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Practical Criticism of Classical Arabic Poetry: an investigation
of the attitude of Arab poets and their audiences towards poetry
in the early classical period.

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in the Faculty of Arts in
the University of Glasgow.

August, 1982

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my mother

اهدبك غير مكافئ منك واحدة من الأيدي التي لم يعفها القدم
(الحلى)

To my father, to my brothers and sisters, in particular my elder brother Al-Tayyib and his wife Batūl, and to my wife Su'aad and my son Muhammad, to all of them I dedicate this thesis.

Mahdi

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to present, through the examination of the views of as many as possible of those who were principally concerned with the subject, a general conspectus of the contemporary criteria for excellence in Arabic poetry from its beginnings until the time of Ibn al-Mu'tazz. There are a number of problems that face anyone attempting such an examination; much of the information is scattered and fragmentary, and even when it is readily accessible, it is still often difficult to interpret, owing to its unspecific, and sometimes contradictory, nature. Nonetheless, it is possible to make a number of suggestions, on the basis of the collected comments of poets themselves, critics of varying interests and approaches, and laymen with a more or less informed concern for poetry, which, it is hoped, serve to provide further illumination on some aspects of this vital but mysterious topic. It is not claimed that any revolutionary new interpretations have been offered; the nature of the subject, and the material available, do not lend themselves to this. It is only by attempting gradually to approach a fuller understanding of the elusive terms in which the mediaeval Arabs spoke of their poetry, and of the unfamiliar assumptions that lay behind it, that we can hope eventually to arrive at a proper critical appreciation of it. It is hoped that the present study makes some contribution to such an understanding.

The thesis is divided up on a somewhat broad basis for the earlier part of the period, both chronologically and geographically; subsequently the divisions become narrower, first by schools and then by individuals. Ibn al-Mu'tazz was chosen as the final figure to be considered, as representing the culmination of a certain type of criticism.

The chapters of the thesis are as follows:

Chapter One:	The Jāhiliyya
Chapter Two:	The Early Islamic Period
Chapter Three:	Hijāzī Poets of the Umayyad Period
Chapter Four:	Iraqi and Syrian Poets of the Umayyad and Early Abbasid Periods
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Chapter Nine:	The Modern School 1. Al-Jāhiz
Chapter Ten:	The Modern School 2. Ibn Qutayba
Chapter Eleven:	The Modern School 3. Al-Mubarrad
Chapter Twelve:	The Modern School 4. Ibn al-Muṭazz
	a. A General View
	b. The Quotations in Tabaqāt al-shuʿarā' al- muḥdathin

INTRODUCTION

A great deal remains to be discovered concerning classical Arabic poetry. The unanswered questions are many and obvious, more particularly in connection with the Jāhilī period, but also to some extent in connection with later periods as well; they concern the origins of Arabic poetry, its methods of composition, its conventions, its subject-matter, its authenticity, its meaning, and its very object. The obstacles confronting those examining these questions are formidable: the inherent difficulty of much of the material, the uncertain state of the texts, the fragmentary way in which some of the poetry has been preserved, but principally the sheer bulk of what has to be studied and the limited numbers of those available to study it. It is possible, and even probable, that the application of modern aids to scholarship, such as the computer, will eventually give answers to the more technical of these questions; others will always require a breadth of knowledge and a certainty of taste that are bound to be as rarely found in individual scholars as they have always been.

One fundamental question that we are still a long way from answering is: what did the Arabs, the poets themselves, their contemporaries, and their later readers, regard as constituting good poetry, and what criteria did they apply in making such decisions? To some extent, the first part of this question can be answered by instinct. It is not difficult to make a short list of names that one knows, as it were impressionistically, would generally be regarded as among the principal Arab poets, e.g. Imru' al-Qays, al-Mutanabbī, Abū Nuwās, al-A'shā, Abū al-'Alā al-Ma'arri, and one or two others. Apart from such obvious candidates, however, there are a very large number of contenders for consideration, all of whom would no doubt have their champions, and it is at this point that the second part of the question becomes particularly pertinent. When a body of poetry is clearly

based on an elaborate set of conventions - conventions so rigorous that it is often difficult to distinguish the work of individual poets of the same general period - the criteria that the poets and their audiences employed in their respective capacities necessarily assume greater importance for the later student of the poetry than would be the case with more diversified material. Our understanding of these criteria is all too small. A certain amount of work has been done on the writings of the more academic Arab critics of the later part of the classical period, and this has yielded much valuable information. It seems appropriate, however, also to consider in as much detail as possible the views expressed, or reported as having been expressed, by those closer in time to the poets in question, whatever their qualifications may have been for expressing such views, for it is probable that what the later critics had to say was, at least in part, based on these.

The material considered in this study is of a very diverse nature. At one end of the scale we have the works of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, himself a distinguished poet, who devoted a great deal of attention to all aspects of his craft, in addition to concerning himself, of necessity, with the political and religious affairs of the Arab empire; he occupied a unique position in the history of Arabic literature and criticism, and his views are therefore of the greatest possible interest and importance. At the other end are the scattered comments on the subject by the early caliphs, whose views on literature may be supposed to have been influenced by a variety of considerations, perhaps the least cogent of which was aesthetic. In between come the writings of the philologists and lexicographers, whose approach to poetry was of a very particular kind, the classifiers of *Tabaqāt*, whose systems appear idiosyncratic and frequently obscure, and the *Adab*-writers such as al-Jāhiz and Ibn Qutayba, who often present some of the most interesting opinions. The views of poets themselves are patently of great value; it is unfortunate that so many of these - and

they are not very plentiful - are recorded in the form of isolated, often casual, remarks, which are incompatible with, or flatly contradict, other such remarks, and to which too much weight should not be given, even assuming that their attribution is correct. Nevertheless, it has been thought right to assemble as much of this disparate information as possible, in the hope that, despite the difficulty of evaluation of individual items, some kind of comprehensive picture may emerge of the way in which the adherents of this fascinating but elusive medium thought about it.

Some of the material considered here is, of course, already familiar. It is improbable that any startlingly new insights will accrue from a wider-ranging examination, but it is to be hoped that this will, at all events, provide some evidence either to confirm or to cast doubt on various points, the validity of which has until now depended largely on impressions rather than on documentary evidence. It is likewise to be hoped that future students of this poetry may find indications of directions for future profitable research.

As to the period covered, its beginning was easy enough to establish, but its end did not suggest itself nearly so obviously, since it would have been interesting, and no doubt useful, to pursue the history of Arabic poetic criticism a good deal further. Considerations of time and space, however, demanded that a limit should be set; it seemed not intolerably arbitrary to set it at the point at which the controversy over the *muhdathūn* and the ancients, on which critics had achieved some sort of compromise, was about to break out afresh. This point was also that at which the more theoretical critical works, already referred to, began to be written. It marks the end of the period of what, in modern terms, may be called 'practical criticism' - although, in view of the obscurity of

some of this criticism, 'practical' is perhaps an unduly optimistic adjective. Some of the less academic criticism advanced in these later works is, in fact, mentioned, so that we do not, with Ibn al-Mu'tazz' writings, come to a clean break in the tradition. Nevertheless, they proved a convenient mile-stone at which to pause to take stock, and, in the event, to conclude this already perhaps over-extended study.

CHAPTER ONE

The JĀHILIYYA

The aspect of Jāhili poetic criticism which I propose to discuss is that of muwāzana, or poetic comparison in which a critic compares two poems, lines, or poets in order to tell which or who is better. This type of criticism is the most common one in Jāhili times, and it continues throughout the history of Arabic literature. The idea of muwāzana probably appeared in the field of criticism due to the nature of the Arabs' life in the Jāhiliyya, when they indulged in tribal mufākhara and munāfara concerning power, courage, generosity, eloquence and other valuable qualities. In each field a tribe claimed that they were the best, and this idea was transferred to the poetic field, where we find the poet who claimed himself to be the best. The practice continued, both in society as a whole, where, under Islam, piety became the criterion -

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

1

and in poetic criticism, where explicit criteria were gradually established.

The critics at the time of the Jāhiliyya were, in general, the poets themselves; and by making use of those views attributed to them we may be able to form an idea about the sort of poetry they preferred. Those critical views are few and scattered and it seems that a great deal of them have been lost, as Abu 'Amr b-al-'Alā' states.² In general, those views are concerned with either one line or two, and sometimes with a whole poem or the whole poetry of a poet as compared with another. Sometimes they deal with a poet himself and describe him instead of talking about his poetry. A critic may be asked to give his opinion about the best poet or the best type of poetry, or he may be asked to compare and

judge between a group of poets. A poet may simply claim himself the best, and another may compete with others in writing poetry spontaneously on a certain subject so as to see who is the most successful. No doubt some of those critical views are influenced by tribalism and personal conflicts, and therefore they cannot always be taken at their face value. Nevertheless, they give us an idea about the nature of criticism at its earliest stage, and we can see in them the seeds of later poetic criticism.

Before we talk about what we think to be the criteria used by the Jāhilīs in their poetic comparison, it may be useful to consider briefly the methods followed by the Jāhilī poets in order to satisfy the taste of their audience, either in their own tribes, at the fairs like 'Ukāz, or during their travels in Arabia. Al-Nābigha and al-A'shā are good examples of travelling poets. There were also the reciters who transmitted the poems of their masters, and by this method the Jāhilī poet had his poetry spread over a wide area. It is notorious that the Jāhilī poet had to conform rigorously to inherited conventions; the Jāhilī qaṣīda generally opens with nasīb and atlāl, then comes the rahīl which includes the description of the she-camel, and then comes the main subject of the qaṣīda, whether madih or another topic. Within these general limits the poet would attempt to achieve a poem perfect in the judgement of an audience whose apparently insatiable appetite for similar themes and details must have been informed by considerable expertise in the matter of vocabulary, metre and rhyme, and perhaps, even at this date, by an appreciation of the finer points of simile and isti'āra.³

The Hawliyyāt of Zuhayr give us an idea of the effort that the poet made in order to compose perfect poems. Zuhayr himself was aware of the fact that he could do nothing but follow earlier poets, and in one of his lines he made it clear that he and his contemporary poets were only repeating

what had been already said by their predecessors:

4 مَا أَرَانَا نَقُولُ إِلَّا مُعَارًا أَوْ مُعَادًا مِنْ لَفْظِنَا مَكْرُورًا

When 'Antara wrote the line that opens his mu'allaga:

هَلْ غَارَرَ الشُّعْرَاءُ مِنْ صُتْرَدِّمْ

he was in fact regarding himself as a modern poet; as Ibn Rashīq put it:

"'Antara considered himself a muhdath in comparison with the earlier

Jāhili poets when he mentioned in his above-quoted line that he had

arrived at poetry when all its topics were finished and covered by the

earlier poets before him, and there remained nothing for him to say".⁵

A poet might be criticised and disparaged because of a single defect in

a poem. It is said that al-Mutalammis or al-Musayyab was criticised by

Tarafa for his line:

وَقَدْ أَتَنَاسَى الْهَمَّ عِنْدَ احْتِفَارِهِ . بَنَاجٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّيْعَرِيَّةُ مُكْدَمٌ

When Tarafa listened to the line he said: "Istinwaqa al-jamalu" or "the

camel has become a she-camel". This is because the poet attributed to

the male a quality (say'ariyya) which can be applied to the female only.⁶

For these reasons the Jāhili poet found it necessary to scrutinise and

polish his poetry, in order to satisfy his discriminating audience. The

best examples of this are provided by poets like Zuhayr and those who

followed his path such as al-Hutay'a and Ka'b b. Zuhayr. Imru' al-Qays

himself admitted that he used to scrutinise his poetry carefully and select

for recitation what he thought to be the best. He wrote:

أَذُودُ الْقَوَافِي عَنِّي ذِيَادَا ذِيَادَ غَلَامٍ جَرِيٍّ جَوَادَا
فَلَمَّا كَثُرْنَ وَعَيْنِيَهُ تَخَيَّرَ مِنْهُنَّ شَتَّى جِيَادَا
فَأَعَزَلُ مَرَجَانَهَا جَانِبًا وَآخِذٌ مِنْ دُرِّهَا الْمُسْتَجَادَا

7

Imru' al-Qays also used other methods to appeal to his public. Some

Jāhili poets did not properly bring their poems to a close, and he did the

same in his mu'allaga, ending it with the following line:

لَأَنَّ السَّبَاعَ فِيهِ غَرَقَى عَشِيَّةً بِأَرْجَائِهِ الْقُصُوى أَنَا بَيْشَى عَنْصِلِ

As Ibn Rashīq says, the listener feels that the gasīda is not yet finished and there is something more to be added. This sudden breaking-off of the gasīda, as Ibn Rashīq suggests, attracts the listener, and increases his interest in the gasīda and his desire to hear more of it. This abrupt conclusion is praiseworthy, because it is a sign of tab.⁸ Another device that Imru' al-Qays is fond of is the frequent use of similes in which the preposition ka does not appear, e.g.:

تَسْمُونَ إِلَيْهَا بَعْدَ مَا نَامَ أَهْلُهَا سُمُورَ حَبَابِ الْمَاءِ حَالًا عَلَى حَالٍ

and:

إِذَا مَا الثَّرِيَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تَقَرَّضَتْ تَقَرُّضَ أَثْنَاءِ الْوَشَاحِ الْفَصَلِ

This device is also used by other poets of the Jāhiliyya like al-Munakhkhal al-Yashkurī, e.g.:

فَدَفَقْتُهَا فَتَدَافَعَتْ مَشَى الْقَطَاةِ إِلَى الْغَيْرِ

9

What al-Qādī al-Jurjānī writes in his Wasāta about some of the criteria used by the Jāhili Arabs in their poetic criticism and comparison may cast more light on the sort of poetry admired by them: "The Arabs, when comparing poets, look for the sublimity and correctness of ma'nā, and eloquence and soundness of phraseology. They prefer that poet who writes excellent descriptions, and produces apposite similes, the one who writes poetry spontaneously, the one who includes many proverbs and famous unique lines. They do not care for tajnīs, mutābaqa, and isti'ara. The only thing they care for is that poetry should be composed according to the 'amūd al-shi'r.¹⁰ The two qualities of eloquence jazāla and soundness required in the phraseology of poetry are the same as those required by the Jāhili in their speech.¹¹ Sublimity (sharaf) of ma'nā is a criterion which appeared later when critics called for exaggeration in madih, nasīb or hijā', regardless of sincerity. It appears probable that al-Jurjānī did not mean that the Jāhili Arabs understood sublimity of ma'nā in the same way as later critics understood it, though we do not deny that some Jāhili critics called for hyperbole in poetry, as we shall see later. It

seems to me that the Jāhili Arabs looked for decent subjects which accorded with reality and facts. They cared for words, tashbih, spontaneity and proverbs. They were interested in unique individual lines, probably containing hikma, a proverb or even an excellent tashbih. What al-Jurjānī says is affirmed by Ibn Rashīq in his remark that the Jāhilīs did not care for jinās, tibāq or muqābala, and that they were interested in eloquence and firmness of speech, clarity of ma'nā, sound formation of poetry, and perfection (ihkām) of rhymes, and required that the sentences in the qasīda should be connected with one another; he called it talāhum al-Kalām. This last quality is shown in the qasīda of al-Huṭay'a in the following lines of madīh:

فَلَا وَأَبِيكَ مَا ظَلَمْتُ قَرِيعٌ بَأْنُ يَبْنُوا الْمَكَامَ حَيْثُ شَاءَ وَ
وَلَا وَأَبِيكَ مَا ظَلَمْتُ قَرِيعٌ وَلَا يَبْرُمُوا لِذَاكَ وَلَا أُسَاءُ وَ
بِقِرَّةٍ جَارِهِمْ أَنْ يَنْعِشُوا فَيَغْبِرُ حَوْلَهُ نَهْمٌ وَشَاءُ
فِي بَنِي مَجْدٍ وَ يَقِيمُ فِيهَا وَيَمِشُّ إِنْ أَرِيدَ بِهِ الْمَشَاءُ
وَإِنَّ الْجَارَ مِثْلُ الضَّيْفِ يَفْدُو لِيُوجِهُتَهُ وَإِنْ طَالَ التَّوَادُّ
وَإِنِّي قَدْ عَلَقْتُ بِجِلِّ قَوْمٍ أَعَانَهُمْ عَلَى الْحَسَبِ الشَّرَاءُ

Ibn Rashīq quotes other lines as an example of what he thinks to be a sort of san'a admired by the Jāhili poets, though unlike the san'a of the muhdathīn. The lines quoted are by Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, describing wild asses and a hunter:

فَوَرَدَنَ وَالْعَيُوقُ مَقْعَدَ رَابِئٍ الضَّرَبَاءُ خَلْفَ النِّجْمِ لَا يَتَنَلَّعُ
فَوَكَّرَنِي فِي حَجَرَاتٍ عَذْبٍ بَارِدٍ حَسْبُ الْبُلَاحِ تَغِيْبُ فِيهِ الْأَكْرَعُ
فَشَرِبْتُ ثُمَّ سَمِعْتُ حَسًّا دُونَهُ شَرَفَ الْحَبَابِ وَرَيْبُ فَرَحٍ يُقَرِّعُ
فَنَكَّرَنِي فَتَغَرَّنِي فَامْتَرَسَنِي بِهِ هَوَاجُ هَادِيَةٍ وَهَادٍ جُرْشَعُ
فَرَسِي فَأَنْقَذَ مِنْ نَحْوِي عَائِلٌ سَهْمًا فَخَرَّ وَرَيْشُهُ مَتَصَمِّعُ
فَبَدَّلَهُ أَقْرَابَ هَادٍ رَائِعًا عَنْهُ فَعَيَّتْ فِي الْكِنَانَةِ يَرْجِعُ
فَرَسِي فَأَلْقَى صَاعِدِيًّا مَطْعَرًا بِالْكَشْحِ فَاشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ الْأَضْلَعُ
فَأَبْدَهْنِي حَتُوفَهُنَّ فَهَارِبٍ بِذِمَائِهِ أَوْ بَارِكٌ مَتَجَفِّعُ

Ibn Rashīq, quoting the above two pieces, thinks that "the formation of

the discourse in that connected manner" in the lines of the former and the repetition of the letter fā' in the latter indicates that the two poets were aware of what they were doing and that they were intentionally making use of a sort of san'a. It was with this kind of san'a in view that Zuhayr felt obliged to polish and re-appraise his poetry while composing his Hawliyyāt.¹² Al-Hutay'a, in the lines quoted above, repeats the first half of the first line in the second. This repetition is called takrār; it is regarded as a poetic felicity, and was frequently used by poets. When it is used in madih, as in the lines above, its purpose is to glorify the mamduh, here the tribe of Qurayf. Takrār also occurs in nasīb, with the poet repeating the name of his beloved. A good example of this is found in Imru' al-Qays:

دِيَارٌ لَسْتُمْ عَافِيَانِ يَذِي الْإِنَالِ أَلَحَّ عَلَيْهَا كُلُّ الشُّمِّ هَطَالِ
وَتَحْسَبُ سَلَمِي لَا تَزَالُ كَعَهْدِنَا بَوَادِي الْخَزَامِ أَوْ عَلَى رَسِّ أَوْعَالِ
وَتَحْسَبُ سَلَمِي لَا تَزَالُ تَرَى لَمَلًا مِنَ الْوَحْشِ أَوْ يَيْفَاءَ مَيْثَاءَ مَحَلَالِ
لَيَالِي سَلَمِي إِذَا تَرِيكَ مُنْهَبًا وَجِيدًا كَجِيدِ الرَّثْمِ لَيْسَ بِمِقْطَالِ

13

Abū Kabīr al-Hudhalī is fond of takrār. In his poem beginning:

أَرْهَيْرُ هَلْ عَنْ شَيْبَةٍ مِنْ مَقَرٍ أَمْ لَا سَبِيلَ إِلَى الشَّبَابِ الْأَوَّلِ ؟

he repeats the following line seven times:

فَإِذَا وَذَلِكَ لَيْسَ إِلَّا ذِكْرُهُ وَإِذَا مَضَى مَشْيُيْ لَأَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلِ

14

Ibn Rāshiq's text is different from that in the Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn

in which the line occurs only once, at the end of the poem.¹⁵ However,

Abū Kabīr al-Hudhalī certainly repeats the same line in four poems. Its occurrence is in the poem starting:

أَرْهَيْرُ هَلْ عَنْ شَيْبَةٍ مِنْ مَقَرٍ أَمْ لَا سَبِيلَ إِلَى الشَّبَابِ الْمَذْبُورِ

Its third is in that starting:

أَرْهَيْرُ هَلْ عَنْ شَيْبَةٍ مِنْ مَقَرٍ أَمْ لَا خُلُودَ لِبَاذِلٍ مُتَكَلِّفِ

And its fourth is in that starting:

أَرْهَيْرُ هَلْ عَنْ شَيْبَةٍ مِنْ مَقَرٍ أَمْ لَا خُلُودَ لِبَاذِلٍ مُتَكَلِّمِ

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He also frequently repeats the name of his daughter Zuhayra in his poems, together with other words. Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, whose lines we have quoted above for his repetition of the letter fā', seems to be particularly fond of that conjunction, which he uses a great deal in the rest of his poetry.¹⁷ It seems that he uses it as a means of connecting his lines closely with one another; this is apparent in the lines quoted above and those that follow, from the same poem. Describing a wild bull with a hunter and his dogs, he writes:

والدَّهْرُ لَا يَبْقَى عَلَى حَدَثَانِهِ شَبَبٌ أَفَرَّتَهُ الْكِلَابُ مَرَّعٌ
تَشَقُّقَ الْكِلَابِ الْفَارِيَانِ فَوَارَهُ فَإِذَا يَرَى السَّبْعَ الْمَسْدَقَ يَفْرَعُ
وَيَقْوُذُ بِالْأَرْضِ إِذَا مَا شَقَّ قَطْرٌ وَرَاحَتُهُ بَلِيلٌ زَعْرَعُ
يَرْمِي بَعَيْنِيهِ الْعُيُوبَ وَطَرَفُهُ مَقْفُصٌ يُقَدِّقُ لَطَفُهُ مَا يَسْمَعُ
فَقَدَا يُشْرِقُ مَشْنَهُ فَبَدَا لَهُ أُولَى سَوَائِقَهَا قَرِيبًا تَوْرَعُ
فَا هَتَاجَ مِنْ فَرَعٍ وَسَدَّ فُرُوبَهُ غَيْرُ ضَوَارٍ : وَإِخْيَانٍ وَأَجْدَعُ
يَنْهَشْنَهُ وَيَذْبُهْنَ وَبَحْتِي عَمَلُ الشَّوَى بِالطَّرْتِينَ مَوْلَعُ
فَمَا لَهَا مُذَلَّتَيْنِ لَأَمَّا بِهِمَا مِنَ النَّفْعِ الْمُبْدَحِ أَيْدَعُ
فَكَأَنَّ سَفُودَيْنِ لَهَا يُفْتَرَا تَحِيلاً لَهُ بِشَوَاءٍ شَرِبَ يُنَزَعُ
فَصَرَعَتْهُ تَحْتَ الْعُبَارِ وَجَبَهُ مُتَشَرَّبٌ وَكُلَّ جَنْبٍ مَقْرَعُ
تَحَى إِذَا أُرْتَدَّتْ وَأَقْبَدَتْهُ مِنْهَا وَقَامَ شَرِيدُهَا يَتَفَرَعُ
فَبَدَا لَهُ رَبُّ الْكِلَابِ بِكِفِهِ بَيْفٌ رِهَانٌ رِيَشُهُنَّ مَقْرَعُ
فَرَمَى لِيُنْقِذَ فَرَّهَا فَهَوَى لَهُ سَهْمٌ فَأَنْقَذَ لَطَرَتِيهِ الْمُنْرَعُ
فَلَبَا كَمَا يَلْبُو فَنِيْقٌ تَارِزٌ بِالْحَبْنِ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ هُوَ أَبْرَعُ

This close connection of the lines with one another seems to be the same as the idea of qirān discussed by al-Jāhiz later. A poet is reported as saying to another that he is the better poet and when the other poet asks why, the answer is: "because I write a verse and its brother and you write a verse and its cousin". Al-Jāhiz explains this to mean that the other poet has no connection between the ideas in his lines. This may suggest a sort of unity that the Jahilī poets were aware of, and

admired. Al-A'shā in one of his poems writes:

أَبَا يَسْمَعِ أَقْصَرَ فَإِنَّ قَصِيرَةً مَتَى تَأْتِكُمْ تَلْحَقُ بِهَا أَخَوَاتُهَا

Al-Jāhiz adds to his explanation that a verse can be the brother of another if there are similarity and harmony between them. What concerns us here is that he stated that the line of al-A'shā quoted above has the same idea of connection and harmony between the lines of a poem.¹⁹

It seems that the Jāhilīs also admired length in poetry, as is evidenced in the observation concerning the poetry of al-Nābigha compared with that of Imru' al-Qays. When they asked al-Nābigha to prolong his poems as Imru' al-Qays did, he said to them: "he who writes poetry should select".²⁰ This was al-Nābigha's excuse for the shortness of his poems; he used to select the good lines from a poem and reject the bad ones, and this made his poems shorter. Though Imru' al-Qays also made a practice of selecting the good lines, nevertheless his poems are longer.

Al-Nābigha, whom we regard as the critic of the Jāhilīs, had many critical views attributed to him. When he was once asked "who is the best poet of all?" his answer was: "He is the one whose excellent poetry is admired and whose bad poetry is laughed at". Ibn Rashīq comments: "It is hard to believe that such a view could be held by al-Nābigha because if a poet's bad poetry is laughed at, that means he is one of the worst poets, unless al-Nābigha meant by "bad poetry" hijā' poetry".²¹ However, if al-Nābigha meant by "bad poetry" hijā' poetry, it may indicate that the best hijā' poetry, in his view, is that which contains most mockery. This is perhaps supported, as we shall see later, by his mocking hijā' of 'Amir b. al-Tufayl.

Al-Nābigha also seems to have preferred hyperbole in poetry and for him the best poet is the one who lies most. He is again reported as saying:

"The best poet is the one whose lies are admired and whose bad poetry is laughed at" or "the one whose lies and mutābaqa are admired".²² Besides hyperbole, to which we shall refer later, we notice that al-Nābigha indicates mutābaqa as a characteristic of excellent and admirable poetry. He does not give any example from poetry and therefore it is not easy to know what he meant by mutābaqa, and whether the term had the same meaning as it did later for the poets of badī'.

The idea of the best poetry as being "that which lies most" is also attributed to Hajar, the father of Imru' al-Qays, who is reported as saying to his son: "O my son, the sweetest poetry is that which lies most; how can you allow yourself to lie?"²³

Nevertheless, among the Jāhilī poets there were apparently some who preferred sincerity and truth in poetry. The following lines are attributed to many poets, among them Hassan b. Thābit:

وإن أشعر بيت أنت قائله بيت يقال إذا انشده صدقا
وإنها الشعر لب المرء يعرضه على المجالس إن كيساً وإن حمقاً

These lines are attributed also to Zuhayr in al-ʿIqd al-Farīd²⁴ and to Bāqila al-Akbar in Kitāb al-sināʿatayn of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī²⁵. If Zuhayr is the author of the two lines, they probably reflect his own character, as described by Ibn Qutayba:

ولان زهير يتأله ويتعقق في شعره .

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However, al-ʿAskarī, in his comment on the first line of the two, says that it means that the best poetry is that which teaches wisdom and contains preaching that amends the soul, and that which indicates good habits to be cultivated and bad to be avoided. Al-ʿAskarī adds that the line may also refer to that maḍīh poetry which praises men with genuineness and sincerity, avoiding exaggeration. "Those who admired the poetry that lies most", said al-ʿAskarī, "were looking for exaggera-

tion in praise, in dispraise, and in descriptions also".²⁷

According to Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, the most effective hi jā' for the Jāhilīs was that called hi jā' bi-l-tafdīl or iqdhā'. In this sort of hi jā' a poet compares two men or two tribes, praising one and dispraising the other in obscene manner. Later on, this sort of hi jā' was prohibited by the Prophet, and 'Umar threatened al-Ḥuṭay'a if he wrote it. That it deals in obscene mockery at least seems to be the view of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, who criticised the poets of his own tribe when they wrote hi jā' poems on 'Āmir b. al-Tufayl. According to al-Nābigha, these poems were full of obscenity, which is not suitable in hi jā' against a noble man like 'Āmir, who was the chief of his tribe. A noble man should be satirised with poetry containing mockery like that in the following lines of his:

فَإِنْ يَدُ عَائِرٍ قَدْ قَالَ جَهْلًا فَإِنَّ مَطِيَّةَ الْجَهْلِ السَّبَابُ
فَكُنْ لَأَبِيكَ أَوْ لَأَبِي بَرَاءٍ تَصَادِفُكَ الْحُكُومَةُ وَالْهَوَابُ
فَلَا يَزْهَبُ بِلُبِّكَ طَائِشَاتٌ مِنْ الْخِيَلِ لَيْسَ لَهُنَّ بَابُ
فَإِنَّكَ سَوْفَ تَحْلُمُ أَوْ تَنَاقِصُ إِذَا مَا شَبَّتَ أَوْ شَابَ الْغَرَابُ
فَإِنْ تَكُنِ الْفُؤَارِسُ يَوْمَ حِسِّي أَصَابُوا مِنْ لِقَائِكَ مَا أَصَابُوا
فَمَا إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ سَبَبٍ بَعِيدٍ وَلَكِنْ أَدْرَكُونَ وَهُمْ غَضَابُ

When 'Āmir heard the lines he was most upset and said, "No poet who has satirised me has achieved anything, except al-Nābigha, who mocked me and described me as a foolish and ignorant man, while the others described me as a chief and a wise man of my people."²⁸

When al-Nābigha said: "the best poet is the one whose excellent poetry is admired and whose bad poetry is laughed at", he probably meant by "bad poetry" that which causes laughter - poetry of decent hi jā' that contains mockery.

Concerning what was good madīh, according to the Jāhilīs, we have only the view of al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir, whom al-Nābiga praised in a

qasīda in which he says:

أَخْلَقَ مَبْدَكَ جَلَّتْ مَا لَهَا حَقَرُ فِي الْبَاسِ وَالْجُودِ بَيْنَ الْبَدْوِ وَالْحَفَرِ
مُتَوَجِّعٌ بِالْمَعَالَى فَوْقَ مَقَرِّهِ وَفِي الْوَنَى ضَبِيعٌ فِي سُورَةِ الْقَمَرِ

On listening to these lines, al-Nu'mān was so delighted that he ordered the mouth of the poet to be filled with pearls and is reported to have said: "By such poetry hearts will be delighted and with such poetry kings are to be praised".²⁹ It seems that al-Nu'mān admired the lines for two qualities, exaggeration and brevity. The poet uses the word jallat (became very great) when describing the good qualities of the mandūh. He exaggerates in praising them as unlimited. We notice that the poet creates contrasts by expressing his ideas in a dualistic way. The mandūh is praised for two contrasted qualities, ba's and jūd; there is a contrast between badw and hadar; the mandūh is described in two opposite situations: in time of peace and in time of war; he is also credited with beauty and light when compared with the moon. This trend of praising opposite qualities is later followed by the muhdathīn, as we shall see later when we discuss the critical views of Ibn. al-Mu'tazz.

As part of Jāhilī tribal mufākhara, every tribe claimed that her poets were the best, and that they were the source of poetry from which other tribes learned. It is said that when the poet Bishāma b. al-Qadīr was near death he divided his wealth among his family. Zuhayr b. Abī Sulma, to whom Bishāma was uncle, asked for his share. Bishāma told him that he had inherited his poetry, that all Arabs admitted that their spring of poetry lay in his tribe of Ghatafān, and that he was the best poet of that tribe. ^{29a}

Imru' al-Qays is said to have been very proud of his poetry; he engaged in many disputes about it with other poets. He used to practise mumātana

with them, that is the holding of a competition in writing poetry spontaneously in which one poet recites a half-verse and the other poet supplies the second half. One such mumātana took place between Imru' al-Qays and al-Taw'am al-Yashkurī, with his two brothers Qatāda and Abū Shurayh. Imru' al-Qays recited the following half-line:

أَحَارِ تَرَى بَرِيْقًا هَبَّ وَهَنًا

and al-Taw'am completed the line thus:

كَنَارٍ مَجُوسِي تَسْتَعِيرُ اسْتَعَارًا

The four poets continued until the poem was complete. When Imru' al-Qays saw the ability of the other three, he expressed his admiration by saying to them: "I wonder why your house does not catch fire through the excellence of your poetry". It is said that from that day the family of the three poets was called Banū al-Nār and that Imru' al-Qays decided not to indulge in mumātana with any other poet after being defeated by al-Taw'am and his brothers.³⁰ His comment on their poetry perhaps indicates that Imru al-Qays valued "warmth" in poetry. Mumātana, or mumālata, as it is sometimes called, emphasises a poet's tab, because of the necessity of extemporising. This quality of tab possibly plays a considerable part in Jāhili judgements between poets that are otherwise unexplained.

Poets were divided into various classes according to excellence.

Al-Hutay'a says - the lines are at any rate attributed to him - that there are four classes of poets:

الشُّعْرَاءُ فَاعْلَمَنَّ أَرْبَعَهُ فُشَاعِرٌ لَا يُرْتَقَى لِمَنْفَعَةٍ
وَشَائِعٌ يَنْشُدُ وَشَطْرَ الْجَمْعَةِ وَشَائِعٌ آخِرٌ لَا يَجْرِي مَعَهُ
وَشَائِعٌ يَقَالُ خَيْرٌ فِي رَعَاهُ

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Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī was probably influenced by views such as those expressed in the lines quoted above and did something similar in putting four poets into each tabaqa. One of the classes of poets of the Jāhiliyya

is that of shuway'ir, or poetaster, such as Ibn Abī Himrān, who was called shuway'ir by Imru' al-Qays.³² Critics in the Jahiliyya were influenced by their Bedouin environment in offering their critical views. This is clear from the fact that they borrowed the names of types of camels and used them to indicate a poet's rank in poetry. He may be called thinyān, meaning "weak", or mugham or 'awd. The three categories of poet are mentioned in the following line by Aws b. Hajar:

وَقَدْ رَأَى بَحْرِي قَبْلَ دَلِيلِ لَهَا مِيًّا مِنْ الشُّعْرَاءِ كُلِّ عَوْدٍ وَمُفْحَمٍ

Al-Nābigha wrote:

يَعْنِي الشَّاعِرُ الثَّنِيَّانُ عَنِّي مَدَوْدَ الْبَكْرِ عَنْ قَرْمٍ حَبَانٍ

Other titles could be conferred on a poet in order to show his superiority. A poet like Tufayl al-Ghanawī was called al-Muhabbir, either as critics later explained, because of his excellent descriptions of horses or because of his beautiful poetry in general.³³ The title came from the verb habbara or habara, which has various meanings, one of which is "to embellish and refine something"; it also means "to compose in elegant style".³⁴ Tufayl al-Ghanawī was famous for his "excellent descriptions of horses".³⁵ We have no examples of his poetry on that subject which the Jāhilīs admired, and therefore it is not easy to discover the criteria used by them in preferring Tufayl, together with Abū Duwād al-Iyādī and al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī.³⁶ If Tufayl was called al-muhabbir because of his beautiful poetry in general, and this seems to be what they meant by the title, this may indicate that he used to refine and embellish his poetry; we do not know, however, what sort of embellishment he used - it probably consisted of similes and isti'āra. It may equally well reflect the Jāhilīs appreciation of beauty of style and form in general, and of the type of san'a used by Zuhayr, his son Ka'b, and al-Hutay'a.

The interest of the Jāhilīs in "refined poetry" is reflected in the title

by which they called the poet ʿAdī b. Rabiʿa: al-muhalhil. This derives from the verb halhala, which means "to weave finely". It is said that he was "the first poet who refined poetry and avoided using gharīb and unfamiliar language in it". This explanation indicates that the Jāhilīs were praising the poet when they called him by this title, but another explanation claims that it was given to him as a means of disparaging him. This says that he was called al-muhalhil because in his poetry you find the quality of halhala, a word used to describe a piece of cloth that is not excellently woven in some of its parts. This implies that he achieved different levels of excellence in his poetry; some of it is excellent and some is bad. It also may mean that some of it is not soundly formed, as may be inferred from Ibn Sallām.³⁷ The title is also said to have been given to the poet because he was the first one to compose long qasīdas³⁸; this indicates their interest in long poems. It is also said that he was so-called because he was the first to make poetry delicate (raḥīq), implying that he incorporated ghazal in his poems. If we look at his poetry, however, we find that most of it is rithā' for his brother Kulayb and refers to wars between his tribe and others. Still others say that he was called al-muhalhil because of the following lines:

لَهَا تَوَعَّلَ فِي الْكِرَاعِ هَجِينُهُمْ فَلَمَّتْ أَثَارُ مَا كَأُ أَوْصِيْلَا

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A third poet whose poetry seems to have been admired by the Jāhilīs is al-Namr b. Tawlab, who was called al-kayyis "because of his beautiful poetry".⁴⁰ Among the different meanings of the word is that of "skillful". We do not know in what sense al-Namr was 'skillful' in his poetry. Probably he used to select his words carefully and scrutinise his poetry. However, both al-muhalhil and al-Namr are described as "liar" poets.⁴¹ This implies that they exaggerated in their poetic maʿānī. Is it possible that the Jāhilīs admired these "lies" in the two poets' poetry?

As we have mentioned before, some Jāhilīs believed that the "best poet is the one that lies most".

Sometimes the Jāhilīs expressed their particular admiration for a poem by giving it a name, as they did the one by Suwayd b. Abī Kāhil that begins:

بَسَلَتْ رَابِعَةُ الْجَبَلِ لَنَا فَوَصَلْنَا الْجَبَلَ مِنْهَا مَا اتَّسَعَ

They called it al-Yatīma (the peerless pearl). According to al-Asma'ī the Arabs of the Jāhiliyya "preferred this poem and counted it among their "wisdoms".^{41a} The fact that the poem was regarded by them as a "wisdom" may indicate that they were interested in moral poetry which manifests itself in lines of wisdom and proverbs. Al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf is reported to have quoted various lines from this poem, among them:

كَيْفَ يَرْجُونَ سَقَاطِي بَعْدَمَا جَلَّ الرَّأْسُ بِيَاضِي وَصَلَعُ

42

The poem of Hassan b. Thābit that starts with the line:

لَلَّهِ دَرٌّ عَصَابَةٌ نَادَمْتَهُمْ يَوْمًا . بَجَلَّقَ فِي الزَّمَانِ الْأَوَّلِ

was admired by the Jāhilīs and called by them al-Battāra. The poem contains madīh, and it is probably for this and its mufākharā that it was considered excellent. Al-Hutay'a honoured Hassan for a line of madīh in the same poem.⁴³

Hassan himself, whenever poets gathered to recite their poems, used to ask: "Did they recite the poem of al-Huwaydira?" By that he meant the poem that starts:

بَكَرْتُ سُمَيَّةَ غَدَوَةً فَتَمَتَّعِي

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They also admired the mu'allaga of 'Antara and called it al-mudhhaba (the golden).⁴⁵ It is also reported that the poet 'Alqama al-Fahl visited Quraysh and recited to them his two poems that start:

هَلْ مَا عَلِمْتَ وَمَا اسْتَوْدِعْتَ مَكْتُومُ أَمْ حَبَلُهَا إِذْ نَأْتَاكَ الْيَوْمَ مَصْرُومُ

and: طَمَأَ بِكَ قَلْبٌ فِي الْحَسَنِ طَرُوبٌ بَعِيدَ الشَّبَابِ عَفَرَ حَانَ مَشِيْبُ

The Qurashites expressed their admiration for the two poems and called them simtā al-dahr (the two necklaces of time).⁴⁶ The mu'allagā of 'Antara, as has just been mentioned, was called al-mudhhaba together with the other mu'allagāt, which are al-mudhhabāt. Whether they were suspended in the Ka'ba after being written in gold or not, it seems that the title al-mudhhabāt was probably used for distinguishing them and it may be an indication of the respect shown for these poems. The idea of selecting and collecting certain poems as being particularly excellent seems to have been known to the Jāhilīs, and it may affirm the story of the mu'allagāt. The king of Hīra, al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir, is reported to have had a dīwān in which he had collected the poetry of the fuhūl and the poetry written in his praise. This dīwān, or at least part of it, is said to have been in the possession of the Umayyad Marwānids.^{46a} What Ibn Sallām says may throw some light on al-Hirmāzī's statement that the mu'allagāt were collected by 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān for the first time, and that there had been no-one who collected them in the Jāhiliyya.^{46b}

It seems to me probable that the dīwān said to have been collected by al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir contained some of the mu'allagāt, and other poems, and that 'Abd al-Malik was inspired by the idea of that dīwān to add poems not included in the "Seven Odes". We shall discuss his critical views concerning poetic comparisons later.

However, neither in connection with al-Nu'mān nor 'Abd al-Malik is any mention made of the criteria used for making such selections; perhaps the simple fact that the "Seven Odes" are long poems was the principal one. Other reasons are suggested by al-Hirmāzī, who states that the

Arabs of the Jāhiliyya collected four poems that contained a number of different topics like nasīb, wasf, preaching, proverbs and fakhr. Those poems were by Zuhayr, Tarafa, al-Hārith b. Hilliza and Suwayd b. Abī Kāhil. Tayfur b. Abī Tāhir thinks that some of the mu'allagāt, like that of Imru'al-Qays and that of Zuhayr, were selected because they contain numerous ma'ānī which are not found in other Jāhilī poetry. The mu'allaga of Tarafa was chosen because it contains beauties not to be found in any other poem and also because it has a gnomic conclusion. The mu'allaga of 'Abīd b. al-Abras is written in a distinguished metre and 'arūd.^{46c} Whether the Jāhilīs were really aware of what later critics suggested about their criteria or not, the reasons given above may give us an idea about the grounds on which they expressed a preference for certain poems.

In connection with their interest in metre and rhyme, it is said that al-Nābigha perpetrated iqwā' in one of his poems. When he visited Yathrib and recited his poem they told him about the defect but he was unable to detect it until it was sung to him.⁴⁷

It is said that al-A'shā taught his daughter how to judge poetry and that he used to recite his to her and ask her opinion about it. Some of his poems he called al-mukhziyāt (poems that disgrace the efforts of other poets). Whenever he asked his daughter to recite some of the mukhziyāt she would recite the poem in which he says:

أَغْرَأَ أَرْوَعَ يُسْتَسْقَى الْقَهْمُ بِهِ لَوْ قَارَعَ النَّاسَ عَنْ أَحْسَابِهِمْ قَرَعًا

She would also recite other ones similar to this one.⁴⁸ The poem in

question is long - 76 lines - and begins:

بَانَتْ سَعَادٌ وَأَمْسَى حَبْلُهَا انْقَطَعَ وَاحْتَلَّتْ الْغَمْرُ فَالْجَرْدَيْنِ فَالْفَرَا

The nasīb continues for seven lines, ending:

وَمَا طَلَبُكَ شَيْئًا لَسْتُ مُدْرِكُهُ إِنْ لَانَ عِنْدَكَ غَرَابُ الْبَيْنِ قَدْ وَقَعَا

Then the rahil begins:

تَقُولُ بِنْتِي وَقَدْ قَرَّبْتُ مَرْتَحَلًا يَا رَبِّ جَنَّبْ أَبِي الْإِتْلَافَ وَالْوَجْعَا

In the lines following he addresses his daughter who does not want him to travel. Then he tells the story of the people of ancient Yamāma who were destroyed by the army of a king called Dhū āl Ḥassān. He then takes up the rahil again:

وَبَلَدَةٍ يَرْهَبُ الْجَوَابُ خَشِيَّتَهَا حَتَّى تَرَاهُ عَلَيْهَا يَبْتَغِي الشَّيْعَا

The description of his she-camel begins:

بِذَاكَ لَوْتِ عَفْرَاءَةٍ إِذَا عَثَرَتْ فَالْعَنْ أَوَّلَى لَهَا مِنْ أَنْ يُقَالَ لَهَا

He compares her with a wild cow which he describes for thirteen lines, introducing also a hunter and his dogs. It is somewhat inappropriate that the wild cow to which he likens his she-camel is killed by this hunter. The madīh which is the main subject of the poem occupies thirty-six lines, beginning:

أَنْفَيْتُهَا بَعْدَ مَا حَالَ الْهَبَابُ بِهَا تَوُومُ هَوْدَةَ لَا نِكْسًا وَلَا وَرَعَا

It is not easy to guess the criteria used by the poet's daughter in selecting that poem and others similar to it. In fact the poem was bitterly criticised later by Ibn Ṭabāṭabā (d. 322), who described it as poetry consisting of "unprofitable words, cold ma'ānī, artificial structure, and uneasy rhymes".⁴⁹ According to him the whole poem is mutakallaf poetry, with the exception of the following lines:

تَقُولُ بِنْتِي وَقَدْ قَرَّبْتُ مَرْتَحَلًا يَا رَبِّ جَنَّبْ أَبِي الْإِتْلَافَ وَالْوَجْعَا
بِذَاكَ لَوْتِ عَفْرَاءَةٍ إِذَا عَثَرَتْ فَالْعَنْ أَوَّلَى لَهَا مِنْ أَنْ يُقَالَ لَهَا
بِأَكْلِ كِسْرَاءِ النَّبْلِ ضَارِيَةٍ تَرَى مِنَ الْقِدْرِ فِي أُعْنَاقِهَا قُلْعَا
يَا هَوْدَ إِنَّا لَمِنْ قَوْمٍ أَوَّلَى حَسَبٍ لَا يَفْشَلُونَ إِذَا مَا آنَسُوا قَرْعَا
أَنْغَرُ الْبَلَجُ يُسْتَسْقَى الْغَمَامُ بِهِ لَوْ قَاعِ النَّاسِ عَنْ أَحْسَابِهِمْ قَرْعَا
لَا يَرْقِعُ النَّاسُ مَا أَوْصَى وَإِنْ جَهَدُوا لَمَوْلَى الْحَيَاةِ وَلَا يَوْهُونَ مَا رَفَعَا

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However, it seems likely that the poet's daughter admired the length of the poem; as Abū 'Ubayda says, al-A'shā was known for his "long excellent poems".⁵¹ The poem contains a number of so-called "poetic

beauties": in the first line we find tasrī:

بانت سعادٌ وأمسى حبها انقلعا واحتلت الفمرَ فالجدين فالفريا

in the lines that follow we find contrast:

وكان شئياً إلى شئٍ فقيرهُ دهرٌ يعود على تشتيت ما جمعا

and:

واستنجدى قافل الركبان وانتظري أوبَ المسافر إن ريثاً وإن سرى

The poem contains many lines containing what later critics called

tawshīh, in which the rhyme of the line can be guessed from the other

parts of the line. This implies that the rhyme has a kind of connection

with the meaning. Qudāma b. Jaʿfar gave some examples, such as the line

of ʿAbbās b. Mirdās:

هم سودوا هُبناً وكل قبيلةٍ يُبين عن احسابها من يسودها

and the line of Nusayb:

وقد أيقنت أن ستبين لي وتُحبُّ عندك إن تقع البقيين

In both lines the beginning suggests the rhyme.⁵² Al-Aʿshā's poem has similar lines, such as:

فظلَّ يخدها عن نفسٍ واحدٍها ومثله مثله عن واحدٍ خدها

and:

دارت لتطمعه لهماً ويجمعها بابن فقد أطعمت لهماً وقد فجعا

and:

حتى إذا فيقة في ضرعها اجتمعت جاءن لتضع شق النفس لورفعها

and:

أغرَّ أبلج يُستسقى الغمام به لوقايح الناس عن احسابهم قرعاً

and:

لا يرقع الناس ما أوهى وإن جهدوا حول الحياة ولا يوهوه مارقعاً

and:

وما يرد من جميع بعد فرقه وما يرد بعد من ذى فرقة جمعا

and:

تلقى له سادة الأقوام تايعة كلٌّ سيرضى بأن يدعى له تبعا

and:

واستشفت من سراة القوم ذا شرف فقد عصاها أبوها والذى شفعا

Though it is hard to believe that the Jāhilīs can have known of the various elements that make up "poetic beauties" as tabulated by later critics, one can claim that they were aware of these "poetic beauties" as such, and that they admired them in poetry in spite of the fact that they may not have called them by the same names. Probably the daughter of al-Aʿshā was attracted by the presence of some of these "beauties" in her father's poem, and had derived her appreciation of them from him, since he was the one who taught her how to judge poetry. The Jāhilīs, in all probability, recognised the "poetic beauties", or certain types of them, and in fact the remark made about the mu'allaga of ʿArafa, that "it contains some beauties not to be found in any other poem", may affirm this claim.

Some of the Jāhilī critics gave reasons when preferring one poet to another or comparing two poems or lines. When Imru'al-Qays argued with ʿAlqama (al-Fahl) b. ʿAbada about poetry, each of them claimed that he was a better poet than the other. Umm Jundub, the wife of Imru' al-Qays, asked each of them to write a poem in the same rhyme on the subject of description of horse and camel. Imru' al-Qays wrote the poem that starts:

خَلِيلِي مُرَا بِي عَلَى أُمِّ جُنْدُبٍ نَقَّيْ لُبَانَاتِ الْفَوَادِ الْمُقَدَّبِ

ʿAlqama wrote the poem that starts:

ذَهَبَتْ مِنَ الْهَجْرَانِ خَيْرَ مَذْهَبٍ وَلَمْ يَكُ حَقًّا لَلْ هَذَا التَّجَنُّبِ

On listening to the two poets Umm Jundub gave her judgement for

ʿAlqama, and said to Imru' al-Qays: "the horse of Ibn ʿAbada is better than yours!" When he asked her to explain, she replied "you shouted at your horse to make him run, you kicked him with your feet and hit him with your whip. You say:

فَلِلزَّجْرِ الْهُوْبُ وَلِلسَّاقِ دِرَّةٌ وَلِلسَّوْطِ مِنْهُ وَقْعٌ أَخْرَجَ مُهْزَبِ

'Alqama describes his horse:

فَأَدْرَكَهُنَّ ثَانِيًا مِنْ عِنَانِهِ يَمْشِي كَمَرِّ الرَّائِحِ الْمُتَحَلِّبِ

His horse overtook them (gazelles, wild asses or wild cows) with its reins shortened. 'Alqama did not whip it as you did and his horse was not tired." It is said that Imru' al-Qays did not accept his wife's explanation and told her that she was in love with 'Alqama and that this was why she had preferred him to her husband. He divorced her and 'Alqama married her. This is why he was called 'Alqama al-Fahl.^{52a}

Probably the title of al-Fahl was given to 'Alqama because he defeated Imru' al-Qays in poetry and not because he succeeded him as his wife's husband. According to al-Mubarrad, any poet who could defeat another in hijā' is worthy to be called a fahl.⁵³ As we have noticed, Umm Jundub limited herself, when comparing the two poems, to one line in each, and she preferred 'Alqama for one line only. She did not take an overall approach to a poem as a unity - or perhaps she did have such a view but she found that the two poets equalled each other except in those particular two lines quoted above. It seems that she did not expect a poet to be sincere and describe reality, but to give an ideal picture of what he was describing. She criticised her husband for describing his horse realistically; he forced it to run, whereas 'Alqama's horse required no effort on its master's part to cause it to overtake animals, and was in fact able to do so even when he restrained it. 'Alqama exaggerated and gave an ideal picture of his horse. Umm Jundub's criticism of the line of Imru' al-Qays demonstrates the relation between ma'nā and words; Ibn Tabātabā, criticising the line, said that it fell below the acceptable level both in ma'nā and in words.⁵⁴ The same, he said, applied to the line of al-Musayyab or al-Mutalammis previously quoted. The Jāhilīs seem to have had some understanding of the relation between ma'nā and words.

Though al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī had some important critical views, he frequently, like other contemporary critics, gave no reasons for preferring a particular poet or admiring a particular poem. It is said that he once met Labīd when the latter was a young boy at the court of the Hīran king al-Nu'mān. Al-Nābigha asked Labīd if he wrote poetry and when Labīd replied that he did, al-Nābigha asked him to recite some of it. Labīd recited his poem that starts:

أَلَمْ تَرْبِعْ عَلَى الدَّمَنِ الْخَوَالِي

Al-Nābigha, having heard the poem, said to him: "You are the best poet among the Banū 'Āmir (the family of Labīd)". He asked him to recite more and Labīd recited his poem that starts:

طَلَّ لُحُولَةٌ بِالرُّسَيْبِ قَدِيمٌ

Al-Nābigha was even more impressed and declared Labīd to be the best poet of Qays or Hawāzin. It is also said that Labīd recited his mu'allaga and al-Nābigha declared him to be the best poet among the Arabs.⁵⁵ It is not credible that Labīd should have written his mu'allaga at such a young age; if he had done so, al-Nābigha should at least have heard of him and known his poetry. The point is, however, that al-Nābigha offers no justification for his judgements concerning Labīd's poetry, and it is difficult not to regard his extravagant praise as the expression, as so often with Jāhili critics, of a capricious and momentary enthusiasm.

Hassān b. Thābit reported that he once saw al-Nābigha in the market at Yathrib and listened to him reciting his poem that starts:

عَرَفْتُ مَنَازِلًا بِعُرَيْتَيْنِ فَأَعْلَى الْجَرَعِ لِلْحَيِّ الْمُبِينِ

Hassān described the poem as having "a difficult rhyme", and he doubted whether al-Nābigha could continue to extemporise at length in such a rhyme. On finishing his recitation, al-Nābigha called on any poet who would like to recite his own poetry. Qays b. al-Khatīm came forward

and recited his poem that starts:

أَتَقَرُّ رَسْمًا كَأَطْرَادِ الْمَذَاهِبِ

Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī says that the poem is one of the poet's best, and that al-Nābigha acclaimed him for it. It is said that before Qays had finished reciting the first line, al-Nābigha declared him to be the best poet of the Arabs.⁵⁶

At 'Ukāz, al-Nābigha used to have a skin tent pitched for him, to which other poets came to recite their poems and receive his judgements. Once al-A'shā came and recited his poem that starts:

مَا بَكَاءُ الْكَبِيرِ بِالْأَطْلَالِ وَسُؤَالِي وَمَا تَرُدُّ سُؤَالِي!

After he had finished, al-Khansā' recited her poem starting:

قَذَى بَعِينِكَ أُمُّ بِالْعَيْنِ عَوَّارُ

When she reached the lines:

وَلِيَنَّ صَخْرًا لَتَأْتُمُ الْهَدَاةُ بِهِ لَأَنَّهُ عَلِمَ فِي رَأْسِهِ نَارُ
وَلِيَنَّ صَخْرًا لِمَوْلَانَا وَسَيَرِنَا وَلِيَنَّ صَخْرًا إِذَا نَشْتُو لَنَخَارُ

al-Nābigha swore that if al-A'shā had not recited before al-Khansā' and he had not already recognised his superiority, she should have been proclaimed the best poet of the Arabs.

The poem of al-Khansā' is rithā' for her brother Sakhr. The two lines which al-Nābigha admired contain takrār in which she repeats the name of her brother three times. Ibn Rashīq quotes the same two lines as an example of excellent takrār, which is, according to him, recommended especially in rithā'. The repetition of the name of the elegized person is a means of glorifying him and indicating his importance.⁵⁷ Once again, we find a hint, as with al-Nābigha's mention of mutābaga and the general admiration for the exceptional "beauties" in Tarafa's mu'allaga, that the Jāhilīs may have been aware of the artistic devices catalogued by later critics, even if they did not classify them in a systematic way,

or distinguish them with a consistent nomenclature.

After al-Khansā' had finished reciting, Hassān claimed that he himself was a better poet than al-Nābigha. The latter challenged him to compose two such lines as the following:

فِيَا نَكَ كَاللَّيْلِ الَّذِي هُوَ مُدْرِكِي وَإِنْ خِلْتُ أَنَّ الْمُنَى عَنْكَ وَاسِعٌ
فَطَاطِيفُ حُجْنٍ فِي جِبَالٍ مَتِينَةٍ تَمُدُّ بِهَا أَيْدٍ إِلَيْكَ تَوَازِعُ

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Hassān claimed that he had in fact composed two lines better than those of al-Nābigha, namely:

لَنَا الْبَفَنَاتُ الْفُرُيْلَمَنُ بِالْشَمَى وَأَسْيَافُنَا يَقْطُرْنَ مِنْ بَجْدَةٍ دَمًا
وَلَدْنَا بَنِي الْفَقَاءِ وَابْنُ مَكْرَقٍ فَأَكْرِمُ بَنِي خَالٍ وَأَكْرِمُ بَنِي أُبْنَمَا

Al-Nābigha, however, criticised him for diminishing the number of his bowls by using the plural form jafanāt rather than jifan, and of his swords by using asyāf rather than suyūf. He also criticised him for describing the bowls as yalma'na bi-l-duḥā (shining in the forenoon), saying that it would be more eloquent and excellent to say yashruḡna bi-l-dujā (giving light in the darkness), on the grounds that guests arrive during the night more than during the day. He further criticised Hassān for saying of his swords yaqturṇa min najdatin damā (they drip blood from a fight). This, he alleges, is a rather weak statement, in that it implies only a limited amount of bloodshed; it would be more effective to say yajrīna min najdatin damā (they run with blood from a fight). Finally he criticised him for boasting of the sons that his tribe had borne, without boasting of their grandfathers, who ought to be mentioned in poems of mufakhara.⁵⁹

Al-Nābigha's criticism here is of considerable interest. In every case, the "improvements" that he suggests are designed to reinforce a conventionally dramatic effect, at the expense of a more realistic, if scarcely understated, portrayal. It suggests that Jāhili' sensibilities,

as represented by al-Nābigha, at any rate, had become so blunted by exposure to hyperbole that they were incapable of responding to anything less than an all-out assault. We must, of course, make allowances for the fact that mufākhara might be expected to be less subtle than other genres, and that restraint here might be taken at its face value. It is also possible, although unlikely, in view of his acknowledged eminence, that al-Nābigha is merely displaying a weakness in his own literary judgement.

Qudāma b. Ja'far, for his part, declared that Ḥassān was right in using the words criticised by al-Nābigha. He believed that Ḥassān was describing "reality", and that when he used the word ghurr to describe his bowls he meant to emphasise their fame rather than their whiteness. Therefore al-Nābigha was wrong to recommend Ḥassān to use bīd instead of ghurr. Ḥassān was following the traditions of the Arabs in using the words that he did; yaqtūrna is the conventional word used of swords, and yajrīna would be unorthodox. Al-Nābigha, he thinks, is pursuing exaggeration and ifrāt in his criticism.⁶⁰

Towards the end of the Jāhiliyya we find a critic comparing four poets of Tamīm, and basing his judgements on a review of the whole body of poetry of each. The poets concerned are al-Zibriqān b. Badr, al-Mukhabbal al-Sa'dī, 'Abada b. al-Tabīb and 'Amr b. al-Ahtam. They submitted to the judgement of Rabi'a b. Hudār, who asked each to recite his poems. The judgements he gave differed in kind, and we do not know what poems the poets recited. To al-Zibriqān b. Badr he said: "Your poetry is like meat which is not thoroughly cooked but only heated, so that it is not fit to be eaten. At the same time, it has not been left as it was, so that it could be (properly) made use of." He further said: "You are like a man who has found a slaughtered camel, and taken some good

meat from it but mixed it with bad."

He described the poetry of 'Amr b. al-Ahtam as "striped variegated garments that shine for some time, but then the shining disappears." He also described it as "striped garments from Yemen which can be either folded up or spread out." The poetry of al-Mukhabbal, he says, is "less good than that of his friends, but better than that of other poets." It consists of "meteors sent by God, who throws them at whom He wishes." Finally, the poetry of 'Abada is "like a water-skin which is very well tied and from which nothing drops."⁶¹

Though Rabi'a's views concerning the poetry of these four poets are not very clear, it is not difficult to guess at some of his criteria, and to discover which of the four he prefers. First, he appears to favour poetry which has a consistent level of excellence; this is clear from his remarks on the poetry of al-Zibriqān. Secondly, he appears to require profundity of poetic ideas. This emerges from his judgement on the poetry of 'Amr b. al-Ahtam, which he describes as shining but then gradually losing this appearance. When heard for the first time, it attracts the reader, but when he hears it again he does not find the same attraction. It may be written in beautiful language, but its ideas are simple. Al-Mukhabbal is regarded as the least talented of the four, but his poetry is described as "meteors from God". This judgement perhaps indicates that portions of his poetry make a particularly strong impression, but it is more probable that he is a composer of hija', and the implication is that occasional shafts of his satire are especially wounding to his victims.

'Abada is the poet who appears to receive Rabi'a's fullest approval. The comparison of his poetry with a well-tied water-skin suggests a

soundness of poetic technique that permits no deviation from a consistent standard. It does not necessarily indicate a high standard. It is difficult to assess precisely the status accorded by Rabīʿa to a water-skin, which is, after all, an object of everyday use and of no great intrinsic value; on the other hand, water is a commodity of considerable interest and use in a desert environment, so it is likely that the comparison implies a high degree of praise, if not perhaps the very highest.

This last example of poetic comparison in the Jāhiliyya represents a type of mufākharā in the field of poetry. Those who judge the claims of rival poets are called muḥakkamīn, as are those appointed to arbitrate in any other kind of dispute, and the act of judgement is called ḥukūma. It should be emphasised that muwāzana (poetic comparison) constitutes an essential part of Arab social and tribal life, in exactly the same way as does arbitration on various other questions. The earliest attempts at criticism naturally took this form, just as the criteria by which poetry was judged evolved from those applied in other areas of Arab experience. It is not always clear what these criteria are, or if they are applied in any consistent way; where, however, we think we can discern some basis for the judgements arrived at, this appears to have a strong connection, as is only to be expected, with practical aspects of tribal life.

CHAPTER TWO

The Early Islamic Period

Poetic comparison continued in early Islam, and the criteria used for judging between poets were generally those of sincerity and truth, good poetry being considered that which agreed with the teachings of Islam. Critics, at this period, were accordingly more concerned with the ma'na of a poem than with the words or any other element, except as is indicated by opinions attributed to 'Umar and some others.

This preoccupation with truth and sincerity in poetic ma'ānī is to be found in a hadīth of the Prophet: "Poetry is speech composed [of various things]; whatever is in agreement with truth is beautiful, whatever is not lacks any goodness."¹ It is also to be found in his remark on a line by Labīd:

أَلَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَا خَلَا اللَّهَ بَاطِلٌ وَكُلُّ نَعِيمٍ لَا مَحَالَةَ زَائِلٌ

The Prophet is reported as having described this line as "the most truthful word ever spoken by a poet." In a third hadīth he is reported to have said: "In poetry there is hukm" (or "there is hikma") - inna min al-shi'r la-hukm/la-hikma. Ibn al-Athīr's commentary on this hadīth is that in poetry there is useful and good counsel that restrains men from bad actions. This probably alludes to poetry that contains mawā'iz and proverbs of an improving nature, and is based on the reading hikma. The reading hukm would imply knowledge, fiqh and justice.² At all events, the Prophet was concerned with poetry that agreed with the truth and taught people morality and good habits. In general, "wise" aphoristic sayings were a favourite component of poetry at this period, just as they had been, to some extent, in the Jāhiliyya. It is said that 'Umar b. al-Khattāb asked Ka'b al-Ahbār (a Jew who had embraced Islam) if he had ever read anything about poets in the Torah. Ka'b replied that he had read in

the Torah that "there are people who belong to Ismā'īl and who have their books in their hearts. They utter hikma and proverbs." Ka'b then said: "We believe that these people are none but the Arabs."³

The hadīths of the Prophet and other remarks made by him and by his companions about poetry had a remarkable influence on Muslim inquiry concerning the value of poetry and on the evaluation of poetic characteristics and qualities, as Cantarino suggests.⁴

Although, as I have said, in general, moral criteria were the principal ones used in judging poetry, others were also applied. The quality of tab', which we have noticed in connection with Jāhili' criticism, is now to be found linked with that of sincerity. Both the Qur'ān and the Prophet disapproved of takalluf, and the Prophet advocated simplicity and brevity of speech.⁵

The first Islamic statement on poetic comparison is that attributed to the Prophet concerning Imru' al-Qays: "he is the greatest of all poets and he is their leader to the Fire", in which it is supposed that he was referring to the poets of the Jāhiliyya and the mushrikīn.⁶ We do not know on what this comparative judgement was based, but it is said that the Prophet once praised the "opening" of the mu'allaga of Imru' al-Qays.⁷

As far as Islamic poets were concerned, the Prophet listened to their poems. He listened to al-Khansā' recite her rithā' poems on her brothers Sakhr and Mu'āwiya, to al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī and others, and he rewarded Ka'b b. Zuhayr for his qasīda, Bānat Su'ād. He himself had three poets who defended the Muslims against the poets of the non-believers: Hassān b. Thābit, Ka'b b. Mālik and 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāha. He praised their poems, seeming to have preferred Hassān.⁸ All

subsequent critics seem to have been influenced by his preference for Hassān; Abū 'Ubayda (one of the ruwāt and 'ulama'') preferred him to the urban poets, as did Ibn Sallām and others. Critics also seem to have been influenced by his remark about Imru' al-Qays, and we find 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, among others, according him pre-eminence.

A short time after the Prophet, we find the first caliph, Abū Bakr al-Siddīq, giving (somewhat vague) artistic reasons for preferring al-Nābigha to all others, on the grounds that "his sea is the sweetest and his depth is the deepest."⁹ This may perhaps be taken to refer to the form as well as the content of his poetry.

Among the earliest Islamic critics 'Umar b. al-Khattāb must be considered the best.¹⁰ His views on poetry are characterised by two things; while he certainly applied moral criteria, he did not disregard artistic criteria. Whenever he heard a line that contained hikma or a moral dictum he would repeat it again and again to show his admiration for it. It is also said that he would recite lines of poetry in order to support his views, and he is reported to have said: "recite the most virtuous poetry and the most beautiful speech." He also used to advise people to recite noble poetry to their sons.¹¹ Provided that poetry contained good morality he admired it and encouraged poets to write more. On listening to a line of Suhaym 'Abd Banī al-Hashās:

نَمِيرَةٌ وَرَعٌ إِنْ تَجَهَّرْتَ غَادِيَا كَفَى الشَّيْبُ وَالْإِسْلَامُ لِلْمَرْءِ نَاهِيَا

'Umar said to him: "If you continue to compose poetry like this line, I will reward you for it." Another version of the incident makes him say: "If you had mentioned Islam before shayb I would have rewarded you for it".¹²

For him the best poetry was that which taught noble manners, and upright-

ness, and which detailed genealogies. In a message to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (one of his governors) he recommended him to order his subjects to learn poetry because it contained these qualities.¹³ Aside from its value in imparting moral precepts, 'Umar used poetry as a source of historical knowledge and called it "the science of the Arabs." He also acknowledged the effectiveness of concise madīh poetry in enabling a poet to obtain what he wanted.¹⁴

Because of his moral view of poetry, 'Umar prohibited al-Huṭay'a from writing hiḡā' muḡdhi, which had also been prohibited by the Prophet. When al-Huṭay'a inquired about this kind of hiḡā', 'Umar replied: "it is hiḡā' in which you compare two persons, tribes or peoples with each other, to the advantage of one and the disadvantage of the other. It is poetry based on praising some people and satirizing others." Al-Huṭay'a said: "You know about hiḡā' better than I".¹⁵ It would seem that the term hiḡā' muḡdhi must have been coined in Islam because al-Huṭay'a himself asked 'Umar to explain the meaning of it. Even if this name was not used, however, this variety of hiḡā' was not unknown in the Jāhiliyya, as can be seen, for example, in al-Nābigha's satires on 'Amir b. al-Tufayl.

We have three separate reports about 'Umar's preferences in poetry and on each occasion he favours a different poet. It is said that when al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muttalib asked 'Umar about poets, 'Umar replied that Imru' al-Qays was their leader: "he dug for them the spring of poetry and there poured forth, instead of 'one-eyed' ma'ānī, those with sounder sight."

امرو القيس سابقهم ، خسق لهم عين الشعر فافتقر عن معاني عور
اصح بقرأ .

'Umar's words are explained by some as meaning that the Yemen, from which Imru' al-Qays came, had not attained the same standard of eloquence

as the tribe of Nizār, and that Imru' al-Qays changed this.¹⁶ Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawsilī gives a similar explanation, but referring to Muḍar rather than to Nizār. He somewhat obscures matters, however, by maintaining that 'Umar continued to consider Imru' al-Qays's poetry as inferior to that of Muḍar.¹⁷ 'Umar seems to have adopted the remark attributed to the Prophet referring to Imru' al-Qays as the leader of poets, and to have added his own critical elaboration.

Elsewhere 'Umar is reported as having favoured al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī for a number of his lines that are of an elevated aphoristic character.

Two of the lines that he would repeat are:

خَلَفْتُ فَلَمْ أَتْرِكْ لِنَفْسِكَ رِيْبَةً وَلَيْسَ وَرَاءَ اللَّهِ لِلْمَرْءِ مَذْهَبٌ
وَلَسْتُ بِمُسْتَبْقٍ أَخَا لَا تَلْهُهُ عَلَى شَعَتِي ، أَيُّ الرِّجَالِ الْمُهْذَبُ

Others are:

أَتَيْتُكَ عَارِيًّا خَلَقًا ثِيَابِي عَلَى وَجْهِ تَلَفُّتِي بِي التَّنُونُ
فَأَلْفَيْتُ الْأَمَانَةَ لَمْ تَخْنُهَا كَذَلِكَ كَانَ نُوحٌ لَا تَخُونُ

and:

وَلَسْتُ بِذَاخِرٍ لِفِدٍ طَعَامًا حَذَارَ غِدٍ كُلِّ غِدٍ طَعَامُ

When a delegation from Ghatafān came to see him he told them that al-Nābigha was their best poet on account of these lines.¹⁸ 'Umar also seems to have favoured al-Nābigha for his i'tidhār or apology. The first two examples quoted above are on this topic. 'Umar was probably influenced by Abū Bakr's opinion, and their combined approval may well have had its effect on subsequent critics who championed al-Nābigha. The third poet whom 'Umar is said to have favoured is Zuhayr. Ibn 'Abbās reported that 'Umar asked him to recite for him "poetry by the best of poets." When Ibn 'Abbās inquired who that was 'Umar replied that it was Zuhayr "because he did not use mu'āzala in his poetry (kāna lā yu'āzilu bayn al-kalām), he avoided wahshī and never praised anybody except for those qualities he in fact possessed."¹⁹

Another version of this account makes 'Umar refer to Zuhayr as "the poet among poets" (shā'ir al-shu'arā') and add to the list of his virtues that of not saying what he did not know. As an example of his admirable madh, he cites:

إذا أُبتدِرَ قَيْسُ بْنُ عَيْلَانَ غَايَةً من المجدِ مَنْ يَسْبِقُ إِلَيْهَا يُسَوِّرُ
سَبَقَتْ إِلَيْهَا كُلَّ طَلْقٍ مُبَرَّرٍ سَبَقَتْ إِلَى الْغَايَاتِ غَيْرَ مُرْتَرٍ
كَيْفَعْلٍ جَوَادٍ يَسْبِقُ الْخَيْلَ عَفْوُهُ الـ سَرَّاعٍ وَإِنْ يَجْهَدُ وَيَجْهَدُنْ يَبْعُدُ
وَلَوْ كَانَ حَمْدًا يُحْمَدُ النَّاسُ لَمْ تَهْتِ وَلَكِنْ حَمْدُ النَّاسِ لَيْسَ بِمُخْلَدٍ

20

It is also said that the one who praised Zuhayr was Ibn 'Abbās himself, and that 'Umar agreed. In this instance, Ibn 'Abbās justifies his praise with the following quotation:

قَوْمٌ أَبْوَهُمْ سَيْنَانٌ حَيْثُ تَنْسِبُهُمْ طَابُوا وَطَابَ مِنَ الْأَوْلَادِ مَا وَكَّرُوا
لَوْ كَانَ يَقَعْدُ فَوْقَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ كَرَمٍ قَوْمٌ بَأُولَهُمْ أَوْ مَجْدُهُمْ قَعْدُوا
أَوْ كَانَ يَخْلُدُ غَيْرَ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ مَا تَسْلَفُ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ خَلَدُوا
لَوْ يَعْدِلُونَ بِكَيْلٍ أَوْ مَوَازِينٍ مَالُوا بِرَفْئُولٍ وَلَمْ يَعْدِلْ بِهِمْ أَحَدٌ
جَنَّةً إِذَا فَرَعُوا أَنْسَمَ إِذَا نَسَبُوا مَرَّءُونَ بِهَالِيلٍ إِذَا جُهِدُوا
مُحَسَّدُونَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْ نَعَمٍ لَا يَنْزِعُ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ مَا بِهِ حُسِدُوا

21

'Umar's reference to mu'azala is also given in a slightly different form: kāna lā yu'azilu bayn al-kalimatayn.²²

From those reports it would seem that the qualities that 'Umar admired in the poetry of Zuhayr are connected with the words, form, ma'nā and some of the mahāsin al-shi'r. When 'Umar praised Zuhayr for avoiding mu'azala he may have meant that his expression is clear and not complicated. If, however, we accept the explanation given by Qudāma b. Ja'far of mu'azala as fāhish al-isti'āra, then we may infer that 'Umar approved of Zuhayr's use of isti'āra. Qudāma gives an illustration of what he means by fāhish al-isti'āra from Aws b. Hajar:

وَذَا نُهُدٍ عَارٍ نَوَاشِرُهَا تَضْمِنُ بِأَمَاءٍ تَوَلَّيَا جَدِيعًا

The application of the word tawlab, "young ass", to a child is an ugly

one.²³ 'Umar clearly admired Zuhayr for avoiding archaic and obscure words and thus, by implication, for clarity of ma'nā. The statement that Zuhayr did not praise anybody except for qualities he in fact possessed reflects 'Umar's desire for sincerity and reality in poetry. There is no exaggeration in the poetic ma'anī of Zuhayr and he does not go beyond reality, as suggested by his fondness for the word law in the examples cited here. Ibn Rashīq comments that 'Umar admired sincerity, both for its own sake and because of the noble characteristics it implied.²⁴

Also to be found in the lines/^{admired} by 'Umar are tasdīr and tashīm which are counted as poetic beauties. In both of these the rhyme is connected with the first half of the line and the listener can guess it in advance. Examples of this are in the following lines. In the first citation:

وَلَوْ كَانَ حَمْدًا يُخَلِّدُ النَّاسَ لَمْ تَهْتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ حَمْدَ النَّاسِ لَيْسَ بِمُخَلِّدٍ

and in the second:

لَوْ كَانَ يَقَعْدُ فَوْقَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ كَرَمٍ قَوْمٌ بِأَوَّلِهِمْ أَوْ مَجْدِهِمْ قَعْدُوا
أَوْ كَانَ يُخَلِّدُ غَيْرَ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ مَا تَسَلَّفَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ خَلِدُوا
مُحْسِنُونَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْ نِعَمٍ لَا يَنْزِعُ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ مَا بِهِ حُسِدُوا

Repetition of a root (tajnīs), without involvement of the rhyme-word, is also to be found in these citations:

تَسَبَّحْتَ إِلَيْهَا كَلَّ طَلْقٍ مَبْرَرٍ سَبُّوقٍ إِلَى الْغَايَاتِ غَيْرُ مُزْنَرٍ

and:

قَوْمٌ أَبَوْهُمْ سَيْنَانٌ حَيْثُ تَنْسَبُهُمْ طَابُوا وَطَابَ مِنَ الْأَوْلَادِ مَا وَلَدُوا
لَوْ يَعْدِلُونَ بِكَيْلٍ أَوْ مَوَازِنَةٍ مَالُوا بِرَضْوَى وَلَمْ يَقْدِرْ بِهِمْ أَحَدٌ

It is probably this kind of san'a, for which Zuhayr and others were later to be called by al-Aṣma'ī "slaves of poetry", that pleased 'Umar.

There is no evidence that the terms tashīm and tasdīr were used at that time but it seems clear that such poetic embellishments were discerned and admired. Ibn 'Abbas is said, on hearing 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a

recite the half-line:

تَشَطُّ غَدًا دَارُ جِيرَانِنَا

to have completed it thus:

وَلِلدَّارِ بَعْدَ غَدٍ أَبْعَدُ

whereupon 'Umar said: "That is what I wrote."²⁵

It also seems possible that 'Umar was attracted by the use of tag̣sīm (subdivision), another of the "poetic beauties". If we look at the second poem quoted we find tag̣sīm in the following line:

جَنِّ إِذَا فَزِعُوا / ائْسَسْ إِذْ نَسِبُوا / مَرْءٌ وَنَ بَهَائِلٍ / إِذَا جُهِدُوا /

This may also be considered as tarsī', following what Qudāma says about this figure.²⁶ There are other reports which indicate very clearly that 'Umar was interested in hushn al-tag̣sīm. Al-Jāhiz says that 'Umar would repeat again and again the line of Zuhayr:

وَإِنَّ الْحَقَّ مَقْلَعُهُ ثَلَاثٌ .. مِمَّنْ أَوْ نِفَارٌ أَوْ جَلَاءُ

"as if wondering at the poet's excellent subdivision." He also repeated the second half of the line of 'Abada b. al-Tabīb:

وَالْمَرْءُ سَاعٍ لَشَيْءٍ لَيْسَ يَدْرِكُهُ وَالْعَيْشُ نَشْجٌ وَإِشْفَاقٌ وَتَأْمِيلٌ

"for its excellent tag̣sīm and tafsīl."²⁷ There is also an indication that 'Umar was interested in muqābala although he did not use the term. It is said that he admired and used to repeat the following line of Abū Qays b. al-Aslat (which also contains tag̣sīm):

الْحَزْمُ وَالْقُوَّةُ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْإِدِّ هَانٍ وَالْفَكَّةُ وَالْهَامِ

The muqābala is made between al-hazm and al-idhān, and also between al-quwwa and al-fakka.²⁸

In the early Umayyad period we can trace the influence of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb on those who champion al-Nābigha or Zuhayr. Qudāma quotes 'Umar on three points. He quotes him on the subject of good madīh, referring to his approval of Zuhayr, in that "he did not praise a man

except for qualities he in fact possessed." On this view Qudāma bases his theory of madīh. He also quotes him as saying that Zuhayr avoided wahshī. Qudāma accepts this and counts wahshī as a defect in poetry. Finally, he quotes him concerning mu'āzala as another poetic defect to be avoided.²⁹

ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib, who seems to have been influenced by the Prophet in regarding Imru' al-Qays as the best poet, laid down some general principles for poetic comparison and probably also himself exerted some influence in promoting the pre-eminence of Imru' al-Qays. He is reported as saying: "If the earlier poets were now able to gather in one place at the same time and compete in writing poetry on a certain subject, we should be able to tell which was the best of them. But since it is not possible to have them all together at one time, I may say that the best of them is the poet who wrote poetry neither out of desire nor out of fear, and that is Imru' al-Qays. I have noticed that he was the best of them in producing incomparably excellent lines and he surpassed the rest in writing poetry spontaneously."

30 كان أحسنهم نادرة وأسبغهم بادرة .

When the men of his army argued about the best poet, ʿAlī asked Abū al-Aswad al-Duʿalī to give his opinion. The latter gave it for Abū Duʿād al-Iyadi, for his two lines describing a horse:

وَلَقَدْ اغْتَدَى يَدَانِغَ رُكْنِي أَوْزَى ذَوْ مَيْقَةٍ إِضْرِبِجْ
مُخَلَّطٌ مَزِيلٌ مَكْرٌ مَفَرٌ مَنَفْعٌ مَطْرَحٌ سَبُوحٌ خُرُوجٌ

ʿAlī then spoke in favour of Imru' al-Qays, in terms very similar to those just quoted.³¹ Ibn Rashīq's version of this is that ʿAlī favoured Imru' al-Qays because the latter wrote poetry naturally (sanaʿa bi-tabʿihi) unaffected by greed or fear.³² Ibn Abī Tarafa and those who followed him, like Ibn Qutayba, in speaking of the effect of desire, fear, pleasure and anger on the poetic ability of poets like Zuhayr, were

very likely influenced by this remark of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib on Imru' al-Qays. The views of these critics will be discussed later. In the version of 'Alī's remark given in the Aghānī, it is also implied that each poet was excellent on a certain topic. Though 'Alī did not give examples, his influence may perhaps be seen later in al-Asma'ī, concerning the excellence of poets in certain poetic topics. The same influence may be seen in Ibn Abī Tarafa, before al-Asma'ī.

Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī may have based his preference for Abū Du'ūd al-Iyādī on his approval of the tarsī which is used in the second line. It also contains mugābala: mikarr/mifarr.

Other companions of the Prophet, and those who followed them, had views concerning poetry. Ibn 'Abbās encouraged 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a and listened to his poems. It is said that 'Umar recited to him his poem starting:

أَمِنْ آلِ نَعْمٍ أَنْتَ غَادٍ فَمُبَكَّرٌ

and Ibn 'Abbās learned it by heart.³³ Ibn 'Abbās was chiefly interested in poetry that could be cited as a witness for linguistic usage and as an aid to the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He seems to have started a school which included such critics among the ruwāt and grammarians as had the same interest in poetry. Ibn 'Abbās advised people to consult Arabic poetry in order to understand the meaning of the Qur'ān. Whenever he was asked about the meaning of a Qur'ānic verse, he would recite a line of poetry. When Nāfi' b. al-Azraq (leader of the Azāriqa sect of the Khawārij) asked him about some verses of the Qur'ān, Ibn 'Abbās supported his interpretation by reciting some lines of poetry.³⁴

Ibn 'Abbās also seems to have been the originator of the literary theory

that separates poetry from morality and religion. This theory was adopted later by critics like Ibn al-Mu'tazz, al-Sulī and 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jurjānī, as we shall see. Ibn 'Abbās was once asked whether or not poetry was to be regarded as a sort of rafath (obscene speech). In denying that it was, Ibn 'Abbās is reported to have recited the following line, in which the poet used an obscene word:

وَهَنَّ يَمْشِينَ بِنَاهِمِي سَا إِنْ تَقْدُقِ الطَيْرُ نِتْلَكَ لَيْسَا

Ibn 'Abbās, who was about to begin his prayer, added "obscenity (rafath) is with women"; he then began to pray.³⁵

The same concept of separating poetry from morality and religion was followed by Ibn Sīrayn, who was famous as a religious man and a faqīh. He was in the mosque when someone asked him about the legality of reciting poetry during the month of Ramadān and whether or not the recitation of poetry nullified ablution. Ibn Sīrayn, who was also about to begin his prayer, answered the two questions by reciting the following line:

نُبِّئْتُ أَنَّ فَتَاةً كُنْتُ أُخْطَبُهَا عُرْقُوبُهَا مِثْلُ شَهْرِ الصَّوْمِ فِي الطَّوْلِ

It is also said that he recited the following line of Jarīr, satirizing

Farazdaq:
لَقَدْ أَصْبَحْتُ عِرْسُ الْفَرَزْدَقِ نَاشِرًا وَلَوْ رَغِبْتَ رُحْمَ أَسْتَه لَأَسْتَقَرَّتْ³⁶

Nevertheless, the trend towards emphasizing the moral and educational elements in criticising poetry continued. We find critics like al-'Umārī, who is reported as saying "recite poetry to your children because it makes them fluent, it encourages the coward, it helps the miser to be generous and it teaches noble manners".³⁷ At the same time, the other trend, towards separating poetry and morality, continued, as we shall see later from the views of Ibn Abī 'Atiq. Among those who followed the moral and educational trend we find Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, for whom good poetry was that which taught noble manners, and in whose view we may detect the influence of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb. Mu'āwiya

is reported as saying: "A man should educate his son, and poetry is the highest degree of education". On another occasion he said: "Busy yourselves with poetry and learn it". It is said that when al-Hārith b. Nawfal visited Mu'āwiyā with his son he asked him: "What have you taught your son?" Nawfal replied that he had taught him the Qur'ān and the religious duties (farā'id). Mu'āwiyā said to him: "Teach him eloquent poetry, because it opens the mind, makes the speech fluent and teaches murū'a and courage. On the day of the battle of Siffin I was about to run away from the fight when I remembered the following lines of 'Amr b. al-Atnāba:

أَبْتَنِي لِي عَقْنِي وَأَبْنَى بِلَاثِي وَأَخَذِي الْحَمْدَ بِالثَّمَنِ الرِّبِيحِ
وَإِعْطَانِي عَلَى الْمَكْرُوهِ مَالِي وَفَرَّبَنِي هَامَةَ الشَّيْخِ الْمَشِيخِ
لَا دَفْعَ عَنْ مَا ثَرَّ صَالِحَاتِي وَاحْصِي بَعْدَ عَنْ عَرْضِي صَحِيحِ
بِذِي شَطْبٍ كُلُّونَ الْمَلْحِ صَافِي وَنَفْسِي لَا تَقْرُ عَلَى الْقَبِيحِ

38

Mu'āwiyā is reported to have considered the tribe of Muzayna superior in poetry. According to him, the best of the Jāhili poets was from that tribe, namely Zuhayr, as were also the best of the Islamic poets, Ka'b b. Zuhayr and Ma'n b. Aws.³⁹ In preferring the last-named to other Islamic poets, Mu'āwiyā seems to have been guided by his moral and educational tendency in judging poetry. He is said to have admired the following poem of his and based his preference for him on it:

لَقَمْرُكَ مَا أَدْرِي وَإِنِّي لَا أُوجِلُ عَلَى آيِنَا تَقْدُوُ الْمَنِيَّةُ أَوَّلُ
وَإِنِّي أَخْلُوكَ الدَّائِمَ الْعَهْدَ لَمْ أَخْنِ لِي ابْنُ ابْنِكَ خَصْمٌ أَوْ نَبَا بِلَا مَنَزِلُ
أَحَارِبُ مِنْ حَارِبَتِ مَنْ ذِي عِدَاوَةٍ وَأَخْبِسُ مَالِي إِنْ غَرَمْتُ فَأَعْقِلُ
وَإِنْ سَوَّيْتَنِي يَوْمًا صَلَحْتُ إِلَى عَدِي لِيُعْقَبَ يَوْمًا مِنْكَ آخِرُ مُقِيلُ
لَأَنْتَ تَشْفِي مِنْكَ دَائُ مَسَاءَتِي وَرَسْخِي وَمَا فِي رَيْبِي مَا تَعَجِّلُ
وَإِنِّي عَلَى أَشْيَاءَ مِنْكَ تَرِيبِي قَدِيمًا لَذُو صَفْحٍ عَلَى ذَاكَ مُجْمِلُ
سَتَقْطَعُ فِي الدُّنْيَا إِذَا مَا قَطَعْتَنِي بِمِينِكَ فَاتَّظَرِ أَيَّ كَفٍّ تَبْدَلُ

وَمَنْ النَّاسِ إِنْ رُتِّبَ حَبَالُكَ وَاصِلٌ وَمَنْ الْأَرْضِ عَنْ دَارِ الْقَلَى مُتَحَوِّلٌ
 إِذَا أَنْتَ لَمْ تُنْصِفْ أَخَاكَ وَجَدْتَهُ عَلَى طَرَفِ الْهَجْرَانِ إِنْ كَانَ يَقْعِلُ
 وَيَرْكَبُ كَدَّ السَّيْفِ مِنْ أَنْ تَفِيئَهُ إِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ عَنْ شَنْفَةِ السَّيْفِ مَرْحَلُ
 وَكُنْتُ إِذَا مَا صَاحِبُ رَامٍ لَهْنِي وَبَدَلْ سَوْأً بِالَّذِي كُنْتُ أَفْعَلُ
 تَغَلَّبْتُ لَهُ ظَهْرَ الْمُجَنِّ فَلَمْ أَدَمْ عَلَى ذَاكَ إِلَّا رَيْثَمَا اتَّحَوَّلُ
 إِذَا انْصَرَفْتُ نَفْسِي عَنِ الشَّيْءِ لَمْ تَكُ عَلَيْهِ بَوَاجِهُ آخِرِ الدَّهْرِ تُقِيلُ 40

The poem contains moral advice, and some lines consist of hikma and aphorisms. Mu'awiya's admiration for Zuhayr was apparently based on the merits of his madih poetry, since he agreed with al-Ahnaf b. Qays, who gave as his reason for admiring Zuhayr the opinion that "he had relieved those who praise of (the necessity of using) an excess of words" (alqā 'an al-mādihīn fudūl al-kalām). As an example of this he recited the line:

فَمَا يَكُ مِنْ خَيْرٍ أَتَوْهُ فَإِنَّمَا تَوَارَثَهُ آبَاءُ آبَائِهِمْ قَبْلُ 41

It seems that, like 'Umar b. al-Khattāb both Mu'awiya and al-Ahnaf appreciated poetry which was free from hashw and exaggeration and was characterized by that brevity which was regarded by critics as a sign of eloquence.⁴² In the line recited by al-Ahnaf this brevity is to be found in the fact that the poet is able to praise the mamduh, his father and his grandfather for every noble quality in one line. On another occasion, Mu'awiya championed Tufayl al-Ghanawī, about whom he said: "leave me Tufayl and you can keep all other poets."⁴³ A third report tells that Mu'awiya used to prefer 'Adī b. Zayd to all other poets.⁴⁴ He did not give any reasons for preferring the last two poets, but it seems probable that, following his moral and educational tendency in poetic criticism he favoured 'Adī for his poetry of exhortation (mawā'iz), zuhd and hikma. Tufayl he seems to have admired for his poetry describing horses, in which the poet is said to have excelled. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān said about him: "he who wants to learn to ride horses should recite the poetry of Tufayl."⁴⁵

The influence of the critical views of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb in favouring Zuhayr seems to have continued into the Umayyad period, especially in Medina, and it may well explain to us the attitude of the people of the Hijāz in general in their preference for Zuhayr and al-Nābigha that we shall encounter later. In Medina, Qudāma b. Mūsā, whom Ibn Sallām describes as a learned man, is reported to have admired Zuhayr and to have declared that his most admirable poem is the one in which he says:

قَدْ جَعَلَ الْمُبْتَغُونَ الْخَيْرَ فِي قَرِيمٍ وَالسَّائِلُونَ إِلَى أَبْوَابِهِ طُرُقًا
مَنْ يَلْقَى يَوْمًا عَلَى عِلَّاتِهِ صَرِيحًا يَلْقَى السَّمَاحَةَ مِنْهُ وَالذِّي خُلِقَا 46

The same poem was also admired by 'Umar b. Shabba, who declared that Zuhayr had surpassed all other poets with this poem of praise.⁴⁷ The second line quoted above contains one of the "poetic beauties", that is tardīd: the poet repeats the word yalqa twice.⁴⁸ At the same time, the poem also contains another of the "poetic beauties", husn al-taqsīm, in the following line:

يَلْعَنُهُمْ مَا ارْتَهَوْا حَتَّى إِذَا طَعَنُوا ضَارِبَ حَتَّى إِذَا مَا ضَارَبُوا اعْتَنَقَا

This line is considered an excellent example of taqsīm, according to Ibn Rashīq.⁴⁹ It is also quoted by Ibn Qutayba⁵⁰ as an excellent line, in that the poet "has collected in one line all kinds of fighting."

Zuhayr was also admired for his madīh poetry by Bilāl b. Abī Burda al-Ash'arī, a governor of al-Basra during the Umayyad period. Bilāl used to recite the following lines of Zuhayr as being the best madīh:

فَمَا يَلُوكَ مِنْ خَيْرٍ أَتَوْهُ فَإِنَّمَا تَوَارَتْهُ آبَاءُ آبَائِهِمْ قَبْلُ
وَقَدْ يَنْبُتُ الْمَرَّانُ إِلَّا وَمَشِيحُهُ وَتَفَرَّسُ إِلَّا فِي مَنَابِتِهَا النَّخْلُ

Second to Zuhayr Bilāl classed al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī for the following line:

فَلَسْتُ بِمُسْتَبَقٍ أَخَا لَا تَلْمُهُ عَلَى شَعْنِ أَىِّ الرِّجَالِ الْمَهْذَبِ 51

Bilāl seems to have appreciated the same qualities as were admired by critics before him in Zuhayr's poetry. He referred to the line quoted by al-Ahnaf as being poetry in which Zuhayr had avoided "an excess of

words". The second line of Zuhayr and that of al-Nābigha quoted by Bilāl are aphoristic. The influence of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is to be seen here in the reasons given for favouring both poets. We shall later find Ḥammād al-Rāwīya citing the same line to justify his admiration for al-Nābigha.

We have traced the influence of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the early Umayyad critics and we have found this to consist principally in the rejection of exaggeration and the appreciation of sincerity and reality in poetry. It may also be considered to have been responsible for a general dislike of wahshī, complicated expression and mu'āzala (or fāhish al-isti'āra), and an interest in some of the "poetic beauties", especially husn al-tag̃sīm.

Nevertheless, in the Umayyad period, we find some people who favoured exaggeration and who actually did not care for sincerity. Some also favoured humour in poetry; Ziyād b. Abīhi is reported as saying: "Poetry is lies and humour, and the best is the most humorous."⁵²

This liking for exaggeration continued, and the most important Umayyad critic of those who admired it was 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān. His concept of poetry was otherwise no different from that of Mu'āwīya, in that he looked in poetry for noble manners, murū'a, courage, and also for fluency. He ordered the tutor of his sons to teach them poetry in order to make them noble. As he himself was a great admirer of al-A'ṣhā, he said to his sons' tutor: "educate them well by reciting to them the poetry of al-A'ṣhā, because it has sweetness and it will guide them to the beauties of speech. May Allāh fight him! How sweet is his sea and how hard his rock! Anyone who considers any poet superior to al-A'ṣhā must be ignorant of good poetry."⁵³

'Abd al-Malik mentioned the "beauties of speech" as something found in the poetry of al-A'shā, but we do not really know what he meant by this and whether or not he was referring to the "poetic beauties". There are two other elements admired by him in the poetry of al-A'shā, namely the "sweet sea" and the "hard rock". Again it is not easy to tell what he really meant by these two things. The "sweet sea" was admired before by Abū Bakr al-Siddīq in the poetry of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī. The interest of 'Abd al-Malik in moral poetry is to be seen in his admiration for certain lines of Ma'n b. Aws al-Muzanī. He referred to them as the best poetry he had ever heard, and he considered the poet superior even to Imru' al-Qays, al-A'shā and Tarafa. The lines are:

وَذِي رَجِيمٍ قَلَمْتُ أَظْفَارَ فَنَعْنِهِ بِحِلْمِي عَنْهُ وَقَوَّ لَيْسَ لَهُ حِلْمٌ
 إِذَا سُمِّنَتْهُ وَقِيلَ الْقَرَابَةُ سَامَنِي قَطِيعَتَهَا ، تَلَاءُ السَّفَاهَةِ وَالظُّلْمِ
 فَاسْتَعَى لَكُنِّي أَبْنِي وَيَهْدِيمُ صَالِحِي وَلَيْسَ الَّذِي يَبْنِي كَهْنُ مِثْلُهُ الْهَدْمُ
 بِجَاوِلٍ رَغْمِي لَا بِجَاوِلٍ غَيْرِهِ وَكَالْمَوْتِ عِنْدِي أَنْ يَنَالَ لَهُ رَغْمٌ
 فَمَا زِلْتُ فِي لَبْنٍ لَهُ وَتَعَلَّقِي عَلَيْهِ كَمَا تَحْنُو عَلَى الْوَلَدِ الْأُمُّ
 لَأَسْتَلَّ مِنْهُ الْفَيْعَنَ حَتَّى سَلَلْتَهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ ذَا فَنَعْنِي يَفِيقُ بِهِ الْحِلْمُ

54

Beside the moral content, we notice definite indications of san'a in the repetition of words within individual lines. In the second half of the first line the word hilm is repeated; in the first half of the second line the root swm: sumtuhu and samani; in the third line bny: abni and yabni and hdm: yahdimu and al-hadm; in the fourth line raghmi and raghmu occur; and in the sixth line dighn is repeated, as is the root sll: astallu and salaltuhu. The repetition in the first line constitutes tasdir, one of the "poetic beauties". Tasdir is not very different from tardid, but it involves the rhyme-word, while tardid is confined to the rest of the line. In the first line the tasdir occurs in the second half and comprises the first and last words. We also find tasdir in the second and third lines. The other lines contain tardid. Beside these two "poetic beauties" the lines have a unity in that they

deal with one subject. This unity of subject is also found in the poem by Ma'n b. Aws quoted by Mu'awiya, as we have seen. 'Abd al-Malik's liking for aphoristic and wise poetry also made him declare that al-Nābigha was the best poet of the Arabs, for this line:

55 حَلَفْتُ فَلَمْ أَتْرِكْ لِنَفْسِكَ رَيْبَةً وَلَيْسَ وَرَاءَ اللَّهِ لِلْمَرْءِ مَذْهَبٌ

Here again we may detect the influence of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, who, as we have seen, quoted the same line. His influence is also clearly seen in the case of al-Sha'bī, whom 'Abd al-Malik asked to give his opinion concerning al-Nābigha. Al-Sha'bī replied that 'Umar b. al-Khattāb had already favoured him and that he agreed with 'Umar.⁵⁶

'Abd al-Malik, like Mu'awiya, favoured poetry that taught bravery and noble manners. He is reported to have asked Sulaymān b. al-Ahnaf al-Asadī to recite to him the best poetry in which he (Sulaymān) was praised.

The latter recited the following lines:

أَلَا أَيُّهَا الرُّكْبُ الْمُغْبَوْنَ هَلْ لَكُمْ بِسَيِّدِ أَهْلِ الشَّامِ تَحَبُّوا وَتَرْجِعُوا
مَنْ النِّفَرِ الْبَيْضِ الَّذِينَ إِذَا اعْتَزَلُوا وَهَابَ الرِّجَالُ حَلَقَةَ الْبَابِ قَعَقَعُوا
إِذَا النِّفَرِ السُّودِ الْيَمَانُونَ نَمِنُوا لَهُ كَوْكُ بُرْدَيْهِ أَرْقُوا وَأَوْسِعُوا
جَلَا الْمِسْكُ وَالْجَمَامُ وَالْبَيْضُ كَاللَّمَى وَفَرَّقَ الْهَدَارِي رَأْسَهُ فَهَوَّ أَنْزَعُ

'Abd al-Malik said to him "What the brother of al-Aws wrote is better than what you have recited." Then he recited the following line by

Abū Qays b. al-Aslat:

57 قَدْ حَصَّتْ الْبَيْضَةُ رَأْسِي فَمَا أَطْعَمُ نَوْمًا غَيْرَ تَهْبَاجِ

It comes from a poem quoted later by Ibn Tabātabā as an example of poetry in which the poet exaggerates greatly in his poetic ma'ānī.

The poem, in full, reads:

قَالَتِ وَلَمْ تَتَّعِدِي لِقِيلِ الْخَنَاءِ مَهْلًا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتَ أَسْمَاعِي
وَأَسْتَنْكِرُنَّ لَوْنًا لَهُ شَارِبَا وَالْحَرْبُ غَوْلٌ ذَاتُ أَوْجَاعِ
مَنْ يَذُقُ الْحَرْبَ يَجِدُ طَعْمَهَا مَرًّا وَتَبْرِكُهُ بِجَعْبَاعِ
قَدْ حَصَّتْ الْبَيْضَةُ رَأْسِي فَمَا أَطْعَمُ نَوْمًا غَيْرَ تَهْبَاجِ
أَسْقَى عَلَى جُلٍّ بَنِي مَالِكٍ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ فِي شَأْنِهِ مَسَاعِ

أَعَدَدْتُ لِلْأَعْدَاءِ فَخْفَافَةً مَوْضُونَةً كَالنَّهْلِ بِالْقَاعِ
أَحْفَرُهَا عَنِّي بِذِي رَوْنَقٍ أُبَيْضٌ مِثْلُ الْمَلِيحِ قَطَاعِ
صَدَقَ حَسَامٌ وَادِقٌ حَدُّهُ وَمَا رَيْنِ اسْمِرٍ قَرَّاعِ
بَرٌّ أَمْرِي مُسْتَبْسِلٌ حَازِرٍ لِلدَّهْرِ جَلْدٌ غَيْرُ مِجْزَاعِ
الْكَيْسُ وَالْقُوَّةُ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْإِلَ دَهَانِ وَالْفَكَّةُ وَالْهَاعِ

58

The second line of the poem recited by Sulaymān (the mamdūh) is also quoted by al-Mubarrad as an excellent line of madih because it shows the importance and high status of those people who are considered respectable and received at the doors of kings.⁵⁹ The last line describes the mamdūh as having a bald head from using too much musk, bathing too much, and having his hair combed too much by beautiful women. 'Abd al-Malik preferred another line of Abū Qays b. al-Aslat in which he claims that the baldness of his own head is due to his continuous wearing of his helmet in battle.

'Abd al-Malik's liking for such qualities in poetry is to be seen on other occasions on which he approved of certain lines. He disagreed with al-Sha'bi, who considered al-Khansa' as the best poetess on the basis of these two lines:

وَقَائِلَةٌ وَالنَّفْسُ قَدْ فَاتَ خَلْوَهَا لَتُدْرِكُهُ يَالَهُوَ تَفْسِي عَلَى صَخْرِ
الْأُثْلِكْتُ أُمُّ الَّذِينَ عَدَوْا بِهِ إِلَى الْقَبْرِ مَاذَا يَحْمِلُونَ إِلَى الْقَبْرِ

'Abd al-Malik preferred Laylā al-Bāhiliyya to al-Khansa' on the basis of her two lines:

مُهَفِّفُ الْكَشْحِ وَالسَّرِيَالِ مَنْخَرُ عَنْهُ الْقَمِيصُ لِسَيْرِ اللَّيْلِ مُحْتَقِرُ
لَا يَأْمَنُ النَّاسُ مِمَّسَاهُ وَمُتَّبِعُهُ فِي كُلِّ فَجٍّ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَفْرُ يُنْتَظَرُ

60

The poem from which 'Abd al-Malik recited the two lines is attributed also to A'shā Bāhila, elegizing al-Muntashir b. Wahb al-Bāhilī. The poem is said to be one of the best poems of rithā', greatly admired by the Arabs and much imitated.⁶¹ Later we shall see that al-Asma'ī

regarded A'shā Bāhila as a fahl for this poem. In the two lines by al-Khansā' al-Sha'bī admired the conciseness of her exclamation in the second line: "What a man they are taking to the grave!" Critics admired this conciseness of eulogy and considered it a sign of eloquence. They used to recite the following line of al-'Ajjāj as one of the best lines on that subject:

يَحْمِلُنَ لَأْسَؤَدَةٍ وَخَيْرَ يَحْمِلُنَ مَا نَذَرِي وَمَا لَا نَذَرِي 62

'Abd al-Malik's reasons for admiring the two lines by Laylā al-Bāhiliyya were probably, first, the more general one that it was conventionally considered fitting to describe the subject of rithā' as a lean slim-waisted man⁶³; and, secondly, that the second line contains a figure that is one of the more important of the "poetic beauties". In her description:

هَفَفَ الْكَشِيعُ وَالسَّرَّالُ مُخَرَّقٌ عَنْهُ الْقَمِيصُ ..

Laylā is using what critics later categorized as irdāf. This means that the ma'nā is not directly expressed, but is approached indirectly, by means of a second ma'nā, which "follows" the first and implies it, so that the ma'nā intended can be inferred from that actually stated.⁶⁴

Ibn Rashīq calls this figure tatbī', and considers it a form of ishāra, the use of which connotes eloquence, since it involves a subtle means of achieving conciseness through a direct, but allusive, image. Other critics, he mentions, use the term tajāwuz for this figure. He credits Imru' al-Qays with the first use of it, in the line:

وَيُفْعِي فَتَيْتُ الْمِسْكِ قَوْقُ فَرَاثِمَا نَوْمُ الْقَحَى لَمْ تَنْطِقْ عَنْ تَقْفُلُ

Here the poet expresses the ma'nā of the woman's living a life of idleness and luxury by means of three concrete examples, without actually putting into words the bald statement of the fact.⁶⁵

Both Qudāma and Ibn Rashīq quote the line of Laylā al-Akhyaliyya:

وَمُخَرَّقٍ عَنْهُ الْقَمِيصُ نَحَالُهُ وَسَلَا الْبَيُونَ مِنَ الْحَيَاءِ سَقِيمَا

This line contains tatbī^c, according to Ibn Rashīq, and irdāf, according to Qudāma. Both of them agree that the poetess wishes to describe the man as generous, and, instead of saying it directly, describes his shirt as being torn, because those who are in need gather round him and pull his shirt in order to attract his attention. This implies his generosity and his willingness to listen to people's demands. The same applies to the line admired by 'Abd al-Malik in which in fact there is more than one irdāf or tatbī^c. The first states that the man has a slim waist, implying that he is generally thin, and the second states that his shirt is torn, implying generosity.

'Abd al-Malik's liking for exaggeration appears in his admiration for some lines by al-A^cshā which he preferred to some others by Kuthayyir.

Kuthayyir praised 'Abd al-Malik in a poem in which he says:

عَلَى ابْنِ أَبِي الْعَاصِي دِلَاسٌ تَصِيْنَةٌ أَجَادَ الْمُسَدِّي سَرْدَهَا وَأَذَالَهَا
يُؤَوِّدُ ضَمِيْفَ الْقَوْمِ حَمْلُ قَتِيرِهَا وَيَسْتَطْلِعُ الْقَرْمُ الْأَشْمُ إِحْتِمَالَهَا

'Abd al-Malik did not like the lines, preferring those by al-A^cshā in praise of Qays b. Ma^cd Karib in which the poet says:

وَإِذَا نَجَى كَتِيْبَةٌ مَلْمُومَةٌ شَهَبَاءُ يَخْشَى الذَّائِدُونَ نَهَالَهَا
كُنْتُ الْمَقْدَمَ غَيْرَ لَا بَسْ جَنَّةٍ بِالسَّيْفِ تَقْرُبُ مُقِلُّهَا أَبْهَالَهَا

Kuthayyir defended his lines, on the grounds that he had described 'Abd al-Malik as a wise man, who put his armour on before the battle, while al-A^cshā had described his mamdūh as a foolish man, who fought without armour.⁶⁶

Al-Marzubānī comments: "I have heard those who know poetry well express a preference for the lines of al-A^cshā because they think that exaggeration is better than moderation. Al-A^cshā exaggerated in describing

bravery by representing the courageous mamdūh entering the battle without wearing armour, even though wearing it in battle is a wise thing to do. The description of al-Aʿshā is strong evidence that his mamdūh is brave. Kuthayyir failed to achieve a good description of bravery."⁶⁷ Qudāma b. Jaʿfar adopts the same view as ʿAbd al-Malik, and criticised Kuthayyir for moderation.⁶⁸ Both Qudāma and al-Marzubānī in this way condone ʿAbd al-Malik's preference for exaggeration in madīh.

Besides his liking for exaggeration, ʿAbd al-Malik enjoyed madīh that attributed spiritual virtues to the mamdūh, as witnessed by Qudāma. He criticised ʿAbd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt for eulogizing him in these terms:

يَأْتِلِقُ النَّاجُ فَوْقَ مَفْرِقِهِ عَلَى جَبِينِ لَأَنَّهُ الذَّهَبُ

while eulogizing Musʿab b. al-Zubayr thus:

إِنَّمَا مُسْعَبٌ شَهَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَلَّتْ عَنْ وَجْهِهِ النَّجْمُ

He complained: "You have described him as a light from Allāh, and you have described me as having a beautiful crown on my golden face, as though I were an ʿAjamī king." Qudāma considered that ʿAbd al-Malik was justified in his complaint.⁶⁹

ʿAbd al-Malik revolted against the traditional similes in the madīh poetry. He is reported as saying to some poets: "O, you poets, you sometimes liken us to the lion, which is abkhar (suffering from halitosis), sometimes you liken us to the mountain, which is rugged, and sometimes you liken us to the sea, which is bitter; why do you not use words like Ayman b. Khuraym, who praised the Banū Hāshim thus:

نَهَارَكُمْ مَكَابِدَةً وَصَوْمٌ وَيَلِكُمْ صَلَاةٌ وَاقْتِرَاءٌ
وَلَيْتُمْ بِالْقُرْآنِ وَبِالتَّوَكُّلِ فَأَسْرَعَ فَيْكُمُ ذَاكَ الْبَلَاءُ
أَأَجْعَلُكُمْ وَأَقْوَامًا سُوءًا وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمُ الْهَوَاءُ
وَهُمْ أَرْفَعُ لَأَرْجَلَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَأَعْيُنُهُمْ وَأَرْؤُسُهُمْ سَمَاءُ

A similar remark made by him to al-Akhtal indicates that he also required brevity, exaggeration and fresh terms of praise. When al-Akhtal came to recite his poem in praise of him, 'Abd al-Malik said: "If you have likened me to the eagle and the lion I do not wish to hear your poetry, but if you have praised me in excellent poetic ma'ānī like those of al-Khansā' then I can listen to you." 'Abd al-Malik then recited these lines of al-Khansā':

فَمَا بَلَغَتْ كَفُّ أَمْرِي مُتَنَاوِلِ بِهَا الْمَجْدُ إِلَّا حَيْثُ مَا نِلْتُ أَطْوَلُ
وَلَا بَلَغَ الْمَهْدُونَ فِي الْقَوْلِ مِزْدَةَ وَلَوْ أَطْنَبُوا إِلَّا الَّذِي فِيكَ أَفْضَلُ

Al-Akhtal said that although the lines were excellent, he had written better ones. He then recited to 'Abd al-Malik:

إِذَا صُتَّ مَاتَ الْعُرْفُ وَاتَّقَعَ النَّدَى مِنَ النَّاسِ إِلَّا فِي قَلِيلٍ مُسَرَّدٍ
وَرَدَّنْ أَكْفُ السَّائِلِينَ وَأَمْسَكُوا مِنَ الدِّينِ وَالْدُنْيَا خَلْفَ مُجَدِّدٍ

Although 'Abd al-Malik admired these lines, al-'Askarī criticises the poet for mentioning death, "which is not a pleasant thing to mention when addressing kings."⁷¹ We notice that the two pieces quoted by 'Abd al-Malik, that by Ayman b. Khuraym and that by al-Khansā', are madīh poems in which the poet makes a comparison between the mamduh and others, asserting his superiority. This type of madīh is not very different from the hijā' muqdhī prohibited by the Prophet, and also by 'Umar.

The lines of al-Khansā' are an example of concise and exaggerated madīh; those of al-Akhtal contain a kind of dualistic madīh, by virtue of the reference to dīn and dunyā. In the poetry of the muhdathīn quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his tabaqāt, we shall see that poets frequently employ the juxtaposition of dīn and dunyā in their madīh poetry, implying that the mamduh is both a man of religion and a man of outstanding worldly merit - that he is generous, brave, etc.

ʿAbd al-Malik was also in need of a good "opening" to a poem of praise. He criticised Jarīr for beginning a madīh poem to him:

أَتَقْرَأُ أُمَّ فُؤَادِكَ غَيْرَ صَاحٍ

ʿAbd al-Malik was angry, even though he knew that the poet was addressing himself in the first line. The same thing happened when Dhū al-Rumma visited ʿAbd al-Malik and recited his poem that begins:

مَا بَالُ عَيْنِكَ مِنْهَا الْمَاءُ يَنْسَكِبُ

It is clear that the poet is addressing himself in his tashbīb, but because ʿAbd al-Malik had one eye that wept continuously, owing to some complaint, he was extremely angry and dismissed the poet, saying: "Why do you ask about this, O ignorant man?"⁷²

Some poets used to address the mandūh by his matronymic in order to make the poem more famous.⁷³ ʿAbd al-Malik disliked this habit and asked his brother, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz: "Why does ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ruqayyāt address you in his madīh poems by your matronymic, as if you had no nobility from your father's side?" In his criticism of Hassān, we have seen that al-Nābigha wished the poet to boast of his fathers and grandfathers rather than of his grandmothers.

In nasīb, ʿAbd al-Malik admired rigga, by which he seems to mean the poet's producing evidence of the sincerity of the passionate love that he claims to feel and of the reality of the suffering that it causes him. When ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa, Jamīl and Kuthayyir visited him, ʿAbd al-Malik asked them each to recite the most sensitive nasīb that they had ever written. He considered ʿUmar's nasīb to be the best, on the grounds that his expressed willingness to go anywhere to meet his beloved, even to Jahannam, indicated the sincerity of his passion. The nasīb runs:

أَلَا لَيْتَ قُبْرِي يَوْمَ تَقْضَى مَنِيَّتِي بَتَلَكِ الَّتِي مَا بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْكَ وَالْفَمِ
وَلَيْتَ طَهْرِي لَأَنْ رَيْكَ كَلَهُ وَلَيْتَ حَنُوطِي مِنْ مَشَا شَيْكِ وَالِدَمِ

أَلَا كَيْتَ أُمِّ الْفَقْلِ كَانَتْ قَرِينَتِي هَذَا أَوْ هَذَا فِي جَنَّةٍ أَوْ جَهَنَّمَ

In his views concerning nasīb, 'Abd al-Malik, like most of his contemporaries, was guided by traditional etiquette concerning woman in that society. This may be clearly seen in his criticism of the poet Nusayb, who wrote:

أُهِيمُ بِدَعْدٍ مَا حَيَّيْتُ وَإِنْ أُمْتُ فَوَاحِشًا مِّنْ ذَا يَهِيمُ بِهَا بَعْدِي

'Abd al-Malik wished the line to be changed to:

74 تَحِبُّكُمْ نَفْسِي حَيَاتِي فَإِنْ أُمْتُ فَلَا صَاحِبَتٍ دَعْدٌ لِّذِي خُلَّةٍ بَعْدِي

As far as poetry in general is concerned, 'Abd al-Malik is said to have made a collection consisting of seven major poems.⁷⁵ He was possibly influenced in this by the supposed collection of al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir which was inherited by the Marwānids, according to Ibn Sallām. The poems selected by 'Abd al-Malik were the mu'allaga of 'Amr b. Kulthūm, that of al-Hārith b. Hilliza, a poem by Suwayd b. Abī Kāhil, one by Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, one by 'Abīd b. al-Abras, one by 'Antara and lastly that by Aws b. Maghrā' in which he says:

مُحَمَّدٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مَّشِي عَلَى قَدَمِ

The gasida of Suwayd is known as al-Yatīma, and begins:

بَسَلْتُ رَابِعَةَ الْحَبْلِ لَنَا

That of Abū Dhu'ayb begins:

أَمِنْ الْمُنُونِ وَرَيْبِهَا تَتَوَجَّعُ

And that of 'Abīd begins:

إِنْ تَبَدَّلَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا وَحُوشَا

It is not clear on what basis 'Abd al-Malik selected these poems, but it is likely that he was influenced, in general, by the admiration that they had received in the Jāhilī period.⁷⁶

The poem of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī is rithā' for his five, or seven,

sons, all of whom died on one day. This poem has been discussed in connection with Jāhili criticism, and we indicated then the kind of san'a in it which the Jāhiliīs admired. Besides that, it contains a certain amount of hikma, such as:

وَإِذَا الْمَيِّتَةُ أَنْشَبَتْ أَظْفَارَهَا أَلْفَيْتُ كُلَّ نَيِّمَةٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ
وَالنَّفْسُ رَاغِبَةٌ إِذَا رَغَبَتْهَا فَإِذَا تَرَدُّ إِلَى قَلِيلٍ تَنْفَعُ

and some of the elevated moral sentiments of which 'Abd al-Malik was fond, such as:

حَتَّى لَأَنْتِ لِلْحَوَادِثِ مَرْوَةٌ يَهْجَا الْمَشْرِقُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ تُفْرَعُ

and:

وَتَجْلِدِي لِلشَّامَتَيْنِ أُرَيْبِهِمْ أَنِّي لِرَيْبِ الدَّهْرِ لَا أَتَقَوَّضِعُ

It may be, however, valuable to consider it in more detail, in order to obtain some idea of what constituted an ideal, or at least a highly commended rithā' poem, in the eyes of 'Abd al-Malik, apart from the somewhat general poetic features just mentioned. The most obvious feature is the double repetition of one half-line, once in consecutive lines:

وَالدَّهْرُ لَا يَبْقَى عَلَى حَدَثَانِهِ فِي رَأْسِ شَاهِقَةٍ أَعَزُّ مَمْنَعُ
وَالدَّهْرُ لَا يَبْقَى عَلَى حَدَثَانِهِ جَوْنُ السَّرَاةِ لَهُ جَدَائِدُ أَرْبَعُ

and then a few lines later:

وَالدَّهْرُ لَا يَبْقَى عَلَى حَدَثَانِهِ تَشَبَّهَ أَفْرَتُهُ الْكِلَابُ مَرْوَعُ

After the first two lines quoted above, the poet describes the killing of wild asses by a hunter and his dogs, and after the third line, he describes a wild bull which meets the same fate. The lines just quoted, together with others, like:

لَا بُدَّ مِنْ تَلَفٍ مُقِيمٍ فَانْتَظِرْ أَبَارِضِ قَوْمِكَ أَمْ بِأُخْرَى الْمَضْرَعِ
وَلَقَدْ أَرَى أَنَّ الْبَاءَ سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَسَوْقَى يُوَلِّعُ بِالْجَا مِنْ يُنْجِعُ
وَلَيَأْتِيَنَّ عَلَيْكَ يَوْمٌ مَرَّةً مَبْلَى عَلَيْكَ مُقَنَّعًا لَا تَسْمِعُ
كَمْ مِنْ جَمِيعِ الشَّمْلِ طَلَتْهُمُ الْهَوَى بَاتُوا بِقَيْشِي نَاعِمٍ فَتَقَدَّرُوا
فَلَيْتَ بِهِمْ فَجَعَ الزَّمَانُ وَرَيْبِهِ إِنِّي بِأَهْلِ مَوَدَّتِي لَمُنْجِعُ

are intended as a means of obtaining consolation. After the expression

in the opening lines of the poet's grief at the death of his sons, the whole poem is based on this idea of consolation, which is not uncommon in rithā' and received general critical approval, as we shall see. It may be difficult to determine, at first, how the sections that we have just referred to, the two hunting scenes, can be thought of as part of the theme of consolation, although, in a gasīda, a hunting scene may often follow a rahīl, which itself is sometimes introduced as a means of consoling oneself for the departure of one's beloved. It may be that there is something of this idea present here, but there is, in fact, a more obvious connection. The poet implies that even those wild animals that hide themselves from man in wild and remote areas and high mountains cannot escape the sentence of time and cannot avoid being hunted; it is thus not surprising that his sons have passed away and have been unable to protect themselves.

This same poem was admired by other critics, like 'Umar b. Shabba, who on the basis of it, pronounced the poet superior to all other poets of the tribe of Hudhayl.⁷⁷

If we leave 'Abd al-Malik aside and consult other critics, we find both similar and different criteria for judging poetry. One of those critics is al-Sha'bi, who considered al-A'shā pre-eminent in some poetic topics, e.g. in a line such as this that deals with courage and fighting:

78 قَالُوا الْهَرَادُ قَتَلْنَا نَلَّاءَ عَادَتْنَا أَوْ تَنْزَلُونَ فَإِنَا مَعَشَرٌ نَزَلُ

Though al-Sha'bi was here attracted by the ma'nā, he was also probably attracted by the figure of iltifāt, which is one of the "poetic beauties". Iltifāt is defined by Ibn al-Mu'tazz as "a switch from the second to the third, or from the third to the second person." It also occurs where the poet switches suddenly to another ma'nā.⁷⁹ In the line quoted by al-Sha'bi, the poet switches from the third person to the first, and then to

the second.

Again al-Shaʿbī admired al-Aʿshā for a line of ghazal in which the poet describes his beloved when she walks:

80 غَرَاءُ فَرَعَاءُ مَفْقُولٌ عَوَارِضُهَا تَمْشِي الْهَوَيْنَا كَمَا تَمْشِي الْوَجِي الْوَحِلُ

In this line, al-Shaʿbī may well have been attracted by the figure of ighāl. This "poetic beauty" is connected with the rhyme. The maʿnā intended by the poet is complete before the rhyme-word is reached, and its addition merely serves to intensify the already completed maʿnā.⁸¹

The line of al-Aʿshā admired by al-Shaʿbī is also quoted by Ibn Rashīq as an example of excellent ighāl.⁸² The poet Muslim b. al-Walīd seems to be following al-Aʿshā when he describes a drunken man:

إِذَا مَا عَلَنَ مِنَّا ذُوَابُهُ شَارِبٌ تَمْشِي بِهِ مَشْيَ الْمُقْبِدِ فِي الْوَحْلِ

Al-Rashīd, who admired the line, said: "May Allāh fight him [the poet]. He not only likened him to a man in fetters but even made him walk on mud."⁸³ The ighāl in this line is formed by the last two words.

Al-Shaʿbī also admired a line by al-Aʿshā describing wine and considered him superior to al-Akhtal, who writes:

فَإِذَا تَعَاوَرَتِ الْأَكْفُ خِتَامُهَا نَفَحَتْ فَشَمَّ رِيَاخَهَا الْمَزْكُومُ

Al-Aʿshā's line runs:

84 مِنْ خَمْرِ عَانَةٍ قَدْ أَتَى لِحَنَامَهَا كَوَلٌ تَسْلُ غَمَامَةُ الْمَزْكُومِ

Al-Marzubānī commented that those who preferred al-Aʿshā did so because he produced a complete maʿnā and he exaggerated more than al-Akhtal. The latter describes the strong smell of his wine as being perceived even by a man with catarrh, while al-Aʿshā describes his wine as something that can cure catarrh itself.⁸⁵

People differed in their judgements on nasīb poetry, but the most common opinion is that the best kind is that which contains riqqa,

this being demonstrated by the expression of the suffering caused by love, and by the depiction of humbleness, slavery, and submission to the beloved. This trend in the criticism of nasīb probably started in the first century of the Hijra with critics like Ibn Abī ʿAtīq and Abū al-Sāʿib al-Makhzūmī, both of whom, incidentally, were famous for their religious knowledge. The views of Ibn Abī ʿAtīq will be discussed later. Abū al-Sāʿib al-Makhzūmī criticised the poet Ishāq al-Aʿjam, a mawlā of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān, for the following line of nasīb:

فَلَمَّا بَدَأَ لِي مَا رَأَيْتَنِي نَزَعْتُ نَزْوَعِ الْأَيْمَى الْكَرِيمِ

When the line was recited to Abū al-Sāʿib he said: "May Allāh disfigure him [the poet]. No, by Allāh, he never loved her, even for an hour."⁸⁶

Abū al-Sāʿib criticised the poet because the latter does not display humility and servility to his beloved. He puts himself in a higher position than her, and declares that when she does not do what pleases him he leaves her, because "he is a man of dignity and pride". Abū al-Sāʿib saw this as an indication of insincerity in love, considering that if the poet was really sincere he would accept humbly whatever treatment she chose to accord him, without thought of his dignity and pride.

Al-Walīd b. Yazīd, the Umayyad caliph, took the same view in preferring a line of nasīb by ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa to one by Jamīl, in that ʿUmar displays servility and humbleness in his line:

كَأَنِّي جِئْتُ أُمْسِي لَا تَكَلَّمْنِي ذُو بُفْيَةٍ يَبْتَغِي مَا لَيْسَ مَوْجُودًا

Whereas Jamīl declares that whenever he meets his beloved he feels his love for her diminishing and dying, but returning when she leaves him:

87 ..مَوْتُ الْهَوَى مِنْ إِذَا مَا لَقِيتُهَا وَجِيءًا إِذَا فَارَقْتُهَا فَيَعُودُ

In the early Abbasid period the same tendency in nasīb criticism is

evident, and we find the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī preferring al-Ahwas to Imru' al-Qays and Kuthayyir in nasīb. On hearing a line of Imru' al-Qays:

وَمَا ذَرَفْتُ عَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا لِتَضْرِبَ
بِسَهْمَيْكَ فِي أَغْشَارِ قَلْبٍ مُّقْتَلٍ

al-Mahdī said: "This is an uncivilised Bedouin". When he then heard a line of Kuthayyir:

أُرِيدُ لِأَنْسَى ذِكْرَهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا
تَهْتَلُ لِي كَيْلَى بَكْلٍ سَبِيلٍ

al-Mahdī commented: "This is not good; why does he wish to forget her?"

The line of al-Ahwas that he then heard he accepted as a most sensitive line of nasīb:

إِذَا قُلْتُ إِنِّي مُشْتَفٍ بِلِقَائِهَا 88
فَحُمَّ السَّلَاقِي بَيْنَنَا زَادَنِي سُفْمًا

Al-Mahdī's comments on the three lines probably reflect the somewhat sentimental attitude of the reasonably educated, but undiscerning, man of this period to romantic love as portrayed in nasīb. His reason for rejecting Kuthayyir's line is clear, if unsophisticated; a desire to forget one's beloved must indicate a lack of sincerity. His reasons for criticising the line of Imru' al-Qays, which was regarded by other critics as one of the best written by any poet⁸⁹, are obscure, but the form taken by his criticism would seem to imply a distaste for the Bedouin imagery (if it is that) used in the second half of the line. Certainly the sentiments expressed seem unexceptionable

From early times, there seems to have been a prejudice, in some quarters, in favour of idealised description, at the expense of reality. This is exemplified by the objections raised by a woman to Kuthayyir concerning his lines:

وَمَا رَوْضَةٌ بِالْحَزَنِ طَيِّبَةٌ التَّوْبَى
بِأَطْيَبِ مَنْ أُرْدَانِ عَمْرَةَ مَوْعِنًا
تُجُّ النَّدَى جَتَجَاتُهَا وَعِارُهَا
إِذَا أُوقِدَتْ بِالْمَجْمَرِ اللَّدْنِ نَارُهَا

She expressed a preference for Imru' al-Qays's line:

90 أَلَمْ تَرَيَانِي كُلَّمَا جِئْتُ لَهَا رِقًّا وَجَدْتُ بِهَا لُحِيًّا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَطِيبْ

on the grounds that it was more fitting to describe one's beloved as smelling nice naturally. Any slave-girl could perfume herself; the beloved should be distinguished from the common herd.

Some people expressed admiration for certain lines of nasīb and pronounced them superior to other lines on the same topic, without giving any reasons that would allow us to guess at the criteria they applied. The following lines by al-Simma al-Qushayrī were quoted by Ibrāhīm b. Sulaymān al-Azdī as the best lines of ghazal ever written, either in the Jāhiliyya or in Islam:

حَنَنْتُ إِلَى رَيَّا وَنَفْسُكَ بَاعَدَنِي مَزَارِكُ مِنْ لَيْلِي وَشَقِيًّا لَمَّا مَعَا
فَمَا حَسَنٌ أَنْ تَأْتِيَ الْأَمْرَ طَائِعًا وَتَجْرِعُ أَنْ دَاعِيَ الْقَبَايَةِ أَسْمَعًا
بَكَتْ عَيْنِي الْيُمْنُ فَلَمَّا زَجَرْتَهَا عَنْ الْجَهْلِ بَعْدَ الْحِلْمِ أَسْبَلْتَا مَعَا
91

Probably the critic admired the lines for the rigga expressed in submission and slavery to the beloved in the second and third lines.

Another example of such criticism in which there are no clear criteria is 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz's judgement that the following lines of Qays b. al-Khatīm were the best lines of nasīb ever composed:

بَيْنَ مُشْكَوْلِ النِّسَاءِ خَلَقْتَهَا قَصِدٌ فَلَا حَبْلَةَ وَلَا قَصْفُ
تَنَامُ عَنْ كِبَرِ شَأْنِهَا فَإِذَا قَامَتْ رَوِيدًا تَكَادُ تَنْقُصُ
تَفْتَرِفُ الْخُرُوفَ وَهِيَ لِأَهِيَةٍ لَأَنَّمَا شَفَّ وَجْهَهَا نُرْفُ
92

It was probably the ma'nā that 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz principally admired, but one can point to a kind of tagṣīm in the first line, and tatbī' in the first half of the second line, where the poet implies that his beloved lives in luxury and she does no work at home because she has servants. This ma'nā is similar to that of Imru' al-Qays

which we have already quoted as tatbī:

نُؤْمِنُ الْفَقِيَّ لَمْ تَنْتَقِ عَنْ تَفَقُّلٍ

93

Conciseness is sometimes a criterion. Some critics admired the poet who was able completely to express a number of ideas in a few words. Al-A^{shā} is admired by some for the two following lines of ghazal, but he is criticised by others for the same lines. 'Alī b. Abī Tahir considered al-A^{shā} superior to all other poets for these lines:

وَنَبْرُ بَرْدٍ رَدَّاءِ الْعُرْسِ فِي الْهَيْفِ رَقَرَّتْ فِيهِ الْعَيْرَا
وَتَسْنُ لَيْلَةً لَا يَسْتَلِيعُ نُبْحًا بِهَا الْكَلْبُ إِلَّا هَرِيرَا

Other critics, however, while admitting his excellence, criticised him for being unable to express the ma^{na} in one line. They preferred the single line of Tarafa with the same ma^{na}:

نَظَرْتُ الْبَرْدَ حَرًّا سَاخِنٍ وَعَلَيْكَ الْحَرَّ الْقَيْظَ إِنْ جَاءَ بِقُرْ

Critics also required a good "opening" for a poem, one of the characteristics of which they considered to be brevity. They agreed that the best "opening" ever composed was Imru' al-Qays celebrated:

قَفَا نَبْكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِي حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ

They also admired the "opening" of another poem of his:

95 أَلَا أَنْعِمَ صَبَاحًا أَيُّهَا الْهَلَلُ الْبَالِي

The first line is regarded as the best "opening" because "the poet has stopped and requested his companions to stop, wept and requested them to weep, and mentioned his beloved and her dwelling, all in one half-line." It was said that this "opening" of Imru' al-Qays was first admired by the Prophet.⁹⁶ However, both of these lines of Imru' al-Qays also contain tasrī.

Brevity is also required in tashbīh. A poet is regarded as excellent if he is able to compress a number of similes into one line. It was for this reason that this line of Imru' al-Qays was greatly admired:

لَأَنَّ قُلُوبَ الْهَيْرِ رَطْبًا وَيَابَسًا لَدَى وَكْرِهَا الْعُنَابُ وَالْحَشَقُ الْبَالِي

The poet here likens two things in different conditions to two other things also in different conditions.⁹⁷ Other poets followed him in this. Labid has:

وَجَلَا السَّبُورُ عَنِ الطُّلُولِ لِأَنَّهَا زُبْرٌ تُجَدُّ مَتُونَهَا أَقْلَامُهَا

likening tulūl to zubar and suyul to aqlām. Bashshār is reported to have said: "I could not settle after hearing that line of Imru' al-Qays until I was able to write a similar one:

لَأَنَّ مَنَارَ النَّقْعِ فَوْقَ رُؤُسِنَا وَأَسْبَاغُنَا كَيْلٌ تَهَاوَى كَوَاكِبَهُ⁹⁸

The line of Imru' al-Qays was also quoted by al-Asma'ī to Hārūn al-Rashīd as the best line describing an eagle.⁹⁹

It also seems that those who admired the line were attracted by the figure of mugābala, as pointed^{out} by Ibn Rāshiq. The mugābala is produced by the words ratb, 'unnāb, yābis and hashaf.¹⁰⁰

The "perfection" and "completion" of the ma'nā were sought by early critics. This "completion" is often achieved through the "poetic beauty" of tatmīm, which is sometimes also called ihtirās (caution). Some poets were criticised for leaving a ma'nā incomplete, through not having applied tatmīm or ihtirās. Dhū al-Rumma is criticised for this line:

أَلَا يَا أَسْلِمِي بَادَارِي عَلَى الْبَلَى وَلَا زَالَ مُنْهَلًا بِجُرْعَائِكَ الْقَلْرُ

in that the ma'nā is incomplete because he did not take precautions that the rain might not harm his beloved dwelling when he prayed for it to be watered. Tarafa's line on the same subject was preferred:

فَسَقِّ دِيَارَكَ غَيْرَ مُفْسِدِهَا صَوْبُ الرِّبْعِ وَدِيمَةُ تَهْمِي

for he made the proviso ghayra mufsidihā, which constitutes the tatmīm of the ma'nā. He prays that the dwelling may be watered by the spring

rain, provided that it does not harm it.¹⁰¹ Other critics defended Dhū al-Rumma, saying that he had implied a precaution (iẖtirās) in the first half of the line by praying for the dwelling to be at peace (aslamī) before being watered by the rain.¹⁰²

Similar is the criticism of Tarafa b. al-ʿAbd for the following line:

أُسْدٌ غِيلٍ فَإِذَا مَا شَرَبُوا وَهَبُوا كُلَّ أَمُونٍ وَطَمَرٍ

The maʿnā is imperfect and incomplete because one may understand from the line that the people being praised are generous only when they are drunk. This means that their generosity is not something natural but only a temporary condition. In order to complete the maʿnā, the poet should take the precaution of showing them as generous in all circumstances. Hassān b. Thābit is also criticised for following Tarafa on the wrong path:

نَوَلَّيْتُ الْمَلَامَةَ إِنْ أَلَمْنَا إِذَا مَا كَانَ مَفْنٌ أَوْ حَيَاءٌ
وَنَشْرَبُهَا فَتَنْتَرِكُنَا مَلُوكًا وَأُسْدًا مَا يُنْهِنُهَا الْفَقَاءُ

Hassān's case is considered even worse than Tarafa's, because while the latter at least describes them as being brave as lions before they are drunk, Hassān makes them as brave as lions and as generous as kings only after they are drunk. Better than either is ʿAntara, who, in similar circumstances, makes certain that there shall be no misunderstandings:

وَإِذَا شَرَبْتُ فَإِنِّي مُسْتَهْلِكٌ مَالِي وَعِزِّي وَافِرٌ لَمْ يُبْلَمْ
وَإِذَا صَمَوْتُ فَمَا أَقْصَرُ عَنْ نَدَىٰ وَكَمَا عَلِمْتَ شِمَائِلِي وَتَكْرُمِي

He makes it clear that although he spends money when he is drunk he does not harm his honour, and that his generosity and noble manners and deeds are permanent and not limited to the condition of drunkenness. Though

ʿAntara is considered superior to Tarafa and Hassān on this maʿnā because of his iẖtirās, Imru' al-Qays is superior to him, because, besides completing and perfecting the maʿnā by means of iẖtirās and tatmīm, he compresses it into one line:

سَمَاحَةٌ ذَا وَبَرٍّ ذَا وَوَفَاءٌ ذَا وَنَائِلٌ ذَا ، إِذَا صَمَا وَإِذَا سَكِرَ 103

Ibn Tabāṭabā quoted the same line of Imru' al-Qays, with this one before it:

وَتَقَرُّ فِيهِ مِنْ أَبِيهِ شَمَائِلًا وَمِنْ خَالِهِ وَمِنْ يَزِيدٍ وَمِنْ حُجْرٍ

He cited the two lines as an example of excellent madīh because of their eloquence and brevity.¹⁰⁴ It seems also that critics approved of the taqṣīm in the second half of the line where the poet mentions the two conditions of drunkenness and sobriety.

From early Islamic times, the public differed widely as to who was the best poet of all. Some judgements comparing poets were attributed to the Jinn, and, in fact, these judgements reflect the views of the public themselves. According to Abū 'Ubayda, a man from al-Basra claimed that he met a Jinnī who discussed poetry with him and preferred Imru' al-Qays for the following line:

وَمَا ذَرَفْتُ عَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا لِتَضْرِبَ بِسَهْمَيْكَ فِي أَعْشَارِ قَلْبِ مُقَتِّلٍ

He declared that second to Imru' al-Qays came Tarafa, for his line:

تَلَرُّدُ الْقَرِّ نَحْرٌ سَاخِنٍ وَعَلَيْكَ الْقَيْظُ إِنْ جَاءَ بِقُرٍّ

Third is al-A'shā, for his line:

وَتَبَرُّ بَرْدَ رِذَاءِ الْقُرُوسِ بِالصَّيْفِ رَقَرَقَتْ فِيهِ الْعَبِيرَا

Again, according to Abū 'Amr b. al- 'Alā, another man claimed that he had met a Jinnī who declared that al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī was the best poet of all.¹⁰⁵ As we have said, these and similar stories reflect the opinions of the common people and sometimes of the scholars themselves. The lines just quoted have been mentioned before, quoted by other critics as lines of sensitive nasīb, or as examples of brevity and excellent ma'nā.

It was apparently impossible for people at that time to reach agreement concerning the best of all poets. As 'Umar b. Shabba mentioned, every

tribe claimed that their poet was the best. The Yemenites claimed that Imru' al-Qays was the best; the Banu Asad preferred their own poet 'Abīd b. al-Abras; the tribe of Taghlib their poet al-Muhalhil; the tribe of Bakr the two poets 'Amr b. Qamī'a and al-Muraqqiah al-Akbar; and the tribe of Iyād their poet Abū Du'ād.¹⁰⁶ Other tribes, such as Tamīm, claimed that Aws b. Hajar was the best poet; others, as Ibn al-Kalbī mentions, preferred 'Adī b. Zayd. One of their poets, al-Hārith b. Badr al-Ghudānī, wrote a line in which he declared that real poetry is like that of 'Adī b. Zayd al-'Ibādī. He wrote:

والشعرُ لَانِ مَبِينُهُ وَمِثْلُهُ عِنْدَ الْعِبَادِ الَّذِي لَا يُجْهَلُ

Hammād al-Rāwīya also mentioned that he had met some people from the tribe of Tamīm who did not consider anyone superior to 'Adī in poetry.¹⁰⁷ Aws b. Hajar was also put first by 'Umar b. Ma'ādh al-Taymī, who put Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī second, according to Ibn Sallām.¹⁰⁸

Some people regarded Zuhayr as the best poet and al-Huṭay'a as second to him, according to Ishāq al-Mawṣilī. Another critic, Ma'ādh b. al-Harrā', declared Imru' al-Qays, Zuhayr and 'Abīd b. al-Abras as the best poets of the Jāhiliyya.¹⁰⁹ Other critics differentiate between the poets of the bādiya and those of the towns. They declared that Ḥassān was the best poet among those of the towns (ahl al-madar).¹¹⁰ None of these tribes or individuals gave reasons or indicated the criteria on which they based their judgements. It seems that those who preferred 'Adī b. Zayd and Aws b. Hajar liked moral poetry, wisdom, descriptions and aphorisms. 'Adī was famous for his poetry of "preaching", "advice", and zuhd; Aws was famous for his aphorisms. He was described as "a wise man in his poetry, famous for his many proverbs and descriptions of wild asses, and bows and other weapons". In championing Zuhayr and al-Huṭay'a, al-Mawṣilī was concerned with "refined poetry", which contained no defect and maintained a consistent

level of excellence. These were apparently the characteristics of the two poets' poetry. We have more specific judgements about poets, in which we find a poet declared to be the best on a certain topic. Such a judgement is attributed to Ibn Abī Tarafa, who is reported as saying: "You may be content with four poets, namely: Zuhayr for desire; al-Nābigha for fear; al-Aʿshā for delight; and ʿAntara for rage."¹¹¹ This remark is also attributed to the poet Kuthayyir (or Nusayb), and may mean that Zuhayr is the best in madīh since madīh is motivated by desire for reward; that al-Nābigha is the best in iʿtidhār (apology) since this topic is based on fear (of the King of Hīra, al-Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir in the case of al-Nābigha); that al-Aʿshā is the best in khamriyyāt, together with poetry about songs and music; and that ʿAntara is the best in the description of war, alluded to here by the word "rage". This sort of classification is based on the idea of specialisation in certain topics and we shall see later that al-Asmaʿī and Abu ʿUbayda adopted and extended the same idea. Ibn Qutayba, too, as it seems to me, based his theory of tafāwut al-tabʿ on the idea of desire, fear, delight and anger. It also seems likely that Ibn Sallām al-Jumhī was to some extent influenced by it in dividing up poets into four in each tabaqa, in the same way as Ibn Abī Tarafa mentioned four poets. Ibn Sallām, however, with regard to the number four, seems also to have been influenced by other views, as we shall see.

A similar judgement to that of Ibn Abī Tarafa is attributed to other critics, who seem to be influenced by him. They said: "the best poets are Imru' al-Qays when he rides, al-Nābigha when he fears, Zuhayr when he desires, and al-Aʿshā when he drinks."¹¹² Imru' al-Qays is added here as the best poet either in horse description or in hunting poetry. Some critics say that poetry is based on four emotions, desire, fear, delight and anger. The association of the various genres of poetry

with one particular emotion is as we have seen above: madīh with desire, i'tidhār with fear, nasīb with delight, and hijā, 'itāb and so on with anger. Probably Ibn Abī Tarafa himself and those who followed him were all influenced in this by either Kuthayyir or Nusayb, or by the poet Artāt b. Suhayya who visited 'Abd al-Malik when he [the poet] was very old, and on being asked: "Do you write poetry now?" replied: "I do not feel delight or anger; I do not drink wine, and I desire nothing, so how can I write poetry? Poetry comes only with these four things for which I am now too old."¹¹³

The poets Dhū al-Rumma and Kuthayyir had similar views about the motives behind writing poetry. When Kuthayyir was asked what he did when he felt unable to write poetry, he replied that he would walk in gardens and grassy places and then poetry would come into his mind. Dhū al-Rumma, when asked the same question, replied that he caused poetry to come by sitting alone and remembering those whom he had loved.¹¹⁴ Al-Asma'ī was perhaps influenced by Kuthayyir when he said that the best way to evoke poetry was "looking at running water, and walking in the hills and empty places".¹¹⁵ Al-Farazdaq followed the same method. Abū Nuwās used to drink before writing a poem.¹¹⁶ Ibn Qutayba, as Ibn Rashīq suggests, was probably influenced by all these views when he discussed tab' in al-Shi'r wa-al-shu'arā'.¹¹⁷ We shall deal with Ibn Qutayba at length in due course.

CHAPTER THREE

Hijāzī poets of the Umayyad period

During the Umayyad period Hijāz flourished as a centre of religious studies, and at the same time it witnessed a development in the arts of music and singing, as can be seen from the Kitāb al-Aghānī of Abū al-Faraj. Due to social and other factors, most Hijāzī poetry at this time was concerned with ghazal, which divided into two kinds. One was decent and virtuous ghazal, which had flourished in the bādiya at the hands of poets like Jamīl and Kuthayyir. The other kind was the frank, open ghazal which had been developed in Mecca and Medina by ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘a, al-Ahwas and al-‘Araji. Though the poet Nusayb lived in this milieu, his ghazal was decent and admired by the people of the bādiya because it agreed with their concept of ghazal, as we shall see later. Among the other urban poets were ‘Abd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt and al-Hārith b. Khālīd al-Makhzūmī.

As we have seen in the last chapter, Hijāz was the source of literary critical views concerning poetic comparison. This sort of criticism continued, but in a different direction. Although we find the moral trend in poetic criticism as in the past, we also have now critics who concerned themselves with the elements of excellent ghazal poetry and put the moral criteria aside. The critics who appeared at this time were themselves men of high social and religious status. The most important among them were Ibn Abī ‘Atīq, Abu al-Sā‘ib al-Makhzūmī, Sukayna bint al-Husayn and ‘Aqīla bint ‘Aqīl b. Abī Tālib. There were also Mus‘ab al-Zubayrī, ‘Abd Allāh b. Mus‘ab and his grandson al-Zubayr b. Bakkār. Comparisons were made between these poets, and judgements were given according to the different tastes of the critics, most of whom agreed in preferring ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘a to all other poets for

certain qualities found in his ghazal poetry. According to Ibn Abī 'Atīq, 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a surpassed his companions and was the best of the poets of Quraysh because "his poetry has links with the heart and attachment with the soul; it satisfies needs, as no other poetry does. Allāh, praise be to Him, has not been so disobeyed in any poetry more than in that of Ibn Abī Rabi'a. He is the best among Quraysh poets because his poetic ma'nā is finely and precisely written, his madkhal is delicate and gentle, his makhraj is easy, his hashw is firm, his poetic "borders" are connected with one another, his poetic ma'anī shine clearly, and his feelings are plainly expressed." It is not easy to represent in English the sense of Ibn Abī 'Atīq's comment; the original Arabic reads:

لِشِعْرِ عُمَرَ نَوَاطَةٌ بِالْقَلْبِ وَعُلُوقٌ بِالنَّفْسِ وَدَرَكٌ لِلْحَاجَةِ لَيْسَ لِشِعْرِ غَيْرِهِ.
وَمَا عُصِيَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِشِعْرِ أَكْثَرِهَا عُصِيَ بِشِعْرِ ابْنِ أَبِي رِييْعَةَ. فَذَ
عَنْ مَا أُعِيفُ لَكَ ، أَشْعَرُ قَرِيبَتْ مَنْ دَقَّ مَعْنَاهُ ، وَلَقَدْ مَرَّخْلُهُ ،
وَسَهْلَ مَخْرَجُهُ ، وَمَتْنُ حَشْوِهِ ، وَتَقَطَّعَتْ حَوَائِشِيهِ ، وَأَنَارَتْ
مَعَانِيهِ ، وَأَعْرَبَ عَنْ حَاجَتِهِ .

1

Although it is difficult to pin down precisely what Ibn Abī 'Atīq means by each of his remarks, their general import is clear. He refers to 'Umar's sensitivity of ma'nā, ease of expression, and firmness of construction. The various parts of a poem are well connected with one another. In other words, it has talāhum al-kalām. By madkhal and makhraj is probably meant embarking on, and leaving, a subject, but it is possible that madkhal may also refer to the way in which the poetry enters men's hearts. Hashw here clearly cannot have its usual meaning of "functionless words", but must refer to the construction of the poem. "Links with the heart" and "attachment with the soul" presumably denote riqqa (sensitivity) in the poetic expression. The principal characteristics admired by Ibn Abī 'Atīq in 'Umar's poetry appear to be its

plain, easy style and expression, which nonetheless convey considerable subtlety and both impress the mind and satisfy the emotions. The strong impression made by his poetry on critics is a distinctive feature shared by no other poetry. Other critics remarked on this. 'Abd Allāh b. Muṣ'ab said: " 'Umar's poetry makes a beautiful impression on the heart and forms a mukhālata (union) with the soul. No other poetry has the same quality. If there is a poetry that charms men it is the poetry of 'Umar."²

Because of its strong attractiveness and great charm, 'Abd Allāh b. Muṣ'ab forbade his poetry to be recited at his house to women, because it was not good for them to listen to poetry that easily and gently entered their hearts.³ Other critics too repeated the same views concerning the charm of 'Umar's poetry and how it led men to disobey God.⁴

Muṣ'ab b. 'Abd Allāh al-Zubayrī, while forbidding the recitation of 'Umar's poetry to women, seems to have admired it and studied it thoroughly. In preferring 'Umar to other poets of ghazal and in justifying people's admiration for his poetry, Muṣ'ab spoke about the characteristics of this poetry as follows: 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a amazed people and excelled his peers in facility of poetry, in firmness of composition, in beauty of description, in subtlety of concept, in aptness of choice of starting-point, in directness of achieving his object, in expressing the thoughts of deserted dwellings and the heart, in fineness of consolation, in conversation with women, in decency of discourse, in infrequency of digression, in affirmation of evidence, in causing doubt to prevail in place of certainty, in elegance of excuse, in initiating amorous dalliance, in adducing pleas, and in placing guilt

on his detractors. He excelled in expressing distress, in accusing deserted dwellings of withholding information, in conciseness of narrative, and in sincerity of passion. If he struck a spark he kindled a fire, if he apologized he satisfied, if he complained he inspired compassion. He proceeded only after reconnaissance, he did not excuse himself for recklessness. He took sleep captive; he made the birds grieve; he travelled swiftly; he disturbed the water of youth; he expressed his characters' thoughts fluently; he measured and increased love; he disobeyed and deserted his beloved; he made his hearing and sight ally against him; he described his messengers well and he warned them; he both announced and concealed his love; he kept it within him and displayed it; he persisted and insisted; he wedded sleep to men; he culled conversation and beat its back against its belly; he made its difficulties easy; he was content with hope of fulfilment; he incited his murderess; he made his detractor weep; he shook off sleep; he caused the pledge of Minā to be forfeited; he caused his slain to remain unavenged and, as well as all this, he was eloquent."⁵

The examples quoted by Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī from the poetry of 'Umar, illustrating what Mus'ab al-Zubayrī had said about it, may throw some light on the characteristics that Mus'ab admired in his ghazal poetry. Examples of lines in which 'Umar excelled his peers in "facility of poetry" are the following:

فَلَمَّا تَوَاقَفْنَا وَسَلَّمْتُ أَشْرَقَتْ وَجُوهٌ زَهَاهَا الْحُسْنُ أَنْ تَتَقَنَّعَا
تَبَالَهِنَّ بِالْعِرْفَانِ لَمَّا رَأَيْتَنِي وَقُلْنَ امْرُؤٌ بَانٍ أَكَلَّ وَأَوْفَعَا

An example of "beauty of description":

لَمَّا مِنَ الرَّيْمِ عَيْنَاهُ وَسَيِّئَتُهُ وَغُرَّةُ السَّابِقِ الْمُتَنَالِ إِذَا سَهَلَا

An example of "subtlety of concept" and "aptness of choice of starting-point":

عُوجًا نَحَى اللَّهُ الْحَوَلَا وَالرَّبْعَ مِنْ أَسْمَاءِ وَالْمَنْزِلَا
بَسَائِعِ الْبُؤَاةِ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ تَقَادُمُ الْعَهْدِ بِأَنْ يُؤْهَلَا

An example of "directness of achieving his object":

أَيْهَا الْمَنَاجِجُ الثُّرَيَّا سَهِيلًا تَمَرُّكَ اللَّهُ كَيْفَ يَلْتَقِيَانِ
هِيَ شَامِيَةٌ إِذَا مَا اسْتَقَلَّتْ وَسَهِيلٌ إِذَا مَا اسْتَقَلَّ بَهَانِ

An example of "expressing the thoughts of deserted dwellings":

سَايِلَا الرَّبْعَ بِالْيَدِ وَقُولَا هَجَّتْ شَوْقًا لِي الْغَدَاةَ طَوِيلَا
أَيَّتَ حَتَّى حَلَّوْكَ إِذَا أَنْتَ مَخْفُو فِيْ بِهِمْ آهْلُ أَرَاكَ جَمِيلَا
قَالَ سَارُوا فَأَمْنُوا وَاسْتَقَلُّوا وَبِرْغَمِيْ وَلَوْ وَجَدْتُ سَبِيلَا
سُئِمُونَا وَمَا سُسِمْنَا جَوَارًا وَأَحْبَبُوا دِمَاثَةً وَسُهُولَا

The same lines were quoted by Ibn Abī 'Atīq when he compared 'Umar favourably with al-Hārith al-Makhzūmī as we shall see.

An example of "expressing the thoughts of the heart":

قَالَ لِي فِيهَا عَتِيقٌ مَقَالًا حَجَرْتُ صَمَا يَقُولُ الدَّمُوعُ
قَالَ لِي وَدَعْتُ سُلَيْمِيَّ وَدَعَمَا فَأَجَابَ الْقَلْبُ لَا أَسْتَطِيعُ

An example of "fineness of consolation":

أَلْحَقْتُ أَنْ دَارَ الرَّبَابِ تَبَاعَدَتْ أَوْ ابْنَتْ حَبْلٌ أَنْ قَلْبَكَ طَائِرُ؟
أَفِقْتُ قَدْ أَفَاقَ الْعَاشِقُونَ وَفَارَقُوا الْهَوَى وَاسْتَمَرَّتْ بِالرَّحِيلِ الْمَرَائِرُ
نَجَى النَّفْسَ وَاسْتَبَقَ الْحَيَاءُ فَإِنَّمَا تَبَاعَدُ أَوْ تُدْنِي الرَّبَابَ الْمَقَادِرُ
أَمِنْ حُبِّهَا وَاجْعَلْ قَدِيمَ وَصَالِهَا وَعُشْرَتِهَا كَمَثَلٍ مِنْ لَا تُعَاشِرُ
وَقَبْطُ كَشْفٍ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَوْ كُنَانِي بِهِ الدَّارُ أَوْ مِنْ غَيْبَتِهِ الْمَقَائِرُ
وَالنَّاسِ عُلِّقَتْ الرَّبَابُ فَلَا تُكُنْ أَحَادِيثَ مَنْ يَبْدُو وَمَنْ هُوَ حَاضِرُ

The same lines were regarded as the best lines of ghazal and attributed to Ḥassān b. Yasār al-Taghlibī by al-Dahḥāk b. 'Uthmān al-Khuzāmī, according to al-Marzubānī.⁶

An example of "conversation with women":

تَقُولُ غَدَاةَ التَّقِينَا الرَّبَابُ أَيَاذَا آخَلْتُ أَفُولَ السَّمَاءِ
وَكَلَّفْتُ مَسَايِقَ مِنْ عَبْرَةٍ كَمَا انْفَضَّتْ نَظْمٌ ضَعِيفُ السَّلَاكِ
فَقُلْتُ لَهَا مَنْ يَلْفِغُ فِي الصَّدِيقِ ائْتَدَاءَهُ تَجَنُّبُهُ كَذَاكِ
أَغْرَكَ أَنْتِ عَيْنِي الْمَلَا مَ فَيْكِ وَأَنْ هَوَانَا هَوَاكِ
وَأَنْ لَا أَرَى لَذَّةً فِي الْحَيَاةِ تَقْرُ بِهَا الْعَيْنُ حَتَّى أَرَاكِ

مَكَاتَ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ لِي عِنْدَكُمْ مَكَارِصِي وَابْتِغَائِي رِضَاكَ
تَقَلَّبْتَ الَّذِي لَمْ فِي حِكْمِ وَضِي أَن تَزَارِي، بَرْنَمُ وَقَاكِ
هُمُومَ الْحَيَاةِ، وَأَسْقَاهَا وَإِنْ كَانَ حَقًّا جَهَنًّا، فَدَاكِ

al-Zubayr b. Bakkar said: "these lines were accepted by the people of our country who know poetry well as the best lines of ghazal poetry."

An example of "decency of discourse":

لَمَّا لَيْلِي وَعَمَّادَنِي الْيَوْمَ سَقَمُ وَأَصَابَتْ مَقَاتِلَ الْقَلْبِ نَعْمُ
حُرَّةُ الْوَجْهِ وَالشَّامِلِ وَالْجَو هَرَّتْ كُلِّيْهَا لَمَنْ نَالَ غَنَمُ
وَحَدِيثِي بِمِثْلِهِ تُنَزِّلُ الْعُقْمُ رَخِيمٌ يَشْوِبُ ذَلِكَ حِلْمُ
هَكَذَا وَصَفُ مَا بَدَأَ لِي مِنْهَا لَيْسَ لِي بِالَّذِي تَقَيَّبَ عِلْمُ
إِنْ تَجُودِي أَوْ تَبْخُلِي فَيُحْمَدُ لَسْتُ يَا نَعْمُ فِيهِمَا مَنْ يُذَمُّ

An example of "infrequency of digression":

أَيْهَا الْقَاتِلُ غَيْرِ الْقَوَابِ أَمْسِدُ التَّفَنُّعَ وَاقْلِيلُ عَنَابِي وَاجْتَنِبْنِي وَاعْلَمْنِي أَنْ سَتَقْصِي
وَاجْتَنِبْنِي وَاعْلَمْنِي أَنْ سَتَقْصِي وَلَكِنَّ لَكَ طَوْلَ اجْتِنَابِي
إِنْ تَقُلْ نَعْمًا قَعْنُ ظَهْرِي غَشِي دَائِمُ الْغَيْرِ بَعِيدُ الْذَهَابِ
لَيْسَ بِي عَيْتٌ بِمَا قُلْتَ، إِنْ عَالِمُ أَفْقَةٍ رَجَعَ الْجَوَابِ
لَا تَلْمِزْنِي فِي الرِّيَابِ، وَأَمْسَتْ فِدَى اللُّوْمِ، وَكَلْنِي لِمَا بِي
هِيَ وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي هُوَ رَبِّي عَدَلْتُ لِلنَّفْسِ بَرْدَ الشَّرَابِ
أَكْرَمُ الْأَحْيَاءِ طُرًّا عَلَيْنَا صَادِقًا أَحْلَفُ غَيْرَ الْكِذَابِ
خَالِطَتْنِي سَاعَةً وَهِيَ تَبْكِي عِنْدَ قُرْبٍ مِنْهُمْ، وَانْتِرَابِ
وَكَفَانِي مَدْرَهَا لِحُصُونِ ثُمَّ عَمَّرَتْ خُلَّتِي فِي الْخِلَابِ
لِسَوَاهَا، عِنْدَ جِدِّ تَنَابِ

An example of "affirmation of evidence":

خَلِيلِي بَعْفَ اللُّوْمِ لَا تَرْحَلَا بِهِ رَفِيقَكُمَا حَتَّى تَقُولَا عَلَى عِلْمِ
خَلِيلِي مَنْ يَكْلَفُ بَأْخَرُ كَالَّذِي كَلَفْتُ بِهِ يَدْمُلُ فَوَادًا عَلَى سَقَمِ
خَلِيلِي حَتَّى لَوْ جَلِي نَحَايِغِ مُوقِفِي إِذَا بَرَسَ، صَبِوَدِي إِذَا بَرَسَ
خَلِيلِي، إِنْ بَاعَدْتُ لَأَنْتَ، وَإِنْ أَلَيْتَ تَبَاعِدُ، فَمَا تُرْجَى لِحَرْبٍ وَلَا سَلَمِ
خَلِيلِي إِنْ الْحُبِّ أَحْسَبُ قَاتِلِي فَقَاغِي عَلَى نَفْسِي كَمَا قَدَبَرِي عَظَمِي

خَبِيلٌ مَا حَبَّ كَيْتُ أَجْبَهُ ، وَلَا دَائِدُ ذِي جَبٍّ كَدَائِي وَلَا هَعِي
 خَبِيلٌ ، قَدْ أُعْيَا الْعِرَاءُ ، فَخَفَا وَلَا بُدَّيَا لُؤْيٍ ، فَيُفِيكُمَا حَسِي
 خَبِيلٌ ، مَنَّا رَاكُلْنَا مَعَ الْعَوَى وَهَذَا اللُّؤْمُ بِالْمُسْلَى فَوَادِي مِنَ الْغَمِّ
 خَبِيلٌ ، لَعُورَتِي خَبِيلٌ مِنَ الْمَوَى رُفِيتْ بِهَا بُدْنِي النَّوَارَ مِنَ الْعُغَمِّ

An example of "causing doubt to prevail in place of certainty":

نَظَرْتُ بِالْبَيَا بِالْمُكْتَبِ مِنْ صِيٍّ وَلِي نَظَرٌ لَوَلَا التَّخَرُّجُ عَاذِمٌ
 فَخَلْتُ أَشْغَسَ أَمَّهَا بَيْعٌ بَعِيدٌ بَدَنٌ لَدَى تَحْتِ السَّيْفِ أَمَّ أَنْتَ حَالِمٌ
 صَهْلَهْفَةٌ مَعْرَاءٌ ، مِقْرٌ وَمَشَاخَا وَفِي الْمِرْطِ مَنَّا أَهْلٌ مَتْرَامٌ
 بَعِيدٌ مَهْوَى الْقُرْطِ يَأْتَا لِنَعْقُلَ آبُوهَا وَيَأْتَا عَبْدٌ شَمْسٍ ، وَهَذَا شَيْعٌ
 وَهَذَا عَلِيمَا السَّجْفِ بِوَجْهِ لَقِيَتْهَا عَلَى جَبَلٍ ثَبَاتُهَا وَالْخَوَارِمُ
 فَلَمْ أَسْتَطِعْهَا غَيْرَ أَنْ قَدْ بَدَأْنَا عَشِيَّةً رَاكِبٌ رَافِعًا وَاطْعَاهِمُ
 مَعَايِمٌ لَمْ تَفْرُبْ عَلَى الْبَهْمِ بِالْهَيِّ عَمَاهَا ، وَوَجْهٌ لَمْ تَلْجُ السَّهَامُ
 نَفَارٌ تَرَى فِيهِ أَسَابِيحَ صَائِهِ صَبِيحٌ تُفَارِدِيهِ الرَّاكِبُ النَّوَاعِمُ
 إِذَا مَا دَعَتْ أَتْرَابَهَا فَاتَّقَنَتْهَا تَمَايَلَتْ أَوْ مَالَتْ بِهِنَ الْمَلَأَ لَمْ
 طَلَبَ الرِّهَابَ حَتَّى إِذَا مَا أَصْبَهَ نَزَعَتْ وَهَذَا الْمُسْلِمَاتُ الْفُلُورَامُ

An example of "elegance of excuse":

عَاوَدَ الْفَلَّ بِبَعْضِ مَا قَدْ شَجَاهُ مِنْ حَبِيبٍ أُمْسَى هَوَانَا هَوَاهُ
 بِالْعَوَى ، وَكَيْفَ صَبْرِي كَيْفَ أَرْسَلْتِ إِذْ رَأَيْتِ عَادِي ، أَنْ لَا
 لَا تَطْعُ بِي ، فَخَلَّوْا نَفْسِي عَدُوًّا لَحْدِيثٍ عَلَى هَوَاهُ افْتَرَاهُ
 مَا ضَرَارِي نَفْسِي بِهَجْرَةٍ مِنْ لِي لَكَ أَسِيرَتِي ضَرُورَةٌ ، مَا عَنَاهُ
 وَاجْتِنَابِي بَيْتَ الْكَيْبِ وَمَا الْخُلْدُ بِأَشْغَى إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أَرَاهُ
 دُونَ أَنْ يَبْصَحَ الْمَعَاذِرَ صَيِّ أَوْ يَرَى عَاتِبًا ، فَمَنْزَى رِضَاهُ

An example of "initiating amorous dalliance":

إِذَا أَنْتَ لَمْ تَعْنُقْ وَلَمْ تَذُرْ مَا الْمَوَى فَلَنْ جَبْرًا مِنْ يَابَسِ الْعَجْرَجَلَمَا

An example of "adducing pleas":

وَأَيُّ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَسْعِي إِذَا جُنْتَلَمْ مَسْتَدًا يَنْشِدُ
 فَرَحَنَا سِرْعَانًا وَرَاحَ الْمَوَى دَبِيلًا ، أَلَيْهَا بِنَا بَقْعَدُ
 فَلَمَّا دَنَوْنَا لِحَرْسِ الشَّبَاحِ إِذَا الضُّوْءُ ، وَالْحَيَّةُ لَمْ تَبْرَفُوا
 بَعَثْنَا أَلَيْهَا بِأَغْيَا نَا نَشْدُ وَفِي الْحَيِّ وَفِيهِ مَنْ يَنْشُدُ

An example of "placing guilt on his detractors":

لَا تَلْمَنِي حَسْبِيَ الَّذِي بِي إِيَّاكَ يَا عَتِيقُ مَا قَدْ كَفَانِي
لَا تَلْمَنِي وَأَنْتَ زَيَّنْتَهَا لِي أَنْتَ مِثْلُ الشَّيْطَانِ لِلْإِنْسَانِ

An example of "expressing distress":

هَجَرَنَ الْحَبِيبَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ غَيْرِ مَا اجْتَرَمُ وَقَطَعْتَ مِنْ ذِي وَدَّكَ الْحَبْلَ فَأَنْصَرَمُ
أَطَعْتَ الْوُشَاةَ الْكَاشِحِينَ وَمَنْ يُلْجُ مَقَالَةً وَأَنْشَى يَقْرِعُ السَّنَّ مِنْ نَدَمِ
أَتَانِي عَدُوٌّ وَكُنْتُ أَحْسَبُ أَنَّهُ شَفِيقٌ عَلَيْنَا نَاصِحٌ كَالَّذِي زَعَمُ
فَلَمَّا تَبَاثَنَّا الْحَدِيثَ وَصَحَّرْتَهُ سَرَائِرُهُ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا كَانَ قَدْ كَتَمَ
تَبَيَّنَ لِي أَنَّ الْمَحْرُشَ كَاذِبٌ فَعَدَلِي لِكَ الْعُتْبَى عَلَى رَغْمٍ مِنْ رَغْمِ
فَلَمْ أَرَ لَوْحَ النَّفْسِ بَعْدَ الَّذِي مَضَى وَبَعْدَ الَّذِي آلَتْ وَأَلْبَنُ مِنْ قَسَمِهِ
ظَلَمْتُ وَلَمْ تَعْتَبْ وَكَانَ رَسُولُهَا إِلَيْكَ سَرِيعًا بِالرَّضَا لَكَ رَاذِ ظَلَمِ

An example of "accusing deserted dwellings of withholding information":

عَرَفْتُ مَصِيفَ الْحَرِّ وَالْمُتْرَبَا بِلَهْنِ حَلِيَّاتٍ دَوَارِسَ بَلْقَا
أَرَى السَّرْحَ مِنْ وَادِي الْقَبْقَبِ تَبَدَّلَتْ مَقَالِمُهُ وَبَلَا وَكِبَاءَ زَعَزَعَا
فَيَبْخُلُنَّ أَوْ تَخْبِرُنَّ بِالْعِلْمِ بَعْدَ مَا كُنَّ فَوَارِدًا كَانَ قَدْ مَأْتَجَمَا

An example of "conciseness of narrative":

أَمِنْ آلِ نَعْمٍ أَنْتَ غَادٍ فَهَجَرْتُ غَدَاةَ غَدٍ أَوْ رَاحٍ فَهَجَرْتُ
لِحَاجَةِ نَفْسٍ لَمْ تَقُلْ فِي جَوَابِهَا فَتَبْلُغُ عُذْرًا وَالْمَقَالَةَ تَعِذُّ
أَشَارَتْنِ بِمَدْرَاهَا وَقَالَتْ لِتَرْبِهَا أَهَذَا الْمَغِيرَى الَّذِي كَانَ يُذَكِّرُ
لَكِنَّ كَانَ بِآيَاهُ لَقَدْ حَالَ بَعْدَنَا عَنْ الْعَهْدِ وَالْإِنْسَانِ قَدْ يَتَغَيَّرُ

An example of "sincerity of passion":

كُلُّ وَصْلٍ أَمْسَى لَدَيْكَ لِأَنْشَى تَغْيَرَهَا ، وَصَلُّهَا إِلَيْهَا أَدَاءُ
كُلِّ أَنْشَى وَإِنْ دَنَتْ لِوَصَالٍ أَوْ نَأَتْ فَهِيَ لِلرَّيَابِ فِدَاءُ

and:

أَحِبُّ لِحَبْلِكَ مَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ صَفِيًّا لِنَفْسِي وَلَا صَاحِبًا
وَأَبْذُلُ مَالِي لِمَرْضَاتِكُمْ وَاعْتَبُ مَنْ جَاءَكُمْ عَاتِبًا
وَأَرْغَبُ فِي وَدِّ مَنْ لَمْ أَكُنْ إِلَى وَدِّهِ قَبْلَكُمْ رَاغِبًا
وَلَوْ سَلَكَ النَّاسُ خِي جَانِبِي مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاعْتَزَلْتُهُ جَانِبًا
لَيَمَنَّ لِي بِسِتْهَا إِيَّائِي أَرَى قُرْبَهَا الْعَجَبَ الْعَاجِبًا

An example of "If he struck a spark he kindled a fire":

لَمَّا لَيْلِي وَتَعَنَّا فِي الْهَرَبِ وَاعْتَرَانِي طَوْنُ هَمٍّ وَوَصَبِ
أَرْسَلْتُ أَشْهَاءَ خِي مَعْتَبِرِ عَتَبَتْهَا وَهَى أَحْلَى مِنْ عَتَبِ
أَنْ أَتَى مِنْهَا رَسُولٌ مُوَفِّدٌ وَجَدَ الْحَيَّ نِيَامًا فَانْقَلَبَ
ضَرَبَ الْبَابَ فَلَمْ يَشْعُرْ بِهِ أَحَدٌ يَفْتَحُ بَابًا إِذَا ضُرِبَ
فَأَتَاهَا بِحَدِيثٍ غَاظَهَا شَبَّهَ الْقَوْلَ عَلَيْهَا ، وَلَذَبَ
قَالَ : أَبْقِظْ ، وَلَكِنَّ حَاجَةً عَرَضَتْ ، تَكَلَّمْ عَنَّا ، فَاجْتَبِ
وَلَعَمْرُأُ رَدَّنِي ، فَاجْتَهَدْتُ بِيَمِينِ حِلْفَةٍ عِنْدَ الْفَقْبِ
أُشْهِدُ الرَّحْمَنَ لَا يَجْعَلُنَا مَسْقُوفَ بَيْتٍ رَجِيًّا حَتَّى رَجَبِ
فَلَنْتُ حِلًّا فَاقْبَلِي مَعْدِرَتِي ، مَا كُنَّا يَجْزِي مُجِبٌّ مِنْ أَحَبِ
لَمَّا كَفَى لِي رَهْنٌ بِالرِّضَا فَاقْبَلِي يَا هِنْدُ قَالَتْ : قَدْ وَجَبَ
وَأَتَتْهَا لُحْمَةٌ مَخَالَةٌ ، تَمْرُجُ الْجِدِّ مَرَارًا بِاللَّيْبِ
تَرْفَعُ الْقَوَّةَ إِذَا لَانَتْ لَهَا ، وَشَرَاخِي عِنْدَ سَوَارِ الْفَقْبِ
وَهَى ، إِذَا ذَاكَ عَلَيْهَا مَشْرُورٌ وَلَهَا بَيْتُ جَوَارٍ مِنْ لُغْبِ
لَمْ تَزَلْ تَهْرِيفُهَا عَنْ رَأْيِهَا وَنَاتَاهَا بِرَفْقٍ وَأَدَبِ

An example of "if he apologized he satisfied":

فَالْتَقَيْنَا ، فَحَبَبْتُ حِينَ سَلَمْتُ ، وَلَقَنْتُ دَمْعًا مِنَ الْعَيْنِ مَارًا
ثُمَّ قَالَتْ عِنْدَ الْعَتَايَ : رَأَيْنَا مِنْكَ عَنَّا تَجَلُّدًا وَازْوَارًا
قُلْتُ : كَلَّا ، لِأَنَّ ابْنَ عِمْلَكٍ ، بَلْ خَفْنَا أُمُورًا كُنَّا بِهَا أَغْمَارًا
فَجَعَلْنَا الصَّدُودَ ، لَمَّا رَأَيْنَا قَالَةَ النَّاسِ ، بَيْنَنَا أَسْتَنَارًا
وَرَكِبْنَا حَالًا ، لَنَلْزِبُ عَنَّا قَوْلَ مَنْ كَانَ بِالْبَنَانِ أَشَارًا
وَاقْتَصَرْتُ الْحَبِيبَ دُونَ الَّذِي قَدْ لَانَ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَعْلَمُ الْأَسْرَارَا
لَيْسَ كَالْعَهْدِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتَ ، وَلَكِنْ أَوْقَدَ النَّاسُ بِالْأَحَادِيثِ نَارَا
فَلِذَاكَ الْإِعْرَاضُ عِنْدَكَ ، وَمَا آثَرَ قَلْبِي عَلَيْكَ أُخْرَى اخْتِيَارَا
مَا أَتَى إِذَا النُّوَى قَرَّبْتَلُمُ فَدَنَوْتُمْ ، مَنْ حَلَّ أَوْ مَنْ سَارَا
وَالْيَالِي ، إِذَا نَأَيْتَ طَوَالَ ، وَأَرَاهَا ، إِذَا دَنَوْتَ ، قِصَارَا
فَعَرَفْتُ الْقَبُولَ مِنْهَا لِعُذْرِي إِذَا رَأَيْتَنِي مِنْهَا أُرِيدُ اعْتِدَارَا
ثُمَّ لَانَتْ ، وَسَامَحَتْ بَعْدَ مَنُوعِ وَأُرْتِنَى كَفًّا تَزِينُ السَّوَارَا
فَتَنَاوَلَتْهَا فَمَالَتْ كَعُفْنِي حَرَكَتَهُ رِيحٌ عَلَيْهِ فُخَارَا

An example of "if he complained he inspired compassion":

لَقَمْرِكَ مَا جاورَتْ عُمْدَانِ طَائِعاً وَقَفَرِ شَقَوْبٍ ، أَنْ أكونَ بِهَا صَبَاً
وَلَكِنَّ حُمَّى أَضْرَعَتْنِي ثَلَاثَةً مَجْرَمَةً ، ثُمَّ اسْتَهْمَرْتُ بِنَا غَبَاً
وَحَتَّى لَوْ أَنَّ الْخُلْدَ يَعْرِضُ إِنْ مَشَتْ إِلَى الْبَابِ رَجُلِي مَا نَقَلْتُ لَهَا إِرْبَا
وَمَصْرَعِ إِخْوَانٍ لَأَنَّ انْبِتَهُم أَنْبِتُ مُكَارِيهِ ، خَارَقْتُ بِلْدَاً خِفْبَا
فَإِنَّكَ لَوْ أَبْهَرْتَنِي بِعُومٍ سَوِيْقَةٍ مَقَامِي ، وَحَبْسِي الْهَيْسَ دَامِيَةً حُدْبَا
إِذَا لَأَخْشَعَتِ الرَّأْسُ مِنْكَ صَبَابَةً وَلَا اسْتَفْرَغَتْ عَيْنَاكَ مِنْ عَبْرَةٍ سَكْبَا

An example of "he proceeded only after reconnaissance":

صَرَمْتُ وَوَاصَلْتُ حَتَّى عَرَفْتُ أَيْنَ الْمَصَادِرِ وَالْمَوَارِدِ
وَجَرَّبْتُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ حَتَّى عَرَفْتُ مَا أُتَوَقَّى وَمَا أُنْعَمِدِ

An example of "he took sleep captive":

نَامَ صَحِيحٍ وَبَانَ نَوْمُ اسِيرَا أَرْقَبُ النِّجْمِ مَوْهِنَاً أَنْ يَغُورَا

An example of "he made the birds grieve":

فَرَحْنَا وَقُلْنَا لِلْغَلَامِ أَقْفَحَ حَاجَةً لَنَا ثُمَّ أَدْرَكْنَا وَلَا تَنْتَفِرْ
سِرَاعاً نَعْمَ الطَّيْرُ إِنْ سَخَتْ لَنَا وَإِنْ تَلَقْنَا الرِّكَابُ لَا تَنْتَحِرْ

An example of "he travelled swiftly":

قُلْتُ سِيرَا وَلَا تَقِيمَا بِبَهْرِي وَخَفِيرٍ فَمَا أُجِبُّ خَفِيرَا
وَإِذَا مَا مَرَرْتُمَا بِعُمَانَ فَأَقْلَا بِهِ الثَّوَلَةَ وَسِيرَا
لِنَا قَفَرْنَا إِذَا كَسَرَ السَّيْرُ بَعِيرَا أَنْ تَسْتَجِدَّ بَعِيرَا

An example of "he disturbed the water of youth":

أَبْرَزُوهَا مِثْلَ الْمَهَاةِ تَهَادَى بَيْنَ خَمْسٍ كَوَابِ أَثْرَابِ
ثُمَّ قَالُوا تَجِبَا قُلْتُ بَهْرَا عَدَدَ الْقَطْرِ وَالْحَصَا وَالشَّرَابِ
وَقَدْ مَلُئْتُهُ خَيْرَ مِنْهَا فِي أَدِيمِ الْخَدَيْنِ مَاءُ الشَّبَابِ

An example of "he expressed his characters' thoughts fluently":

قَالَتْ عَلَى رِقْبَةٍ يَوْمًا لِمَارَتِهَا مَا تَأْمُرِينَ فَإِنَّ الْقَلْبَ قَدْ ثَبَلَا
وَقُلْتُ لِي الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أُخْتِي مُوَاخِيَةً مِنْكَ أَشْكُو إِلَيْهَا بَعْفَ مَا فَعَلَا
فَرَا جَعَلَتْهَا حَصَانٌ غَيْرَ فَاحِشَةٍ بَرَجَ قَوْلٍ وَلَبَّيْ لَمْ يَكُنْ خَلَلَا
لَا تَذْكُرِي حُبَّهُ حَتَّى أَرَا جَعُهُ إِنِّي سَأَلُفِيكَه إِنْ لَمْ أُمَّتْ عَجَلَا
فَاقْتَرِ حَيَاءُكَ فِي سِرِّهِ وَفِي كَرَمِ فَلَسْتُ أَوَّلَ أَنْتَ عُلَّقَتْ رَجُلَا

An example of "he measured and increased love":

وَقَرَّبَنَ أَصْبَابَ الْهَوَى لِمَتِّمْ يقيس ذراعاً كلما قسنت أصبعا

An example of "he disobeyed and deserted his beloved":

وَأَنْفُ الْمَطَرِ يَنْبَعْنَ بِالرَّكْبِ سراعاً نواجم الأظعان
فَنَصَبُ الْغُرَيْرِ مِنْ بَقَرِ الْوَحْشِ وَنَلَهُوْ بِلَذَّةِ الْفَتْيَانِ
فِي زَمَانٍ لَوْ كُنْتَ فِيهِ ضَجِيعِي غَيْرَ شَكٍّ عَرَفْتَ لِي عِصْيَانِي
وَتَقَلَّبْتَ فِي الْفَرَاشِ وَلَا تَدْرِي رَيْنَ إِلَّا الظُّنُونُ أَيْنَ مَكَانِي

An example of "he made his hearing and sight ally against him":

سَمِعِي وَلَمْ تَرْضَ حَلِيفَهَا عَلَى جَسَدِي فَكَيْفَ أَصْبِرُ عَنْ سَمْعِي وَعَنْ بَصَرِي
لَوْ لَهَا وَعَانِي عَلَى أَنْ لَا أَكُلُّهَا إِذَا لَقَضَيْتُ مِنْ أَوْطَارِهَا وَطَرِي

An example of "he described his messengers well and he warned them":

فَبَعَثْتُ كَاتِمَةَ الْحَدِيثِ رَقِيقَةً . مجوابها
وَحَشِيَّةَ النِّسْبَةِ خَرَّاجَةً مِنْ بَابِهَا
فَرَّقْتُ فَسَهَّلْتُ الْمَعَا رَفَنَ مِنْ سَبِيلِ نِقَابِهَا

and:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْتُ جَارِيَتِي وَقُلْتُ لَهَا خُذِي حَذْرِي
وَقُولِي فِي مُلَا لَفَعَةٍ لَزَيْتَبَ نَوْلِي عُمْرِي

An example of "he both announced and concealed his love":

شَكْوَتْ إِلَيْهَا الْحُبَّ أَعْلَنُ بَعْضُهُ وَأَخْفَيْتُ مِنْهُ فِي الْفُؤَادِ غَلِيلاً

An example of "he kept his love within him and displayed it":

حُبُّكُمْ يَا آلَ لَيْلَى قَاتِلِي ظَهَرَ الْحُبُّ . بحسبي وَبَلَنَ
لَيْسَ حُبٌّ فَوْقَ مَا أَحْبَبْتُمْ غَيْرَ أَنْ أَقْتُلُ نَفْسِي أَوْ أَجَنَّهُ

An example of "he persisted and insisted":

لَيْتَ ظَهَرَ كَلْفُفَةُ الْعَيْنِ مِنْهَا وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهَا الْقَلِيلُ الْمُهْنَا
أَوْ حِدِيثٍ عَلَى خِلَاءٍ يُسَلَّى مَا يَجْنُ الْفُؤَادُ مِنْهَا وَمِنَا
كَبُرَتْ رَبِّ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْكَ يَوْمًا أَنْ أَرَاهَا قَبْلَ الْمَهَانِ وَمِنَا

An example of "he wedded sleep to men":

حَتَّى إِذَا مَا الْبَلُّ جَنَّ ظِلَامِهِ وَنَظَرْتُ غَفْلَةً لَا شَيْعَ أَنْ يَفْعَلَا
وَاسْتَنْجَحَ النِّعَمُ الَّذِينَ تَخَافُهُمْ وَسَقَى الْكُرَى بَوَابَهُمْ فَاسْتَنْقَلَا
خَرَجَتْ تَأَطَّرُ فِي الشِّيَابِ كَأَنَّمَا أَيْهَمُ تَسْيِبُ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ أَهْبَلَا

An example of "he culled conversation":

وَجَوَارِ مُسَاعِفَاتٍ عَلَى اللَّهِوِ مَسْرَاتٍ بِأَلْهِنِ الْأَفْعَانِ
صَبِيٍّ لِلرَّجَالِ يَرْتَشِفُ بِاللُّرِّ فِي حِسَانٍ كَحَذْلِ الْفُرْلَانِ
قَدْ دَعَانِي وَقَدْ دَعَاهُنِ لِلَّهِوِ تَشْبُونُ مَنْ أَعْجَبَ الْأَشْجَانِ
فَاجْتَنَيْنَا مِنَ الْحَيْثِ ثَهَارًا مَا جَنَى مِثْلَهَا لَعْمُكَ جَانِ

An example of "and he beat its back against its belly":

فِي خَلَاءٍ مِنَ الْأَيْسَى وَأَمْنٍ فَبِتُّنَا غَلِيلَنَا وَاشْتَفَيْنَا
وَضَرْبَنَا الْحَيْثُ ظَهْرًا لِبَطْنٍ وَأُتِينَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا هَوَيْنَا

An example of "he made the difficulties of conversation easy":

فَلَمَّا أَقْضَيْنَا فِي الْهَوَى نَسْتَبِينَهُ وَعَادَ لَنَا صَعْبُ الْحَيْثِ دَلُولًا
شَكُونُ إِلَيْهَا الْحَبَّةُ أَظْهَرَ بَقْعَهُ وَأَخْفَيْتُ مِنْهُ فِي الْفَوَادِ غَلِيلًا

An example of "he was content with hope of fulfilment":

فَعِدِي نَائِلًا وَإِنْ لَمْ تُبْلِي إِنَّهُ يُفْنِغُ الْحَبَّةَ الرَّجَاءُ

An example of "he incited his murderess":

فَبَعَثْتُ جَارِيَّتِي وَقُلْتُ لَهَا اذْهَبِي وَأَشْكِي إِلَيْهَا مَا عَلِمْتُ وَسَلِّمِي
قُولِي يَقُولُ تَحْرِصِي فِي عَاشِقِي كَلِّفِي بِكُمْ حَتَّى الْمَهَانِ مُتَبِمِي
وَيَقُولُ إِنَّكَ قَدْ عَلِمْتِ بِأَكْلِكُمْ أَصْبَحْتُمْ يَا بَشْرُ أَوْجَةٍ ذِي دَمِ
فَعَلَّيْ رَهِينَتَهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلِي فَاعْلَمِي عَلَى قَتْلِ ابْنِ عَمِّكَ وَاسْلَمِي

An example of "he shook off sleep":

فَلَمَّا فَقَدْنَا الْقَوْنَ مِنْهُمْ وَأَطْفَيْنَا مَصَابِيحُ شُبَّتْ بِالْعِشَاءِ وَأَنْوُرُ
وَنَابَ قُبَيْرٌ كُنْتُ أَرْجُو غُيُوبَهُ وَرَوَّحَ رُغْيَانٌ، وَنَوْمَ سُهْرُ
وَنَفَسْتُ عَنِ النَّوْمِ، أَقْبَلْتُ مِشْبَةً أَلِ حُبَابٍ، وَرُكْنِي، خَشْيَةَ الْقَوْمِ، أَرْوُرُ

An example of "he caused his slain to remain unavenged" and "he caused the pledge of Minā to be forfeited":

فَكَلِمٌ مِنْ قَتِيلٍ مَا يَبْأُ بِهِ دَمٌ وَمَنْ غَلَقَ رَقَبًا إِذَا لَقَهُ مِنْ
وَمِنْ مَالِي عَيْنِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ غَيْرِ إِذَا رَاحَ نَحْوَ الْجَمْرَةِ الْبَيْضِ كَالدَّمِ

For the people of Quraysh there was no poet equal to 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a in ghazal poetry. The qualities for which they favoured him are rejected by others and considered as signs of insincerity and of the

wrong direction in ghazal, contrary to that followed by the Arabs. What the people of Quraysh admired in his ghazal poetry is that he praises himself, instead of praising women, and talks about himself as the beloved one. He used to boast of his adventures with women and not conceal them. Such things, although admired in his poetry, are disapproved of if written by other poets.⁸

This tendency of 'Umar to "praise himself" is criticised by Ibn Abī 'Atīq and others as something opposed to the riqqa required in ghazal. Although Ibn Abī 'Atīq was a great admirer of 'Umar and preferred him to all other ghazal poets, he criticised him for these lines:

بَيْنَمَا يَبْعَثَنِي أَبْصَرْتَنِي دُونَ قَبْدِ الْمَيْلِ يَقْدُو بِي الْأَنْزَرُ
قَالَتِ الْكَبْرَى أَتَعْرِفَنَ الْفَتَى؟ قَالَتِ الْوُسْطَى نَعَمْ هَذَا عُمَرُ
قَالَتِ السُّفْرَى وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَتْهَا قَدْ عَرَفْنَاهُ وَقَدْ نَحْنُ الْقَمَرُ؟

Ibn Abī 'Atīq justified his criticism and rejection of the lines by saying to 'Umar: "You have not written nasīb about her but rather about yourself. You should have said: I talked to her and she talked to me, and I put my cheek on earth and she trod on it."⁹ Ibn Abī 'Atīq considered that what 'Umar had written was the opposite of riqqa, which consisted in showing full submission, humility and servility to the beloved. The poet should represent himself, and not the woman, as the one who loves, suffers and pursues. Later critics appear to have agreed with Ibn Abī 'Atīq's criticism. Al-Mufaddal b. Salama, for instance, said: "He is not sensitive in his ghazal as other poets are, because he never complains of separation from his beloved and he does not show his sufferings if his beloved turns away from him; most of his poetic descriptions and similes are about himself and he represents women as suffering more from their love of him than he does from his love of them. In the following lines:

عَاوَدَ الْقَلْبَ بَعْفُ مَا قَدْ شَجَاهَ مِنْ حَبِيبٍ أَمْسَى هَوَانًا هَوَاهُ

مَا ضَرَّارِي نَفْسِي بِهَجْرَةٍ مِّنْ لَّيْسَ مُسِيئًا وَلَا بَعِيدًا هَوَاهُ
وَأَجْتَنَابِي بَيْتَ الْحَبِيبِ وَمَا لُحْدُ بِأَشْهَى إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أُرَاهُ

he claims that his beloved wishes what he himself wishes, that he avoids her house intentionally, for no reason, and that he turns away from her, without any offence on her part, although seeing her is better than seeing paradise. In a line already quoted:

فَدُ عَرَفْنَاهُ وَهَلْ يَخْفَى الْقَمَرُ

he claims that women talk about his beauty, comparing him with the moon.

Elsewhere he writes:

قَالَتْ لِقِيْمِهَا وَأَذَرَنِّي عَبْرَةً مَّالِي وَمَالِكُ يَا أَبَا الْخَطَّابِ
أَطْمَعَنِي كَتَنًا إِذَا أَوْرَدَنِي كَلَّاتَنِي وَلَمْ أَسْتَيْمِ شَرَابِي

claiming that a woman is weeping out of unreciprocated love for him and desire to be with him.¹⁰

Al-Mufaddal, like Ibn Abī ʿAtīq before him, required rigga in ghazal poetry. This entailed, among other things, that the poet should not put himself in an equal position with his beloved. He should express his suffering in love, he should complain about his beloved turning away from him, and he should exhibit his sadness at being deserted by her. He should represent his beloved as uncaring and himself as being the one who cares and pursues, himself as the lover and her as the beloved. He should not show indifference or dignity if she left him. His attitude in all cases should be that of a sincere and sensitive lover in complete submission to his beloved. These are the characteristics of rigga in ghazal and the signs of sincerity in love.

This view, which lasted for a long time, of what were proper sentiments to be expressed in love poetry goes back, according to ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Ibrāhīm al-Nahshalī, to traditional Arab ideas of the relations

between men and women, which represented the man as the one who longed for and pursued the woman, suffering in the process, and the woman as the often indifferent object of this longing and pursuit.

Both Qudāma b. Jaʿfar and al-ʿAskarī also maintain that the best nasīb (or tashbīb) should demonstrate deep feelings of intense love (ṣabāba), and should be sensitive (raḡīq) and submissive, and without any manifestations of roughness or pride.¹¹

Ibn Rashīq added that the language of nasīb should be sweet and straightforward; the maʿanī should be simple and plain. It should express deep feelings that move and delight the gentle and please the sad.¹² Such were the components of the riqqa that Ibn Abī ʿAtīq used as his criterion in judging ghazal poetry and comparing its exponents. He also stated that the poet should "be content with little from his beloved"; this was regarded as a sign of sincerity and true love. He should not consider himself as his beloved's equal. Thus, Ibn Abī ʿAtīq criticised Kuthayyir for his line:

وَلَسْتُ بِرَافِيٍّ مِنْ خَلِيدٍ بِنَائِلٍ قَلِيلٍ وَلَا أَرْقَى لَهُ بِقَلِيلٍ

He said: "This is the speech of an equal and not of a true lover. The two Qurashites, ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa and ʿAbd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt, are more content and more sincere than you. Ibn Abī Rabiʿa writes:

كَيْتَ حَظِّي لَلْخَفَةِ الْعَيْنِ مِنْهَا وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهَا الْقَلِيلُ الْمُهَنَّأُ

And he is satisfied with merely a promise from her:

فَعِدِّي نَائِلًا وَإِنْ لَمْ تُنِيلِي إِنَّهُ يَقْنَعُ الْحَبَّ الرَّجَاءُ

The other poet, Ibn al-Ruqayyāt, writes:

رَقَّتْ بَعِيشُكُمْ لَا تَهْجُرِينَا وَمَنْبِنَا الْمَنْى تَمَّ امْطَلَبِنَا
عِدِينَا فَرَعْدٌ مَا شِئْتِ إِيَّا نَحْبُ وَإِنْ مَلَكْتَ الْوَاعِدِينَا
فَأِمَّا تَهْجُرِي عِدَّتِي وَإِمَّا نَعِيشُ بِهَا نَوْمَلُ مِنْكَ جِينَا 13

Abū al-Sāʿib al-Makhzūmī, who had the same concept of riqqa in ghazal

poetry, also criticised Kuthayyir for the line quoted above and called him "creditor". He wondered why Kuthayyir did not write like Ibn al-Mawlā, who followed the right path in the following lines:

وَأَنْبَلَى فَلَا لَيْلَى فَكَلْتُ مِنْ صَبَابَةٍ لِبَاكِ وَلَا لَيْلَى لِيذَى الْوَدِّ تَبْدُلُ
وَأَخْنَعُ بِالْفُتَيْبَى إِذَا كُنْتُ مَزِينًا وَإِنْ أَدْبَبْتُ كُنْتُ الَّذِي أُنْصَلُ 14

According to Abū al-Sā'ib, this is a true and sincere lover, who does not expect his beloved to share his suffering with him. He shows his submission to her and apologises even if he is right and she is wrong.

Ibn Abī 'Atīq also believed that the ghazal poet should not expect his beloved to be trustworthy when she promised to visit him. He thought that it was the habit of women not to keep their promises and that this habit made them more attractive. From this point of view, Ibn Abī 'Atīq criticised Kuthayyir for this line:

وَأَخْلَفَنِي مِيعَادِي وَخُنَّ أُمَانِي وَلَيْسَ لَهَا خَانَ الْأَمَانَةَ دِينُ

He said: "Have you loved her for her trustworthiness?" And when

Kuthayyir recited the following line:

كَذَبَتْ صَفَاءَ الْوَدِّ بِوَعْدِ مَحِلَّةٍ وَأَنْكَدَنِي مِنْ وَعْدِهَا دُبُونُ

Ibn 'Atīq said to him: "this habit of breaking their promises is

beautiful and makes them more attractive to the hearts of men." Ibn Abī

'Atīq favoured 'Abd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt "because he knows better

about women and puts things in their proper perspective when he says:

حَبَّ ذَاكَ الدَّلُّ وَالْفُجْ وَالَّتِي فِي عَيْنِهَا رَعَجُ
وَالَّتِي إِنْ حَدَّثْتُكَ كَذَبَتْ وَالَّتِي فِي وَعْدِهَا خَلَجُ
وَتَرَى فِي الْبَيْتِ صُورَتَهَا مِثْلَهَا فِي الْبَيْعَةِ الشَّرْجُ
خَبَرُونِي هَلْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ عَاشِقٍ فِي قُبْلَةٍ حَرَجُ

It is said that, when Kuthayyir heard these lines, he was delighted and

accepted what Ibn Abī 'Atīq said about his own lines.¹⁵ Ibn Qays al-

Ruqayyāt was preferred by Ibn Abī 'Atīq for the lines just quoted

because "he put things in their proper perspective" by accepting his

loved ones' breaking their promises to him and actually praised them for that. This meant that the poet accepted their lies and did not expect them to be trustworthy. It also meant that he did not consider himself equal to them but was submissive to them; in this way he demonstrated his sincerity and achieved rigga in his ghazal.

A third test used by Ibn Abī 'Atīq for rigga in ghazal poetry was the way the poet addressed the deserted dwelling. He should be sensitive and gentle when he addressed the dwelling, as if he was addressing his beloved herself, and he should show real sorrow on account of those who had left. He should be careful not to wish anything bad to the dwelling. It was for this reason that Ibn Abī 'Atīq criticised al-Hārith b. Khālīd al-Makhzūmī for these lines:

لَا تَنْ وَ مَا نَحْرُوا غَدَاةَ مِنْ
لَوْ بَدَّلْتَ أَعْلَى مَسَاكِتَا
فِيكَادُ يَفْرِضُهَا الْخَيْرُ بِنَا
لَعَرَفْتُ مَقَامَهَا بِمَا احْتَمَلَتْ
عِنْدَ الْجَارِ بِوَدِّهَا الْعَقْلُ
سُفْلًا وَأَصْبَحَ سُفْلًا يَغْلُو
فَيَرُدُّهُ الْإِقْوَاءُ وَالْمَحِلُّ
مِنْ الْفُلُوعِ لِأَهْلِهَا قَبْلُ

He complained that "he had wished his beloved ill luck when he described her deserted dwelling as being turned upside down, and that he intended to pray God to drop on it pellets of baked clay." He preferred 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a because "he is more friendly towards the dwelling and addresses it more beautifully than al-Hārith does. 'Umar writes:

سَائِلَا الرِّبْعَ بِالْبَلَى وَقُولَا
أَيُّنَ حَتَّى حَلُّوكَ إِذَا أَنْتَ مَخْفُو
قَالَ سَارُوا فَأَمَضُوا وَاسْتَقَلُّوا
سَمُّونَا وَمَا سَمَّيْنَاهَا مَقَامًا
هَجَّتْ شَوْقًا لِي الْغَدَاةَ طَوِيلًا
فِي يَمِّهِمْ أَهْلٌ أُرَاكَ جَمِيلًا ؟
وَبِرَّغْمِي لَوْ اسْتَلْعَنْتُ سَبِيلَا
وَأَحْبَبُوا دِمَانَةً وَسُهُولَا

16

The lines quoted here by Ibn Abī 'Atīq were quoted later by Abū al-Faraj in the Aghānī as an example of excellent poetry addressing a dwelling in accordance with the views of Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī concerning

'Umar's poetry.

Rigga also demanded that the poet should express true sorrow when describing the departure of beautiful women. However excellently he described them, failure to convey the proper degree of sadness at their departure meant that he could not be considered really sensitive and sincere in his poetry. Accordingly, Abū al-Sā'ib al-Makhzūmī criticised 'Urwa b. Udhayna for these lines:

لَبِثُوا ثَلَاثَ مَنَازِلٍ غَبْلَةٍ	وَهُمْ عَلَى غَرْضٍ لَعْمُوكَ مَا هُمْ
مُتَجَاوِرِينَ بِغَيْرِ دَارٍ إِقَامَةٍ	لَوْ قَدْ أَجَدَّ رَحِيلَهُمْ لَمْ يَنْدَمُوا
وَلَهُنَّ بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ لُبَانَةٌ	وَالْبَيْتُ يَعْرِفُهُنَّ لَوْ يَتَكَلَّمُ
لَعَلَّانَ حَيًّا قَبْلَهُنَّ طَعَانًا	حَيَّا الْخَطِيمُ وَجُودَهُنَّ وَزَفَرَمُ
وَلَا تُهْنَنَّ وَقَدْ حَسَرْنَ لَوَاغِيًا	بَيِّنَ بَاكِتِي الْخَطِيمِ مَرَمُ

in that, although the poet described very well the women about to return after completing their pilgrimage, he expressed no sorrow at their departure. Kuthayyir made a similar mistake when he wrote:

تَفَرَّقَ أَهْوَاءُ الْحَبِيبِ عَلَى مَنَى	وَفَرَّقَهُمْ صَرْفُ النُّوَى مُسْتَى أَرْبَعِ
فَرِيقَانِ مِنْهُمْ سَالِكِ بَطْنِ تَخْلَةٍ	وَأَخَرُ مِنْهُمْ سَالِكِ بَطْنِ تَفْرِغِ
فَلَمْ أَرِ دَارًا مِثْلَهَا دَارَ غَبْلَةٍ	وَمَلَقَى إِذَا التَفَّ الْحَبِيبُ بِجَمْعِهِ
أَقَلَّ مُقِيمًا رَاضِيًا بِمَكَانِهِ	وَالنَّزَّاجَارُ طَاعِنًا لَمْ يُودِعْ

Kuthayyir was criticised for describing the place where the departing women gathered before they left as a lovely one and then contradicting himself by saying that he was not content with it. He should also have expressed his sorrow at their departure. According to Abū al-Sā'ib, al-'Arjī was more sincere and more sensitive than the other two poets. His lines indicated his true friendship and love for the departing women in that he went out to see his beloved, with the other women, on her way home from Minā after the pilgrimage. He expressed his love for her, and his sorrow for her departure, as follows:

عُوجِي عَلَى وَسَلِي حَبْرٌ فِيمَ الصَّوْدُ وَأَنْتُمْ سَفَرُ
مَا نَلْتَقِي إِلَّا ثَلَاثَ مَيَّ حَتَّى يَفْرَقَ بَيْنَنَا النَّفَرُ
فَالشَّهْرُ ثُمَّ الْحَوْلُ يَتْبَعُهُ مَا الدَّهْرُ إِلَّا الْحَوْلُ وَالشَّهْرُ

17

The concept of riqqa adopted by Ibn Abī 'Atīq and Abū al-Sā'ib appears to have been one that was wide-spread at that period. When 'Azza, the beloved of Kuthayyir, criticised him and expressed a preference for the poetry of al-Ahwas, she was comparing the elements of riqqa in the two poets' poetry. She believed that al-Ahwas "is more sensitive and gentle in his poetry, and more submissive to women than Kuthayyir."

She declared that she admired the following lines by al-Ahwas:

يَا أَيُّهَا اللَّائِي فِيهَا لِأَصْرِمِهَا أَكْثَرَنَ لَوْ كَانَ يُغْنِي مِنْكَ الْكَثَارُ
إِنْ رَجَعْتُ فَلَسْتُ مُلْعَمًا إِذْ وَشَّيْتُ بِهَا لَا الْقَلْبُ سَالٍ وَلَا فِي حُبِّهَا عَارُ

and she described the following line by him as "sensitive, soft and gentle":

وَمَا كُنْتُ نَوَّارًا وَلَكِنَّ ذَا الْهَوَى إِذَا لَمْ يَبْرُرْ لَا بُدَّ أَنْ سَبِيْرُ

She also admired this line:

وَمَا الْقَيْشُ إِلَّا مَا تَلَذُّ وَتَشْتَهِي وَإِنْ لَأَمْ فِيهِ ذُو الشُّنَانِ وَفَدَا

She criticised Kuthayyir because "he was too rough with women" in this line:

بِحَاذِرَنِّ مَيَّ غَيْرَةٍ قَدْ عَرَفْنَاهَا لَدَى فَمَا يَفْعَلُكَ إِلَّا تَبَسُّهَا

She also criticised him because "he wished her prolonged misery" when he wrote:

وَدِدْتُ وَبَيْتِ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَكِلَ بَلَرَةً هَجَانٌ وَإِنِّي مُضْعَبٌ ثُمَّ تَهْرِبُ
كِلَانًا بِهِ عَمَّرْتُ فَهَنْ يَبْرُنَا يَفْلُ عَلَى حُسْنِهَا جَرَبَاءُ تُعْدِي وَأَجْرِبُ
نَكُونُ لَدَى مَالٍ كَثِيرٍ مُفْعَلٍ فَلَاهُو بَرَعَانَا وَلَا تَحْنُ نَطْلَبُ

She thought that if he was sensitive he would wish her something more pleasant.¹⁸

Kuthayyir was also criticised by 'Aqīla bint 'Aqīl b. Abī Ṭalīb

for being hard-hearted and showing no sorrow at his beloved's departure.

When he recited this line to her:

أَنْ زُمَّ أَجْمَانُ وَفَارَقَ جِيرَةٌ وصاح غراب البين أنت حزين

she was astonished and asked him: "When should there be sadness if not at the moment of departure?" Kuthayyir acknowledged his lapse of taste and offered these two lines as a more acceptable treatment of the same topic:

أَأَزْمَعِنِ بَيْنًا عَاجِلًا وَتَرَكَتِنِي كَثِيبًا سَقِيمًا جَالِسًا أَتَلَدُّ
وَبَيْنَ التَّرَاقِي وَاللَّهَاقِ حَرَارَةٌ كَانَ الشَّجَا مَا تَلْهَيْتُ قَتَبُورُ 19

Compared with Jamīl, Kuthayyir was said to lack sincerity in some of his love-poetry. Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī reported that Jamīl's line:

خَبِيلٌ فِيمَا عَشْتُمَا هَذَا رَأَيْتُمَا قَتِيلًا بَلَى مِنْ حُبِّ قَاتِلِهِ قَبْلِي

was generally admired, and preferred to Kuthayyir's:

أُرِيدُ لِأَنْسَى ذِكْرَهَا فَكَأَنِّي تَمَثَّلُ لِي لَيْلَى بَلْكَ سَبِيلِ

concerning which people asked: "Why does he want to forget her?"²⁰

Jamīl was approved of for his total submission to his beloved. Even if he died of her love he wept for his killer. This indicated riqa and sincerity. Kuthayyir was also criticised for insincerity by 'Ā'isha bint Talha because he wrote:

إِذَا مَا أَرَادَتْ خُلَّةٌ أَنْ تَزِيلَنَا أَبِينَا وَقُلْنَا الْحَاجِيَّةَ أَوَّلُ
سَنُؤَلِّيكَ عِرْفَانًا إِنْ أَرَدَتْ وَصَلْنَا وَتَحَنُّ لَتِلْكَ الْحَاجِيَّةِ أَوْصَلُ
لَهَا مَهْلٌ لَا يُسْتَفَاعُ دِرَاكُهُ وَسَابِقَةُ فِي الْحُبِّ مَا تَتَحَوَّلُ

In the next line he said that he might love another woman besides his beloved 'Azza even though the latter was more lovable to him. 'Ā'isha considered Jamīl's sentiments to be more acceptable:

وَلَرَبَّ عَارِضَةٍ عَلَيْنَا وَصَلَهَا بِالْجِدِّ نُخْلِعُهُ يَقُولِ الْهَازِلِ
فَأَجَبْتُهَا فِي الْحُبِّ بَعْدَ تَسْنُرٍ حُبِّي بُشَيْنَةٌ عَنْ وَصَالِكِ شَاغِلِي
لَوْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِي لَقَدْرٌ فَلَامَةٌ حُبٌّ وَصَلْتِكِ أَوْ أَتَتْكِ رِسَائِلِي 21

Other critics, however, preferred Kuthayyir and believed that he was more sincere than Jamīl. They said that evidence for Jamīl's hardness and insincerity was to be found in lines such as:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ فِي عَيْنِي بِثَبِيَّةَ بِالْقَدَى وَفِي الْفُرِّ مِنْ أَنْبَابِهَا بِالْفَوَاحِ

They contrasted with this ugly outburst of anger Kuthayyir's forgiveness of 'Azza, when she had abused him:

هَنِيئًا مَرِيثًا غَبَرَ دَائِي مُخَامِرٍ لِعَزَّةٍ مِنْ أَعْرَاضِنَا مَا اسْتَحَلَّتْ
يَكْلَفُهَا الْخَزِيرُ شَتَّى وَمَا بِهَا هَوَانِي وَلَكِنْ لِلْمَلِكِ اسْتَنْذَلْتُ
أَصَابَةَ الرَّدَى مَنْ كَانَ يَهْوِي لِكِ الرَّدَى وَجُنَّ اللَّوَانِي قُلْتُ عَزَّةٌ جُنْتُ
فَمَا أَنَا بِالْدَّاعِي لِعَزَّةَ بِالرَّدَى وَلَا شَامِنِي إِنْ نَعَلْتُ عَزَّةَ زَلْنِي 22

In this particular comparison, Kuthayyir certainly has the advantage over Jamīl in the rigga that manifests itself in submission to the beloved. As we have seen, however, Jamīl generally displays this characteristic in his love-poetry, and when he visited Sukayna bint al-Husayn with other ghazal poets, she acknowledged his superiority in the following lines:

لَكِلِّ حَدِيثٍ عِنْدَهُ بَشَاشَةٌ وَكَذَلِكَ قَتِيلٍ عِنْدَهُ شَهِيدُ
يَقُولُونَ جَاهِدْ بِأَجْمِلِ بِفَرَّةٍ وَأَيُّ جَاهِدٍ غَيْرُهُ أُرِيدُ

being pleased with his finding pleasure in women's conversation and his regarding the victims of passion as martyrs.²³

Sometimes comparison of ghazal poets was more general and concerned with whole poems rather than individual lines. When Mus'ab al-Zubayrī compared 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a with Jamīl, he considered 'Umar the superior in his poems rhyming with the letters rā' and 'ayn, but Jamīl in his poem rhyming with the letter lām starts:

لَقَدْ فَرِحَ الْوَاشُونَ أَنْ صَرَمَتْ حَبْلِي بِثَبِيَّةٍ أَوْ أَبَدَنَهُ لَنَا جَانِبَ الْبُحْلِ

and 'Umar's:

جَرَى نَاصِعٌ بِالْوَدِّ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهَا فَقَرَّبَنِي يَوْمَ الْهَضَابِ إِلَى قَتْلِي

Other critics, however, did not accept this judgement. Al-Zubayr b.

Bakkār described Jamīl's lāmiyya as "having differing levels of excellence and not being harmonious; in it one finds both high and low ground.

‘Umar's poem is the better, since its parts are homogeneous and its lines are of an equal standard and well connected with one another.

If Jamīl tried to address women in his poem as ‘Umar does, he would not succeed."²⁴

This is one of the earliest instances of a critic's using sophisticated terms like "differing levels of excellence", and, indeed, of treating a poem as a whole, rather than as a collection of individual lines or groups of lines.

There are "poetic beauties" that may have appealed to earlier critics and men of letters in the poetry of ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a. We have seen that Mus‘ab al-Zubayrī appreciated the isti‘āra and majāz, as well as other qualities, in the ghazals of ‘Umar. Some of the lines he quotes contain husn al-taqsīm, tashakkuk and irdāf or tatbī‘. Early ghazal poets such as Kuthayyir seem to be well aware of such elements of poetic craft.

Ibn al-‘Athīr mentioned that Kuthayyir wrote one of his poems in luzūm mā lā yalzam. It is the poem that starts:

25 خَيْلِيْ هَذَا رَبْعٌ عَزَّةٌ فَأَعْقِلَا قُلُوصَيْكُمَا ثُمَّ ابْكِيَا جِثُّ حَلَّتِ

The poet Abū al-‘Aynā' noticed the figure taqsīm in ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a's poetry and quoted the following lines as outstanding in that figure:

26 تَهَيَّمُ إِلَى نَعْمٍ: فَلَا الشَّهْدُ جَامِعٌ وَلَا الْحَبْلُ مُوَصِّلٌ، وَلَا أَنْتَ مُقْبِلٌ وَلَا خُرْبٌ نَعْمٌ إِنْ دَنْتَ مِنْكَ نَافِعٌ وَلَا نَائِبًا يُسْلِي، وَلَا أَنْتَ تَصْبِرُ

Some early men of letters criticised Jamīl for "incorrect taqsīm" in the following line:

لَوْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِي كَقَدْرِ فَلَامَةٍ فَضْلٌ وَصَلْتِكِ أَوْ أَتَتْكِ رَسَائِلِي

They said that he repeated himself in the second half of the line when he told the woman whom he was addressing that if there was room in his

heart for another love he "would either communicate with her or write to her". They considered that writing could not be treated as an alternative to the more general "communication".²⁷

CHAPTER FOUR

Iraqi and Syrian poets of the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods.

In the last chapter we saw that the main genre of poetry in which people were interested in the Hijāz during the Umayyad period was ghazal, for which they had certain criteria based on the concept of riqqa. They seem not to have been greatly interested in other genres.

In Syria and Iraq during the same period, the most important poets were Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal. Besides these there were others such as Dhū al-Rumma, al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī, 'Adī b. al-Riqā', Muzāhim al-'Uqaylī, Ka'b b. Ju'ayl, and some rajaz poets, like al-'Ajjāj and his son Ru'ba, al-Aghlab and Abū al-Najm. In general, their verses have much in common with Jāhili poetry, in both content and style; they have the same quality of jazāla (firmness), and they still contain the tribal mufākhara that played such an important part there.¹ In fact, mufākhara, both tribal and personal, is the main subject touched on by these poets, who expressed it mainly in poems of hijā'. As the poets of the Jāhiliyya met at the market of 'Ukāz to recite their poems, the Umayyad poets met at the market of al-Mirbad in al-Basra. Each poet had his own circle of his own supporters. As a result of tribal and political conflicts, encouraged by the Umayyad Caliphs, a great deal of this kind of hijā' poetry was produced, exemplified by the Naqā'id of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, and by the arājiz of al-'Ajjāj, his son Ru'ba, and others. Since the products of these poets differed from those of the Hijāzī poets with whom we dealt in the last chapter, the nature of the poetic criticism applied to them also differed, in that critics had to deal with different poetic topics and were not restricted to one topic as in the case of the Hijāzī poets.

The question of who was the best poet of the three, Jarīr, al-Farazdaq or al-Akhtal, was a controversial one in Umayyad, and even in early Abbasid, literary criticism. The relationship between the three poets was one of rivalry and there was a fierce exchange of hijā' between Jarīr on the one hand and al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal on the other. Each poet had his own supporters both among the general public and among men of letters. Besides the issue of the hijā' between them, politics in Umayyad Syria influenced people's views about them. The main type of poetry in which the Caliphs were interested at that time was madīh. The Caliphs themselves were struggling against several parties, such as the Shi'ites, Zubayrites, Khārijites and, later, the Abbasid movement. Their opinions of the poets depended on the attitudes of these towards the various parties and their relations with the Caliphs themselves. Al-Akhtal was most generally admired, and, as we have seen, was regarded by 'Abd al-Malik as the Umayyad poet.

Each of the three had his partisans, the dispute about them continued, and critics could not reach a definite answer to the question of who was the best.² Nevertheless, as 'Umar b. Shabba put it: "The Arabs agreed that the three of them were the best poets of Islam but there was no agreement about who was the best of the three."³

Some critics did not consider al-Akhtal as equal to the other two. After stating that they were the best poets of Islam, and mentioning the disagreements of men of letters in comparing the three of them, Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī said that al-Akhtal had intervened between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq and supported the latter, when the two rivals were in the final stages of their struggle against each other. When he joined them, he was already old, and although he had his own excellence, his

poetic background was not at all like theirs.⁴ On another occasion, speaking about people's disagreement over the three poets, Abū al-Faraj added that the early experts and reciters of poetry did not regard al-Akhtal as equal of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, because "he had not reached their position in poetry, had not the same poetic art as they had, and was not able to write in all fields of poetry as they were". He stated that "people claimed that the tribe of al-Akhtal, Rabī'a, had an inflated opinion of him in considering him to be as great as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq". Concerning the latter two, Abu al-Faraj informs us: "there are two groups of critics: those who admire firmness, jazāla, fakhamā and great attractiveness, shiddat al-Asr, in poetry preferred al-Farazdaq; those who admire natural matbū' poetry, and beautiful speech, prefer Jarīr".⁵

Though the dispute was limited to Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, there was no agreement about who was the better of the two, and, as Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, the grammarian, stated, whenever the two poets were mentioned there was a disagreement about them.⁶

Some critics preferred Jarīr not only to al-Farazdaq but to all other poets. When Ibn al-Mahdī al-Bāhilī, one of the Arab 'Ulamā', as Abu al-Faraj described him, was asked to give his opinion about Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, he replied "Jarīr is the best poet of the Arabs; the poets will remain waiting on the Day of Judgement until Jarīr arrives to decide between them".⁷ Some considered him simply the best Islamic poet. Such a view was attributed to Yahyā b. al-Jawn al-'Abdī, the reciter of Bashshar, who said: "We, the reciters, are the weavers of poetry in the Jāhiliyya and in Islam, and we are the ones who know best about it. Al-A'shā was the master of all poets in the Jāhiliyya and Jarīr is their master in Islam".⁸

A story is told that illustrates the passions aroused by the continual debate concerning the relative merits of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq.

Al-Muhallab b. Abī Sufra, the governor of Khurasān, was disturbed one day during his campaign against the Azāriqa, a Khārijite sect, by an uproar in his camp. On inquiring the reason for this, he was told that some of his soldiers were disputing as to whether Jarīr or al-Farazdaq was the better poet. When asked himself to decide the issue, he declined to do so, comparing the situation of such an arbiter to that of a man being torn to pieces by two dogs. He advised his men to ask the opinion of the enemy Azāriqa, who might be thought to be impartial in the matter, but who were Arabs and good judges of poetry. Accordingly, when ‘Ubayda b. Hilāl, one of the Azāriqa, issued a challenge to single combat the following day, his would-be opponent insisted first on obtaining his opinion on this question. Although ‘Ubayda irritably indicated that such matters were trivial in comparison with the study of the Qur’ān and fiqh, he nonetheless quoted the following lines:

يَا نَا لَنَذْمُ يَا فُقَيْرَ عَدُوْنَا بِالْحَبْلِ لَاحِقَةَ الْأَيْطِلِ قُودَا
وَتَحَوُّ كَوْنُنَا وَتَمِي سَرَحَنَا جُرْدٌ تَرَى لِفَارِهَا أُخْدُودَا
أَجْرِي خَلَاثَمَا وَقَدَّ لِحْمَهَا أَلَّا يَذُقْتَ مَعَ الشَّكَاثِمِ عُودَا
وَلَهْوَى الْقِبَادُ مَعَ الطَّرَادُ مَثُونَهَا لَمْ تَجَارِ بِحُضْرَمَوْنَ بُرُودَا

and asked who had composed them. "Jarīr", was the reply. Whereupon ‘Ubayda said: "he is the better poet".⁹

According to Ibn Sallām, ‘Ubayda recited only the last line of these four, which contains tashbih. The lines as a whole are wasf concerning horses and ‘Ubayda did not give any reason for admiring them. It is possible that their martial flavour appealed to him, as being appropriate to the warlike attitude of the sect to which he belonged. As in so many of the anecdotes concerning the Khārijites, a far greater acquaintance

with, and interest in, literature of a secular type is suggested than one might expect to be compatible with the movement's religious outlook.

Jarīr was much admired by the people of the bādiya, who preferred him to all other poets.¹⁰ Ibn Sallām reported that he asked an a'rābī of the Banū Asad to compare Jarīr with al-Farazdaq and to tell him which was the better in the view of the people of the bādiya. The a'rābī replied: "Lines of poetry are of four kinds: fakhr, madih, hijā' and nasīb; in all of them Jarīr is superior. In fakhr Jarīr says:

يَا ذَا غَفَبَتْ عَلَيْكَ بَنُو قُضَيْمٍ كَسِبَتْ النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمْ غَضَابَا

In madih:

أَلَسْتُمْ خَيْرَ مَنْ رَكِبَ الْمَطَابَا وَأَنْدَى الْعَالَمِينَ بِطَوْنِ رَاحٍ ؟

In hijā':

فَقُفُّنَا الْفُرْقَ إِتَدَ مِنْ نُبَيْرٍ فَلَا كُفَاً بَلَفَتْ وَلَا كِلَابَا

And in nasīb:

يَا نَّ الصَّيُونَ الَّتِي فَرَطَ فُضَا حَوَّرَ قَتَلْتَنَا نَمْ لَمْ يُجَيِّنَ قَتْلَانَا

Ibn Sallām commented that what the a'rābī said was generally believed by the people of the bādiya.¹¹

Another a'rābī from the Banū 'Udhra was asked by 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān about the best lines ever written in madih, fakhr, hijā', ghazal and tashbīh. He recited the lines quoted above and added the following one for tashbīh:

سَرَى نَحْوَهُمْ كَيْلٌ لَأَنَّ نَجُومَهُ فَنَادِيلُ فِيهِنَّ الزُّبَالُ الْمُفْتَلُ

12

The line of hijā' quoted by the two Bedouins has two characteristics. First, it is considered as an example of decent hijā', and secondly, it is an example of hijā' by tafdīl, or hijā' in which the poet compares two men or groups and prefers one to another.¹³ This sort of hijā' is

also called hiġā' muḡdhi and is regarded as the most effective, as we have mentioned before. The line is also quoted by Ibn Tabāṭabā as an example of hiġā' in which the poet exaggerates too much.¹⁴ The line of tashbīh is also an exaggerated one because it contains the "poetic beauty" of īghāl in its last two words.

It was the decency admired by the people of the bādiya in the poetry of Jarīr that they also admired in the ghazal poetry written by the poet Nusayb. A sign of this was that he never wrote nasīb except about his own wife. The people of the bādiya used to call him al-Nusayb instead of just Nusayb in order to honour him.¹⁵ Sukayna bint al-Husayn preferred Jarīr to al-Farazdaq for his lines of rithā' and nasīb. She instanced the following lines of his nasīb:

بِنَفْسِي مَنْ تَجَنَّبُهُ عَزِيزٌ عَلَىَّ وَمَنْ زِيَارَتُهُ لِمَامٌ
وَمَنْ أُمْسِي وَأُصْبَحُ لَا أَرَاهُ وَيَطْرُقُنِي إِذَا هَجَعَ النَّيَامُ

and:

يَا أَيْنَ الْعَيُونَ الَّتِي فَرَطَ فِيهَا حَوْرٌ قَتَلْنَا ثُمَّ لَمْ يُجَيِّنْ قَتْلَانَا
يَقْرَعَنَّ ذَا اللَّبِّ حَتَّى لَا حَرَاكَ بِهِ وَهَنَ أَوْضَعُ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ أَرْكَانَا
أَتَبْعُهُمْ مُقَلَّةً رَأْسَانَا غَرِقَ قَدْ مَا تَرَى تَارِكًا لِلْبَيْنِ إِنْسَانَا

and:

لَوْلَا الْحَيَاءُ لَهَا جَنَى اسْتِغْبَارُ وَلَزَرْتُ قَبْرَكَ وَالْحَبِيبُ يُزَارُ
لَا نَتَ إِذَا قَجَرَ الضَّجِيعُ فَرَاشَهَا كُتْمَ الْحَدِيثِ وَعَقَقَنِ الْأَسْرَارُ
لَا يَلْبَثُ الْقِرْنَاءُ أَنْ يَتَفَرَّقُوا لَيْلٌ يَكُرُّ عَلَيْهِمْ وَنَهَارُ 16

Although Sukayna, like the two a'rāb who favoured Jarīr, did not give any reason for admiring the lines of nasīb quoted, it seems likely that she did so because they contain riqqa. This is to be seen in the poet's speaking of dying of love, being killed by her eyes, and submitting to this. This concept of riqqa, as viewed by Sukayna, and Hijāzī urban

critics, as we have seen, was also adopted by the people of the bādiya.

ʿAmir b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Mismaʿī also regarded Jarīr as superior to al-Farazdaq in nasīb, hiajā and tashbīh.¹⁷ These views, attributed to various men of letters, indicate that Jarīr varied his topics, and that he essayed all, or most, of the poetic fields. One of the earlier critics, Zayrak b. Hubayra al-Mannānī, described Jarīr as "the field of poetry. Those who have not run on that field are unable to write anything. Those who are defeated by Jarīr in hiajā poetry are to be regarded as better than those who have surpassed others in the same topic".¹⁸ However, Jarīr was most admired, and considered superior to al-Farazdaq, for his nasīb, as Abu al-Zīnād informs us on the authority of his father.¹⁹ Those who compared them in nasīb criticised al-Farazdaq for his line:

يَا أُخْتَ نَاجِيَةِ بَن سَامَةَ إِنِّي أَخْشَى عَلَيْكَ بَيْزَةَ إِنِّ طَلَبُوا دَمِي

He was considered to be insensitive in threatening his beloved that his sons would avenge him if he died of love for her. Critics asked:

"What has the ghazal-poet to do with mentioning his sons and revenge when addressing his beloved? Why did he not say, as Jarīr did in his line:

قَتَلْنَا ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْيِينَا قَتَلْنَا

20

In their view, Jarīr followed the right path in ghazal when he spoke of those who were killed by love as remaining unavenged. This again is the same concept of rigga as we have already discussed. Jarīr himself, however, did not escape criticism on these grounds. His lines that we have already cited as being admired by Sukayna:

بِنَفْسِي مَن تَجَنَّبَهُ عَزِيزٌ عَلَى وَمَنْ زيارته لِيَهَامُ
وَمَنْ أُمْسَى وَأَصْبَحَ لَا أَرَاهُ وَيَطْرُقُنِي إِذَا هَجَعَ الشَّيْءُ

were admired also by Abū Muḥallim, and both compared them favourably

with others of his:

طَرَقَتْكَ صَائِدَةُ الْقُلُوبِ وَلَيْسَى ذَا
تَجْرَى السَّوَاءَ عَلَى اغْتَرَاكَ
وَقَتُّ الزِّيَارَةِ فَاجْعَلْ بِسَلَامٍ
بَرْدٌ تَحْذَرُ مِنْ مُتُونِ عَمَامٍ

Abū Muḥallim wondered why, if the poet described his beloved so beautifully in the second line, he should not have welcomed her when he saw her in his dream. The other lines are better because they are more sensitive.²¹ Sukayna, criticising Jarīr, said to him: "Why not, instead of driving her away, take her by the hand, welcome her and say to her what she - and those who are like her - deserves! You are a virtuous man but you are weak".²²

Jarīr seems to have been influenced by Tarafa and Labīd, both of whom had been criticised for writing similar lines. Tarafa was the first to introduce the conceit of driving away the wraith of his beloved who visited him in his dream. He wrote:

قَالَ لِحَيَاكِ الْخَنَاطِيَّةِ يَنْقَلِبُ إِلَيْهَا فَإِنِّي وَاصِلٌ حَبْلٌ مِنْ وَصَلِ

Labīd declared that he broke off relations with his beloved because she was irregular in her communication with him. He wrote:

فَاقْطَعْ لَبَانَةً مِنْ تَعْرِفَتِي وَصَلُهُ وَلَشَّرْ وَاصِلٌ خُلَّةٌ صَرَامُهَا

This fashion in ghazal was developed later by the Muhdathūn, some of whom even declared their intention of killing their beloved. Both Qudāma b. Jaʿfar and Ibn Rashīq criticised this as being contrary to riqqa. In accordance with this view, Qudāma also criticised al-Nābigha of the Banū Taghlib for this line:

بِحُكْمِنَا لِحُكْمِكَ كَوْنُ تَعْلِيمَيْنِ وَكَيْفَ يَعْيبُ بِخَيْلٍ خَيْلًا

on the grounds that he regards himself as equal to his beloved, and he ill-treats her. Ghazal should be free from such unromantic conceits.²³

Other critics preferred Jarīr to al-Farazdaq for his hijā' poetry; as Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik put it "al-Farazdaq builds and Jarīr pulls down what the former has built; there is nothing that can resist

demolition".²⁴ By this he probably meant that al-Farazdaq wrote excellent fakhr but that Jarīr answered him and refuted what he boasted of. Even in fakhr, Jarīr was preferred to al-Farazdaq as we saw when quoting the two a'rābīs of the Banū Asad and Banū 'Udhra. When the two poets were requested by Bishr b. Abī Marwān to compete in fakhr, they extemporised several lines, and when al-Farazdaq boasted:

فَحَنُّ الزَّمَامِ الْقَائِدُ الْمُقْتَدَى بِهِ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا زِلْنَا وَلَسْنَا لَهَا زِمًا

Jarīr answered him:

فَحَنُّ بَنِي زَيْدٍ قُلْعُنَا زِمَاهَا قَتَا هَتْ كَسَا لَهَا شَيْءَ الرَّاسِ عَارِمٍ

Bishr considered Jarīr's line to be superior in that he said that "he cut the halter of the she-camel". Al-Farazdaq had likened himself and his people to the halter by which others were led, but when Jarīr cut that halter he was overcome.²⁵

Again, when al-Hajjāj requested the two poets to compete in praise of him, al-Farazdaq wrote:

مَنْ يَأْمِنُ الْحَجَّاجَ - وَالْبَيْرُ تَنْقَرُ عُقُوبَتُهُ - إِلَّا ضَعِيفُ الْعِزَائِمِ

Jarīr wrote:

مَنْ يَأْمِنُ الْحَجَّاجَ أَمَّا عِقَابُهُ فَمَرٌّ وَأَمَّا عَهْدُهُ فَوَثِيقٌ

Al-Hajjāj adjudged Jarīr the superior and criticised al-Farazdaq for saying: "The birds fear him". "This is nonsense", said al-Hajjāj.

"Birds fear everything, such as a piece of cloth, even a small boy".²⁶

Al-Farazdaq had failed adequately to describe the power of the mamdūh; an emir should be praised by means of a more extravagant ma'nā, and in a manner more befitting a man in his position. Al-Marzubānī, who seems to have favoured al-Farazdaq, agreed that Jarīr's line is better, but he claimed that he had made use of al-Farazdaq's line in which the ma'nā was initiated.²⁷

It seems that al-Nawwār, al-Farazdaq's wife, preferred Jarīr to her

husband as a poet, and told him that Jarīr surpassed him in sweet poetry and shared with him in bitter poetry. According to another tradition, she reversed the remark: "He has shared with you in sweet poetry and surpassed you in bitter poetry".²⁸ In the first version, the implication is that Jarīr surpassed al-Farazdaq in nasīb, madih, fakhr, tashbih and wasf, and in the second, that he surpassed him in hijā'. In any case, al-Farazdaq was not as famous for nasīb and rithā' as Jarīr. Some later critics, like al-Marzubānī, discounted the remark of al-Nawwār about her husband, believing simply that they were not on good terms with each other.²⁹

Jarīr was also favoured by some critics on the basis of poems to which they claimed that there was nothing similar in the poetry of al-Farazdaq.

Such a poem, they said, was that which starts:

حَتَّى الْهَدْمَلَةِ مِنْ ذَانِ الْمَوَاعِيسِ فَالْحِنُوْ أَسْبَحَ قَفْرًا غَيْرَ مَأْنُوسِ

According to Ibn Abī 'Alqama, who preferred Jarīr, al-Mufaḍḍal, who preferred al-Farazdaq, failed to find a similar poem in the latter's poetry. Another critic, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mu'adhadhal, informs us that his father believed that the above poem was Jarīr's best and that the latter was superior to al-Farazdaq because he competed with him all his life without al-Farazdaq being able to defeat him.³⁰ Although this poem was regarded by critics as his best, Jarīr himself preferred

another, which starts:

أَهْوَى أَرَاكَ بِرَامَتَيْنِ وَقُودًا أَمْ بِالْجَنِيَّةِ مِنْ صَدَافِ أُوْدَا 31

Neither the critics, like Ibn al-Mu'adhadhal, nor Jarīr gave any reason for their preference, and both poems contain tasnī' in their first lines. As mentioned before, Jarīr was described as the "field of poetry", meaning that he wrote on all the different poetic topics. Such a poet is called mutasarriḥ, and this is regarded as a virtue.

This is one of the grounds on which Jarīr was considered superior to al-Farazdaq; those who did so said: "he has many kinds of poetry unknown to al-Farazdaq".³²

Jarīr was also considered superior by many from the point of view of his language and style. When the aʿrābī from the Banū ʿUdhna championed Jarīr against all other poets, ʿAbd al-Malik asked him: "Do you know Jarīr?" The aʿrābī replied: "No, but the poems of many poets reach us and I have never come across a poetry that has more sensitive metre and can fill the mouth more than his poetry".³³ This probably alludes to the qualities of riqqa and jazāla in the poetry of Jarīr. It was also regarded as a virtue for a poet to be able to exchange suhūla (easiness, softness) for jazāla when appropriate, and in this respect too Jarīr was considered to be more versatile than al-Farazdaq, who was alleged to display only jazāla, being incapable of suhūla. As an example of Jarīr's suhūla, the following two lines are cited:

طَرَقَتْكَ صَائِدَةُ الْقُلُوبِ وَلَيْسَ ذَا وَقَدْ الزَّيْبَةُ فَارْجِعْ بِسَلَامٍ
تَجْرِي السُّؤَالُ عَلَى أُغْرٍ لَأَنَّهُ بَرْدٌ تَحْدَرُ مِنْ مُتُونِ عَهَامٍ

and for his jazāla, this line:

وَأَبْنُ اللَّبُونِ إِذَا مَا لَزَّ فِي قَرْنٍ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ صَوْلَةَ الْبُرْلِ الْقَنَائِيسِ 34

Nevertheless, there were those for whom al-Farazdaq's jazāla was the principal reason for favouring him. He was also esteemed for the excellence of some of his short poems.³⁵

Jarīr was also considered superior to al-Farazdaq on account of his "most celebrated" or "unique" lines, according to Aḥmad b. Yahyā. Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī declared to Aḥmad that al-Farazdaq had more of these lines, but he failed to produce a single one from the whole of his poetry, putting forward instead some of the poet's "complex" lines.³⁶

Those who preferred al-Farazdaq seem to have been the 'ulamā' and grammarians, while those who preferred Jarīr were the people of the bādiya and the common folk. When he was told this, at any rate, by someone whose opinion he had asked, Jarīr was pleased, and said: "There is not one man in a hundred who is learned".³⁷ The 'ulamā' who preferred al-Farazdaq were men like al-Mufaddal, Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, Ibn Sallām and al-Marzubānī. The reason for this is that, as grammarians, they admired the complications of language that al-Farazdaq introduced into his poetry. Examples of his "complex" lines are:

وَأَصْبَحَ مَا فِي النَّاسِ إِلَّا مُهْمَكُ أَبُو أُمِّهِ حَيْثُ أَبُوهُ يُقَارِبُهُ

and:

لَا إِلَهَ قَدْ سَفِهَتْ أُمِّيَّةٌ رَأْيَهَا فَاسْتَجْهَلَتْ سَفَهَاؤُهَا حِلْمَاؤُهَا

Many of these "complex" lines are quoted by Ibn Sallām and later by Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī in his Aghānī.³⁸

Some critics criticised al-Farazdaq for these "complex" lines and regarded them as sagāt or worthless. 'Āmir b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Misma'ī was of this opinion, while his brother Misma' regarded such lines as a sign of great intelligence, in that they required deep thought in order to be understood. For his part, he regarded as sagāt lines of Jarīr such as the following:

* وَالْتَقَلْبِيُّ جَنَازَةُ الشَّيْطَانِ *

and:

* فِي كُلِّ قَائِلَةٍ لَهُ طُلُفَانِ *

which he considered to display poetic incompetence.³⁹

Concerning al-Akhtal and the comparison between him and the other two, we have mentioned that, according to Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, tribalism played a role in his being considered their equal. This view is

affirmed later by Bashshār. Nevertheless, al-Akhtal was sometimes considered superior in certain poetic genres. Comparing the three poets, Qutayba b. Muslim judged al-Farazdaq to be the best poet of his time in fakhr, Jarīr in hijā' and al-Akhtal in wasf.⁴⁰ When Shabba b. 'Uqāl dealt with the three poets, he remarked on the difference in nature tab' between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq and indicated the genres of poetry in which al-Akhtal surpassed them. He is reported to have said: "Jarīr takes poetry from a sea and al-Farazdaq cuts it from a rock, and al-Akhtal is excellent in madīh and fakhr".⁴¹ By this, he appears to refer to the easiness, gentleness, plainness and abundance of Jarīr's poetry, and the firmness, strong attraction (shiddat al-asr) and less natural character of al-Farazdaq's. To him poetry comes with more effort, as if he were cutting it from a rock, than it does to Jarīr, who writes as easily as if he were taking water from the sea; al-Akhtal is superior in the two genres specified. What Shabba says about Jarīr and al-Farazdaq is similar to what Abū al-Faraj says in his Aghānī, as we have seen. In his comparison, Shabba gives us no examples from the three poets' poetry. The reasons for his views are not very clear, as is so often the case with the views of critics and men of letters concerning poetic comparison. He alleges that al-Akhtal is excellent in fakhr, compared with the other two, but this is not the view of most other critics, who consider al-Akhtal to be superior in madīh and wasf. According to Khālīd b. Safwān, al-Farazdaq has the best fakhr, the best i'tidhār, the most famous aphorisms and the sweetest 'ilal, and is most eloquent. Al-Akhtal is the best of the three in wasf and has written the most excellent line both of madīh and of hijā'. Jarīr has the "largest sea", the most elegant, gentle and sensitive poetry and the most wounding hijā'.⁴² It is not clear what Khālīd meant by sweet 'ilal (arguments?) in speaking of the poetry of al-Farazdaq. When he

said that al-Akḥṭal had written the most excellent line of madīh and of hijā', he did not quote these, but it seems likely that the line of madīh is the following:

شَمْسُ الْعَدَاوَةِ حَتَّى يُسْتَقَادَ لَهُمْ وَأَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ أَطْلَامًا إِذَا قَدَرُوا

since it is quoted elsewhere as an excellent one.⁴³ The line of hijā' referred to may be the following, according to certain men of letters:

قَوْمٌ إِذَا اسْتَنْبَجَ الْأَضْيَافَ كَلَبَهُمْ قَالُوا لَهُمْ بُولَى عَلَى النَّارِ 44

What he said about Jarīr perhaps implies that his poetry is the most natural and easy; this is what one would most readily understand from his remark about Jarīr's "large sea", assuming it to be parallel to that of Shabba b. 'Uqāl, quoted above, in which he speaks of Jarīr as taking poetry from a sea.

Other critics, like al-'Alā' b. Jarīr al-'Anbarī, noticed that, in the various comparative assessments of the three poets, al-Akḥṭal comes either first or third, al-Farazdaq always comes second, and Jarīr sometimes comes first, sometimes second and sometimes third. They accordingly likened them to race-horses. The first horse is called sābiq, the second is called musallī and the last is called sukkayt. Al-'Alā' b. Jarīr al-'Anbarī, according to Ibn Sallām, said that al-Akḥṭal "has five, six or seven poems which are long, excellent, and famous, by virtue of which he comes first (sābiq); the rest of his poetry is less excellent than that of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, and thus, as far as this is concerned, he is placed last (sukkayt). As for al-Farazdaq, he is less excellent than al-Akḥṭal is in his above-mentioned poems, but better than him in the rest of his poetry, and therefore he is always placed second (musallī). Jarīr has excellent and wonderful poems by virtue of which he is placed first, poems of medium quality by virtue of which he is placed second, and other poems, less good even than the medium ones, by virtue of which he is placed last".

Another critic, Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik, regarded al-Akhtal as always placed first; concerning Jarīr and al-Farazdaq he gave similar judgements to those of al-'Alā' b. Jarīr al-'Anbarī. A third critic, Abū al-'Askar, gave the same judgements as Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik but differed from the other two critics in giving examples from the poetry of Jarīr. Abū al-'Askar gave the following line of Jarīr as an example of poetry in which the poet surpassed his two rivals:

سَرَى لَهُمْ بَيْلٌ لَأَنَّ نَجْوَاهُ فَنَادَيْتُ فِيهِنَّ الذُّبَابُ الْمُقْتَلُ

He also gave the following line as an example of Jarīr's bad poetry, in which he falls behind:

45 التَّغْلِيَةُ مَهْرَهَا فِلْسَانِ وَالتَّغْلِيَةُ جَنَازَةُ الشَّيْطَانِ

Al-Akhtal was called the poet of the Umayyads and the best poet among the Arabs by 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, who was delighted by the poem praising him that starts:

* خَفَّ الْقَلْبُ فَرَحًا مَكَأُ بَكْرًا *

"Would you like me to write to the other countries of the empire stating that you are the best poet among the Arabs?" 'Abd al-Malik asked him. He ordered one of his clients to reward the poet and then to conduct him through the streets of Damascus, calling out: "Here is the poet of the Commander of the Faithful! Here is the best poet of the Arabs!" On another occasion, he again ordered his client to reward al-Akhtal, and was then reported to have said: "Every people has their own poet and the poet of the Umayyads is al-Akhtal".⁴⁶

Besides being admired by 'Abd al-Malik for his madih, al-Akhtal was also considered, by Ishāq b. Marwān al-Shaybānī, to be superior to Jarīr and al-Farazdaq in hijā', as we are informed by Ibn al-Nattāh. When Ibn al-Nattāh remarked that al-Akhtal was said to be the best of

the three poets in madīh, Ishāq disagreed with him and stated that al-Akhtal was the best of them in hijā' also, because neither of the other two could write a line of hijā' similar to the following:

وَنَحْنُ رَقَعْنَا عَنْ سَلُولٍ رِجَالَنَا وَنَحْمَدُ رَغْبَنَا عَنْ دِمَاءِ بَنِي تَقْرِيرٍ

In the circle of al-Madā'inī, Abū Qassān defied Ṣabāḥ b. Khāqān to recite two lines of hijā' from the poetry of Jarīr or al-Farazdaq similar to the following ones by al-Akhtal:

أَلَمْ يَأْتِهَا أَنَّ الْأَرْقَمَ قَلَّصَتْ جَمَاعِمُ قَيْسٍ بَيْنَ رَاذَانَ وَالْحَضِرِ
جَمَاعِمُ قَوْمٍ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا ظِلَامَةً وَلَمْ يَعْرِفُوا آيَةَ الْوَفَاءِ مِنَ الْقَدْرِ

Umar b. Shabba agreed that al-Akhtal was superior to the other two poets in wounding hijā', and he added that the hijā' written by al-Akhtal was free from obscenity. This decency in hijā' referred to by Ibn Shabba is also mentioned by al-Akhtal himself, who said: "I have never written a line of hijā' that a virgin would feel shameful to recite to her father".⁴⁷

According to Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, who preferred al-Akhtal to Jarīr in hijā', the fact that al-Akhtal was a Christian restricted his scope in writing hijā' against Jarīr. This was because Jarīr belonged to the large tribe of Mudar, to which the Umayyad Caliphs also belonged, while al-Akhtal belonged to Rabī'a; thus he could not write what he liked against the tribe of Mudar without angering both the Caliphs and many other Muslims. Therefore his hijā' is limited, while Jarīr had nothing to fear if he exaggerated in his hijā' against Rabī'a. Knowing this, a man from Rabī'a begged al-Akhtal not to write hijā' against Jarīr. Al-Akhtal told him that he would "pick out Jarīr and his tribe Kulayb from the large tribe of Mudar and write against them a sort of hijā' that will make them feel ashamed for all time. You should realise that a man who knows poetry well will admire an excellent line of poetry and does not care whether it is written by a Muslim or a Christian".⁴⁸

It is clear that this notorious unresolved dispute was complicated by a number of factors other than purely artistic consideration. Nevertheless, insofar as these can be distinguished, they would seem to suggest that, in general, each of the three was considered superior to the other two in certain poetic genres. Jarīr was famous for his gentle and delicate nasīb and for his natural poetry, al-Farazdaq for his fakhr and for his firm composition, and al-Akhtal for his madīh, wasf and decent hijā'.

As far as other Umayyad poets are concerned, al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī is said to have been "the fahl (master-poet) of Mudar until he was bitten by the lion", which means Jarīr, who wrote a famous poem of hijā' against him and his people, containing the line:

فَفَقَعَ الطَّرْقَ إِنَّكَ مِنْ نُجَيْرٍ فَلَا كَعْبًا بَلَفْتَ وَلَا كِلَابًا 49

To be regarded as a fahl by critics at that time the poet had to master four genres of poetry, madīh, fakhr, hijā' and tashbīh, in other words to become a mutasarrif. This criterion was used later also by Ibn Sallām and other critics, as we shall see. According to this criterion, Dhū al-Rumma was not counted among the fuhūl. When al-Butayn was asked whether Dhū al-Rumma was a fahl or not, he replied that "those who know about poetry have agreed that poetry is based on four elements: excellent madīh, hijā', fakhr and tashbīh. These four elements are all found in the poetry of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal. As for Dhū al-Rumma, he was not excellent in madīh, hijā' or fakhr; in fact, in all these genres he fell below the acceptable level. He was excellent only in tashbīh, and therefore he is only one quarter of a poet".⁵⁰ In tashbīh, Dhū al-Rumma was regarded by many 'ulamā' as the best among Islamic poets.⁵¹ He was also admired for his excellent

tashbīb, wasf, and weeping over deserted dwellings, according to Khālīd b. Kulthūm. He added that if Dhū al-Rumma tried to write madīh or hijā' he did not write anything worth while.⁵² Critics offered the following line as evidence of his failure to write good madīh:

رَأَيْتُ النَّاسَ يَنْجَعُونَ نَجِيشًا قُلْتُ لَقَيْتُكَ انْتَجَمَ بِلَالًا

He wrote the line in a poem of madīh on Bilāl b. Abī Burda; Saydah is the name of his she-camel. Bilāl criticised him for this poem and said: "he does not know how to praise well."⁵³

It is also said that Dhū al-Rumma tried to imitate lines of madīh by al-A'shā and al-Farazdaq, but he "deformed and bolted (without properly chewing) the ma'nā produced by the two poets, when praising Bilāl b. Abī Burda". Al-A'shā initiated this ma'nā:

أُرِيحِي صَلْتٌ بَطْلٌ لَهُ الْقَوُّ مُ قِيَامًا قِيَامَهُمُ لِلْهِلَالِ

Al-Farazdaq then borrowed it:

تَرَى الْفَرَّ الْجَاحِجَ مِنْ قَرِيشٍ إِذَا مَا الْأَمْرُ فِي الْحَدَثَانِ عَالًا
قِيَامًا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى سَعِيدٍ لِأَنَّهُمْ يَبْرُونَ بِهِ هِلَالًا

Dhū al-Rumma's version was:

لَأَنَّ النَّاسَ حِينَ يَمُرُّ حَتَّى عَوَاتِقٌ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَدْعُ الْجِبَالَا
قِيَامًا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى بِلَالٍ رِفَاقٌ الْحَيِّ أَبْقَرَنِي الْهِلَالَا ⁵⁴

Though he was generally regarded as not writing good hijā', some of Dhū al-Rumma's lines in that genre were quoted by al-Askarī and Ibn Rashīq as excellent examples. Al-Askarī described the following lines as the most "eloquent lines of hijā'":

وَأَمْثَلُ أَخْلَاقٍ أَمْرُ الْقَيْسِ أَنَّهَا صِلَابٌ عَلَى طُولِ الْهَوَانِ جُلُودُهَا
وَمَا أَنْتَظَرْتُ نَجَابَهَا لِمَلَمَةٍ وَلَا اسْتَوَمَرْتُ فِي حُلٍّ أَمْرٍ شَهُودُهَا
إِذَا أَمْرِيَّاتٌ كَلَّتْ بِلَدَةٍ مِنْ الْأَرْضِ لَمْ يَصِلْ طَهْوَرًا صَعِيدُهَا ⁵⁵

Ibn Rashīq quoted other lines by him as lines in which the poet used takrār in hijā', in order to make his hijā' more wounding. These lines

are:

تسمى امرؤ القيس بن سعد إذا اعتزن وتأبى السبيل الشهب والائف الحمير
ولكنما أصل امرؤ القيس مفسر بجل لهم لهم الخنازير والنمر
نصاب امرؤ القيس العبيد وأرضهم هم المساحي لا فلاة ولا مفر
تطى إلى الفقر امرؤ القيس إنه سواد على القيس امرؤ القيس والفقر
نخب امرؤ القيس الفري أن تناله وتأبى مقاريطا إذا لمع الفجر
هل الناس إلا يا امرؤ القيس غادر ووافي وما فيكم وفاء ولا غدر

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As has already been mentioned, the 'Umayyad poets included some important poets of rajaz, among whom we singled out al-'Ajjāj and his son Ru'ba, and al-Aghlab and Abū al-Najm, both of whom belonged to the Banū 'Ijl. In comparing them with one another, critics remarked on the development of rajaz which took place at the hands of al-Aghlab al-'Ijlī. One critic, Ibn Abī Ḥabīb, is reported to have said: "The Arabs used to write rajaz in times of war, and for ḥudā' (the animating song of the caravan leader) and mufākkhara, but in all this they wrote only a few lines. When al-Aghlab came along, he was the first to write rajaz as qasīd (qassada al-rajaz), and people followed him in that".⁵⁷ Although Ibn Sallām al-Jumhī claimed that al-Aghlab was the first one who wrote rajaz, it seems that this is not true, to judge from what Ibn Abī Ḥabīb said. Al-Aghlab lived at the time of the Prophet and was probably the first to prolong rajaz poems, although Abu 'Ubayda claimed that al-'Ajjāj was the first who did so.⁵⁸ By prolonging rajaz and writing it like a qasīda they meant that the rajaz poem now contained nasīb, descriptions of deserted dwellings, the poet's weeping over these, and causing his companions to halt there, laments for lost youth, descriptions of the rahīl, and other subjects contained in the qasīda.⁵⁹ Those who were able to write qasīd as well as rajaz were considered superior to others who limited themselves to rajaz only. For this reason some critics

preferred Abū al-Najm al-‘Ijlī to al-‘Ajjāj; the former used to write excellent qasīd besides writing rajaz.⁶⁰ Other poets of qasīd also wrote rajaz: Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, ‘Umar b. Laja', Humayd al-Arqaṭ and al-‘Umānī. Al-Farazdaq, they say, wrote only a few rajaz: less than the other poets. As for Dhū al-Rumma, he used to write exclusively rajaz at first but he left it and turned to qasīd; when asked why he did so he answered that he found himself unable to compete with al-‘Ajjāj and Ru'ba.⁶¹

These poets and rujjāz who lived during the Umayyad period busied themselves mainly with madīh, hijā', mufākkhara, tashbīb and wasf. Their qasīd and rajaz-poems were evaluated by their critics according to the criteria which we have discussed in the last few pages. Parallel to this movement of poetry and criticism, at the same time as these poets were competing with one another to please the Caliphs, the critics and the public with their poems in the different poetic genres, another poetic movement came into existence, led by the Khārijite poets, whose poems are coloured by the spirit of Jihād against the Umayyad caliphate and by their preoccupation with the practice of the teachings of Islam, with martyrdom and paradise. In their poems one finds sincerity, enthusiasm, depth of belief, love of worship and admiration for bravery and warfare. They praised neither Caliphs nor anyone else, and indeed they criticised those who did so. When the Khārijite poet ‘Imrān b. Hattān saw al-Farazdaq reciting one of his madīh poems, he criticised him thus:

أَيُّهَا الْمَادِحُ الْعِبَادِ كَيْفَ لِي أَنْ لِّلَّهِ مَا بَأْيَدِ الْعِبَادِ
فَأَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ مَا طَلَبْتُ إِلَيْهِمْ وَأَرْجُو فَضْلَ الْمُقْسَمِ الْقَوَادِ
لَا تَقُلْ لِلْجَوَادِ مَا لَيْسَ فِيهِ وَتُسَمِّ الْبَخِيلَ بِاسْمِ الْجَوَادِ

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According to them the best poet was the one who expressed sincerity towards God and fear of Him, and the one who wished to die as a martyr for the sake of his religion. It was in the light of this that they

evaluated other poets; one of them called al-Farazdaq "the poet of the non-believers" and one of their own poets "the poet of the believers".⁶³ While other poets had artistic criteria, based on Jāhili poetry, the Khārijite judged poetry according to its sincerity and its adherence to their notions of religious truth. They appear to have applied moral criteria in their criticism even more rigorously than had 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the other moralistic critics whose views we have mentioned. It is actually rather surprising to find so vigorous a poetic school associated with a puritan, revolutionary, religious movement, particularly as much of its poetry, while invariably conforming to the movement's doctrines, is not directly religious in theme; elements of the Jāhili conventions persist, in the phraseology and general approach, above all, in the raiding and battle scenes, which are frequent.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Muhdathūn

The appearance of the poets known generally, probably from the time of Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', as the muwalladūn or the muhdathūn is associated with the growing conflict between critics among the 'ulamā' and ruwāt of the earlier periods, who supported the ancients and preferred them, and other critics and men of letters who admired modern tendencies in poetry. According to Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' even Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal were muwallad poets, compared with the Jāhilī, the Mukhadramūn, and the early Islamic poets.¹ The admiration of the 'ulamā' (grammarians) and ruwāt for the ancient poets will be discussed later. What concerns us here is that this idea of admiring the ancients had gradually developed and resulted in the emergence of two rival camps of literary critics, in which we find the supporters of the ancients and those of the muhdathūn. The opinion of the first group found its expression in the scattered views of the ruwāt and the early 'ulamā', as well as in a number of books, such as fuhūlat al-shu'arā' of al-Asma'ī. The opinion of the second group found its expression in various works of al-Jāhiz, such as al-Hayawān and al-Bayān wa-al-tabyīn, in al-Shi'r wa-al-shu'arā' of Ibn Qutayba, al-Kāmil of al-Mubarrad, Tabaqāt al-shu'arā' of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, and Akhbār Abī Tammām and Akhbār al-Buhturī of al-Sulī. The last two books, in which the author championed the muhdathūn in the person of Abū Tammām, stand opposite to Kitāb al-muwāzana bayna shi'r Abī Tammām wa-al-Buhturī by al-Āmidī, who supported the ancients in the person of al-Buhturī, whom he indirectly indicated as being superior to Abū Tammām. Other literary works, such as Al-Wasāta bayn al-Mutanabbī wa-khusūmihi by al-Qādī al-Jurjānī, Kitāb al-sinā'atayn by Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, al-Mathal al-sā'ir by Ibn

al-Athīr and al-ʿUmda by Ibn Rashīq, all have some concern with the subject of the dispute about the merits of the muhdathūn and the ancients.

We shall not here discuss in detail poetic comparison made between the earlier and the muhdath poets, but rather that made between the muhdathūn themselves, at the same time pointing out some aspects of the admiration shown for the ancients. The most important muhdath poets examined are Bashshār b. Burd, Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa, Muslim b. al-Walīd, Abū Nuwās, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, al-Husayn b. al-Dahhāk, al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf, al-ʿAttābī, al-Sayyid al-Himyarī, and Abū ʿUyayna.

Before we start to discuss the views of the critics about these poets it may be useful to discover the opinions of one or two people among both the commons and men of letters about the nature of good poetry. According to an aʿrābī who was questioned by Ishāq al-Mawsilī, "the best poet is the one who, if he speaks, does so quickly; if he speaks quickly, he invents; if he utters, he causes others to listen; if he praises, he raises up; and if he satirizes he humbles".² It seems that the aʿrābī preferred a poet who had the ability to compose poetry spontaneously, with invention (ibdāʿ) - though we do not know whether this implies practising the art of badīʿ or simply composing wonderful poetry. Since the aʿrābī admired a poet who composed spontaneously, he added the condition that what he composed should be excellent. This is the most probable meaning of ibdāʿ in this context. The compelling voice of the poet and the rapidity of his utterance which are required by the aʿrābī are clearly thought of as signs of a strong poetic talent. They may also reflect something of the restless and impulsive nature of the Bedouin life and way of speaking. However, the aʿrābī mentioned only two poetic genres, madīh and hijāʿ, as criteria for judging a poet. This may reflect the importance of these two genres in the opinion of

critics at that time, some of whom, indeed, said that poetry was divided into two types only, namely, madīh and hijā'. From each of these derive other genres.³ Others added rithā' to madīh and hijā'. The poet 'Abd al-Samad b. al-Mu'adhdhal was reported as saying: "poetry is summed up in three words (i.e. the three genres specified) and not everyone will be able to compose them (i.e. the genres designated by the three words) excellently. If you praise, you should say 'you are'; if you satirize, you should say 'you are not'; and if you elegize you should say 'you were'".⁴ Other critics gave priority to rithā' and preferred a poet who was excellent in that genre because, according to them, rithā' was written neither out of desire nor out of fear. They also preferred a poet who had the ability to praise a woman and elegize her in the same poem.⁵ The combination of rithā' and madīh in one poem was frequently taken as a measure of excellence, as we shall see later in the criticism of Ibn al-Mu'tazz.

It seems that the general opinion about poetry at the time of the muhdathūn was that the most admirable poetry was that which displayed the qualities of facility and clarity. One critic said that the best poetry was "tractable poetry that attains the object".⁶ Ibn al-Mu'tazz reported that a madman was asked about the best poetry and he replied that it was the poetry that "enters easily into the heart without any obstacle". This may refer to 'natural', easy, clear poetry. The view of Abū 'Abd Allāh, the vizier of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī, is a moderate and acceptable one. He is reported to have said: "the best poetry is that which is understood by the commons and accepted by the elite".⁷ In saying this, the vizier was calling for simplicity, clarity and facility in poetry; these were perhaps considered the qualities of 'natural' poetry. At the same time, he required correctness of

language and beauty of expression, and that poetry should not be too simple. These last qualities were required also by the elite, who included men of letters, 'Ulamā', and those among the upper class who were interested in literature.

These views concerning poetry are new, in the sense that they refer generally to poetry and are not limited to particular genres of it, such as hijā' and madīh. In general, however, the dominant critical criterion by which a poet was judged remained his excellence in those genres, and it was in accordance with that that the muhdathūn were judged.

The majority of the muhdathūn lived during the Abbasid Caliphate. From the very beginning of this Caliphate we notice the admiration of the Caliphs for the earlier poets and for the genre of madīh in particular. The first Abbasid Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās al-Saffāh, summed up in a few words his opinion of the muhdath poets. When he was told that a poet had praised him and wished to recite his poem, he asked: "What can he say about me, after Ibn al-Nasrāniyya (al-Akhtal) has written the following excellent line in praise of the Umayyads?" :

شَمْسُ الدَّأْوَةِ كَتَنَ يُسْتَفَادَ لَهُمْ وَأَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ أَحْلَامًا إِذَا قَدَرُوا

The same line was quoted by Harūn al-Rashīd as the "most splendid and excellent line of madīh".⁸ A third Caliph, al-Ma'mūn, expressed his admiration for the earlier poets, and probably the poets of madīh, when he said "Poetry disappeared with the Umayyad Kingdom".⁹

Admiration for the earlier poets may be indirectly found in the views of the Abbasid critics and men of letters concerning the muhdathūn. The criteria used by them in judging the latter were based on the traditional methods used in judging between the earlier poets. In

other words, the ancients were themselves used as standards for judging the muhdathūn. In his comparison of Bashshār, Marwān and Abū Nuwās, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawsilī showed his admiration for the earlier poets and his distaste for the muhdathūn. In preferring Marwān to Bashshār and in rejecting Abū Nuwās, he was guided by his high opinion of the ancients, whom he used as standards for preferring one poet to another. It is said that Ishāq "did not believe in Bashshār", and he used to say about him: "there is a great mixture in his poetry. His poems are different from one another". Ishāq quoted the following lines by Bashshār to prove his claim:

إِنَّمَا عَظِيمُ سُلَيْمٍ حَبْتِي فَغَبَّ الشُّكْرُ لَا عَظِيمُ الْجَمَلِ
وَلِذَا أَذْنِبْتَ مِنْهَا بَعَلًا غَلَبَ الْحَسَدُ عَلَى رِيحِ الْبَقَلِ

Ishāq criticised the poet, saying: "If he wrote the most excellent poetry and then added these lines, it would be spoilt". Ishāq preferred Marwān to Bashshār, on the grounds that "Marwān has more regular poetry than Bashshār. His speech and his style of poetry are more similar to those of the Arabs." Ishāq always "neglected Abū Nuwās, not counting him as a poet at all; he saw no good in him".¹⁰

When Ishāq referred to the 'Arabs', the style of whose poetry Marwān followed, he meant the earlier poets, and it is clear that he considered them to be perfect standards by which to judge Marwān and Bashshār; he favoured the former because of his similarity to the ancients and rejected the latter because of the variation in his poetry. This means that Ishāq required either a consistent level of excellence or a consistent namat (style) of poetry. This criterion of a single namat was used later by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his Tabagāt al-shu'arā' al-muhdathīn, as we shall see.

If Marwān was admired by Ishāq al-Mawsilī and considered superior by him for his "regularity in levels of excellence" and for "following the path of the earlier poets", he was criticised and rejected by others for defects in his poetry. According to Muhammad b. Dāwūd, Yazīd al-Muḥallibī said: "the people of Yamāma have no fluency (fasāḥa) or facility in their poetry". Muhammad b. Dāwūd also commented that "Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa used to refine his poetry and re-examine it; he was not a natural poet".¹¹ Perhaps this not being a natural poet may explain to us the "regularity of levels" in Marwān's poetry; this quality may have resulted from refinement and re-examination. Later, we shall see that al-Asma'ī preferred poetry which had "different levels of excellence", such as the poetry of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī. He regarded this "difference of levels" as a sign of naturalness (ṭab'). This perhaps affirms the view of Muhammad b. Dāwūd that Marwān was not a natural poet. It is strange that Marwān was believed to have inherited his poetry from al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī but that he nonetheless wrote a different kind of poetry from his grandfather. The idea of 'inheriting poetry' we encountered earlier with Zuhayr and his maternal uncle Bishāma b. al-Qadīr. According to Marwān b. Abī al-Janūb, a poet who was a grandson of Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa, "the mother of Yahyā b. Abī Ḥafsa was Lakhnā' Bint Maymūn, who was a descendant of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī. Poetry came to the family of Abū Ḥafsa from there".¹²

The admiration of Ishāq al-Mawsilī for the work of the earlier poets appears also from his remark to Abū Tammām: "Oh, my boy, how much you depend on yourself!" This means that Abū Tammām did not follow the ways of the ancients but his own method of poetry.¹³ When he talked about Abū Nuwās, Ishāq described him as "a maker of mistakes". Al-Marzubānī commented that Ishāq always used to champion the earlier poets, and that 'Alī b. Yahyā said that he used to recite to Ishāq excellent poems by

Abū Nuwās but Ishāq did not care much for them, because of his bad opinion of that poet. Once 'Alī recited to Ishāq the poem of Abū Nuwās which starts:

وَحَيْهَ نَالُوبٍ بِرَأْسٍ مُنِيفَةٍ تَهْمُ بَدَا مَن رَامَهَا بِزَيْلٍ

but Ishāq "was not moved at all and he remained firm in his bad opinion of Abū Nuwās". 'Alī said to him: "If that poem had been written by an a'rābī from the tribe of Hudhayl, surely you would admire it and regard it as the best poetry you had ever heard". Ishāq said to him: "Abū Nuwās makes mistakes and he does not follow the path of the poets".¹⁴

'Alī b. Yahyā mentioned that Ishāq would prefer the poem if it was written by an a'rābī from Hudhayl; admiration for the poets of that tribe is a phenomenon that appears early and it is said to have originated with Hassan b. Thābit, as we shall see; later, Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' also spoke of the fluency of Hudhayl in poetry.

Though Ishāq criticised Abū Nuwās, he admitted that he had written some excellent poems. However, this, in his view, was not enough to place Abū Nuwās in the first class of poets. According to al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad al-Yazīdī and others, Ishāq was once heard to say: "I did not think that I should live to see the time when the poetry of Abū Nuwās would be so admired. I thought him (some time ago) the lowest of his class. Nevertheless, he is excellent from time to time".¹⁵ Restricting poetry only to madiḥ and hijā', Abū 'Alī al-Baṣīr rejected Abū Nuwās and those like him. According to Aḥmad b. Abī Tāhir, Abū 'Alī al-Baṣīr accepted neither Abū Nuwās nor Muslim b. al-Walīd, nor those poets who followed their style. Aḥmad b. Abī Tāhir, who supported Abū Nuwās, argued with al-Baṣīr and claimed that if one assumed that Abū Nuwās had one or two excellent lines in every poetic genre that he wrote in, he would have a total of enough excellent lines to be regarded as one of

the most excellent and versatile poets. He added that no-one could deny the excellence of Abū Nuwās. Abū 'Alī al-Basīr replied: "poetry is based on madīh and hija', in neither of which genres Abū Nuwās is excellent. The best of his poetry is about wine and hunting (tard), and even then, the best of it is plagiarised. If Abū Nuwās borrows a poetic ma'nā he is unable to develop it and is reduced simply to copying it.

For instance, his line:

وَدَاوَنِي بِالنِّسَاءِ كَأَنَّ هِيَ الرَّاءُ

is borrowed from al-A'shā:

وَأُخْرَى تَدَاوَيْتُ مِنْهَا بِهَا

which is better than his. He also borrows the line:

لَا نَ الشَّبَابُ مَطِيَّةَ الْجَهْلِ

from al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī:

فَبِأَنْ يَلُوكَ عَامِرٌ قَدْ قَالَ جَهْلًا خَانَ مَطِيَّةَ الْجَهْلِ الشَّبَابُ

He also borrows:

لَمَّا تَبَدَّى الشَّبَّاحُ مِنْ حَبَابِهِ كَطَلْعَةِ الْأَشْمَلِ مِنْ جَلَابِهِ

from the line of Abū al-Najm al-'Ijlī:

كَطَلْعَةِ الْأَشْمَلِ مِنْ كِسَائِهِ

Besides these lines, he commits further plagiarism on an indescribable scale from the poetry in which poets have preceded him; so, if he is unable to rise to the level of these poets in poetry in which they have excelled him (i.e. if, in spite of having earlier poets' ma'ānī to draw on, he fails, because of his inability to develop these, not only to surpass, but even to equal, them), what do you think of that poetry in which he is below his contemporaries? (i.e. in the kinds of poetry in which he has not got such resources of already-established ma'ānī to take over, he is even worse than in the former kinds. The precise sense of this sentence is somewhat obscure, but this must be the general implication). The only thing I can say about him is that he has been lucky in having his poetry widely circulated and transmitted. The people of his country have favoured him even though his work contains

many grammatical mistakes and absurdities (ihāla); if you realise this, you will throw away most of his poetry. Nevertheless, he is excellent in many poems, but not to the exaggerated extent that the ignorant believe.¹⁶

Clearly, besides excellence in madīh and hijā', and correctness of language, Abū 'Alī required of the poet that he should add to the lines he borrowed from others and present what he borrowed in a better way. If he merely copied the idea, in similar words, this would be regarded as simple plagiarism. Though Abū 'Alī criticised Abū Nuwās for not writing excellent madīh, other critics, on the contrary, considered Abū Nuwās superior to all other muhdathūn in some of his lines of madīh. According to 'Alī b. Hārūn "people of knowledge have agreed that the best lines of madīh ever written by the muwalladūn are the following two by Abū Nuwās:

أَمَتَ الَّذِي تَأْخُذُ الْأَيْدِي تَحْجِرَتِهِ إِذَا الزَّمَانُ عَلَى أَيْبَانِهِ كَلِمًا
وَلَلَّتْ بِالْقَهْرِ عَيْنًا غَيْرَ غَافِلَةٍ مِنْ جُودِ كَلِّكَ تَأْسُوكُلَّ مَا جَرَحَا

Some critics preferred the other two lines:

تَفَلَّتْ مِنْ دَهْرِي بِلَلِّ جَنَاحِهِ قَعْمَيْنِ تَرَى دَهْرِي وَلَيْسَ بَرَانِي
فَلَوْ تَسْأَلِ الْأَحْدَاثُ عَنِّي مَا دَرْتُ وَأَبْنِ مَكَانِي مَا عَرَفْتِ مَكَانِي

17

Abū 'Alī did not precisely give a scientific explanation when he referred the fame of Abū Nuwās to the fact that the poet was just a lucky man. The approach of Abū al-Mundhir to the problem is more reasonable. He believed that "the poetry of Abū Nuwās is admired by people because of its facility and beauty of words, as well as the great quality of badā'i' that it contains; these are the things that people actually admire in poetry".¹⁸

Those who had an exaggerated admiration for Abū Nuwās and preferred him to Bashshār did so because they were ignorant of the latter, in

al-Sulī's view. According to him, Bashshār was the master of all the muhdath poets; all of them had followed him and borrowed his concepts. He defended Bashshār against those who claimed that Abū Nuwās was superior to him. Those who believed this quoted lines by Abū Nuwās in which they considered that he showed distinction. Al-Sulī countered their arguments by pointing out the originals from which Abū Nuwās had borrowed these lines. For example, his supporters admired these two lines:

إِذَا نَحْنُ أَتَيْنَا عَلَيْكَ بِصَالِحٍ فَأَنْتَ كَمَا نَشْنِ وَفَوْقَ الَّذِي نُشْنِ
وَإِنْ جَرَى الْأَلْفَاظُ بَوْمًا مَدَّةً لِفَيْرِكَ إِنْسَانًا فَأَنْتَ الَّذِي تَقْنِ

Al-Sulī stated that the first line was borrowed from the following line of al-Khansā':

فَمَا بَلَغَ الْمُهْدُونَ لِلنَّاسِ مِدَّةً وَإِنْ أَطْبَعُوا إِلَّا الَّذِي خَبَدَ أَفْضَلُ

and also from the following line of 'Adī b. al-Riqā':

أَنْتَ خَلَا آلُو وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهَ فَوْقَ الَّذِي أَتْنِ بِهِ وَأَقُولُ

The second line was borrowed from one by al-Farazdaq, addressing Ayyūb b. Sulaymān:

وَمَا وَامَرْتَنِي النَّفْسُ فِي رُحْلَةٍ لَهَا إِلَى أَحَدٍ إِلَّا إِلَيْكَ ضَمِيرَهَا 19

Like Abū 'Alī al-Basīr, al-Sulī was looking for originality above all. He preferred Bashshār to all other muhdathūn because of this quality, in which all others were behind him. Al-Jāhiz, on the other hand, as we shall see, adopted a more moderate view; he preferred Bashshār to all other muwalladūn, but ranked Abū Nuwās next to him.²⁰ Because of his originality and his mastership among the muwalladūn, Bashshār was compared with Imru' al-Qays, in the sense that "he preceded the muwalladūn and they borrowed from him, just as Imru' al-Qays preceded the ancients in creating certain poetic ma'ānī which they borrowed from him. For that reason Bashshār was called "the father of the muhdathūn".²¹

Abū Nuwās was likened to al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī in "eloquence, firmness of composition, gracefulness, elegance of style, and skill in praising kings".²² Similarity between Abū Nuwās and al-Nābigha in "skill in praising kings" may stand as evidence against Abū ʿAlī al-Baṣīr in his criticising Abū Nuwās for not writing excellent madīh. Bashshār was also admired for his powerful tabʿ, in which he was likened to al-Aʿshā; other similarities were also recognised between them. It was said: "al-Aʿshā is called sannājat al-ʿArab because he was the first to mention cymbals in his poetry; but it is also said that he was so called because of his powerful tabʿ and the beauties of his poetry. If one recites it, one will imagine that someone else is reciting with one. The poet who is most similar to him among the muhdathūn is Bashshār; if one of his poems composed in the shortest ʿarūd and in the most delicate language is recited, the reciter will feel a sense of movement and emotion. This is because of the powerful tabʿ of Bashshār, who is also similar to al-Aʿshā in having an unlimited ability to write in a variety of poetic genres such as madīh, hijāʾ and fakhr, to compose in the whole range of ʿarūd, and to produce long poems".²³

Although Ibn al-Muʿtazz had referred badīʿ to a time before Bashshār and Abū Tammām, and had discovered it in the Jāhilī poems, in the Qurʾān and in the Hadīth of the Prophet, those who gave Bashshār superiority over the other muhdathūn and regarded him as their master claimed that his originality lay in using badīʿ. When Ibrāhīm b. Yahyā al-Madanī spoke of Muslim b. al-Walīd he described him as "a very excellent poet of madīh", and alleged that "he was the first poet to widen badīʿ; Bashshār was the one who initiated it".²⁴ Ibn Rashīq, stated that the first to use badīʿ among the muhdathūn were Bashshār and Ibn Harma; the latter is known as the rear-guard of the Arabs and the last poet whose poetry is quoted as a hujja. These two poets were

followed in using badī by Kulthūm al-ʿAttābī, Mansūr al-Namrī, Muslim b. al-Walīd and Abū Nuwās. These again were followed by Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī and ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Muʿtazz. The last is described by Ibn Rashīq as having "the knowledge of badī and poetic craftsmanship gathered together in his hands; they are sealed with him".²⁵ Ibn al-Muʿtazz himself, as we shall see later, admired Bashshār, preferred him to all other muhdathūn and stated his superiority and his mastership over them.²⁶

Besides his powerful tab, his originality in using badī and his other poetic qualities, Bashshār is considered superior for his lines in certain poetic genres. The following opening of a poem was judged the most excellent of any by a muhdath poet:

أَبَى لَهْلَلٌ بِالْجَنَعِ أَنْ يَتَكَلَّمَ وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِ لَوْ أَجَابَ مُتَبِّمًا
وَبِالْفَرَسِ أَثَارٌ لِهَيْدٍ وَبِاللَّوْى مَلَاعِبٌ مَا يُعْرَفْنَ إِلَّا تَوْفَهُمَا

He was also considered to have written the "most splendid lines of fakhr ever written by a muhdath". His lines read as follows:

إِذَا مَا غَفَبْنَا غَفْبَةً مُفَرِّقَةً هَتَكُنَا حِجَابَ الشَّمْسِ أَوْ قَطَرَنَ دَمًا
إِذَا مَا أَعْرَضْنَا سَيِّدًا مِنْ قَبِيلَةٍ ذُرًّا مُنْبَرِّحًا عَلَيْنَا وَسَلًّا²⁷

The most important quality for which Bashshār is admired is tab. He, al-Sayyid al-Himyarī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiya were described as the "most natural poets among those of the Jāhiliyya and Islām; no-one is able to collect the whole of their poetry for there is too much".²⁸

Both Abū Nuwās and his friend al-Husayn b. al-Daḥḥāk known as al-Khalī were the pupils of the poet Wālība b. al-Ḥubāb, who "had no equal in the poetry of mujūn and khalāʿa", and from whom they borrowed and learned the art of mujūn, as we are informed by Ibn Abī Fanan.²⁹ Abū Nuwās and al-Husayn competed in wine poetry and the latter claimed that he had

surpassed his peer by his wine poem that starts:

بَدَلْتُ مِنْ نَفْحَانِ الْوَرْدِ بِالْآءِ وَمِنْ صَبُوحِكَ دَرَّ الْإِبِلِ وَالشَّاءِ

When al-Husayn claimed superiority over Abū Nuwās and other muhdath poets on the strength of this poem, he was criticised by Ahmad b.

Khallād, who believed that he was only "imitating and circling round the other wine poem by Abū Nuwās, which is better". The poem of Abū Nuwās, in the same rhyme, starts:

كَعَمَّ عَنْكَ لَوْحِي فَإِنَّ اللُّوْحَ لِأَعْرَافٍ وَدَاوُنِي بِالنِّى لَأَنْتَ هِيَ الرَّاءُ

Ahmad b. Khallād preferred the poem of Abū Nuwās to the one by al-Husayn because the latter contained no "unique lines" except the following:

قَفَّتْ خَوَاتِمَهَا فِي نَفْتٍ وَاصِفِهَا عَنْ مِثْلِ رَقْرَاقَةٍ فِي عَيْنِي مَرَّهَا

Abū Nuwās' poem, on the other hand, contained the following lines:

دَارَنْ عَلَى فَتْيَةٍ دَلَّ الزَّمَانُ لَهُمْ فَمَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءُوا
صَفَرَاءُ لِانْتِزَلِ الْأَحْزَانِ سَاحَتَهَا لَوْ مَسَّهَا حَجَرٌ مَسَّتْهُ سَرَّاءُ
فَأُرْسِلَتْ مِنْ فَمِ الْإِبْرِيقِ صَافِيَةً لَأَنَّمَا أَخَذَهَا بِالْعَيْنِ إِنْغَفَاءُ

Khallād claimed that al-Husayn would never be able to write similar lines to these.³⁰

The most important fact about the wine poets such as Abū Nuwās, al-Husayn b. al-Dahhāk, Abū Haffān and others, as we are informed by Sadafa al-Bakrī, was that they were all able to write excellent poetry of wine owing to the fact that "they had looked into the poetry of Abū al-Hindī and discovered his poetic ma'ānī of wine description".³¹

Abū Nuwās was considered superior to Muslim b. al-Walīd for "writing poetry spontaneously" while Muslim "pretended to be restrained and calm and to not write poetry unless after deep thought". He was also considered superior to him by virtue of being a mutasarrif and writing poetry in many different genres and in many styles, while Muslim

restricted himself to one manner and never changed it".³² The following lines are quoted as an example of the "easy, fluent and plain poetry" of Abū Nuwās:

قُلْ لِيهِ الْقُوَّةُ الطَّيِّرُ وَلِيَّ الرِّدْفِ الْوَتِيرُ
وَالْمُعْلَقِ هُمُومِي وَمِفْتَاحِ سُورِي
يَا قَبِيلًا فِي التَّلَاقِ وَكَثِيرًا فِي الضَّمِيرِ

These others are an example of poetry by Abū Nuwās containing "firmness of composition":

مَا هَوَى إِلَّا لَهُ سَبَبُ يَبْتَدِي مِنْهُ وَيَنْشَعِبُ
فَتَنَتْ قَلْبِي مَحَبَّةٌ بِرَدَائِ الْحُسْنِ تَنْتَقِبُ
خُلَيْتِ وَالْحُسْنُ تَأْخُذُهُ تَنْتَقِي مِنْهُ وَتَنْتَخِبُ
فَأَنْتَقَتْ مِنْهُ طَرَائِقُهُ وَاسْتِزَادَتْ فَضْلَ مَا تَنْهَبُ
صَارَ جِدًّا مَا مَرَحَتْ بِهِ رَبِّ جِدِّ جَرَهُ اللَّعِبُ

33

Al-ʿAskarī quoted another example from the poetry of Abū Nuwās in which he had a variety of firm and delicate composition, just as we have noticed in the two examples quoted above.³⁴

Although Abū al-ʿAtāhiya was said to be the "most able poet at writing poetry spontaneously", Abū Nuwās was considered superior to him because he "is better than Abū al-ʿAtāhiya at going deeper into the craft of poetry and because he is more excellent than him in all poetic fields".³⁵

Ibn al-Athīr stated that Abū Nuwās was to be preferred to other poets of his time because of the "fluency, facility and delicacy of his poetry".³⁶ Abū al-ʿAtāhiya was admired for similar qualities, as we shall see, but he was criticised by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī for "poetry which is nearer to prose than to real poetry". Ishāq refused to accept the following line of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya as poetry:

هُوَ اللَّهُ هُوَ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ 37

He was also criticised by Muḥammad b. Yahyā for writing mudamman poetry, which was regarded as a major defect. Ibn Yahyā quoted the following

lines of his as an example of mudamman:

وَاللهُ لَوْ كَلَّفَتْ مِنْهُ مَكَا	يَا ذَا الَّذِي فِي الْحُبِّ يَلْحَى أَمَا
لَهَتْ عَلَى الْحُبِّ ، فَذَرْنِي وَمَا	كَلَّفَتْ مِنْ حُبِّ رَجِيمٍ ، لَهَا
بُيُوتٌ إِلَّا أَنِّي بَيْنَهَا	أَلْقَى ، فَإِنِّي كَسْتُ أَدْرِ بِهَا
أَطُوفُ فِي قَصْرِهِمْ - إِذْ رَوَى	أَنَا بَابَ الْفَقْرِ - فَرَبَعٌ مَا
أُخْطَأُ بِهَا قَلْبِي ، وَلَكِنَّمَا	قَلْبِي غَزَالٌ بِسَهَامٍ ، فَمَا
أُرَادَ قَتْلِي بِهَا سَلَامًا	سَهْمَاهُ عَيْنَانِ لَهُ ، كُلُّمَا

According to Muhammad b. Yahyā, the best kind of poetry is that, each of the lines of which - and, indeed, on occasions, parts of each line - can stand by itself and independent from the others, such as the following line of al-Nābigha, the parts of which are independent and give a complete meaning:

وَلَسْتَ بِمُسْتَبَقٍ أَخَا لَا تَلْمُهُ عَلَى شَقِيٍّ ، أَيُّ الرِّجَالِ الْمُهَذَّبُ

If one recites the part:

أَيُّ الرِّجَالِ الْمُهَذَّبُ

it gives a complete sense; the same is true if one recites the other part:

وَلَسْتَ بِمُسْتَبَقٍ أَخَا لَا تَلْمُهُ عَلَى شَقِيٍّ

38

It seems likely that this idea of the independent line, or part-line, of al-Nābigha originated with Ḥammād al-Rāwīya who admired al-Nābigha for such lines, as we shall see when we discuss the views of the ruwāt and 'ulama'. The unity of a poem, according to this outlook, is apparently considered to be better achieved by a series of independent lines constituting a progression or train of thought than by the unsymmetrical and untidy practice of tadmīn.

Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, at all events, was well known for his great quantity of poetry and for his powerful tabʿ, to the extent that most of his

speech was said to be poetry or to have poetic characteristics, as Abū al-ʿAnqāʾ al-Basrī observed. In his opinion, the ghazal of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya was very soft, like the discourse of women and in harmony with their nature. In this, he was similar to ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa and al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf.³⁹ When Harūn al-Rashīd, who was a great admirer of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, argued with Ishāq al-Mawsilī, who preferred al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf, he recited the following two lines of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and ordered Ishāq to learn them by heart. Harūn appears to be influenced by considerations of rigga in ghazal here:

قال لي أحمد ولم يدرب ما بي أُنخب الفداة عُنْبَةً حَقًّا
فَتَنَقَّسْتُ ثُمَّ قُلْتُ نَعَمْ جُبًّا جَرَى فِي الْعُرُوقِ عَرَقًا فَعَرَقًا

He claimed that he had never heard anything like:

فَتَنَقَّسْتُ ثُمَّ قُلْتُ

40

Abū al-ʿAtāhiya was also admired for madīh poetry because "he reduced tashbīb". When he praised ʿUmar b. al-ʿAlāʾ, the latter rewarded him with seventy thousand dirhams. A poet criticised ʿUmar b. al-ʿAlāʾ for giving Abū al-ʿAtāhiya more than he deserved for his madīh poem, which was not so excellent. ʿUmar b. al-ʿAlāʾ replied: "A poet among you [addressing poets] will go round and round a poetic maʿnā, trying to write it down, but he will fail and will not succeed until he has written about fifty lines of tashbīb, after which he will praise me in only a few lines. This man (Abū al-ʿAtāhiya) seems to have had all poetic maʿanī gathered together for him. He shortened the tashbīb and praised me in these terms:

إِنِّي أَمِنْتُ مِنَ الزَّمَانِ وَرَيْبِهِ لَمَّا عَلِقْتُ مِنَ الْأَمِيرِ حَبَالًا
لَوْ يَسْتَطِيعُ النَّاسُ مِنْ إِجْلَالِهِ لَحَذَّوْا لَهُ حُرَّ الْوَجْهِ نَعَالًا
لَإِنَّ الْمَطَايَا تَشْتَكِيكَ لِأَنْظَا قَطَعْتَ إِلَيْكَ سَبَابًا وَرِمَالًا
فَإِذَا وَرَدَنَّا بِنَا وَرَدَنَّا مُنْقَعَةً وَإِذَا رَجَعْنَا بِنَا رَجَعْنَا نَقَالًا

41

Shortness of tashbīb is recommended in a madīh poem. When a poet praised Nasr b. Sayyār in a poem that contained a very long tashbīb,

Nasr said to him "there is no excellent poetic ma'nā but that you have used in your tashbīb instead of in my praise". The poet came the next day with another poem, this time of rajaz, which contained only half of a line of tashbīb, the rest of it being in praise of the emir. It began:

هَلْ تَذْكُرُ الدَّارَ لِأُمِّ الْعَمْرِ دَعَى ذَا وَحَبَّرَ مِدْحَةً فِي نَصْرِ

Nasr did not accept this poem either and said to the poet: "No, it is neither that nor this; but it is better to be in between".⁴²

Al-Rashīd also admired the madīh poetry of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and preferred him to all other poets of madīh for the following lines:

يَا مَنْ تَبَقَّى زَمَنًا صَالِحًا صلاحُ هَارُونَ صلاحُ الزَّمَنِ
كُلُّ لِسَانٍ هُوَ فِي مَلِكِهِ بالشكر في إحسانه مُرْتَهَنٌ

Abu al-ʿAtāhiya was the only poet who received the Caliph's prize on that day when poets came to recite their poems in praise of al-Rashīd.⁴³

The poem in which Abū al-ʿAtāhiya praised the Caliph al-Mahdī may show us some of the characteristics of his madīh poetry by which he excelled other poets:

أَتَتْهُ الْخِلَافَةُ مُنْقَادَةً إِلَيْهِ تَجَرَّرُ أَذْيَالُهَا
فَلَمْ تَكْ تَصْلُحْ إِلَّا لَهُ وَلَمْ يَكْ يَصْلُحْ إِلَّا لَهَا
وَلَوْ رَامَهَا أَحَدٌ غَيْرُ لَزُلْزِلَتْ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالُهَا
وَلَوْ لَمْ تَطْعُهُ نِبَاتُ الْقُلُوبِ لَهَا قَبْلَ اللَّهِ أَعْمَالُهَا

Ibn al-Athīr, who described the poetry of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya as "like water in softness of words and elegance of composition, and free from weakness", spoke about this poem as follows: "And you should know that these lines quoted above belong to 'delicate' ghazal and madīh. ALL poets at that time submitted to this. The poem had reached its final point of fluency and elegance; such poetry is called the "apparently easy but impossible to imitate" (al-sahl al-mumtani); if you recite it,

you feel that you can write poetry similar to it, but if you try to, it jinks away as a fox does; this is what poetry and speech should be, and the best is that which enters the ear without permission".⁴⁴

As we have mentioned before, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya was likened to ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa and al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf. The similarity between the three lies in their "softness and delicacy in discourse with women in ghazal poetry; their language is in harmony with the nature of women".⁴⁵ The difference between Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and the other two is that he also wrote madīh, while they restricted themselves to ghazal poetry. There were other poets who avoided madīh, as Jamīl Buthayna and al-Rammāh b. Mayyāda. Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf was said by Muṣʿab al-Zubayrī to be the "ʿUmar of Iraq". He meant that al-ʿAbbās was, for the people of Iraq, like ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa for the people of the Hijāz, in the sense that both of them concerned themselves with ghazal poetry and neglected madīh and hijā. Nevertheless, al-ʿAbbās received prizes from al-Rashīd and other Caliphs for his excellent ghazal and his gentleness in approaching tashbīb.⁴⁶

Though al-ʿAbbās was famous for his ghazal poetry and his gentleness in discourse with women, he was regarded by some as an unsuccessful poet, in spite of the fact that he restricted himself to that genre.

According to al-Madā'inī al-ʿAbbās and Abū al-ʿAtāhiya were incapable of achieving their object. Al-Madā'inī is reported as saying: "al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf was in his ghazal poetry similar to Abū al-ʿAtāhiya in his zuhd poetry. Both of them made many incisions but failed to reach the joint". This means that they were unable to hit the mark and that they failed to express themselves. Al-Madā'inī criticised al-ʿAbbās for the following line:

فَإِنْ تَقْتُلُونِي لَا تَقْتُلُوا بِهَيْبَتِي مَهَالَيْتَ قَوْمِي مِنْ كَيْفَةِ أَوْعَجِدَ

accusing him of being insensitive towards his beloved in threatening her that his sons would avenge him if she caused him to die of love for her.⁴⁷

Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf was also compared with al-ʿAttābī and was considered superior to him. Muḥammad b. Yahyā al-Sūlī reported that Ahmad b. Yahyā b. ʿAlī al-Munajjim disputed with a certain al-Mutafaqqih al-Mawsilī about the relative merits of al-ʿAbbās and al-ʿAttābī. Al-Mutafaqqih alleged the superiority of al-ʿAttābī over al-ʿAbbās, and al-Munajjim, in reply, wrote a short treatise in which he compared the two poets and argued the superiority of al-ʿAbbās. In this he wrote: "Al-ʿAttābī has not the qualifications to excel al-ʿAbbās in poetry and he would not expect anyone to prefer him to his peer; if anyone claimed to do so, al-ʿAttābī would reject that, because he knows well about poetry and knows that he cannot reach the position of al-ʿAbbās. Indeed, I have never seen a critic who alleged any similarity between the two poets, or anyone who preferred al-ʿAttābī to al-ʿAbbās. This is because of the fact that the two poets are different from each other in their styles of poetry. Al-ʿAttābī is a mutakallif while al-ʿAbbās is a very natural poet. His discourse is plain and sweet while the speech of al-ʿAttābī is complicated and rigid. The poetry of al-ʿAbbās contains freshness, softness and sweetness; while in the poetry of al-ʿAttābī there is coarseness and solidity. The poetry of al-ʿAbbās is in one poetic genre, ghazal, which he has written a great deal, and it is excellent. On the other hand, al-ʿAttābī has a variety of poetic genres but in all of them he is just as described above. The best of his poetry is the poem in which he praised al-Rashīd, starting:

يَا بِلَّةَ لِي. نُحَوَّارِينَ سَاهِرَةً حَتَّى تَتَلَكَّمْ فِي الصَّبْحِ الْعَصَافِيرُ

In it he wrote:

فِي مَا قَرَّيْتُ انْقِبَاصًا عَنْ جَفُونِهِمَا وَفِي الْجَفُونِ عَنِ الْأَعْمَاقِ تَقْصِيرُ

This he borrowed from an excellent line by Bashshār:

جَفَّتْ عَيْنِي عَنِ التَّقْمِيمِ حَتَّى لَأَنَّ جَفُونَهَا عِنْدَ قِصَارِ

Bashshār himself had borrowed the idea from Jamīl Buthayna's line:

لَأَنَّ الْهَبَّ قَصِيرُ الْجَفُونِ لَطَوَى السَّهَادَ وَلَمْ تَقْصُرْ

Though Bashshār's line is excellent it does not equal Jamīl's. Then

when al-ʿAttābi borrowed the maʿnā, he misrepresented and abused it.

If a poet borrows a maʿnā from a predecessor, he should represent it

in a better and more excellent way than that in which it was

originally written. He should add something to the original idea so

as to give the line its due. If he fails to achieve this object he is

to be blamed for plagiarism and for inability. When al-ʿAttābi entered

his battle of hiḡā with Abū Qābūs al-Nasrānī, he was defeated even

though Abū Qābūs was not a good poet.

To return to the poem mentioned above, al-ʿAttābi included the following

lines:

مَاذَا عَسَى مَادِحٌ يَتَنَى عَلَيْكَ وَقَدْ نَادَاكَ فِي الْوَحْيِ تَقْرِيسٌ وَزَلْهِيرُ
فَتَّ الْمَادِحِ إِلَّا أَنَّ السُّنَنَ مُسْتَنْطِقَانِ بِمَا تُخْفِي الضَّمَائِرُ

Here he used the word al-mamādiḡ in the second line; if he had instead used al-madāʿiḡ, it would have been better, lighter on the ear and more in accordance with the practice of skillful and natural poets. He also used the word mustantiqāt in the same line; if he had used nawātiḡ instead, it would have been better and more natural. Finally, he used the word al-damāʿīr, thus ending his line with an extremely heavy word, which, if dropped in the sea, would pollute it. Though it is correct, it is not familiar and not sweet. Indeed, there is nothing better in poetry, after correctness of maʿnā, than beauty of words. These

defects of al-ʿAttābi are actually due to affectation and faulty tabʿ. As for al-ʿAbbās, he has many merits.⁴⁸ The treatise of al-Munajjim is one of the earliest works concerning poetic comparison and there is no doubt that al-ʿAmidī, in his comparative study of the poetry of Abū Tammām and al-Buhturī, owed much to his predecessors, like al-Munajjim, in this field.

Although al-Munajjim found al-ʿAbbās, in general, superior to al-ʿAttābi, and, in fact, put him on an altogether different level of ability, it is clear that he considered that there was no proper basis for a comparison, since there was so little similarity in their poetic production. He concentrated therefore on their use of language, in which some sort of comparison was possible, even though one might imagine that the natural, limpid style that was well suited to ghazal was less appropriate to madih. There was obviously a considerable body of opinion at this time that favoured a simple, unaffected style in all poetry, although admirers of a more florid, complex style were never lacking.

Al-Munajjim did not prohibit a poet to borrow a poetic maʿnā from another, but he insisted that the borrower should add to the original idea and represent the maʿnā more excellently. He paid much attention to tabʿ, and in criticising some words used by al-ʿAttābi he described them as heavy on the ear and removed from what was natural. Although he admired beauty of words however, correctness of maʿnā came first for him.

One of the exaggerated notions in the field of poetic comparison is that of khatm al-shuʿarāʾ ("the seal of the poets"). It means the last person who actually deserves the name of poet. The term seems to be associated with the appearance of the muhdath or muwallad poets, and it appears

that Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', who did not recognise the muwalladūn, was among the first critics to use it, although we do not know when it was used for the first time and by whom. However, it appears to me that the philologists were the first group to introduce the idea of khatm al-shu'arā' to mean the last poet whose poetry deserved to be cited as a witness for correct language. One of the poets who was accorded the title was Dhū al-Rumma, who was regarded as khatm al-shu'arā' by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā'. This judgement of Abū 'Amr's was later rejected by his own great-grandson Salm b. Khālīd b. Mu'āwiya b. Abī 'Amr. According to al-Hasan b. 'Alī al-Anbārī, Salm was reported as saying: "My great-grandfather, Abū 'Amr, used to seal poetry with Dhū al-Rumma, but if he had seen 'Amāra b. 'Aqīl b. Jarīr, he would have known that he was better than Dhū al-Rumma in the ways of poetry. 'Amāra's poetry is even more consistent (in level) than that of Jarīr because Jarīr had some weaknesses (sagāt) in his poetry and there is nothing worthless in 'Amāra's poetry".⁴⁹

The comment by Muhammad b. Yazīd on the remark made by Salm about 'Amāra's poetry, may perhaps confirm our explanation for the term khatm al-shu'arā', as used by the earlier philologists and ruwāt. He said: "Eloquence in the poetry of the muhdathūn is sealed by 'Amāra b. 'Aqīl".⁵⁰

Another term which is similar to khatm al-shu'arā', and for which a straightforward explanation can be given, is the one referred to Ibn Harma, who is said to be "the rear-guard of the Arabs" (sagāt al-'arab) also meaning "the last poet whose poetry is cited as a witness", as interpreted by Ibn Rashīq.⁵¹ Later, the term khatm al-shu'arā' was used in a wider sense, when, for example, critics said: "poetry was begun by

the tribe of Kinda and was sealed by it". This may mean that the first who deserved the name of poet was Imru' al-Qays, who belonged to the tribe of Kinda and that the last was al-Mutanabbī who is said to have belonged to the same tribe. Others said: "poetry was begun by a king - meaning Imru' al-Qays - and was sealed by a king - meaning Abū Firās al-Hamdānī". Or again: "poetry was begun by the tribe of Rabī'a - meaning by its poet al-Muhalhil - and was sealed by it - meaning by Abū Firās, who belonged to the same tribe".⁵²

The critics almost certainly borrowed the term khatm from the Qur'ān, where we find the Prophet Muhammad declared to be the khātim of the Prophets, meaning the "seal" of them, after whom no true prophet will come. Though the word khatm may have been known to the Jāhilīs, the influence of the Qur'ānic term on critics may be seen in the new significance that they give to khatm, in using it to describe a poet as the last whose language is correct, fluent and worth citing. Probably such a poet followed the style of the ancients and his poetry was full of Bedouin concepts, as was the case with Dhū al-Rumma. Anyhow, it seems to me that the terms khatm and sāgat, which have similar meanings, are used in a literary-critical context as a sign of hostility towards the muhdathūn. They are used to demarcate the beginning of the era of the muhdathūn and the end of that of the early poets who were regarded as the only true poets by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' and his generation.

The term khatm was also used in the field of mysticism, where we find khatm al-awliyā' used by al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 296), and later by Muhyi al-Dīn b. 'Arabī.⁵³

The use of the terms khatm and sāgat al-shu'arā' by critics among philologists, ruwāt and grammarians, bears the same significance of using the ancients as criteria for judging the muhdathūn as we have seen in the case of Ishāq al-Mawsilī when he championed Marwān because "he was similar to the early poets", and rejected Abū Nuwās because the latter "made grammatical mistakes". The fact that they explained these terms to refer to those whose poetry might be cited as witnesses for language, in itself confirms our claim that the ancients were used as standards for judging the muhdathūn. The latter were admired as long as they followed the early poets. Even those among the muhdathūn who were admired for their badī', such as Bashshār and Abū Nuwās, were admired because they were similar to Imru' al-Qays, al-Nābigha and al-A'shā, as we have seen. The poets of ghazal, like al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf, and Abū al-'Atāhiya in his ghazal poetry, were admired for the quality of rigga found in their poems. Both of these were judged and measured against 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, to whom they were likened. The standard of "consistency in levels of excellence" which we have seen in the criticism of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār of the two lāmiyyas of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a and Jamīl Buthayna, is also found in Ishāq al-Mawsilī, who preferred Marwān to Bashshār on that basis. The standards of variety of poetic genres, and of difference in poetic manner (firmness or softness of composition) were also used in judging the muhdathūn, when Abū Nuwās was preferred to Muslim b. al-Walīd. Other poetic qualities were also demanded in muhdath poetry; such were correctness of the ma'nā and of language, beauty of words, firmness and facility, shortness of tashbīb and natural poetry. As a later critic, Ibn Wakī' al-Hasan Abū Muhammad, commented "the poems of the muwalladūn are recited because of the sweetness and delicacy of their words and the sweetness of their ma'ānī. If they had tried to follow the ancients in using gharīb and in

describing deserts, wild animals and insects, their poems would not be recited, because the ancients are more associated with those topics than the muwalladūn. People nowadays are not very much interested in literature and they are looking for a kind of poetry that can be admired by both the elite (khāssa) and the commons (ʿamma) ...".⁵⁴

The last remark of Ibn Wakīʿ about poetry that can be accepted by the elite and admired by the commons, is not very different from what Abū ʿAbd Allāh, the vizier of the Abbasid Caliph, said, as we have seen. They appear to have meant that admired muhdath poetry is that which combined the characteristics of ancient and muhdath. In other words, it should be grammatically correct, contain firmness of composition, facility of maʿnā, natural poetic maʿānī, and some of the "poetic beauties" and badiʿ. This is the sense that emerges from these general comparative views concerning the ancients and the muhdathūn. Critics said that "the ancients are quoted for their words and the muhdathūn are quoted for their "poetic beauties" and badiʿ". Ibrāhīm b. al-Hasan b. Sahl said: "the ancients are regarded as a hujja, and these people (the Muhdathūn) have more beautiful characterisation".⁵⁵

CHAPTER SIX

The Opinions of the Poets

As a preliminary to the discussion of the poets' own opinions about good and bad poetry and about the merits of each poet and his views on his own and others' poetry, it may be useful to quote some lines by different poets in which they speak of their position in poetry.

Boasting about one's poetry was a habit among poets, and they expressed their high opinions of themselves in different ways. For example, a poet might claim that his jinnī, who inspired him with poetry, was the amīr of the jinn of all poets, meaning that he is the best poet of all. One rajaz-poet wrote:

يَا نِيَّ وَإِنْ كَانَ صَغِيرًا سِنِّي وَلَئِنْ فِي الْعَيْنِ نُبُوٌّ عَنِّي
فَإِنَّ شَيْطَانِي أَمِيرُ الْجِنِّ بِذَهَبُ بِي فِي الشَّعْرِ كُلِّ قَنِي
كَتَبْتُ يَزِيلُ عَنِّي النَّظْمُ

Besides claiming that his jinnī was the leader of all poets' jinn, that is to say that he himself was the leader of all poets, he also claimed that he was inspired to write in all different poetic genres, and that he was a natural poet; this is what the word tazannī in the last line implies: that he did not need to think hard or consider when he wrote poetry.¹

Another rajaz-poet, Abū al-Najm al-Ijlī wrote a line in which he declared his superiority over other poets by claiming that he had a male jinnī, while others had female ones:

وَمَا نِيَّ وَكَلَّ شَاعِرٍ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ شَيْطَانُهُ أَنتَى وَشَيْطَانِي ذَكَرُ 2

Some poets, from the time of the Jāhiliyya, when comparing themselves with other rival poets, described the latter as 'dogs'. This is exemplified in the line of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī:

وَلَا تَهَرَّهَا كُلِّي لِيَبْعَدَ نَفَرُهَا وَلَقَدْ تَبَحَّشَنِي بِالشَّكَاةِ كِلَابُهَا

where the word 'dogs' is explained as meaning poets³, and also in a line by Abū Zubayd al-Ta'ī, in which he refers to certain poets whom he has silenced as dogs:

ألم ترني سكنتُ لذيّاً كلابهم وكلفنتُ عنكم أكلبي وصي عُقر

The poet Tamīm b. Abī Muqbil compared all poets with barking dogs and claimed that whatever they did they could not reach his position in poetry:

آلَيْتُ إِذَا آلَيْتُ مُجْتَهِداً وَرَفَعْتُ صَوْتاً مَابَهُ نَحْجُ
لا يدرك الشعراءُ منزلي في الشعر إن سكتوا وإن نجوا 4

In other lines he talked about himself and about his poems as follows:

إِذَا مَتَّ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الْقَوَافِي فَلَنْ تَرَى لَهَا قَائِلاً بَعْدَ الْهَيْبَةِ وَأَشْعَرَا
وَأَكْثَرَ بَيْتاً سَائِراً صُرِّيتَ لَهُ خُزُونِ جِبَالِ الشَّعْرِ حَتَّى تَبْسُرَا
أَنْغَرَّ غَرِيباً يَمْسَحُ النَّاسَ وَجْهَهُ كَمَا تَمْسَحُ الْأَيْدِي الْأَنْغَرَّ الْحُشَّعَرَا 5

Ibn Muqbil in these lines speaks of his 'unique' and 'unfamiliar' lines; al-Parazdaq did the same, and stated that his poems were famous and recited everywhere:

بَلَفَنَ الشَّمْسُ حِينَ تَكُونُ شَرْقاً وَمَسْقَطُ رَأْسِهَا مِنْ حَيْثُ غَابَا
بِكُلِّ ثَنِيَّةٍ وَبِكُلِّ تَغْفِرٍ غَرَابِئُهُنَّ تَنْتَسِبُ إِنْ تَسَابَا 6

Abū Shurayh al-Umayr spoke of the eternity of his poems, which are perfect, like beautiful garments, and could be quoted as aphorisms:

فَإِنْ أَهْلَكَ فَقَدْ أَبْقَيْتُ بَعْدِي قَوَافِي تَعْجِبُ الْمُتَمَثِّلِينَ
لِذِيذَاتِ الْمُقَالَحِ مُحْكَمَاتٍ لَوْ أَنَّ الشَّعْرَ يُلْبَسُ لَارْتَدِينَا 7

The beauty of his poems, it seems to be implied, lies in the words and in perfection of structure.

Al-Rammāh b. Mayyāda claimed that true poetry is that written by the poets who belonged to the tribes of Qays and Khindaf, who were the spring of poetry. Their lines were many, and they wrote natural poetry. Poets from other tribes merely wrote an unnatural and diverting poetry:

فَجَرَّأَ بِنَايِغَ الْكَلَامِ وَبَحْرَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ فِيهِ ذُو الرِّوَايَةِ يَسْبَحُ

وما الشعر إلا شعر قيسٍ وخندفٍ وشعر سواهم للفةٍ وتلحٍ

Uqāl al-Qaynī opposed al-Rammāh and rejected what he claimed. Uqāl declared that poetry was written for the first time by the tribes of the Yemen, and that other poets then followed them:

ألا بلغ الرِّمَّاحَ تَقْنَنَ مَقَالَةٍ بها فطد الرِّمَّاحُ أَوْ كَانَ يَمْزَحُ
لقد خَرَّقَ الحَيُّ الِيمانونَ قِلبَهُم بحور الكلام تُسْتَقَرُّ وَهي لُفْعُ
وهم عَلَّمُوا من بعدهم فَتَعَلَّمُوا وهم أَعْرَبُوا هذا الكلامَ وَأَوْضَحُوا
فليسَّا بَقَيْنَ الفضلَ لا تَجِدُونَهُ وليسَ لمَسْبُوقٍ عَلَيْهِم تَبَجُّحُ 8

Natural poetry was also praised by Abū Hayya al-Numayrī, who claimed himself to be a natural poet who wrote poetry easily; when he embarked on a difficult rhyme it would yield to him, but if another poet attempted it he would find it unwilling and difficult. He declared that he used not to re-examine his poems because he was such a skilful poet:

إِنَّ الصَّائِدَ قَدْ عَلِمَنَ بِأَنِّي صَنَعُ اللِّسانِ بِهِنَّ لَا أَتَنَحَّلُ
وَإِذَا ابْتَدَأْتُ عَرُوفَ نَسِجٍ رَيفِيٍّ جَعَلْتُ تَذَلُّ لِمَا أُرِيدُ وَتَسَهَّلُ
حَتَّى تَلْهَوْعَنِي وَلَوْ بِرِثَاضِهَا غَيْرِي لِحَاوَلِ صَعْبَةٍ لَا تُقْبَلُ 9

Bashshār boasted of his skill even though he was born blind. He praised his natural, beautiful, easy, and harmonious poetry in the following lines:

عَمِيَّتْ جَنِينًا وَالذُّلَاءُ مِنَ الْعَمَى فَجِئْتُ عَجِيبَ الظَّنِّ لِلْعِلْمِ مَوْئِلًا
وَنَاضَ ضَبَاءُ الْعَيْنِ لِلْعِلْمِ رَافِدًا لِقَلْبٍ إِذَا مَا ضَبَّعَ النَّاسُ كَقِلًا
وَشِعْرِ كَنُورِ الرَّؤُوفِ لَأَعْمَتْ بَيْنَهُ يَقُولُ إِذَا مَا أَخْرَنَ الشُّعْرُ أَسْهَلًا 10

When he was asked how he contrived to excel his contemporaries in the beauty of his poetic maʿānī and in his polished words, he replied:

"because I do not accept every idea that comes into my mind; I search out the essence of things, and elegant similes, towards which I walk with thoughtfulness and a powerful instinct; thus I get right to the

bottom of them, select the best of them and avoid the unnatural ones".¹¹

Besides the quality of naturalness (tab) in poetry, poets seem to have admired some sort of unity in a poem. They boasted that they wrote poems in which the lines were connected with one another. This quality of connection between the lines of a poem met us when we spoke of poetic comparison in the Jāhiliyya when we mentioned talāhum al-kalām in the poem of Abū Dhu'ayb quoted by Ibn Rashīq and in the line of al-A'shā quoted by al-Jāhiz. Later on, in Islamic times, we find the poet and rājiz 'Umar b. Laja' saying to another poet: "I am a better poet than you". When the poet asked 'Umar to explain, he replied: "because I write a line and its brother and you write a line and its cousin". That is to say that his lines have some relation with one another. A similar opinion is expressed by Ru'ba b. al-'Ajjāj about his son's poetry. He described it as having no girān, or connection, between its lines. Ibn Qutayba explained the word girān here as meaning that he "does not link a line in a poem with another similar to it".¹² A poet criticised another poet's poetry and described it as follows:

وَشِعْرٌ كَبَعْرِ الْكَبْشِ فَفَرَّقَ بَيْنَهُ
لِسَانُ دَعِيٍّ فِي الْقَرِيفِ دَخِيلِ

The poetry of this man is likened to the dung of a male sheep that scatters when it falls. The poet meant to say that his poetry contained different thoughts (ma'ānī), it was not written in one style, and there was no similarity between its lines. The line quoted above shows us the influence of the Bedouin environment in poetic criticism, in likening poetry to sheep's dung.

It also seems that shortness in a poem was something admired and recommended by poets. This quality we also met when we discussed the views of al-Nābigha in the Jāhiliyya. In different Islamic periods we

find many poets who call for shortness in a poem and praise it. When the mukhadramī poet, Ibn al-Zib‘ara was asked why his poems were short, he replied: "because short poems are quicker to enter the ears, are more famous, and are recited in gathering-places".¹⁴ A similar question was put to al-Ḥutay'a. His daughter asked him: "Why are your short poems more in number than your long ones?" He replied: "Because the short poems enter the ears more quickly and they are more recitable".¹⁵ Al-Farazdaq was asked: "Why have you started to write short poems after having been used to write long ones?" He made a similar reply to that of Ibn al-Zib‘ara and al-Ḥutay'a. He said: "Because short poems settle in men's hearts and are more famous in the gathering-places than long ones".¹⁶

When a muhdath poet was asked: "Why do you not write more than two or four lines?" he replied: "because a few lines settle in men's hearts better than many, they are easier to learn by heart, they are more recited, they gather together more poetic ma‘ānī in a small compass, and the poet who writes so is more eloquent".¹⁷ Another muhdath poet was asked why he did not prolong his poems. To this he replied in the following lines:

أَبَى لِي أَنْ أَطِيلَ الشِّعْرَ قَصْرِي إِلَى الْمَعْنَى وَعِلْمِي بِالْقَوَابِ
وَأَجْازِي بِمُخْتَصَرٍ قَرِيبٍ حَذَفْتُ بِهِ الْفُضُولَ مِنَ الْجَوَابِ
فَابْعَثْنِي أَرْبَعَةً وَسِتًّا مُتَقَفَةً بِالْفَاطِ عَذَابِ
خَوَالِدَ مَا كَدَا بَيْكُ نَهَارًا وَمَا كَسَنَ الْقَبَا بِأَضَى الشَّيَابِ
وَهَنَ إِذَا وَسَمَنَ بِهِنَّ قَوْمًا لَأَطْوَقِي الْحَمَائِمَ فِي الرِّقَابِ
وَكُنَّ إِذَا أَقَمْتُ مَسَافِرَاتِي تَهَادَاهَا الرُّوَاةُ مَعَ الرِّكَابِ

18

The poet Ibn Ḥāzim, in the above lines, praised himself as being an eloquent poet because he expressed his thoughts in brief words, especially in poems of hijā'. His poems are eternal and they are made famous and spread abroad by being recited by the transmitters.

Shortness in the poem of hijā' in particular was recommended by many poets, most of whom agreed that the best of hijā' poetry is that which is short and decent. Jarīr was an exception to the majority of poets concerning shortness in the poem of hijā'. He was reported by his grandson, 'Amāra b. 'Aqīl, to have told his sons: "If you praise, do not prolong the poem, because its first lines will be forgotten and its last lines will not be committed to memory, and if you satirize, you had better write at length".¹⁹ On another occasion, Jarīr was reported as saying: "If you satirize, make others laugh".²⁰ The risible hijā' mentioned by Jarīr may be the kind of hijā' demanded by al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, and it also may be the kind of hijā' that contains mockery and amusing images which we shall encounter in the quotations of Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his Tabaqāt.

Some of the muhdathūn avoided gharīb and criticised those who used it; they called for natural and easy poetry. Abū al-'Atāhiya criticised his contemporary Ibn Munādhir for using gharīb in the following line:

وَمِنْ عَادَاتِكَ لَا قِيَّ الْمَرْسِيَا

He accused the poet of trying to imitate al-'Ajjāj and his son Ru'ba in using gharīb, and he asked him about the meaning of al-marmaris.²¹ When the muhdath poet al-Sayyid al-Himyarī was asked: "Why do you not use gharīb in your poetry?" he replied: "Using gharīb in our time is regarded as indicating incapability of expression (عجز), and I should be an unnatural poet if I used it. I have been fortunately endowed with the quality of tab' and great facility of speech, and so I write what is understood by young and old and never needs an explanation."²²

The quality of tab' and easy poetry were also praised by the muhdath poet al-Khuraymī who was asked why his poetry was admired and accepted by everyone who listened to it. He replied: "because I attract speech so that it becomes easy and natural for me, and if anyone listens to it, it will be easy for him to admire it".²³

Another muhdath poet referred his fame to the fact that he "did not make much incision, but "easily reached the joint and hit the most vulnerable spot of speech". He wrote "excellent openings and endings", and "elegant transitions from nasīb to madīh and hijā'".²⁴

The poet Abū al-‘Abbās al-Nāshī' criticised those who used gharīb and neglected easy and plain words, and also those who wrote impossible and mean thoughts. He stated that ideal poetry is that which is regular in form, has similarity between its parts and connection between its lines, in which there should be a relation between the beginning of a line and its end; that in which the ma‘ānī and the words serve each other; that in which the madīh is long and sincere, nasīb is easy and apposite, and hijā' is decent and written in a compromise between direct and indirect statement (ta‘rīd). According to al-Nāshī', the most correct poetry is that which is excellent in form, and if heard is admired; that which is apparently easy but impossible to imitate. He expressed his opinion in the following poem:

لَعَنَ اللَّهُ صِنْعَةَ الشَّعْرِ، مَاذَا	من صنوفِ الجهالِ فيها لقينا
يُثْرُونَ الْغَرِيبَ مِنْهُ عَلَى مَا	كَانَ سَهْلًا لِلْسَّامِعِينَ مَبِينًا
وَيَبْرُونَ الْحَالَ شَيْئًا صَحِيحًا	وَضَمِيرَ الْمَقَالِ شَيْئًا قَبِينًا
يَجْهَلُونَ الصَّوَابَ مِنْهُ، وَلَا يَد	رُونَ لِلْجَهْلِ أَنَّهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَا
فَهُمْ عِنْدَ مَنْ سَوَانَا بِلَامُو	نَ، وَفِي الْحَقِّ عِنْدَنَا يُعْذَرُونَا
إِنَّمَا الشَّعْرُ مَا تَنَاسَبَ فِي النُّظْمِ،	وَإِنْ كَانَ فِي الصَّفَاتِ فَنُونَا
فَأَتَى بَعْضُهُ يَشَاكُلُ بَعْضًا	قَدْ أَقَامَتْ لَهُ الصُّدُورُ الْمُنُونَا
كُلُّ مَعْنَى أَتَاكَ مِنْهُ عَلَى مَا	تَتَمَنَّى لَوْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَنْ يَكُونَا
فَتَنَاهَى عَنِ الْبَيَانِ إِلَى أَنْ	كَادَ حَسَنًا يَبِينُ لِلنَّاطِرِينَا
فَكَانَ الْأَلْفَاظُ فِيهِ وَجُوه	وَالْمَعَانِي رُكِبَتْ فِيهِ عَيُونَا
فَأَتَتْ فِي الْمَرَامِ حَسَبَ الْأَمَانِي	فِيَجْلِي حُسْنَهُ الْمُنْشِدِينَا
فَإِذَا مَا مَدَحْتَ بِالشَّعْرِ حَرًّا	رَمَتْ فِيهِ مَذَاهِبَ الْمُشْهَبِينَا
فَجَعَلْتَ الْفَنَسِيْبَ سَهْلًا قَرِيبًا	وَجَعَلْتَ الْمَدِيْحَ صِدْقًا مَبِينَا
وَتَكَلَّبْتَ مَا تَهْجُنَ فِي السَّمْعِ	وَإِنْ كَانَ لَفْظُهُ مَوْزُونَا

وإذا ما فرضته بهجاء عفت فيه مذهب المرفقينا
 فجعلت التصريح منه دواء وجعلت التعريف دائماً دفيناً
 وإذا ما بكيت فيه على الفا دين يوماً للبين والطاعيننا
 حلت دون الأسى ودللت ما كان من الدمع في العيون مضموناً
 ثم كتبت إن كنت عاتباً شئت في الوعد وعيداً وبالصوبة لبنا
 فتركت الذي عتبت عليه حذراً آمناً، عزيزاً مهيناً
 وأصحح القريض ما فات في النظم وإن كان واضحاً مستبيناً
 وإذا قيل أطمع الناس طراً وإذا ريم أعجز المعجزينا

25

In another poem he advocated brevity and told poets the methods they should follow in writing different poetic genres. According to him ideal poetry always takes a middle way and is a combination of two things. He wrote:

الشعر ما قومت زيف صدوره
 ورايت بالأطناب شعب صدوره
 وجمعت بين قريبه وبعيره
 فإذا بكيت به الديار وأهلها
 وإذا مدحت به جواراً ماجداً
 أصفيته بنفيسه ورصينه
 فيكون جزلاً في اتساق صنوفه
 فإذا أردت كناية عن رتبة
 فجعلت سامعه بشوب شكوكه
 وإذا عتبت على أخ في زلة
 فتركته مستأنساً برماثة
 وإذا نبذت إلى التي علقتها
 تبيّتها بلطفه ودقيقه
 وإذا اعتذرت إلى أخ من زلة
 واشكلت بين محيله ومبينه

وشددت بالتهذيب أسر متونه
 وفقت بالإيجاز عور عيونه
 ووصلت بين حجمه ومعينه
 أجريت للمحزون ماء شؤونه
 وفيتته بالشكر حق ديونه
 وخصصته بخليعه وثمانه
 ويكون سهلاً في اتفاق فنونه
 باينت بين ظهوره وبطونه
 ببيان وفنونه بيقينه
 أدمجت شدته له في لينه
 مستيسراً لوعوته وحزونه
 إن صار ذلك بفاتتان شؤونه
 وشغفتها بخبيته ومكينه

26

We also may notice the idea of combination in the previous poem in the sixteenth, nineteenth and twentieth lines. Because of his advocacy of

brevity he claimed in his book Tafdīl al-shi'r that he had excelled

Jarīr, who wrote:

لَا تَنْتَ الْعَيُونَ الَّتِي فِي طَرْفِهَا مَرَضٌ قَتَلْنَا ثُمَّ لَمْ يَجِينْ قَتْلَانَا
بَصَرُ عَنْ ذَا اللَّبِّ حَتَّى لَا حَرَاكَ بِهِ وَهَتْ أَضْعَفُ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ إِنْسَانَا

with a line that " is better than these two lines of Jarīr because it is briefer". His line read as follows:

لَا شَيْءٌ أَحَبُّ مِنْ عَيْنَيْكَ إِنَّهُمَا لَا يَضْعِفَانِ الْقُوَى إِلَّا إِذَا ضَعُفَا 27

Ibn Rashīq criticised al-Nāshī' because the latter had exaggerated in praising his own poetry and preferring it to the poetry of all fuhūl; actually, his poetry was on a low level.²⁸

In his advice to al-Buhturī, Abū Tammām told him to write poetry at certain times, namely when he was free from worries and relaxed. The best time for that was dawn, because the body would be relaxed after it had rested all night. He should not try to write poetry when he was restless and if he felt so while writing a poem he should stop and take a rest. When he felt that his worries had left him, and he had a desire to write poetry, he might do so, because desire would enable him to be excellent. He should also look at the poetry of the ancients and consult the 'ulamā', to determine their opinion of it. What they admired he should follow and what they rejected he should avoid. When he wrote nasīb he should use sensitive words, beautiful or graceful ma'ānī, many expressions of great passion; he should show his suffering and gloominess; his longing for his beloved and his sadness at her departure. When he wrote madih, he should make the virtues of the mandūh very famous, praise him highly and ennoble his status. The poet should avoid unfamiliar ma'ānī and contemptible words. He should be like a tailor; he measured clothes correctly and made them fit, exactly as a poet should select

suitable words for his poetic maʿānī.²⁹

From the comparative views adopted by poets about themselves it is not easy to form a complete theory of poetic criticism; all we can do is to gather these scattered remarks, concerning both their own and others' poetry. By putting these together we may gain some idea about what is seen as good and bad poetry by the poets.

Among the mukhadramūn we have Labīd b. Abī Rabiʿa, who, according to his own assessment, was the third of the chief pre-Islamic poets, the first two being Imru' al-Qays and Tarafa. He called Imru' al-Qays "the wandering king with the wounds", and Tarafa "the slain youth from the Banū Bakr".³⁰ Labīd did not give any reason for considering Imru' al-Qays as the chief of the Jāhili poets or Tarafa as the second; probably the latter was so rated for his muʿallaqa.

Another mukhadramī poet, Ḥassān b. Thābit, when asked about the best poet, replied that the tribe of Hudhayl was the best in poetry and that Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī was the best poet among that tribe.³¹ On another occasion, Ḥassān declared that "the best tribe in poetry are the blue-eyed ones from the Banū Qays b. Thaʿlaba", referring to the people of al-Aʿshā.³²

Ḥassān also championed the poet ʿUmar b. al-Aṭnāba, who is described by al-Marzubānī as an ancient poet who belonged to the tribe of Khazraj. Ḥassān declared him to be the best poet on the strength of this line:

³³ إني من القوم الذين إذا انتدوا يداؤوا بحقي الله ثم النائل

Ḥassān is also reported to have praised the poetry of Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, who belonged to the tribe of Aws and was a mukhadramī but remained

non-Muslim. Ḥassān said that "If the Arabs contend with us and we wish to show the habarāt (beautiful garments) of our poetry we will present to them the poetry of Qays b. al-Khatīm."³⁴

Concerning himself and his position among poets, Ḥassān had great confidence in his poetic powers and was reported to say proudly: "If I were to put my tongue on a hair, it would shave it off, and if I were to put it on a rock, it would split it".³⁵ Ḥassān stated that he was distinguished from other poets by two qualities: first, that he did not steal others' lines, and secondly, that his poetry is different from theirs; he did not, however, make it clear in what sense his poetry differed. He wrote:

لَا أُسْرِقُ الشُّعْرَاءَ مَا نَقَّوْا بِهِ بَلْ لَا يُوَافِقُ شِعْرَهُمْ شِعْرِي

Probably he meant that others' lines would not fit in his poetry if he borrowed them, because they were not as excellent as his.

A third mukhadramī poet, al-Ḥuṭay'a, seems to have considered himself as possessing less excellence in poetry than Zuhayr and his son Ka'b. He himself had been the transmitter (rāwīya) of these two and other poets of their family for a long time. Talking to Ka'b b. Zuhayr, he was once reported as saying: "O Ka'b, you know that I have been the transmitter of your poetry and that of your father for a long time. Now, all master-poets have passed away except you and me, and I think it would be best if you were to write a poem in which you mention your name and then mention mine. People admire and recite your (the family of Zuhayr's) poetry more than that of others". Ka'b complied with the request and wrote the following lines in which he praised his own poems and those of al-

Ḥuṭay'a:

فَمَنْ لِّلْقَوَافِي شَأْنُهَا مِمَّنْ يَحْكُمُهَا إِذَا مَا مَنَى كَعْبٌ وَفَوْزَ جَرُولُ
كَفَيْتُكَ لَا تَلْقَى مِنَ النَّاسِ وَاحِدًا تَخَلَّ مِنْهَا مِثْلُ مَا يَتَخَلَّ
يُثَقِّفُهَا حَتَّى تَلِينَ كَعْبُوكَا فَيُثَقِّفُ عَنْهَا مَنْ يُسِيءُ وَيَعْلُ

In the first line, Ka'b claims that poems will not find a poet who can write them excellently when he and al-Huṭay'a die. In the second and third, he indicates that they polish and re-examine their poetry and select the best of it. Poets did not accept what Ka'b said about himself and his friend. The poet Muzarrid b. Dirār wrote a line in which he preferred Ḥassān, al-Shammākh, and al-Mukhabbal:

فَلَسْنَا كَحَسَّانِ الْحُسَّامِ ابْنِ ثَابِتٍ وَلَسْتُ كَشَمَّاخٍ وَلَا كَالْمُخَبَّلِ

Al-Kumayt b. Zayd also rejected Ka'b's opinion and stated that poems would never be harmed if both Ka'b and al-Huṭay'a died. He wrote:

37 وَمَا ضَرَّهَا أَنْ كَلِمًا قَدْ ثَوَى وَفَوَّزَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ جَرَوَلٌ

Ka'b himself was proud of being a pupil of his father, Zuhayr, and he noticed the similarity between the latter's poetry and his own poems. He stated that he had not been influenced in poetry either by his maternal uncle or by his cousin but by his father only. He praised his father for his great knowledge of poetry and said that he had imitated his poems:

38 أَقُولُ شَبِيهَا تَبَاهَا قَالَ عَالِيًا يَهْتَ وَمَنْ يَشْبَهُ أَبَاهُ فِي ظَلَمٍ وَأَشْبَهُهُ مَنْ بَيْنَ مَنْ وَطَى الْحَصَى وَلَمْ يَنْتَزِعْنِي شَبَهُ خَالٍ أَوْ ابْنِ عَمٍّ

In praising the sort of poetry written by his father and in imitating him, Ka'b b. Zuhayr seems to favour re-examined and polished poetry which stands in opposition to the natural poetry favoured by al-Asma'ī as we shall see later. Ka'b did not say in what sense his poems were similar to those of his father but it seems that the similarity between the two lies in their lengthy re-examination of poetry. This sort of poetry is called hawlī. Al-Huṭay'a is reported as saying: "The best poetry is al-hawlī al-muhakkak (re-appraised)". When he was asked about his master Zuhayr he declared him the best poet, for his mastery of

rhymes and for his variety of poetic subjects. He said: "I have never seen a man similar to him in falling upon the shoulders of rhymes and seizing their reins whenever he likes, besides his variety in the ma'ānī of praise and satire". When he was asked who was the second poet to Zuhayr, he replied "I do not know, except that you see me putting one of my feet on the other and howling after the rhymes (to come)".³⁹

Al-Ḥuṭay'a praised Zuhayr for mastering different rhymes and for having many styles of madīh and hi jā'. Later we shall find that al-Buhturī preferred al-Farazdaq to Jarīr because the former satirized the latter in many styles while the latter stuck to a few when satirizing the former. When talking about the qualities of Zuhayr's poetry, al-Ḥuṭay'a was aware of the importance of madīh and hi jā', though he neglected the genre of hikma, for which Zuhayr was famous. Al-Ḥuṭay'a characterised his own kind of poetry clearly when he described himself as "howling after the rhymes", by which he probably alluded to his lack of tab' and his difficulty in evoking poetry, even though he was a master-poet. As his master did, he used to re-examine and polish his own poems, spending a great deal of time correcting them. He believed that poetry was not an easy thing to write for those who were unfamiliar with it. In two of his lines he says:

الشعر صعبٌ وطويلٌ سُلْمُهُ إذا ارتقى فيه الذي لا يعلمه
نَلَّتُ به في الخفيفِ قدمه بريد أن يعبره فيعجمه

Though he put himself second to Zuhayr, on another occasion al-Ḥuṭay'a mentioned 'Abīd b. al-Abras as second after him. He liked Zuhayr's line of hikma:

وَمَنْ يَجْعَلِ الْمَعْرُوفَ مِنْ دُونِ عَرَفِهِ يَفِرُّهُ وَمَنْ لَا يَتَّقِ الشَّيْءَ يُشْتَمُّ

He also liked 'Abīd b. al-Abras' line of hikma:

40 مَنْ يَسْأَلُ النَّاسَ يَحْرَمُوهُ وَسَائِلُ الدَّاءِ لَا تَخْبِي

Though his appreciation of the two lines indicates a moral trend in his criticism, al-Ḥuṭay'a might have been guided by his own interest as a greedy and avaricious poet, in that the two lines were composed for begging indirectly. He knew that his position in poetry was affected by his greediness, as he told Ibn 'Abbās when the latter asked him about the best poet of all. He believed that the same reason had detracted from al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, even though he was not inferior to Zuhayr. In his reply to Ibn 'Abbās, al-Ḥuṭay'a declared Zuhayr the best poet among the ancients and championed him for the line of hikma quoted above. He admired the line of al-Nābigha-cited as a proverb - in which the poet says:

وَلَسْتَ بِمُسْتَبِقٍ أَخَا لَا تَلْمُهُ عَلَى شَعْتِي، أَيُّ الرِّجَالِ الْمَهْذَبُ

He stated that al-Nābigha would not have been considered inferior to Zuhayr, had it not been for his "humility and cupidity" for money. The same applied to himself, who, had it not been for greed, would have been the best poet among the ancients. Nevertheless he claimed that he was the best of his contemporaries and that his "arrow is the best at hitting the target".⁴¹

However, although he considered that greed was responsible for holding him back from reaching the standard of the ancient poets, on another occasion, he claimed himself to be the best poet when he was greedy or when he was affected by desire or fear, "howling after the rhymes as if I were a thirsty young camel crying for its mother".⁴² He seems to be the origin of the idea that associates "desire and fear" with the ability to write excellent poetry. We have seen that 'Alī b. Abī Tālib used these two words when talking about Imru' al-Qays. They were also used by Kuthayyir, Ibn Abī Tarafa and Ibn Qutayba, as we shall see later.

Ibn Rashīq criticised al-Huṭay'a for regarding Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī as the best poet on the strength of his poem that starts:

لَا أُعَدُّ الْإِقْتَارَ عُرْمًا وَلَكِنْ فَخْدٌ مِّنْ قَدْ رُنِيْتُهُ الْإِعْدَامُ

Ibn Rashīq commented that though "Abū Du'ād is an ancient master-poet whose poetry Imru' al-Qays made use of and transmitted, no critic has ever declared him the best poet as al-Huṭay'a does.⁴³ Al-Huṭay'a put 'Abīd b al. Abras next to Abū Du'ād on the strength of his poem with the line:

أَفْلَحَ بِمَا شِئْتَ فَقَدْ يُدْرِكُ بَارَ جَهْلٍ وَقَدْ يُخَدِّعُ الْأَرِيبُ 44

Both poems contain lines of hikma, which al-Huṭay'a seems to appreciate. Before he died, al-Huṭay'a was requested by his family to make his will, but he merely kept reciting some lines of poetry declaring that al-Shammākh b. Dirār was the best poet, on the strength of the following line:

إِذَا أُتْبِئَ الرَامُونَ عَنْهَا تَرَمَّتْ تَرَنَّمٌ تَكَلَّى أَوْجَعَتْهَا الْجِنَائِرُ

The line describes a bow, a weapon which al-Shammākh was famous for describing. He also stated that Dābī' b. al-Hārith al-Burjumī deserved to be called a poet because he wrote the following line:

لَكَلِّ جَدِيدٍ مَفِي لَذَّةٌ غَيْرَ أَنِّي رَأَيْتُ جَدِيدَ الْمَوْتِ غَيْرَ لَذِيذٍ

He also declared that Imru' al-Qays was the best of all Arab poets in having written the line:

فِيَالِكَ مِنْ لَيْلٍ لَّأَنَّ جُومَهُ بَلَّ مَغَارِ الْفَتْلِ شَدْنُ بِيذْبُلٍ

and that Hassān was the best poet in having written this line:

يُفْشَوْنَ حَتَّى مَا تَهَرُّ كَلَابُهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ عَنِ السَّوَادِ الْحَقِيلِ

Lastly, al-Huṭay'a, pointing to his mouth, declared: "this hole is the best poet, if it is greedy for some good".⁴⁵

From the different comments and judgments made by al-Huṭay'a at different times, it is difficult to tell who was in fact his favourite

poet. His quotations from Zuhayr, al-Mābigha, Abu Du'ād and 'Abīd b. al-Abras indicate that he was interested in the poetry of hikma. Ideal poetry for him is hawli, which the poet spent a great deal of effort and time correcting and polishing, such as the poetry of his master Zuhayr. He identified psychological motives such as fear and desire that affected a poet and caused him to be excellent in his poetry.

If we now leave the mukhadramūn aside and look at the Hijāzī poets of the Umayyad period, we shall find that 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a was regarded by poets as the best of them, at any rate in ghazal poetry. According to Ya'qūb b. Ishāq, the Arabs admitted that Quraysh was the best tribe in religious, social, political and economic matters, and when 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a appeared, they recognised the superiority of Quraysh in poetry also.⁴⁶ Jamīl Buthayna, on listening to the lāmiyya poem of 'Umar that starts:

جَرَى نَاصِحٌ بِالْوَدِّ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهَا فَقَرَّبَنِي يَوْمَ الْحَسَابِ إِلَى قَتْلِي

admitted that he would never be able to write a poem like it because there was "no-one who can address women and talk to them like 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a".⁴⁷

When al-Farazdaq listened to the same poem he said: "this is what the poets were looking for, but they missed it, and instead of finding it, they kept weeping over deserted dwellings. This man has found it".⁴⁸ The same opinion is expressed by Jarīr when he listened to another poem of 'Umar starting:

سَأَلَا الرَّبْعَ بِالْبَلَاءِ وَقَوْلَا هَجَّتْ شَوْقًا لِي الْغَدَاةَ طَوِيلَا

He said: "This is what we were looking for and missed; this Qurashite has now attained it."⁴⁹ On another occasion, Jarīr is reported as telling the people of Medina, who requested him to recite some of his poetry, that they were interested in nasīb and that they should look

for it in the poetry of 'Umar because "he is the best poet in nasīb".⁵⁰ What poets were looking for seems to have been riqqa, which is expressed in delicate conversation with women, gentle and sensitive ways of addressing the deserted dwelling, humility and submission to the beloved, and other such qualities which we have already pointed out in the poetry of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a.

Though Jarīr had declared that 'Umar was the best poet in nasīb, on another occasion he preferred Kuthayyir.⁵¹ Kuthayyir himself, who was the transmitter of the poetry of Jamīl, spoke about the latter as his master in the "path of nasīb". If he was asked about his nasīb poetry, he would say: "God has taught me about nasīb through Jamīl".⁵² When the poet Nusayb asked him to compare himself with his master Jamīl, he asked him in astonishment: "Is there anyone who has facilitated nasīb for us except Jamīl?"⁵³

The poets of the Hijāz were classified by Nusayb, when he was asked to compare them, as follows: "Jamīl is our leader, 'Umar is the best among us in describing women, and Kuthayyir is the best among us at weeping over departing women and at praising kings". These, as a group of nasīb poets, were also described by Nusayb on another occasion: "Jamīl is the most sincere in his poetry, 'Umar is the most untruthful among us, and I myself write what I know".⁵⁴

Kuthayyir criticised 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, using the same argument as used by Ibn Abī 'Atīq, that "instead of writing nasīb about his beloved, 'Umar wrote it about himself". He cited the following lines:

لَتُفْسِدَنَّ الطَّوْفَ فِي عَمْرِ	قَالَتْ لَهَا اخْتِا تَعَاتِبَهَا
ثُمَّ انْغَمَزِيه يَا اخْتِ فِي خَفَرِ	قَوِي تَصَدِّقْ لَه لِيَبْهَرَا
ثُمَّ اسْبِطَرْنِ تَشْنَدُ فِي اُشْرَى	قَالَتْ لَهَا قَدْ غَمَزْتَهُ فَاُبَى

He added that a woman should be described as "bashful, reserved, desired but unattainable". He believed that what al-Ahwas wrote was the ideal and better than what 'Umar wrote. He quoted the following lines of al-Ahwas:

أَدُورُ وَلَوْلَا أَنْ أَرَى أُمَّ جَعْفَرٍ بِأَيِّياتِكُمْ مَا دُرْتُ جَيْتَ أَدُورُ
وَمَا كُنْتُ زَوَّارًا وَلَكِنَّ ذَا الصَّوَى إِذَا لَمْ يَزُرْهُ لَا بُدَّ أَنْ سَيَزُورُ
لَقَدْ مَنَعْتُ مَعْرُوفًا أُمَّ جَعْفَرٍ وَإِنِّي إِلَى مَعْرُوفٍ لَفَقِيرُ

In criticising 'Umar and preferring al-Ahwas, Kuthayyir was guided by traditional etiquette and good manners in dealing with women, to which the lines of 'Umar are contrary, just as they do not conform to the requirements of riqa. The lines of al-Ahwas preferred by Kuthayyir fulfil these requirements. But, because Kuthayyir was always concerned with traditional manners in nasib, he also criticised al-Ahwas for following the wrong path in ghazal on other occasions, as for instance when he wrote:

فَإِنْ تَصِلَنِي أَصْلُكَ فَهَلْ تَبِينِي بِهَجْرٍ بَعْدَ وَصْلِكَ لَا أَبَالِي

He told him that it was not the way of the fuhul to say that he did not care if she left him. It was contrary to the demands of riqa, and the true lover should care for his beloved "not only if she left him but even if she broke his neck". The one who followed the right way, he said, was Nusayb in the following line:

بَرِئْتُبَ إِلَهُمُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرَحَلَ الرِّكْبُ وَقُلْ إِنْ تَحْلَيْنَا فَمَا مَلَكُ الْقَلْبُ

because he went to see her before she departed and told her that he was not bored with her even if she was bored with him. This was a sign of sincerity and humility to the beloved. Again, however, he criticised Nusayb for writing:

أَهْبِمُ بِدُعْرِ مَا حَيَّيْتُ فَإِنْ أُمْتُ فَوَاحِزْنِي مَنْ ذَا يَهْبِمُ بِهَا بَعْدِي

because it was not decent for the poet to wish for someone to love her after he had died.⁵⁵ From his remarks on these lines by different poets it seems that Kuthayyir was no different in his views from Ibn Abī 'Atīq

and other critics in what he required of nasīb poetry. He himself, however, was criticised for not conforming to this style of nasīb in some of his lines.

The Iraqi poets of the Umayyad period were headed by Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal. Jarīr, in his reply to 'Abd al-Malik, the Caliph, or his son, al-Walīd, when he was asked about certain poets, gave his opinion about them in general and vague terms, especially when he spoke about Zuhayr, Ka'b his son, Imru' al-Qays, and also al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal. His views of his own poetry are clearer and more valuable, though still somewhat vague. According to him, the best poet of all is "the twenty-year old", meaning Tarafa, and "the poetry of Zuhayr and his son Ka'b is full of light". Imru' al-Qays he speaks of as "the wicked" who "used poetry just as he used his pair of shoes"; if he had met him he "would have raised the hem of his garment". Dhū al-Rumma, he says, was "capable of writing elegant, strange and excellent poetry to which no-one was able to write anything similar". As for al-Akhtal, "he died with much poetry unspoken". Al-Farazdaq "holds in his hands a nab' of poetry". About himself Jarīr said that he was "the city of poetry from which it goes out and to which it comes back". He had written "nasīb that caused delight, and madih that raised up, and hija' that humbled". He had also written much poetry in the metres ramal and rajaz. He was better than those other poets mentioned because each of them had only written in one genre of poetry, and he wrote in all poetic fields.⁵⁶

In speaking about Imru' al-Qays as having used poetry as "a pair of shoes", Jarīr may mean that he had a powerful poetic ability and tab' that made it easy for him to write poetry in all genres and whenever he liked, since it was just like putting on his shoes or taking them off. His admiration

for him is indicated by his saying that if he had met him he would "have raised the hem of his garment", which probably means that he would have served him and followed his style of poetry. The description of the poetry written by Zuhayr and Ka'b as being "full of light" may mean that it is clear and carefully written; Jarīr described it on another occasion as "polished and sharpened".⁵⁷ Though his judgement on Zuhayr did not state his position with regard to other Jāhili poets, Jarīr preferred him to all others when asked by his sons about the Jāhili poets in general.⁵⁸ His judgement on al-Akhtal, that "he died with much poetry unspoken", may indicate his powerful talent for poetry, but Jarīr did not tell us about the position of al-Akhtal compared with himself and al-Farazdaq. The latter, who was described as having a nab of poetry in his hands is not clearly judged either. The word nab may mean a "spring", and it also may mean "a kind of tree whose wood is used in arrow-making". In any case, the remark of Jarīr indicates the richness of the poetic source of al-Farazdaq. In preferring himself to all these poets Jarīr used the standard of "multiplicity of poetic genres" and the "ability of a poet to write in rajaz and in all other poetic metres". We do not know why Jarīr should have mentioned the ramal metre in particular.

We have a more specific judgement on al-Akhtal by Jarīr, when he was asked for one by his son 'Ikrima. According to Jarīr, "the poet of the Jāhiliyya is Zuhayr", and, concerning the poets of Islam, "al-Farazdaq is the nab of poetry, and al-Akhtal is excellent in praising kings and in describing wine". When his son said that he had left nothing for himself, Jarīr said "leave me aside, for I have slaughtered poetry thoroughly".⁵⁹ Comparing himself with the other two poets, Jarīr repeated his opinion that he was "the city of poetry", and that

"al-Farazdaq is a man of boasting"; as for al-Akhtal, Jarīr said: "He is the best among us in shooting at the farā'is (the part of the body between the shoulders and the ribs of a horse), the one who is best able to express himself briefly, the best at describing wine and 'the red ones' (women)".⁶⁰ Jarīr repeated that he was "the city of poetry" on many occasions, and that "al-Farazdaq was the nab of poetry". "Anyone who claims that he is better than al-Farazdaq is a liar".⁶¹

In spite of his favourable judgement on al-Farazdaq, Jarīr said that the former would not resist him (in hijā') and though he once said about al-Akhtal: "I met him when he was old and had only one canine tooth; if I had met him when he had two he would have eaten me; whenever I saw him I feared that he would swallow me", he said about him elsewhere: "there were two things that helped me to overcome him, his old age and his unbelief".⁶²

However, Jarīr considered himself superior to his two contemporaries, the reason being that he was "the city of poetry" and that he had "slaughtered poetry thoroughly", both of which remarks indicate the multiplicity of poetic genres in which Jarīr had excelled the others, according to his own criteria. Nevertheless, he admitted that al-Farazdaq was excellent in fakhr and that al-Akhtal surpassed both of them in madīh and in the description of wine and women (humr). The skill of al-Akhtal in shooting at the farā'is may indicate ability at hijā'. Besides, al-Akhtal was praised by him for his brevity. The "unbelief" of al-Akhtal helped Jarīr in the sense that his being a Christian in itself stood as an obstacle to his satirizing Jarīr and his large tribe Mudar, as we have indicated before. Jarīr admitted that al-Akhtal had excelled him in his line:

أَبْنَى كَلْبٍ إِنْ عَمَّ الذَّا قَتَلَ الْمَلُوكَ وَفَكَ الْأَغْلَا

Jarīr preferred the poem of al-Akhtal which contains that line and which starts:

كَذَبْتَكَ عَيْنُكَ أُمِّ رَأَيْتَ بَوَاسِلِي غَلَسَ الظَّلامُ مِنَ الرِّبَابِ خِيَالَا

to his own poem which starts:

حَسَّ الغَدَاةَ بِرَامَةِ الْأَطْلَالَا رَسَمًا تَحَمَّلَ أَهْلُهُ فَأَحَالَا

simply because it contained that line.⁶³

His comments on the poetry of al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī and on Dhū al-Rumma reflect the importance of the genres of hijā' and madīh, and may also indicate that for Jarīr the ma'nā is more important than the word. His opinion of the poetry of Dhū al-Rumma is that "it is like the dots (decorations) of a bride and the dung of a gazelle". His opinion of al-Rā'ī is that "he is a poet, but has busied himself with the description of his horses, his camels and the desert. He has lost the way".⁶⁴

The statement that al-Rā'ī concerned himself with the poetic topics mentioned above implies that he ought to have paid more attention to other genres such as madīh, hijā', nasīb and fakhr, and to have tried to cover all poetic fields. Jarīr was again applying his criterion of "multiplicity" as he did when he preferred himself to other poets.

His remark on the poetry of Dhū al-Rumma may mean that it had beauty and decorativeness but there was no depth in his poetic ma'anī. The similarity between his poetry, the "dots of a bride" and the "dung of a gazelle" suggests that the beauty of his poetry will not last long, just like the decorations of a bride, and the dung of a gazelle which has at first a pleasant smell because of the grass that it eats, but this gradually disappears. Anyhow, Dhū al-Rumma was praised by Jarīr for his "tashbīh and elegant, unfamiliar, excellent poetry in which no other poet could compete with him".⁶⁵ On the poem of Dhū al-Rumma that starts:

مَا بَانَ عَيْنِكَ مِنْهَا الْمَاءُ يَنْسِكِبُ

Jarīr said that it was the poem which he would like to be attributed to him rather than to its real author, and that if Dhū al-Rumma had stopped writing poetry after that poem he would have been considered the best poet of all.⁶⁶ It is strange to hear Jarīr admiring "unfamiliar poetry" that Dhū al-Rumma had written. It is not clear whether this unfamiliarity was in words or ma'nā; probably the word unfamiliar means here "wonderful" rather than gharīb, though on another occasion we find him admiring hūshī or strange and unfamiliar poetry.

In his reply to 'Abd al-Malik, the Caliph, who asked him whether he would like to have the poetry of other poets attributed to him, Jarīr answered that he would not, except that "a poet called Muzāhim al-'Uqaylī writes a hūshī poetry that no other poet can imitate; I should like to have some of his poetry exchanged for some of mine".⁶⁷ On another occasion, Jarīr wished that he was the writer of the following two lines by Muzāhim al-'Uqaylī:

وَوَدِدْتُ عَلَى مَا لَكَ مِنْ سَرَفِ الْهَوَىٰ وَغَى الْأَمَانِ أَنَّ مَا فَاتَ يُفْعَلُ
68 فَنَرْجِعَ أَيَّامَ مَقْبِنٍ وَلَذَّةٍ تَوَلَّيْتُ ، وَهَلْ بَشَى مِنَ الْعَيْشِ أَوَّلُ

In his critical views al-Farazdaq appears more specific than Jarīr, though sometimes he too makes rather vague remarks about poetry. The idea of poetic inheritance was adopted by him and he claimed that he had inherited poetry from a group of Jāhili poets whom he mentioned in this line:

وَقَبَّ الْقَصَائِدَ لَى النَّوَابِغِ إِذْ مَضَوْا وَأَبُو يَزِيدٍ وَذُو الْقُرُوحِ وَجَرُولُ

The poets he meant here are al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, and al-Nābigha al-Shaybānī, Imru' al-Qays, al-Huṭay'a and Abū Yazīd al-Mukhbāl al-Sa'dī. He believed that he was descended from these poets through his grandmothers.⁶⁹ He also claimed that he had inherited poetry

from his maternal uncle, al-ʿAlā' b. Qarāza al-Dabbī.⁷⁰ It is strange that all poets claimed to have inherited poetry through their mothers, as we have seen in the case of poets already mentioned, like Zuhayr and Marwān b. Abī Hafsa.

According to al-Farazdaq, poetry is connected with, and influenced by, the nobility or otherwise of the poet. For him, ideal poetry is that written by ^{noble men.} ~~slaves~~. Criticising Nusayb for praising an Umayyad Caliph instead of boasting, al-Farazdaq wrote:

71 وَخَيْرُ الشَّعْرِ أَشْرَفُهُ رَجَالًا وَشَرُّ الشَّعْرِ مَا قَالَ الْعَبِيدُ

He likened poetry to a huge old camel that had been divided up; Imru' al-Qays had taken its head, ʿAmr b. Kulthūm its hump, ʿAbīd b. al-Abras its thigh, al-Aʿshā its rump, Zuhayr its withers, Tarafa its calloused belly, and the two Nābighas its two sides. When al-Farazdaq and his peers arrived they found nothing but the fore-leg, the shank and the stomach, which they divided between them.⁷²

Al-Farazdaq remarked on the figure of taghsīm in the poetry of Imru' al-Qays, when he admired the line:

له أَيْطَلَا طَبِيٍّ، وَسَاقَا نَعَامَةٍ وَارْخَاءَ سِرْحَانٍ وَتَقَرِيبَ تَنْقَلٍ

He said: "It is the most comprehensive line".⁷³ For him, Imru' al-Qays excelled all poets in fakhr, hikma, sensitive nasīb and tashbih. He quoted from him the two following lines as the best poetry of fakhr:

فَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا أَسْمَى لِأَدْنَى مَعِيشَةٍ كَفَانِي وَلَمْ أُطَلِّبْ قَلِيلًا مِنْ أَمْوَالٍ
وَلَكِنَّمَا أَسْمَى لِمَجْدٍ مُؤْتَلٍ وَقَدْ يَدْرِكُ الْمَجْدَ الْمُؤْتَلُ أَمْثَالِي

the following line as the best one of hikma:

اللَّهُ أَنْجَحَ مَا طَلَبْتُ بِهِ وَالْبَرُّ خَيْرُ حَقِيقَةِ الرَّجُلِ

the following as the best line of nasīb (because of its sensitiveness):

وَمَا ذَرَفَتْ عَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا لَتَضْرِبَ بِسَهْمَيْكَ فِي أَعْشَارِ قَلْبٍ مُقَتَّلٍ

and this last as the best line of tashbīh:

لَأَنَّ قُلُوبَ الْهَبْرِ رُحْبًا وَيَابِسًا لَدَى وَكْرِهَا الْعُنَابُ وَالْحَشَفُ الْبَالِي 74

Al-Farazdaq also noticed the "different levels of excellence" in the poetry of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī whom he likened to a man who sells new and old clothes and with whom one may find a beautiful silk garment that costs a thousand dirhams and beside it a veil worth only one dirham.⁷⁵

Though al-Farazdaq admired the nasīb of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, as we have seen, on another occasion he told 'Umar, when the latter recited to him one of his poems, that "it is a Hījāzī poetry that will shiver if it goes to Najd".⁷⁶ It is not clear what he meant by his remark about Hījāzī poetry that would suffer from cold, but a similar remark was made by al-Akhtal, on listening to a poem of Kuthayyir; he described it as "a Hījāzī poetry which is suffering from cold and if it is oppressed by the cold of Syria it will dwindle away".⁷⁷ The same view was taken by 'Adī b. al-Riqā' of the poetry of Kuthayyir; he too said that the poetry of Kuthayyir was "a Hījāzī poetry which is suffering from cold and if it is hit by the Syrian cold it will freeze and perish".⁷⁸

As I say, it is not clear precisely what was meant by these remarks. However, it may indicate that the poets were aware of the influence of environment on poetry and that poetry differed according to the differences in places. It seems to me that the poets who described the poetry of 'Umar and Kuthayyir in this way may have meant to say that the poetry which emerged in the Hījāz was different from that of Syria and Iraq. It was different because it was concerned only with nasīb, while Iraqi and Syrian poetry was concerned with hijā', madih and fakhr, and the poets were engaged in tribal and political strife.

Therefore their poems were more similar to Jāhilī poetry, in both words and in content, than Hījāzī nasīb-poetry, which was characterised by rigga and delicacy. The Iraqi-Syrian poets rejected it, as it appears, on the grounds that Hījāzī poetry was not suitable for, and not accepted in, Iraq or Syria because it neglected the genres which had satisfied the tastes and needs of the public in Iraq and Caliphs in Syria. The demand for these genres, and their importance, are evident from the remark of Jarīr about al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī cited before. It is also evident from the remark made by al-Farazdaq, and repeated by him on several occasions, about the poet Dhū al-Rumma. For al-Farazdaq, a poet, in order to become a master-poet, had to write poetry in the genres demanded in his time. When al-Farazdaq was asked by Dhū al-Rumma: "Why should not I be counted among the fuhūl?" he replied: "What prevents you from reaching the standard of the fuhūl is that you have busied yourself with weeping over deserted dwellings, describing the resting places of camels and their urine, and describing deserts and sandgrouse, and have neglected madih and hija'".⁷⁹ On another occasion, he said to him: "What kept you back from the ranks of the fuhūl is that you have persistently avoided madih and hija' and restricted yourself to the traces of deserted dwellings".⁸⁰ The Bedouin topics discussed by Dhū al-Rumma seemed not to suit the taste of people at that time in Iraq and Syria.

For al-Farazdaq, poetry should consist of a combination of two things, firmness and delicacy, as appears from his remark on Jarīr's poetry. The combination of his poetry and that of Jarīr would make that of an ideal poet. Comparing himself with Jarīr, on hearing certain lines by the latter, such as:

أَتَشَى إِذْ تُودِّعُنَا سُلَيْمَى بَعْدَ بَشَامَةِ سَقَى الْبَشَامِ

and:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ غَدُوا بِلَبِّكَ غَادِرُوا وَشَلَّا بِفَيْدِكَ مَا يَزَالُ مَعِينَا
غَيَّيْنِ مِنْ عِبْرَاتِهِنَّ وَقَلْنَ لِي مَاذَا لَقِيتِ مِنَ الْهَوَى وَلَقِينَا

and:

أَسْرَى لِحَالِدَةَ الْخِيَالِ وَلَا أُرَى شَيْئاً أَلْذَّ مِنَ الْخِيَالِ الطَّارِقِ
إِنَّ الْبَلِيَّةَ مَنْ تَهْلُ حَبِيبَتُهُ فَانْقَعِ فُؤَادَكَ مِنْ حَبِيبَتِ الْوَاقِقِ

al-Farazdaq commented: "How much he - with his decency - is in need of the firmness of my poetry, and how much I - with my indecency and desires - am in need of the delicacy and gentleness of his poetry".⁸¹ He thought that there was a similarity between himself and Jarīr in that both of them had the same poetic power, but that Jarīr had less ability to dive deep in search of poetic concepts or to prolong his poems. Their styles of poetry were not very different from each other, but Jarīr could not compete with him, and his poetic power let him down half-way along the road. He is reported as saying: "Both of us take our poetry from one sea, but his bucket shakes on the long way (from the well)".⁸²

He claimed that he had surpassed Jarīr in four unique lines, to which he gave the names al-muḡaffī, al-muʿannī, al-muḡtabī and al-khāfiḡāt. All of these are of fakhr, a genre in which al-Farazdaq excelled Jarīr, as the latter admitted. In them the poet is boasting of his ancestors, such as Dārim, Mujāshīʿ, Zurāra and Nahshal. He told Jarīr that he could not claim to have such great ancestors and that all his attempts to do so would be in vain. The names of these lines are collected in the following:

غَلَبْتُكَ بِالْمُقَفَّرِ وَالْمُعَنَّى وَبَيْتِ الْمُحْتَبَى وَالْخَافِقَانِ

The lines in question are:

وَلَسْتُ، وَلَوْ فَخَّاتَ عَيْنَكَ وَاجِدًا أَبَاكَ، إِنَّ عَدَّ الْمَسَاعِي كَدَارِمِ
وَإِنَّكَ إِذْ تَسْعَى لَتَذْرَكَ دَارِمًا لَأَنْتَ الْمُعَنَّى - يَا جَبْرِ - الْمَكْلَفُ
بَيْتًا زُرَّاقَ مُحْتَبَى بَقَائِهِ وَجَبَّاشِعَ وَأَبُو الْفَوَارِسِ تَهْشَلُ
وَأَبْنَى تَقْفَى الْمَالِكِ أُمُورَهَا خَيْرٌ - وَأَبْنَى الْخَافِقَانِ اللَّوَامِعُ 83

Nevertheless, he admitted that he admired some poetry by Jarīr, such as

his poem that starts:

حَتَّى الْهَدْمَلَةَ مِنْ ذَاتِ الْهَوَامِيسِ فَالْجَنُودُ أَصْبَحَ قَفْرًا خَيْرَ مَا نُسِ

Whenever al-Farazdaq listened to it, he used to say that Jarīr ought always to write poetry like that.⁸⁴ Concerning this line of fakhr

written by Jarīr:

لَا إِذَا غَضِبْتَ عَلَيْكَ بَنُو قَيْمٍ وَجَدْتَ النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمُ غَضَابًا

al-Farazdaq used to say that if he himself had written it, it would be dearer to him than the whole earth.⁸⁵ He also remarked that Jarīr wrote excellent poetry on the rhyme yā', and he said: "I have found that yā' is the mother and father of Jarīr".⁸⁶

According to Ibn Sallām al-Jumhī, the poets and the Bedouins preferred Jarīr to al-Farazdaq. When he asked Bashshār about the poets of Islam, the latter replied that the best of them were Jarīr and al-Farazdaq and that al-Akhtal was not equal to them, but that his tribe, Rabi'a, had an exaggerated admiration for him, and in order to compete with Mudar in poetry, they claimed al-Akhtal as an equal to the two of them. Of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq Bashshār preferred the former, because "he had composed in poetic genres unknown to al-Farazdaq", such as rithā'; "when al-Nawwār, the wife of al-Farazdaq, died, women found no poetry in which they could mourn her except the poem of Jarīr in which he had elegized his own wife:

شَرَكْتِي حِينَ كَفَّ الدَّقْرُ مِنْ بَصْرِ وَحِينَ صِرْتُ كَعَظْمِ الرِّمَّةِ الْبَالِي
إِلَّا تَكُنْ لَكَ بِالْدَيْرِينَ نَاشِئَةً قَرَّبْتُ بِأَكْيَةِ بِالرُّمْلِ مَقْوَالِ
قَالُوا نَصِيبُكَ مِنْ أَجْرِ فَقُلْتَ لَهُمْ كَيْفَ الْعَزَاءُ وَقَدْ فَارَقْتُ أَشْبَالِي 87

Those who considered Jarīr to be the best poet believed that his position in poetry had been harmed by the humbleness of his family in comparison with that of al-Farazdaq. As the latter claimed that excellence of poetry was associated with the nobility of the poet, so we find the same opinion adopted by other poets, who used it as a standard of comparison.

Though the poet al-Sallātān al-'Abdī admitted that Jarīr was better than al-Farazdaq, he stated that the latter had overcome the former in poetry because of the greater nobility of his rank. Al-Sallātān expressed this in verse:

ألا إنها تخطى كليباً بشعرها وابلجد تخطى دارمٌ والأقارِعُ
أرى الخطى بذَّ الفرزدقِ شعره ولكنَّ خيراً من كليبٍ مَجاشِعُ
فيا شاعراً لا شاعراً اليوم مثله جبرٌ ولكن ض كليبٍ تواضعُ
جبرٌ أشدَّ الشاعرين شكيمةً ولكنَّ علتهُ الباذخانُ الفواريحُ
ويرفعُ من شعرِ الفرزدقِ أنه له باذخٌ لذي الخبيسةِ رافعُ

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The poet Marwān Ibn Abī Hafsa seems to have adopted a similar view of the two poets. He reported that, after consulting the Naqā'id of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, he had concluded that the former had been overcome by the latter. Though Marwān claimed that Jarīr had been unable to resist al-Farazdaq in the Naqā'id, he stated that he had surpassed him in both "sweet and bitter poetry", while al-Farazdaq excelled him in fakhr. Comparing the two poets and al-Akhtal with one another, Marwān gave his judgement concerning them in three rather vague lines:

ذهبَ الفرزدقُ بالفخارِ وإيَّها حلَّو القريضَ ومُرهَ الجبرِ
ولقدَّ هجا قامةً أخطأ قلبُ وحوى النُّهى ببيانه المشهورِ
كلُّ الثلاثة قد أجاد فخره وهجاؤه قد سار كل مسيرِ

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By "sweet and bitter poetry", Marwān probably meant the poetry of nasīb and madīh, and of hijā' and rithā'.

According to al-Buhturī, al-Farazdaq was better than Jarīr, because he had invented many concepts in hijā' with which he satirized Jarīr, who, in replying to him, merely repeated four points. Nevertheless, Jarīr had excelled him in nasīb.⁹⁰ Al-Marzubānī, who agreed with al-Buhturī in preferring al-Farazdaq, claimed that al-Buhturī did so because his own style of poetry was not dissimilar from that of

al-Farazdaq, in spite of the fact that he had a tab similar to that of Jarīr, as he himself had declared. The similarity between al-Buhturī and al-Farazdaq lay in their use of tibāq, mumāthala, tajnīs and isti'āra, according to al-Marzubānī, who added that this style of poetry was admired by al-Buhturī because it agreed with his own.⁹¹

However, it seems likely that tribalism had some influence on the opinion of those poets who preferred al-Farazdaq to Jarīr, as appears from what Ibn Sallām al-Jumhī said concerning Dhū al-Rumma, who supported al-Farazdaq in his war of hijā with Jarīr.⁹² Even al-Akhtal himself was influenced by this tribalism in his views concerning the two poets. While Jarīr and al-Farazdaq were struggling against each other in Iraq, al-Akhtal sent his son, Mālik, to listen to their poems. When his son came back, he asked him his opinion. Mālik said that "he found Jarīr taking his poetry from a sea and al-Farazdaq hewing his poetry from a rock". In view of this, al-Akhtal declared for Jarīr, and said: "the one who takes from the sea is better than the other". He thereupon recited the following two lines:

إِنِّي قَفَيْتُ قَضَاءَ غَيْرِ ذِي جَنْفٍ لَهَا سَمِيتُ وَلَهَا جَاءَنِي الْخَبْرُ
إِنَّ الْغَزْدَقَ قَدْ شَالَتْ نِعَامَتُهُ وَعَقَبَهُ كَيْتٌ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ ذَكَرُ

However, when Bishr b. Marwān came to Kūfa, he gave al-Akhtal money and other presents and asked him "to write a poem giving superiority to al-Farazdaq, because he is our poet". al-Akhtal is said to have accepted the offer and to have done what he was requested to do.⁹³

Other poets were also paid to declare al-Farazdaq superior to Jarīr. According to Abū Ubayda, Muhammad b. Umayra offered four hundred dirhams and a horse to any poet who was ready to write a poem to this effect. It is said that no poet dared to do so for fear of Jarīr, but

eventually Surāqa al-Bāriqī accepted the offer and wrote:

أَبْلَغُ نَيْمًا نَعَثًا وَتَسْمِيَةً وَالْحُكْمُ يَقْهِيهِ تَارَةً وَيَجُورُ
أَنَّ الْفَرَزْدَقَ بَرَزَتْ أَعْرَاقُهُ سَبَقًا وَخُلِقَ فِي الْفَبَارِ جَبِيرُ
ذَهَبَ الْفَرَزْدَقُ بِالْفَضَائِلِ وَالْعُلَى وَابْنُ الْمُرَانَةِ مَخْلَقٌ مَحْسُورُ
هَذَا قَضَاءُ الْبَارِقِيِّ وَإِنِّي بِالْمَلِيلِ فِي مِيزَانِهِمْ لَبَصِيرُ

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Comparing himself with the other two poets, al-Akhtal stated that Jarīr was the best in nasīb and tashbīh, al-Farazdaq in fakhr and he himself in the madīh of kings, description of wine and 'the red ones' humr (women).⁹⁵ However, he told al-Farazdaq that both of them were better than Jarīr, but that the latter was fortunate in having his poetry more widespread and recited than their poetry.⁹⁶

Al-Akhtal was confident in himself and his ability to write madīh, hijā' and nasīb. He claimed that he had surpassed all poets in these genres in the following lines of nasīb:

أَلَا يَا أَسْلَمَى يَا هَنْدُ هَنْدَ بَنِي بَدْرِ وَإِنَّ لَانَ حَبَانَا عِدَى آخِرِ الدَّرِّ
مِنَ الْخَفِرَانِ الْبَيْفِ أَمَّا وَشَاحُهَا فَيَجْرِي وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ مِنْهَا فَلَا يَجْرِي
تَمَوْتُ وَتَحْيَا بِالضَّجِيعِ وَتَلْتَوِي يَهْطَرِدِ الْمَتْنَيْنِ مُنْبَتَرِ الْخَفْرِ

the following lines of madīh:

نَفْسِي فِدَاءُ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا أَبْدَى النُّوَاجِذَ يَوْمًا عَارِمٌ ذَكَرُ
الْحَائِفُ الْفَتْرَةَ الْهَيْمُونُ طَائِرُهُ خَلِيفَةُ اللَّهِ يُسْتَسْقَى بِهِ الْمَهَرُ

and the following lines of hijā':

وَكُنْتُ إِذَا لَقِيتَ عَبِيدَ نَيْمٍ وَنَيْمًا خُلْتُ أَتَيْتُهُمُ الْعَبِيدُ
لَيْتُمُ الْعَالَمِينَ يَسُودُ نَيْمًا وَسَيِّدُهُمْ وَإِنْ كَرِهُوا مَسُودُ

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Al-Akhtal admitted that many of his lines were plagiarized from the poetry of others, and he used to say "the poet has no religion", meaning that there is nothing to prevent him from stealing other poets' thoughts. He was also reported as saying: "We poets are better thieves than the goldsmiths",⁹⁸ thus apparently implying a lack of originality in the

works of his contemporaries (and perhaps predecessors), as well as in his own.

From Jarīr's description of him, Dhū al-Rumma would seem to have had a different style of poetry from other poets, though Jarīr did not state in what sense this was so, except in that he wrote a large quantity of unfamiliar poetry with strange kinds of tashbīh. Ibn Rashīq stated that most of his poetry did not contain tasrī' in the opening lines.

According to him, this tendency of Dhū al-Rumma is that of the fuhūl, although he was not counted among them because of his lack of variety in poetic subjects.⁹⁹ Anyhow, Dhū al-Rumma himself was aware of this difference, and though he considered al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī as his teacher and leader in the path of poetry, as we are informed by Muntajī^c b.

Nabḥān, he believed that he had a distinguished and individual style.

When he wrote his line:

والقُرْطُ فِي حُرَّةِ الذِّفْرِ مَعْلَقَةٌ تَبَاعَدَ الْجَبَلُ مِنْهَا فَهُوَ يَضْطَرُّ

he was criticised for using the word dhifrā in describing his she-camel,

on the grounds that the word was only used of a male camel. Defending

himself, Dhū al-Rumma cited a line of al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī in which he

had used the same term describing his she-camel.¹⁰⁰ Dhū al-Rumma is

said to have been the transmitter of al-Rā'ī's poetry, and when asked

about his master, he used to say, comparing himself with him: "My

relationship with him is like that of a young man who followed an old

one, and was guided by him, along various roads, and then left him and

travelled over mountains and valleys on paths unknown to the old man".¹⁰¹

What these paths were that were followed by Dhū al-Rumma and unknown to

al-Rā'ī, it is not easy to tell. What we can say is that both poets

were occupied in writing poetry on Bedouin topics such as descriptions

of deserted dwellings, camels and their urine, deserts and sandgrouse, as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq had already remarked. Probably Dhū al-Rumma differed from his master al-Rā'ī in the strange kinds of tashbīh that he became famous for writing. However, it seems that Jarīr felt that his poetry and that of other poets lacked some other qualities that were present in that of Dhū al-Rumma. It is not clear what Jarīr meant by saying that Dhū al-Rumma wrote poetry "which no one among us is able to imitate". As Jarīr expressed admiration for the "hūshī poetry written by Muzāhim al-'Ugaylī which no-one could imitate", as well as for the "unfamiliar poetry and strange tashbīh" written by Dhū al-Rumma, it may be that he was merely referring again to this element in Dhū al-Rumma's poetry in different terms; however, I still feel that Jarīr meant that there was something more in the poetry of Dhū al-Rumma, something which the latter and his peers lacked in their own poetry. The answer to this problem may perhaps be sought in a remark made by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' about Dhū al-Rumma, when he "sealed" poets with him. This means that Dhū al-Rumma's poetry was accepted by Abū 'Amr as a hujja. Perhaps this was due to the fact that his poetry was closer to the Jāhili style, with its Bedouin topics, than those of his contemporaries. The fact that Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' refused to quote other Islamic poets (including Jarīr and al-Farazdaq) as a hujja, as we are informed by al-Asma'ī,¹⁰² while he accepted Dhū al-Rumma from among them, may throw some light on the "distinguished style" of Dhū al-Rumma noticed by Jarīr and by the poet himself.

Speaking about his own poetry, Dhū al-Rumma wrote:

وشر قد أرقنت له طريفٍ أَجَنَّبَهُ السَّائِدَ والمحال

The line indicates the effort made by the poet to avoid poetical defects such as sinād.¹⁰³ It seems that the Bedouin style of Dhū al-Rumma was admired by other poets contemporary with him, who tried to

imitate it. The two poets al-Kumayt b. Layd and al-Tirimmāh b. Ḥakīm are the best examples of this. Al-Kumayt said that he tried to imitate Dhū al-Rumma in his poem beginning:

ما بال عينك منها الماء ينسكبُ

He wrote a poem starting:

هل أنت عن طلب الإيقاع منقلبٌ أم كيف يحسن من ذى الشبهة اللعبُ

When he recited this poem to Dhū al-Rumma, the latter told him that he described things in such a way that it was not easy to tell whether he was right or wrong, because "when you describe something you neither describe it as it should be described nor do you go far from the truth". Al-Kumayt ascribed his failure to produce correct descriptions to the fact that he was a townsman describing Bedouin items which he had not seen but only been told about, while Dhū al-Rumma had seen them with his own eyes.¹⁰⁴ What al-Kumayt said about himself indicates that his poetry lacked naturalness and sincerity, and that it was divorced from reality. Ḥammād al-Rāwiyā's account affirms that al-Kumayt wrote second-hand poetry. He stated that al-Kumayt had gained his knowledge of poetry from his two grandmothers, who had lived for some time in the Jāhiliyya. They used to tell him about life in this period and describe to him the desert and the Bedouin way of life.¹⁰⁵

Al-Tirimmāh, who was an intimate friend of al-Kumayt, followed him in using in his poetry what had been described to him, as al-ʿAjjāj pointed out. Talking about the two poets, the latter reported that: "They used to ask me concerning rare expressions in the language of poetry, and I informed them, but afterwards I found the same expressions wrongly used in their poems, the reason being that they were townsmen who described what they had not seen and misapplied it, whereas I who am a Bedouin describe what I have seen and apply it properly".¹⁰⁶

The same thing is reported by Ru'ba b. al-ʿAjjāj, who said that both

poets used to ask him concerning unfamiliar words and when he told them they used those words in their poems.¹⁰⁷

When al-ʿAjjāj and his son Ruʿba disputed about their own merits, Ruʿba claimed that he was a better poet than his father, because he was "a poet and the son of a poet", while his father was only "a poet born of a non-poet father". Ruʿba seems to have accepted the idea of inherited poetry which we have mentioned before. His father believed that a poet should be judged according to his own inventions and discoveries in poetic maʿānī. From his reply to his son, al-ʿAjjāj seems to have known of tajnīs or jinās, which he considered a figure to be proud of. He asked his son: "How can you be a better poet than I, when I am the one who taught you ʿatf al-rajaz?" Ruʿab asked him what this was, and his father replied by reciting his line:

عاصِمٌ يَا عَاصِمُ لَوْ اعْتَمَرُ 108

Al-ʿAjjāj did not call it jinās but instead used the word ʿatf, which may also indicate, as Ibn Rashīq suggested, iltifāt.¹⁰⁹

At all events, what al-ʿAjjāj said about al-Kumayt and al-Tirimmāh, and the latter's acknowledging that his own poetry lacked reality and sincerity, may well have influenced and guided Abū Nuwās when he criticised those who started their poems by weeping over deserted dwellings. Abū Nuwās believed that a poet should not talk about things that he had not really seen, and that if a muhdath poet started his poem with atlāl he would not succeed. He called for innovation in the introduction to the poem and suggested that, instead of weeping over atlāl, the poet should do as he, Abū Nuwās, did when he wrote:

لَا تَبْكِي لَيْلَى وَلَا تَنْزَبِي إِلَى هِنْدٍ وَأَشْرَبِي عَلَى الْوَرْدِ مِنْ حَمْرَاءَ كَالْوَرْدِ

He gave his opinion on the subject in a number of his poems, repeating the warning given by al-ʿAjjāj and al-Kumayt. For example, he wrote:

صِفَةُ الطَّلُولِ بِلَاغَةُ الْقَدَمِ فَاجْعَلْ صِفَاتِكَ لِابْنَةِ الْكَرَمِ
تَصِفُ الطَّلُولَ عَلَى السَّمَاعِ بِهَا أَفْذُو الْعِيَانِ لِأَنْتَ فِي الْحَكَمِ ؟
وَإِذَا وَصَفْتَ الشَّيْءَ مُتَبَعًا لَمْ تَخُلْ مِنْ خُلْأٍ وَمِنْ وَهَمِ

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Abū Nuwās' own opinion of himself is that he fell below those poets who had preceded him but that he was above those who came after him; therefore he thought that he was unique of his kind.¹¹¹ He told his friend al-Husayn b. al-Daḥḥāk that he had excelled him and all other poets in the poetry of wine.¹¹² Ibn Munādhir called Abū Nuwās the best poet among jinn and ins on the strength of the following lines:

يَا قَهْرًا أَبْصَرْتُ فِي مَا تَمَّ يَنْدُرُ شَجْوًا بَيْنَ أَثْرَابِ
يَبْكِي فَيُزِي الدَّرَّ مِنْ نَرْجَسٍ وَيَلْطِمُ الْوَرَدَ بَعْنَابِ

Ibn Munādhir's justification for this remark was that "he wrote poetry naturally". Ibn Rashīq agreed with Ibn Munādhir and accepted the latter's judgement on Abū Nuwās' naturalness. He said that it appeared in his language (lafz), when, for instance, he used the word al-durr where he could have used al-tall in order to produce a more harmonious effect. To have done so, however, would have suggested takalluf and tasnīʿ, which Abū Nuwās disliked. Ibn Rashīq admired the second line and quoted it as an example of poetry in which the poet combined several tashbīhāt in one line without using the particle ka. Ibn Rashīq described the line as malīh jiddan.¹¹³

The admiration of Abū Nuwās for a poem of ghazal by Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, and his comment on that poem, may throw some light on the sort of poetry looked for by Abū Nuwās and other poets of his time. It is said that one day Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, Abū Nuwās and al-Husayn b. al-Daḥḥāk al-Khalīʿ met together, and Abū Nuwās suggested that each of them should recite one of his subjective poems but not of madīh or hijāʾ. Abū al-ʿAtāhiya was

the first to recite his poem:

فَيَسِّرُوا الْأَكْفَانَ مِنْ عَاجِلِ	يَا أَخَوْتِي، إِنْ الْهَوَى قَاتَلِي
فَإِنِّي فِي شُغْلٍ شَاغِلِ	وَلَا تَلُومُوا فِي اتِّبَاعِ الْهَوَى
بِدَمْعِهَا الْمُنْسَكِبِ السَّائِلِ	عَيْنِي عَلَى عَتَبَةٍ مُثْهَلَةٍ
مِنْ شِدَّةِ الْوَجْدِ عَلَى الْقَائِلِ	يَا مَنْ رَأَى قَبْلِي قَتِيلًا بَكِي
مَاذَا تَرُدُّونَ عَلَى السَّائِلِ	بَسَطْتَ كَفِّي خَوْكُم سَائِلًا
قَوْلًا جَمِيلًا بَدَلَ النَّائِلِ	إِنْ لَمْ تَنْيَلُوهُ فَقُولُوا لَهُ
مِنْهُ فَهَنُوهُ إِلَى تَابِلِ	أَوْ كُنْتُمْ الْعَامَ عَلَى عَسْرَةٍ

When he finished his recitation, Abū Nuwās and al-Husayn are said to have submitted, and to have seen no point in reciting their poems, saying to Abū al-ʿAtāhiya: "In the face of such facility (suhūla) of words, beauty of object (ḡasd), and excellence of emphasis, we are not going to recite anything".¹¹⁴ Ibn Rashīq said that those who require facility (suhūla) of expression (lafz) would admire such a poem by Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, and the poems of those who are like him, such as al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf. Such critics would regard this poem of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's as the extreme limit of excellence.¹¹⁵

This poem is a good example of rigga in ghazal poetry; the ideas of complete submission, humility, servility, the unavenged murdered lover, contentment with little and with promises from the beloved, and gentleness in addressing the beloved, are all expressed in it. The admiration of poets and others for the poem seems to indicate that rigga was still desired in ghazal poetry in the Abbasid period. The fact that Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf, who were great poets of ghazal at that time, were compared with ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa, as we have mentioned before, confirms this. Some critics, admittedly, denied the existence of rigga in much of ʿUmar's poetry, as we have also seen, but most were agreed about the rigga of his ghazal. Desire for rigga in ghazal poetry may be seen clearly in the remarks made by Bashshār b. Burd, comparing

himself with Kuthayyir, whom he criticised for his lines:

وَقَدْ جَعَلَ الْأَعْدَاءُ بِنْتَقِصُونَا وَتَطْمَعُ فِينَا أَلْسُنٌ وَعَيُونُ
أَلَا إِنَّمَا يَلِي عَمَّا خَيْرُ رَانَةٍ إِذَا عَمَزُوهَا بِالْأَكْفِ تَلِينُ

Bashshār is reported to have said: "By Allāh, even if he claims that she is like a stick of marrow (mukhkh) or of butter, she will still be rough and coarse as long as he uses the word 'stick' in describing her.

Why does he not say as I have said:

وَدَعَبَاءِ الْحَاجِرِ مِنْ مَعَدٍ لَأَنْ حَدِيثًا ثَمَرُ الْجَنَانِ
إِذَا قَامَتْ لِمَشَبَّتِهَا تَشَنَّتْ لَأَنْ عَطَامَهَا مِنْ خَيْرِ رَانَ 116

When Bashshār recited his own line:

وَإِذَا قُلْتُ لَهَا جُودِي لَنَا خَرَجْتُ بِالْهَمِّ مِنْ "لَا" وَ"نَعَمْ"

a man suggested to him that instead of saying kharaajat bi-'l-samt, it would be better to say: kharisat bi-'l-samt. Bashshār said to him: "In that case it would mean that I wished her to be dumb, which is a bad thing". Shawqī Dayf attributed this sophisticated manner of Bashshār's of selecting his words and his sensitiveness in his ghazal poetry to the fact that he had a delicate Persian nature and taste in dealing with women.¹¹⁷ It seems more probable that Bashshār is simply following the tendency that we noticed previously of men like Ibn Abī 'Atīq, who criticised al-Hārith b. Khālīd al-Makhzūmī for wishing that unpleasant things might come to the deserted dwelling of his beloved, and, indeed, the general desire for riqqa in earlier ghazal poetry, which we have associated with traditional Arab manners. There is no particular need to postulate a Persian temperament.

There are also indications that some of the muhdathūn favoured a kind of poetry in which the poet could write both seriously and with hazl in the same poem. When Ibn Munādhir was asked by Ibn Bishr al-Mazīnī who was the best poet in Islam, his answer was that it was the one who could be

both serious and the opposite, such as Jarīr who wrote in nasīb:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ نَمَدُوا بِلَيْلِكَ غَادَرُوا وَشَلًّا بِعَيْنِكَ مَا يَزَالُ مَعِينَا
نَحْيَيْنَ مِنْ عِبْرَاتِهِنَّ وَقُلْنَا لِي مَاذَا لَقِيتَ مِنَ الْهَوَى وَلَقِينَا

and then became serious and wrote:

إِنَّ الَّذِي حَرَّمَ الْمَكَارِمَ تَغْلِيًّا جَعَلَ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْخِلَافَةَ خِينَا
مُفَسِّرُ أَبِي وَأَبُو الْمَلُوكِ فَهَلْ لَكُمْ يَا آلَ تَغْلِبَ مِنْ أَبِي لَا بَيْنَا
هَذَا ابْنُ عَمِّي فِي دِمَشْقٍ خَلِيفَةً لَوْ شِئْتُ سَأَقْلُمُ إِلَى قَطِينَا

Ibn Munādhir further said that, as far as the muhdathūn were concerned, the best poet was "that wicked one who takes his poetry from his sleeve".

Ibn Bishr asked him who that was, and Ibn Munādhir replied that it was Abū al-ʿAtāhiya. Ibn Bishr asked for an example from the latter's poetry and Ibn Munādhir recited the following lines:

إِلَهَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ مَوَلَاتِي أَبَدْتُ لِي الْقَدَّ وَالْمَلَالَاتِ
لَا تُفَرُّ الذَّنْبَ إِنْ أَسَأْتُ وَلَا تَقْبَلُ عَذْرَى وَلَا مُوَاتَاتِي

Ibn Munādhir then recited the following two lines from the same poem as an example of the poet's becoming serious:

وَمَهْمُهُ قَدْ قَطَعَتْ طَامِسَهُ قَفَرٍ عَلَى الْهَوَى وَالْمَحَامَاةِ
بُحْرَةَ جَسْرَةٍ عَذَافِرَةٍ خُوصَاءَ عِيرَانَةٍ عَلَنَدَاةِ 118

It seems that Ibn Munādhir, in describing the first two lines of Jarīr's and the first two of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's as hazl, did not mean that they were jocular or amusing, but rather that they were of a delicate nature. This desire for a combination of seriousness and hazl is not very different from what al-Farazdaq had already said about himself and Jarīr. The concept will meet us again in al-Asmaʿī and Ibn al-Muʿtazz. The delicate nature of some of the poetry of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya seems to be one reason for regarding him as the best of the muhdathūn. This at least one can sense in the answer of Bashshār, when asked "who is the best poet of our time?" He said: "The effeminate (mukhannath) of the people of Baghdād", meaning Abū al-ʿAtāhiya.¹¹⁹ The combination of madīh and hijāʾ in one

poem is also regarded as a sign of excellence, and accordingly the poet Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣa, when asked by the poet Diʿbil b. ʿAlī: "Who is the best poet among you, O muhdathūn?", answered: "He is the one who has the most famous line. That is Rabīʿa al-Raqqī, who says:

لَشَّتَانِ مَا بَيْنَ الْبِزِيدَيْنِ فِي النَّدَى بَزِيدُ سُلَيْمٍ وَالْأَغْرَابُ ابْنُ حَاتِمٍ 120

The poem in which this line occurs was quoted later by Ibn al-Muʿtazz, as we shall see. It contains madīh and hijā' and can be regarded either as hijā' mudhi' or as madīh bi-'l-tafdīl. This last is the best kind of madīh, according to Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, who quoted the following lines of Laylā al-Akhyaliyya on Tawba:

فَفِيهِمْ فَتَى الدُّنْيَا وَإِنْ كَانَ فَاجِرًا وَفَوْقَ الْفَتَى إِنْ كَانَ لَيْسَ بِفَاجِرٍ
فَتَى كَانَ أَحْيَا مِنْ فِتْنَةٍ خَرِبَةٍ وَاشْجَعُ مِنْ كَيْتٍ يَخْشَقُ خَادِرٍ 121

It is not easy to give one definite answer to the question concerning the kind of poetry admired by the muhdathūn. Answers will differ according to the differences in styles of poetry and the tastes of poets. The comments and remarks made by some of them, as quoted above, may give us some idea about their views concerning good poetry. The differences we have spoken of make it difficult to grasp any consistent criteria on which the muhdathūn based their judgements. For instance, we find that the style of poetry followed by al-Buhturī, as a muhdath poet who is more influenced by ʿAmūd al-Shiʿr, plays a part in his judgements about the muhdathūn. He favoured Diʿbil b. ʿAlī as against Muslim b. al-Walīd, the reason, as given by al-Buhturī, being that Diʿbil's discourse was closer to the discourse of the early Arabs than was that of Muslim. The madhhab of Diʿbil was also similar to that of the early Arabs.¹²² As we have seen, al-Buhturī favoured the poet whose style of poetry most agreed with his own, which was the style of the early poets, the style of ʿAmūd al-Shiʿr. Muslim al-Walīd is more famous for the badī' style.

Nevertheless, elsewhere, al-Buhturī is also said to have admired Abū Tammām, to have imitated his style of badī', and even to have preferred him to himself, declaring that the excellent poetry of Abū Tammām was better than his own excellent poetry, but his medium and bad poetry were better than the medium and bad poetry of Abū Tammām.¹²³ Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's remark on poetry, especially the poetry of zuhd, will be the last quoted in order to give an idea of the kind of poetry admired in the period of the muhdathūn and its characteristics. Ibn Abī al-Abyad reported that he once visited Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and said to him: "I am a writer of zuhd poetry, and I have written many poems on that subject. I like this type of poetry; I hope that I shall not commit sins since I write zuhd. I have heard your poetry on this subject, and I admire it, so I should like you to recite me some of the best of it". Abū al-ʿAtāhiya told him what he had written was not excellent and when Ibn Abī al-Abyad asked why, with surprise, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya replied: "Because poetry should be like that written by the earlier fuhūl, or like the poetry of Bashshār and Ibn Harma; if it is not like that, it is better to write it in words that can be understood by the public (jumhūr), as is the case with my poetry, especially the poetry of zuhd because the way of zuhd is not the way of kings or the transmitters of poetry (ruwāt), nor is it the way of those who are looking for gharīb. The way of zuhd is more admired by the zuhhād, the people of the hadīth, the fugahā', the people of hypocrisy (riyā') and the commons (ʿamma), all of whom admire very much what they can actually understand". Ibn Abī al-Abyad agreed with Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and said: "You have spoken the truth".¹²⁴

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Old School of Critics (Ruwāt, Philologists, and Grammarians)

This school of critics consisted mainly of the grammarians, philologists and ruwāt (transmitters of poetry) of Basra, Kūfa and Baghdād, among whom we find the most distinguished group of 'ʿulamā', like Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlā', al-Asma'ī, Hammād al-Rāwīya, Khalaf al-Aḥmar, Mufaddal al-Dabbi, Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā and Ibn al-Aʿrābī. Besides this group of ruwāt-ʿulamā', we find others who were mainly grammarians and philologists, although they had some literary views on poetic comparison. These were men like ʿIsā b. ʿUmar, Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, Abū Ḥatīm al-Sijistānī who was a student of al-Asma'ī, Sībawayhi, the student of al-Khalīl, and al-Akhfash. The school of Baghdād was formed from a combination of the two schools of Basra and Kūfa, and from it we have al-Marzubānī.¹

The ruwāt, in order to collect poetry, travelled and wandered among the tribes; many tribesmen also came to Basra and Kūfa, where the scholars met them. As I have mentioned, Ibn ʿAbbās may be the origin of this school of critics, one of whose main interests was the use of ancient Arabic poetry in interpretation of the Qur'ān; Ibn ʿAbbās was certainly one of the first to do this. In the course of this activity Arabic grammar was established, and interest in ancient poetry increased for other reasons, such as the gathering of akhbār (information concerning historical figures).

Apart from their interest in ancient poetry from a linguistic and grammatical point of view, the members of the two schools, Basra and

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Hūfa, had some critical views concerning the ancient, the Islamic and the mudath poets. They widely differed about the Jāhili poets Imru' al-Qays, al-Nābigha, Zuhayr and al-A'shā, besides others like Labīd, Tarafa and 'Amr b. Kulthūm. Generally, it is reported that the people of Basra preferred Imru' al-Qays to his Jāhili peers, and, according to them he was a pioneer for all poets in many poetical matters. It seems that the people of Basra admired him because of his inventiveness, principally in the field of similes. They pointed out that he excelled the poets "not because he had said what they had not but because he invented certain poetic ma'ānī in which other poets followed him". Some of these innovations are concerned with the mugaddima of the qasīda, in which Imru' al-Qays seems to have inserted certain subjects for the first time. According to the Basrans, he was the first poet to request his companions to stop with him in front of a deserted dwelling and to weep for those who had departed from it long ago; he also set the scene in its geographical location in the same line:

قَفَا نَبْلِكَ مِنْ ذَكَرِي حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلِ بِسَقَطِ اللَّوَى بَيْنَ الدَّخُولِ فَتَوَمَّلِ

Besides being attracted by the theme of the poet's companions stopping with him and weeping over the deserted dwelling, as introduced by him, the Basrans seem also to have appreciated the conciseness by which the poet combined several elements of this in one line.

The second innovation of Imru' al-Qays was the introduction of certain similes into poetry. These similes are divided into two sections, horse description and tashbīb. Those who championed him claimed that "he is the first poet who likened horses to sticks, eagles, lions, deer and birds. He is the first to liken women to gazelles, wild cows, and ostrich eggs. All poets then followed him in this". A third innovation concerned the subject of nasīb. The Basrans said that "his

nasīb was excellent and sensitive (raqīq), and that he separated nasīb and maʿānī". Though they did not give examples of his sensitive nasīb poetry, they were probably referring to certain of his lines in which he implies that humility and submission to the beloved that we have so frequently encountered before, such as the line:

أَتَنَزَّكَ مِنِّي أَنْ حُبَّكَ قَاتِلِي وَأَتَنَزَّكَ مَهْمَا تَأْمُرِي الْقَلْبَ يَفْعَلِ

When they described him as the first poet to separate nasīb from maʿānī, by which they meant poetic themes in the body of the gasīda, they probably meant to say that his poetic themes are introduced in order, and not confused with one another. Thus, nasīb is separated from lines of rahīl, camel or horse descriptions and other items; perhaps, again, he was the first to make a transition from nasīb to other parts of the poem, as in the following line:

فَدَعِ ذَا وَسَلِّ الْهَمَّ عَنْكَ بِجَسْرَةٍ ذَمُّوْا إِذَا صَامَ النَّهَارُ وَهَجَّرَا

The claim that he was the first to introduce the concept of stopping and weeping over a deserted camp and requesting his companions to join him in doing so may be challenged with a line of his own, in which he stated that he followed the poet Ibn Hizām in this theme:

نَحْوَجَا عَلَى الْهَلَلِ الْحَبِيلِ لَعَلَّنَا نَبْكِي الدِّيَارَ كَمَا بَكَى ابْنُ حِزَامٍ

Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī mentioned that Ibn Hizām belonged to the tribe of Tay', and that he had never heard of poetry of his in which he had wept over deserted dwellings, or, indeed, of any other poetry of his.

Al-Suyūṭī mentioned that the Basrans admired Imru' al-Qays because, in addition to this, he wrote excellent istiʿāra and tashbīh.²

The people of Kūfa preferred al-Aʿshā, for the reason that "he wrote many long and excellent poems, and he wrote poetry in all poetic genres, madih, hijā', nasīb, and others. No other poet did the same". Other

critics of Kūfa said that "al-Aʿshā is the best at writing poetry in praise of kings, and at describing wine; he wrote a great deal of poetry with deep maʿānī, and his muʿallagā is the best of all, besides his superiority over all other poets in other poetic genres". Al-Asmaʿī added that the people of Kūfa preferred al-Aʿshā because he wrote poetry in all metres and in many different rhymes".³

The length of al-Aʿshā's poems, which was one of the factors in their championing of him, of course implies that he included many themes in them: nasīb, rahīl, wasf and madīh. This, together with his multiplicity of poetic topics and metres, indicates his powerful tabʿ and poetic ability. The standard of multiplicity (tafannun) of poetic topics was also used by al-Asmaʿī and Ibn al-Muʿtazz. The latter called such a poet mutafannin or muftann, as we shall see later. The point that al-Aʿshā was the best at praising kings and describing wine show that these genres, madīh and khamriyyāt, were the principle ones in his poetry. The fact that he wrote long excellent poems, besides indicating the inclusion of various themes and topics, may be linked in particular with madīh; if we keep in mind that al-Aʿshā may have been the first poet "to beg by his poetry", as stated in the ʿUmda of Ibn Rashīq,⁴ we shall probably be correct in assuming that these long poems for which he won approbation were essentially poems of madīh, since such a poem must necessarily be long if it is to include all the elements that, at that period at any rate, were considered appropriate as preludes to the madīh itself. If al-Aʿshā was "the first to beg by his poetry", does this imply that he was the first to write madīh and to arrange the various themes within the qaṣīda of madīh? Ibn Rashīq, however, stated that al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, and not al-Aʿshā, was the first to "beg by his poetry".⁵

Opposed to the schools of Basra and Kūfa stood that of the Hijāz and the bādiya, though this was not a school of grammar or philology. These people championed Zuhayr and al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī. "Those who put Zuhayr at the top", said Ibn Sallām "argue that his poetry surpassed that of all others in beauty, in its freedom from sakhf, in having an abundance of ma'ānī in the fewest words, in effective praise and in quantity of aphorisms".⁶ Others said: "Zuhayr is the best of poets in praise and his poetry has more firmness of composition (ashadduhum asr shi'r)".⁷

The quality of "beauty" admired by these people in the poetry of Zuhayr, though not explained, may refer to Zuhayr's poetry being particularly polished and composed with carefully selected words. The fact that they described his poetry as being free from sakhf confirms what has been mentioned above concerning constantly re-examined and polished poetry. Conciseness and sincerity were also admired in his poetry, despite the point mentioned by Ibn Sallām, that Zuhayr produced the most effective praise. It does not mean "exaggerated madīh", as Ibn Rashīq understood⁸, but rather refers to praise by means of telling details and the covering of all the themes of that topic. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭab's opinion, that Zuhayr did not exaggerate in his madīh, has already been cited.

"Al-Nābigha", said those who admired him among the people of the Hijāz and the bādiya, "has the best poetic style (dībāja), has most beauty of discourse, writes the purest verses, and produces poetry that appears to be speech, without affectation".⁹ Others said: "his discourse is the clearest, and there is little hashw/sakhf (in his words). He has more excellent phrases and openings (than any other poet). His style makes his poetry look as though it were not rhymed verse, because it is too delicate and womanly. At the same time, his style is as firm as a

rock with which one could strike mountains and demolish them. His ma'ānī are the clearest, his ideas are the deepest, and his poetry is the most profitable".¹⁰ All this would seem to indicate that al-Nābigha was accustomed to polish his poetry to purge it of worthless words and expressions. Although it implies that he practised a sort of san'a, he is nonetheless described as a poet without affectation. As well as combining san'a and tab' in this way, he was also described as combining delicacy and firmness of discourse, a combination thought desirable, as we have seen, by al-Farazdaq, when comparing himself with Jarīr.

The delicacy of style which made the poetry of al-Nābigha appear as though it were "speech and not rhymed verse" may be taken to be a sign of tab'. The quality of femininity (unūtha) which was noticed in it may refer to lines like:

سَقَطَ الذَّهَبُ وَلَمْ تُرِدْ إِسْقَاطَهُ فَتَنَاوَلْتَهُ وَاتَّقَيْنَا بِالْيَدِ

The same quality was found in the poetry of al-A'shā, in lines like:

قَالَتْ هَرَبْرَةٌ لَهَا جِثٌّ زَائِرُهَا وَيَلِي عَلَيْكَ وَيُولِي مِنْكَ يَا رَجُلُ 11

The "clarity of his ma'ānī" and the "depth of his ideas" might seem to be in contradiction to one another, but this is not necessarily so; presumably what is intended is penetrating images lucidly articulated. Al-A'shā was also credited with these virtues. "Profitable" as applied to al-Nābigha's poetry almost certainly implies "full of hikma, akhbār, moral advice", and so on.

The preference of the people of the Hijāz and the bādiya for Zuhayr and al-Nābigha may well have been influenced by the admiration of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and other such early critics for them.

These then were the four Jāhilī poets who formed the first class, and,

though critics generally agreed about this, they differed widely as to who was the best poet of the four. However, other poets, too, with lesser reputations did not lack for critics who admired them and preferred them to the great four. Poets like Labīd, ʿAmr b. Kulthūm and Tarafa replaced them, in the opinion of some of the critics of Basra and Kūfa. They tended to assess poets mainly on the basis of qualities that they admired in their characters, rather than on poetic grounds; nevertheless, they did apply some artistic standards, however vague, as can be seen from their assessment of Labīd: "he is the (morally) best of the poets in the Jāhiliya and in Islam. He knows most about the eloquent and fluent men among the Arabs. His poetry contains very little sakhf in its language".¹²

Those who admired Tarafa did so because "though he was very young when he died, he was able to compete with other poets older than himself and to arrive at what they had arrived at only in the course of long lives".

ʿAmr b. Kulthūm was put first by those who admired him because, according to them, "he was one of the ancient poets; he was the most powerful among them and the one who had the best muʿallaga". This muʿallaga ʿĪsā b. ʿUmar considered superior to all other Arab poetry and not only to the muʿallaqāt.¹³

It is interesting to see Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ and al-Asmaʿī later picking up the moralistic standards of Labīd's earlier champions, in that they too used the term sālih in their judgements on his work. Clearly, as might be expected, there was often a degree of (probably unconscious) dependence on traditional attitudes among critics, even when these were largely irrelevant to their immediate purposes.

Tarafa's being described as having achieved all that other poets older than he had achieved, in spite of his early death, may refer merely to the wide scope of ma'ānī present in his mu'allaga, with its greatly admired description of the she-camel. If, however, we are to take literally al-A'shā's interpretation, that he had covered all poetic genres, we must agree with Ibn Sallām's assertion that most of Tarafa's poetry is lost.¹⁴

The criteria of those who favoured 'Amr b. Kulthūm on account of his "ancientness" and "power" was taken up later by Ibn Sallām, who spoke of 'Abīd Ibn al-Abras as an ancient and powerful poet (qadīm al-dhikr, 'azīm al-qadr) and of 'Amr b. Shā's as being noble among his people, as we shall see.

It seems likely that the presence of the Azd tribe in Basra at that time had some connection with the admiration expressed for Imru' al-Qays, who, like the Azd, belonged to the Yemen. The Banū Tamīm were also settled near Basra and they too were related to the Azd. As we have seen before, al-Farazdaq, the great poet of Tamīm, favoured Imru' al-Qays and even claimed that he had inherited poetry from him. Besides that, it also seems probable that the opinion of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, who stayed in Irāq to the end of his life, probably influenced people there in favour of the poet.

Those who admired al-A'shā were the people of Kūfa, as we have mentioned, and this was perhaps because of the fact that his tribe Rabī'a was settled near there. As for Zuhayr and al-Nābigha, they were championed by the people of the Hījāz and the bādiya because they were their own poets, and besides, as we have seen, Abū Bakr and 'Umar admired them.

What has been said above gives us a general idea of the opinions of the Basran and Kūfan schools, and of the people of the Hijāz and the baḍiyya about the Jāhiliī poets, principally the four who formed the first class among them. We shall now examine, in more detail, the views of some of the ruwāt and ʿulamāʾ from Basra and Kūfa concerning not only the Jāhiliī poets but also the mukhadramun, the Islamic poets and the muhdathūn. It is not particularly easy to form a theory of literary criticism from the scattered views of these early critics, but it may be useful to quote them, bearing in mind that these views were the bases on which later critics founded their literary criticism. We have already given, at the beginning of the chapter, the names of the principal critics of the old school. Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī represents the last stage of this school, but, as one of its major figures, we have chosen to discuss his views later in a separate chapter; his book, Tabagāt fuhūl al-shuʿarāʾ may be considered the first in the field of Arabic literary criticism. With the exception of al-Asmaʿī, in some instances, the other ʿulamāʾ and ruwāt with whom we are dealing, did not record their remarks concerning poetic comparison; these were - in most cases - reported by their pupils or other scholars.

We begin with Hammād al-Rāwīya, who was known as the first collector of the muʿallaqāt and was famous for his knowledge of Jāhiliī poetry. Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī spoke of him as "The first man who collected Jāhiliī poetry and transmitted its texts". Ibn Sallām accused him of being a falsifier of early Arabic poetry and of adding to it his own verses.¹⁵ Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī accused him of corrupting the poetry, and described him as an expert in the language and poetry of the Arabs, and the styles and ideas of the poets.¹⁶

In his collection of Jāhilī poetry Hammād seems to have used the standard of length very largely, since the seven or ten poems are very long compared with others by the same poets or with the poems of other poets. Other factors which may have influenced Hammād in selecting the mu'allaqāt are the diverse poetic topics and themes dealt with in them. The openings of the poems may also have attracted him, especially that of Imru' al-Qays, which was widely praised. The description of the life of pleasure led by the poet may also have appealed to Hammād, since he himself was described as a mājin and a lover of drink and lahw.¹⁷ The mu'allaga is also full of similes and metaphors, describing a night, a horse, women, clouds and rain. In general the mu'allaga consists of wasf, in which the poet shows his skill at tashbīh and kināya; it contains no madih, hijā' or rithā'. Fakhr is restricted to the poet's adventures with women.

The mu'allaga of Tarafa is the longest. Besides the muqaddima talaliyya and the nasīb, the main topics are wasf (of his she-camel), ʿitāb (of his cousin), fakhr and aphoristic hikma. Hammād, like earlier critics, admired lines of hikma and aphorisms, of which he found a great deal in Tarafa's mu'allaga and also in the one by Zuhayr. The description of the she-camel, with its unfamiliar words, satisfied Hammād's desire for gharīb, as a rāwiya of the ancient poetry of the Arabs.

The mu'allaga of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm is distinguished by its muqaddima khamriyya, for which it is probably unique among Jāhilī poems. It seems that, as the main theme of the poem is fakhr, the poet began with the subject of wine as a part of this; the Jāhilī poets used frequently to boast of their drinking feats. In his book, al-Hayāt al-adabiyya fī al-ʿasr al-jāhilī¹⁸, Muhammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim Khafājī referred the muqaddima khamriyya in ʿAmr's mu'allaga to the fact that wine was widespread among his tribe, Taghlib, who were Christian. At any rate,

besides the probability that Ḥammād was struck by this muḡaddima, he seems to have been particularly interested in the main topic of the casīda, which he selected as a masterpiece and an excellent example of the poetry of fakhr. The mu'allaga of al-Ḥārith b. Ḥilliza may have been selected for the same reason. That of 'Antara contains a number of similes admired by earlier critics; it also contains some fine concise lines, which passed into general currency, such as:

يَنْبُتُكَ مَنْ شَهِدَ الْوَقِيعَةَ أَنَّنِي أَغَشَى الْوَنَى وَاعْفُ عِنْدَ الْمَغْنَمِ

and:

وَإِذَا بَشَرْتُ فَإِنِّي مُسْتَهْلِكٌ مَالِي وَعَرَضِي وَآخِرُ لَمْ يَكْلَمْ
وَإِذَا هَجَوْتُ فَمَا أَقْصَرُ عَنْ نَدَى وَكَمَا عَلِمْتَ شِمَائِلِي وَتَكَرَّرُ مِي

The poem also contains a section describing war, beginning:

وَلَقَدْ ذَكَرْتُكَ وَالرَّوَّاحِ نَوَاهِلُ مِنِّي وَبَيْنَهُ الْهَنْدُ تَقْطُرُ مِنْ دَمِي

The description of his she-camel also employs unfamiliar words, like that of Tarafa. The same thing could be said about the corresponding section of the mu'allaga of Labīd. This fascination with gharīb, hikma, aphorisms and tashbīh is also evident in his views concerning other poets. As a representative of the Kūfan school of critics, Ḥammād placed al-A'shā at the head of the Jāhili poets, on the strength of the following line of wine description:

19 نَارِعَتْهُمْ قُصْبَ الرِّيحَانِ مُتَكِنًا وَقَهْوَةٍ مُزَّةٍ رَأَوْوْهَا خَصِلٌ

His liking for conciseness and aphorisms appears in his judgement about al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, and he alleged that he was the best poet because one could satisfy oneself with one line of his poetry, with a half-line, or even with a quarter-line. Such a line is the following one:

خَلَفْتُ فَلَمْ أَتْرَكَ لِنَفْسِكَ رِيْبَةً" وَلَيْسَ وَرَاءَ اللَّهِ لِلْمَرْءِ مَذْهَبٌ

Either half of this line can be recited separately and have a meaning.

Sometimes, even a part of one half can be quoted and give sense, as for instance:

20 أَيُّ الرِّجَالِ الْمُتَهَدِّبُ

His liking for hikma and aphorisms can also be observed in his admiration for the mukhadram poet al-Nawr b. Tawlab, whom he spoke of as having "many aphorisms in his poetry"; he quoted several lines in illustration, such as:

لَا تَغْضَبَنَّ عَلَى أَمْرِي فِي مَالِي وَعَلَى كِرَائِمِ صُلْبِي مَالِكَ فَأَغْضَبِ
وَإِذَا تُصِبُّكَ خِصَامَةٌ خَارِجُ الْغِيَةِ وَإِلَى الَّذِي يُعْطِي الرِّغَائِبَ فَارْغَبِ

and:

تَلَبَّسْ لِذَهْرِكَ أَثْوَابَهُ فَلَنْ يَبْتَئِيَ النَّاسُ مَا هَدَمَا

The fact that he also quoted lines from the poetry of advice (wasāya) of the same poet, such as:

وَأَحِبُّ جِيلَكَ حُبًّا رَوِيًّا فَلَيْسَ يَهْوِلُكَ أَنْ تَهْرُمَا
وَابْغِفْ بِفَيْضِكَ بَعْضًا رَوِيًّا إِذَا أَنْتَ حَاوَلْتَ أَنْ تَحِلَمَا

may indicate a moral tendency in his criticism, like that of most earlier critics, who looked on poetry as a source of moral teaching.

His interest in tashbih and in isti'āra may be guessed from his admiration for the following lines by al-Akhtal, which he regarded as "the best describing drunkenness":

تَرَى الزُّجَاجَ وَيُلَمُّهُ يُلَيْفٌ بِهِ لِأَنَّهُ مِنْ دَمِ الْأَجْوَانِ مُتَّخِذٌ
حَتَّى إِذَا اخْتَفَتْ مَاءُ الْمُرْنِ عُدَّتْهَا رَاحَ الزُّجَاجُ وَفِي أَلْوَانِهِ صَهْبٌ
تَنْتَرُّ إِذَا شَجَّهَا بِأَمَاءٍ مَا رَجَبَا تَنَرُّ الْجَنَادِبِ فِي رَمَقَاءٍ تَلْتَهَبُ
رَاعُوا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ فِي فُلَا إِنَّهُ هُمُّعُوا وَقَيْنَ الرَّاحَاتِ وَالرُّكْبُ 21

Ḥammād admired Imru' al-Qays and Dhū al-Rumma for their skill in writing excellent tashbih, and declared that each of them was the best in his class (tabaqa) in that respect. He believed that Dhū al-Rumma was a great poet and would have been ranked with the famous poets, had it not been that he was young and that people envied him. What most attracted him in the poet was that "he is the most eloquent poet and the most knowledgeable about gharīb, besides being skilled in tashbih".²²

The second man whose views concerning poets and poetic comparison we shall discuss is Khalaf al-Ahmar, who was a pupil of Ḥammād al-Rāwiyā but belonged to the Basran school. His great knowledge of Arabic poetry was acknowledged by contemporary critics as we shall see from Ibn Sallām's remarks concerning him. Al-Suyūṭī spoke of him as the one who knew most about ancient Arabic poetry and, being a poet himself, the best able to imitate it and attribute his own poems to earlier poets.²³ It is said that Khalaf admitted to being the author of Lāmiyyat al-Shanfarā and the other lāmiyya attributed to Ta'abbata Sharran, beginning:

24 إِنَّ بِالشَّعْبِ الذِّي دُونَ سَلْعٍ لَقَتِيلًا دَمَهُ مَا يُبَلُّ

Nevertheless, Ibn Sallām al-Jumhī spoke of Khalaf as a trustworthy transmitter and a skilful critic of poetry.²⁵ Ibn Rashīq even placed him above Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' and his peers in the art of poetic criticism.²⁶

It seems that Khalaf paid great attention to words and their role in creating the correct ma'nā in poetry. When al-Asma'ī recited to him the following lines of Jarir:

وَلَيْلٍ لَا بِطَامِ الْجَبَارِ حَبِيبٍ إِلَى هَوَاهُ غَالِبٍ لِي بِإِطْلُهُ
رَزَقْنَا بِهِ الصَّيْدَ الْغَزِيرَ وَلَمْ نَكُنْ كُنْ نَبْلُهُ مَحْرُومَةً وَجَائِلُهُ
فِيَا لَكَ يَوْمًا خَيْرُهُ قَبْلَ شَرِّهِ تَقَيَّبَ وَاشْيِ وَأَقْصَرَ عَاذِلُهُ

he criticised the poet for the first half of his third line and said: "What is the use of a day that starts with good and ends with evil?"

He then told al-Asma'ī to change the line to: خَيْرُهُ دُونَ شَرِّهِ
instead of خَيْرُهُ قَبْلَ شَرِّهِ. He justified his action by saying

that the ancient transmitters used to amend the poetry of the early poets.²⁷ The poet Tamīm b. Abī Muqbil is reported as saying: "We write false rhymes and later the transmitters correct them".²⁸

Related to the words and form of poetry is the idea of qirān, which we have discussed before. Khalaf seems also to have admired poetry in which the lines are connected with one another. He criticised the kind of poetry that was written in affected language, contained strained maʿānī, and had no connection between its parts. The words, he said, looked uneasy in their places, and the incongruity between the lines was like that between brothers from one father but different mothers. Khalaf quoted the following line to express his opinion of such poetry:

29 وبعض قريف القوم أبناء علة يكيد لسان الناطق المتخلف

When Khalaf was asked to say who was the best poet of all, he replied that it was not possible to say who was the best poet, just as it was not possible to say who was the bravest man, the most eloquent orator or the most beautiful person. People would never agree about such matters. The same view was adopted by the grammarian Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, who said: "Poetry is like nobility, courage and beauty. It is not possible to say who is the best of all in these things".³⁰ When asked: "Whom do you find the most admirable among poets?" he replied that it was al-Aʿshā, "because he was the one who combined all poetic genres, rhymes and metres".³¹ This is the same argument adduced by the Kūfan school for championing al-Aʿshā.

Like other critics, Khalaf sought for tashbīh and conciseness in words. As Ḥammād before him had placed Imru al-Qays first for his excellent similes, so Khalaf, too, indicated his admiration for the poet's similes, and for his ability to put an abundance of maʿānī into a few words, as in the following line:

له أَيْلًا ظَبِيٍّ وَسَاقًا نَعَامِيٍّ وَإِخْضَاءُ سِرْحَانٍ وَتَقْرِيبُ تَنْقُلٍ

which Khalaf described as "the most comprehensive (ajmaʿ) line". This

remark, besides meaning that the line contained a number of similes, and that it was concise, may also mean that the line is admirable for its tag̣sīm. Qudāma b. Jaʿfar quoted the line as an example of poetry that contained a variety of similes gathered in one line and in a few words.³² Ibn Rashīq quoted it as an example of poetry in which there were four similes without the particle kāf, and he pointed out that Imru' al-Qays was the first to produce similes in this way.³³

Khalaf also cited the following line of Imru' al-Qays for its conciseness, describing it in the same terms as the one above, namely "the most comprehensive line":

أَفَادَ وَجَادَ وَسَادَ وَقَادَ وَعَادَ وَزَادَ وَزَادَ وَأَفْضَلَ 34

The line is quoted by Ibn Rashīq with slight differences:

أَفَادَ فَبَادَ وَشَادَ فَرَادَ وَقَادَ فَدَارَ وَعَادَ فَأَفْضَلَ

He observed that it consisted entirely of tag̣sīm, and that it was the original of a number of similar lines written by Abū al-Tayyib and others of the muhdathūn.³⁵

In madīh, Khalaf quoted these lines of Zuhayr as "the most realistic and most flattering praise":

تَرَاهُ إِذَا مَا جِئْتَهُ مَتَهَلًّا لِأَنَّكَ تُعْطِيهِ الَّذِي أَنْتَ سَائِلُهُ
أَخُو ثَقَةٍ لَا يَهْلِكُ الْخَمْرُ مَالَهُ وَلَكِنَّهُ قَدْ يَهْلِكُ الْمَالُ سَائِلُهُ
غَدَوْتُ عَلَيْهِ غَدَوَةً فَوَجِدْتُهُ قُعُورًا لَدَيْهِ بِالصَّرِيمِ عَوَازِلُهُ
يَفْدِيْنَهُ طُغْرًا وَطُغْرًا يَلْمُنُهُ وَأَعْيَىٰ فَمَا يَدْرِيْنَ أَيْنَ مَخَازِلُهُ
فَأَعْرَضْتُ مِنْهُ عَنْ كَرِيمٍ مَرَّرًا عَزُومٍ عَلَى الْأَمْرِ الَّذِي هُوَ فَاعِلُهُ 36

These lines were also admired by Ibn Tabāṭabā, who quoted them as an example of lines that "fascinate because of the elegance of the discourse".³⁷

Khalaf declared that he would have proclaimed the superiority of Kaʿb

over his father Zuhayr, "had it not been for a poem of the latter's very much admired by people", starting:

لَمَنْ الدِّيَارُ بَقِيَهُ الْبَرِّ أَتَقَوُّنَ مِنْ حَجَّجٍ وَمِنْ دَهْرٍ

in which he says:

وَلَا نَتَّ أَشْبَعُ مِنْ إِسَامَةَ إِذْ دُعِيَ النَّزَالُ وَلُجَّ فِي الدُّعْرِ 38

Concerning hijā' poetry, Khalaf took the traditional view of what was the most harmful sort of hijā', namely that it was hijā' muḡdhi' or hijā' bi-'l-tafdīl. Khalaf added that "the severest hijā' is that which is most decent and most sincere. On another occasion, Khalaf indicated what he meant by decency and sincerity in hijā', giving an example from a poem, already quoted, by al-Ḥutay'a:

وَأَنَيْتُ الْعَشَاءَ إِلَى سَهْلٍ أَوْ الشَّعْرِ فَطَالَ بِي الْإِنَاءُ 39

His admiration for "beautiful and suitable words" caused him on one occasion to prefer the muwallad poet Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa to al-A'shā, even though he had regarded the latter as the best of poets, as we have seen. When Marwān recited to Khalaf his poem that starts:

لَمَرَقَكَ زَائِرَةٌ فَحَيَّ جَمَالَهَا بَيْضَاءُ تَخْلُطُ بِالْجَمَالِ دَلَالُهَا

Khalaf told him that in that particular poem he was better than al-A'shā in his poem written in the same rhyme, starting:

رَحَلْتُ سُمِّيَّةَ غَزْوَةَ أَجْمَالِهَا

because al-A'shā had used an unpleasant word in the following line:

فَأَصَابَ حَبَّةَ قَلْبِهِ وَطَحَالِهَا

This poem was marred by the word tiḥāl, whereas Marwān's poem was free from any such blemishes.⁴⁰ This attitude, of considering certain words unsuitable for poetry, is also taken by al-Asma'ī, as we shall see later. Decency in hijā' is also required by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', and we have already seen al-Akhtal expressing the same view. Khalaf's standards, variety in poetic genres, rhymes and metres, the use of pleasant and suitable words, and decency and sincerity in hijā' were adopted by some

of those who followed him. Although we do not have many of his critical views, we are inclined to regard him as the best critic of his group, judging by the accounts given by Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī and Ibn Rashīq.

The third critic of the old school, and a very good representative of it, is Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', a Basran scholar who, according to al-Marzubānī, was born during 'Abd al-Malik's caliphate and died in the year 155 A.H., at the age of ninety.⁴¹ Though he belonged to the Basran school, who preferred Imru' al-Qays to all other poets, Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', like his peer, Khalaf al-Ahmar, considered no poet to be superior to al-A'shā, about whom he is reported as saying: "Learn the poetry of al-A'shā; I liken him to the hawk which is able to prey upon all birds, from the nightingale to the crane".⁴² According to him, again; "Al-A'shā was the best of poets, but ignorance and his persistent begging (ilhāf) had caused him to be under-valued".⁴³ What Abū 'Amr meant by his first observation is either, as Khalaf also remarked, that al-A'shā had written poetry in all genres, or that his poetry contained both excellent poems and bad ones. His opinion that "his persistent begging" had reduced al-A'shā's standing as a poet, was possibly influenced by al-Huṭay'a's belief that "persistent begging and self-abasement (ilhāf wa-darā'a)" had spoilt al-Nābigha and himself as poets. These early critics are often, as reported, completely contradictory in their views; Abū 'Amr also is said to have declared that "The best poets of all are four, and these are Imru' al-Qays, al-Nābigha, Tarafa, and Muhalhil".⁴⁴ Later, we shall see the influence of such remarks on Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī; for now, it is sufficient to remark that Imru' al-Qays was once more placed first, which may simply be a reflection of the general view of the Basran school; Muhalhil was added to the list, for no very clear reason, except that he appears to have been admired by a number of critics in Iraq at that time; Tarafa was probably, once again, included for his mu'allaga; al-Nābigha

seems to have been very much admired by Abū 'Amr, who proclaimed his superiority to Zuhayr in extravagant terms. Comparing Aws b. Hajar with al-Nābigha, he stated that the former remained the master-poet of the tribe of Mudar until al-Nābigha appeared and reduced him to being a poet of his tribe Tamīm. He alleged that al-Nābigha was so much better than Zuhayr that Zuhayr was not worthy to be al-Nābigha's hireling.⁴⁵ He claimed that "if Zuhayr were to stamp his feet on the ground one hundred times he would not be able to write a similar line to the following one (of tashbīh) by al-Nābigha:

فإنك كالليل الذي هو مذكرى وإن خلت أن المنتأى عنك واسع

What cannot be imitated by Zuhayr cannot be imitated by others".⁴⁶ There appears to be some inconsistency here, if the report is correct. Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' noticed similarities between certain Jāhilī poets, and also between certain Islamic poets and Jāhilī ones. He compared al-Namr b. Tawlab with Ḥatim al-Ta'ī and pointed out that they had the same madhhab of poetry. He admired the former and used to call him "the skilful one" (al-kayyis).⁴⁷ Abū 'Amr did not indicate in what sense the madhhabs of the two poets were similar, but it seems that the similarity between them was that both were famous for being generous men and they talked about generosity (karam) in their poems in lines of hikma. This suggests a liking on the part of Abū 'Amr for poetry that teaches good manners and noble deeds, a liking shared by earlier critics.

"No poetry is more admirable to me than that of Labīd", said Abū 'Amr elsewhere, "for he mentioned Allāh, he was a Muslim, and he spoke of religion and good; but his poetry is a corn-mill".⁴⁸ On another occasion, he compared him with Khidāsh b. Zuhayr, preferring the latter to Labīd, whom he described as "a man of qualities (sāhib sifāt)".⁴⁹ What Abū 'Amr appears to mean is that Labīd was admirable as a man, and that his poetry

dealt with the most elevated subjects, but that it did not contain excellent ma'ānī, and consisted of harsh and grating words and expressions. Hence his description of it as a corn-mill; the grammarian al-Farrā' gives a similar description of it.⁵⁰ The opinion of Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī concerning him was that he had "a sweet manner of discourse and elegant words", as we shall see later. This must refer to his poetry other than the mu'allagā. For instance, the language of his elegies on his half-brother Arbad is much simpler than that of his mu'allagā, as is that of his well-known lines on his old age, as M.M. Badawi has pointed out.⁵¹

Abū 'Amr demonstrated his interest in fasāḥa in poetry by his remark on the poet 'Adī b. Zayd, whom he likened to Canopus in comparison with other poets. Though he was a poet, he could not reach the standard of other poets, to take Ibn Qutayba's explanation of this comparison. Because of the fact that many of his words were not from the language of Najd, his poetry was not recited by the 'ulama''. According to al-Marzubānī 'Adī's language was influenced and softened by his stay in al-Hīra. Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī added that during his stay at the Hīran court, 'Adī used to listen to the different delegations who visited the kings, and he made use of their words in his poetry.⁵²

Comparing the Islamic poets with Jāhilī poets, Abū 'Amr likened Jarīr to al-A'shā and said that they were "two hawks who prey upon all birds from the crane to the nightingale". (We have already come across this metaphor in connection with al-A'shā). He likened al-Farazdaq to Zuhayr in "firmness of composition and facility of poetry", and al-Akhtal to al-Nābigha in the correctness of their poetic language.⁵³ Of these Islamic poets, al-Akhtal was the one whom Abū 'Amr admired most, and he even claimed that, if al-Akhtal had lived a single day in the Jāhiliyya,

he would have preferred no-one at all to him. When al-Asma'ī recited to Abū 'Amr some excellent poetry, he said: "No-one of the Islamic poets could write poetry equal to this, not even al-Akhtal himself".⁵⁴ Along with other early critics, he particularly admired certain poems of al-Akhtal; the five poems that begin:

عَفَا وَاسِطٌ مِنْ آلِ رَضْوَى فَتَبَّلُ
تَأْبَدُ الرَّبْعُ مِنْ سَلَمَى بِأَخْفَارِ
خَفَّ الْقَطِينُ فَرَاوَا مِنْكَ وَابْتَلَوْا
كَذَبْتَكَ عَيْنُكَ أَمْ رَأَيْتَ بِوَاسِطِ
دَعِ الْحُمُرَ لَا تَسْأَلِ يَمْشُرِعِ

were especially praised for their excellence, which manifested itself in their length, their purity, their polish, and their correctness of style.⁵⁵ It was also said that a further five of his poems were of a similar quality to those specified above.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Abū 'Amr declared that Jarīr surpassed all other poets in lines of boasting, praise, satire and nasīb, and quoted the lines quoted earlier by the two a'rāb who championed Jarīr.⁵⁷

In spite of this admiration for al-Akhtal and Jarīr, Abū 'Amr did not recognise their poetry as a hujja and apparently counted them among the muhdathūn or the muwalladūn, to judge from the account of Ibn Rashīq.⁵⁸ Al-Asma'ī mentioned that he had never heard Abū 'Amr cite any verse of the Islamic poets as a hujja.⁵⁹ When asked to give his opinion concerning the muhdathūn, he replied that the ancients had preceded the muhdathūn in creating all excellent ma'ānī, and so the latter were just imitating the former. If they made mistakes, it was their responsibility and had nothing to do with the ancients. The poetry of the muhdathūn was not written in one consistent style but had different levels of excellence. Some of it was written in a style like a piece of silk, some of it like a rough piece of cloth and some of it like a piece of leather.⁶⁰

As we have mentioned before, Abū 'Amr "sealed" poets with Dhū al-Rumma⁶¹; he perhaps accepted him because of his Bedouin style, which, however, seems to have been affected later on by town life, as may be gathered from al-Asma'ī's attack on him. Sometimes Abū 'Amr softened his hard line against the muhdathūn but he never really altered it at all. Once he is reported as saying: "This muhdath poetry has increased and became so good that I have almost wished to cite it".⁶² However, one cannot always trust information from different sources concerning Abū 'Amr's hostility to muhdath poetry. When we look at his selected lines we find that they actually include some muhdath poetry, as well as the Jāhili and early Islamic poetry that is to be expected. Like other early critics, he did not state reasons for admiring some of the lines that he quoted. In Jāhili poetry, he expressed a high opinion of the poem of al-Muthaqqib al-'Abdī that starts:

أَخْلَطُ قَبْلَ بَيْنِكَ مَتَّعِينِي وَمَنْعَكَ مَا سَأَلْتُ لَأَنْ تَبِينِي

and, in particular, of the line:

رَزَدَنَ تَحِيَّةً وَكَنتَ أُخْرَى وَثَقَبْتَ الْوَصَائِدَ لِلْعُيُونِ

About this poem he said: "If poetry is written like this poem, people should learn it".⁶³ It seems probable that he was attracted by the facility of the poem and by the two lines of hikma with which it ended.

Like many earlier critics, Abū 'Amr appreciated moral poetry and he looked for sincerity in it. For this quality he preferred the line of al-Hutay'a:

مَنْ يَفْعَلِ الْخَيْرَ لَا يَقْدَمُ جَوَازِيَهُ لَا يَذْهَبُ الْعَرَفُ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَالنَّاسِ

to that of Tarafa:

مَسْتَبْدَى لَكَ الْأَيَّامُ مَا كُنْتَ جَاهِلًا وَيَأْتِيكَ بِالْأَخْبَارِ مَنْ لَمْ تَزُودْ

He thought that Tarafa's line was less perfect than that of al-Hutay'a, in that he said concerning it: "him whom you provide will bring you more information than he whom you do not". He also said that every line written by the Arabs contained a defect, except the one by al-Hutay'a

His interest in moral poetry is also to be seen in his admiration for the poem of Durayd b. al-Simma which starts:

تَقُولُ أَلا تَبْكِي أَخَاكَ ! وَقَدْ أَرَى مَكَانَ الْبُكَاءِ لَكِنَّ بُنَيْتَ عَلَى الصَّبْرِ

Abū 'Amr cited the poem as: "the best poetry ever written advocating patience in time of misfortunes".⁶⁵ He also expressed his admiration for the following two lines on the same subject:

تَقُولُ: أَرَاهُ بَعْدَ عُرْوَةٍ لَاهِيًا وَذَلِكَ رُزْءٌ مَا عَلِمْتُ جَلِيلٌ
فَلَا تَحْسِبْنِي تَنَا سَيِّدَ عَهْدِهِ وَلَكِنَّ صَبْرِي يَا أُمَيَّيْمُ جَمِيلٌ

He also appreciated conciseness, and this may be seen in his admiration for certain lines of rithā'. He cited this as "the best line of rithā'":

فَمَا كَانَ قَيْسٌ هُلْكُهُ هُلْكَاً وَاحِداً وَلَكِنَّهُ بُنْيَانُ قَوْمٍ تَهْدَمَا

and these lines of Aws b. Hajar as the best opening of a marthiya:

أَيَّتَهَا النَّفْسُ أَجْهَلِي جَزَعًا إِنَّ الَّذِي تَحْذَرِينَ قَدْ وَقَعَا
إِنَّ الَّذِي جَمَعَ السَّحَابَ وَالْبَرَّةَ وَالْبِرَّ وَالْقُرَى جُمَعَا
الْأَلَمِيُّ الَّذِي يَنْظُرُ لَكَ الظَّنَّ لَأَنْ قَدْ رَأَى وَقَدْ سَمِعَا

The conciseness of the lines is remarked on by Qudāma, who described them as lines that had gathered together all the good qualities and virtues that can be mentioned in rithā'.⁶⁸

In madīh poetry, he quoted the same line of Zuhayr's poem that was also admired by Khalaf. He said that it was "the best line written by the Arabs in madīh":

تَرَاهُ إِذَا مَا جِئْتَهُ مَهْلِكًا لَأَنْكَ تُعْطِيهِ الَّذِي أَنْتَ سَائِلُهُ

His opinion of hijā' poetry is similar to that of al-Akhtal, who required hijā' which was free from obscenity. According to Abū 'Amr: "the best hijā' poetry is that which a virgin can recite in her khidr (private section of a tent for women) without feeling ashamed, like the lines of

Aws b. Hajar:

إِذَا نَاقَةُ شِدَّتْ بِرَحْلِ وَنُزِقِ إِلَى حَكَمِ بَعْدِي فَفَضَّلَ ضَلَالُهَا
لَأَنِّي حَلَوْتُ الشَّعْرَ بَيْنَ مَدَنِهِ صَفَا صَخْرَةَ صَمَاءَ صَلَدِ بِلَالِهَا 70

From among the poetry of the muhdathūn, Abū 'Amr expressed admiration for the following lines of ghazal by Bashshār:

لَمْ يَبْطُلْ لِيَايَ وَلَكِنْ لَمْ أَنْهَمْ وَنَفَرَ عَنِّي الْكَرَى طَيْفُ أَلَمْ
رَوْحِي عَنِّي قَلِيلًا وَأَعْلَمِي أَنِّي يَا عَبْدُ مِنْ لَمْ وَدَمُ 71

He described the lines as abda' baytayn, but, as so often, it is not clear whether he meant "the most amazing" or "wonderful" lines, or was referring to the presence in them of badī' itself. Like most earlier critics, he was interested in the ma'ānī more than in other poetic elements or "beauties". The poetry that he liked had plain and simple ma'ānī, and, naturally enough with a grammarian, correct language. His concern for perfection in the ma'nā appears from the preference he expressed for al-Ḥuṭay'a's line to Tarafa's. Like so many others, he required conciseness, variety in poetic genres, firmness of composition, facility of expression and length of poem. Hikma and moral sentiments also pleased him.

The fourth critic of the old school chosen for discussion is Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā, who, like Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', belonged to the Basran school. It seems that he was the first to classify poets into a number of tabaqāt Jāhilīs, early Islamic and muhdathūn. The mukhadramūn were mixed in with either the Jāhilīs or the Islamic poets. Perhaps Ibn Sallām al-Jumhī was inspired by what Abū 'Ubayda had done in his own classification of poets. According to Abū 'Ubayda, Imru' al-Qays leads the poets of the mu'allagāt, and after him in order come Zuhayr and al-Nābigha. In the second class are al-A'shā, Labīd and Tarafa. In the third class are al-Muraqqiah, Ka'b b. Zuhayr, al-Ḥuṭay'a, Khidāsh b. Zuhayr,

Durayd b. al-Simma, 'Antara, 'Urwa b. al-Ward, al-Namr b. Tawlab, al-Shammākh and 'Amr b. Ahmar. Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī described these poets as "the poets of Najd who wrote hi jā' and madīh and went into all the fields of poetry. As for the people of the Hijāz, they are people of cattle, and the majority of their poetry is ghazal".⁷² The comment made by al-Mufaddal may give us an indication of the criteria used by Abū 'Ubayda in making his classification, namely variety of poetic genres. We notice that in the first class he placed three poets, in the second one three also, and in the third class ten. One may also guess that the Hijāz had been famous for ghazal poetry since the time of the Jāhiliyya, as al-Mufaddal implied, and this may throw some light on the development of ghazal poetry in the Umayyad period. His words may also explain to us the attitude of Ibn Sallām in neglecting the ghazal poets, among whom 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a was a leading figure but received only a brief mention from Ibn Sallām. The widely accepted criteria for excellence at that time were ability in hi jā' and madīh, and versatility in genre.

Although Abū 'Ubayda mentioned Tarafa in the second class of Jāhili poets, he also classified him in a fourth class with al-Ḥārith b. Hilliza, 'Amr b. Kulthūm and Suwayd b. Abī Kāhil. He declared that in his mu'allaga, Tarafa was the best of all but he would not allow him a place among those poets whom he called the buhūr, meaning the great ones like Imru' al-Qays, Zuhayr and al-Nābigha. Al-A'shā is better than Tarafa, he said, "because he has a greater number of long and excellent poems than Tarafa. He is also more excellent in describing wine and women (humr), and he is more excellent in madīh and hi jā'.⁷³ The criteria of length and variety are once again used here in comparing the two poets.

Abū 'Ubayda added Aws b. Hajar and al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī to the third class of Jāhili poets, and again he put al-Ja'dī with poets of horse description,

Tufayl al-Ghanawī and Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī.⁷⁴ Among the third class, al-Hutay'a was reprehended by Abū 'Ubayda for his "bad manners" but praised for his excellent poetry with its firm composition and absence of defects.⁷⁵ This separation of poetry from morals was followed by other critics, among whom were al-Asma'ī and Ibn al-Mu'tazz, as we shall see later.

Among the Islamic poets, Hassān b. Thābit was put at the head, because, according to Abū 'Ubayda, he excelled other poets in three respects. First, he was the poet of the Anṣār in the Jāhiliyya, second, he was the poet of the Prophet, and third, he was the poet of whole Yemen in Islam".⁷⁶ His position as the poet of the Prophet gave him special standing in the eyes of Abū 'Ubayda. When speaking of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal as the poets of Islam who stood next to Hassān, he said: "no poet is like the poet of the Prophet, may peace be upon him".⁷⁷

Jarīr, Farazdaq and al-Akhtal had no other poets equal to them because "they wrote effective praise and satire". They had also overcome those who exchanged satire with them.⁷⁸ On the other hand, Abū 'Ubayda also claimed that Kuthayyir was the best poet of Islam, although lacking the sincerity of Jamīl in nasīb.⁷⁹

This desire for sincerity may be one of the reasons behind the admiration of Abū 'Ubayda for the poetry of the Kharijite poets, especially the poet Qatari b. al-Fujā'a, as for instance in the poem starting:

يَا رَبِّ ظِلِّ حِمَارٍ قَدْ وَقَبْتُ بِهِ مَهْرِي مِنَ الشَّمْسِ وَالْأَبْطَالُ جَتَلَرُ

When he cited Kharijite poetry, Abū 'Ubayda used to say: "This is (real) poetry and not that with which you entertain yourselves, from the works of effeminate poets (mukhannathīn)".⁸⁰ Abū 'Ubayda himself was said to be

a Kharijite, belonging to the Sufriyya sect, but he used to hide this and not reveal it except to those whom he trusted. According to Abū Ḥatīm al-Sijistānī, he used to recite the poetry of Imrān b. Ḥiṭān, one of the Kharijite leaders. One of these poems is the elegy for Bilāl b. Mirdās, another of their leaders:

أَنْكَرْتُ بَعْدَكَ مَنْ قَدْ كُنْتُ أَعْرِفُهُ مَا النَّاسُ بَعْدَكَ يَا مِرْدَاسُ يَا نَاسِي
إِمَّا تَكُنْ دُقْتُ لَأَسَاءَ دَارَ أَوَّلِهَا عَلَى الْقُرُونِ فَذَاقُوا نَهْلَةَ الْكَاسِ
قَدْ كُنْتُ أَبْكَيكَ حِينًا ثُمَّ قَدْ بَيَّسْتُ نَفْسِي خَا رَدَّ عَنِّي عَبْرَتِي يَا يَسِي

According to al-Tawwazī, Abū 'Ubayda called Qatārī b. al-Fujā'a "the Commander of the Faithful". The lines recited by him from Kharijite verse are from poems concerned with holy war, containing description of fighting, courage, weapons and death. One of the poems of Qatārī that he recited was:

أَقُولُ لَهَا إِذَا جَاشَتْ حَيَاءً مِنَ الْأَبْطَالِ وَيَحْكَ لَنْ تُرَائِي
فَإِنَّكَ لَوَطَلَبْتَ حَيَاةَ يَوْمٍ عَلَى الْأَجْلِ الَّذِي كِدَ لَنْ تُطَاعِي
فَصَبْرًا فِي مَجَالِ الْمَوْتِ صَبْرًا فَمَا نَبِلُ الْخُلُودِ بِمُسْتَطَاعِ

another was the poem starting:

إِلَى كَمَرٍ تَعَارَيْنِ السُّيُوفِ وَلَا أَرَى مُفَارَاتَهَا تَدْعُو إِلَى جَمَامِيَا

Describing the Kharijites with admiration, Abū 'Ubayda used to quote the following line of al-Hutay'a:

أُولَئِكَ قَوْمٌ إِنْ بَنَوْا أَحْسَنُوا الْبَنَى وَإِنْ عَاقَبُوا أَوْفَوْا، وَإِنْ عَقَدُوا شَدُّوا

Those who were interested in the poetry of the Kharijites were reported to come to him and listen to him. Some, like al-Tawwazī, wrote down what he recited for them.⁸¹

Though Abū 'Ubayda "sealed" poets with Ibn Harma⁸², he expressed admiration for some of the muhdath poets. He even preferred the poem of Bashshār rhyming in mīm to those by Jarīr and al-Farazdaq in the same rhyme. Bashshār's starts:

أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ مَا طَعَنُ عَيْشِي بِدَائِمٍ وَلَا سَالِمٍ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ يَسَالِمِ

It is said that originally the poem was hijā' for Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr,

but that the poet feared him and re-addressed it to the Abbasid leader Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī, who was killed by the Caliph.⁸³ As a statement of revolt against the Abbasid caliphate, it appealed to Abū 'Ubayda's Kharijite leanings. It also ended with lines of hikma, aphorisms and advice, such as:

إذا بلغ الرأي المشورة فاستعن برأي نصيح أو نصيحة حازم
ولا تجعل الشورى عليك غصافة فإن الخوافي قوة للقوادم
وما خير كفي أمسك الفل اختها وما خير سيف لم يؤيد بقائم ؟
وخل الهوينى للضعيف ولا تكن نفوذاً فإن الحزم ليس بناثم
84 وحارب إذا لم تقط إلا للامة شبا الحرب خير من قبول المظالم

The spirit of the poem, calling for war in the last line quoted, suited the character of Abū 'Ubayda as a Kharijite, and his liking for hikma and moral poetry in general was in line with the widespread interest of early critics in such topics. It is said that he used to cite the two following lines of Abū Nuwās:

إذا امنحن الدنيا لبيب تكشفت له عن عدو في ثياب صديق
85 وما الناس إلا هالك وإبن هالك وذو نسب في الهاكين عريق

He admired Abū Nuwās and described him as "among the muhdathūn like Imru' al-Qays among the ancients", and he claimed that he had never learned by heart any lines of the muhdathūn except the following ones by Abū Nuwās:

لأن ثيابه أطلعت من أزراره قمرًا يزيك وجهه حسنًا إذا ما زردته نظرًا
بعين خالط التفتير من أجبانتها الحورًا وخذ سابري لو تصوب ماؤه قطرًا
86

Another poet among the muhdathūn whose poetry he admired was al-Husayn b. Matīr. What attracted him in this poet's poetry was the abundance of

badā'i. When al-Tawwazī asked him to give his opinion of Ibn Matīr, he said: "He can write excellently from time to time and I wonder at his abundant badā'i. If you meet him, please tell him that his poetry is the most admirable to me".⁸⁷

Though Abū 'Ubayda admired some of the muhdath poets, he was still a typical critic of the old school, since he considered Jāhiliī poetry to be the standard for judging poetry in general. One of his reasons for preferring al-Akhtal to Jarīr and al-Farazdaq was that he was more like the Jāhiliī poets. He accepted what Yūnus b. Ḥabīb had said in preferring al-Akhtal to his peers, that he had written "more long excellent poems, which contain no obscenity or sagat". Abū 'Ubayda said that al-Akhtal had written ten poems with the qualities mentioned and had another ten no less excellent than the first ten. Jarīr had only three of such a kind.⁸⁸

Abū 'Ubayda's critical leanings are illustrated by his comment on two ancient lines recited to him by Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawsilī, who admired them. Abū 'Ubayda was not attracted by the lines and asked Ishāq: "Do you find any aphorism or ma'nā in these lines?" When Ishāq replied that he did not, Abū 'Ubayda criticised him for reciting such poetry and compared him to a donkey carrying books that does not know what is written inside them.⁸⁹

Abū 'Ubayda differed from Abū 'Amr in some aspects of his poetic selections. For instance, the poems of rithā' quoted admiringly by Abū 'Amr differed widely from those quoted by Abū 'Ubayda. The first resembled Jāhiliī poetry and the main idea which they expressed was that of consolation and patience in enduring the misfortunes of time and in facing the reality of death. Even the tone of fakhr is different in the selections of the two critics, as can be seen in the quotation by Abū 'Amr

from the marthiya of Durayd b. al-Simma for his brother 'Abd Allāh and others of his people. When we look at the quotations of Abū 'Ubayda from the rithā' poems of the Kharijites, instead of finding the themes of consolation and patience, we find the poet expressing his longing for death in holy war exactly as his companion had died. Lines like:

يَا عَيْنُ بَلَى لِمَرْدَاسٍ وَمَرَعَةٍ يَا رَبِّ مَرْدَاسٍ اجْعَلْنِي كَمَرْدَاسٍ

by 'Imrān b. Hittān, and lines like:

لَا لَابَنَ مَلْحَانَ مَا شَارَ أَضَى ثَقَّةٍ أَوْ لَابَنَ عُلْقَمَةَ الْمُسْتَشْهَرِ الشَّارِ
مَنْ صَادَقِي كُنْتُ أَصْفِيهِ مُخَالِصَتِي فَبَاعَ دَارِي بِأَعْلَى صَفْقَةِ الدَّارِ
إِخْوَانُ صَدَقِ أَرْجِيهِمْ وَأَحْذَرُهُمْ أَشْكُو إِلَى اللَّهِ إِخْوَانِي وَإِحْذَارِي
فَهَرْتُ صَاحِبَ دُنْيَا لَسْتُ أُمْلِكُهَا وَصَارَ صَاحِبَ جَنَائِي وَأَنْظَارِي

by a Kharijite from Tay', and other lines not quoted here,⁹⁰ are all good examples of this. While the Jāhilī poet confines himself in his rithā' to his own family, own tribe, and his mamduḥ, as can be seen in the quotations by Abū 'Amr, the Kharijite poet in his poems of rithā' extended his passions over a wider circle of people related to him through religion and the Kharijite belief. We do not want to go beyond the aim of this thesis and discuss the differences between Jāhilī and Kharijite poetry, but what should be made clear here is that, despite the fact that Abū 'Ubayda seems to be similar to Abū 'Amr and other early critics in accepting Jāhilī poetry as the standard by which to judge contemporary poetry, and in accepting other common standards, he requires a different approach from his peers. He seems to have lost interest in Jāhilī poetry because, as it appears, it was irrelevant to him as a Kharijite. A story told by al-Tawwazī about him may have some significance in this respect. Al-Tawwazī reported that he went to see Abū 'Ubayda and took with him the poetry of 'Urwa b. al-Ward. When Abū 'Ubayda realised this, he said to him: "an idle man who carried the poetry of an idle man in order to recite it to a poor man"; al-Tawwazī regretted that he had no other poetry with him to recite and asked him to recite to him what he liked.

Abū 'Ubayda recited the poem of the Kharijite poet Qatārī, the first line of which we have already quoted:

يَا رَبِّ ظِلِّ حِمَارٍ قَدْ وَقَيْتُ بِهِ

As we have mentioned before, Abū 'Ubayda said of this poem: "this is real poetry and not that with which you entertain yourselves, from the works of the mukhannathīn".⁹¹ It seems that he did not mean the poetry of 'Urwa b. al-Ward by "the works of the mukhannathīn", but rather muhdath and Islamic poetry other than Kharijite poetry. We cannot allow ourselves to claim that Abū 'Ubayda was influenced by Islam in his liking for poetry that had a more universal outlook, and found this in the poetry of the Kharijites. This may be true to some extent, but we think that he was interested in the Kharijites' poetry mainly because he was himself a secret member of their sect. In a sense, a wider outlook, beyond the boundaries of the tribe, is evident in the line of 'Abada b. al-Tabīb, elegizing Qays b. 'Asim, as quoted by Abū 'Amr:

وَمَا لَانَ قَبْسٌ هَلَكَ هَلَكًا وَاحِدٌ وَلَكِنَّ بَنِيَّ قَوْمٍ تَهْدَمَا

The admiration for this line of Abū 'Amr and other earlier critics, and their regarding it as the best opening line of a marthiya, may be attributed to the influence of Islam in creating this wider outlook. Nevertheless, Abū 'Amr was still more attached to Jāhilī poetic concepts, while Abū 'Ubayda found release in the Kharijites' poetry; perhaps it is significant that he was most interested in the Jāhilī poetry that contained akhbār and genealogies (ansāb), according to al-Jāhiz.

The fifth figure in this group of earlier critics is Ibn al-A'arābī Muhammad b. Ziyād, a Kūfan scholar, who is said to have more resembled the Basrans.⁹² He was widely known for his anti-muhdathūn attitude and examples are given to confirm this. Although he had a few quotations from Bashshār and Abū Nuwās, he was an admirer of ancient poetry, in which he seems to be most fond of similes (tashbīhāt) in the genre of

wasf. In this field he indicated a group of poets who constituted a series of models for the various topics of wasf. He expressed his opinion as follows: "Anyone who attempts descriptions of horses will be in need of Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī, and he who attempts descriptions of wild asses will be in need of Aws b. Hajar, and he who attempts descriptions of ostriches will be in need of 'Alqama Ibn 'Abada", and lastly, "he who aspires to compose i'tidhār (apology) poetry will be in need of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī".⁹³ This may stand as a certification or a sort of indirect preference for these poets in these different topics of wasf. The three types of wasf, namely horses, ostriches and wild asses, are all Bedouin subjects. His admiration for Jāhilī poetry appears in his judgements that certain lines of, for instance, hi jā', were the best, such as:

وَقَدْ عَلِمْتُ عِرْسَاكَ أَتْلُكَ آتِبُ
تَجَبَّرُهُمْ عَنْ جَيْشِنَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْبَعٍ

which he regarded as "the most effective line of hi jā'", and also the following one, by Jarīr:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ قَلْبِي جَمَعَتْ أَحْسَابُهَا
بِعَوْنِ الْقَاضِلِ لَمْ تَزِرْهُ مِنْقَالًا

These two lines do not go beyond the Jāhilī values in fakhr, madīh and hi jā'. It also appears in his admiration for the following lines of wasf in which two Islamic poets describe the severity of hot weather.

Al-Qutāmī wrote:

فَهْنٌ مُتَغَرِّضَاتٌ وَالْحَصَى رَمِفٌ
وَالرَّيْحُ سَاكِنَةٌ وَالظِّلُّ مُقْتَدِلٌ
حَتَّى وَرَدَنَ رَكِيَّاتِ الْغَوِيرِ وَقَدْ
كَادَ الْمَلَأُ مِنَ الْكُثَانِ يَشْتَعِلُ

and Jarīr wrote:

أُخِنَ لِتَغْوِيرٍ وَقَدْ وَقَدَ الْحَصَى
وَذَابَ لُعَابُ الشَّمْسِ فَوْقَ الْجَمَاجِمِ

Ibn al-A'arabi summed up his opinion of the Jāhilī and muhdath poetry as follows: "the poems of these muhdathūn - Abū Nuwās and others - are like aromatic plants, which people gather in order to enjoy their pleasant smell for only one day; when they fade they are thrown on the dunghill. The poems of the ancients, on the other hand, are like musk and perfumes,

which, whenever shaken or moved, will give out a sweet and pleasant smell".⁹⁶ This remark on Jāhilī and muhdath poetry reminds us of the one made by Jarīr about the poetry of Dhū al-Rumma. Ibn al-Aʿrābī rejected the poetry of Abū Tammām on the grounds that the poet did not follow the ancients, and when he listened to one of the poet's poems in which he used a great deal of badīʿ, he commented: "If this be poetry, then the composition of the Arabs is false". He was sincere when, on listening to a poem of Abū Nuwās which was said to be excellent, he admitted that it was indeed "a very excellent poem but what is ancient (qadīm) is more admirable to me".⁹⁷ For him, poets were "sealed" by Ibn Harma, and later by Marwān b. Abī Hafsa, who was said to be the last poet whom he quoted.⁹⁸

In spite of all he said about the muhdathūn, Ibn al-Aʿrābī, with the same dualistic attitude as most of his peers, expressed his admiration for certain lines of Bashshār and Abū Nuwās. It is strange that these two were almost the only two muhdath poets who were admired and quoted by both Abū ʿAmr, Abū ʿUbayda and Ibn al-Aʿrābī. The last was said to be fond of the following lines by Bashshār, describing the length and the cares of a night.

خَلِيلِي مَا بَالُ الدُّجَى لَا تَرْخَنِي وَمَا بَالُ ضَوْءِ الصُّبْحِ لَا يَتَوَفَّقُنِي
أَضَلَّ الصَّبَاحُ الْمُسْتَنْبِرَ طَرِيقَهُ أَمِ الدَّهْرُ كَيْدَهُ كُلَّهُ لَيْسَ يَبْرَحُ
أَطْنُ الدُّجَى طَالَتْ وَمَا طَالَتِ الدُّجَى وَلَكِنَّ أَطَالَ اللَّيْلَ هَمٌّ مُبْرَحُ

The following lines of wine description by Abū Nuwās he regarded as the best on the subject:

لَا يَنْزِلُ اللَّيْلُ حَيْثُ حَلَّتْ فَدَهْرُ شَرَابِهَا نَهَارُ
فَهِيَ إِذَا اسْتَوْدَعَتْ سِرَارًا لَمْ يَخَفْ فِي ضَوْئِهَا السِّرَارُ

and:

إِذَا مَا حَسَاهَا شَارِبُ الْقَوْمِ خَلَّتْهُ يُقْبَلُ فِي دَاجٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ كَوْبًا 99

Apart from the fact that Ibn al-Aʿrābī may have been attracted by certain

elements of badī' like isti'āra and tashbīh in the lines (of wasf), and apart from his dualistic attitude to Jāhilī and muhdath poetry, his admiration for these two poets, and the admiration of the others for them, was probably due to two factors. Firstly, they recited these lines and others similar to them as a sort of relaxation from long recitation of the ancient poems. Secondly, these two poets were moderate, especially Bashshār, in their use of badī' and rhetorical elements, unlike Abū Tammām, who used them extravagantly. One may not, at any rate, find it easy to accept what al-Sūlī said about Ibn al-A'arābī and his book Kitāb al-Nawādir, that he collected in it a lot of muhdath poems "without knowing that they belonged to the muhdathūn, and if he had known that he would not have collected them".¹⁰⁰ It seems much more probable that his motives were such as we have suggested, even if he would scarcely have acknowledged them, and that he was well aware of what he was doing.

Perhaps the best representative of the group of earlier critics of the old school is Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Malik b. Qurayb al-Bāhilī, known as al-Aṣma'ī, a pupil of Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', Khalaf al-Ahmar, Sibawayhi, Ḥammād b. Salama and others, but closest to Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', from whom he inherited his views concerning poetry, criticism and language. His vast knowledge of poetry was proverbial, as we are informed by Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawsilī, and according to his pupil Abū Ḥatīm, al-Aṣma'ī could recite from memory fourteen thousand poems of rajaz.¹⁰¹ His Fuhūlat al-shu'arā is regarded by some scholars as the first book of Arabic literary criticism.¹⁰²

Apart from his great knowledge of poetry, he was known for his reluctance to cite or transmit any sort of poetry in which stars (anwā') were mentioned, or any poetry that interpreted a Qurānic verse; he also did not like to listen to hijā' poetry, as al-Mubarrad reported.¹⁰³

Al-Aṣma'ī was influenced, in his poetic comparison and literary criticism, by many of his predecessors, poets, grammarians, philologists, transmitters and men of letters, whom we have already mentioned; this will become clear during our discussion of his views.

The best source for these is his book Fuhūlat al-shu'arā', taken down by his pupil Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī. The term fahl (master-poet) used by al-Aṣma'ī in this book was used for the first time, as far as I know, by al-Huṭay'a who talked of himself and Ka'b b. Zuhayr as the last fuhūl. Kuthayyir 'Azza, Dhū al-Rumma, and Ru'ba b. al-'Ajjāj had also used the term, and it appears that it was widely known by the time of al-Aṣma'ī.

From the title of his book, it seems that fahl was used to distinguish a class of poets whom he considered particularly good. As he explained it, "fahl means the one who has a marked superiority over his fellows, like the superiority of a thoroughbred stallion over mere colts; it is the same thing which is expressed by the line of Jarīr:

104 وَإِبْنُ اللَّبُونِ إِذَا مَا لَزَّ فِي قَرْنٍ لَمْ يَسْتَلِغْ هَوْلَةَ الْبُزْلِ الْقَنَائِسِ

The definition given by al-Mubarrad in his Kāmil is different from the one mentioned above, in that it deals only with poets of hija'. He says that any poet who overcame another in hija' was called a fahl.¹⁰⁵ On another occasion, al-Aṣma'ī defined the fahl thus: "A poet will not become a master in the craft of poetry until he has quenched his thirst with reciting the poetic compositions of the Arabs, has heard the stories and learned the poetic conceits, and their words resound in his ears. First of all, he should learn prosody to the extent that it becomes a rule for all his discourse; grammar to improve his language and ensure his proper use of inflection (i'rāb); then also the Arab genealogies and events in the life of men".¹⁰⁶

Ibn Rashīq himself said more about the importance of the function of

recitation (riwāya) in making a poet a fahl. He stated that "the poet by nature (matbū⁶) among those who have passed away had superiority over his peers because he recited others' poems, knew the stories (akhbār) and became a pupil of a senior poet. People used to say: this one is a poet and a reciter (rāwiya), meaning that if he is a reciter he will know the ways (maqāsid) of poetry, and that discourse will be easy for him and he will not be forced to follow a narrow way in poetry; and if the poet by nature (matbū⁶) has no knowledge or experiences of recitation (riwāya), he will follow the wrong way of poetry unaware of that; perhaps he may try to write a certain poetic ma'nā but will not find it even if it is before his eyes, and this is because his tool of poetry is weak".¹⁰⁷

Ru'ba b. al-'Ajjāj, when asked about "the fahl among poets", replied that "he is the rāwiya-poet", meaning that when a poet becomes the rāwiya of another poet, this will help him to develop into a fahl; to his own excellent lines he will add the knowledge of the other excellent lines of those poets whose poems he recites; thus he will not be misled in the ways of poetry, as the grammarian Yūnus b. Ḥabīb explained.¹⁰⁸ Sometimes the term khindhīdh was used instead of fahl, meaning a poet who wrote good poetry as well as reciting others' poems. In the second class was the poet who was muflīq, the one who had his own excellent poetry but did not transmit others' poems. In the third class was the one who was simply called "poet", and he was a degree above the bad poet, the ^{shu'ūr}~~shu'ur~~, who was nothing. Some critics mentioned the shuway'ir who was said to be above the ^{shu'ūr}~~shu'ur~~. As we have mentioned before, this classification of poets, or at least part of it, had been known since the Jāhiliyya; Imru' al-Qays called the poet Ibn Ḥimrān a shu'ūr.¹⁰⁹

According to what has been said, fahl may mean a good poet who is the transmitter of another poet, or poets, senior to him. Critics gave examples of such poet-transmitters (Shā'ir Rāwiya) like Imru' al-Qays, who

is said to have been the rāwīya of Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī; al-Ḥarazdaq, who was the rāwīya of al-Ḥuṭay'a, who was, in turn, the rāwīya of Zuhayr. The last was himself a rāwīya, of Aws b. Ḥajar and Tufayl al-Ghanawī.¹¹⁰

The main theme of Fuhūlat al-shu'arā' is, of course, the fuhūla or non-fuhūla of poets: those who deserved the title fahl and those who did not. Certain poets were mentioned as fursān rather than fuhūl, although among them there were some who deserved the title. Some poets were not a hujja, and others were. Fabrication and plagiarism in poetry are touched on but not thoroughly discussed. Comparisons are made between the Jāhilī, mukhadramī and Islamic poets and also between different tribes. Like earlier critics, al-Aṣma'ī gave comparative views concerning single lines and, sometimes, whole poems.

Those who were classified as fuhūl numbered twenty-four.¹¹¹ They included the four Jāhilī poets who formed the first class, as mentioned, but al-Aṣma'ī omitted al-A'ṣhā the Great, as we shall see. In his place he put Aws b. Ḥajar.¹¹² Sometimes al-Aṣma'ī was not sure whether a poet was a fahl or not, like Ka'b b. Ju'ayl, about whom he said: "I think that he is of the fuhūl, but do not feel certain of it".¹¹³

It seems that among al-Aṣma'ī's criteria for judging poets as to fuhūlah were general excellence, variety of production, quantity of composition, and some other moral and religious factors. The first three of these we have frequently encountered before, especially when we spoke about al-A'ṣhā's being favoured by the Kūfan school. Al-Aṣma'ī did not specify the poems through which the masters had become so, but he stated that those who were non-fuhūl needed to produce more excellent poems - in addition to what they had already written - in order to be regarded as fuhūl. Such poets were: al-Huwaydira, who, according to al-Aṣma'ī "if he had composed five qasīdas like the one which we have,

would have been a fahl"; Muḥalhil, who "if he had produced other poems like that one of his:

أَلَيْلَتَا بَدَى جُشْمِ أَنْبَرِي

would have been the foremost fahl of them all"; Muʿaqqir al-Bāriqī, who "if he had composed five or six gasīdas, would have been a fahl"; Thaʿlaba b. Suʿayr al-Mazīnī, who "if he had written five poems like his gasīda, would have been a fahl"; Aws b. Ghalfā', who "if he had composed twenty gasīdas would have joined the fuhūl, but he fell short of that"; and Salāma b. Jandal, who "if he had accomplished somewhat more, would
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have been a fahl".

Again, al-Aṣmaʿī did not specify the poems that he admired by these poets, with the exception of that by Muḥalhil in which the poet elegized his brother Kulayb and boasted of his avenging him. The poem, which seems to have lost some lines, consists of about thirty-six lines of simple, plain verse, though it employs some exaggerated ideas, such as:

فَلَوْلَا الرِّيحُ أَسْمَعُ مِنْ بَحْرِ صَلِيلِ الْبَيْتِ تُقَرِّعُ بِالذُّكُورِ

It contains a group of similes, in one section of nine lines, most of which are about night and its stars. The poet begins by an address to a night:

أَلَيْلَتَا بَدَى حُشْمِ أَنْبَرِي إِذَا أَنْتِ انْقَضَيْتِ فَلَا تَحْوَرِي
فَإِنَّ يَدَكَ بِالذَّنَائِبِ طَالِ لَيْلِي فَقَدْ أَتَيْتِ عَلَى الْيَلِّ الْقَصِيرِ
وَأَنْقَضْتِ بِيَاضَ الصَّبْحِ مِنْهَا لَقَدْ أَنْقَضْتَ مِنْ شَرِّ كَبِيرِ

and then turns to his series of similes:

لَأَنَّ كَوَاكِبَ الْجُوزَاءِ عُمُومٌ مَعْلَفَةٌ عَلَى رَبْعِ كَسِيرِ
لَأَنَّ الْفَرَقْدَيْنِ بَدَا بَفِيضِي أَلَحَّ عَلَى إِخَاضَتِهِ قَهْبَرِي

and:

لَأَنَّ الْجَدَى جَدَى بَنَاتِ نَقَشِ يَكُبُّ عَلَى الْيَدَيْنِ مُسْتَدِيرِ
وَأَخْبُو الشُّعْرِيَانِ إِلَى سَهْلِي يَلُوحُ كَقُمَّةِ الْجَبَلِ الْكَبِيرِ 115

He also repeats the same half-line:

عَلَى أَنَّ لَيْسَ عَدْلًا مِنْ كَلْبٍ إِذَا

eleven times (Abū Hilāl al-Aʿskarī, quoted by Cheikho, mentioned that it was repeated twenty times, and it would appear that the rest of these lines are lost).¹¹⁶ Al-Aṣmaʿī was uncertain who was the best of the fuhūl. Influenced by Abū ʿAmr, and perhaps by al-Khalil b. Ahmad, he decided for al-Nābigha, but he was also reported as saying: "the first of them all in excellence is Imru' al-Qays; his was the highest honour and the precedence, and they all drew upon his poetry and followed his canons".¹¹⁷

He remarked on the difference in levels of excellence in the poetry of Imru' al-Qays, and said that he was surpassed by Tufayl al-Ghanawī in some of his poetry. He tried to excuse Imru' al-Qays for his bad lines: "it is said that most of Imru' al-Qays' poetry was not his at all, but was by some of the saʿalīk who accompanied him".¹¹⁸ Even al-Nābigha was surpassed by Durayd in some of his poetry and "indeed Durayd came near to vanquishing al-Dhubyānī".¹¹⁹

In preferring al-Nābigha to Zuhayr and Aws b. Hajar he repeated the opinion of Abū ʿAmr: "Aws was the fahl of Mudar but al-Nābigha took away from him some of his glory", although both he and Zuhayr borrowed from him. Because of the conciseness of al-Nābigha in one line borrowed from Aws, al-Aṣmaʿī preferred him to the latter. Aws wrote:

بَجِيشٍ تَرَى مِنْهُ الْقَضَاءُ مَعْقِلًا

Al-Nābigha, in adapting this conceit, contrived to add to it:

بَجِيشٌ يَنْقُلُ بِهِ الْقَضَاءُ مَعْقِلًا يَدْعُ الْإِلَاحَ لِأَنَّهُنَّ صَحَارِي

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Some poets were admitted into the class of fuhūl on the strength of only one excellent poem, such as Kaʿb b. Saʿd al-Ghanawī, "who was a fahl only in his marthiya, to which there is no equal in the world", and Bishr b. Abī Khāzim "of whom I heard Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlā' say: his gasida

rhyming in the letter rā brought him into the company of the fuhūl:

121 أَلَا بَاتَ الْخَلِيلُ وَلَمْ يَدَانِي وَقَلْبُكَ فِي الطَّعَائِنِ مُسْتَعَارُ

In his poem, Ka'b concentrates on enumerating the virtues and good qualities of his brother, whom he is elegizing. The idea of consolation is to be found indirectly in the lines in which he does this:

لَعَمْرِي لَيْتَ كَأَنَّ أَصَابَتْ مَنِيَّةً أَضَى وَالْمَنَايَا لِلرِّجَالِ شُعُوبُ
لَقَدْ كَانَ أَمَّا حِلْمُهُ مُرَوِّحٌ عَلَيْنَا وَأَمَّا جَهْلُهُ فَقَرِيبُ

Direct consolation occurs in a few lines, like:

فَلَوْ كَأَنَّ الدُّنْيَا تَبَاعُ اشْتَرَيْتَهُ بِمَا لَمْ تَكُنْ عَنْهُ النَّفُوسُ تَطِيبُ

and:

لَعَمْرُكَمَا إِنَّ الْبَعِيدَ لَمَّا مَضَى وَإِنَّ الَّذِي يَأْتِينِي غَدًا لَقَرِيبُ
وَإِنِّي وَتَأْمِيلِي لِقَاءَ مُؤَمِّلٍ وَقَدْ شَقَبْتَهُ عَنْ لِقَايَ شُعُوبُ
كَدَاعِي هَدِيلٍ لَا يَزَالُ مَكْلَفًا وَلَيْسَ لَهُ حَتَّى الْهَمَاتُ هَجِيبُ
سَقَى كَلًّا ذَكَرَ جَائِعًا مِنْ مُؤَمِّلٍ عَلَى النَّأْيِ زَحَافُ السَّحَابِ سَكُوبُ

The poem is a long one and, according to some sources, amounted to sixty-two lines.¹²²

Among those who were classed among non-fuhūl were al-A'shā the Great, Labīd and 'Adī b. Zayd. The last was harshly described as "neither a fahl nor a female".¹²³ Al-Asma'ī's opinion of Labīd was influenced by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā's describing him as a man of good qualities. When he was asked about Labīd by Abū Hātim, he replied that "he was a good man"; Abū Hātim commented that "it was as if al-Asma'ī intended to deny him any great merit as a poet". He once described his poetry as being like a mantle from Tabaristān, meaning that it was well-woven but without elegance; it was good-looking but lacking grace and sweetness.¹²⁴

Al-'Askarī described the poetry of Labīd as "consisting of correct words with correct ma'ānī but having no beauty (rawnaq) or freshness".¹²⁵

Ibn Aḥmar, though not a fahl, "stood above his own class"; al-Aswad "resembled the fuhūl though himself not a fahl"; Jarāda b. 'Umayla "had some poems which resembled those of the fuhūl, but his were short". Al-Asma'ī did not give us any indication of the nature of the similarity between these poets and the fuhūl, not even of how some of Jarāda's poems resembled theirs. At any rate, it is clear that the length of his poems had a considerable function in making a poet a fahl. His judgement on Muzarrid b. Dirār reflects his moral tendency and his hatred of hiḡā', for he said that he was not inferior to the fuhūl but had spoilt his poetry by much satire.¹²⁶

Though the term fuhūla gives the sense of "strength", al-Asma'ī separated the knight-poets (fursān) from the fuhūl. With the exception of Durayd b. al-Simma, who is mentioned among both fuhūl and fursān, there is no other of the knight-poets allowed into the class of the fuhūl, not even 'Antara.¹²⁷ It seems that among al-Asma'ī's criteria for fuhūla in poets was that their predominant occupation should be poetry, rather than, for example, knight-errantry. The exclusion of poets like Ḥatim al-Ta'ī and 'Urwa b. al-Ward, whom he described as generous men but not fuhūl, was also due to the fact that their predominant quality was generosity rather than poetry.¹²⁸ This being so, we can also understand the attitude of al-Asma'ī in excluding "those who made incursions on foot" such as Ta'abbata Sharran and al-Shanfarā al-Azdī among the sa'ālīk poets, from the class of fuhūl.¹²⁹

Although al-Asma'ī conferred the title of fahl on Zuhayr, al-Ḥuṭay'a and those "who were like them" in their styles of poetry, he was not enthusiastic about their work, calling them "slaves of poetry" because they used to review and polish their poems and did not follow the way of the natural poets (maṭbū'un).¹³⁰ Speaking of al-Ḥuṭay'a, whom he

described in harsh terms, calling him "a slave of his poetry", he made this quite clear when he stated that in al-Huṭay'a's poetry "you will never find a defect". This statement was an echo of that made by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' about a line he quoted from al-Huṭay'a, as we have seen. The fact that poetry, owing to its constant revision, contained no defect was in itself a defect. Al-Jāḥiẓ, explaining al-Asma'ī's attitude, said that it was a sign of takalluf.¹³¹

Al-Asma'ī defined the "slave of poetry" as the poet who "puts great effort into presenting excellent poetry; he stops for a long time beside every line in his poem, correcting and revising it, in order to produce a poem complete and excellent in all its parts".¹³² It should be noted that the artificiality which al-Asma'ī disliked in the poems of the "slaves of poetry" is not the same as that for which Abū Tammām was condemned later. The artificiality rejected by al-Asma'ī is connected with the selection of words and the careful maintenance of "one level of excellence" throughout the poem, while the artificiality of Abū Tammām consists mainly in exaggerated use of badī'. His admiration for poetry that contains "different levels of excellence" (tafāwut fī al-jawda) is reflected in his praise of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī and Ru'ba, when he described their poetry as "commendable poetry". Al-Ja'dī was described by b. Sallām al-Jumahī as having "different levels in his poetry", which al-Asma'ī praised and took as a sign of naturalness. Al-Asma'ī used similar words to those of al-Farazdaq when speaking of al-Ja'dī, saying that "he has in his poetry a veil worth one dirham and a shawl worth thousands". In admiring such poetry, al-Asma'ī stood alone among critics, as al-Jāḥiẓ claimed.¹³³

Concerning the "difference of levels" in the poetry of al-Ja'dī, al-Asma'ī was reported as saying: "while al-Nābigha (al-Ja'dī) is writing a speech (poetry) which is smoother (ashal) than sweet water

and firmer than a rock, he suddenly dilutes (his language) and continues in a manner very different from his first. Such poetry is the following:

سَمَا نَدَا هَمٌّ وَلَمْ تَقْرَبِ وَبِتَّ يَبِتُّ وَلَمْ تَنْسَبِ
وَقَالَتْ سُلَيْمَى أَرَى رَأْسَهُ كُنَّا صِيْفَ الْفَرَسِ الْأَشْهَبِ
وَذَلِكَ مِنْ وَقَعَاتِ الْمَنُونِ فَخِيْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَعْجَبِي
أَتَيْتَنِي عَلَى إِخْوَتِي سَبْعَةً وَوَعَدَنِي عَلَى رُبْعِي الْأَقْرَبِ

After these lines of firm composition comes this line:

فَأَدْخَلَكَ اللَّهُ بَرْدَ الْجَنَانِ جَذْلَانِ فِي مَدْخَلِ طَيْبٍ

Here his poetry becomes thin; even if Abū al-Shamaḡmaq was the writer of that line, it would be regarded as bad and weak".¹³⁴ It seems that al-Asma'ī only admired the early poetry of al-Ja'dī. He said that al-Ja'dī was silent for thirty years after having written poetry; then he again began to write, but while his earlier poetry was good, his later poetry looked as if it were stolen (masrūq), and it is not good.¹³⁵

Though al-Asma'ī criticised the line of al-Ja'dī's on the grounds that it was thin and weak, he contradicted himself by selecting other verse which has the same thin quality. Ibn Qutayba reported that al-Asma'ī used to admire and recite the following gīt'a:

يَا تَمْلِكُ يَا تَهْلِي هَلِينِي وَذُرِّي عَذْلِي
ذُرِينِي وَسِلَاحِي ثُمَّ شَدَّيْ الْكَفَّ بِالْفَرْلِي
وَنَبْلِي وَخَقَاصَا كَمَرَاقِيْبٍ قَطَا طَحْلِي
وَمِنْ تَقْرَةٍ بَعْدِي وَمِنْ نَظْرَةٍ قَبْلِي
وَتَوْبَايَ جَدِيدَانِ وَأُفْضَى شُرْكَ النَعْلِي
وَأَمَّا مَنْ يَأْتَلِي فَكُونِي حُرَّةً حِلْيِي

Al-Asma'ī justified his admiration for it by claiming that "it has a light rhyme (khiffat al-rawī)".¹³⁶

Al-A'skarī criticised al-Asma'ī for selecting lines of "low and base

words", such as the following:

ولو أُرسلتُ من حَبِّكَ مَبْهُوتاً رَلى السَّيْنِ
لَوَا فَيْتَكَ قَبْلَ السُّبْحِ أَوْ حِينَ تَصَلِّيْنِ 137

It seems likely that al-Asma'ī, in admiring such poetry as quoted above, was no different from others of the critics of the old school, who used such lines and some of the muhdath poetry as a sofa on which to recline and relax from the heavy burden of ancient poetry which they studied and transmitted for various purposes. This desire for relaxation from the ancient poems is one of the reasons behind the attitude of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mu'tazz in limiting himself to muhdath poets in his Tabaqāt al-shu'arā', as we shall see later. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that the early critics were not attracted by other things in the lines of this kind that they selected. They were, in fact, attracted by certain qualities and mahāsin in them, as we shall see shortly. However, the combination of delicacy and firmness in poetic style that al-Farazdaq spoke of when comparing himself with Jarīr, and that some critics found in al-Nābigha, describing his style as extremely delicate and extremely firm at the same time, was still sought by al-Asma'ī even in the poetry of the muhdathūn. Talking about Abū Nuwās with al-Fadl b. Yahyā al-Barmakī, and encouraging the latter to choose Abū Nuwās as his poet, despite his bad reputation for mujūn and khalā'a (for which al-Fadl rejected him), al-Asma'ī praised him for his knowledge of the various kinds of literature (funūn al-adab) and for his high level in poetry. "Is he not the one" he asked, "who says:

ذَكَرْتُمْ مِنَ التَّرْحَالِ يَوْمًا فَعَمِنَا
نَعْمَتُمْ بَأَنَّ الْبَيْتَ يَحْزَنُكُمْ . نَعْم
تَعَالَوْا نَقَارِعْكُمْ لِيُحَقِّقَ عِنْدَكُمْ
أُحَالٌ قَصِيرُ الْبَيْلِ يَا رَحِمَ عِنْدَكُمْ؟
وَمَنْ يَصْرِفُ الْبَيْلَ الطَّوِيلَ وَهَمَّهُ
خَلْيُونُ مِنْ أَوْجَاعِنَا بَعْدُ لُونَا
فَلَوْ قَدْ فَعَلْتُمْ هَبَّحَ الْمَوْتُ بَعْضَنَا
سَيَحْزَنُكُمْ حُزْنًا وَلَا مِثْلَ حُزْنِنَا
مَنْ أَشَجَى قُلُوبًا أَمْ مَنْ أَسْخَنَ أَعْيُنًا
فَإِنَّ قَصِيرَ الْبَيْلِ قَدْ طَالَ عِنْدَنَا
مَنْ النَّاسِ إِلَّا مَنْ تَجَمَّرَ أَوْ أُنَا
يَقُولُونَ : لَوْ لَمْ يَكُنْ بِالْحَبِّ لَانْتَنَى

يَقُومُونَ فِي الْأَقْوَامِ يَكُونُ فِعْلَنَا سَفَاهَةً أَطْلَامٍ وَسُخْرِيَةً بِنَا
 غَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبِّي لَا يَبْلَاهُمْ بِمَثَلِ مَا ابْرَأَ تَلَانَا فُكَاوَا لَا عَلَيْنَا وَلَا لَنَا
 سَأَشْكُو إِلَى الْفَضْلِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ خَالِدٍ هَوَاكِ لَعَلَّ الْفَضْلَ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا
 أُمَيْرٌ رَأَيْتُ الْمَالَ فِي حَجَرَاتِهِ مَهِينًا ذَلِيلُ النَّفْسِ بِالْفَيْمِ مُوقِنًا
 إِذَا صَنَعَ رَبِّي الْمَالَ ثَوَّبَ جُودَهُ بِحَسٍّ عَلَى مَالِ الْأُمَيْرِ وَأُذْنَا
 وَلِلْفَضْلِ أَجْرًا مَقْدَمًا مِنْ ضَبَائِمٍ إِذَا لَبَسَ الدَّرْعَ الْحَصِينَةَ وَآكَتَنِي
 إِلَيْكَ أَبَا الْعَبَّاسِ مِنْ دُونِ مَنْ مَشَى عَلَيْهَا امْتَلَيْنَا الْخَضِرَى الْمُتَلَسَّنَا
 قَلَّ ثَقُلْ لَمْ تَقِفْ كَلَّا عَلَى الْوَقْبِ وَلَمْ تَدْرِمَا قَرْعَ الْفَيْقِ وَلَا الْهِنَا

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In this poem of Abū Nuwās one readily feels the presence of the two qualities, firmness and delicacy. The first nine lines, finishing:

سَأَشْكُو إِلَى الْفَضْلِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ خَالِدٍ هَوَاكِ لَعَلَّ الْفَضْلَ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا
 are clearly of a delicate nature. The rest of the poem is firm, both in words and in maʿanī, especially the line:

وَلِلْفَضْلِ أَجْرًا مَقْدَمًا مِنْ ضَبَائِمٍ إِذَا لَبَسَ الدَّرْعَ الْحَصِينَةَ وَآكَتَنِي
 and yet, there is still a delicacy in the last lines, for instance in the second half of the thirteenth line:

عَلَيْهَا امْتَلَيْنَا الْخَضِرَى الْمُتَلَسَّنَا

and also in the last line itself. Apart from these qualities in the style, al-Asmaʿī may also have been pleased by the conceit in the last two lines by which the poet says that he has made the raḥīl to his mamdūh on foot and not on his she-camel.¹³⁹

There are indications that al-Asmaʿī admired some elements of badīʿ, or poetic "beauties" in general. Though on many occasions he praised poets for following the path of the ancients, he favoured others for following a new path never trodden before. This new path seems to be nothing else but the path of badīʿ. One has to bear in mind that though al-Asmaʿī rejected the "slaves of poetry" and those like them because of their

takalluf he believed that a poet who was celebrated for his badī' could still be a natural poet. This indicates that al-Asma'ī differentiated between badī' and takalluf. The latter quality could be found even in the poetry of those who followed the path of the ancients among the muhdathūn themselves. Confirmation of what we have claimed is to be found in the reply of al-Asma'ī when asked to compare Bashshār with Marwān and say which was the better poet. He said "Bashshār is a very natural poet (matbū' jiddan) and does not seek out difficult or impossible ma'ānī. He is not like that poet (meaning Marwān) who writes a line of poetry and spends many days polishing and correcting it. Bashshār is like al-A'shā and al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, and Marwān is like Zuhayr and al-Hutay'a; he is an affected poet (mutakallif)..... Marwān has taken a road that many others have taken before and has not overtaken those who preceded him; the same is true of his contemporaries. But Bashshār has taken an untravelled road, has excelled in it, and is unequalled in it; he is the greater in versatility and in all the genres of poetry, and he has a greater abundance and broader scope of badī', whereas Marwān has never gone beyond the manner followed by the ancients".¹⁴⁰ On another occasion, al-Asma'ī showed his admiration for the similes of Bashshār and his new style of poetry. "He was born blind", he said, "and could not see the world. In his poems he compares things with one another and attains such a vision as those who can see are unable to attain. He opens paths on which nobody before him has walked".¹⁴¹ According to al-Asma'ī Bashshār is the "seal" of poets and "had his days not come late in time, he would have preferred him to many poets". He criticised the ruwāt of Kūfa because "they 'sealed' poets with Marwān instead of Bashshār". This was not acceptable "because Marwān was associated with Salm al-Khāsir; they competed in praising caliphs, and they received the same rewards. Salm himself was a pupil of Bashshār, and the latter used to correct the poetry of Marwān himself who never divulged a poem before reciting it to

Bashshār for approval".¹⁴² Al-Asma'ī did not greatly exaggerate when he described Marwān as an affected poet and likened him to Zuhayr and al-Ḥuṭay'a. Marwān himself admitted that he would take a full year to complete a poem; he would spend four months writing it, four months checking and revising it, and lastly he would take four months to present it.¹⁴³

What has been said has given us a general idea about the interest of al-Asma'ī in badī' and/or the poetic "beauties" in general. We shall now consider some examples of badī' and mahāsin admired by him. He is reported to have spoken about mutābaga, which he explained as follows: "Its origin (literal meaning) is putting the back foot in the place of the fore-foot, and it refers to the manner in which quadrupeds walk". Al-Nābiga al-Ja'dī says:

وَحَيْلٌ يَهَائِقَنَّ بِالْدَارِعَيْنِ لِحِيقِ الْكِلَابِ يَهَائِنُ الْهَرَّاسَا

He then recited the following line of Zuhayr as "the best line of mutābaga":

لَيْتُ يَغْتَرَّ بِطَاذِ الرِّجَالِ إِذَا مَا اللَّيْتُ كَذَّبَ عَنْ أَقْرَانِهِ صَدَقَا 144

He is also said to have admired taṣdīr, which is known to some people as radd al-kalām 'alā sudūrihi. It means that a poet uses a certain word at the beginning of a line and then repeats it at the beginning or the end of the second half of the same line. If poetry is written like this it is easy to guess the rhyme-word in advance. Al-Asma'ī said: "The most beautiful taṣdīr is the following line by 'Amir b. al-Tufayl:

فَكُنْتُ سَنَامًا فِي فَرَازَةٍ تَامَكًا وَفِي كُلِّ حَيٍّ ذُرْوَةٌ وَسَنَامٌ 145

In a passage quoted by Ibn Rashīq, al-Asma'ī displayed his knowledge of iltifāt in a poem of Jarīr. Ishāq al-Mawsilī reported that al-Asma'ī asked him: "Do you know the iltifāt of Jarīr?" Ishāq asked: "What is

that?" Al-Asma'ī recited:

أَتَنَسَّى إِذْ تَوَدَّعْنَا سُلَيْمَى بَعُودَ بَشَامَةٍ سَقَى الْبَشَامُ

Then al-Asma'ī said: "Don't you see him concerning himself with his poetry (muqbilan 'alā shi'rihi), and suddenly turning to the bashāma (a kind of tree) and blessing it?" Jarīr suddenly breaks off the sequence of his poem in order to pronounce a blessing on the tree, a branch of which was in the hand of his beloved when she bade him farewell. The same example is to be found in Kitāb al-badī' of Ibn al-Mu'tazz,¹⁴⁷ where he defines iltifāt as the poet's changing from the second to the third or from the third to the second person.¹⁴⁸

Al-Asma'ī praised the poet who used ighāl, the one who could elevate a low ma'nā and lower an elevated ma'nā, and the one who "after completing the ma'nā before the rhyme, adds to it by writing the rhyme-word, like al-A'shā, who says:

كُنَالِجِ صَخْرَةٍ يَوْمًا لِيَفْلُقَهَا فَلَمْ يَفْرِهَا وَأَوْحَى قَرْنَهُ الْوَعْلُ

He produces ighāl with al-wa'lu, which comes as a rhyme, although the ma'nā is complete without it. Al-Asma'ī cited more examples of ighāl from the poetry of Dhū al-Rumma, for instance:

قَفِيَ الْعَيْسَ فِي أَطْلَالِ مَيَّةٍ وَاسْأَلِ رُسُومًا لَأُخْلَقَ الرَّدَاءُ الْمُسَالِ

The ma'nā is complete before the rhyme (al-musalsali) is supplied and when it is, "something is added" to the ma'nā. Again:

أُظِنَ الَّذِي يَجْدِي عَلَيْكَ سَوْأَالَا دَمُوعًا كَتَبِيدِ الْجَمَانِ الْمُفَصَّلِ

"his discourse is complete, but he needs the rhyme, and when he supplies it (al-mufasssali), he adds something to the ma'nā".¹⁴⁹ Ighāl, it is clear, is a means of exaggeration, and in praising the poet who has the ability to demean a great ma'nā or to glorify a low one by his words, al-Asma'ī may be revealing a taste for exaggeration and a tendency to give more importance to words than to ma'nā. On another occasion, however, he is reported to have demanded truth and integrity of ma'nā

in poetry. Listening to the following lines of Malik b. Asma':

وَإِذَا الدُّرُّ زَانَ حُسْنٌ وَجُوهٍ لَانَ لِلدَّرِّ حُسْنٌ وَجُوهٌ زَيْنًا
وَتَرْيِدِينَ طَيْبَ الطَّيْبِ طَيْبًا إِنَّ تَمْسِيَهُ آيَتٌ مِثْلُكَ آيَتَنَا

he said to the man who had recited the lines: "Do not admire them, because they are worth nothing; the most excellent poetry is that in which you find truth and a full ma'ānā, as in the following line of Imru' al-Qays:

أَلَمْ تَرَيَانِي كَلِمًا جِئْتُ طَارِحًا وَجَدْتُ بِهَا طَيْبًا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَنْطَبِ 150

He probably wanted ma'ānā that were 'realistic' and not precious, and although he could admire exaggeration, it had to be sensible, and in moderation.

One needs to be careful in using the term "truth" (sidq) when discussing the views of al-Asma'ī concerning poetic comparison. Sidq should not be understood as the opposite of "lie" but rather as meaning "reality", as just suggested. In its religious sense, sidq was not to be recommended in poetry, in al-Asma'ī's view. Good (khayr) and truth (sidq) are not suitable for poetry, and in fact they reduce the rank of the poet if he pursues them. Talking about Ḥassān b. Thābit, al-Asma'ī declared that he was a fahl in his Jāhili poetry but not in his Islamic poetry. He is reported as saying: "Poetry is nakid and its way is evil (sharr); if it is composed on matters of good (khayr) it will become weak and soft. Ḥassān b. Thābit was one of the Jāhili fuhūl, but when Islam came, his poetry declined".¹⁵¹ On another occasion, he said: "The poetry of Ḥassān written in the Jāhiliyya is some of the most excellent poetry, but its firmness was cut back (quṭi'a matnuhu) in Islam, and that was because of the hāl of the Prophet...". He gave as examples of Ḥassān's weak and soft poetry in Islam his elegies on the Prophet and his companions, Ḥamza, Ja'far, and others. Real poetry, he said, was that of the Jāhili fuhūl, like Imru' al-Qays, Zuhayr, al-Nābigha, in which they discussed topics

like descriptions of deserted dwellings, hiġā', maḏih, taṣṭīb, wine, horse descriptions, wars and mufākḥara. These were suitable subjects for poetry; if it was written on subjects connected with khayr, it would not be excellent.¹⁵²

It is somewhat strange that al-Asma'ī should have rejected poetry that dealt with religious subjects, particularly that of Ḥassān, in view of the Prophet's approval of his poet. The reasons that he gives for this rejection appear even stranger. If he had argued that, since poetry is evil (or even simply concerned with worldly matters, which is probably what he meant by sharr in this context), it would defile or debase religious themes, this would be immediately comprehensible. To say, however, that religious themes make poetry weak and soft might be thought to be sacrilegious. I suspect that what he said was connected with the doctrine of i'jāz al-Qur'ān; given the inimitability of the Qur'ān, any attempt to render in poetry any part of the divine revelation could only result in a weakening and softening of it. The līn of which he spoke was thus to be understood as a softening of the ma'ānī (if one can use the term in this connection), in comparison with their presentation in the Qur'ān. This would detract both from the majesty of God's words and from the secular standing of the medium in which an attempt was made to paraphrase them.

It was probably for similar reasons that he did not care for the later poetry of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, who was also a mukḥadram, like Ḥassān. His remark that this poetry "looks as if it were stolen" may refer to the effect of Islam on al-Ja'dī's poetic production.

We find that most of his selections relate to the topics that he listed

as suitable for poetry, but despite the fact that he did not include rithā' among these, he nevertheless admired a number of famous rithā' poems and declared them to be the best in the genre.

As an example of the way in which he criticised poets' treatment of these topics, let us take horse descriptions. Those whom he singled out as being excellent describers of horses were Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī, Tufayl al-Ghanawī and al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī.¹⁵³ The first two of these had been associated with horses for a great part of their lives and so they were able to describe them very well. As for al-Ja'dī, he lacked originality, since he had learned to describe them merely by listening to other poets' descriptions of them, but he was still excellent.¹⁵⁴ In these descriptions al-Asma'ī looked for factual expertise concerning horses, rather than for other artistic qualities; they should conform with reality. Thus, he criticised Imru' al-Qays for describing his mare as follows:

وَارْكَبْ فِي الرُّعَى خَيْفَانَةً كَسَا وَجْهَهَا سَقْفٌ مُنْتَشِرٌ

"because if hair covers the face, a horse will not be regarded as noble (karīm), it is best for it to have little hair over the face, as in the following line of 'Abīd:

مَقْبَرٌ خَلَقَهَا تَضْبِيرًا يَنْشَقُّ عَنْ وَجْهِهَا السَّيْبُ 155

The best lines of horse description are written by al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī:

وَنَارَةٌ تُسْعِرُ الْمَنَاقِبَ قَدْ سَارَعَتْ فِيهَا بِصِلَمٍ صَتْمٍ
فَقَمَّ السَّيْلُ عُرَافِي أَوْطَافَةٍ الرَّجْلَيْنِ خَاطِي الْبَهْجِ مُلْتَمِمْ
فِي مَرْفَقَيْهِ تَحَانُفٌ وَلَهُ بَرَكَتٌ زَوْجٍ كِبَاءَةٍ الْخَزَمِ
وَقَوَّ طَوِيلُ الْجِرَانِ مَدَّ بِالْحَيَّةِ فَلَمْ يَأْزِمَا عَلَى كَرَمِ
خَيْلٍ عَلَى زُفْرَةٍ فَتَمَّ وَلَمْ يَرْجِعْ إِلَى دِقَّةٍ وَلَا هَفَمِ 156

It is immediately evident that the lines constitute a simple physical description, which depicts the ideal model of a horse, and correctly describes its various members; it seems likely that al-Asma'ī was right

in assuming that al-Jaʿdī had learned to describe horses by listening to others' descriptions of them in their poetry. What concerned al-Asmaʿī was the correctness of the description in relation to the traditional data. The same applied to the lines describing camels that he selected from a poem of 'Umar b. Laja' that begins:

أَفْتَمَّا رَئِيَّ مِنْ نُعَاتِهَا مُنْدَقَّةَ الشَّرَائِ وَادْقَاتِهَا
مَكْفُوفَةَ الْأَخْفَافِ مَحْمَرَاتِهَا سَابِقَةَ الْأُذُنَابِ ذِيَالَاتِهَا 157

The poets who were famous for describing camels were 'Uyayna b. Mirdās, who was the best at describing a riding-camel (markūb min al-ibil), al-Rāʿī al-Numayrī, who was the best at describing a milking-animal (mahlūb) in gasīd, and 'Umar b. Laja' al-Taymī, who was the best at describing it in rajjaz.¹⁵⁸

In spite of al-Asmaʿī's obvious attachment to topics connected with the desert and Bedouin life, and his use of Jāhilī poetry as a standard by which to judge later poetry, he did, on occasion, express a preference for Islamic poets to Jāhilī ones. It is reported that he criticised to al-Rashīd the following line of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī:

نَظَرْتُ إِلَيْكَ بِحَاجَةٍ لَمْ تُقْضِهَا نَظَرَ السَّقِيمِ إِلَى وَجْهِهِ الْفُورِ

Admitting that the simile in the line was incomparable and unique, he deprecated the poet's use of the word sagīm and stated that it was not acceptable to liken the beloved to a sick person. He preferred the two lines by the Islamic poet 'Adī b. al-Riqā' in which he used a pleasanter simile, describing the eyes of his beloved as the sleepy eyes of a wild

cow:

وَلَا نَهَا وَسَطِ النَّسَاءِ أَعَارَهَا عَيْنِيهِ أَحْوَرُ مِنْ جَاذِرِ جَاسِمِ
وَسَنَانُ أَقْصَدِ النَّاسِ فَرَّقَتْ فِي عَيْنِيهِ سِنَّةٌ وَلَيْسَ بِنَاثِمِ

Ibn Rashīq said that al-Asmaʿī was aware that "the madhhab of the ancients

has to be abandoned in many respects for other styles that suit people better with the passing of time".¹⁵⁹ His attitude was similar to that of Khalaf al-Ahmar, who preferred Marwān to al-A'shā for using pleasant words in his poetry, as we have seen. Nevertheless, al-Asma'ī was still a great admirer of the ancients, whom he regarded as standards for poets of his own time. When asked whether the three Umayyad poets, Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal were fuhūl or not, he replied that since they belonged to Islam, he would say nothing about them, but that "if they had belonged to the Jāhiliyya, they would have had a distinguished place (in that ranking)".¹⁶⁰ However, al-Akhtal excelled even the ancients in his poem in which he wrote:

161 لَقَمَرِي لَقَدْ أَشْبَيْتُ لَإِيلَ عَاجِرٍ بِسَاهِمَةِ الْحَدِيثِ طَاوِيَةِ الْقُرْبِ

In comparing al-Rā'ī with Ibn Muqbil, he did not indicate a preference, but his words implied that he admired al-Rā'ī, because "his poetry is more similar to the poetry of the ancients".¹⁶²

Those poets of Islam whom he called the sāgat al-shu'arā' or the "rear-guard of the poets" are al-Rammāh b. Mayyāda, Ibn Harma, Ru'ba, Hakam al-Khudrī, and Makīn al-'Udhri. Of these, Ibn Harma wrote the best line:

لَا أَمْتَعُ الْعُودَ بِالْفِضَالِ وَلَا ابْتَاعُ إِلَّا قَرِيبَةَ الْأَجَلِ

Al-Asma'ī still declared that "had Ibn Harma not come so long after the time of the ancients, he would have been considered a fahl, but since he is a muta'akhkhir he does not deserve the title. When he expressed a preference for Ibn Harma to the others on the strength of this line, he was actually most impressed by the poet's nobility and generosity as demonstrated in it. He claimed that even Hātim al-Tā'ī could not have said more than Ibn Harma had said from the point of view of generosity."¹⁶³

He praised a group of both Jāhilī and Islamic poets for their distinction

in certain poetic topics, even though he did not appreciate all of these. For instance, he spoke of 'Umayya b. Abī al-Salt as the best poet at writing about the hereafter, a subject which, as we have seen, he considered unsuitable for poetry. 'Antara was the best at describing war, and 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a at writing about youth (dhikr al-shabāb).¹⁶⁴

Like Ibn al-A'rābi before him, al-Asma'ī mentioned lines written by certain poets as models for those who wished to write on the same subjects. They ought to follow and imitate those lines if they wanted to succeed. He said that "any poet who wishes to describe the mouth (thaahr) of a woman needs to look at the following line by Bishr b. Abī Khāzim:

يَفْلَجَنَّ الشِّفَاهُ عَنْ أَفْخَوَانٍ بَلَاةٍ غِيبَ سَارِيَةٍ قَطَارُ

Those who wish to describe a woman's eyes need to look at the lines of 'Adī b. al-Riqā' (quoted before). The following lines of 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a are the best example for those who wish to describe a woman's colour:

وَقَى مَكْنُونَةٌ تَحْبِرُ مِنْهَا فِي أُرْدِيمِ الْحَذِينَ مَاءُ الشَّبَابِ
شَقَّ مِنْهَا حَقَّقٌ جَنْدِيٌّ قَهَى كَالشَّمْسِ مِنْ خِلَالِ السَّحَابِ

The line of 'Alqama al-Fahl describing a male ostrich is a model for those who wish to write on the same subject:

هَقِيقٌ لَأَنَّ جَانِيَهُ وَجُوبُهُ بَيْتٌ أَطَافَتْ بِهِ خَرَقَاءُ مَهْجُومٌ

And lastly, al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī is to be followed on the topic of i'tidhār, especially in this line:

فَإِنَّكَ كَالْبَيْلِ الَّذِي هُوَ مُدْرِكِي وَإِنْ خِلْتُ أَنَّ الْمُسْتَأَى عَنْكَ وَاسِعٌ 165

Some poems he declared the best on their subjects, such as that by al-Shammākh b. Dirār in which he described a bow, rhyming in zā'. It was better than another poem, in the same rhyme, written by al-Mutanakhkhil, because the one by al-Shammākh was longer. Al-Mutanakhkhil, on the other hand, wrote the best poem rhyming in tā', in which he said:

وما يورذن أميم طام على أرجائه زجل الفطاط
لأن مزاحف الجيات فيه قبيل الصبح آثار السباط

Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī wrote the best poem rhyming in jīm, starting:

صبا صهوة بل كج وهو لجوج وزالت لها بالانعمين حروج

The two poems of rithā' by Ka'b b. Sa'd al-Ghanawī and al-A'shā al-Bāhilī had no equal in the world.¹⁶⁶

Like earlier critics, in most of their judgements, al-Asma'ī did not state any criteria when judging those poems. One can guess at some of those that he applied in certain poetic genres, such as madīh and hijā'.

It seems that he was looking for poetry in which the poet combined an abundance of ma'anī with great ^{comprehensiveness} conciseness. An example of this is in the following two lines of madīh by Ka'b b. Zuhayr on the Prophet:

تحملة الناقة الأدماء مقتجراً بالبر لا لبر جلى كيلة الظلم
وفى عطا فيه أو أثناء زليته ما تعلم الله من دين ومن كرم

The ^{comprehensiveness} conciseness is in the second half of the last line. Al-Asma'ī cited the lines as the best ones in praise of the Prophet.¹⁶⁷

Similar to these lines is the one by al-'Ajjāj:

نجلن كل سودد وفخر نجلن ما ندرى وما لا ندرى

Al-Asma'ī stated that the origin of the lines by Ka'b and al-'Ajjāj was the following line of al-Hārith b. Hilliza:

وقفنا بهم كما علم الله ولمان الحائنين دماء

in the first half of which he had condensed a number of ma'anī.

Al-Asma'ī then stated that no poet had produced better ma'anī than those of Ka'b in the two lines quoted above.¹⁶⁸

Conciseness and abundance of ma'anī in the poetry of hijā' was to be found in the following line by al-Akhtal:

فقوم إذا استنبح الأضياف كلهم قالوا لا هم بولى على النار

He said: "This is the most satirical line ever written by the Arabs,

because it combines various kinds of hiḡā'. The poet implies that these people are misers, since they put out their fire for fear that a guest may see it and come to them at night; they are misers also because they do not use water but urine to put it out; they are misers also because their fire is so small that a little urine can put it out, the urine of an old woman, at that - denoting very little indeed. He also represents them as having no respect for their mother and as having no servants in their tent.¹⁶⁹

In ghazal, al-Asma'ī again required riḡa. This may be seen in his criticism of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī for likening his beloved to a sick person. Al-Asma'ī's view of riḡa appears equally clearly in his criticism of Tarafa who "did not know how to love passionately" because, after writing excellent lines in which he expressed his great passion for his beloved, claiming that he could not sleep when he remembered her:

أَصَحَّوَتِ الْيَوْمَ أُمُّ شَاتِقِكَ هِرَ وَمِنَ الْحَبِّ جَنُونَ مُسْتَعِيرَ
أَرْقَ الْقَيْنَ خِيَالٌ لَمْ يَقِرْ طَافَ وَالرَّكْبُ بِصَحْرَاءِ يَسْرَرُ

he then spoilt the effect by writing:

وَإِذَا تَلَسَّنِي السُّنْهَ أَنِّي لَسْتُ بِمُوهُونٍ عَمَّرُ
لَا كَبِيرٌ دَالِفٌ مِنْ قَرَمٍ أَرْهَبُ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا كَلُّ الْظَفَرِ

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According to the dictates of riḡa, the poet should not boast of himself to his beloved, and should not make himself equal to her; he should not be harsh with her if she angers him, but rather be soft and gentle. Also, the true lover should be content with little from his beloved, as we have seen before. This is why al-Asma'ī admired the following lines of Ishāq al-Mawsilī, in which the poet seemed to be content with every small token of recognition from his beloved and to consider it to be something great:

قَدْ إِلَى تَقَرَّةٍ إِلَيْكَ سَبِيلُ يُرَدُّ مِنْهَا الصَّدَى وَيُشْفَى الْغَلِيلُ
إِنَّ مَا قَلَّ مِنْكَ يَكْثُرُ عِنْدِي وَلَكثيرٌ مِمَّنْ تَحَبَّ الْقَلِيلُ

Hearing the poet recite those lines, al-Asma'ī described them admirably as "al-harīr al-khusrawānī wa-al-washy al-iskandarānī."¹⁷¹

The fact that he rejected the lines when he knew that they were by Ishāq himself, on the grounds that they were written with affectation, does not alter the fact that he first admired them for the reasons that we have given.

To sum up, we may say that although al-Asma'ī was one of the old school of criticism, and the most important figure of the group whose views we have discussed, and although he was greatly influenced by those who preceded him, he differed from them in that he had some of his views concerning poetic criticism recorded by his pupil Abū Hātim in Fuhūlat al-shu'arā'. He tried to make a classification of poets based on the quality of fuhūla, and he divided them into fuhūl and non-fuhūl. The influence of the Bedouin environment appears in his using the term fahl itself, which was originally used for a camel-stallion, according to his own definition. Among his criteria for fuhūla was transmission (riwāya) of the work of senior poets, excellence of production, variety of poetic genres, quantity of composition, and sometimes religious and moral considerations, although he actually separated religion from poetry. Other standards that he used in comparing different poets, poems and lines are tab', varying levels of excellence, writing at length, conciseness and abundance of ma'ānī compressed into a few words, especially in madih and hijā', though he was not interested in the latter; he also required riqqa in ghazal poetry. He rejected affectation, and, like many of the earlier critics, he recited Islamic and muhdath poetry as a means of relaxation. He sometimes praised a combination of firmness and delicacy in poetic style and form. He accepted, and appreciated, the new path of poetry by Bashshār, and he even admired some kinds of badī' and mahāsin. Nevertheless, he still considered Jāhilī poetry as the model to be

followed and the standard for judging later poets, despite the fact that he was moderate in his judgements on them and even preferred some of them to Jāhilī poets. Those considered by him as the "seal" of poets were fewer than they might have been because some who were otherwise qualified appeared only in Islamic times. His most interesting and original view was that of the relationship between khayr and sharr and poetry, which led him to advance a more or less logical justification for regarding the topics treated by the Jāhilī fuhūl as the most suitable for poetry.

The old school of critics and the muhdathūn:

The members of this school were generally interested in ancient poetry for various reasons; as Ibn Rashīq said, they were principally looking for shawāhid for eloquent language.¹⁷² As we have mentioned, the origin of the school can be traced back to Ibn 'Abbās, who used poetry in interpreting the Qur'ān. When these critics appeared they based their studies on this idea and extended them to cover other areas of linguistic and grammatical learning. Besides this, some of them were interested in poetry that contained gharīb, akhbār and other items of knowledge. They felt a responsibility to preserve the language and the ancient poetry, and this resulted in collections such as the Mu'allaqāt, Asma'īyyāt, Mufaddaliyyāt and Jamharat Ash'ār al-'Arab, despite the fact that some of these contain Islamic poetry as well. Although there may have been some artistic criteria behind these collections, the main reason for their existence is that the collectors saw it as their duty to make them. Some of them were even requested by the caliphs to do so, as was the case with the Mufaddaliyyāt. This activity displayed the official side of the characters of these early critics, ruwāt, grammarians and philologists, who seem to have lived a kind of double life. Aside from their jobs as defenders of the language, occupied with their taxing studies of ancient poetry, they tended to seek relaxation as we have mentioned before, in reciting what they thought to be excellent of Islamic and muhdath poetry.

We have seen how al-Asma'ī was interested in certain lines that displayed a delicacy of touch and were composed in short metres with "light" rhymes (Khiffat al-rawī). He was frequently heard to quote, with great admiration, lines like:

نَسَقَ اللهُ أَبَاسًا لَنَا لَسَنَ رَجَبًا وَنَسَقًا لِقَعْرِ الْعَامِرَةِ مِنْ عَقْرِ
لِيَالِجٍ أَعْطَيْتُ الْبَطَالََةَ مَقُودِي تَهْنَأُ الْبِيَالِي وَالشُّهُورُ وَلَا أُدْرِي

In admiring and reciting such lines, and others of muhdath poetry, these critics of the old school were truly and sincerely expressing themselves as men of letters who appreciated poetry. It is true that men like Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', Khalaf al-Ahmar, Ibn al-A'rābī, Abū 'Ubayda and even al-Asma'ī, expressed some views hostile to the modern, and even the early Islamic, poets. But their selections from the two groups' poems, and al-Asma'ī's praise for the originality of Bashshār and admiration for some kinds of badī' and mahāsin, should prevent us exaggerating their hostility towards the muhdathūn, despite the fact that they took antiquity as a standard against which to judge early Islamic and muhdath poets, and even those whom they called sāgat al-shu'arā'.

However, the hostile views expressed by these critics towards the muhdathūn caused a reaction from the latter against the former and resulted in the emergence of a group of critics who represented a new trend in Arabic literary criticism, regarding poetic comparison in particular. This group of critics demanded an equal judgement for ancient and muhdath poets alike, based not on antiquity but on excellence. This will be discussed later, but in the following pages we shall see some aspects of the reaction of the muhdathūn against the earlier critics. In fact, the defence of the muhdathūn started with the poets themselves; Ibn Munādhir was perhaps the pioneer in this. Hammād al-Arqaṭ reported that he once met Ibn Munādhir, who said to him: "Pass my greetings to Abū 'Ubayda, and tell him that Ibn Munādhir says to him: "Fear Allāh, and

judge between my poetry and the poetry of 'Adī b. Zayd. Do not say that one is a Jāhilī poet and one is an Islamic poet; that one is qadīm and one is muhdath, so that you judge between the two epochs; but rather judge between the two poems and forego partisanship". He then recited to Hammād al-Arqat the rithā' poem he wished to be judged:

173 كُنْ صَيِّ لِقَى الْحَمَامِ قَمُورِي

Ibn Munādhir regarded himself as no lower in poetic rank than the great Jāhilī poets. When he met al-Aṣma'ī and Khalaf al-Ahmar at a dinner party, he said to the latter: "Even if Imru' al-Qays, al-Nābigha and Zuhayr are dead, their poems are still alive, so I ask you to compare my poetry with theirs". Khalaf took a plate full of soup and threw it in Ibn Munādhir's face".¹⁷⁴

Instead of submitting to the critics, he fought them, boasted of his capabilities, and showed his independence of them. He satirized Abū 'Ubayda, and when al-Khalīl b. Ahmad claimed that all poets submitted to him, and that if he praised them their poetry was marketable, otherwise not, he challenged him and said: "By Allāh, I will praise the Caliph in a poem with which I shall need neither your help nor that of anyone else".¹⁷⁵

Other poets among the muhdathūn are reported to have opposed the earlier critics. It is said that Bashshār was able to force al-Akhfash or Sībawayhi to quote his verse as a grammatical hujja, probably for fear of his satire after they had criticised him.¹⁷⁶ The muhdathūn expressed their views about the earlier critics among the ruwāt in their verses. Marwān b. Abī Hafsa accused them of ignorance, likening them to camels that carried books and knew nothing about what they contained. He wrote:

زواملٌ للأشعار لا علم عندهم بجيدها إلا كعلم الأباعير
لعمرك ما يدري البعير إذا غدا بأوساقه أو راح ماضٍ الفرائر

Ibn al-Rūmī told a certain Abū Jaʿfar that he was not qualified to criticise poetry because it was more difficult to recognise excellent poetry than to distinguish true coin from false. He wrote:

يا أبا جعفر تحكّم في الشعر وما فيك آلة الكلام
لأنّ نقد الدينار إلا على الله برّ في صعب فكيف نقد الكلام
قد رأيتك كنت تفرّق في الإشعار بين الأرواح والأجسام 177

When Abū Nuwās was asked to judge between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, he preferred the former; and when they told him that Abū ʿUbayda did not agree with him, he replied: "This is not something known to Abū ʿUbayda; it is known only by those who are pushed into the narrow (ways) of poetry".¹⁷⁸

A similar reply was given by al-Buhturī, who preferred Abū Nuwās to Muslim b. al-Walīd because the former had written poetry in all poetic genres and was excellent in all its aspects. He wrote poetry according to his wish, serious and jocular (*jidd wa-hazl*), while Muslim limited himself to one style and never went beyond it. When al-Buhturī was told that Abū al-ʿAbbās Thaʿlab did not agree with him in this judgement, he replied: "This is not something known to Thaʿlab and those like him, who get poetry by heart but do not write it. Poetry is known only by those who are pushed into its narrow ways".¹⁷⁹

However, while the *muhdathūn* were engaged in their struggle with the earlier critics, the field of criticism began to be dominated by another group of critics, who formed a new school and represented a compromise between the two warring factions. These new critics were men like al-Jāhiz, Ibn Qutayba, al-Mubarrad and Ibn al-Muʿtazz. Nevertheless, they made use of the views of the old school, even though they differed from them in their approach to the *muhdathūn*. The conflict continued in another way and reached its peak with the appearance of Abū Tammām,

backed by al-Ḥulī, and al-Buhturī, backed by the school of al-Āmidī. These last stood for ‘amūd al-shi‘r, whereas Abū Tammām stood for the style of badī‘. Al-Buhturī himself did in fact use badī‘ in his poetry, but he clung more firmly to ‘amūd al-shi‘r and the style of the ancients, as may be seen from Kitāb al-muwāzana of al-Āmidī.

The old school of criticism resembled a bridge between the scattered views of literary men that we have already discussed and the views of those who recorded their opinions in systematic works of literary criticism. The first representative of these was Ibn Sallām al-Jumhī, with his book Tabagāt fuhūl al-shu‘arā’. Although he was really a typical critic of the old school, we have chosen, as we have said, to deal with him separately, since his book is considered to be the first work of Arabic literary criticism, putting aside Al-Asma‘ī's Fuhūlat al-shu‘arā’.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Old School, Continued: Muhammad b. Sallām al-Jumhī

Ibn Sallām was a Basran scholar, who, with his book Tabagāt fuhūl al-shu'arā', represented the second stage of the old school of literary criticism and poetic comparison. Being a pupil of al-Asma'ī, Khalaf al-Ahmar, Yūnus b. Ḥabīb and Abū 'Ubayda, among others, he was deeply influenced by their views concerning poets, and by other groups of 'ulama'', as well as by men of letters, and poets; he had, however, a number of views of his own, in which he seems to have been original. The title of his book indicates the possible influence of al-Asma'ī, in using the term fuhūl, though Ibn Sallām's concept of fuhūla was more open than that held by al-Asma'ī. This will be apparent from the fact that, while al-Asma'ī was very grudging in conferring the title fahl on his poets, Ibn Sallām, on the contrary, admitted many of them into this category.

One of the main problems discussed by Ibn Sallām in the introduction to his Tabagāt is the authenticity of the Arabic poetry available at his time and in particular Jāhilī poetry. The authenticity of the poetry attributed to any poet was important to Ibn Sallām in his grading, since quantity of production was one of the standards he used for this. His negative description of the falsified poetry gives us a general idea about the characteristics of the authentic poetry and shows us the qualities of poetry in which he was interested. The fabricated verse did not contain evidences for eloquent language, as he described it; and this indicates his similarity with those grammarian critics who were looking for poetry which could be quoted as a hujja. Poetry should contain edifying matter (ma'nā and adab) and aphorisms, apart from the principal poetic genres, which were, as far as he was concerned, wonderful praise (madīh rā'i'),

hiġā' mudhi¹, fakhr muġib, and nasīb mustatraf.¹

He did not mention rithā' and wasf, although he gave the poets of marāthī a separate section in his study. The sort of hiġā' singled out by Ibn Sallām is hiġā' mudhi², and on this point he seems to have been in a full agreement with those of his own time, like Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, and his distant predecessors, such as 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, in their views concerning the most harmful hiġā'. One may also expect the quotations of Ibn Sallām to be relevant to what he said about the characteristics lacked by the falsified poetry.

The most authentic poetry was that transmitted by the Bedouins and accepted by the 'ulamā'. He gave great consideration to riwāya, and therefore rejected those poems recited by the ṣuḥāfiyyūn, those who learned poetry from written sources and did not hear it recited by the Bedouins.² Some of the poetry transmitted by Ibn Ishāq in the Sīra, the poetry which the different tribes had attributed to their poets after the early Islamic conquest, that transmitted by untruthful transmitters, by the muwalladūn, and even by some Bedouins - all of this was totally rejected by Ibn Sallām.³ He described the poetry transmitted by Ibn Ishāq as kalām wāhin khabīth and da'if al-asr qalīl al-tulāwa.⁴

While discussing the authenticity of Jāhilī poetry and rejecting that transmitted in the Sīra by Ibn Ishāq, who attributed some poems to 'Ād and Thamūd, Ibn Sallām stated that qasīd and long poems began to be written at the time of Ḥāshim Ibn 'Abd Manāf and 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather.⁵ Again, he mentioned that "the first one who wrote qasīd and mentioned events (waqā'i') was al-Muhalhil Ibn Rabī'a al-Taghlibī, when his brother Kulayb was killed by the Banū Shaybān."⁶

When he talked about urban poets of Mecca, Medina, Oman and Taif, he stated that production of poetry increased with wars, such as the wars which took place between Aws and Khazraj. There was not much poetry among the Quraysh or in Oman, because there were not many wars, disputes or mutual raids.⁷ Also, when he talked about poetry in different tribes and its transfer from one tribe to another, he reported that it originated in the tribe of Rabīʿa, among whom there were al-Muhalhil and Saʿd Ibn Mālik, who says:

8 يا بؤس للحرب التي وضعت أراهلنا فاستراحوا

Such remarks seem to indicate that he linked poetry with war, where we expect poems of mufākhara (tribal or personal), rithā', and narrative of events (wagā'i') and battles (ayyām) of the Arabs. Such poetry contains a great deal of akhbār and genealogical facts, as do poems of hijā'. He considered poetry as both a sort of science (ʿilm) and a craft (sināʿa). He quoted ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as speaking of poetry as ʿilm, and he himself described poetry as the dīwān of the Arabs.⁹ Interest in poetry as a source of akhbār, and records of genealogies, is also attributed to other Basran scholars like Abū ʿUbayda. Ibn Sallām did not differ from his shuyūkh in that respect. The main point, however, is that his remarks concerning the relation of wars with poetry and the use of poetry as a source of various kinds of knowledge may cast some light on his quotations in the Tabaqāt, and may serve as a guide in our attempt to discover the criteria he used in his selection and in his grading of poets. The other point to be mentioned here is that there is a similarity between al-Asmaʿī, with his notion of poetry and evil, and Ibn Sallām, with his notion of the relation between poetry and wars. Both critics also talked about the quality of līn, as we have seen in the case of al-Asmaʿī, and as we shall see in the case of Ibn Sallām. Discussion of Ibn Sallām's criteria will occur later, when we talk about

the grades of poets and the quotations from their poems.

Following his concept of poetry as a craft, (sinaʿa), Ibn Sallām stated that the authenticity of poetry and its excellence could only be judged by an expert and qualified critic with good taste.¹⁰ He believed that only prolonged study of poetry and continuous recitation would result in expert knowledge of it and help the critic to make accurate judgements.¹¹

A similarity may be noticed between Ibn Sallām and the Greek Longinus who pointed out that an accurate judgement in literature resulted only from long experience. Only those with this experience could distinguish between the true and the false.¹² According to Ibn Rashīq, Ibn Sallām believed that excellence in poetry was something to be sensed and felt, but that there was no certain definition of it, just as it is not easy to define beauty of face.¹³

In his grading of poets Ibn Sallām seems to have been guided by two basic factors, the quality of fuhūla and the similarity (tashābuh) between poets. The application of the term fahl, though not explained by him, was considerably enlarged, and Ibn Sallām selected forty fuhūl from the Jāhilī poets and forty from the Islamic poets, including a group of mukhadramūn. Besides these, there were the urban Arab poets, shuʿarāʾ al-marāthī and the Jewish poets. In dealing with the forty famous fuhūl, he said that those who were similar to one another in their verse were divided into ten classes (tabaqāt), in each of which there were four, equal to one another.¹⁴ Out of all these tabaqāt, he said that, in accordance with what the learned people had said and with his own estimation, the first Jāhilī tabaga was already settled, having its four poets, who were commonly regarded as the best among the Arabs, despite the fact that people disagreed about who was the best of the four.¹⁵ He did

not indicate any aspect of the "similarity" on which he based his classification, and we shall try to discover to what extent he applied that criterion. The fact that he graded some of the mukhadramūn with both the Islamic poets and the Jāhilī ones, and that he included some of the latter with the Islamic poets, may well have had something to do with this "similarity". We can guess that he felt a similarity among the poets of the towns, among the poets of marāthī (one poetic subject), and among the Jewish poets (religion). In dealing with the first Jāhilī tabaqā, consisting of Imru' al-Qays, Zuhayr, al-Nābigha, and al-Aʿshā, which he regarded as already established, he avoided giving his opinion about which was the best of them, and he limited himself to mentioning the views of critics from Kūfa and Basra, leaving the reader to decide for himself. His differences from al-Asmaʿī in the concept of fuhūla appeared in his inclusion of al-Aʿshā in the first tabaqā of fuhūl, since al-Asmaʿī had excluded him from that rank.

In the second Jāhilī tabaqā, Ibn Sallām was faced with a problem of his own making in limiting the number of poets in each tabaqā to four. According to him, Aws Ibn Hajar deserved to be in the first tabaqā but, since the number was completed by the four poets, there was no room for him and thus he was transferred to the second class. Though Ibn Sallām quoted Abū ʿAmr b. al-Aʿlā's view that Aws was the fahl of Mudar who was relegated by al-Nābigha and Zuhayr, he still regarded him as worthy of the first tabaqā, which included the latter two poets.

But before we discuss the criteria used by Ibn Sallām in grading Aws and his peers in the second tabaqā, and try to guess the "similarity" between its members, we should try to arrive at a solution of the problem of the number four, since it had its influence on the inclusion of Aws in the second class and his exclusion from the first, and indeed

on the whole system of the book. First, Ibn Sallām was not the first to use this number in the classification of poets. The division of poets into four grades had a long history in Arabic criticism, and we have already mentioned that Imru' al-Qays, perhaps following the classification used in his time, called the poet Ibn Ḥamrān a shu'rūr. Moreover, we have also quoted the lines attributed to al-Ḥuṭay'a that start:

الشُّعْرَاءُ فَاغْلَمْنِي أَرْبَعَةً

We have also quoted a line of a poet addressing another:

يَا رَابِعَ الشُّعْرَاءِ كَيْفَ هَجَوْتَنِي وَزَعَمْتَ أَنَّي مُفْلِحٌ لَا انْطِقُ

The line indicates a possible grading of poets into four classes, the fourth of which was probably the shu'rūr. The other three were the khindhīdh, the mufliḥ, and the shā'ir.¹⁶ One cannot deny the possible influence of this on Ibn Sallām with regard to the number four. But, in all probability, Ibn Sallām was directly influenced by the words attributed to Ibn Abī Ṭarafa, according to al-Asma'ī (also to Nusayb and Kuthayyir), which we have quoted before: "You may be satisfied with four poets: Imru' al-Qays when he rides; Zuhayr when he desires; al-Nābigha when he fears; and al-A'shā when he feels delight". We have suggested that this idea was in itself an echo of what was said by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib about Imru' al-Qays, when he described him as having written his poetry neither for desire nor for fear. We have also said that this view of 'Alī's developed into the notion of motives for poetry, and we have referred to Artāt b. Suhayya's reply to 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān when the latter asked him about poetry. He spoke of desire, anger and delight and their relation with poetry. This notion of the motives for poetry reached its final form in the idea that referred the pillars of poetry to four emotions: desire; fear; anger; and delight. Similar to it was the idea of the four elements of poetry, namely, madīh, hijā', nasīb, and rithā'/fakhr. Even when the two a'rāb championed Jarīr in front of 'Abd al-Malik, they mentioned four elements or pillars of poetry; and when the poet

al-Bitāyn was asked to judge Dhū al-Rumma, he said that the latter equalled only one-quarter of a poet, because he was excellent only in one of the four elements of poetry.

Now, the one who seems to have been most influenced by this before Ibn Sallām was Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', being reported as saying: "The best poets of all are four: Imru' al-Qays; al-Nābigha; Tarafa; and Muhalhil".¹⁷ When we come to Ibn Sallām, we can see that he might have found himself encircled by the number four. The four poets he included in his first tabaga were already said to be the four best in particular emotional circumstances, according to the notion of the motives for poetry and to what Ibn Abī Tarafa had said about them. There was no possibility of Ibn Sallām's putting five poets in one tabaga, because he was forced to establish his first on the already given data. This was why Aws Ibn Hajar was excluded from the first tabaga, even though he was the equal of those who were included. The solution to the problem of the number four or the magic number, as Hilary Kilpatrick called it¹⁸, is probably to be found in what we have suggested above. The fact that Ibn Sallām himself avoided giving his own opinion about which was the best poet in the first Jāhilī tabaga was probably due to the critical situation in which he found himself. Earlier critics, following the idea of the motives for poetry, had credited each of the four with especial merit in a particular topic, which corresponded with one of these motives; this made it impossible for Ibn Sallām to give superiority to one of the four poets over his peers in all poetic topics.¹⁹

If we return to the classification in the second tabaga to investigate the criteria used by Ibn Sallām in grading its members, we find that there is some relation between it and the first. The first aspect of this relation has been covered by what we have said about Aws b. Hajar. The second

aspect is of prosodic nature, namely that two poets, al-Nābigha from the first tabaqa, and Bishr Ibn Abī Khāzim from the second, were criticised for committing iqwā' in their verses. Iqwā' (change of the vowel following the rhyme-letter) was committed by al-Nābigha in these lines:

أَمِنْ آلِ لَيْلَى رَاحِجٌ أَوْ مُغْتَدِي مَجْلَانٌ ، ذَا زَادٍ وَتَبِيرَ مَزُودٍ
زَعَمَ الْبَوَاحُ أَنَّ رَحَلَتْنَا غَدًا وَبِذَلِكَ كَبَّرْنَا الْغَدَاةُ الْأَسُودُ

and:

سَقَطَ النَّصِيفُ وَلَمْ تُرِدْ إِسْقَاطُهُ فَتَنَّا وَلَتَهُ وَانْتَقَتْنَا بِالْيَدِ
يُخَفِّبُ رَحِيحُ كَأَنَّ بَنَانَهُ عَنَمٌ يَكَادُ مِنَ اللَّطَافَةِ يُعْقَدُ

Iqwā' was committed by Bishr b. Abī Khāzim in these lines:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ لُحُولَ الدَّهْرِ يُسَلِّي وَنُتَيْسِي مِثْلَ مَا نُتَيْسَتْ جُذَامُ
وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا فَبَفَّوْا عَلَيْنَا فَسُقْنَاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَلَدِ الشَّامِ 20

Ibn Sallām, through association of ideas, when mentioning that al-Nābigha had committed iqwā', immediately thought of Bishr, who was the only other poet among the fuhūl to do so.²¹

The most probable criterion used by Ibn Sallām in grading Aws, Ka'b b. Zuhayr and al-Huṭay'a in the second class, a criterion which also may give us an idea about the similarity between those three poets, is something concerned with riwāya, which can also be considered as a link between these poets and Zuhayr from the first tabaqa. Ibn Sallām mentioned that Zuhayr was the rāwīya of Aws b. Hajar. Zuhayr himself had his poetry transmitted by his son Ka'b and by al-Huṭay'a, who was also a rāwīya of Ka'b himself. This chain of riwāya suggests a relation of pupil and master between these poets, at whose head stood Aws b. Hajar. In fact the three others, namely Zuhayr, his son Ka'b and al-Huṭay'a, formed what the earlier critics called 'abīd al-shi'r' (slaves of poetry). Ibn Sallām was possibly aware of that, and this may cast some light on his grading of the poets together. Another possibility concerning the ranking of Aws with Ka'b, and the link between the two poets and Zuhayr

from the first tabaqa, is that Ibn Sallām was interested in the notion of "poetical houses". Talking about Aws, he mentioned that he was the stepfather of Zuhayr²², and he stated that there was none of the Jāhili fuhūl in whose family house there was a continued tradition of poetry as there was with Zuhayr, and with Jarīr in Islam.²³ Ibn Qutayba mentioned those who were poets among the family of Zuhayr, such as his father, Abū Sulma, Zuhayr himself, his sons Ka'b and Bujayr, 'Uqba b. Ka'b and al-'Awwām Ibn 'Uqba.²⁴ As for al-Hutay'a, he was included in the "house of Zuhayr" because he was the rāwīya of the family, beside other factors common to them, which have been discussed above.

The tribal adherence suggested by Bräunlich²⁵ as a criterion used by Ibn Sallām in his classification and in his quotations, namely that he was drawing on a tribal dīwān, agrees with what I have noticed concerning Ibn Sallām and the notion of the transfer of poetry from one tribe to another. Al-Asma'ī mentioned that poetry flourished in the Jāhiliyya for the first time in the tribe of Rabī'a, then it moved to Qays, and finally it went over to Tamīm in Islam and remained there. Al-A'shā, al-Musayyab b. 'Alas and al-Muragqish were mentioned as among the best poets of those tribes.²⁶

Ibn Sallām followed a similar course concerning poetry and tribes. In his introduction, he talked generally about "the Arabs and their poetry, their famous poet horse-men (fursān) and noblemen (ashrāf), and the battles (ayyām) of the Arabs". Then he stated that it was not possible to know all about the poets of every tribe of Arabs, and that was why he limited himself to the famous fuhūl.²⁷ In another place, he spoke about poetry being with the tribe of Rabī'a in the Jāhiliyya, its first poet being al-Muhalhil, then the two Muragqish, Sa'd b. Mālik, Tarafa b. al-'Abd, 'Amr b. Qami'a, al-Hārith b. Hillizah, al-Mutalammis, al-A'shā, and

al-Musayyab b. 'Alas. After that, poetry moved to Qays, among whom there were al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī, - Zuhayr and his son Ka'b are counted among Ghatafān - Labīd, al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, al-Huṭay'a, al-Shammākh, his brother Muzarriḍ, and Khidāsh Ibn Zuhayr. Eventually, poetry moved to Tamīm and remained there.²⁸ Ibn Sallām then spoke about tribes and families who, on reviewing their poems, found that they were few, and therefore started to fabricate poems and attribute them to their poets of the Jāhiliyya.²⁹

Such remarks and comments by Ibn Sallām indicate his interest in a tribal classification of poetry, but it does not mean that the different classes in his book were all necessarily classified on those lines. Nevertheless, his description of Aws b. Hajar as "the poet of Mudar" and al-A'shā as "the poet of Rabī'a" may support the claim that he was sometimes guided by this criterion of tribal adherence. More examples will be given to make it clearer. However, the most important links between the three poets of the second class, and Zuhayr himself, are those of riwāya and similarity of poetic styles (revised and refined poetry), or al-hawli al-muhakkak, as al-Huṭay'a described it. He himself was described by Ibn Sallām as a poet who had "firmly composed poetry and famous rhymes" matīn al-shi'r sharūd al-ḡāfiya.³⁰ The perfection and firmness of composition of al-Huṭay'a's verse described here is no different from what was said by those who preceded Ibn Sallām, such as Abū 'Amr Ibn al-'Alā', al-Asma'ī and Abū 'Ubayda, who described his poetry as containing not a single defect. The same point is mentioned by Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī in the Aghānī.³¹

The last two points concerning this ṭabaqa are, first that Ibn Sallām differed from al-Asma'ī in including Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr in the second ṭabaqa of the fuhūl; al-Asma'ī excluded him. As we have seen, Khalaf al-

Ahmar was almost inclined to prefer Ka'b to his father Luḡayr. Ibn Sallām may have classified Ka'b in the second tabaqa just to keep him near his father. Ka'b's qasīda, Bānat Su'ād, in praise of the Prophet, gained him a religious and poetic reputation which should be kept in mind when we try to understand Ibn Sallām's, and perhaps Khalaf's, high opinion of him. The second point about the second tabaqa is that, although it is one of the Jāhili tabaqas, two of the mukhadramūn, namely Ka'b and al-Ḥuṭay'a, were included in it, a fact which may suggest that Ibn Sallām was not attempting a chronological classification of his poets, but was rather guided by their "similarity", as he understood it.

Two mukhadram poets, namely al-Zibriqān b. Badr and al-Mukhabbal al-Sa'dī, were incidentally mentioned with the poets of the second tabaqa. Both of them were from Medina and belonged to the clan of 'Awf from the same tribe. Later, al-Mukhabbal was mentioned in the fifth Jāhili tabaqa and was described as a fahl, whereas, when he was mentioned with al-Zibriqān, both of them were described as poets who were mufliḡ.³² Besides being guided by the criterion of tribal adherence in mentioning these poets together, Ibn Sallām was also guided by his concept of poetry as connected with the wars and ayyām of the Arabs, which were rich subjects for mufākhara and hijā'. When al-Ḥuṭay'a came to stay with al-Zibriqān for a short time at Medina, he was angered by signs of hostility in the latter's wife. He satirised al-Zibriqān and moved to stay with Baghīd b. 'Āmir, the cousin of al-Zibriqān, who competed with him in matters of nobility and generosity and who had his other cousin, al-Mukhabbal, on his side. The latter defeated al-Zibriqān in hijā' mixed with lines of mufākhara, such as in the poem that starts:

33 لَقَمْرَكَ إِنَّ الزَّبْرِيقَانَ لَدَائِبٌ عَلَى النَّاسِ يَفْدُو نَوَكُهُ وَهَجَاهِلُهُ

Therefore it seems likely that Ibn Sallām had hijā' in mind when linking

al-Libriqān and al-Mukhabbal with al-Huṭay'a, who was a poet of the second tabaga. When we come to discuss the quotations of Ibn Sallām, we shall see his interest in these kinds of poetic topics.

The criterion of tribal adherence is also used in the classification of the third tabaga, where we find al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, al-Shammākh b. Dirār and Labīd b. Rabi'a, all of whom belonged to the large tribe of Qays. Besides that, al-Ja'dī and Labīd both belonged to the clan of 'Amir b. Sa'sa'a. The selection of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī was also made on tribal grounds. Ibn Sallām pointed out that, according to Ḥassān b. Thābit, the tribe of Hudhayl were the best in poetry, and that, according to Abū 'Amr Ibn al-'Alā', Abū Dhu'ayb was the best poet of that tribe. These judgements he accepted.³⁴

All poets of this tabaga were mukhadramūn, though it should be noted that Ibn Sallām only once used that term, in his introductory section.³⁵ When he talked about al-Huṭay'a, he simply stated that he had lived for a long time in the Jāhiliyya and for some time in Islam.³⁶ He said that al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī was an ancient poet who lived for a long time in the Jāhiliyya and in Islam.³⁷

The judgements passed by Ibn Sallām on the third tabaga are that al-Ja'dī was a muflīq poet, who wrote in different styles, or levels (mukhtalif al-shi'r), and a mughallab poet (one who is defeated in hijā'); Abū Dhu'ayb was described as a fahl without a defect or a weakness; al-Shammākh, who was compared with Labīd, was said to be shadīd mutūn al-shi'r, ashadd asr kalām min Labīd, wa-fīhi kazāza, wa-Labīd ashal minhu mantiqan. Labīd was described elsewhere as 'adhb al-mantiq, raqīq hawāshī al-kalām.³⁸

It is strange that, although Ibn Sallām regarded al-Ja'dī as a

mughallab poet (vanquished, beaten) and mentioned those poets who had defeated him in their exchanges of hijā', he still counted him among the fuhūl and called him muflīq. When we discussed the views of al-Asma'ī about the term fahl, we quoted al-Mubarrad who once defined the fuhūl as those who had beaten others in hijā'. This attitude of Ibn Sallām, in regarding even those beaten in hijā' as fuhūl, is one reason for considering him a moderate critic, who conferred the title of fahl to many poets, some of whom were rejected by earlier critics. More examples of such poets will be given later on in this chapter.

With the exception of the distant relationship between Labīd and al-Shammākh as poets of Qays, it is difficult to find a similarity between them, since al-Shammākh was described as a poet of firmly composed poetry, which is more compact than that of Labīd and contains the quality of dryness (kazāza). Labīd has an easier and less austere discourse, with sweetness and amiability. Al-Ja'fī himself did not fit with al-Shammākh, because his discourse sometimes lacked firmness and became soft (layyin) as al-Asma'ī described it. The member of this tabaga who came closest to al-Shammākh was Abū Dhu'ayb, whose poetry was also firmly composed; al-Shammākh, however, had the additional quality of "dryness".

The idea of poetic families appears again with the mention of the two brothers of al-Shammākh, Muzarrid and Jaz', both of whom were poets, and fuhūl, although al-Shammākh was the foremost fahl of the three. Muzarrid was the more similar to him, and he was also a famous poet.³⁹ Ibn Sallām differed with Abū 'Amr Ibn al-'Alā' and al-Asma'ī, both of whom respected Labīd for his piety but did not regard him as a good poet or a fahl. Ibn Sallām described Labīd as a good and true Muslim, and at the same time ranked him with the fuhūl. The three critics agreed about the beauty

and sweetness of his discourse, and Ibn Sallām, in particular, emphasised that point in his remarks about the discourse of al-Shammākh. It may be that we can discern in his observation on these two poets, and on others elsewhere, a greater concern with the form and words in poetry than displayed by his predecessors.

In the same way as Ibn Sallām talked about Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī from a tribal point of view, describing him as the best poet of his tribe, so too he considered Labīd from this point of view, pointing out that he was the best poet of his tribe in the Jāhiliyya. He used to praise and elegize them, and mention their ayyām, wars and horsemen.⁴⁰ The notion of the relationship between war and poetry, which perhaps guided him in this study, appears again here. The fact that Ibn Sallām talked about Labīd as a poet who stopped writing poetry in Islam⁴¹, and what he said about the genres of his poetry written in the Jāhiliyya, reminds us of the view of al-Asma'ī about suitable genres for poetry, and his assertion that Ḥassān was not a fahl of Islam because he wrote poems connected with khayr rather than with sharr.

The criterion of quantity, which was used by al-Asma'ī, who only allowed those who had produced a large amount of poetry into his class of fuhūl, was also used by Ibn Sallām in speaking about his fourth and seventh tabaḡas. While it was essential for a poet to have many excellent poems in order to be a fahl, according to al-Asma'ī, Ibn Sallām differed from him in that he regarded those who had written a small number of excellent poems as fuhūl, but of an inferior standard of fuhūla. With regard to the fourth tabaḡa, he described its four poets as fuhūl who deserved to be mentioned together with the earlier tabaḡas but, because they had few poems known to the transmitters, were mentioned later. The same applied

to the poets of the seventh Jāhili tabaqa, who were described as muhkimūn.⁴²

Another difference between Ibn Sallām and al-Asma'ī is that, while the latter rejected the poet 'Adī b. Zayd and described him as "neither a fahl nor a female" as we have seen, Ibn Sallām mentioned him among the fourth class, although he described his language as "softened" and delicate, for which reason the grammarians did not quote his poetry, as we are told by Ibn Qutayba⁴³; this seems to indicate that Ibn Sallām did not link fasāḥa and fuhūla, as may also be inferred from the case of Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī. It also provides evidence that Ibn Sallām did not collect his Tabaqāt for philological and grammatical purposes. The most important fact concerning 'Adī b. Zayd is that he was described by earlier critics, like Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', as a poet who followed a different path from that of other poets. This was mentioned when we discussed the views of Abū 'Amr. Now, Ibn Sallām classified him with the other poets in this tabaqa, on the basis of "similarity" between them; what the other critics had said makes it difficult to see what the nature of the "similarity" was.

The tribal criterion is employed again in the fourth tabaqa, as well as in others to come; 'Alqama and 'Adī b. Zayd belonged to Tamīm.⁴⁴ It was also employed in the fifth tabaqa, where we find Khidāsh b. Zuhayr and Tamīm b. Ubayy b. Muqbil belonging to 'Amr b. Sa'sa'a.⁴⁵ Al-Aswad b. Ya'fur from that tabaqa was not regarded as a fahl by al-Asma'ī because he had only one excellent poem; if he had written more similar poems he would have been a fahl. Ibn Sallām, however, regarded him as a fahl merely for that one excellent poem, adding that if he had written another similar poem, he would have been graded in one of the earlier tabaqas of fuhūl.⁴⁶

In the fifth tabaga a comparison was also made between Khidāsh and Labīd b. Rabi'ā; according to Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' Khidāsh was a better poet. The comparison was made because the two poets again belonged to the same clan, 'Amir b. Sa'sa'a.⁴⁷

In the sixth tabaga, three poets belonged to Rabi'ā, namely, 'Amr b. Kulthūm, al-Hārith b. Hilliza of Bakr b. Wā'il and Suwayd b. Abī Kāhil of the same clan. With 'Antara, they were graded in one class as "poets of one poem (ashāb al-wāhida)".⁴⁸ With the exception of Suwayd, each of them had his mu'allaga singled out as the best poem of his poetry.⁴⁹ Ibn Sallām also described Tarafa, from the fourth tabaga, in the same terms.⁵⁰ What is interesting here is that Ibn Sallām did not call them "the poets of the mu'allagāt" but "poets of one poem", a fact which may indicate that the term mu'allagāt was not in general use at that time, at any rate by him; he did state that Hammād al-Rāwiya was the first to collect "the poems of the Arabs" (ash'ār al-'Arab)⁵¹, and it was, of course, Hammād to whom the collection of the mu'allagāt was attributed.

Two of the poems of the seventh class, which we mentioned with the fourth, as containing those who had written rather few poems, were also classified together on tribal grounds, al-Mutalammis and al-Musayyab, both of whom belonged to Rabi'ā.⁵² The first is mentioned as being the maternal uncle of Tarafa, while the second is said to be the maternal uncle of al-A'shā.⁵³ The tribal criterion is also used in the eighth class, where we find al-Namr b. Tawlab and 'Awf b. 'Atiyya belonging to 'Abd Manāt b. Udd. Although Ibn Sallām allotted 'Awf the fourth place in this tabaga he discussed his poetry immediately after that of al-Namr, a fact that indicates his awareness of the relationship between the two poets.⁵⁴ The poems selected from the poetry of 'Awf, and from that of Aws b. Ghalfā' in the same class, are poems of tribal mufākharā and hijā'.⁵⁵

One of the four poets in this class, al-Namr b. Tawlab, was praised for his fasāḥa, his generosity, and he was described as:

56 وكان شاعراً فصيلاً جريئاً على المنطق.

Ibn Sallām sometimes spoke with enthusiasm about the nobility (sharaf) of a poet, his reputation, and his antiquity, as we have seen in the case of ʿAbīd and shall see in the case of others; he also often enthused about the generosity of a poet (e.g. Labīd). These good qualities in a poet seem to have played some role in his ranking, and this is reflected in the lines quoted from the poetry of al-Namr in which he expressed his opinions about generosity. This will be discussed when we come to the quotations in the Tabaqāt. The immediate point concerning al-Namr is that it is not clear what Ibn Sallām meant by jariʿan ʿalā al-mantiq and whether it had something to do with the poet's poetry or not. He used the word mantiq when speaking about Labīd and when quoting ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb on Zuhayr. Mantiq there meant "words in poetry". As used here, in the case of al-Namr, it seems to be part of, and related to, his fasāḥa. He was jariʿan ʿalā al-mantiq because he was a fasīḥ. Later, we shall see Ibn al-Muʿtazz using the word mantiq with reference to eloquence and rhetoric.

In the ninth tabaqa, the criterion of nobility (sharaf) is applied in the case of Suwayd Ibn Kurāʿ, who was related to al-Namr. Both of them belonged to ʿUkl.⁵⁷ Suwayd, who was described as a skilled poet (muhkim), was also said to be "the man of the Banū ʿUkl", and he was one of their leading wise men.⁵⁸

The term muhkim by which Suwayd was described, as were also the poets of the seventh class, indicates a particular degree of rank in poetry. The common term used by Ibn Sallām was fahl, which is applied to all of his

poets, who differed in their degree of fuhūla. A poet who is a fahl may also be described as mufliq (al-Mukhabbal, and al-Ja'āfi), mujīd or jayyid al-shi'r (Tamīm b. Muḡbil, and 'Awf b. al-Khir⁵⁹), or he may be described just as shā'ir (al-Huwaydira and Khidāsh b. Zuhayr). The last term, shā'ir, indicates an inferior rank of poetry to mujīd and mufliq, which is the highest of all, according to the information given by Ibn Rashīq.⁵⁹ Inferior to shā'ir are two other types of poets, the mugham and the thunyan (two further terms used for camels, to which should be added bāzil, mustahkim and 'awd, which are also used for poets).⁶⁰ Al-Asma'ī borrowed the term fahl from the camel and Ibn Sallām did the same, as well as adopting a number of different terms from the same source. It appears that even the term muhkim may have something to do with mustahkim, a strong and mature male-camel.

The fourth poet of this ninth tabaqa, Suhaym 'Abd Banī al-Hashās, who is described as: hulw al-shi'r raqīq hawāshī al-kalām⁶¹, terms similar to those in which Labīd was described earlier.⁶²

In the last tabaqa, the tenth, the criteria both of nobility (sharaf) and of tribal adherence were applied. Talking about Umayya b. Hurthān, Ibn Sallām described him as a poet who was a sayyid. Also, when he talked about 'Amr b. Sha's, he said that he had high status and nobility among his people:

63 وكان ذا قدرٍ وشرفٍ ومَنْزِلَةٍ في قومِهِ

Both of them were mukhadramūn and had written poetry in both the Jāhiliyya and Islam. 'Amr b. Sha's was said to have produced much poetry and to have excelled the rest of his tabaqa in this respect.⁶⁴ Al-Kumayt b. Ma'rūf, who was an Islamic poet, was placed in this Jāhilī tabaqa, and this may be due to his relationship with 'Amr b. Sha's, both of them belonging to the Banū Asad.⁶⁵ The other two Kumayts, al-Kumayt b.

Tha'labā and al-Kumayt b. Zayd, were compared with al-Kumayt b. Tha'rūf (the middle Kumayt). He was said to be the best of them in the quality of his poetry, but al-Kumayt b. Zayd had produced more.⁶⁶ The inclusion of the two other Kumayts was due to their tribal or family relationship: al-Kumayt b. Tha'labā was the grandfather of the middle Kumayt.⁶⁷

In his quotations from Jāhili poetry, Ibn Sallām was guided by his views on the connection between its authenticity and the length of the poems, as he mentioned in his introduction. This is reflected in his citation of short poems from the most authentic and ancient poetry by Duwayd b. Zayd, A'sur b. Sa'd, al-Mustawqir b. Rabī'a, Zuhayr b. Janāb and Jadhīma al-Abrash.⁶⁸ These short poems were cited as evidence that the very early Arabs of the Jāhiliyya did not compose long poems, and that these were, in fact, first composed by Muhalhil, at the time of Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf. This helped Ibn Sallām to reject the long poems transmitted by Ibn Ishāq and attributed to poets who lived at the time of 'Ad and Thamūd.

The citation of lines that contain ta'ahhur and fawāhish by Imru' al-Qays and al-A'shā⁶⁹, and by al-Farazdaq, implies that Ibn Sallām was a continuation of the earlier group of critics who separated poetry and morality, in that they saw no objection to citing such poetry from a religious or moral point of view.

In the first Jāhili tabaqa, Ibn Sallām seems to have been interested principally in tashbīh, and for that reason he favoured Imru' al-Qays, declaring him the best poet of his tabaqa in this field, and comparing him with Dhū al-Rumma, as the best corresponding poet of the Islamic classes.⁷⁰ From the poem of Imru' al-Qays starting:

أَرَاكُمْ صَبَاحاً أَيُّهَا الطَّلُّ الْبَالِي وَهَلْ يَبْمَنُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْعُصْرِ الْخَالِي

he selected only lines of tashbīh. Some of these lines contain more than one simile, such as a line that we have encountered before:

لَأَنَّ قُلُوبَ الْغَيْرِ رُحْبًا وَيَا بَسًا لَدَى وَكْرِهَا الْعَنَابُ وَالْحَشَفُ الْبَالِي

From his mu'allaga, the lines quoted are also of tashbīh, and most of them are of horse description.⁷¹

In accordance with what we have taken to be Ibn Sallām's concept of poetry, his quotations, although in some cases introduced by nasīb, are concerned with fighting, hiajā' (tribal hiajā' and exchanges), mufākkhara, and the mention of ayyām and akhbār.

In the second Jāhili tabaqa, some lines of the casīda Bānāt Su'ād are quoted, such as:

لَإِنَّ الرَّسُولَ لَسَيِّفٌ يُسْتَفَاءُ بِهِ : مَهْدٌ مِنْ سَيْفِ اللَّهِ مَسْلُوكٌ
فِي خَيْفٍ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ قَالَ قَاتِلُهُمْ يَبْطُنُ مَكَّةَ لَهَا شَلَمُوا زُولُوا
زَالُوا فَمَا زَالَ أَنْكَاسٌ وَلَا كُشْفٌ يَوْمَ الْإِقَاءِ وَلَا سُودٌ مَقَارِيلُ
لَا يَبْقَى الْهَقَّةُ إِلَّا فِي نُحُورِهِمْ وَمَا بِهِمْ مِنْ حِيَابِ الْمَوْتِ تَهْلِيلُ

These lines are in praise of the Prophet's companions from Quraysh for their fighting and courage. A line in which the poet praises the muhājirūn and satirises the Ansār (because they were not friendly to him) is quoted:

يَمْشُونَ مَشَى الْجَمَالِ الزُّهْرِيَّعِيهِمْ ضَرْبٌ إِذَا عَرَدَ السُّودُ التَّنَائِيلُ

When the muhājirūn became angry at his satirising the Ansār, he composed some lines in praise of the latter, describing them as good fighters who fought bravely on the day of Badr. These lines, which are also quoted, start:

مَنْ سَرَّهُ كَرَمُ الْحَيَاةِ ، فَلَا يَزَلْ فِي مُقْتَبٍ مِنْ صَالِحِ الْأَنْصَارِ 72

Personal and tribal hiajā' and mufākkhara are to be found in the poems of

exchanged hiġā' between Musarriḡ b. Dirār and Ka'b b. Luḡayr. The lines also contain genealogical data on tribal origins.⁷³ These poems lead the author to quote a poem by al-Nābigha, also of hiġā', with references to genealogy and tribal origins:

جَمَعَ مِشَاكُ، يَا بَزِيدُ فِإِنِّي أَعَدَدْتُ بَرْبُوعاً لَكُمْ وَلِئِيهَا
وَلَقِيتُ بِالسَّيْبِ الَّذِي غَيَّرَنِي وَوَجَدْتُ نَهْرَكَ، يَا بَزِيدُ ذَمِيهَا

A similar subject is found in the lines of al-Zibriqān b. Paḡr.⁷⁴

Poems of munāfara, which is associated with tribal mufākharā and contains maḡīh and hiġā', are quoted from the poetry of al-Ḥuṭay'a, such as his poem on the munāfara that took place between 'Alqama b. 'Ulātha and 'Āmir b. al-Tufayl:

يَا عَامٍ، قَدْ كُنْتَ ذَا بَايِعٍ وَمَكْرَمَةٍ لَوْ أَنَّ مَسْعَاةَ مَنْ جَارِيَتُهُ أَمَّهُمْ

Another poem of his, on the munāfara between 'Uyayna b. Ḥiṣn and Zabbān b. Sayyār (both of whom belonged to Fazāra) is also quoted. He favoured 'Uyayna and satirised Zabbān, addressing him in the first lines:

أَبَى لَكَ آبَاءٌ، أَبَى لَكَ مَجْدُهُمْ سِوَى الْمَجْدِ فَانْظُرْ صَاغِراً مَنْ تَفَاخَرَهُ
قُبُورُ أَصَابَتِهَا السَّيُوفُ ثَلَاثَةٌ تُجْعَلُ هَوَاتُ فِي كَلِّ نَحْمٍ مَرَارِيرُهُ
فَقُبِّرَ بِأَجْبَالٍ، وَقُبِّرَ بِحَاجِرٍ وَقُبِّرَ الْقَلِيبُ أَشَقَرُ الْحَرْبِ سَاعِرُهُ

The mention of war in these three lines, in which the poet referred to three men killed by different tribes in battle, is one of the reasons for quoting them.

As we mentioned in connection with the second Jāhilī tabaqa, Ibn Sallām was interested in hiġā' poetry, especially hiġā' bi-'l-tafdīl, as cited from the poem of al-Ḥuṭay'a in which he praised the Banū Quray' and satirised al-Zibriqān, and also from the poem of al-Mukhabbal to which we have referred before.⁷⁶

When Ibn Sallām spoke about the third Jāhilī class, he referred to the exchanges of hijā' between Aws b. Maghrā' and al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, citing the poem of the former which contains hijā' on the tribe of the latter. In this poem one particular line gave the poet superiority over al-Ja'dī in hijā':

77 لَقَمْرَكَ مَا تَبَلَى سَرَائِلُ عَامِرٍ مِنْ اللُّؤْمِ ، مَا دَامَتْ عَلَيْهَا جُلُودُهَا

Poetry of akhbār was quoted from this tabaqa, such as the lines of al-Ja'dī quoted to support the claim of Ibn Sallām that he was earlier than al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, who was contemporary with the king of Hira, al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir, while al-Ja'dī lived at the time of al-Mundhir himself. In one of his poems he wrote:

فَمَنْ يَكُ سَائِلًا عَنْ فِائِي مِنْ الْفِيَّانِ أَيَّامَ الْحَنَانِ
أَتَتْ مِئَةَ لِقَامٍ وَلِدَتْ فِيهِ وَعَشْرٌ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ وَجِئَانِ
وَقَدْ أَبَقَتْ خُطُوبُ الدَّقْرِ مِثِّي لَمَا تَبَقِيَ مِنَ السَّيْفِ الْيَمَانِ

In another of his lines he is more specific in establishing his date:

78 تَدَامَى عِنْدَ الْمُنْذِرِ بْنِ مُحَرَّرٍ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنْهُمْ لَهَايَرُ الْأَرْضِ مُفِيرًا

In dealing with the poetry of the fourth Jāhilī tabaqa, Ibn Sallām takes a more integral approach, in that he gives his judgements on whole poems rather than on qit'as or individual lines. Two poems of Tarafa are praised, among them his mu'allaga, which is said to be the best of the mu'allagāt. Ibn Sallām again did not use the term mu'allaga, but instead said:

فَأَمَّا طَرْفَةٌ فَأَشْرُ النَّاسِ وَاحِدَةً .

In his judgement on 'Alqama's three poems he may have been influenced by the judgements of Quraysh on the same poems. He described them as excellent, wonderful poems which could be excelled by no other poetry.⁷⁹

A third poet from that tabaqa to receive an integral judgement on his poetry was 'Adī b. Zayd whom Ibn Sallām praised greatly for several poems.⁸⁰ Since he mentioned that little of the poetry in this tabaqa

was known to the transmitters, he may have intended to make a sort of diwān of it; this would explain his integral approach to its poetry, which he adopted with no other tabaqa.

His interest in tribal hijā', and poetry associated with war, appears again in the fifth tabaqa, where we find Khidāsh b. Zuhayr quoted as a poet who satirised Quraysh, who had killed his father on the day of al-Fujjār. His poem:

أَبِي خَارِسُ الصَّخْيَاءِ تَمْرُ بْنُ عَامِرٍ أَبَى الذَّمِّ وَاخْتَارَ الْوَفَاءَ عَلَى الْفَرْ

his hijā' on Quraysh:

يَا شَرَّةً مَا شَدَدْنَا غَيْرَ لَذِيقٍ عَلَى سَخِينَةٍ لَوْلَا الْبَيْلُ وَالْحَرَمُ

and the poem called al-munsifa (a poem in which a poet praises his enemies and their bravery in battle against his own people):

فَالْبَغُ إِنَّ عَرَضْتَ بِنَا هِشَامًا وَعَبْدَ اللَّهِ أَبْلَغُ وَالْوَلِيدَا

are quoted.⁸¹

His judgement on al-Aswad b. Ya'fur was similar to that of al-Asma'ī but he differed from him in conferring the title fahl to al-Aswad for only one poem, wishing that he had composed another similar to it so that he could have been placed in a higher class.⁸²

Poems of tribal and exchanged hijā' dominate in the eighth tabaqa. The poems of 'Awf b. al-Kharī' in which he replied to Laqīt b. Zurāra in a sort of exchange of tribal hijā', and the poem of Aws b. Ghalfā', in which he exchanged tribal hijā' with Yazīd b. al-Sā'iq, are quoted.⁸³

A poem full of obscenity is quoted from the hijā' poetry of Dābī' b. al-Hārith of the ninth tabaqa, whom Ibn Sallām described as an obscene and very evil man. His poem is hijā' on the people of Qurhān of the Banū Nahshal, and in it he accuses their mother of making love with a

In the akhbār of the poet Suwayd b. Kurā' of this tabaqa, two poems about tribal conflict, containing tribal hiǰā', are quoted. One is by Khālīd b. 'Alqama and the other is a reply to it by Suwayd.⁸⁵ A third poem, of tribal mufākhara, on the subject of tribal conflict, is quoted from the poetry of al-Farazdaq, even though he is not in this tabaqa. His poem is quoted because its subject is relevant to the subject of the other two poems. Moreover, the tribes involved in the conflict are all related to one another. One is Banū al-Sīd of Dabba, to which al-Farazdaq's mother belonged. His poem starts:

86 أَلَمْ تَرْنِي أَرْمَعْتُ وَثْبَةً حَزِيمٍ لِأَقْرَى بَأْنِي مِنَ الْمَوْتِ خَالِبًا

A relevant poem of Jarīr is also quoted. The poet addresses the tribes of Tha'labā and Bakr b. Sa'd of Dabba, the maternal uncles of al-Farazdaq. The poem contains tribal mufākhara and mention of ayyam such as Yawm al-Nagā' and Yawm al-Ghabī'.⁸⁷ In the tenth tabaqa, lines from a poem of Hurayth b. Muhaffiz are quoted, starting:

وَأَخْنُ طَرْدُنَا الْحَرَّ بَكَرَ بَنَ وَائِلٍ إِلَى سُسَّةٍ مِثْلِ السَّانِ وَنَارِ

Another poem of mufākhara by the same poet is quoted, starting:

تَقُولُ ابْنَةُ الْفَبِيِّ يَوْمَ لَقَيْتُهَا : تَغَيَّرْتَ ، حَتَّى كِدْتُ مِنْكَ أَهَالُ

and a further poem, in which he says:

88 أَلَمْ تَرَ قَوْمِي إِنْ دَعَاهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ أَجَابُوا ، وَإِنْ يَغْضَبُ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ يَغْضَبُوا

Some lines from a poem of tribal mufākhara are quoted from the poetry of 'Amr b. Sha's, starting with nasīb:

لَمَّا خَنُ أَدْرَجْنَا وَأَنْتِ أَمَامَنَا كَفَى لِمَطَايَانَا بَرِّيَاكِ هَادِيَا

Another two lines, which are associated with akhbār and tribal conflict, are also quoted from his poetry:

89 أَبَانَا لِقَاحَ الْحَنْظَلِيِّ بِمِثْلِهَا لِقَاحًا وَقُلْنَا : دُونَكَ ابْنُ مُكْدَمٍ
وَفَاءٌ ، لَمْ تُشْرِفْ عَلَيْهِ تَقْوُسُنَا حَاجِرُهَا لِأَنَّهَا صَوْعٌ حَنْتَمُ

Although Ibn Sallām classified the poets of marāthī in a separate tabaqa from the ten Jāhilī ones, one may feel that he still regarded them as belonging to these. It is true that he classified the marāthī poets in one tabaqa on the strength of their similarity in subject matter, but the fact that the poems that he quoted from them have the same characteristics as the Jāhilī marāthī⁹⁰, and that they do not seem to be influenced by Islam even though their poets were mukhadramūn, may explain why he placed this tabaqa immediately after the Jāhilī ones. The marthiya by Ka‘b b. Sa‘d is on his brother who had died, and not been killed, but the other three poems of rithā’, by Mutammim b. Nuwayra, al-Khansā’ and A‘shā Bāhila are all about brothers who had been killed. The two brothers of al-Khansā’ were killed by the Banū Asad and Banū Murra b. Ghatafān; the half-brother of A‘shā Bāhila (al-Muntashir b. Wahb) was killed by the Banū al-Hārith b. Ka‘b; and the brother of Mutammim (Mālik) was killed by Khālīd b. al-Walīd.⁹¹ Such information is useful to us, since we have suggested that Ibn Sallām's concept of poetry is somehow related to war, and we have already quoted him as saying that Muhalhil was the first who wrote qasīd (qassada al-qasā'ida), when his brother Kulayb was killed by the Banū Shaybān. This connection between poetry and war is similar to al-Asma‘ī's connection between poetry and sharr, as we have mentioned before. Concerning rithā’ poetry, we have seen that al-Asma‘ī rejected the rithā’ poems written by Hassān on the Prophet and his companions, in accordance with his theory of khayr and sharr and their relation with poetry; however, when he considered the two rithā’ poems by A‘shā Bāhila and Ka‘b b. Sa‘d, he praised them as having no equal in the whole world.⁹² His admiration for those two poems and his rejection of the marāthī written by Hassān, were presumably due to the fact that while the marāthī of Hassān were connected with khayr (religious matters), the other two had Jāhilī characteristics and were connected with sharr (worldly affairs

not related to the hereafter). Ibn Sallām, however, differed from al-Asma'ī, in that, while the latter saw no equal to the two rithā' poems by A'shā Bāhila and Ka'b b. Sa'd, the former preferred Mutammim Ibn Nuwayra's poem:

لَعْمَرِي وَمَا دَهَرِي بِنَا بَيْنَ هَالِكٍ وَلَا جَنْعٍ مِمَّا أَصَابَ وَأَوْجَعَا 93

Ibn Sallām probably preferred Mutammim because his production was greater⁹⁴; the other two poets were famous only for one rithā' poem each.

Shu'arā' al-Qurā al-'Arabiyya, quantity of production, tribal adherence, and the concept of poetry in relation to war and the ayyām of the Arabs.

In his classification of the poets of the Arab towns, especially those of Medina and Mecca, and to some extent those of Taif and Bahrein, Ibn Sallām was guided by three factors, tribal origin, quantity of production, and his notion of the connection between poetry and war (which was related to the use of poetry as a source of information concerning the ayyām of the Arabs). He stated that Medina was the best town in poetry; this perhaps was due to the great quantity of poetry produced by its poets, as a result of the wars between its two main tribes, Aws and Khazraj. According to him, Mecca, Taif and Oman produced comparatively little poetry, because there were fewer civil wars in those places than in Medina.⁹⁵

He made his division of the poets of Medina according to tribal origin, selecting five fuhūl, three from Khazraj and two from Aws, and declared that Hassān was the best of them, despite the fact that some people preferred Qays b. al-Khatīm.⁹⁶ Quantity and general excellence were the criteria applied here in favour of Hassān, besides the fact that he excelled the other two poets of the Prophet in his hijā' against Quraysh.⁹⁷ Probably Ibn Sallām was influenced by the opinion of the Prophet concerning Hassān, as well as by that of Abū 'Ubayda, and indeed

by the generally accepted opinion that Ḥassān was the best poet of ahl al-madar. Although he employed the criteria of sharaf and siyāda when talking about ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥa, stating that he was the foremost sayyid in his tabaqa, the most respected among his people and by the Prophet, and lastly the one who had witnessed the battle of Badr⁹⁸, he still preferred Ḥassān to him in poetry. Kaʿb Ibn Mālik and Abū Qays b. al-Aṣlat were both described as mujīd, but Qays b. al-Khatīm was said only to be shāʿir.⁹⁹ When talking of Ḥassān, Ibn Sallām said a great deal about his hijāʾ poetry against Quraysh. This was Islamic poetry, in that it was written in Islam, but its characteristics were those of Jāhilī poetry. Although Ibn Sallām did not give examples, we may presume that it had Jāhilī characteristics from the fact that Ḥassān made considerable use of what Abū Bakr (who knew a great deal about the affairs of Quraysh in the Jāhiliyya) told him about their defects (maʿāʾib).¹⁰⁰ Al-Asmaʿī, as we have seen, regarded Ḥassān as a Jāhilī fahl only. Ibn Sallām also classified him as a Jāhilī fahl, but considered that his fuhūla extended into the Islamic period also. He selected two of his Jāhilī poems in praise of the family of Jafna, the Ghassanids of Syria, first the poem starting:

لَهُ دَرٌّ عَصَابَةٍ نَادَمْتُهُمْ يَوْمًا بَلَغَ فِي الزَّمَانِ الْأَوَّلِ

and secondly the fakhr poem:

لَنَا الْبَغَفَاتُ الْفَرَّيْلَمَنَ بِالضُّحَى وَأَسْيَافُنَا يَقْفُرْنَ مِنْ نَجْدَةٍ دَمَا¹⁰¹

He disregarded his Islamic marāthī, and concentrated on the hijāʾ that he wrote during this period, this being similar to Jāhilī hijāʾ, and also, of course, a genre that Ibn Sallām considered appropriate to poetry. The quality of līn in Ḥassān's poetry, the presence of which he acknowledged, he attributed to the fact that a great deal of spurious poetry had been ascribed to him.¹⁰²

Ibn Sallām's notion of the relationship between poetry and war (resulting in poems of tribal mufākharā, hijā' and akhbār) is to be found again in his remarks about the poets of this tabaqā (Medina) and their poems. He talked about the day of Sumayha, which took place between Aws and Khazraj, and he quoted the poem that Ḥassān wrote about it:

103 مَنَعَ النِّعَمَ بِالْعِشَاءِ الْهُمُومُ

He selected from the poetry of Ka'b b. Mālik his poems written on the days of Uhud and al-Khandaq.¹⁰⁴ He also selected two poems of Abū Qays b. al-Aslat, one composed on a war that took place between his people, Aws, and Khazraj, and the other consisting of tribal mufākharā.¹⁰⁵ From the poetry of Qays b. al-Khatīm, he selected a poem on the day of Bu'āth:

اتَّعَرَّفُ رَسْمًا كَالْطَّرَادِ الْمَذَاهِبِ لِقَمَرَةٍ ، قَفَرًا غَيْرَ مَوْقِفٍ رَاكِبِ

quoting from it the lines of nasīb and those in which Qays talked about war.¹⁰⁶

The criteria he used in classifying the poets of Mecca (the Qurashites) are similar to those he used in the case of the Medinan poets, in that tribal origin had its role to play and that his quotations were connected with ayyām, akhbār and wars in general, granted that Quraysh had not a great deal of poetry in any case, owing to a paucity of civil wars. The concept of poetry as a source of knowledge for tribal genealogies is also found. The tabaqā included nine poets, all of whom belonged to Quraysh.¹⁰⁷ Ibn Sallām gave first place to 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zibā'arā, although he said that Abū Tālib was a poet of excellent discourse.¹⁰⁸ Though Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith was a mukhadram poet, Ibn Sallām regarded him only as a fahl of Islam, since he rejected his Jāhili poetry.¹⁰⁹ His remark on Hubayra b. Abī Wahb, who was one of the leading men of Quraysh:

وَلَا كَانَ شَرِيْدَ الْعَدَاوَةِ لِلَّهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ ، فَأَخْلَعَهُ اللَّهُ وَدَقَّقَهُ .

suggests a religious tendency in his criticism, as does his comment on

the poem of Abū Tālib in praise of the Prophet:

وَأَبَيْتُ يُسْتَسْقَى الْغَمَامُ بِوَجْهِهِ ربيعُ اليتَامى عِصْمَةٌ لِلْأَرَامِلِ

that it was "the best poem ever written by Abū Tālib".¹¹⁰ He also quoted two poems of Ibn al-Zibā'ra composed after his accepting Islam, both of which are of madīh on the Prophet.¹¹¹

Concerning war and poetry, Ibn Sallām quoted the poem of Ibn al-Zibā'ra on the day of Uhud:

كَلَّ بُؤْسٌ وَنَعِيمٌ زَائِلٌ وَبَنَاتُ الدَّخْرِ يَلْعَبْنَ بِكُلٍّ

in which he talked about the defeat of the Muslims at that battle.¹¹² He also quoted the poem in which Ibn al-Zibā'ra praised the family of al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī for their good fighting on the day of al-Fujjār:

أَلَا لِلَّهِ قَوْمٌ وَلَدَتْهُ أُخْتُ بَنِي سَهْمٍ

The poem also contains useful genealogical information.¹¹³ From the poetry of Abū Sufyān b. al-Hārith, Ibn Sallām selected the poem written on the day of Uhud in reply to Ḥassān. The latter's poem was also quoted; its subject is the attack on the caravan of Quraysh after the battle of Badr.¹¹⁴ From the poetry of Hubayra, the author again selected the poem on the day of Uhud:

قَدْ نَا كِنَانَةٌ مِنْ أَلْنَفِي ذِي يَمَنِ عَرَفَ الْبِلَادِ عَلَى مَا لَانَ بُرْجِيهَا 115

The poets of Taif shared both a local and a tribal (Thaqīf) origin; the idea of the poetic family or house also appears, since Abu al-Salt and his son Umayya were mentioned among the first poets of the group. The idea of war's influence on poetry also appears here, in the remark of Ibn Sallām that not much poetry came from Taif because there were few wars or raids there.¹¹⁶ Even so, when it came to making a selection from their poetry, we notice that Ibn Sallām quoted the poem of Abū al-Salt b. Rabī'a "in which he praised the Persians when they killed the Abyssinians":

لِلَّهِ دَرَّهْمٌ مِنْ عُقْبَةٍ خَرَجُوا مَا لَانَ تَرَى لَهُمْ فِي النَّاسِ أَمْثَالَ 117

and also that by his son Umayya in "which he wept over the loss of those who were killed (from Quraysh) on the day of Badr".¹¹⁸ From the poetry of Abū Mihjan al-Thaqafī, he quoted a qit'a written on the day of al-Qādisiyya between the Muslims and the Persians:

كَلَمْ حَزَنَّا أَنْ تُطْرَدَ الْخَيْلُ بِالْقَنَا وَأُتْرِكَ كَشْرُوداً عَلَى وَثَاقِبَا 119

Both Abū Mihjan and Ghaylān b. Salama were described by Ibn Sallām as sharīf¹²⁰, and as we have mentioned, the nobility of the poet was among Ibn Sallām's criteria for grading his poets. More examples of this will be given from time to time in this chapter.

Like other groups of shu'arā' al-qurā, the poets of Bahrein belonged to one tribe (ʿAbd al-Qays). The criteria of quantity and fasāha were again applied to this group.¹²¹ The use of poetry as a source of information appears here, since we find Ibn Sallām quoting lines which give an explanation of a poet's name, in this case al-Muthaqqib, who is so called because of his line:

رَدَدَن تَحِيَّةً وَكُنْتُ أُخَرَى وَتَقَبَّنَ التَّوَصَّاءُ مِنَ اللَّبُونِ 122

The last group of shu'arā' al-qurā are the Jewish poets of Medina and places nearby, whose poetry was praised for its excellence.¹²³ The obvious similarity between these poets is their religion, although they were of different tribes, for instance, al-Samaw'al belonged to Ghassān, al-Rabī' b. al-Huḡayq to the Banū al-Nadīr and Ka'b b. al-Ashraf to Tay'.¹²⁴ The tone of Ibn Sallām's quotations changes with shu'arā' al-Bahrayn and the Jewish poets. In the quotation from the first group, tribal mufākhara and the poetry of war and ayyām completely disappear, and instead we find four lines of nasīb by al-Muthaqqib al-ʿAbdī from his qasīda, quoted also in the Mufaddaliyyāt. The poem opens:

أَفَا لَمْ قَبْلَ بَيْنِكَ مَتَّعِينِي وَمَنْعَكَ مَا سَأَلْتُكَ أَنْ تَبِينِي

What should be noticed here is that Ibn Sallām seems to differ from perhaps all other critics concerning the rigga in nasīb, about which we have often spoken before. The poet here (al-Muthaqqib) makes himself equal to his beloved and demands that she should treat him on equal terms and should fulfil her promises; otherwise he will break off relations with her. He says:

ولا تَعِدِي مَوَاعِدَ كاذِبَاتٍ تَهْمُرُ بِهَا رِيَّاحُ السَّيْفِ دُونِي
خَانِي لَوْ تَخَالَفَنِي شِمْهَالِي عِنَادَكَ مَا وَصَلْتُ بِهَا يَمِينِي
إِذَا تَقَطَّعْتُهَا وَتَقَلَّتْ بَيْنِي ! كَذَلِكَ أَجْتَوِي مَنْ يَجْتَوِينِي 125

The other lines quoted from the same poem are four in which the poet makes his she-camel talk and complain of continuous travelling. Ibn Sallām did not quote the full description of the she-camel but started from the line:

إِذَا مَا قُمْتُ أَرْحَلُهَا بِلَيْلٍ تَأْوَهُ آهَةٌ الرَّجُلِ الْحَزِينِ

These eight lines he said were the best lines of the whole poem.¹²⁶ Both qit'as are subjective poetry, since in the first the poet talks of himself directly, and in the second indirectly, through his she-camel:

تَقُولُ إِذَا دَرَأْتُ لَهَا وَضِئِي أَهَذَا دِينُهُ أَبَدًا وَدِينِي ؟
أَلَلَّ الدَّقْرَ كَلًّا وَارْتَحَالَ ؟ أَمَا يُبْقِي كَلِّيَّ وَلَا يَقِينِي
فَأُبْقِ بِالْجُلَى وَالْجِدِّ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ الدَّرَابِنَةُ الْمَطِينِ 127

The second poem, quoted from the poetry of Yazīd b. Khadhḥāq (attributed also to al-Mumazzaḥ al-ʿAbdī), also has a subjective theme:

مَلِّ لِفَتْنٍ مِنْ بَنَاتِ الدَّهْرِ مِنْ وَاقِي ؟ أَمْ هَلْ لَهُ مِنْ حِمَامِ الْمَوْنِ مِنْ رَاقِي

The poet is writing a marthiya on himself.¹²⁸ The same theme is to be found in a poem by the Jewish poet Saʿya b. al-ʿArīḍ:

بَلْ كَيْتَ شَعْرِي حِينَ أَنْدَبْتُ هَاكِنًا مَاذَا يُؤْنَبُنِي بِهِ أَنْوَاصِي ؟

Ibn Sallām's contention, that a large poetic output is connected with wars, is not borne out by the poetry of Bahrein, of which, he said, there was a great deal.

As for the second group, the Jewish poets, it is not absolutely clear from Ibn Sallām's quotations what criteria he applied that enabled him to separate them from the other Medinan poets. Obviously, the difference in religion is one possibility, but this is hardly reflected in the quotations that he presented from their poetry. The very fact that he labeled them as Jewish indicates that their religion played some part in his classification, but differences of theme from the non-Jews, some of whom even belonged to the same tribe (Aws) are also apparent, and it is likely that these were also taken into consideration. In general, the themes of the Jewish poets are Jahilī ones. No religious influence appears, and with the exception of the poems by al-Shamaw'al, al-Rabī' b. al-Huṣayq and Shurayh b. 'Imrān, which display a moral tendency¹³⁰, all consist of mufākhara, with some nasīb.¹³¹ The mufākhara is both personal and tribal. What we do not find in these poems, however, is any mention of ayyām, or any exchanges of hiǰā', in stark contrast to the other Medinan poems, which were concerned with the conflicts between Aws and Khazraj, and between the Ansār and Quraysh in Islam. It is possible that Ibn Sallām was led to create his separate category by this correspondence of non-warlike themes with religious difference.

The Islamic tabaḡas

This title is somewhat misleading, since although the majority of poets listed under it are Islamic, some of them are mukhadramūn and some belonged to the Jāhiliyya. This may indicate, as we have suggested before, that Ibn Sallām made his classification according to the similarity between the poets of each tabaḡa, as he understood it, and not according to any chronological criterion. It seems possible, in view of this, that he regarded the whole of poetry, Jāhili, mukhadram and Islamic, as one unity. Earlier critics (men like Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' and al-Asma'ī), did

not give their opinions about the Islamic poets in the same way as they did about the Jāhiliī ones. Ibn Sallām differed from them in producing a classification of Islamic poets and mixing with them Jāhiliī and mukhadram poets, as though he regarded Islamic poetry as a continuation of Jāhiliī. This should be seen in the context of his concept of poetry as the dīwān of the Arabs, recording their akhbār and ayyām, that is to say poetry of mufākhara (tribal or personal), exchanged hijā', and informative poetry (for genealogical facts, historical events, explanations of names or nicknames and linguistic usage), and perhaps also of his idea of the relationship of war with increased production of poetry. His quotations, with few exceptions, are to do with these topics, and their similarity, whether they come from Jāhiliī, mukhadram or Islamic poetry, may support the view that he looked on Jāhiliī and Islamic poetry as one whole. An important additional point in this regard is that Labīd b. Abī Rabi'a, who was a mukhadram poet classified in the Jāhiliī tabaqas, was judged by Ibn Sallām according to his Jāhiliī poetry only, since he is said to have stopped writing poetry in Islam.¹³² We have also seen that Hassān b. Thābit was judged according to his Jāhiliī poetry or semi-Jāhiliī poetry written in Islam (exchanges of hijā' with Qurashite poets and mention of ayyām). In addition, Ibn Sallām quoted marāthī (with their Jāhiliī concepts) in conjunction with the Jāhiliī tabaqa, even though their poets were mukhadramūn and Muslims. If this point is viewed together with the others, that he did not quote the marāthī of Hassān (written in Islam) and that most of his quotations are of Jāhiliī concepts and do not show an Islamic influence, one may perhaps suggest that, although different from earlier critics in considering Islamic poetry, in the depths of his soul, he was principally an admirer of Jāhiliī poetry and used it as a criterion by which to judge Islamic poets. Through his concept of poetry and its relation to war, his idea of the transfer of

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poetry between tribes, his criterion of tribal adherence and, lastly, his concept of poetry as the ḍiḥān of the Arabs, he was able to establish a similarity between his three groups and to regard them as one unity. This similarity and unity expressed themselves in the sameness of his quotations and in his mixing the three groups in the different tabaqas, especially the Islamic ones.

In his first Islamic tabaqa, Ibn Sallām is much concerned with the exchanges of hijā' (with mufākhara) between its members and with their akhbār. The criterion of tribal adherence is applied here as well as in many other Islamic tabaqas. The key-word for this first Islamic tabaqa is the subject of hijā' and its poets are Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, al-Akhtal and al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī. The first two poets belonged to the tribe of Tamīm and it seems that Ibn Sallām's recognition of them is at least partly connected with his notion of the transfer of poetry between tribes, for, as we have seen, according to him, poetry reached its final destination when it arrived at Tamīm, and it remained there with them. Jarīr and al-Farazdaq were the leading poets of Tamīm. Though al-Akhtal belonged to a different tribe, his inclusion in this tabaqa is due to the conflict between him, al-Farazdaq and Jarīr, of whom he backed the former against the latter. The inclusion of al-Rā'ī comes from a wider tribal point of view and also from the conflict between him and Jarīr. He is said to have been the fahl of Mudar, until he was vanquished by Jarīr. Ibn Sallām regarded him as the last of his tabaqa; ¹³³ however, he remarked on his originality and his difference from other poets, not imitating or following any of them:

لَا تَهْ يَفْتَسِفُ الْفَلَاةُ بِغَيْرِ دَلِيلٍ . 134.

As we have said, hijā' is the key-word, and Ibn Sallām, when speaking of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, mentioned that "the two poets continued to exchange

hiġā' for forty years, without either of them being vanquished by the other. No other two poets, of the Jāhiliyya or of Islam, ever exchanged hiġā' in such a way". He then stated that their poems on that subject were so numerous that it was impossible to quote all of them, and so he would only select the best of them.¹³⁵ He also mentioned that al-Rā'ī used to favour al-Farazdaq, which was the reason for Jarīr's satirising him.¹³⁶ Other poets were mentioned within this tabaqa, because they participated in the war of hiġā' between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq. Most of them backed the latter against the former. Such poets were al-Ba'ith, Jarīr b. Kharqā' (Abū al-ʿAttāf), ʿAdī b. al-Riqāʿ, al-Laʿīn al-Minqarī, and al-Sallātān al-ʿAbdī.

In his quotations from the poetry of this tabaqa, Ibn Sallām was concerned with informative poetry and lines of naġā'id of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal, together with semi-naġā'id poems of other poets mentioned with them. Mutual hiġā', together with tribal mufākhara, and occasional mention of avvām, are the general characteristics of the poetry that he quoted in this tabaqa. Concerning the three principal poets, he stated that no decisive answer could be given as to which was the best.¹³⁷ In spite of that, he appeared to favour al-Farazdaq indirectly, which may have been due to the influence of the grammarian Yūnus b. Ḥabīb.¹³⁸ Tribal considerations may have had some role to play in the attitude of Yūnus towards al-Farazdaq, because he belonged to the tribe of Dabba, to which the mother of al-Farazdaq also belonged. This may also have been the reason for al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī's favouring al-Farazdaq.¹³⁹ The other reason for Yūnus' admiration of al-Farazdaq is concerned with grammar. Ibn Sallām mentioned that the grammarians admired him because he used to complicate his discourse

١٤٠. وكان يداخِلُ السَّلامَ.

On the question of mugalladāt (memorable lines complete in themselves and quoted as proverbs), Ibn Sallām stated that al-Farazdaq had more of these than the others.¹⁴¹ The influence of Yūnus on the judgements of

Ibn Sallām concerning the three poets appears also in his quoting some lines of al-Akhtal as mucalladāt; in these the poet praised the family of al-Farazdaq and satirised Jarīr.¹⁴²

A sign of the importance of hijā' in this first Islamic tabaqa is the use of taghlīb and the titles mughallab and maghlūb, which are intimately associated with exchanges of hijā'. The one who is defeated is maghlūb, the victor is said to have ghulliba or to have been recognised as superior.¹⁴³ According to Hilary Kilpatrick, the meaning of mughallab seems to have been established by Ibn Sallām,¹⁴⁴ but since the term is used by the mukhadram poet al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī¹⁴⁵, what she suggests may not be the case. When speaking about the third Jāhili tabaqa, Ibn Sallām mentioned al-Ja'dī as a mughallab, who had been defeated in hijā' by Laylā al-Akhyaliyya, Aws b. Maghrā', 'Iqāl b. Khālīd and others.¹⁴⁶ In the fifth Jāhili tabaqa, Tamīm b. Muqbil was also regarded as a mughallab, who had been beaten in hijā' by al-Najāshī.¹⁴⁷ In this first Islamic tabaqa, al-Ba'ith was regarded as a maghlūb, who was defeated by Jarīr and sought the assistance of al-Farazdaq against him.¹⁴⁸ There were other poets beaten by Jarīr in hijā', such as 'Umar b. Laja', Surāqa al-Bāriqī, and al-'Abbās b. Yazīd al-Kindī (said to have died of sorrow after being beaten); the most important was al-Ra'ī al-Numayrī.¹⁴⁹

The akhbār of al-Farazdaq are filled with tribal mufākhara and exchanges of hijā' with other poets; for instance, his mufākhara with al-Ashhab b. Rumayla is prominent.¹⁵⁰ We also find contests of the same kind with poets such as al-Bakrī (Jarīr b. Kharqā' al-'Ijlī) and Miskīn al-Dāramī, as well as a good deal of madīh on both individuals and tribes.¹⁵¹

In the second Islamic tabaqa, two poets were related to one another, al-Ba'ith and Dhū al-Rumma, both of whom belonged to Udd b. Tābikha b. Ilyās b. Mudar.¹⁵² The other two poets in the tabaqa were al-Qutāmī and

Kuthayyir. The title mughallab is applied to al-Ba'ith and Dhū al-Rumma.¹⁵³ The criteria that Ibn Sallām used in grading this tabaqa were those of tribal adherence, poetic subject (hijā', tashbīb and tashbīh) and linguistic usage. Al-Qutāmī, who belonged to Taghlib, was compared with al-Akhtal of the first Islamic tabaqa. The reason for the comparison was that they belonged to the same tribe. Al-Qutāmī was described thus:

وكان القمامي شاعراً فحلاً ، رقيق الحواشي ، حلو الشفر .

while al-Akhtal was said to be:

154 أَبَدَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا وَأَمْتَنَ شِعْرًا .

The lines quoted from the poetry of al-Qutāmī are connected with the war that took place between his tribe and Qays, lead by Zufar b. al-Hārith, who captured al-Qutāmī but released him; he praised him for this and also spoke about the war itself.¹⁵⁵

Dhū al-Rumma was compared with Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, who were his cousins (all of them belonged to Udd of Mudar). He equalled them in some of his poetry but fell below them in the rest.¹⁵⁶ Owing to his close relationship with 'Umar b. Laja', he supported him against Jarīr in their war of hijā'; he also supported al-Farazdaq against Jarīr.¹⁵⁷ For this reason Jarīr supported Hishām al-Mara'ī, who was exchanging tribal hijā' with Dhū al-Rumma. Hishām was another cousin.¹⁵⁸ This war of hijā' was documented by Ibn Sallām, who quoted many of the poems with which they presented it.¹⁵⁹ Like al-Ba'ith, Dhū al-Rumma was described as mughallab, and was said not to be good in hijā'.¹⁶⁰ Once again, Ibn Sallām's concern with hijā', particularly tribal hijā', and mufākhara, is abundantly evident. The mention of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, 'Umar b. Laja' and Hishām al-Mara'ī in connection with al-Ba'ith and Dhū al-Rumma is due mainly to their tribal relationship.

Dhū al-Rumma was also compared with Imru' al-Qays in his tashbīb, in which both excelled the other poets of their respective times.¹⁶¹

In just the same way, Kuthayyir, also of this second tabaqa, was compared with Jamīl, of the sixth, in his tashbīḥ and nasīb. Although Jamīl excelled Kuthayyir and all other poets of nasīb, and although Kuthayyir was a rāwīya of Jamīl's, and was not sincere in his nasīb as his master was, he was still ranked before Jamīl. The reason for this was that Ibn Sallām applied the criterion of variety of poetic genres, a criterion which had already been used by earlier critics in judging Dhū al-Rumma, as we have seen; he said that Kuthayyir "has poetic arts not to be found in Jamīl".¹⁶² The most important of those poetic arts was that of madīḥ, for which he was praised by the poet Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, Ibn Sallām criticised Kuthayyir for some lines of madīḥ such as:

فَإِنَّ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ هُوَ الَّذِي نَغَزَا كَامِنَاتِ الصَّدْرِ مِنِّي فَنَالَهَا

and quoted lines of madīḥ and nasīb for which he had been criticised by others,¹⁶⁴ which does not suggest that he had a very high opinion of him. Somewhat unusually, Ibn Sallām quoted Dhū al-Rumma in this tabaqa on a point of linguistic usage. The line concerned is:

أَعَنَ تَرَسَّمَتَ مِنْ خَرَقَاءَ مَرَلَةً مَاءُ الصَّبَابَةِ مِنْ عَيْنِيكَ مَسْجُومٌ ؟

and the point is that he uses a-ʿan in place of a-an. The hanza is changed to ʿayn, and this is called ʿanʿanat Tamīm, since it was a peculiarity of this tribe; the Banū Asad used also to do the same. Dhū al-Rumma belonged to ʿAbd Manāt b. Udd, and Tamīm were also descended from Udd.¹⁶⁵ Ibn Sallām also quoted the dispute between Dhū al-Rumma and Bilāl b. Abī Burda over the reading of two lines by Ḥātim al-Taʿī. Bilāl read the lines as:

لَمَّا اللَّهُ صُلُوعًا ، مَنَاهُ وَهَمَّهُ مِنْ الْعَيْشِ أَنْ يَلْقَى لَبُوسًا وَمَلْعَمًا
بَرَى الْخَمْسَ تَقْذِيًّا ، وَإِنْ نَالَ شَبَعَةً بَيْتَ قَلْبِهِ مِنْ خِلَةِ الْهَمِّ مُبْهَمًا

Dhū al-Rumma considered that the reading of the second word in the first half of the second line should be al-khims and not al-khims. When they submitted the case to Abū ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAlā' he accepted both readings, and said that Dhū al-Rumma was a fasīḥ.¹⁶⁶ Ibn Sallām probably had in mind Abū ʿAmr's view that Dhū al-Rumma was the "seal" of the poets.

In the third Islamic tabaqa, the criterion of tribal adherence was applied when Ka'b b. Ju'ayl, who belonged to Taghlib, was compared with al-Akhtal and al-Qutāmī of the same tribe. Al-Akhtal was ranked in the first tabaqa of the Islāmiyyūn and al-Qutāmī in the second. Ka'b was said to have lived at the beginning of Islam, thus being earlier than the other two.¹⁶⁷ Two other poets of the third tabaqa, Suhaym b. Wathīl and Aws b. Maghrā' belonged to Zayd Manāt.¹⁶⁸ The criteria of sharaf and antiquity were applied in the case of Suhaym b. Wathīl; Ibn Sallām described him as a noble famous man in the Jāhiliyya and in Islam and respected among his people.¹⁶⁹ This tabaqa contains three mukhadram poets among whom is 'Amr b. Ahmar who was praised by Ibn Sallām for his correct language (kalām) and abundant gharīb.¹⁷⁰ Once again there is an indication that Ibn Sallām, in spite of his mixing the groups, was essentially a traditionalist; his emphasis on antiquity, fasāḥa and gharīb suggests both a predilection for Jāhili poetry and the influence of grammarians and philologists, such as Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' and Abū 'Ubayda. The influence of the last is clearly seen in Ibn Sallām's interest in the akhbār of poets. The lines quoted from the poetry of this tabaqa are of personal fakhr, sometimes mixed with nasīb, like those by Ka'b b. Ju'ayl:

171 وَأَبَيْتَ جَنِيَّ عَلَيْهِ سُمُورُهُ
مِنَ الْإِنْسِ فِي قَصْرِ مُنِيفٍ غَوَارِبُهُ

The other quotations from Ka'b's poetry are individual subjective lines, but one can sense some tribal fakhr, as in the line:

مَعَاوِيَ أَنْصِفْ تَغْلِبَ ابْنَةُ وَائِلٍ
مِنَ النَّاسِ، أَوْ دَعَا وَجِيًّا تَضَارِبُهُ

and:

172 وَلَمَّا نَدَارُوا فِي ثَرَاتِ مُحَمَّدٍ
سَمِعْنَا بِابْنِ هِنْدٍ فِي قَرِيضٍ مَضَارِبُهُ

The longest qit'a quoted from Ka'b's poetry is one in which he elegized 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Umar b. al-Khattāb "who was killed in the battle of Siffīn by the Banū Shaybān".¹⁷³ This again illustrates Ibn Sallām's interest in the poetry of war and records of ayyām and akhbār. The

influence of earlier critics on him may also be seen in his interest in hikma and moral poetry in general, like the poem of 'Amr b. Ahmar, starting:

وَإِنِّي لَأَفْتَرُ بَعْدَ الْغَنَى وَيَفْتَنِي مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا يَفْتَقِرُ
 وَالْحَيُّ لَمْ يَبْتِ وَيَبْقَى التَّقَى وَالْعَيْشُ فَنَانٍ: فُلُوءٌ وَمُرُ

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In the fourth Islamic tabaqa, the criteria of tribal adherence and sharaf, and the idea of poetic families, are widely used. Two poets from this tabaqa, Nahshal b. Harri and al-Ashhab b. Rumayla belonged to Dārim of Tamīm, and both of them were related to 'Umar b. Laja' of Taym al-Ribāb, who were cousins of Tamīm.¹⁷⁵ Nahshal b. Harri was spoken of as belonging to a poetic family. Ibn Sallām mentioned six members of this family, starting with Nahshal himself: his father, his grandfather, and so on back. All were said to be noble, of high status among their people, and very famous men. He spoke of them with enthusiasm and stated that no other family of the tribe of Tamīm had a comparable number of poets.¹⁷⁶ His quotations from the poetry of Nahshal reflect his opinion of his nobility. In one githa the poet offers moral precepts, while boasting of the power and greatness of his people:

إِذَا كُنْتُ جَارًا لِمَرِيٍّ فَأَقْبِرِ النَّا عَلَى عِرْفَانِهِ، إِنَّ النَّا طَرَفُ الْفَدْرِ
 وَدُدْ عَنْ حَرَاهُ، مَا تَحَقَّدَتْ جِبَالُهُ بِحَبْلِكَ، وَأُسْشِرُهُ بِمَالِكَ مِنْ يَسْتَرِ
 وَجَارٍ مَنَعْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّبِيحِ وَالْعِدَى وَجِيرَانُ أَقْوَامٍ بِمُدْرَجَةِ الدَّهْرِ

and:

وَيَوْمَ لَأَنَّ الْمُصْطَلِبِينَ بَحْرَهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ نَارًا، تَقْعُدُ عَلَى جَمْرِ
 صَبْرًا لَهُ حَتَّى يَبُوحَ، وَإِنَّمَا تَفَرَّجُ أَيَّامُ الْكُرْبَةِ بِالصَّبْرِ

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Ibn Sallām's interest in tribal hijā' and mufākharā, and exchanges of hijā', appears in what he said about al-Ashhab b. Rumayla, of this fourth tabaqa, who exchanged hijā' with al-Farazdaq. It appears also in his account of the exchange of hijā' between Jarir and 'Umar b. Laja'.¹⁷⁸

Even the long poem of ghazal quoted from the poetry of 'Umar b. al-Ja', starting:

أَجَدَّ الْقَلْبُ هَجْرًا وَاجْتِنَابًا - لَمَنْ أَمْسَى يُوَاصِلُنَا خِلَابًا

was most likely quoted because it was replied to by Jarīr in his poem:

179 أَصَاحَ الْبَرْقُ لَيْلَةً أَذْرِيَاتٍ هَوَى مَا تَسْتَطِيعُ لَهُ طِلَابًا

In the fifth Islamic tabaqā, we have the mukhadram Abū Zubayd al-Tā'ī, who is graded with three other poets, two of whom, al-'Ujayr and 'Abd Allāh b. Hammām, belonged to the tribe of Salūl.¹⁸⁰ 'Abd Allāh b. Hammām is described as a noble man, of high-aiming ambition, and respected by kings. Abū Zubayd al-Tā'ī is also described as a visitor of kings, especially the Persians, and as greatly respected by 'Uthmān b. 'Affān.¹⁸¹ The fourth poet, Nuwayfi' b. Laqīṭ, is also described as distinguished among the Arabs as a poet and a warrior.¹⁸² Such remarks indicate that Ibn Sallām gave consideration to the character and status of the poet, as we have seen in some cases before.

The quotations from those poets are related to their akhbār. When 'Uthmān asked Abū Zubayd to tell his story about a lion, Ibn Sallām, after relating the story, quoted a poem of lion description by Abū Zubayd. Also, when he spoke of him as a visitor of kings, he quoted the poem in which he expressed his sorrow for al-Walīd b. 'Uqba, the governor of al-Kūfa, on his being discharged by 'Uthmān, his half-brother.¹⁸³

Ibn Sallām displayed an interest in tracing tribal conflicts, citing the poems of mufākhara associated with them, such as the qit'a of Abū Zubayd concerning a conflict between his tribe Tay' and Shaybān. The lines start:

184 خَبَرْتَنَا الرِّبَابُ: أَنَّنَا قَدْ فَخَرْتُمْ وَفَرَحْتُمْ بِفَرَبَةِ الْمَلَاءِ

Another such event related by Ibn Sallām is a war between Taghlib, to whom the mother of Abū Zubayd belonged, and Bahra'. He quoted Abū Zubayd's poem on the subject.¹⁸⁵ Another poem by Abū Zubayd concerns a tribal conflict between Azd of 'Umān and Tay', occasioned by the killing of a man from the latter tribe. Abū Zubayd's poem on this begins:

186 بَلَّغْنَا لَيْثًا جَمِيًّا وَشَتَّى وَلَيْسَتِ مَا أَقُولُ نَصِيْبُ

The poetry quoted from al-'Ujayr is also connected with his akhbār, and tribal and personal mufākhara.¹⁸⁷

Ibn Sallām spoke about 'Abd Allāh b. Hammām al-Salūlī as an ambitious man and as one who was greatly respected by Mu'āwiya and his son Yazīd. This piece of akhbār is followed by two poems, in both of which the poet urged Yazīd to appoint his son, Mu'āwiya the second, his heir as caliph. Yazīd accepted this advice.¹⁸⁸ Ibn Sallām's point, in quoting these two poems, was to substantiate what the statement in the poet's akhbār suggested, that he was respected by the family of Mu'āwiya. The poem in which 'Abd Allāh mentioned the revolt of al-Mukhtār and the tribes which supported him in his wars, was quoted in full by Ibn Sallām, even though it was a long one.¹⁸⁹ This is another illustration of his interest in the poetry of war and ayyām.

Lastly the poetry quoted from Nuwayfi' b. Laqīt is also connected with his akhbār; Ibn Sallām described him as a fighting-man, who sometimes terrorized travellers. This was why he was wanted by al-Hajjāj, and this is reflected in the poems in which he requested al-Hajjāj to forgive him, such as:

190 لَوُكْتُ فِي الْعَقَاوِ، أَوْ فِي عَمَابَةٍ طَنْتُكَ، إِلَّا أَنْ تَصَدَّ، تَرَانِي

Other poems are also associated with this piece of akhbār. Poems of tribal mufākhara and tribal hijā' which are so common among Ibn Sallām's quotations, are also quoted here.¹⁹¹

The sixth Islamic tabaqa is called the Hijāzī tabaqa, and it contains 'Abd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt, al-Aḥwas, Jamāl b. Ma'mar, and Nuṣayb. Besides having a common local origin, these were all poets of ghazal, which may have been the reason for classifying them together. Al-Ruqayyāt was compared with 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zibā'ra, after whom he was said to be the second poet in Quraysh for firmness of poetic composition:

أَشَدَّ قُرَيْشِيٍّ أَشْرَ شِعْرِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ بَعْدَ ابْنِ الزَّبْعَرِيِّ

He was also compared with 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a in ghazal poetry:

وَكَانَ غَزَلًا وَأَغْزَلُ مِنْ شِعْرِ شُعْرُ عُمرَ بْنِ أَبِي رَبِيعَةَ .

The difference between them was that 'Umar wrote plain ghazal, and that he did not write hijā' or madīh.¹⁹² The reason that these three poets were compared was that all of them belonged to Quraysh. We have seen before that Ibn Sallām graded Kuthayyir in the second Islamic tabaqa and described him as the poet of the Hijāz.¹⁹³ Although he placed Jamāl above him in nasīb, he actually classified Jamāl here in the sixth tabaqa, applying the criterion of variety of genres. He seems to have applied this criterion here also with regard to 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a, whom he otherwise neglected, classifying him in any tabaqa, and, in fact, never mentioning him except in comparison with al-Ruqayyāt. The fact that he pointed out the difference between the two poets concerning madīh and hijā' may support this; 'Umar's absence from the Islamic classes is probably due to his having written poetry only in ghazal. Ibn Sallām, in accordance with his concept of poetry, required variety in poetic genres, and he was interested principally in hijā', mufākhara, madīh and poetry in which akḥbār and ayyām were mentioned. This may also explain his lack of enthusiasm for Jamāl and his limited selections from his lines of nasīb. His interest in tribal mufākhara appears in his quotation of such poetry by Jamāl as:

وَكُنَّا إِذَا مَا مَشَرَّ جَحْفًا بِنَا وَمَرَّتْ جَوَارِي طَبْرِهْمُ وَتَقَيَّفُوا

Moreover, this poem contains mention of ayyām, for instance:

وَتَحْنُ مَنَعْنَا يَوْمَ أَوْدَ ذِمَارَنَا وَيَوْمَ أَخِي وَالْأَسِنَّةُ تَرْغَفُ

وَنَحْنُ حَمِيْنَا بِعَمِّ مَلَكَةٍ بِالْقَنَا قَصِيًّا ، وَأَطْرَافُ الْقَنَا تَنْقَصُفُ

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Although Ibn Rashīq mentioned that Jamīl never wrote madīh except on his own relatives,¹⁹⁵ Ibn Sallām quoted a poem of his in praise of 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān, the governor of Egypt.¹⁹⁶

In his akhbār of al-Ruqayyāt Ibn Sallām said that he restricted himself in his madīh to the family of al-Zubayr; he used to praise 'Abd Allāh and his brother Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr and to satirise 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān.¹⁹⁷ Eventually, he also wrote madīh on the Umayyad caliphs.¹⁹⁸ Although he was described as a ghazal poet, no quotations were given from his poetry on that genre, except two lines of nasīb from his poem in praise of the Umayyads:

عَادَ لَهُ مِنْ كَثِيرَةِ الْكَرْبِ فَعَيْنُهُ بِالدَّمْعِ تَنْسَكِبُ
كُوفِيَّةٌ نَارِجٌ مَحَلَّتْهَا لَا أُمٌّ دَارُهَا وَلَا سَقَبُ 199

Even with the poetry of al-Ahwas, about whom Ibn Sallām quoted Hammād al-Rāwīya declaring him the best poet of nasīb²⁰⁰, the quotations in which nasīb occurs are taken from poems of madīh such as that on 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān:

أَقُولُ بِعَمَّانٍ ، وَهَلْ طَرَبِي بِهِ إِلَى أَهْلِ سَيْلَعٍ إِنْ تَشَوَّفْتُ نَافِعُ 201

A qit'a of personal fakhr is also quoted from al-Ahwas' poetry.²⁰² From the poetry of Nusayb two poems of nasīb are quoted, two concerning shayb, and one of madīh on al-Hakam, the grandson of 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān.²⁰³

In the seventh Islamic tabaqa Ibn Sallām's interest in subjective and moral poetry, and in hijā' poetry, appears clearly. Al-Mutawakkil al-Laythī has no similarity with the other poets of his tabaqa, and the quotations from his poetry may explain the reason for his inclusion there. In his poems

he talks about himself and offers moral precepts, as in his poem:

أَنْعَى الْأَمَانَةَ لِلْأَمِينِ بِحَقِّهَا فَيَبِينُ عَفَا سِرِّهِ مَكْتُومٌ 204

Such poetry is probably what Ibn Sallām meant by "useful poetry", when he criticised that narrated by Ibn Ishāq in the Sīra.

Two other poets of this tabaga are Yazīd b. Mufarriq al-Ḥimyarī, described as an evil man who wrote a great deal of hijā' against various people, and Ziyād al-ʿAjam, who was also said to have written a great deal of hijā'. He exchanged hijā' with Kaʿb al-Shaḡrī.²⁰⁵ Ibn Sallām, as was his custom with hijā' poets, quoted a lot from the works of these two poets. Moreover, the hijā' by Yazīd is connected with his akhbār, another subject of interest to Ibn Sallām. These akhbār are linked with ʿAbbād b. Ziyād b. Abīhi, the governor of Sijistān, and his brother ʿUbayd Allāh, the governor of al-Basra. Yazīd's poems of hijā' were mostly directed against the family of Ziyād b. Abīhi. Some of them contain hijā' mugdhi' or hijā' bi-'l-tafḍīl, such as the poem:

أَقْتَرَنْتَ مِنْ آلِ لَبَلَى الْهَضَابُ وَعَفَى بَعْدَ الْأُنَيْسِ الْجَنَابُ

in which he wrote (hijā' mugdhi'):

أَيُّهَا الشَّاتِمُ جَهْلًا سَعِيدًا وَسَعِيدٌ فِي الْحَوَادِثِ نَابُ
مَا أَبُوكُمْ مَشَبُهًا لِأَبِيهِ سَأَلُوا النَّاسَ بِذَلِكَ تُجَابُوا

In another poem he wrote:

أَصْرَمْتَ حَبْلَكَ مِنْ أَمَامَةٍ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَيَّامِ بَرَامَةٍ ؟
لَهْفِي عَلَى الرَّأْيِ الَّذِي لَأَنْتَ عَوَاقِبُهُ نَدَامَةٍ
تَرَكِي سَعِيدًا ذَا النَّدَى وَالْبَيْتُ تَرْفَعُهُ الدِّعَامَةُ
وَتَبِعْتُ عَبْدَ بَنِي عَلَا حَيْثُ تَلَا أَسْرَاطُ الْقِيَامَةِ 206

Tribal hijā' also was quoted from his poetry.²⁰⁷

The quotations from the hijā' poetry of Ziyād al-ʿAjam also contain tribal hijā' such as that against the Banū Yashkur:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّوْمَ حَلَّ عِمَادَةٍ عَلَى يَشْكُرَ الْحُمُرِ الْقِصَارِ السَّوَالِفِ

and that against Jarm:

تَكَلَّفَنِي سَوِيْقَ الْكُرْمِ جَرْمٌ وَمَا جَرْمٌ وَمَا ذَاكَ السَّوِيْقُ

The hijā' poems sometimes incorporate genealogical facts, in which Ibn Sallām was also interested. Another gīt'a of hijā' by Sīyād on the Banū Yashkur is an example of this:

لَوْ أَنَّ بَلْرًا بَرَاهُ اللَّهَ رَاحِلَةً كَانَ بِشَكْرٍ مِنْهَا مَوْفِعُ الذَّنْبِ 208

More genealogical facts are to be found in a poem quoted from the poetry of 'Adī b. al-Riqā' in which the poet stated his tribal origin.²⁰⁹ Lines of hikma and tashbīh were also quoted from his poetry.²¹⁰

In the eighth Islamic tabaqa, the criterion of tribal adherence was widely applied, since we find that all four poets of this tabaqa belonged to the Banū Murra. Two of them, Bashāma b. al-Ghadīr and Qurād b. Hanash, were Jāhilī poets.²¹¹ The akhbār of the first poet of this tabaqa, 'Aqīl b. 'Ullafa, were narrated together with those of his children. In dealing with him, Ibn Sallām appears to have been guided by his idea of poetic families, because he also quoted some poems by his sons, such as Jaththāma and 'Ullafa, and by his daughter, al-Jarbā'. The lines quoted from his poetry and those of his children are of different genre but related to the same events. The interest of Ibn Sallām was in the poet's akhbār rather than in his poetry. Nevertheless, some lines of tribal hijā' and others in which the poet challenged other tribes were also quoted.²¹²

The poems quoted from the poetry of Bashāma are longer and their subjects are of a tribal nature. In three poems he addresses his people and advises them, as, for instance:

يَا قَوْمَنَا، لَا تَسْؤَمُونَا الَّتِي كُرِهَتْ يَا اَللَّامَ إِذَا مَا أُكْرِهُوا غَضَمُوا
لَا تَظْلَمُونَا، وَلَا تَسْؤُوا قَرَابَتَنَا اظْهُوا إِلَيْنَا، فَقَدِمَا تَقْلُفُ الرَّجْمِ

and:

إِنَّ الْخَلِيلَ أَجَدَ الْبَيْنِ فَابْتَكُرُوا لِنَبِيٍّ، ثُمَّ مَا عَاجَبُوا وَمَا انْتَفَرُوا

Poems containing mention of ayyām and mufākharā are also quoted, such as:

213 تَحَنُّنُ الْفَوَارِسِ يَوْمَ الشَّيْبِ ضَا حِيَةً وَالضَّارِبُونَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْ أَلَمٍ

Poems of tribal and personal fakhr were quoted from Shabīb b. al-Barsā', for instance:

يَبْدُلُ عَلَيْنَا الْبَارَ آخِرُ قَبْلِهِ وَأَحْلَامُنَا مَقْرُوفَةٌ وَتَسَدَّادُهَا

and certain lines from his poem:

214 هَلْ عِنْدَ سَعْدَى ابْنَةِ الْقَمَرِيِّ مِنْ زَادٍ .

Unusually, Ibn Sallām displayed a certain interest in nasīb, quoting both from the same poems by these poets and individual lines from other poems.²¹⁵

A poem by Qurād b. Hanash contains genealogical facts:

216 إِذَا مَا نَسَبْتَ بَنَسَبْتَ إِلَى الذَّرَى لِبَدْرِ بْنِ عَمْرِو، أَوْ لِعَمْرِو بْنِ جَابِرٍ
وَمَا هُنَّ مِنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ ذُبْيَانَ كُلِّهَا وَلَا مِنْ مَوَالِيهَا حُمَيْسِ بْنِ عَامِرٍ

The quotations in this tabaqa are either of a tribal nature or comprise akhbār in general. The similarity between its poets seems mostly to lie in their common tribal origin and in the nature of their verse.

In the ninth Islamic tabaqa, Ibn Sallām graded the rajaz poets. Besides having the obvious similarity of writing in the same bahr, the poets in this tabaqa were chosen from two different tribes. Al-Aghlab and Abū al-Najm belonged to 'Ijl (Bakr b. Wā'il), and al-'Ajjāj and his son Ru'ba to Tamīm.²¹⁷ Two poems, one by al-Aghlab, satirising Sajāh when she was married to Musaylima al-Kadhdhāb, and the other by Abū al-Najm describing a naked woman and his impotence when she was ready for him, are full of obscene words and ideas concerned with sexual intercourse.²¹⁸ Both poems were quoted in full; as we have seen before, Ibn Sallām was one of the critics who separated poetry from morality, even though he quoted, with approval, a number of lines of a moral nature.

Poems of tribal mufākharā were also quoted from these two poets, such as

that by al-Aghlab, starting:

تَحْنُ وَرَدْنَا وَادِيَّ جَلَّالٍ بِجَحْفَلٍ جَمَّ الوَثَى مِنْ وَاثِلٍ

and:

إِنَّ لَنَا شَايِكَةً وَغُورًا لَا يَمْلِكُ النَّاسُ لَهَا تَغْيِيرًا

and one by Abū al-Najm, who is described by Ibn Sallām as a man of fakhr, which starts:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الْوَهَّابِ الْمَجْدِلِ أَعْطَى فَلَمْ يَبْخُلْ وَلَمْ يَبْخُلِ

and:

عَلِقَ الْهَوَى بِجَائِلِ الشَّقَاءِ . 219

Abū al-Najm is said to have surpassed al-ʿAjjāj in description.²²⁰ Ibn Sallām mentioned the akhbār of al-ʿAjjāj and the poem in which he addressed ʿUmar b. ʿUbayd Allāh on his way to fight some of the Kharijites. Two poems of tribal mufākharā were also quoted from al-ʿAjjāj, in which he spoke about war with other tribes.²²¹ The poem in which Ruʿba praised Salam b. Qutayba is about the war between his mamdūh and the Banū al-Muhallab. The poem also contains tribal madīh on Qays and Khindaf.²²²

In the tenth Islamic tabaqa, which is the last, the criterion of tribal adherence is not neglected. The four poets in this tabaqa, Muzāhim al-ʿUqaylī, Yazīd b. al-Ṭathariyya, Abū Duʿād al-Ruʿasī and al-Quḥayf al-ʿUqaylī all belonged to ʿĀmir b. Saʿsaʿa.²²³ Two poets of this tabaqa were perhaps classified together because of their similarity in poetic genre; one of them, Muzāhim al-ʿUqaylī, was described as a ghazal poet, the other, Yazīd b. al-Ṭathariyya was similarly described: as a poet of ghazal and a lover of conversation with women:

صَاحِبُ غَزَلٍ وَمَكَادَتَةٍ لِلنِّسَاءِ . 224

Muzāhim al-ʿUqaylī, however, was also known for his ability in description and hijāʾ. Ibn Sallām praised him for combining delicacy and sweetness

of poetry with firmness and harshness in description and hiǧā':

225 وكان شديداً أسرى الشعر خلقه ، وكان مع رقة شفو متعب الشفر بجاء وصفاً .

This reminds us of what al-Farazdaq said about his own obscene poetry, which lacked delicacy, and the decent poetry of Jarīr, which lacked firmness. Ibn Sallām quoted two ghazal poems by Muzāhim, one of which contained a description of his she-camel.²²⁶ Three poems by Yazīd b. al-Tathariyya were quoted by Ibn Sallām, all illustrating what he had said about his ghazal and conversation with women; they were also, however, related to his akhbār.²²⁷

Ibn Sallām's interest in poetry containing akhbār and mention of ayyām is once more demonstrated clearly in this tabaqa. He narrated the story of Yawm al-Nakhīl on which a battle was fought between the clans of Madhhiǧ, Hamadān and ʿĀmir b. Saʿsaʿa, and he quoted the poem of Muzāhim about that day.²²⁸ He also spoke about the fighting among the clans of ʿĀmir b. Saʿsaʿa themselves, and quoted the poem of Abū Duʿād al-Ruʿāsī. He also quoted his poem written on Yawm Fayf al-Rīh (sometimes called Yawm Baǧīʿ or Yawm al-Ajshar) in which he spoke of the defeat of the clans of Madhhiǧ by ʿĀmir b. Saʿsaʿa. The poem starts:

أَلَا هَلْ أَتَاكَ مَا لَقِيتَ خَنَاءَ وَمَا لَقِيتَ بِلَدِّهَا صُدَاءُ ؟

A third poem by the poet was quoted, the subject of which was also the mention of ayyām, war with other tribes, and tribal mufākhara.²²⁹ From the poetry of the fourth poet, al-Quḥayf al-Uqaylī, poems on the ayyām of ʿĀmir b. Saʿsaʿa against other tribes were also quoted, for example, the poem on the day of al-Falaj, on which they fought against the Banū ʿIjl of the Banū Hanīfa, starting:

دِيَارُ الْحَيِّ تَفْزِي بِهَا الْحِلَالُ مِنَ الْخَافِي بِهَا أَهْلٌ وَمَا

Ibn Sallām did not quote many lines from the nasīb, but quickly turned to the lines on war, starting:

أَتَانَا بِالْعَقِيقِ صَرِيحُ كَعْبٍ فَحَتَّ النَّبْعُ وَالْأَسْلُ النَّهَالُ 230

The quotations from this tabaqa, which consists entirely of members of one tribe, are mostly associated with akhbār, ayyām, and tribal mufākhara. Another similarity between two of its members is that they both wrote ghazal. Ibn Sallām's reference to hi.jā' in connection with Muzāhim, and the nature of his quotations, both strongly suggest that here again he applied, to a considerable extent, his criterion of tribal adherence and his idea of the relationship of poetry with war and ayyām.

CHAPTER NINE

The Modern School

1. Al-Jāhiz

The last critic with whom we dealt from the old school was Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī, whom we regarded as a good representative of that school and the "seal" of it. Though some critics of his type, like al-Asma'ī, quoted among their selections some of the muhdathūn, Ibn Sallām did not go beyond the Islamic poets, and we have seen that he in fact chiefly admired ancient poetry, of which he regarded Islamic poetry as a continuation. Despite signs of a moderate attitude on the part of some critics of the old school towards the muhdathūn, the general view of these critics was in favour of the ancients.

The appearance of al-Jāhiz may perhaps be regarded as the first stage of the new school, which tried to reach a compromise in the conflict concerning the ancients and the muhdathūn. He did not say much on this point, and he was largely interested in poetry from the racial point of view, as we shall see. However, the most important of his views concerning the muhdathūn and the ancient poets and poetic criticism, even though he did not write a separate study on the subject and merely expressed opinions incidentally in various of his works, like al-Hayawān and al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn, was that a critic should judge poetry according to elements of excellence and not as to whether the poet was an ancient or a muhdath. This will be clear when we come to his judgement on Abū Nuwās compared with Muhalhil, and his discussion of the al-ḥarāb and the nuwalladūn, which leads to his concept of poetry in relation to racial groups and gharīza (nature or instinct). His criticism of the approach of many of the ruwāt contemporary with him to poetic citation, and his praise for the ruwāt among the kuttāb and men of letters, reveal to us his theory of words and

ma'ānī and his concept of poetry as a sort of ṣiyāgha, naṣīb and taṣwīr. His ideas concerning words and ma'ānī are also connected with the notion of ṣirān, about which we have spoken before.

Concerning the critics of the old school, al-Jāhiz wrote: "I have noticed that the grammarians are only interested in the kind of poetry that contains i'rāb; the ruwāt are interested in every kind of poetry that contains gharīb and obscure ma'ānī which need to be explained; the ruwāt al-akhbār are interested in every kind of poetry that contains evidences.¹

Elsewhere, he is reported as saying: "I went to al-Asma'ī searching for the knowledge of poetry but I found that he only knew its gharīb; I turned back to al-Akhfash but I found that he only knew its i'rāb; then I turned to Abū 'Ubayda but I found that he only cited poetry that was connected with akhbār, ayyām and genealogies. I have never found what I was looking for except from men of letters among the kuttāb, such as al-Hasan b. Wahb and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt.² Speaking about the most important subjects of poetry cited by ruwāt al-masjidiyyīn and those of al-Mirbad, he mentioned that they "would not accept any rāwī unless he could recite the poems of the madmen, the poems of the a'rāb robbers, the naṣīb and the short rajaz poems written by the a'rāb, the poems of the Jews, and the munsifāt (poems in which poets praise their enemies and their bravery in fighting). Then I noticed that they lost interest in all this and just limited themselves to short speeches, short qasīdas, fragments and extracts. At one time, they were very interested in the naṣīb poetry of al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf, as soon as Khalaf al-Ahmar recited to them the naṣīb of the a'rāb they liked it very much and neglected that of al-'Abbās. After some years, they gave up all this, and there was no one who liked to recite the naṣīb of the a'rāb except a young beginner

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or a man of ghazal (mutaḡḡassil)". Neither al-Asma'ī, Abū 'Ubayda, nor the ruwāt of Baghdād were ever heard by al-Jāhiz to recite nasīb. The only one who did, together with other different poetic genres, was Khalaf al-Ahmar, as al-Jāhiz mentioned.³

What was al-Jāhiz looking for, what did he obtain from the ruwāt among the kuttāb and men of letters, and what did he fail to find with the other ruwāt, grammarians and philologists, whom he severely criticised? In fact, he did make use of the views of these last groups concerning poetic criticism, but he was looking for something more, something disregarded by them. He was looking for a combination of appropriate words and ma'ānā, soundness of metre and skill in poetic craftsmanship. Concerning the reciters of poetry among the secretaries (kuttāb), he wrote: "Having observed them over a long period, I have found that most of them concern themselves only with choice methods of expression (alfāz mutakhayyra) and selected concepts (ma'ānī muntakhaba), with sweet words (alfāz 'adhba), easy transitions (or: harmonious sounds?) (makhārij sahla) and noble texture (dībāja karīma), with innate ability (ṭab' mutamakkin) and skilled workmanship (sabk jayyid), with such discourse as has a fresh sparkle (mā' wa-rawmaḡ), and with thoughts that, on entering men's hearts, educate them and amend their previous ignorance ('amarathā wa-aslahathā min al-fasād al-cadīm), and open the gate of eloquence for the tongue, guide the pen to the buried treasure of words (madāfin al-alfāz), and point the way to beautiful concepts (hisān al-ma'ānī). I have found that insight into this essence (jewel?) of discourse (al-jawhar min al-kalām) is more common among those secretaries (kuttāb) who have trained as reciters (ruwāt) and more evident among those poets who are more skilled (huḡḡhāḡ)."⁴

On the other hand, al-Jāhiz criticised one of these ruwāt, Abū 'Amr al-

Shaybānī, for admiring the following two lines:

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الْمَوْتَ مَوْتًا بَلِيًّا وَإِنَّمَا الْمَوْتُ سُؤَالُ الرِّجَالِ
كَلَامًا مَوْتًا وَكَذَلِكَ ذَا أَقْطَعُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ لِذَلِكَ السُّؤَالِ

It would seem, from the lines, that al-Shaybānī was attracted by their theme (of hikma), and was not interested in any poetic qualities. Al-Jāhiz, for whom poetry was a form of craftsmanship, criticised al-Shaybānī for admiring the ma'nā only because: "concepts (ma'ānī) are displayed by the road-side and may be observed by a non-Arab, an Arab, a Bedouin, or a town dweller; so all that one has to do is establish the metre (icāmat al-wazn), choose the words, make the transitions easy (or: the sounds harmonic) (suhūlat al-makhraj), instill freshness (kathrat al-mā'), and apply sound instinct and skilled workmanship (sihhat al-tab' wa-jawdat al-sabk); for poetry is a craft, a form of weaving and a kind of painting".⁵ Though al-Jāhiz attacked al-Shaybānī for admiring the lines quoted above, he himself quoted them, among other lines of hikma.⁶

To achieve a high degree of excellent poetic craft, "weaving" and "painting", al-Jāhiz required poets to contrive harmony in words and letters (qirān), avoiding tanāfur. He also pointed out that the poet should use appropriate words for each type of ma'nā. Concerning incongruity of words (tanāfur al-alfāz), he quoted al-Asma'ī, who pointed out that some Arabic words are incompatible with one another and, if they are used together in a verse of poetry, it will be difficult to recite it. Such is the line:

وَقَبْرٌ حَرْبٍ بِمَكَانٍ قَفْرِ وَلَيْسَ قُرْبُ قَبْرِ حَرْبٍ قَبْرٌ

Al-Jāhiz stated that no-one could recite that line three times without difficulty. He quoted as another example of poetry in which one finds tanāfur al-alfāz the following line of Muhammad b. Yasīr:

لَمْ يَفْرِهَا ، وَالْحَمْدُ لَهُ شَيْءٌ وَانْتَنَتْ خَوْ عَزْفٍ نَفْسٍ ذُحُولِ

He described the words of the second half of the line as being incompatible with one another (ba'ḍ al-fāzihi yatabarra' min ba'ḍ). According to him, it is such poetry that is referred to in the following line cited by Khalaf al-Ahmar:

وَبَعْضُ قَرِيفِ الْقَعْمِ أَوْلَادُ عَلَّةٍ يَكْدُ لِسَانَ النَّاطِقِ الْمُتَقَطِّرِ

And also in the line cited by Abū al-Baydā' al-Riyāhī:

وَشِعْرٍ كَبِيرٍ الْكَبْشِ فَرَّقَ دِينَهُ لِسَانٌ دَعِيٌّ فِي الْقَرِيفِ دَخِيلِ

The first line means that, if poetry is artificial (mutakallaf), the words in its lines will not be in harmony with one another, which makes it difficult for the tongue to recite it. The second line refers to the same idea of tanāfur al-alfāz. It compares such poetry with the dung of the ram which falls scattered on the ground. The poetry which is characterised by tanāfur in its words is similar to that scattered dung. In the other kind of poetry, in which the words are in full agreement with one another and easy to pronounce in conjunction, and in which the letters are also in agreement and harmony with one another, each line will seem to be one word and each word will seem to be one letter. The parts of this poetry will be well connected and its transitions very easy (or: it will produce harmonious sounds), it will look as if it were woven in one piece, and it will be recited as easily and smoothly as oil (dihān) runs off the tongue. An example of this is the lines of al-Ajrad al-Thaqafī:

مَنْ كَانَ ذَا عَضِدٍ يَدْرِكُ طَلَامَتَهُ إِنَّ الذَّلِيلَ الَّذِي كَيْسَتْ لَهُ عَفْدُ
تَنْبُو يَدَاهُ إِذَا مَا قَلَّ خَاصِرُهُ وَيَأْتِقُ الضَّبَّيْمَ إِنَّ أَثَرِي لَهُ عَدُّ

another is the lines of Abū Hayya al-Numayrī:

رَمَيْتَنِي وَسِئْرُ اللَّهِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهَا عَشِيَّةَ آرَامِ النَّاسِ رَمِيمُ
رَمِيمُ الَّتِي قَالَتْ لِمَا رَأَيْتَ بَيْتَهَا ضَمِئْتُ لَكُمْ إِلَّا يَزَالُ بِهِمُ
إِلَّا رَبِّ يَوْمٍ لَوْ رَمَيْتَنِي رَمَيْتَهَا وَلَكِنَّ عَهْدِي بِالنِّضَالِ قَدِيمُ

It was the concept of qirān that influenced al-Jāhīz in requiring harmony between the words of the lines and the letters of the words, or talāhum ^{Rwba b.} al-ajza' as he called it. He quoted al-Ajāj describing his son's rajaz

poetry as having no qirān (connection). We have also quoted al-Jāhiz in the first chapter on this subject. He also cited Ibn al-Aʿrābī:

وَبَانَ يُدْرَسُ شِعْرًا لَا قِرَانَ لَهُ قَدْ كَانَ نَقَّهَ كَوَلًّا فَمَا زَادَا

These examples are concerned with qirān and harmony between the words of a line and between the lines of a poem. As far as iqtirān of the letters was concerned, al-Jāhiz stated that jīm does not harmonise with zā', qāf, tā' or ghayn, or zāy with zā', sīn, dād or dhāl.⁷ The idea of qirān and talāhum al-kalām, which may have been known to the Jāhilīs, as we have seen before, was taken up by later critics, such as al-Mubarrad in his kāmil, where he quoted the lines quoted above by al-Jāhiz from the poetry of Abū Hayya al-Numayrī. Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī pointed out that al-Samawʿal was criticised for his line:

فَخَنُّ كَمَاءِ الْمُزْنِ، مَا فِي نَضَابِنَا كَهَامٍ وَلَا فِينَا بَعْدُ فَيْبِلُ

There was no connection between mā' al-muzn, nisāb and kahām. If the poet had written:

خَنُّ أُولُو الْحَرْبِ وَالْجِدَّةِ، مَا فِي نَضَابِنَا كَهَامٍ

or:

خَنُّ كَمَاءِ الْمُزْنِ صَفَاءُ اخْلَاقٍ وَبَذَلٌ أَكْفَى...

the discourse would have been excellent and harmonious.⁸

The idea of qirān, which indicates a sort of unity in a poem, seems to be connected with what al-Jāhiz said concerning poems of hikma: "If the poems of Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Quddūs and Ṣābiq al-Barbarī were distributed among the poems of a number of other poets, they would gain greater recognition and attain a higher degree of excellence than they really have now. If the whole subject of a poem is amthāl, the poem will not gain renown and will not be very much admired. If the audience has to listen to one thing without a change, it will not be delighted."⁹

Al-Jāhiz seems to have been misinterpreted by some scholars with regard to

his view of words and ma'ānī. To support his theory of naṣm, 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī mentioned that al-Jāhiz did not care much for ma'ānī, as he talked of them as being "displayed by the road-side", when criticising Abū 'Amr al-Shaybānī for admiring the two lines quoted above. The fact that al-Jāhiz claimed that the lines could not be regarded as poetry and that the sons of the poet who wrote them would be unable to write excellent poetry because they were descended from him, was taken by 'Abd al-Qāhir as unequivocal championing of words and as a declaration for the superiority of alfāz over ma'ānī.¹⁰ Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī also quoted the remark concerning ma'ānī being "displayed by the road-side" in order to support his own views about the beauty of words.¹¹

Even some modern scholars believe that al-Jāhiz was more interested in words than in concepts.¹² As Ibrāhīm k. Jirays noticed, Hilāl contradicted himself in the same book, concerning al-Jāhiz's position on this subject.¹³

If we investigate al-Jāhiz's views further, we find that he required a combination of words and concept, believing that both were equal in importance for completing the poetic image. In his kitāb al-mu'allimīn, he criticised, in both writing and teaching, the artificial way of using words that involved forcing them to fit a certain concept. Using words artificially would not produce clear and comprehensive concepts, and they would thus remain functionless. The best kind of discourse, according to him, was that in which the words did not go beyond the concepts, so that it could easily be understood by the listener. Those who chose their words before creating their concepts did so only for the sake of the words, which might not fit those concepts, which was not the right way. Moreover, one read the books of wise men in order to make

use of their concepts, but not their words, because one might force these words and use them in the wrong place. Al-Jāhiz advised poets who wished to express their concepts in a perfect form to read and listen as much as they could so that words would stick to their ears and be absorbed by their hearts. In their hearts, words would be married with one another, become impregnated, and give birth to noble fruits which would be original, far removed from imitation and plagiarism. Elsewhere, he stated that eloquent discourse is that in which the words and concepts compete with one another in entering men's hearts and ears. Its words should not reach the ears before the concepts reach the hearts.¹⁴ In another piece of advice to those who wished to be skilled poets and writers, he quoted a religious man of letters who advised his pupils to seek out beautiful words and harmonious sounds, because if the ma'nā was beautifully and harmoniously expressed, it would be sweeter to the hearts of the audience. If concepts are dressed in noble words, with beautiful and elevated descriptions, they would be more beautiful in men's eyes, and the more they were embellished, the more they would be admired. Words would thus serve as showrooms where beautiful girls were exhibited.¹⁵

From all that has been said, it seems that al-Jāhiz considered words and concepts from an integral point of view. In his eyes, both were equal in creating a perfect and beautiful poetic image. Suitable words should be used for particular concepts. He believed that a noble ma'nā should be expressed in noble words and a mean ma'nā in mean words. If the ma'nā is serious, serious words should be used and if the ma'nā is jocular, jocular words should be used, otherwise the ma'nā would not be clear and complete. Since there are different classes of people, there are also different kinds of discourse. The poet or the speaker should not use gharīb or wahshī unless he is a Bedouin, because a wahshī discourse is comprehensible only to the wahshī man. Also the lafz should not be common or mean unless

the ma'nā is.¹⁶

Al-Jāhiz expressed his attitude to words and concepts even more clearly and directly when he advised writers to avoid sūgī and wahshī words (common, vulgar words and wild ones) and warned them not to spend too much time polishing words and searching out strange concepts (gharā'ib al-ma'ānī). One should be economical and follow the middle way so as to avoid difficulties. A good discourse is that which comes between the two states of falling-short and excess.¹⁷ This recommendation of the intermediate and of moderation appears to be an extension of the Mu'tazilite idea of the "position between the two positions" (al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn), a doctrine deriving from Wāsil b. 'Āṭa', the founder of the Mu'tazilite sect. The same idea also seems to be behind al-Jāhiz's position in rejecting mubālagha (exaggeration). He criticised the muwalladūn for exaggerating in their descriptions, and he quoted Abū Nuwās describing the speed of a dog as an example of this:

مَا يَنْ يَقَعْنَ الْأَرْضَ إِلَّا فُرْطًا .

Another muwallad, quoted by al-Jāhiz, wrote:

لَأَنْتَا بَرَقَ مَا لَا يَفْعُ . 18

Even in his attitude towards the ancients and the muhdathūn, he adopted a moderate position, standing mid-way between the two groups and judging them according to excellence, regardless of their period. Here again, we may perhaps see the influence of the doctrine of al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn. The influence of Mu'tazilite thought did not stop here, but went even further to connect with badī'. In her article "Toward a redefinition of 'Badī'' poetry", Suzanne P. Stetkevych has tried to establish a link between badī' and Mu'tazilite thought. Quoting a poem of Ṣafwān al-Ansārī, in which the poet, who was a Mu'tazilite, replies

to Bashshār, who attempted to prove the superiority of fire over earth in his line:

الأرضُ مُظْلِمَةٌ والنارُ مُشْرِقَةٌ والنارُ معبودةٌ مُذْ لانت النارُ

Stetkevych argues that the poem of Safwān starting:

نَعِمْتَ بِأَنَّ النَّارَ الْكَرَّمَ غُضْرًا وفي الأرضِ تَحِيًّا بِالْحَجَارَةِ وَالزَّيْدِ

and the poem of Bashshār, in which he satirised 'Abd al-Karīm b. Abī al-'Awjā' (after he had been crucified), starting:

قُلْ لِعَبْدِ الْكَرِيمِ يَا بَنَ أُمِّي الْعَو جَاءَ يَغْتَنِمُ الْإِسْلَامَ بِالْكَفْرِ مُرَوِّقًا

support the proposition that the Mu'tazilite Basran circle produced the first badī' or proto-badī' poetry. She also refers to the statement of Ibn al-Mu'tazz about his fifth category of badī' called al-madhhab al-kalāmī, which he attributed to al-Jāhiz. She also quotes al-Jāhiz himself speaking about badī' and citing some lines that contain it. From a Mu'tazilite point of view, badī' for al-Jāhiz would mean "not only an outstanding stylistic device found in the Qur'ān and Hadith" and early Arabic poetry, "but also a method of interpretation, a way of thinking, that was obligatory upon the faithful for the proper understanding of those religious scriptures". When al-Jāhiz gave those examples of badī' in his al-Bayān, he meant by badī' "the use of metonymy or metaphor, or more explicitly, the personification of the abstract as he understood it by analogy to the Mu'tazilite exegetical use of ta'wīl".¹⁹

What concerns us most in what has been said above about badī' and its link with Mu'tazilite thought, is the concept of it as a way of thinking, for it seems that some such concept is behind the domination of the art of badī' and the idea of dualism that expressed themselves widely in the way of life and the poetry of the muhdathūn, as we shall see in tabaqāt al-shu'arā' al-muhdathīn of Ibn al-Mu'tazz.

Whatever the concept of badī' for al-Jāhiz might be, he praised Bashshār for his powerful tab' and excellence in badī'. Comparing him with other modern poets, he wrote: "Those naturally gifted in poetry among the moderns are Bashshār al-ʿUḡaylī, al-Sayyid al-Himyarī, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and Ibn Abī ʿUyayna". Bashshār and Ibn Harma were the best in badī' among the modern poets. The most important point in what he said, is that there was no contradiction between a poet being naturally gifted (matbū') and writing in the badī' style; he found Bashshār the best in both respects.²⁰ Even those who were called by al-Asmaʿī "the slaves of poetry", such as Zuhayr and al-Ḥuṭay'a, seem to have been admired by al-Jāhiz, as appears from his remarks about the type of poets who wrote al-shiʿr al-hawlī al-muhakkak.²¹ He pointed out that this method of re-examining and revising his work was adopted by a poet because he hoped to be a fahl, a khindhīdh, and a mufliḡ poet. Quoting various critics, he stated that the classes of poets are four: al-fahl al-khindhīdh, the mufliḡ poet, the poet shāʿir, and the shuʿrūr (poetaster). Among poems that were hawli muhakkak, he counted those called hawliwāt, muwalladāt, munaggaḡāt, and muhkamāt. In the poem itself there are lines which are called amṡāl (aphorisms) and awābid (wonderful and unfamiliar lines); there are also shawāhid, and shawārid (famous and widely-circulating lines). He excused the poets who were called "slaves of poetry" and those who followed their method, and he said that if a poet used his poetry as a means of earning money and seeking rewards from noble and prominent men, he had no option but to follow the path of sanʿa trodden by Zuhayr, al-Ḥuṭay'a and those similar to them.²²

In the dispute concerning the ancients and the moderns, al-Jāhiz followed a middle way, not favouring ancient poetry at the expense of muhdath poetry. He criticised those who did so and accused them of ignorance. He wrote: "I have seen some of them (ruwāt, grammarians and philologists) reject the poems of the muwalladūn and drop the rāwis who recite them. Such is

the rāwī of poetry who does not know the essence (jewel?) of what he is reciting; if he had insight, he would recognise the excellent regardless of who wrote it or at what time it was written.²³ Though he was more of a theoretical critic, al-Jāhiz sometimes applied his critical views when he judged the ancient and the muhdath poets. An example of his fair attitude is his comparison of Muhalhil and Abū Nuwās, in which he preferred the latter to the former. Muhalhil, describing the silence of the people at the majlis of his brother Kulayb, wrote in one of his poems:

أَوَدَى الْخِيَارُ مِنَ الْمَعَاشِرِ كُلِّهِمْ وَاسْتَنْبَ بَعْدَكَ يَا كَلْبُ الْمَجْلِسِ
وَتَنَازَعُوا فِي كُلِّ أَمْرٍ عَظِيمَةٍ لَوْ قَدْ تَكُونُ شَهَدَتُهُمْ لَمْ يَنْبَسُوا

Al-Jāhiz claimed that the lines of Abū Nuwās concerning the food of Ismā'īl were far better in describing the silence of the people at the majlis of Kulayb than the above lines of Muhalhil:

عَلَى خَيْرِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَاقِيَةِ الْبُخْلِ فَقَدْ حَلَّ فِي دَارِ الْأَمَانِ مِنَ الْأَكْلِ
وَمَا خَبَرَهُ إِلَّا كَأَوَى بَرِي ابْنِهِ وَلَمْ يَرِ آوَى فِي خُرُونٍ وَلَا سَهْلٍ
وَمَا خَبَرَهُ إِلَّا كَفَقَاءٍ مَفْرَبٍ تَتَوَرَّ فِي بُسْطِ الْمُلُوكِ وَفِي الْمَثَلِ
يُجَدَّتْ عَنْهَا النَّاسُ مِنْ غَيْرِ رُؤْيَةٍ سَوَى صُورَةٍ مَا إِنْ تَمَرَّ وَلَا تَحَلَّى
وَمَا خَبَرَهُ إِلَّا كَلْبُ بَنِ وَائِلٍ وَمَنْ لَانَ بِحِمَى عِزِّهِ مَنَبَتَ الْبَقْلِ
وَإِذَا هُوَ لَا يَسْتَبْ قُفْمَانِ عِنْدَهُ وَلَا الصَّوْتُ مَرْفُوعٌ بِجِدٍّ وَلَا هَزْلٍ
فَإِنْ خَيْرُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ حَلَّ بِهِ الَّذِي أَصَابَ كَلْبِيًّا لَمْ يَكُنْ ذَاكَ عَنْ بَدَلٍ
وَكُنْ قَضَاءُ لَيْسَ يُسْلَمُ رَدُّهُ بِحِيلَةٍ ذِي مَكْرٍ، وَلَا فَلَاحٍ ذِي عَقْلِ 24

Elsewhere, when al-Jāhiz was talking about dogs, he quoted one of Abū Nuwās' rajaz poems describing the speed of a dog as follows:

فَانْصَاعَ لَالُوكِبٍ فِي اخْدَارِهِ لَفَتَ الْمَشِيرَ مَوْهِنًا بِنَارِهِ
نَشْرًا إِذَا أَخْصَفَ فِي احْضَارِهِ خَرَّقَ أذْنِيهِ شَبَا أَظْفَارِهِ

Citing the whole urjūza, he wrote: "And I have quoted to you his rajaz in this chapter because he was a learned man ʿālim and a rāwīya. He had played with dogs over a long period, and he knew more about them than the aʿrāb did. This can be clearly seen in his poetry, where dogs are fully

described in his rajjaz poems. This description is written with fine tabʿ, in an excellent form, and with skilled art. If you consider his poetry, you will prefer it, unless you are guided by partisanship (ʿasabiyya), or you think that the Bedouins are, in all cases, better poets than the muwalladūn. If you think like that, you will never be able to differentiate between right (al-ḥaqq) and wrong (al-bāṭil).²⁵

Al-Jāḥiẓ did not use the term muhdathūn, but rather muwalladūn. This attitude of his is very important because it leads us to his concept of poetry in relation to race. Instead of participating with the earlier critics among the ruwāt and ʿulamāʾ in the dispute concerning the merits of the ancient poets and the muhdathūn, al-Jāḥiẓ transferred the matter to a racial field and compared the Arabs (of both towns and bādiya) with the muwalladūn, stating that "the majority of Arabs, the aʿrāb, both Bedouins and town-dwellers, are better poets than the majority of the muwalladūn (those who are not of pure Arab blood), but this is not valid for all of what they have written The difference between the muwallad (poet) and the aʿrābī is that the muwallad, if he works with all his effort and concentration of mind, will be able to write excellent lines, equal to those written by a Bedouin, but when the muwallad writes at length, his strength will fail and his discourse will become confused".²⁶

According to al-Jāḥiẓ, the main factors required in a group of people for writing poetry are three. These are: gharīza (instinct or tabʿ), balad (country or environment), and ʿirq (race).²⁷ As has been remarked by certain scholars²⁸ in adopting this position concerning poetry, he disagrees with Ibn Sallām, who linked increase in poetic production with war. Al-Jāḥiẓ noticed that, although the Banū Hanīfa were very numerous, very brave and good fighters, fought many wars, lived in a territory surrounded by enemies, and were envied by other Arabs, they composed the

least amount of poetry of all tribes.²⁹ He also noticed that, although the tribe of 'Abd al-Qays had very fertile territory, they also did not compose much poetry. The same applied to Thaḡlīf, but their poetry was very natural.³⁰ Al-Jāhiz, however, took a different direction, in developing a theory that contrasted all the Arabs with the muwalladūn. It seems to me that, although he followed a middle way in judging the ancients and the muhdathūn he did in fact, in the depths of his soul, have a slight bias towards the ancients, who resembled, to some extent, the Arabs (especially the a'rāb) whom he compared with the muwalladūn. As we have said, he was not very much interested in the dispute concerning the ancients and the muhdathūn, and much more interested in poetic comparison from a racial point of view. However, he favoured the Arabs on this point and regarded the muwalladūn (who were generally muhdathūn) as having less poetic ability and tab'. If we take the "Arabs" as a continuation of the ancients and the muwalladūn as the muhdathūn themselves, we may discern in him a distinct bias towards the ancients.

As well as speaking about gharīza or tab' (instinct for writing poetry) from a general point of view, al-Jāhiz also went into the matter in some detail, with regard to different poets and different poetic genres. Poets differed according to the differences in their poetic ability and the strength of their tab'. Some of them were not excellent in hijā'; others had no ability in writing nasīb even though they were famous for their long association with women, for instance al-Farazdaq, who was a zīr ghawān, but did not write one single excellent nasīb, while Jarīr, who was a virtuous man and had never loved a woman, was the best of ghazal poets; some rajaz poets could not write qasīd, while others could, such as 'Umar b. Laja', Abū al-Najm, Humayd al-Arḡaṭ and al-'Umānī; some have an ability in oratory and some have not; and a poet's poetic ability and

tab^c may even differ from time to time, as some confirmed about themselves. Al-Farazdaq said that although he was generally considered the best poet, he sometimes found it less painful to have a molar tooth pulled out than to write a single line of poetry. Al-ʿAjjaǧ said that in one night he was able to write his excellent urjūza:

بَكَيْتَ وَالْمُحْتَرِنُ الْبَكَىٰ وَإِنَّمَا يَأْتِي الصَّبَا الْقَبِيَّ

and that its rhymes poured easily into his mind, but then he tried for many days to write an urjūza even of less excellence, but failed.³¹ The same phenomenon was observed by Ibn Qutayba, who borrowed the words of al-Jāhiz in speaking about the differences in poetic tab^c and ability. The difference between him and al-Jāhiz is that Ibn Qutayba tried to find an explanation for the phenomenon, as we shall see later.

Al-Jāhiz seems also to have inspired Ibn Qutayba and Qudāma b. Jaʿfar in their views concerning the combination of lafz and maʿnā. Qudāma followed him in describing poetry as a craft and kind of "painting"³², although in fact, both may have derived this independently from Ibn Sallām.

Qudāma and a number of later critics, such as Ibn al-Muʿtazz, al-Āmidī and Ibn Rashīq, all seem to have been in agreement with al-Jāhiz concerning the point that every category of men should be praised with a particular kind of madīh poetry.³³ Al-Jāhiz criticised al-Kumayt b. Zayd for the following lines in praise of the Prophet:

فَاعْتَبِ الشَّوْقَ مِنْ فَوَادِي وَالشَّعْرَ إِلَى مَنْ رَأَيْهِ اعْتَبِ
إِلَى السَّرَاجِ الْمُنِيرِ أَحْمَدًا بَعْدَ لِي رَغْبَةٍ وَلَا رَهْبِ
عَنْهُ إِلَى غَيْرِهِ وَلَوْ رَفَعَ النَّاسُ سِوَى رَأْيِ الْعَيُونِ وَارْتَقَبُوا
إِلَيْكَ يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ تَفَهَّمَتِ الْأَرْضُ ضُرَّ وَلَوْ عَابَ قَوْلِي الْعَيْبِ
لَجَّ بِتَفْضِيلِكَ اللِّسَانُ وَلَوْ أَكْثَرَ فَيْدِكَ الْهِنَاجُ وَاللَّجْبِ
أَنْكَ الْمَصْلُفَى الْمَهْذَبُ فِي النَّسَبِ أَنْ تَهَيَّ قَوْمَكَ النَّسَبِ

Al-Jāhiz believed that al-Kumayt had followed the wrong path of madīh.

in these lines, because there was no-one who would have blamed him for praising the Prophet, and no-one who would be angered by the Prophet's being praised.³⁴ Ibn Rashīq mentioned that some critics found an excuse for al-Kumayt, alleging that he was actually praising 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, but that he feared the Umayyads and therefore addressed his poem to the Prophet, without changing the terms in which he expressed it.³⁵

Al-Kumayt was also criticised by al-Jāhiz for falling short in his rithā' on the Prophet:

وَبُورِكَ قَبْرُ أَنْتَ فِيهِ وَبُورِكَتْ بِهِ وَلَهُ أَهْلٌ بِذَلِكَ يَتَرَبُّ
لَقَدْ غَيَّبُوا بَرًّا وَحَرَمًا وَنَائِلًا عَمَشِيَّةً وَارَاهُ الصَّرِيحُ الْمُنْهَبُ

Ibn Rashīq thought that the first line was excellent but that the second was not. He wondered why al-Kumayt should have written such a line of rithā' on the Prophet, while 'Abada b. al-Tabīb wrote these excellent lines of rithā' on Qays b. 'Āsim:

عَلَيْكَ سَلَامُ اللَّهِ قَيْسَ بْنَ عَاصِمٍ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا شَاءَ أَنْ يَتَرَحَّمَا
تَحِيَّةٌ مِنْ أَلْبَسَنَهُ مِنْكَ نِعْمَةً إِذَا زَارَ عَنْ شَيْطَانِ بِلَادِكَ سَلَامَا
فَمَا كَانَ قَيْسٌ هَلَكًا هَلَكًا وَاحِدٌ وَلَكِنَّهُ بَنِيَانُ قَوْمٍ تَهْدَمَا

He also wondered if al-Kumayt had written lines similar to those by Fātima, the Prophet's daughter, about her father:

أَغْبَرَ آفَاقُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَوَّرَتْ شَمْسُ النَّهَارِ وَأُظْلِمَ الْعَصْرَانِ
فَالْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَعْدِ النَّبِيِّ كَثِيَّةٌ أَسْفًا عَلَيْهِ كَثِيرَةُ الرَّجْفَانِ
فَلَيْتَكَ شَرَّقَ الْبِلَادِ وَغَرَبَا وَلَيْتَكَ مَفْرُوكٌ كُلُّ بَهَانِي
وَلَيْتَكَ الْهَوْدُ الْمُظْفَرُ جَوْهَ وَالْبَيْتُ ذُو الْأَسْتَارِ وَالْأَرْكَانِ
يَا خَاتَمَ الرُّسُلِ الْمُبَارِكِ صَنُوهُ صَلَّى عَلَيْكَ مُنَرَّلُ الْقُرْآنِ 36

Ibn Rashīq clearly considered that al-Jāhiz's criticism of al-Kumayt was for failing to express an intense feeling of sadness and of great loss at the death of the Prophet, while other poets, like 'Abada, had succeeded, when elegizing men of less importance.

It should be emphasised that, as we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, al-Jāhiz's views on poetry do not represent any coherent and organised theory. In fact, he had comparatively little to say on the subject, and most of such comments as he did make were connected with his views on rhetoric and eloquence in, Kitāb al-bayān wa-al-tabyīn, or with the literary aspects of natural history, in Kitāb al-hayawān.

CHAPTER TEN

The Modern School

2. Ibn Qutayba

The second figure in this new school of critics, and of more importance than al-Jāhiz for poetic criticism is Abū Muhammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba. His book al-shi'r wa-al-shu'arā' reflects the influence of Ibn Sallām and al-Jāhiz, and also that of other critics of the old school and of the scattered views of men of letters with which we have already dealt. His most important opinion is that ancient and modern poets should be judged on equal terms, according to their merits, regardless of their period, whether of the Jāhiliyya or not. From the practical point of view, he included some of the muhdathūn in his book, with selections from their poems. In the introduction he wrote: "In citing extracts from the works of the poets I have been guided by my own choice and have refused to admire anything merely because others thought it admirable. I have not regarded any ancient with veneration on account of his antiquity nor any modern with contempt on account of his being modern, but I have taken an impartial view of both sides, giving everyone his due and amply acknowledging his merit. Some of our scholars, as I am aware, pronounce a feeble poem to be good, because its author was an ancient, and induce it among their chosen pieces, while they call a perfect poem bad though its only fault is that it was composed in their own time or that they have seen its author. God, however, did not restrict learning and poetry and rhetoric to a particular age nor appropriate them to a particular class, but has always distributed them in common amongst His servants, and has caused everything old to be new in its own day and every classic work to be an upstart on its first appearance ..."¹ Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, al-Akhtal and those like them, had

been regarded as modern in their time and now they were regarded as ancient poets. Thus the muhdath poets, such as Abū Nuwās, al-Khuraymī, al-ʿAttābī, and others, who were now regarded as modern would be ancient in time to come.² Thus, "whoever writes excellent poetry, we shall mention it and praise him for it, whether he is a modern or an ancient; at the same time we shall not profess to care for bad poetry even if it is composed by a noble ancient poet".³ Nevertheless, owing to the influence of the critics of the ruwāt and of the old school in general, he called on the muhdathūn to follow the themes of the ancient qasīda, starting with the atlāl section then proceeding to nasīb, rahīl, and then to the main subject of the qasīda, which is madih. He added that the excellent poet was the one who followed these themes in order. The muhdath poet had no right to change what the ancients had initiated; for instance, the muhdath ought to stop at the atlāl because the ancients had done so, and he ought not to address an occupied house. He ought not to make his rahīl on a donkey or a mule, because the ancients had used camels. Indeed the muhdath should do nothing but follow the ancients in the manner of writing his qasīda, except in using gharīb and wahshī. The muhdath poet should also avoid using certain words in which a letter was replaced by another, such as yā by jīm. He should avoid those styles that did not suit particular metres and thus offended the ear, as in the poem of al-Muraqqish:

قَدْ بِالرَّيَّانِ أَنْ تَجِيبَ صَهْمٌ لَوْ أَنَّ جَبًّا نَاطِقًا كَلَّمَ

The best kind of poetry, he said, was that which used a good rawī (rhyming letter), and simple language (alfāz) which should be devoid of complication and affectation and should be accessible to the minds of the common people. The most famous poetry is mutmiʿ (apparently easy but impossible to imitate).⁴ The combination of words (alfāz) and concepts (maʿnā) is one of the major ideas of Ibn Qutayba concerning poetry. Like al-Jāhiz before him, Ibn Qutayba saw words and maʿnā as equal

elements in completing the poetic image. This is clear in his division of poetry into four categories, according to excellence in word and in ma'nā. In this division, the first kind of poetry was that in which both words and concepts are excellent. From the examples that he quoted, it would seem that by excellent ma'nā he meant hikma and mathal, as in lines like:

والنفسُ رَاغِبَةٌ إِذَا رَغِبَتْهَا ۖ إِذَا تَرَدُّ إِلَى قَلِيلٍ تَقْنَعُ

and:

أَرَى بَصِيرِي قَدْ رَأَى بَنِي بَعْدَ هَجَةٍ ۖ وَحَسْبُكَ دَاءٌ أَنْ تَصِحَّ وَتَسْلَمَ

The second kind of poetry, which he did not much admire, was that which was of a high quality in form but not in content. Among such poetry were lines by Jarīr which had been admired by earlier critics as excellent lines of nasīb; Ibn Qutayba saw no good in them except for their words:

لَا يَنْتَظِرُ الْغَدَا بِلَيْكَ غَادِرُوا ۖ وَشَلَا بِعَيْنِكَ مَا يَزَالُ مَعِينَا
غَيَّبَتْ مِنْ عِبْرَاتِهِمْ وَقُلْنَ لِي مَاذَا لَقِيتَ مِنَ الْهَوَى وَلَقِينَا

The third kind of poetry was rejected by Ibn Qutayba because, although its content was of a high quality, its form was not excellent, as with the following line by Labīd:

مَا عَاتَبَ الْمَرْءَ الْكَرِيمَ لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَالْمَرْءُ بِصَالِحِهِ الْجَلِيلِ الصَّالِحُ

Ibn Qutayba described it as a line of "excellent ma'nā but of little freshness and beauty".

The last kind of poetry was that in which both form and content lacked any excellence. The best examples of this were the poems of the 'ulama' which were written with affectation and bad craftsmanship, and which lacked naturalness and facility. The poem of al-Khalīl b. Ahmad, starting:

إِنَّ الْخَلِيلَ تَصَدَّعَ ۖ فَطَرُ بَدَائِكَ أَوْ قَعُ

was a good example of such poetry.⁵

His desire for naturalness (tab^c) in poetry and his disapproval of affectation (takalluf) may be clearly seen in his discussion of the affected poet (mutakallif) and the natural and gifted one (matbū^c). Al-Asma^c'i's description of Zuhayr, al-Hutay'a, and those who were similar to them, as "slaves of poetry", meaning that they wrote it with affectation, seems to have influenced Ibn Qutayba, who quoted it to support his views on affectation in poetry. However, excellent and perfect artificial poetry might be, the eyes of the learned could not miss the long reflection of its author, the effort and the sweat of his brow that he had expended, the numerous poetic licenses that he had used, and the unnecessary additions that he had made.⁶ Artificial poetry also lacked qirān, as was the case with many lines of al-Farazdaq, no matter how excellent they might be. The influence of al-Jāhiz concerning qirān appears in Ibn Qutayba's quoting his words, the remarks of 'Umar b. Laja' concerning "writing a line and its brother", and those of Ru'ba about the poetry of his son that contained no qirān.⁷ Opposite to the affected poet stood the matbū^c, for whom poetry came easily and who mastered the rhymes to the extent that one could guess the beginning of a line of his from consulting its end, and one could guess its rhyme-word by looking at its beginning. In his compositions one could clearly perceive the splendour of his naturalness. If he was put to the test he would never stammer or appear under stress.⁸ From this, and from the examples he gave, quoting al-Shammākh b. Dirār, al-Husayn b. Maṭīr and al-Farazdaq, from certain of their poems composed on the spot, it seems that the matbū^c, in his view, was one who, besides avoiding being a slave of his poetry, could produce poetry extempore.⁹ Poets differ in the degree of their naturalness (tab^c), and this is why some are excellent in madih but not hija', and others find it easy to write rithā' but not ghazal,

for instance. The poets of different poetic abilities who were cited by al-Jahiz are also cited here by Ibn Qutayba.¹⁰ He seems also to have accepted the idea of the motives of poetry being desire, delight, fear and anger. We have quoted 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, al-Huṭay'a, Kuthayyir/Nusayb, Artāt b. Suhayya and Ibn Abī Tārafa on this idea. Ibn Qutayba quoted some of these, and he used the idea to explain the variations in excellence in the poems of rithā' and of madīh written by al-Khuraymī. The poems of madīh on the Umayyads and on the family of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib written by al-Kumayt b. Zayd are also very different in quality. The reason, according to Ibn Qutayba, was his desire for reward from the Umayyad Caliphs.¹¹ Ibn Qutayba also spoke about the variations in the gharīza (poetic instinct) of a poet, just as al-Jāhiz had done. He attributed the difficulty that sometimes faced a poet in writing poetry to disturbances that affect the gharīza, caused by bad food or a sudden sorrow. However, there were some times suitable for writing poetry, and a poet might evoke poetry by sitting alone, by wandering in grassy places and gardens, or by travelling.¹² Ibn Rashīq thought that, in his discussion concerning suitable times for writing poetry, Ibn Qutayba was influenced by Abu Tammām, who held the same view.¹³

Besides these qualities required by Ibn Qutayba in poetry, he found that there were some excellent kinds of poetry which were not included in what he had said. Poetry was admired if it contained accurate tashbīh, and short and light rawīs, as in the following lines:

يَا تَخْلِكُ يَا تَهْلِي صِلِينِي وَذَرِي عَذْلِي
ذَرِينِي وَسَلَا حِي ثُمَّ شَرِي الْكَفَّ بِالْفَزْلِ

which had already been singled out by al-Asma'ī. Poetry was also admired if it contained an unusual concept (ma'nā gharīb), as in the line:

لَيْسَ الْفَتَى بَفَتَى لَا يُسْتَعَاءُ بِهِ وَلَا يَكُونُ لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ آثَارُ 14

Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī mentioned the "unusual concept" in poetry in connection with madīh. He quoted Ahmad b. Ibrāhīm who said: "The best kind of madīh is the gharīb which nothing else resembles". Then he quoted:

15 لِّلّٰهِ دَرْ أَيْ الْمَفِيتِ فَإِنَّهُ حَسَنُ الْفِعَالِ ضَعِيفٌ خَبِلَ الدَّرْهُمُ

Ibn Qutayba is also interested in rare poetry; "either its author did not write other lines or his poetry is not known to many". He quoted a poem by Hishām, the brother of Dhū al-Rumma, and said that it was not an excellent one, but he had quoted it because he did not know any other poem by that poet.¹⁶ The nobility of a poet was also a criterion that he used in selecting poetry. He quoted some lines by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī, a line by al-Rashīd, and three lines by the Abbasid Governor ʿAbd Allāh b. Tāhir, which run:

17 أَمِيلُ مَعَ الزِّمَامِ عَلَى ابْنِ عَمِّي وَإِنْ أَلْفَيْتَنِي مَلَكًا مُّطَاعًا
وَأَحْمِلُ لِلصَّدِيقِ عَلَى الشَّقِيقِ فَإِنَّكَ وَاجِدُ تَبَدُّ الصَّدِيقِ
أَفَرَّقَ بَيْنَ مَعْرُوفِي وَمَنِّي وَأَجْمَعُ بَيْنَ مَالِي وَالْحَقُوقِ

These lines and the one by al-Rashīd are of a moral nature; this is a genre of poetry which Ibn Qutayba appreciated, as can be seen from many of his quotations. His use of the criterion of the sharaf (nobility) of the poet is perhaps due to the influence of Ibn Sallām, from whom he seems to have taken the whole idea of compiling his book. There is an apparent difference between the two scholars, in that they belonged to different groups of critics, but, in fact, Ibn Qutayba, in his introduction, displays a marked similarity to Ibn Sallām in his introduction to Tabaqāt fuhūl al-shuʿarāʾ. The latter regretted that he could not mention all the Arab poets but had to limit himself to the famous ones. He talked about spurious poetry that could not be regarded as a hujja. He mentioned three categories of poets, the Jāhilīs, the Islamic poets, and the

mukhadramūn, and he repeated what the 'ulamā' had said about each of the poets. He criticised those who recited poetry from books and learned it from the ṣuḥafīyyūn, and he talked about the authentic ancient poetry, quoting some of it. He pointed out the importance of riwāya. He also spoke about defects of poetry, such as iqwā', and about expert critics of poetry. He mixed the Jāhili with the mukhadram and Islamic poets in some of his classes and he used tribal adherence as a criterion in classifying some of his poets.¹⁸ Ibn Qutayba said that he limited himself to the famous poets whose poetry was cited as a hujja, and he also regretted that no-one could mention all the Arab poets because their number was so large. He too stated that he had quoted what the 'ulamā' had said about each poet in his book. Again, like Ibn Sallām, he did not follow a chronological method in speaking about his poets, and some of the mukhadramūn are mentioned with the Jāhili and Islamic poets. He also talked about the importance of riwāya and the necessity for knowledge of poetry in the critic. He criticised those who learned poetry from books and other written sources, he referred to the loss of much Arabic poetry and he spoke about the authentic ancient poetry, quoting the same poems quoted by Ibn Sallām before. He was interested in the nobility of the poet, and he seems to have followed the criterion of tribal adherence in mentioning some poets.¹⁹

The number of poets mentioned in his book is over two hundred, with two poetesses, al-Khansā' and Laylā al-Akhyaliyya. The Jāhili poets came first, then the Islamic poets (including the muhdathūn); the mukhadramūn are distributed between the other two groups. The first poet mentioned was Imru' al-Qays; next to him came Zuhayr, who was followed immediately by his son Ka'b. Ibn Qutayba had in mind the idea of poetic families; he

gave the examples of the house of Zuhayr in the Jāhiliyya and that of Jarīr in Islam, since in both cases the sons and grandsons also wrote poetry. This is the same idea as that of Ibn Sallām as we have seen. Those who came after Ka'b b. Zuhayr were earlier poets, such as Tarafa, al-Ḥarith b. Ḥilliza and 'Amr b. Kulthūm, who were all famous poets. Ka'b was mentioned before them either because of his relationship with Zuhayr or because of his famous qasīda, Bānat Su'ād.

Tribal adherence was widely applied by Ibn Qutayba, as in the case of the poets of Hudhayl, whom he mentioned under this common title; there were twelve of them listed, one after another. When he came to Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal, he mentioned them as one class, in that order. Perhaps he was guided by the fact that the three of them were already regarded as the first Islamic class of poets, or because they had participated in a battle of hiḡā' against one another, as we know from the naqā'id. Again, in speaking about al-'Ajjāj, he was guided by the criterion of the same poetic genre, in this case rajaz, and also by that of relationship between a number of the rajaz poets. Ru'ba was mentioned immediately after his father, al-'Ajjāj. They were followed by other poets of rajaz, like Abū Nukhayla, Abū al-Najm and al-Aghlab, all of whom belonged to 'Ijl. Other poets were mentioned together because of some event that linked them, or because of any sort of relationship. For instance, Tawba b. al-Humayyir was followed by his beloved, Laylā b. al-Akhyaliyya. Al-Ahwas was mentioned next to Kuthayyir, al-'Arajj next to Majnūn Laylā, and Qays b. Dhurayh next to 'Urwa b. Hazām. Ibn Qutayba's reason for mentioning these poets in this order was perhaps that he was thinking of a rough classification for poets of the ghazal genre, even though they were different in their styles of ghazal.

Another sort of relationship between poets which he seems to have followed in mentioning them together was friendship, for instance, that between al-Kumayt and al-Tirimmāh, since the latter was put next to the former although there were many differences between them.²⁰

The idea of compiling tribal diwāns, which we encountered with Ibn Sallām, is also perhaps to be found in al-shi'r wa-al-shu'arā', as in the case of the poets of Hudhayl. We also find it with the poets of Bakr b. Wā'il, who are listed together. Such poets are al-Musayyab b. 'Alas, who is described as a distinguished poet of his tribe and the maternal uncle of al-A'shā, al-Mutalammis of the Banū Dubay'a, Tarafa, and al-Hārith b. Hilliza.²¹ Then we have two poets who were related to them, namely the two Muraqqishes, who belonged to Qays b. Tha'laba.²² We also find two poets from the Banū Asad listed together, 'Abīd b. al-Abras and Fīshr b. Abī Khāzim.²³

When we come to the poetry selected by Ibn Qutayba, we do not find any criterion on which he based his admiration for the lines that he quoted, with the exception of what he said in his introduction concerning certain characteristics of excellent poetry. Whenever he wished to quote a line or a poem which he admired, he would simply introduce it by saying that it was excellent and admirable. He was also interested in plagiarism, and he would praise the poet who initiated a ma'nā and then mention those who borrowed it, stating whether or not they had added anything to the original idea. Generally, Ibn Qutayba, like many Arab critics and men of letters before him, was interested in the poems of a moral nature, such as hikma, mathal, precepts, and zuhd poetry. He described Aws b. Hajar as "a wise man in his poetry, who used to point out noble virtues, and the first poet to write deep ma'ānī and a large number of

aphorisms".²⁴ There are more than sixteen poets whose lines were quoted as having been cited as aphorisms (amthāl). In quoting such lines, Ibn Qutayba reveals a distinctly moral and educational concept of poetry.

Examples are the line of al-Nābigha:

نُبِئتُ أَنَّ أَبَا قَابُوسَ أَوْعَدَنِي وَلَا قَرَارَ عَلَى زَائِرٍ مِنَ الْأَسِيرِ

the lines of al-Mutalammis, starting:

وَأَعْلَمُ عِلْمٍ حَقٍّ غَيْرَ ظَنٍّ وَتَقْوَى اللَّهِ مِنْ خَيْرِ الْعِتَارِ

and those by al-Namr b. Tawlab:

وَمَتَى تُصِيبَكَ خَصَاصَةٌ خَارِجُ الْغِنَى وَالِى الَّذِى يُعْطَى الرِّغَابُ فَارْتَبِ
25 لَا تَغْضِبَنَّ عَلَى أَمْرٍ فِي مَالِهِ وَعَلَى كَرَامَتٍ صُلْبٍ مَالِهِ فَارْتَبِ

Further examples are the poem of Hammād 'Ajrad, about friendship, starting:

كَمْ مِنْ أَخٍ لَكَ لَسْتَ تَنْكُرُهُ مَا دُمْتَ مِنْ دُنْيَاكَ فِي يُسْرِ

and also the end of the mu'allaga of Tarafa and the poems of 'Adi b.

Zayd.²⁶ In the poems of rithā' that he selected we also notice a moral tendency and a liking for hikma, as in the poem of Abū Zubayd:

إِنَّ لَوَلَ الْحَيَاةِ غَيْرَ سُعُورٍ وَضَلَالٍ تَأْمِيلُ تَيْلِ الْخُلُودِ

and the one by Labīd:

27 بَلَيْنَا وَمَا تَبَلَّى النُّجُومُ الطَّوَالِغُ وَتَبَقَّى الْجِبَالُ بَعْدَنَا وَالْمَصَانِغُ

He also quoted poems of a religious tendency, like that by al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, starting:

28 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ مَنْ لَمْ يَنْقُلْهَا فَنَفْسُهُ ظَلَمٌ

The poems of zuhd that he selected are akin to moral and religious poetry.

They contain reflections on life and death and fit in well with a moral and educational concept of poetry. This kind of poetry started early in the Jāhiliyya; according to Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', the first poet to write poetry in dispraise of this life (dhamm al-dunyā) was Yazid b. Hadhdhāq.

A poem of his was quoted by Ibn Qutayba:

29 هَلْ لِلْفَتَى مِنْ بَنَاتِ الدَّهْرِ مِنْ وَاقٍ أَمْ هَلْ لَهُ مِنْ حِمَامِ الْمَوْتِ مِنْ رَافِقٍ

This poem and others similar to it are subjective poems, in some of which the poets elegized themselves. That of Yazīd b. Ḥadhdhāq is a good example, as is also that of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, starting:

30 أَعَاذِلُ مَا يَدْرِيكَ أَنْ مَيِّتَتِي إِلَى سَاعَةٍ مِنَ الْيَوْمِ أَوْ فِي ضَمَى الْغَدِ

In the poetry of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, Ibn Qutayba found a great many poems of zuhd which he described as "excellent, sensitive and fluent". Examples of such poems that he admired are that starting:

مَا أَنَا إِلَّا لَهَنَ بَغَانِي أَرَى خَلِيلِي كَمَا بَرَّانِي

and:

31 وَعَظْمُكَ أَجْدَانُ صُمْتُ وَنَفْسُكَ أَرْصَنَةٌ خُفْتُ

Ibn Qutayba's interest in subjective poetry may be clearly seen in his many selections from poems on longevity and those in which the poet weeps over the loss of his youth. These poems are generally characterised by simplicity, plainness and facility. Examples of such poetry are to be found in the poem of ʿAmr b. Qamī'a on his old age, starting:

رَمَتْنِي بَنَاتُ الدَّهْرِ مِنْ حَبْتٍ لَا أَرَى فَكَيْفَ يَمُنُّ بِرُمَى وَيَتَسَبَّرَ بِرَامِ

in the poem of al-Mukhabbal, also on his old age:

فَإِنْ بَلَكَ عُصْنِي أَصْبَحَ الْيَوْمَ ذَاوِيَا وَعُصْنُكَ مِنْ مَاءِ الشَّبَابِ رَطِيبُ

and in the lines of al-Musāwir b. Hind, on the same subject:

32 بَلِيْتُ وَعِلْمِي فِي الْبِلَادِ مَكَانَهُ وَأَقْنَى شَبَابِي الدَّهْرُ وَهُوَ جَدِيدُ

Further examples are the lines of al-Mustawghir b. Rabiʿa complaining of old age:

وَلَقَدْ سَيِّئْتُ مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ وَطُولِهَا وَتَحَمَّرْتُ مِنْ عَدَدِ السِّنِينَ مِثْلِينَا

and also the poem of Zuhayr b. Janāb, on the same subject:

33 الْمَوْتُ خَيْرٌ لَلْفَتَى فَلْيَهْلِكَنَّ وَبِهِ بَقِيَّةُ

Examples of poems in which poets weep over the loss of their youth are that by al-Muraqqish al-Akbar, starting:

فَقَدْ يَرْجِبُنِي لِي لَمَتِي إِنْ نَضَبْتُهَا إِلَى عَهْدِهَا قَبْلَ الْمَمَاتِ خِضَابُهَا

that by al-Akhtal, starting:

يَا قَلَّ خَيْرُ الْفَوَانِي كَيْفَ رُغِنَ بِهِ فَشَرِبُهُ وَشَلُّ فِيهِ تَقْرِيدُ

that by Tamīm b. Abī Muqbil, starting:

كَانَ الشَّبَابُ لِحَاجَاتٍ وَكُنْتُ لَهُ فَقَدْ خِزْتُ إِلَى حَاجَاتِ الْآخِرِ

and that by Abū Nuwās, starting:

34 كَانَ الشَّبَابُ مَطْنَةَ الْجَهْلِ وَمَحَسِّنَ الْفَحْكَاتِ وَالْهَزْلِ

In spite of the fact that Ibn Qutayba did not give any reasons for admiring those lines that he quoted and indicated no criteria by which he judged them, it may be possible to guess at some of these. We find that among his quotations there is poetry of wasf, madīh, hijā', rithā', khamriyyāt, and ghazal, and there is also a good deal of tashbīh. If we examine some lines from each of the genres mentioned above, we may be able to form some idea about what constituted excellent poetry, in his view. Concerning wasf, he singled out poets who were excellent in particular aspects of the genre. For instance, Aws b. Hajar was said to be the best at describing wild asses, weapons, especially bows, clouds and rain. Al-Shammākh b. Dirār was associated with Aws in describing wild asses and bows. Lines were quoted from each poet without the points of excellence in them being specified.³⁵ Aws was favoured for his line describing a she-camel:

لَأَنَّ هَرَاءً جَنِيْبًا عِنْدَ عُرْضَتِهَا وَالتَّفَّ دِيكَ بِرَجْلَيْهَا وَخَنَزِيرُ

Other poets did not go beyond describing the she-camel as having a cat or a jackal tied to its side; Aws initiated a new ma'nā when he mentioned a pig and a cock as well.³⁶ Ibn Qutayba also listed those who were good at describing horses, and he mentioned Abū Zubayd al-Tā'ī as the best at describing lions.³⁷ A poem by Humayd b. Thawr was quoted as containing an excellent description of a wolf.³⁸ Other lines, describing various things, are praised and quoted by Ibn Qutayba, without his referring to any specific quality in them. Nevertheless, some grounds

were indicated for the praise bestowed on certain lines of tashbīh, especially those of Imru' al-Qays and Zuhayr. The line of Imru' al-Qays:

لَأَنَّ قُلُوبَ الْعَبْرِ رَطْبًا وَيَابِسًا لَدَى وَكْرَهَا الْعُنَابُ وَالْحَشْفُ الْبَالِي

was admired because it was comprehensive tashbīh, in which the poet

likened two things to two other things. Another line of his:

لَهُ أَبْطَلَا ظَبْيً وَسَاقًا نَعَامَةً وَمَارْخَاءُ سِرْحَانٍ وَتَقْرِبُ تَنْفَلٍ

contained four similes.³⁹ Qudāma b. Ja'far was among those who praised

this second line of tashbīh, because it compressed four similes into a

few words.⁴⁰ Ibn Rashīq praised the first line for the same reason as

Ibn Qutayba.⁴¹ He also admired the second line because, in addition to

including four similes, the poet did not use the particle ka; Imru' al-

Qays was credited, as we have seen before, with being the first poet to

compose tashbīh in this way.⁴² The first line was also quoted by Ibn

Tabātabā in 'Iyār al-shi'r⁴³ and by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in Kitāb al-badī'.⁴⁴

A third line of tashbīh by Imru' al-Qays was also quoted:

لَأَنَّ عَيُونَ الْوَشْشِ كَوَلَّ قَبَائِنَا وَأَرْطَلْنَا الْجَزْعُ الَّذِي لَمْ يُتَقَبَّ 45

The same line was quoted by Qudāma as an excellent line of ighāl, one of

the "poetic beauties", as has been explained. In this line, the tashbīh

is complete before the rhyme-word is supplied, but when it is, it adds

to the ma'nā. The line was also quoted by Ibn Rashīq for the same

purpose.⁴⁶

Interest in such "poetic beauties" is found elsewhere in the quotations

of Ibn Qutayba. Three lines were quoted from Zuhayr, who contrived to

produce three tashbīhāt for a woman in one line; in the second and third

lines he gave details (tafsīl):

تَنَازَعَتِ الْمَهَا نُسْبَهَا وَدَرَّ الْبُحُورُ وَشَالَهِنَّ فِيهَا الطِّبَاءُ
فَأَمَّا فَوَيْقَ الْعَقْدِ مِنْهَا فَمِنْ أَدْمَاءَ مَرَّتْهَا الْخَلَاءُ
وَأَمَّا الْمُقْلَتَانِ فَمِنْ مَهَاةٍ وَلِلدَّرِّ الْمَلَاةُ وَالْقَفَاءُ 47

A fourth line of Zuhayr's was admired because in it the poet managed to

condense various kinds of fighting:

يَبْلَغَنَّهُمْ مَا ارْتَمَوْا حَتَّى إِذَا طَعَنُوا ضَارِبَ حَتَّى إِذَا مَا ضَارِبُوا اعْتَنَقَا 48

The same line of Zuhayr's was highly praised by Ibn Rashīq, who quoted it as the best line of tagsīm and the most difficult to achieve. He said that it had no equal.⁴⁹ Three lines of apology were quoted from al-Nābigha and admired for the excellent muḡāyasa he produced in them, addressing al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir:

وَلَكِنِّي كُنْتُ أُمْرًا إِلَى جَانِبٍ مِنْ الْأَرْضِ فِيهِ مُسْتَمَارٌ وَمَذْهَبٌ
مُلُوكٌ حِوَانٌ إِذَا مَا لَقَيْتَهُمْ أَحْكَمُ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَقْرَبُ
كَفَعْلِكَ فِي قَوْمٍ أَرَاكَ اصْطَفَيْتَهُمْ وَلَمْ تَرْهَمْ فِي شُكْرٍ ذَلِكَ أَذْنِبُوا 50

In Ibn Qutayba's quotations from rithā' poetry, there were three lines by al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī. Two of them contained the figures of muqābala and istithnā', as Ibn Rashīq pointed out:

فَتَى كَلِمَتٌ خَيْرَاتُهُ غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ جَوَادٌ فَمَا يُبْقِي مِنْ أَمَالٍ بَاقِيَا
فَتَى ثُمَّ فِيهِ مَا يَسُرُّ صَدِيقَهُ عَلَى أَنَّ فِيهِ مَا يَسُوءُ الْأَعَادِيَا 51

Ibn al-Mu'tazz quoted the first line as an example of ta'kid al-madh bi-mā yushbih al-dhamm.⁵² These mahāsin were, of course, incorporated into the art of badī', and they indicate a degree of interest in this art, on the part of Ibn Qutayba, as do also his quotations from Muslim b. al-Walīd, and other poets. He praised Muslim for his fine ma'ānī and sensitive discourse in both of which Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām had followed him. The latter borrowed from Muslim some of his badī' lines such as:

إِذَا مَا نَافَخْنَا الْحَرْبَ بِالْبَيْضِ وَالْقَنَا جَعَلْنَا الْمَنَايَا عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ طَلَاقَهَا

Ibn Qutayba quoted examples of badī' from other poets as well as Muslim, but mostly from him.⁵³ In some of his lines of badī', Muslim is fond of repeating certain letters, like sīn, as in the line:

سَلْتُ فَسَلَّتْ ثُمَّ سَلَّ سَلِيلُهَا فَأَتَى سَلِيلُ سَلِيلِهَا مَسْلُورًا

There are other examples, in which hā' and gāf are repeated. There are also repetitions of certain verbs in the same line.⁵⁴

Among Ibn Qutayba's quotations from madīh poetry there are lines that indicate an admiration for madīh bi-'l-tafdīl, which was regarded by some critics as the best kind of madīh, as we have pointed out. The poem of rithā' by Laylā al-Akhyaliyya on Tawba b. al-Humayyir, some of the lines of which were quoted by Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī as an excellent example of madīh bi-'l-tafdīl, was quoted also by Ibn Qutayba. The relevant lines are:

فَتَيَّ هَرَأِيَا مِنْ قَتَاةٍ حَيَّةٍ وَأَشْجَعُ مِنْ كَيْتٍ نَحْفَانٍ خَادِرٍ
فَنِعْمَ الْقَتَى إِنْ كَانَ تَوْبَةً فَاجِرًا وَفَوْقَ الْقَتَى إِنْ كَانَ لَيْسَ بِفَاجِرٍ 55

Madīh bi-'l-tafdīl is also to be found in these lines, quoted from the poetry of al-Musayyab b. 'Alas:

نَبِيتَ الْمَلُوكَ عَلَى عَثْبِهَا وَشَبَّيَانُ أَنْ غَضِبْتَ تُعْتَبُ
وَالشَّهْدُ بِالرَّاحِ اخْلَاقَهُمْ وَأَحْلَاهُمْ مِنْهُمَا أَعْذَبُ
وَالْمِسْلُ شَرُّ مَنَامَتِهِمْ وَرَبِّا قُبُورِهِمْ أَطْيَبُ

and in these two lines, by the same poet:

وَلَقَدْ بَلَوْتُ الْفَاعِلِينَ وَفَعَلَهُمْ فَلِذِي الرُّقْبَةِ مَالُهُ مِثْلُ
كَفَاهُ مَوْلَاةٍ وَمَوْلَاةٍ وَعَطَاؤُهُ مُتَخَرِّقٌ جَزَلُ 56

In his quotations from hijā' poetry, Ibn Qutayba seems to have favoured amusing hijā' which could be regarded as hazl. This possibly reflects the influence of al-Jāhiz, who used to follow his quotations of serious hijā' by those of hazl, in order to afford the reader some relaxation. This was also done by al-Mubarrad in his al-Kāmil and also by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his tabaqāt, as we shall see. In Ibn Qutayba's quotations from hijā' poetry as well as in those of Ibn al-Mu'tazz on the same subject, we find that this genre was gradually losing its position as a serious one. Ibn Qutayba found hazl in poems of hijā' written by poets against themselves, in which they ridiculed and presented themselves in an amusing light. He also found it to a great extent in poems of hijā'

associated with hospitality, from which he quoted a great deal. Examples of the first kind of poetry, that in which the poet satirises himself, are the following lines by Suhaym 'Abd Banī al-Hashās:

أَتَيْتُ نِسَاءَ الْحَارِثِيِّينَ عُدْوَةً بَوْجَةً بَرَأَهُ اللَّهُ غَيْرَ جَمِيلٍ
فَشَبَّهَنِي كَلْبًا وَلَسْتُ بِفَوْقِهِ وَلَا دُونَهُ إِنْ كَانَ غَيْرَ خَلِيلٍ

those of al-Hutay'a about himself:

أَبَتْ شَنْقَتَايَ الْيَوْمَ إِلَّا تَكَلَّمَا بِسُوءٍ فَمَا أُدْرِي لِمَنْ أَنَا قَائِلُهُ
أَرَى لِي وَجْهًا شَوَّاهُ اللَّهُ خَلَقَهُ فَخَبَّحَ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ وَقُبَّحَ حَامِلُهُ

and those written against his parents.⁵⁷

The mocking type of *hijā'* associated with hospitality was written either against individuals or against tribes. In the latter case, it may be thought to represent a development of the kind of tribal *hijā'* quoted by Ibn Sallām, which is concerned with *mufākharā*, the mention of *ayyām*, and other serious matters. This serious element is noticeably lacking in the quotations of Ibn Qutayba, and this may well indicate, as we have suggested, that the importance of *hijā'* was declining.

An example of this mocking tribal *hijā'* is the following lines by Bilāl

b. Jarīr against the Banū Nāshira of the tribe of Fuqaym:

عَدَدْنَا فَقِيمًا وَآبَاءَهُمْ فَشَرُّ فَقِيمٍ بَنُو نَاشِرِهِ
قَصَارَ الْفُعَالِ طَوَالَ الْخَطِّ مَنَاتِينَ لَيْسَتْ لَهُمْ بَادِرِهِ
يَعْدُونَ غُرْمًا قَرَى حَبِيبِهِمْ فَلَا عِدْمُوا صَفْقَةً خَاسِرِهِ
إِذَا ضَعُفَتْهُمْ ثُمَّ سَاءَ لَتَهُمْ وَجَدَتْ بِهِمْ عِلَّةٌ حَاضِرِهِ

In another poem he wrote:

أَمْسَعُودُ أَنْتَ اللَّيْمُ الْأَثِيمُ لِأَنَّكَ قُنْفُذَةٌ فِي ضَمْعَةٍ
سَمِعْنَا لَهُ إِذْ نَزَلْنَا بِهِ سَلَامًا كَمَا تَنْطَفِقُ الصَّفْعَةُ
فَأَيُّ اللَّيْمَيْنِ أَشَبَّهْتَهُ أَطْفَعَةُ أَمْ أُمْلَكُ الْكَلْبَةِ
عَدَدْنَا عَدِيًّا وَآبَاءَهُمْ فَشَرُّ عَدِيٍّ بَنُو بَيْدَعِهِ
فَمَا أُعْطِشَ الصَّيْفَ لَمَّا غَدَا مِنَ الْبَيْدَعَاتِ وَمَا أَجْوَعُهُ

Ziyād al-‘Ajam mockingly satirised the tribe of Ashāqir as follows:

قَبِيلَةٌ خَبَرُهَا شَرُّهَا وَأَصْدَقُهَا الْكَاذِبُ الْأَثَمُ
وَقَتِيفُهُمْ وَسَطُ آبِيائِهِمْ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ صَائِمًا صَائِمٌ 59

Humorous mockery is also to be found in two lines quoted from Bilāl b.

Jarīr on Hammād al-Minqarī:

نَزَلْنَا بِحَمَادٍ خَلَّى كِلَابَهُ عَلَيْنَا فَكَلَدْنَا بَيْنَ بَيْتَيْهِ نُوْكُلُ
وَقَدْ قَالَ قَبْلِي قَائِلٌ ظَلَّ فِيهِمْ أَذَا الْيَوْمِ أَوْ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَطْوَلُ 60

Hammād ‘Ajrād wrote a number of similar *hi jā* poems, also associated with hospitality.⁶¹ One of the lines quoted from Bashshār in a similar vein

contains the figure of *istitrad*, according to Ibn Rashīq, who cited the passage as an excellent example of this figure:

خَلِيلِي مِنْ كَعْبٍ أَعِينَا إِخْلَامًا عَلَى دَقْرِهِ إِنْ الْكَرِيمُ مُعِينُ
وَلَا تَبْخَلَا بُحْلَ ابْنِ قُرَيْعَةَ إِنَّهُ مَخَافَةٌ أَنْ يُرْجَى نَدَاهُ حَزِينُ
إِذَا جِئْتَهُ لِلْعُرْفِ أَغْلَقَ بَابَهُ فَلَمْ تَنْلَقَهُ إِلَّا وَأَنْتَ كَلِينُ
فَقُلْ لِلْأَمِيِّ يَجِبِي مَتَى تَبْلُغُ الْعُلَى وَفِي كُلِّ مَعْرُوفٍ عَلِيدٌ يَهِينُ 62

Among the quotations from *hi jā* poetry there are also poems containing obscene ideas and words, such as that by Dābī b. al-Hārith al-Burjūmī, already mentioned, against the Banū Jarwal of the tribe of Qurhān. In it the poet accused their mother of having sexual relations with a dog.

The poem starts:

تَجَشَّمُ دُونِي وَقَدْ قُرْحَانُ شَقَّةً تَنْظُرُ بِهَا الْوُضَاءُ وَهِيَ حَسِيرُ

Two lines from the *hi jā* poetry of Zuhayr were also quoted, in which he accused the women of a certain tribe of having sexual relations with a camel.⁶³

The significance of the quoting of such *hi jā* poetry is that it may indicate a change of opinion concerning the most wounding kind of *hi jā*.

Earlier critics, such as Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā, Khalaf al-Ahmar and

al-Akhtal, admired decent hiġā' that contained no obscenity either in words or content. Ibn Qutayba, in spite of the fact that he criticised Imru' al-Qays and 'Adī b. Zayd for proclaiming their adultery in their poems⁶⁴ instead of hiding it, was nonetheless prepared to cite obscene poems of hiġā'. Later, we shall see more examples of this, in the quotations of Ibn al-Mu'tazz.

Although Ibn Qutayba criticised poets who told lies in their poetry, through exaggeration, such as Muhalhil, in his line:

فَلَوْلَا الرِّيحُ أَسْمَعُ أَهْلَ جَبْرِ صَبِيلَ الْبَيْتِ تُقَرِّعُ بِالذُّوَرِ

and al-Namr b. Tawlab, in his line (about his sword):

تَظَلُّ تُخَفِّرُ عَنْهُ إِنْ هَرَبَتْ بِهِ بَعْدَ الذَّرَاعِينَ وَالسَّاقِيَيْنِ وَالْهَادِي

and although he also criticised al-Nābigha for his ifrāt (excessive exaggeration) in the line:

إِذَا ارْتَعَشْتَ خَافَ الْجَبَانُ رِعَاثَهَا وَمَنْ يَتَلَقَّ حَيْثُ عَلِقَ يَفْزُقُ

he still admired a line of ghazal by Majnūn Laylā, describing his thinness:

أَلَا إِنَّمَا غَادَرَنِي يَا أُمَّ مَالِكٍ صَدَى أَيْنَمَا تَذَقُّبُ بِهِ الرِّيحُ يَذْهَبُ

In fact, he preferred this line to two others by 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, on the same subject:

رَأَيْتُ رَجُلًا أَمَّا إِذَا الشَّمْسُ عَارَفَتْ قَيْصَمِي وَأَمَّا بِالْعَيْشِيِّ فَيَخْصُرُ 65
قَلِيلًا عَلَى طَهْرِ الْمَلِيَّةِ شَخْصُهُ خَلَا مَا نَبَى عَنْهُ الرِّدَاءُ الْمُخْبِرُ

This acceptance of, and admiration for, exaggeration in ghazal poetry, whereby a poet expresses his intense love, is related to the demand for riġqa in ghazal. Ibn Qutayba appears to have shared the common view concerning the various ways, which we have frequently referred to before, in which riġqa might appropriately be expressed. When speaking of Jamīl and other poets of ghazal, he mentioned the former as "one of those who were content with little in love", and cited a line of his:

أَقَلَّبْتُ طَرْفِي فِي السَّمَاءِ لَعَلَّهُ يَوَافِقُ طَرْفِي طَرْفَهَا حِينَ تَنْظُرُ

He also cited two lines by al-Ma^lūt al-Sa^hī:

أَلَيْسَ اللَّيْلُ يَلْبِسُ أُمَّمَ تَحْمَرُو وَإِيَّانَا فُذَاكَ بِنَا تَدَانِي
بَلَى وَتَرَى السَّمَاءَ كَمَا أَرَاهَا وَيَعْلُوها النَّهَارُ كَمَا عَلَانِي 66

All of this may throw some light on the supposed criteria used by Ibn Qutayba in making his selections. However, even in those cases where he did give an opinion about poetry that he considered good, it is not easy to tell whether he was actually applying the standards that he indicated to the poems that he quoted. For instance, he wondered why al-Asma^hī had selected the poem of al-Muraqqish al-Akbar that starts:

هَذَا بِالْدِّيَارِ أَنْ تُجِيبَ صَمَمَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ جَبًّا نَاطِقًا كَلَّمَهُ

He described this poem as an example of poetry in an inappropriate metre and rhyme, the words of which had not been carefully chosen and the concepts of which were commonplace. He said that the only good lines in it were:

النَّشْرُ مِثْلَكَ وَالْوَجْوهُ دَنَا نَبِيرٌ وَالْطَّرَافُ الْأَكْفَى عَنَّمِ

and:

كَيْسَ عَلَى طُولِ الْحَيَاةِ نَدَمٌ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ الْمَرْءِ مَا يُعْلَمُ 67

He did not explain how these two lines were admirable, but judging from his interest in tashbīh and his moral and educational tendency, it seems likely that he admired the first line because it contained three kinds of tashbīh, without the particle ka⁶⁸, and the second as being a line of hikma.

Ibn Qutayba often quoted lines for which his poets had been criticised by critics before him. In some cases he accepted their criticism; for instance, Ka^h b. Zuhayr was criticised for his line:

ضَحْمٌ مَقْلَدُهَا فَعْمٌ مَقْبِدُهَا .

because he had described the neck of his she-camel as "big" (dakhm), whereas it would have been correct to describe it as thin, using the word diqqa, as Ibn Qutayba maintained, quoting al-Asma'ī.⁶⁹ Another example of this is the line of Dhū al-Rumma describing dogs:

حَتَّى إِذَا رَوَّمَتْ فِي الْأَرْضِ رَابِعَهُ كَبْرٌ وَلَوْ شَاءَ كَجَى نَفْسَهُ الْهَرَبُ

He was criticised for his wrong use of the verb dawwam, which was applied to a bird flying, not to a dog running.⁷⁰ Such criticism was connected with facts and reality, and it was to a great extent based on what earlier poets had said on subjects similar to those written about by the poets being criticised. This use, even at second hand, of the ancient poets as standards against which to judge later poets, appears to indicate an unacknowledged bias, on Ibn Qutayba's part as well, in favour of the ancients.

Although he took up a moderate position in the dispute concerning the merits of the ancients and the muhdathūn, we have already seen, in his insistence on the perpetuation of the sections of the qasīda, his predilection, if not for the ancient poets themselves, at any rate for the traditional themes and methods of composition associated with the Jāhiliyya. It is not, therefore, altogether surprising to find him using the conservative judgements and criticisms of the ruwāt and 'ulamā' whom he quoted. In addition to this, however, we find him actually articulating something that we may suspect to have been behind much of the apparently arbitrary judgements expressed by early critics, namely the possibility of being provoked into making an instinctive judgement by the immediate impression produced by a poem on first hearing. The following remark is revealing in this respect: "How excellent (Li-llāhi darr) is the man who said: The best poet is the one whose poetry you are actually reciting - until you have finished it". He also told the story

of how, when the poet Marwān b. Abī Hafsa heard some poetry of Zuhayr, he was highly moved and said: "Zuhayr is the best poet of all". Then some poetry by al-Aʿshā was recited to him, and he was again moved by it and said: "Nay, this one is the best poet of all". Finally, he heard some poetry by Imru' al-Qays, and he was greatly delighted and said: "By Allāh, Imru' al-Qays is the best poet of all".⁷¹

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Modern School

3. Al-Mubarrad

The third figure, after al-Jāhiz and Ibn Qutayba, in the modern school of critics, is Abū al-ʿAbbās Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Mubarrad. He was one of the great ʿulamā of the third century of the Hijra and was famous as a grammarian, (he was known as al-Nahwī), and a philologist. His interest in poetry is shown in his books like al-Kāmil, al-Fāḍil and al-Rawḍa, the last containing quotations only from the muhdathūn. Citations of poetry as a witness for language is to be found here and there in al-Kāmil, together with examples of what he thought to be good and admirable poetry. Al-Mubarrad was an important figure among those critics who followed a middle way in the dispute about the ancients and the muhdathūn. Besides his quotations from these poets in al-Rawḍa, there is a considerable number of quotations from them in al-Kāmil. Nevertheless, al-Rawḍa was severely criticised by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi in al-ʿIqd al-farīd. He claimed that the poetry of the muhdathūn selected by al-Mubarrad in this book was the coldest poetry ever written by them, especially those poems selected from the poetry of Abū Nuwās. As for those selected from Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, they could kill with their coldness. He thought that Abū al-ʿAbbās was called al-Mubarrad (rather than al-Mubarrid) because of this coldness that appeared in his selections.¹ Whether or not Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi was right, Abū al-ʿAbbās was also known as al-Mubarrid; he was called so by al-Māzinī, as Yāqūt mentioned in Muʿjam al-udabā.² Anyhow, whether he was al-Mubarrad or al-Mubarrid, the important thing is his interest in the muhdath poetry, which he used to teach to his students, such as Ibn al-Muʿtazz, to whom he explained

the meaning of the poem of Abū Nuwās starting:

3 لَسْتُ لِدَارٍ عَفْتُ وَغَيْرَهَا ضَرْبَانِ مِنْ قَطْرُهَا وَحَاصِبِهَا

Those critics who favoured al-Buhturī and rejected Abū Tammām supported their views by quoting al-Mubarrad who praised al-Buhturī and called him "the poet of his time and the unique one of his kind".⁴ However, it is not easy to tell which of the two he actually admired more. Despite his declaration in favour of al-Buhturī, on another occasion, according to Ibn al-Mu'tazz, when he asked him about the two poets, he replied:

"Abū Tammām has استخرجات الحيفة ومعاني طريفة .

to which al-Buhturī has nothing similar in his poetry. He (Abū Tammām) is صيغ الخاطر حسن الانتزاع .

and al-Buhturī is أَحْسَنُ اسْتِوَاءً .

(more excellent in consistency); in this he is different from Abū Tammām, who writes an unique line and a weak one: النادر والبارد .

This style of poetry was preferred by al-Asma'ī (who took it as a sign of naturalness). I liken Abū Tammām to a pearl-diver who brings up (from the bottom of the sea) pearls together with makhshalaba (?). By Allāh, Abū Tammām and al-Buhturī have so many beauties which cannot be found in most of the poetry written by the ancients".⁵ These last words display a great enthusiasm for the muhdathūn. He demanded that both ancient and the muhdath poets should be judged according to their excellence, regardless of their period, or as he wrote: "The ancient poet is not favoured because of his antiquity and the muhdath one is not disapproved of (if he is excellent) because of his modernity, but each of them should be given what he really deserves".⁶ Although he was a grammarian, in his selections from muhdath poetry, he sometimes ignored his grammar and showed admiration for lines written by a poet who was not a hujja, as we shall see in an example later.

Despite what appear to be his moderate views on the question of ancients and the muhdathūn, al-Mubarrad seems to have been a critic who was much influenced by his investigation of the elements of rhetoric and 'eloquence' in the poetry that he quoted from the two groups of poets. This led him to consult the ancient Arab heritage and the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth in order to support his views concerning what he thought to be good or 'eloquent' poetry in different genres. So, while he rejected the antiquity of a poet as a reason for necessarily preferring him to a muhdath, on the other hand, he judged the ancients themselves, together with the muhdathūn, against the criteria which he had established by consulting the ancient Arab heritage (poetry and prose), the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. In other words, the muhdathūn were in fact judged by the standards of the ancients, as we have found with a number of critics before. The rhetorical figure that al-Mubarrad most admired was conciseness (ījāz), to which he referred, from time to time, as one of the most important qualities of excellent poetry and speech. He supported his views concerning the merits of conciseness by quoting the Prophet as saying to one of his companions: "O, Jarīr, when you say (anything), say it with conciseness, and when you attain your object, do not be affected!"

7 يَا جَرِيرُ إِذَا قُلْتَ فَأَوْجِزْ وَإِذَا بَلَغْتَ حَاجَتَكَ فَلَا تَتَكَلَّفْ .

Al-Mubarrad explained the ḥadīth as meaning that the Prophet desired sincerity of speech and of intention and that he was advocating the avoidance of what was not needed in one's discourse.⁸ He then gave examples of what he considered to be eloquent speeches which were free from affectation and complexity, with magnificent ma'nā and firmness (jazāla) of words.⁹ He also quoted the Arabs' view about the best kind of discourse, it is that which satisfies with its conciseness and does not require exaggeration.¹⁰

Conciseness should be comprehensible, and by means of allusion or gesture (*īmā'*), which would easily be understood by the intelligent, one could achieve conciseness that did not need to be explained or elaborated. A good example of this was this line by al-Huṭay'a (*madīh*):

وذلك فتى إن تأتته في صنيعةٍ إلى ماله لا تأتته بشفيع

and this one by 'Antara (*fakhr*):

يُخِيرُكَ مَنْ تَشْهَدُ الْوَقِيعَةَ أَنَّنِي أَغْمَشِي الْوَعْيَ وَاعْفُ عِنْدَ الْمُقْنَمِ

The two lines were "a plain, easily understood kind of poetry, with beautiful descriptions and composition", and although they were expressed in a few words, they contained complete concepts. Similar to them were the following lines, one by Zuhayr (*madīh*):

على مكثريهم حق من بعثريهم وعند المقلين السباحة والبذل

and one by al-Farazdaq (*hiḡā'* on Jarīr):

فَرَبَّتْ عَلَيْكَ الْعَنْكَبُوتُ بِنَسِجِهَا وَقَفَى عَلَيْكَ بِهِ الْكَتَابُ الْهَنْزَلُ

The line describes the house of Jarīr, comparing it with a spider's web. Instead of saying directly that it is very weak, al-Farazdaq made an allusion (*īmā'*) in the second half of the line to the Qur'ānic verse:

11 "وَإِنْ أَوهَتِ الْبُيُوتُ لَبِيتَ الْعَنْكَبُوتُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ."

Conciseness is achieved by omitting words or by compressing a number of concepts into a few words. As we have said, al-Mubarrad supported his views by citing the Qur'an, the *ḡadīth* and ancient Arabic poetry and prose. Here he quoted some Qur'ānic verses in which words were omitted. In the following verse:

"إِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ."

the meaning, according to al-Mubarrad, was:

إِذَا كَالُوا لَهُمْ وَإِذَا وَزَنُوا لَهُمْ.

And in this:

"وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا رِطْقًا تَنَا."

the preposition *min* was omitted, and one might expect:

وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَى مِنْ قَوْمِهِ.

The following two lines were admired by al-Mubarrad for similar conciseness and omission; the first one was by A'shā Tarūd:

أَمَرْتُكَ الْخَيْرَ فَأَفْعَلُ مَا أُمِرْتُ بِهِ فَقَدْ تَرَكْتُكَ ذَا مَالٍ وَذَا نَسَبٍ

amartuka al-khayra stands for amartuka bi-al-khayri. The second line

was by al-Farazdaq, who wrote:

وَمِنَّا الَّذِي اخْتَبَرَ الرِّجَالَ سَمَاحَةً وَجُوداً إِذَا هَبَّ الرِّيحُ الرِّعَازُ

Min is suppressed before al-rijāl. Such elipses are a sign of 'eloquence' according to al-Mubarrad.¹² Further examples were in a poem of tribal

mufākhara by a poet of Tay'. Al-Mubarrad quoted the whole poem and

pointed out some lines which he particularly admired for their conciseness. One was:

لَهُمْ عَجَزٌ بِالْحَزَنِ فَالرَّمْلِ فَاللَّوَى وَقَدْ جَاوَزَتْ حَبِيَّتِي جَدِيسَ رِعَالِهَا

One would expect the poet to mention the name of the other tribe, which is Tas'am, but he did not. There is also an elipse in the line:

دَعَا لِفِزَارٍ وَانْتَمَيْنَا لِلْهَيْئِ لِأَسَدِ الشَّرَى إِقْدَامُهَا وَنَزَالُهَا

In the second half, one would expect:

13 لِإِقْدَامِ أَسَدِ الشَّرَى إِقْدَامُهَا .

According to al-Mubarrad, the poet who is skilful in discourse is the one who can compress many thoughts into a few words and still express himself clearly. Ibn 'Uyayna wrote:

مَا رَاحَ يَوْمٌ عَلَى حَيٍّ وَلَا ابْتَلَا إِلَّا رَأَى عِبْرَةً فِيهِ إِنَّهُ اعْتَبَرَ
وَلَا أَتَتْ سَاعَةٌ فِي الدَّهْرِ فَانْقَرَمَتْ حَتَّى تُوَثِّرَ فِي قَوْمٍ لَهَا أَثَرًا
إِنَّ اللَّيَالِي وَالْأَيَّامَ أَنْفُسُهَا عَنْ غَيْرِ أَنْفُسِهَا لَمْ تُكَلِّمِ الْخَبَرَ

Abū Tammām borrowed the ma'nā and was able to condense it into a single line:

عُمُرِي لَقَدْ نَصَحَ الزَّمَانُ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِنَّ الْعِبَابِ نَاصِحٌ لَا يَنْشَقُّ

Besides expressing the ma'nā more concisely, Abū Tammām had added to the original idea with: nāsihun lā yashfaqu.¹⁴ Another excellent example

was the lines of Mukhayyis b. Artā al-‘Ajraji, who wrote:

مَرَّضْتُ نَفْسِي مَنِي لِيَجِيَّ فَقَالَ غَشَّشَنِي وَالنَّعْمُ مَرُّ
وَمَا بِي أَنْ أَلُونَ أَحِبُّ يَجِيَّ وَيَجِيَّ طَاهِرُ الْأَخْلَاقِ بَرُّ
وَكَلِنْ قَدْ أَتَانِي أَنْ يَجِيَّ يَقَالُ لَهُ فِي بَقْعَاءَ شَرُّ
فَقُلْتُ لَهُ تَجَنَّبْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ يُعَابُ عَلَيْكَ إِنَّ الْحُرَّ حُرُّ

The lines were admired by al-Mubarrad because, as he described them, they belonged to the kind of beautiful poetry which could easily be understood and approached. He also praised them as "a kind of discourse which has no excess over its meaning", which implies conciseness of expression, and skill on the part of the poet in employing suitable words for his concepts. The most admirable line was the last, because in it the poet expressed several concepts in his words: inna al-hurra hurru, by which he meant: "a noble man behaves according to the manners of noble men". This expression of several ma‘ānī in a concise way was to be found also in a line by Abū al-Najm al-‘Ijlī:

أَنَا أَبُو النِّجْمِ وَشِعْرِي شِعْرِي

The poet was boasting of his poetry and his line meant: "My poetry is such as you have heard and known". Al-Mubarrad claimed that the conciseness and 'eloquence' of the line would disappear if the poet had explained his words: for instance, if he had said: "You have already heard of the great eloquence and excellence of my poetry". To support his view concerning the conciseness of the line, al-Mubarrad quoted the Qur'ānic verse:

“فَنَسِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ”

which referred to the punishment received by Pharaoh, who was drowned in the sea. Instead of specifying the extent of that punishment, the verse gave an exaggerated impression in describing the punishment suffered by Pharaoh and his people who were drowned with him".¹⁵

A poet, besides being concise, should avoid affectation (takalluf) and isti'āna (seeking help). Al-Mubarrad explained isti'āna to mean a poet or a speaker's adding to his discourse something which was not really needed and was not useful to his audience. This sort of addition was made by the poet in order to achieve correctness of rhyme or metre, and by the speaker in order to have a chance to think for a moment and remember or prepare what was to be said next. The common people, in their conversation, used isti'āna in saying, for instance: "don't you hear?"; "did you understand me?" and similar things. The one who cannot express himself may use isti'āna in twisting his finger or touching his beard and other parts of his body.¹⁶ Al-Mubarrad then quoted from two poems, as examples of poetry that he admired because it was free from affectation, unnecessary additions (tazayyud), and isti'āna. The first example was some lines by Abū Hayya al-Numayrī:

رَضَّنِي وَسَيَّرُ اللهُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهَا مَعْشِيَةَ أَرْءَامِ الْكِنَاسِ رَمِيمُ
 أَلَا رَبِّ بَعُومُ لَوْ رَضَّنِي رَضَّتْهَا وَكُنْتُ عَمْدِي بِالْإِضَالِ قَدِيمُ
 يَرَى النَّاسُ أَنِّي قَدْ سَلَوْتُ وَإِنِّي كَمُحْمَدٍ أَحْنَاءُ الْفُلُوحِ سَقِيمُ

The second example was by an a'rābī of the Banū Kilāb:

فَمَنْ يَكُ لَمْ يَفْرِضْ فَإِنِّي وَنَاقَتِي . تَجَبَّرُ إِلَى أَهْلِ الْحِمَى غَرِضَانِ
 هُوَ نَاقَتِي خَلْفِي وَقَدَّامِي الْهُوَى وَإِنِّي وَإِيَّاهَا كُتُفَانِ
 تَحِينَ قُنْبُرِي مَا بَهَا مِنْ عَنَابَةٍ وَأَخْفِي الَّذِي لَوْلَا الْأُسَى لَقَضَانِي

The lines were also praised for their "beauty of words and strangeness of concepts". The poet was said to have succeeded in presenting his ideas beautifully "because of his eloquence and his knowledge of the pearls (essence?) of discourse". This appeared clearly in the concise expression embodied in the last word of the last line, where la-qadānī stood for la-qadā 'alayya al-mawt. Al-Mubarrad quoted the Qur'ān in commenting on la-qadānī:

17 " فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ "

Conciseness should be accompanied by correctness of maʿnā, otherwise the poet would be regarded as unsuccessful. Al-Shammākh, although praised for his conciseness in this line:

إِذَا بَلَغْتَنِي وَحَمَلْتِ رَحْلِي عَرَابَةً فَاشْتَرَيْ بَدَمِ الْوَتِينِ

was criticised for being unkind to his she-camel, when he declared that if she carried him to his mamduḥ, he wished her then to be slaughtered; he had no further use for her, since he did not need to travel to anyone other than ʿArāba (the mamduḥ). Dhū al-Rumma also followed the wrong path when he wrote the following line, addressing his she-camel:

إِذَا ابْنُ أَبِي مُوسَى بَلَاؤُ بَلْفَتِهِ فَقَامَ بِفَاسٍ بَيْنَ قَوْصَلَيْكَ جَارِرُ

The one who followed the right path was ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥa, in these two lines:

إِذَا بَلَغْتَنِي وَحَمَلْتِ رَحْلِي مَسِيرَةَ أَرْبَعِ بَعْدَ الْحَسَاءِ
فَشَأْنُكَ فَاتْنَمِ وَذَلَاكَ ذِمٌّ وَلَا ارْجِعْ إِلَى أَهْلِي وَرَائِي

and al-Aʿshā, in:

فَالَيْتُ لَا أُرْثِي لَهَا مِنْ كِلَالَةٍ وَلَا مِنْ حَفَا حَتَّى تَلَاقِي مُحَمَّدًا
مَتَى مَا تَنَاضَى عِنْدَ بَابِ ابْنِ هَاشِمٍ تَفُوزِي وَتَلْقَى مِنْ فَوَاضِلِهِ يَدَا

Al-Farazdaq, who rightly followed al-Aʿshā, wrote:

عَلَى مَ تَلْتَفِتِينَ وَأَنْتِ تَحْتِي وَخَيْرُ النَّاسِ كُلِّهِمْ أُمَامِي
مَتَى تَرْدِي الرُّصَافَةَ تَسْتَرِيحِي مِنَ الْأَنْسَاعِ وَالذَّبَرِ الدَّوَامِي 18

Concerning maʿanī, al-Mubarrad rejected exaggeration (ifrāt), criticising certain poets who departed too far from reality and sincerity in some of their lines. An aʿrabi was criticised by him for exaggerating, in describing his thinness as follows:

فَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا أَبْقَيْتَ مِنِّي مَعْلَقَ يَغُودِ ثَمَامٍ مَا تَأَوَّدَ عَوْدُهَا

Another poet similarly exaggerated in describing the speed of his she-camel:

وَيَمْنَعُهَا مِنْ أَنْ تَطِيرَ زِمَامُهَا .

According to al-Mubarrad, "the best kind of poetry is that in which the poet produces apposite similes (tashbīh muqārib); better still is that in which the poet tells the truth (haqīqa), points out what is hidden from others, and uses firm composition and comprehensible conciseness". The following lines by Qays b. Ma'adh were a good example of such poetry, with plain and clear concepts:

وَأَخْرَجَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْجُلُوسِ لَعَلَّنِي أَحَدْتُ عَنْكَ النَّفْسَ بِالْيَلِيلِ خَالِيَا
وَمَا نِي لَأَسْتَفْشِي وَمَا نِي تَعْسَةً لَعَلَّ خِيَالًا مِنْكَ يَلْقَى خِيَالِيَا
أَشَوْقًا وَلَهَا يَمْنِي لِي غَيْرُ لَيْلَةٍ رُوَيْدَ الْهَوَى حَتَّى يَفْبَّ لِيَالِيَا

The following line of Dhū al-Rumma was similar and was admired for the same reason:

19 احْبَبُّ الْمَكَانَ الْقَفَرِ مِنْ أَجْلِ أَنَّنِي بِهِ أَتَقَنَّى بِاسْمِهَا غَيْرَ مُعْجَمٍ

A ma'nā should be clear, uncomplicated and free from constraint of discourse. The following line by al-Farazdaq:

وَمَا مِثْلُهُ فِي النَّاسِ إِلَّا مُمْلَكًا أَبُو أُمِّهِ حَيٌّ أَبُوهُ بِقَارِبِهِ

was said to have "the ugliest constraint, the lowest words and the most odd and incomprehensible ma'anī". The poet complicated it by using taqdīm and ta'khīr. Al-Mubarrad wondered how this complicated line could have been written by the same poet who wrote:

وَالشَّيْبُ يَنْهَفُ فِي السَّوَادِ لَأَنَّهُ كَيْلٌ يَصْبِيحُ بِجَانِبِهِ نَهَارٌ

and:

تَقَرَّرَ مِنِّي وَدُّ بَكْرٍ بَنٍ وَائِلٍ وَمَا كَادَ مِنِّي وَدَّ هُمْ يَتَقَرَّرُ
قَوَارِصُ تَأْتِيَنِي وَيَحْتَقِرُونَهَا وَقَدْ بَمَلَأُ الْقَطْرُ الْإِنَاءَ فَبِفَعْمٍ

Such lines were described as poetry of "the clearest ma'nā, most fluent words and closest ma'khadh (easily comprehended).²⁰ Just as the first line of al-Farazdaq's was rejected because of its complicated composition and odd ma'nā, so the following lines of Ibn Mayyāda were admired because of their correctness of ma'nā and firmness of words, and because this kind

of poetry was frequently written and poets were very familiar with it:

أَمَرْتُكَ يَا رِيَّاحُ بِأَمْرِ حَرَمٍ فَقُلْتَ هَشِيمَةً مِنْ أَهْلِ نَجْدٍ
تَهَيَّئْكَ عَنْ رِجَالٍ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ عَلَى مَحْبُوكَةِ الْأَصْلَابِ جُرْدٍ
وَوَجَدْتُ مَا وَجَدْتُ عَلَى رِيَّاحٍ وَمَا أَغْنَيْتُ شَيْئاً غَيْرَ وَجْدٍ 21

Al-Mubarrad also required qirān between the lines, and he accepted

Nusayb's criticism of al-Kumayt b. Zayd, who wrote:

وَقَدْ رَأَيْنَا بِهَا حُوراً مُنَمَّةً بَيْضاً تَكَامَلَ فِيهَا الدَّلُّ وَالشَّنْبُ

Nusayb said that al-Kumayt had gone too far when he said:

تَكَامَلَ فِيهَا الدَّلُّ وَالشَّنْبُ .

and wondered why he had not produced something similar to Dhū al-Rumma's line:

لَمَيَّا فِي شَقِيَّتِهَا حَوَّةٌ لَعَسَ وَفِي اللَّتَايِ وَفِي أُنْيَابِهَا شَنْبُ

Al-Mubarrad believed that the second half-line of al-Kumayt's was very ugly, because the discourse in it was not harmonious or well-arranged, and the words used did not match one another. The most important thing in any discourse was that it should be arranged in an orderly way and composed of elements that possessed some congruity (mushākala).

Al-Mubarrad then quoted 'Umar b. Laja', who had already been quoted by many critics as claiming that he was a better poet than one of his peers because he used to write a line and its brother, while the others wrote a line and its cousin. Al-Mubarrad, concerning the idea of qirān, seems to have been influenced by al-Jāhiz, who said much the same thing and quoted 'Umar b. Laja', Ru'ba b. al-Ajjāj and al-A'shā on the subject. Al-Mubarrad supported his views on qirān by quoting al-Jāhiz's citation of the following line:

وَشِعْرٌ كَبُرَ اللَّبْسُ فَرَّقَ بَيْنَهُ لِسَانٌ دَعَى فِي الْقَرِيفِ دَجِيلِ 22

Concerned as he was with his investigation of 'eloquence' and rhetoric in poetry, al-Mubarrad also sought out mahāsin. He cited the following

lines from the poetry of Tukhaym b. Abī al-Takhmā al-Asadī:

لَأَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَوْمَ بَرْوَرَةَ صَالِحٌ وَبِالْقَصْرِ لَطْلٌ دَائِمٌ وَصَدِيقٌ
وَلَمْ أُرِدِ الْبَلْعَاءَ يَمْزُجُ مَاءَهَا شَرَابٌ مِنْ الْبَرْقَتَيْنِ غَنِيَقٌ
مَعِيَ كَلٌّ فَفَضَايِ الْقَمِيهِ لَأَنَّهُ إِذَا مَا سَرَتْ فِيهِ الْهَدَامُ خَنِيقٌ
بَنُو السَّمْلِ وَالْحَدَاءِ كَدَّ سَمْبِيغٍ لَهُ فِي الْعُرُوقِ الصَّالِحَاتِ عُرُوقٌ
وَإِنِّي وَإِنْ لَانُوا نَضَارَى أَجِبَهُمْ وَبِزَنَاحِ قَلْبِي نَحْوُهُمْ وَيَتَوَقُّ

The lines were said to be "easy and beautiful poetry", and it seems that al-Mubarrad was attracted by the figures of kināya and ishāra in the third line. The first half of the line contains kināya:

مَعِيَ كَلٌّ فَفَضَايِ الْقَمِيهِ .

Literally, the poet described his drinking-companion as "having his garment excessively long and dragging behind him". This, metaphorically, implied that he was proud and walked haughtily. Al-Mubarrad believed that this line by al-Ahwas had a similar implication:

إِذَا أَنْتَ خِينَا لَمْ يَنْهَاكِ عَاصِيَةٌ وَلِذَا أَجْرُ مَا لَيْكُم سَادِرٌ رَسَنِي

as did this by Zuhayr:

يَجْرُونَ الذُّيُولَ وَقَدْ تَمَشَّتْ حُمَيَّا الْكَأْسِ فِيهِمْ وَالْفِئَاءُ 23

The ishāra consisted in the poet's likening his drinking companion who is fadfad al-gamīs to a faniq, in the second half of the line:

إِذَا مَا سَرَتْ فِيهِ الْهَدَامُ خَنِيقٌ

Faniq means a camel stallion. The point of the comparison, al-Mubarrad said, was the resemblance of the haughtiness (khuyalā') of the deportment of the poet's companion, when drunk and happy, to that of a faniq, which, when feeling happy and energetic, moves its tail to right and left, and up and down, and proceeds in a particularly haughty manner.²⁴

Al-Mubarrad also appreciated the kināya in the following lines, which he admired and cited. The poet said of his son:

أَعْرِفُ مِنْهُ قِلَّةَ النَّعَاسِ وَخِفَّةَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ رَأْسِي
كَيْفَ تَرَبُّنَ عِنْدَهُ مِرَاسِي

Al-Mubarrad explained that the first half of the first line was a kināya for cleverness and liveliness.²⁵

He mentioned that there were three kinds of statement. The first was the direct statement; the second was the statement by means of kināya, in which words are not used in their obvious sense, but in an oblique sense; and lastly, the third, which was the most 'eloquent', was the statement by means of mathal. Kināya itself was also divided into three kinds. The first was called ta'miya or taghtiya (obscuring or covering), as in the following line by al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī:

أَلَنِي بِغَيْرِ أَسْمِهَا وَقَدْ عَلِمَ
اللَّهُ خَفِيَّانِ كُلِّ مَكْتَمٍ

According to al-Akhfash, al-Ja'dī was the first poet to use kināya for the name of his beloved in poetry. Another example of this was the line by Dhū al-Rumma:

أَحِبُّ الْمَكَانَ الْقَفْرَ مِنْ أَجْلِ أَنِّي
بِهِ أَتَقَنَّ بِأَسْمِهَا غَيْرَ مُعْجَمٍ

Al-Mubarrad admired kināya and appreciated it in ghazal poetry. He quoted the following lines by Muḥammad b. Naṣīr al-Thaqafī, who wrote ghazal on Zaynab, sister of al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf:

طَرِبْتُ وَشَاقَتْكَ الْمَنَازِلُ مِنْ جَفْنِي
أَلَا رُبَّمَا يَعْتَادُكَ الشَّوْقُ بِالْحَزَنِ
نَظَرْتُ إِلَى أَطْعَانِ زَيْنَبٍ بِاللَّوِي
فَأَعُولْتُهَا لَوْلَا نِ إِعْوَالُهَا يَفْنِي
فَوَالله لَا أَنْسَاكَ زَيْنَبُ مَا دَعْتُ مُطَقَّةً
وَرَقْدًا نَشَجُوا عَلَى غَفْنِي

Al-Mubarrad then singled out, in particular, this line from the same

poem:
وَقَدْ أَرْسَلْتُ فِي السَّرِّ أَنْ قَدْ فَضَحْتَنِي وَقَدْ جَحَّتْ بِأَسْمِي فِي النَّسِيبِ وَمَاتَنِي 26

The second kind of kināya was the best, according to al-Mubarrad. This kind was used to replace "low and obscene words". An example of it was

the following Qur'ānic verse:

« أَجَلَ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصَّيَامِ الرَّفَّةِ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ » .

The word rafath was used here as a kināya for sexual intercourse (jima').

Another example of kināya in the Qur'ān was in the following verse:

« وَقَالُوا لَجُودِهِمْ لَمْ نَشْهَدْكُمْ عَلَيْهَا » .

The word julūd (skins) was used here as a kināya for sexual organs. An example of this second kind of kināya in the ordinary speech of the Arabs was that when they spoke about "relieving nature" they would say: "he came from the ghā'it", which literally meant "valley". 'Amr b. Ma'dī Karīb al-Zubaydī used the word literally to mean "valley":

وَلَمْ غَاظِلٍ مِنْ دُونِ سَلَمَى قَلِيلِ الْإِنْسِ لَيْسَ بِهِ كِتِيعٌ

The third kind of kināya is called tafkhīm and ta'zīm, and it is from this sense that the word kunya comes. The kunya is used in place of the real name of a man in order to honour him.²⁷

Al-Mubarrad cited further poetry that he admired for its kināya, such as the following lines by an a'rābī (many of al-Mubarrad's quotations are attributed to a'rāb):

وَحَقَّةٌ مِسْكٍ مِنْ نِسَائِهِ لَبِسَتْهَا	شَبَابِي وَلَأْسِي بَاكَرَتِي شَمُولَهَا
جَدِيدَةٌ سُرْبَالِ الشَّبَابِ لِأَنَّهَا	أَبَادَةٌ بَعْدِي سَقَّتْهَا غُبُولَهَا
مُخَلَّةٌ بِالْحَمِّ مِنْ دُونِ خَصْرِهَا	تَقُولُ الْفِصَارَ وَالطَّوَالَ تَقُولُهَا

The kināya comes in the first two words of the first line wa-huqqati miskin, a small pot in which musk is preserved. It is used here as a kināya for a woman. The poet likened his woman to an ivory pot full of musk to mean that she had a pleasant smell. The line also contained tashbīh, in that the poet likened his woman to a dress, saying labistuḥā shabābī, meaning that he had enjoyed his youth with her. The Arabs used often to liken a woman to a dress (libās) as al-Nābiga al-Ja'dī did in

the following line:

إِذَا مَا الْفَجِيعُ ثَنَى عِطْفَهَا تَشَبَّهَتْ فَكَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ لَبَاسًا

The lines of the a'rabi quoted above contained another tashbih, in the second line, where the poet likened his woman to "a papyrus cane":

ka-annahā aba'ātu bardī. The similarity between the two is in their purity and beauty of colour.²⁸

Al-Mubarrad pointed out that tashbih was very much used by the Arabs in their discourse, and he divided it into four categories, some of them which he did not admire. They are: tashbih mufrit (exaggerated); tashbih musib (correct); tashbih muqārib (apposite); and tashbih ba'īd (improbable). The last is the kind of simile needing to be explained, which could not stand by itself. According to al-Mubarrad it was the harshest type of tashbih. In the exaggerated simile (tashbih mufrit) they would liken a generous man to the sea and a brave man to a lion. If they described a man's nobility, they would say that he rose high till he reached the stars and went beyond that. An example of exaggerated simile was the lines by Bakr b. al-Nattāh in which he praised Abū Dulaf al-Qāsim b. 'Isā:

لَهُ هَمٌّ لَا مَتْنَهَ لِكِبَارِهَا وَهَمَّتْهُ الصَّغْرَى أَجَلٌ مِنَ الدَّقْرِ
لَهُ رَاحَةٌ لَوْ أَنَّ مَشَارَ جُودِهَا عَلَى الْبِرِّ صَارَ الْبِرُّ أُنْدَى مِنَ الْبَحْرِ
29 وَلَوْ أَنَّ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ مَسْلُكُ فَارِسٍ وَبَارِزُهُ كَانَ الْخَلْقُ مِنَ الْعُمَرِ

Al-Mubarrad only liked the exaggerated simile "if it is used by a great poet, in excellent discourse, with excellent words, beautiful description, regularity and order of form; if it is used like that it will be admired, even though it is an improbable simile. The best of such similes is in the following lines written by al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī elegizing Ḥisn b.

Hudhayfa:

وَكَيْفَ يَجْهَنُ وَالْجِبَالُ جُنُوحُ
يَجْعُمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَدِيمُ صَبِيحُ
فَقُلْ نَزَى الْحَيَّ وَهُوَ يَنْوُحُ

يَقُولُونَ حِصْنٌ ثُمَّ تَأْتِي نَفْسُهُمْ
وَلَمْ تَلْفِظِ الْمَوْتَى الْقُبُورُ وَلَمْ تَنْزِلْ
فَعَمَّا قَلِيلٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَ نَعِيَّتُهُ

The first line meant that the people found it very hard to say that Ḥisn had died. The poet wondered why, if Ḥisn had really died, the mountains were still in their places, why the graves had not cast forth the dead, why the stars had not disappeared, and why the earth had not been thrown into turmoil by grief. Another example of an exaggerated simile admired for its "excellent form" was this line by al-Tamhān al-Qaynī:

30 أَضَاعَتْ لَهُمْ أَحْسَابُهُمْ وَوُجُوهُهُمْ دَجَى اللَّيْلِ حَتَّى نَظَّمَ الْجَزَعُ شَاقِبَهُ

One of the most exaggerated similes (tashbīh mufrit mutaḡawiz) was this one of al-Khansā':

31 وَإِنْ صَخْرًا لَتَأْتِمَّ الْهَدَاةُ بِهِ لِأَنَّهُ عِلْمٌ فِي رَأْسِهِ نَارٌ

Al-Mubarrad rejected the improbable or remote simile (tashbīh ba'īd) because, as he mentioned, it could not stand by itself and needed to be explained in order for one to discover what the poet meant by it. He quoted the following line by an unnamed poet as an example of it:

بَلْ لَوْ رَأَيْتَنِي أَخْتُ جِيرَانِي إِذْ أَنَا فِي الدَّارِ لَأُنِي حِمَارٌ

The poet meant to say that he was healthy, but his audience could not guess that unless it was explained to them. The simile was remote and could not stand by itself.

Al-Mubarrad quoted the following Qurān'ic verse as containing a correct and direct simile:

« كَمَثَلِ الْجَرَارِ يَجْمَلُ أَسْفَارًا »

Another example of a correct simile is in the lines of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī in which he described himself as "a frightened and worried man". The lines were admired because they constituted a tashbīh qāsid saḥīḥ (direct, straight and correct):

أَتَانِي وَدُونِي رَأْسٌ فَالْفَتَوَاجِعُ
مِنَ الرُّقُوشِ فِي أَنْبِيَائِهَا السَّمِ نَاقِعٌ

وَعَيْدُ أَبِي قَابُوسَ فِي غَيْرِ كُنْهِهِ
قَبِيْتُ لَأُنِي سَاوَرْتَنِي ضَيْلُهُ

بُسْتَهْدُ مِنْ نَوْمِ الْعِشَاءِ تَسْلِيْمُهَا لَحَى النِّسَاءِ فِي بَدْرِيهِ تَفَاقُعُ
تَنَازَرُهَا الرَّاغِقُونَ مِنْ سَوْءِ سَمِّهَا تَطْلُقُهُ جِينًا وَجِينًا تَرَاوِعُ

32

The best example of a correct simile (tashbīh musīb) ever written was by Imru' al-Qays, who contrived to liken one thing in two different conditions to two other different things in one line:

لَأَنَّ قُلُوبَ الطَّبَرِ رُطْبًا وَيَابَسًا لَدَى وَكْرِهَا الْعُنَابُ وَالْحَشَفُ الْبَالِي 33

Dhū al-Rumma had a considerable number of his similes quoted by al-Mubarrad.³⁴ His line:

وَرَمَلٍ لِأَوْرَاكِ الْعَذَارَى قَطَعَتْهُ وَقَدْ جَلَّتْهُ الْمُطْلِمَاتُ الْمَنَادِسُ

was described as a sweet, apposite and plain simile (tashbīh muqārib).

What most attracted him in this line is that instead of likening the hips of the virgins to the sand, the poet did the opposite.³⁵

Al-Mubarrad also admired the tashbīh jāmi' (comprehensive or collective simile), in which a poet "gathers two things together". An excellent example of this was these two lines by Bashshār:

وَلَأَنَّ تَحْتَ لِسَانِهَا هَارُونَ يَنْفُتُ فِيهِ سِخْرًا
وَتَحَالُ مَا جَمَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ ثِيَابُهَا ذَهَبًا وَعِطْرًا

Similar to those lines "in gathering two things together" was this line by Muslim b. al-Walīd:

لَأَنَّ فَا سَرَجِهِ بَدْرًا وَضِرْنَامًا . 36

We notice that the line of Muslim's contains madih by contrasted qualities in a sort of dualism, whereby we find the mamduh described as both a moon and a lion. A full range of examples of this dualism will be given in the next chapter.

A tashbīh might also be admired for being concisely expressed. According to al-Mubarrad the Arabs would condense a tashbīh, and would sometimes

do so to excess. One excellent and admirable line of concise tashbīh is the second of these two lines by one of the rajaz poets:

بَتْنَا بِحَسَنٍ وَمِغْرَاهُ تَبِيْطٌ مَا زِلْتُ أَسْعَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَلْتَبِطُ
 حَتَّى إِذَا كَانَ الظَّلَامُ تَخَلَّطُ جَاؤَا بِمَذْقٍ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ الذَّبَّ قَطُ

The poet is describing, mockingly, some milk which was given to him by his host Hassān. It was butter-milk, and it was dust-coloured like a wolf.³⁷ The condensed nature of the following line of tashbīh by Imru' al-Qays is likely to have been the main reason why al-Mubarrad admired and praised it:

إِذَا مَا الثَّرِيَّا فِي السَّمَاءِ تَعَرَّفَتْ تَعَرَّفَ فِي أَشْنَاءِ الْوَشَّاحِ الْهَفْصُ

He said that it "excelled all other lines on the same subject. Many poets (who have tried) have failed to write a similar one, or even to approach it, either in ma'na or in simplicity of words.³⁸

A poet could excel another if he borrowed a simile from him and presented it elaborated and better arranged. For instance, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya wrote the following "excellent lines containing a simile" in praise of al-Rashīd:

أَمِينُ اللَّهِ أَمْنُكَ خَيْرُ أَمْنٍ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ النَّقْرِ فِيهِ لِبَاسُ
 تَسَاسُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بَلَلٌ فَضْلٌ وَأَنْتَ بِهِ تَسْوِسُ كَمَا تُسَاسُ
 لِأَنَّ الْخَلْقَ رُكِبَ فِيهِ رُوحٌ لَهُ جَسَدٌ وَأَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ رَأْسُ

ʿAlī b. Jabala borrowed the ma'na and used it to praise Humayd b. ʿAbī al-Hamīd al-Tūsī, presenting it with "elaborated and well arranged" in his lines:

بَرَّتْ مَا يَفْتَقُ أَعْدَاؤُهُ وَلَيْسَ بِأَسْوَفَتْكَ آيِسُ
 39 فَالْنَّاسُ جِسْمٌ وَإِمَامُ الْهُدَى رَأْسٌ وَأَنْتَ الْعَيْنُ فِي الرَّأْسِ

Although al-Mubarrad rejected exaggerated similes, as we have seen, he admired two lines of tashbīh that contained ighāl, which is a kind of exaggeration. The first is by Imru' al-Qays:

لَأَنَّ عُيُونَ الْوَحْشِ كَوَلَّ خَبَائِنَا وَأَرْحَلْنَا الْجَنِّ الَّذِي لَمْ يَنْقَبْ

Al-Mubarrad described this line as ‘ajīb. The second line is by

Zuhayr:

40 لَأَنَّ فَتَاتَ الْعِيْنِ فِي كُلِّ مَنْزِلٍ نَزَلْنَا بِهِ كَبَّ الْقَنَا لَمْ يُحْمَلْ

Both Qudāma b. Ja‘far and Ibn Rashīq quoted these two lines as excellent examples of ighāl.⁴¹

Although al-Mubarrad was a grammarian, he was sometimes willing to overlook grammatical mistakes for the sake of a beautiful simile. The following simile by al-‘Umānī is a good example:

لَأَنَّ أُذُنَيْهِ إِذَا مَا تَشَوَّفَا قَادِمَةً أَوْ قَلْبًا مَكْرَفَا

The line describes a horse. The poet recited it in the presence of al-Rashīd and it was said that those who were there felt that he had made a mistake somewhere in the line, but they could not spot it. Al-Rashīd saw what was wrong and asked the poet to change the first half of the line as follows:

تَحَالُ أُذُنَيْهِ إِذَا تَشَوَّفَا .

Al-Mubarrad's comment was that, although the poet had made a grammatical mistake, his tashbīh was excellent.⁴²

According to al-Mubarrad, tashbīh had a definite limit beyond which it should not go; for instance when a man was likened to the sun, the similarity between the two should be understood to lie in light and beauty, not in heat.⁴³ The best kind of tashbīh in poetry is that which had its origin in the speech of the Arabs. In their prose they would liken the eyes of a woman to the eyes of a gazelle or of a wild cow; they likened her nose to the edge of a sword, her mouth to a ring, her hair to a branch, her neck to a silver jug, and her leg to a palm frond.⁴⁴ They would also liken a woman to the sun, the moon, a pearl, a white cloud, or an ostrich egg. By each simile they meant a certain thing. These

similes were transferred to poetry, as in the following lines, in which poets likened the eyes of their beloved ones to the eyes of gazelles and wild cows. Majnūn Banī 'Āmir spoke to a gazelle about his beloved as follows:

فَعَيْنَاكِ عَيْنَاهَا وَجَبْدُكِ جِيدُهَا وَلَكِنَّ عَظْمَ السَّاقِ مِنْكَ دَقِيقُ

Dhū al-Rumma spoke to another gazelle about his beloved in similar terms:

أَرَى فِيكَ مِنْ خُرْقَاءِ يَاطِبِيَةِ اللّٰوِي مَشَابِهَ جُبَّتِي اِغْتِلَاقَ الْحَبَائِلِ
فَعَيْنَاكِ عَيْنَاهَا وَجَبْدُكِ جِيدُهَا وَلَوْ أَنَّ لَوْنَهَا إِلَّا أَنَهَا غَيْرَ عَالِلِ

Hudba b. Khashram described some women as follows:

فَلَمْ تَرَ عَيْنِي مِثْلَ سِرْبِ رَأْبَتِهِ خَرَجْتَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ زَقَاقِ ابْنِ وَاقِفِ
45 لَمَلَعْتَ بَاعْنَاقِ الطَّبَائِ وَأَعْيَنَ الْجَآذِرِ وَامْتَدَّنَ يَهَنُّ الرَّوَاقِفِ

In another poem of his, Dhū al-Rumma wrote:

وَمَيِّهٌ أَحْسَنُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ جِيداً وَسَالِفَةٌ وَأَحْسَنُهُمْ قَدَالاً
فَلَمْ أَرَ مِثْلَهَا نَظْراً وَعَيْناً وَلَا أُمَّ الْفَرَالِ وَلَا الْفَرَالِ
تُرِيكَ بِيَاضَ غُرَّتِهَا وَوَجْهًا كَقَرْنِ الشَّمْسِ أَفْتَقَ ثُمَّ زَالَا

The most admirable line, to al-Mubarrad, was the last, in which the poet likened his beloved to the sun which was sometimes hidden by the clouds, but then broke through.⁴⁶ He also admired 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a for his simile in the following two lines:

أَبْصَرْتُهَا كَلْبَةً وَنِسَوْتُهَا يَمَشِينَ بَيْنَ الْمَقَامِ وَالْحَجَرِ
يَرْفُلْنَ فِي الرِّيطِ وَالْمَرْوِطِ كَمَا تَمْشِي الْهُوَيْثُ سَوَاكِبُ الْبَقَرِ

He said that the similes quoted from Dhū al-Rumma, and the one in this line:

فِيَا طَبِيَّةَ الْوَعَسَاءِ بَيْنَ جُلَاجِلِ وَبَيْنَ النَّقَا آ آ نَتِ أُمُّ أُمُّ سَالِمِ

together with that of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a were all "odd but comprehensible".⁴⁷

In four lines, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-'Atawī (a muhdath) likened his beloved to many different things and claimed that she had surpassed them all because she combined the beauty of each one of them. He wrote:

فَدَرَأَيْنَا الْفَرَالَ وَالْفُصْنَ وَالْجَمِينَ شَمْسَ الْفُحَى وَبَدْرَ الْطَلَامِ

فَوَقَّحَ الْبَيَانَ بِفَضْلِهِ الْبَرِّ هَانٌ فِي مَا قَطِطِ الْأَلْدُ الْخِصَامِ
 مَا رَأَيْنَا سِوَى الْمَلِيحَةِ شَيْئاً جَمَعَ الْحُسْنَ كُلَّهُ فِي نِظَامِ
 فَهِيَ تَجْرِي تَجْرَى الْأَصَالَةِ فِي الرَّأْيِ وَمَجْرَى الْأَرْوَاحِ فِي الْأَجْسَامِ

48

The point of comparing a woman with an ostrich egg was to emphasise her pure, clear complexion. Al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī wrote:

لَأَنَّ بَيْضَ نَعَامٍ فِي مَلَاخِهَا إِذَا اجْتَلَاهُنَّ قَيْطٌ كَيْلُهُ وَمِدُّ

Comparison with a cloud implied a leisurely, gentle walk, as in al-A'shā:

لَأَنَّ مَشْيَهَا مِنْ بَيْتٍ جَارَتْهَا مَرُّ السَّحَابَةِ لَا رَيْثٌ وَلَا تَحَلُّ 49

A common kind of tashbih used by the Arabs concerned the gait of the she-camel, its speed and the movement of its feet. It was likened to a woman by many poets. One of the rajaz poets wrote:

لَأَنَّهَا لَيْلَةُ الْأَزْرِقِ وَقَدْ مَدَدْنَا بِاعِهَا لِلسُّوقِ 50
 خَرَقَاءُ بَيْنَ السَّلْمِيِّ تَرْقَى

Al-Shammakh had these lines:

لَأَنَّ ذِرَاعَيْهَا ذِرَاعَا مُدَلَّةٍ بَعِيدِ السَّيَابِ حَاوَلْتُ أَنْ تَعْدُرَا
 مِنَ الْبَيْضِ أَعْلَافاً إِذَا اتَّصَلَتْ دَعَتْ فِرَاسَ بْنَ غَنَمٍ أَوْ لَيْقِيْلَ بْنَ يَغْمَرَ
 بِهَا تَشْرِيقٌ مِنْ زَعْفَرَانٍ وَعَنْبَرٍ أَطَارَتْ مِنَ الْحُسْنِ الرَّدَاءِ الْمُجَبَّرَا
 تَقُولُ وَقَدْ بَلَّ الدَّمْعُ خُمَارَهَا أَبِي عَقَّتِي وَمَنْعَبِي أَنْ أُجَبَّرَا
 لَأَنَّ يَذِخْرَهَا مَنَادِيلَ فَارَفَتْ أَلْفَ رِجَالٍ يَفْهَرُونَ الْقَسْوَبَرَا
 لَأَنَّ ابْنَ آوَى مُوْتَقٍّ تَحْتَ عَرْضِهَا إِذَا هُوَ لَمْ يَكْلَمْ بِنَابِيهِ تَهَقَّرَا

In which the she-camel was likened to a woman who was abused by a son of her husband from another wife. Its movements were considered similar to the violent gestures that she made in her angry rebuttal.

A she-camel might also be likened to a woman who was mourning the death

of someone dear to her, usually her son. A poet (unnamed) described his she-camel as:

لَأَنَّهُ نَائِحَةٌ تَفْجَعُ تَبْكِي لِشَبَّوْهَا وَسَوَاهَا الْمُفْجَعُ

The point again was the violent gestures associated with unrestrained grief. Another poet wrote:

لَأَنَّ ذِرَاعَيْهَا ذِرَاعَا بَيْدَةٍ مُفْجَعَةٌ لَأَقَتْ فَلَائِلَ عَنْ عُفْرِ
سَمِعْنَ لَهَا وَاسْتَفْرَعْنَ فِي حَدِيثِهَا فَلَا شَيْءَ يَفْرِى بِالْبَيْدِ كَمَا تَفْرِى

Al-Mubarrad regarded these two lines as the best describing a she-camel.⁵¹

Another way of describing the movement and speed of a she-camel was to be found in two lines of Imru' al-Qays:

لَأَنَّ الْحَصَا مِنْ خَلْفِهَا وَأَمَامِهَا إِذَا بَجَلَتْهُ رَجُلُهَا كَزُفٍ أَعْسَرَ
لَأَنَّ صَليْلَ الْمَرْوِ بَيْنَ تَشْدِيدِهِ صَليْلَ زَيْوْفٍ يُنْقَدْنَ بِعَبْقَرَا

He likened the way the she-camel threw up small stones with her feet to the way a left-handed man threw stones. He also likened the sound of the stones when thrown up to that of very strong winds (zayf, zuyuf) blowing in the valley of 'Abqar.

Another poet described the action of his she-camel's legs as follows:

لَأَنَّ يَدَيْهَا يَدَا مَانِخٍ أَتَى يَوْمَ وَرْدٍ لِعَبٍّ زُرُودَا
يَخَافُ الْعِقَابَ وَفِي نَفْسِهِ إِذَا هُوَ أَنَّهُلَ أَنْ لَا يَبْعُودَا

He compared it with the rapid arm movements of a herdsman drawing water for his camels from a well at a place called Zarūd. He was hurrying for fear of punishment if late, and he knew that he would not be able to return for water for a long time.⁵² Poets had written a great deal of poetry describing the speed of animals and some had exaggerated, as Dhū al-Rumma did when he wrote about a wild bull:

لَأَنَّهُ كَوَكَبٌ فِي إِشْرِ عَفْرِيةٍ مُسَوِّمٌ فِي سَوَادِ اللَّيْلِ مُنْقَضِبُ

Al-Huṭay'a exaggerated in describing the speed of his she-camel when he wrote:

وَإِذَا نَظَرْتُ بَعُومًا مُؤَخَّرَ عَيْنِهَا إِلَى عِلْمٍ بِالْفَوْرِ قَالَتْ لَهُ أَبْعِدْ

and:

بَارْفِي تَرَى بِهَا فَرْخَ الْحُبَارَى لِأَنَّهُ بِهَا رَاكِبٌ مُوفٍ عَلَى ظَهْرِ قَرَدٍ

and:

وَلَادَتْ عَلَى الْأَطْوَادِ الْأَطْوَادِ ضَائِحٌ تَسَاقَطُنِي وَالرَّحْلَ مِنْ صَوْنٍ قُدْهِدٍ

A line which we have already mentioned as rejected by al-Mubarrad on the grounds of exaggeration was also cited in this list:

مَرْوَحٌ بِرَجْلَيْهَا إِذَا هِيَ هَجَرَتْ وَيَمْتَعُطُ مِنْ أَنَّ تَطِيرَ زِمَامُهَا

Al-Shammākh had a similar line:

مَرْوَحٌ تَقْتَلِي فِي الْبَيْدِ حَرْفِي تَكَادُ تَطِيرُ مِنْ رَأْيِ الْقَطِيعِ

The most excellent and amusing line on the subject of speed, according to al-Mubarrad, was that of Imru' al-Qays describing his horse as a fether for wild animals (it could easily catch them):

53 وَقَدْ اغْتَدَى وَالطَّيْرُ فِي وَكُنَاتِهَا بِمَنْجَرٍ قَيْدِ الْأَوَابِدِ هَبِيلِكِ

Besides conciseness, kināya, ighāl, ishāra, and tashbīh, there were other mahāsin for which al-Mubarrad implied his admiration in his citations. Among these was the figure of iltifāt. In this line:

وَأَمْتَعْنِي عَلَى الْعَشَا بُولْبِدَةٍ فَأَبْتُ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْكَ يَا هَوْدَ حَامِدَا

al-A'shā changes from talking about his mamduḥ, Hawdh b. 'Alī, to direct address in the second half of the line. This was a figure very commonly used by the Arabs. It also occurred in the Qur'ān, as in the following verse:

«تَتَى إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفَلَكَ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ» .

The same Qur'ānic verse was quoted later by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in Kitāb al-badī', in the same context, as we shall see.

As an example of iltifāt from Jāhili poetry, a line by 'Antara was quoted:

شَطَنُ مَرَارَ الْعَاشِقِينَ فَأَصْبَحْتُ عَسِيراً عَلَى لِبْلَابِكِ ابْنَةُ مَحْرَمٍ

and for Islamic poetry, a line by Jarīr:

54 وَتَرَى الْعَوَازِلَ يَبْتَدِرْنَ مَلَامَتِي فَإِذَا أَرَدْنَ سَوَى هَوَالِ عَصِينَا

Another figure was that of istitrad, as exemplified in the lines of Bashshār:

55 خَلِيلِي مَنْ كَعَبَ أُمِّيْنَا إِذَا مَا عَلَى دَهْرِهِ إِنْ الْكُرْهُمُ مُعِينٌ
وَلَا تَبْخَلَا فَنُحْلَ ابْنُ قَرْعَةَ إِنَّهُ خَافَةَ أَنْ يُرْجَى نَدَاهُ حَزِينٌ

Another was that of mathal, which is the most eloquent kind of discourse in al-Mubarrad's view. He quoted many examples of it, such as this line by Zuhayr:

وَمَهْمَا تَكُنْ عِنْدَ امْرِئٍ مِنْ خَلِيقَةٍ وَإِنْ خَالَهَا تَخْفَى عَلَى النَّاسِ تَعْلَمُ

and this one by Imru' al-Qays:

56 إِذَا الْمَرْءُ لَمْ يَخْزَنْ عَلَيْهِ لِسَانَهُ فَلَيْسَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ سِوَاهُ يَخْزَانِ

The two following lines by Humayd b. Thawr:

أَرَى بَقَرِي قَدْ خَانَنِي بَعْدَ صِحَّةٍ وَتَسْبِيكَ دَائِمٌ أَنْ تَصِحَّ وَتَسْلَمَا
وَلَا يَلْبَثُ الْعَقْرَانِ يَوْمٌ وَلَيْلَةٌ إِذَا طَلَبَا أَنْ يَذْرَا مَا بَيْنَهُمَا

he said were "of the greatest wisdom and value as preaching, and they are to be recommended for citation by noble men and for quotation in books". The theme of the two lines is similar to a hadīth of the Prophet (kafā bi-al-salāmati dā'an).⁵⁷

This admiration for mathal in poetry implies a moral tendency in al-Mubarrad's criticism, which is also suggested by his quotations from poems of hikma written by muhdath poets. These poems he described as "wise and admirable and to be cited (as aphorisms) because they are most suitable for this time. The sentiments in them may be borrowed for use in all different kinds of discourse, oratory and books".⁵⁸ He stated that wise and noble poetry was the best thing by which a man could educate and instruct his young son.⁵⁹ Most of his quotations were from the poetry of Mahmūd b. Hasan al-Warrāq, most of whose poetry consisted of wisdom (hikma), advice (wasāyā) and preaching (mawā'iz).⁶⁰ He also quoted several of Abū al-'Atāhiya's poems on the same topics, besides his

poems on zuhd. He pointed out that he had made use of some of the wise sayings of the Greek philosophers and other ancient wise men.⁶¹

Al-Mubarrad, as we have said, used the ancient Arabs' traditions of discourse as a source for the criteria by which to judge all poetry, whether Jāhilī, Islamic or muhdath, and he admired some muhdath poetry because it contained ancient Arabic amthāl, such as the following lines by Abū 'Alī al-Basīr:

يا وزراء السلطان أنتم وآل خاقان
كبعفي ما رويننا في سالف الأزمان
ماء ولا كفتدي مرنى ولا كالسعدان

He said that he quoted these lines, in spite of the fact that the poet was not a hujja, because they were excellent. The last line contained two ancient Arabic mathals:

ماء ولا كفتدي

and: مرنى ولا كالسعدان

There was a third mathal associated with the two quoted, namely:

فتى ولا كمايك .

The three of them were quoted in order to imply that something or someone was good, but that this or that was better.⁶² Another example of lines

that contained ancient mathal was those by 'Umāra b. 'Aqīl:

بنى دارم إن يفتن عمرى فقد مكنى حياتي لكم متى ثناء مخلص
بدائم فأحسنتم فأثبتت جايدا وإن عدمت أثنيت والعود أحمد

The last line was praised by al-Mubarrad because it contained a mathal in its second half:

العود أحمد .

He traced the origin of the mathal and attributed it with two others to Khidāsh b. Hābis al-Taymī. The three of them run as follows:

العود أحمد ، والمرء برشد ، والورد محمد .⁶³

The other main genres in which al-Mubarrad was interested were madīh, hijā', and rithā'. On each of these he consulted the Arab heritage, and his quotations were selected on the basis of what he found there. For

instance, in madih, the Arabs used to praise men for their height, and poets would allude to this by speaking about the length of their sword belts (hamā'il). He cited the following line from Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa in praise of al-Mahdī the Caliph:

قَصُرَتْ حَمَائِلُهُ عَلَيْهِ فَقَلَعَتْ وَلَقَدْ تَأْتَقَّ قَبِيضُهَا فَاطَالَهَا

He cited another line from Abū Nuwās, who described the height of his mamduh, al-Amin, as follows:

سَبَطُ الْبَنَانِ إِذَا احْتَبَى بِنَجَادِهِ غَمَرَ الْجَمَاهِيمَ وَالسَّمَا طُفَيْمُ

Two lines of Jarīr were quoted, in which, addressing al-Farazdaq, he referred to the height of the Banū Hāshim:

تَعَالَوْا ففَاتُونَا فِي الْحِمْ مَقْنَعُ إِلَى الْفَرِّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْبَطَاحِ الْأَكَاِمِ
فَإِنِّي لِأَرْضِي عَبْدَ شَمْسٍ وَمَا قَفَنْتُ وَأَرْضِي الطَّوَالَ الْبَيْضِ مِنْ آلِ هَاشِمٍ

The importance of being a tall man was again emphasised in these two lines, in which a poet spoke of war:

كَيْمَا التَّقَرُّ الصَّفَانِ وَاتَّخَلَفَ الْقَنَا نَحَالًا وَأَسْبَابُ الْمَنَابِإِ يَنْحَالُهَا
تَبَيَّنَ لِي أَنَّ الْقِمَاءَ ذِلَّةٌ وَأَنَّ الشِّدَاءَ الرِّجَالِ طَوَالُهَا 64

The Arabs also used to praise a man for being khamīs al-baṭn (slim of stomach); a warrior (fāris) was praised as muhafhaf al-khisrayn (slim of waist) with burning eyes and slender arms (hamsh al-dhirā'ayn), as in this line quoted by al-Asma'ī:

لَأَنْتَ سَاعِدَاهُ سَاعِدَا ذَيْبٍ .

He was also praised for having little flesh on his backside ('ajuz) and thighs because of his continuous riding in war. On the other hand, a noble leader (al-ra'īs al-sayyid) was described as being fleshy, with a big stomach, a big head, and slightly deaf. He was further described as having a loud voice, and large strides and being respected in men's eyes. If he was seen, he satisfied the sight, and if he spoke, he satisfied the hearing. Di'bil b. 'Alī was quoted as describing such a sayyid as

follows:

فَإِذَا جَالَسْتَهُ صَدَّرَتْهُ وَتَخَيَّتْ لَهُ فِي الْمَاشِيَةِ
وَإِذَا سَابَرْتَهُ قَدَّمَتْهُ وَتَأَخَّرَتْ مَعَ الْمُسْتَأْنِيَةِ
وَإِذَا يَاسَرْتَهُ صَادَفَتْهُ سَلِسَ الْخَلْقِ سَلِيمَ النَّاحِيَةِ
وَإِذَا عَاسَرْتَهُ صَادَفَتْهُ شَرِسَ الرَّأْيِ أَيْبًا دَاهِيَةِ
فَاجِدِ اللَّهَ عَلَى صَحْبَتِهِ وَاسْأَلِ الرَّحْمَنَ مِنْهُ الْعَافِيَةَ

Al-Mubarrad, appreciating conciseness, as we have mentioned, praised Jarīr for achieving the same ma'nā in one line:

65 بَشِّرْ أَبُو مَرْوَانَ إِنَّ عَاسِرَتَهُ عَسِرٌ وَعِنْدَ يَسَارِهِ مَيْسُورٌ

In his view, the best kind of madīh was that in which praiseworthy attributes were summed up without prolixity. A good example was a poem by al-Huṭay'a, who compressed many aspects of madīh into a few lines and then summarised them in his last line. In the first few lines he wrote:

تَزُورُ فَتَيَّ بَطْنِي عَلَى الْحَمْدِ مَالَهُ وَمَنْ يُعْطِ اثْنَانِ الْمَكَارِمِ بِحَمْدِ
تَزُورُ فَتَيَّ يَطْعَمُ عَلَى الْحَمْدِ مَالَهُ وَيَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْمَرْءَ غَيْرُ مُتَحَدِّ
بِرَى الْجُلِّ لَا يُبْقَى عَلَى الْمَرْءِ مَالَهُ وَيَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْمَرْءَ غَيْرُ مُتَحَدِّ
كَسُوبٌ وَمِثْلَافٌ إِذَا مَا سَأَلْتَهُ تَهَلَّلَ وَاهْتَرَّ اهْتِرَارَ الْمُهْتَدِّ

which he summed up:

مَتَى تَأْتِيهِ تَعَسُّوْ إِلَى فَنُوْ نَارِهِ تَجِدْ خَيْرَ نَارٍ عِنْدَهَا خَيْرُ مَوْفِدِ

Similar to this are these lines of al-Shammākh:

رَأَيْتُ عَرَابَةَ الْأَوْسَى يَسْمُوْ إِلَى الْعَلْيَاءِ مَنْقَطِعَ الْقَرِينِ
إِذَا مَا رَابِعَةٌ رُفِعَتْ لِحْدِ تَلَقَّاهَا عَرَابَةُ الْبَلِيمِينِ

Al-Mubarrad seems to have liked the madīh poetry of al-Huṭay'a, from which he quoted several examples, with admiration. The reason for this, apparently, was that his poetry satisfied al-Mubarrad's desire for

conciseness, and other aspects of rhetoric. The following lines of madīh by al-Huṭay'a exemplify this. They are in praise of Baghīd:

جَزَى اللهُ تَجَبُّراً وَالْجَزَاءُ بِكَفِّهِ عَلَى خَيْرِ مَا تُجْزَى الرِّجَالُ بِغَيْفَتِنَا
فَلَوْ شَاءَ إِذَا جِئْنَاهُ ضَنَّ فَلَمْ يُلِمَّ وَصَادَفَ مَنَاءً فِي الْبِلَادِ عَرِيفَا

The comment of al-Mubarrad shows that his reason for selecting them was their conciseness. The poet meant that "the mamdūh's noble qualities and generosity have become famous and are now so great that if someone dispraises him, he will be regarded as a liar; the mamdūh, therefore does not need to be excessively praised, because it is certain that the one who satirises him will not be believed". Al-Mubarrad then added:

"If you consider this discourse, you will find it most distinguished in its topic".⁶⁷ Concise madīh was to be found also in the following line by an a'rābī in praise of Sawwār b. 'Abd Allāh the Qādī:

وَأَوْقَفَ عِنْدَ الْأَمْرِ مَا لَمْ يَفِجْ لَهُ وَأَمْنِي إِذَا مَا شَكَكَ مَنْ كَانَ مَا ضَبَا

The poet was said to have "gathered together the aspects of madīh with firmness of resolution and the accomplishment of decision (rakanat al-hazm wa-imdā' al-'azm)". A similar line was this one by al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī:

أَبَى لِي الْبَلَاءُ وَأَنْزَى امْرُؤٌ إِذَا مَا تَبَيَّنْتُ لَمْ أَرْتَبْ

Al-Mubarrad seems to have admired these lines because, besides being concise, they were associated with a wise saying used by the Arabs:

68 رَوَى تَحْزُمٌ فَإِذَا اسْتَوْضَحْتَ فَاغْزِمْ .

According to al-Mubarrad, the concept of madīh was associated with that of hijā', in that the ma'anī of hijā' contained their opposites, which were the ma'anī of madīh. This idea of "opposites" seems to have guided him in his quotations from the two genres. It was also connected with hijā' muqdhī' or hijā' bi-'l-tafdīl and hijā' bi-'l-ta'rīd (indication) or indirect hijā'. If we look at some of his quotations this may become clearer. He said that the following lines by an a'rābī were "the most

harmful kind of hiġā'". The a'rābī was satirising some of the Tay':

وَلَمَّا أَن رَأَيْتُ بَنِي جَوْوَيْنِ جُلُوساً لَيْسَ بَيْنَهُمْ جَلِيسٌ
بَيْتُتُ مِنَ التِّي أَقْبَلْتُ أَفَى رَابِعُهُمُ إِنِّي رَجُلٌ بَوْسُ
إِذَا مَا قُلْتُ أَتَيْتُهُمْ لِأَيِّ تَشَابَهَتْ الْمَنَائِبُ وَالرُّؤُوسُ

Taking the ancient Arab heritage as his standard for judging poetry,

al-Mubarrad found in these lines the idea expressed in the Arab saying:

تَسْتَنُّهُمْ فِي أَدْيِهِمْ .

This literally meant that they used their cooking butter for themselves

only, i.e. that they were misers. The lines of the a'rābī meant that the people about whom he was talking had no stranger among them, and thus that they were not visited by guests, since they were misers. With this in mind, al-Mubarrad considered that the best kind of madīh was that which contained the idea opposite to that found in this hiġā' and accorded with the aphorism of the "wise men" (hukamā'):

مَنْ كَثَرَ خَيْرُهُ كَثَرَ زَائِرُهُ .

He consequently regarded the following line of Zuhayr in praise of Harim b. Sinan as one of the best lines of madīh because it agreed with this sentiment:

قَدْ جَعَلَ الطَّالِبُونَ الْخَيْرَ فِي هَرَمٍ وَالسَّائِلُونَ إِلَى أَبْوَابِهِ طُرُقًا

A similar idea was to be found in the following rajaz line by Abū

Nukhayla al-Rāġiz:

إِنَّ النَّدَى حَيْثُ تَرَى الْقَفَاطَا .

A third line with the same idea was also quoted by al-Mubarrad in order to support his view about excellent madīh. The line (unattributed) is:

69 يَزِدُّهُمْ النَّاسُ عَلَى بَابِهِ وَالْمَشْرَبُ الْقَذْبُ كَثِيرُ الرِّحَامِ

These lines of hiġā' and madīh achieved their objects in an indirect way. In admiring indirect madīh and hiġā', al-Mubarrad was probably guided by his interest in rhetoric and 'eloquence', as when he spoke about īmā'.

From these traditional sayings and lines of hiĵā' and madīh arose the idea of "opposites" in each of the genres. Al-Mubarrad's taste for this kind of madīh and hiĵā' is to be found in other quotations. The following line of praise by Abū Qays b. al-Aslat was said to be "poetry worthy to be selected":

مِنَ النَّفْرِ الْبَيْضِ الَّذِينَ إِذَا اعْتَزَوْا وَهَابَ الرَّجُلُ حَلَقَةَ الْبَابِ قَعَقَقُوا

This line, as explained by al-Mubarrad, indicated the importance of the people being praised by stating that when they visited kings they would be admitted at once and not be kept at the door. Its opposite was to be found in a line by Jarīr satirising some of the Tamīm:

70 قَوْمٌ إِذَا احْتَضَرَ الْمَلُوكَ وَفُودُهُمْ نَبَتْ شَوَارِبُهُمْ عَلَى الْأَبْوَابِ

A poem by al-Huṭay'a provided a good example of poetry in which al-Mubarrad found the combination of madīh and hiĵā' and the idea of "opposites" which he thought effective. It might also be regarded as hiĵā' muqdhī' or hiĵā' bi-'l-tafdīl. Some of the lines quoted are:

وَمَا نِي قَدْ عَلِقْتُ بِجِلِّ قَوْمٍ أَعَانَهُمْ عَلَى الْحَسْبِ الثَّرَاءُ
إِذَا نَزَلَ الشِّتَاءُ بِجَارِ قَوْمٍ تَجَنَّبَ جَارَ بَيْتِهِمُ الشِّتَاءُ
هُمْ الْأَسْوَونَ أُمَّ الرُّؤْسِ لَمَّا تَوَاكَلُوا الْأُطْبَةَ وَالْإِسَاءُ

The poet then turned to indirect hiĵā' of al-Zibriqān b. Badr and his people, as follows:

أَلَمْ أَلِكْ نَائِبًا فَدَعَوْتُونِي فَجَاءَ بَنِي الْمَوَاعِدِ وَالِدَعَاءُ
فَلَمَّا كُنْتُ جَارَكُمْ أَبَيْتُمْهُمُ وَشَرُّ مَوَالِنِ الْحَسْبِ الْإِبَاءُ
وَمَا كُنْتُ جَارَهُمْ كَبَوْنِي وَفِيكُمْ لَأَنْ لَوْ شِئْتُمْ جِئَاءُ
فَلَمَّا أَنْ مَدَحْتُ الْقَوْمَ قُلْتُمْ هَجَوْتُمْ وَهَلْ يَجِلُّ لِي الْهَجَاءُ
71 وَلَمْ أُشْنِمْ لَكُمْ حَسَبًا وَلَكِنْ حَدَوْتُ بِحَيْثُ يُسْتَمَعُ الْحَدَاءُ

Another good example of poetry that contained a combination of madīh and hiĵā' were the two lines of Ibn Abī 'Uyayna, satirising Khālīd b. Yazīd

al-Muhallabī and praising his father. Al-Mubarrad regarded these lines as the best of their kind, that is, in stating the difference between those who were closely related to each other:

أَبْعَدَ لَنَا نَحْيَتْ نَعِيشُ بِفَضْلِهِ وَأَنْتَ جَرَادٌ كَيْسَ تَبْقَى وَلَا تَذُرُ
72 لَهُ أَثَرٌ فِي الْمَلَكُوتِ يَبْسُرُنَا وَأَنْتَ نَعْفَى دَائِمًا ذَلِكَ الْأَثَرُ

A third example was by al-A'shā on al-Hārith b. Wa'la who was satirised, and Hawdh b. 'Alī who was praised:

أَتَيْتُ حُرْبِيًّا زَائِرًا عَنْ جَنَابَةٍ فَكَانَ حُرَيْتٌ عَمَّ عَطَائِي جَامِدًا
إِذَا مَا رَأَى ذَا حَاجَةٍ فَلَا تُحَا رَى أَسَدًا فِي بَيْتِهِ وَأَسَاوِدًا
لَعْمُرِكَ مَا أَشْشَبَهُنَّ وَعُلَّةً فِي الدُّنَى شِمَائِلَهُ وَلَا أَبَاهُ مُجَالِدًا
وَطَنٌ أَمْرًا قَدْ زَرْتَهُ قَبْلَ هَذِهِ بَجَوٍّ لَنَبِيرٍ مِنْكَ تَفْسًا وَوَالِدًا
تَقْبِيْفَتُهُ يَوْمًا فَقَرَّبَ مَجْلِسِي وَأَصْفَدَنِي عَلَى الزَّيْمَانَةِ قَائِدًا
وَأَمْتَقَنِي عَلَى الْعِشَاءِ بَوَلِيدَةً فَأُبْتُ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْكَ يَا هُوَ حَامِدًا
73 قَتَى لَوْ يَبَارَى الشَّمْسُ أَلْقَتْ قِنَاعَهَا أَوْ الْقَمَرُ السَّارَى لَأَلْقَى الْمَقَالِدَا

The idea of the "opposites" might also be found in the kind of hijā' in which a poet stated that he would not answer this or that poet who had satirised him, because he was not even worthy to be answered. Those who were worthy to be answered in hijā' were those who were the poet's equals. This kind of hijā', although not like hijā' bi-l-tafḍīl, nevertheless contains a similar idea. An extension of this was that some poets who refused to answer the one who had satirised them, on the grounds that he was not worthy to be answered, used to satirise instead a noble man or a chief of the tribe of the poet who had satirised them. This means that they put themselves on a level with the noble men and chiefs of the other's tribe. The Jāhilīs used to do something similar in connection with revenge, in that, instead of killing a killer of low rank, they would kill a noble man from his tribe. It is in the light of all this that we should view al-Mubarrad's selection of lines of this kind of hijā', such as the

following, by a rajaz poet:

لَمَّا بَجِيلًا كَلِمًا هَبَانِي مَلْتُ عَلَى الْأَغْطَشِ أَوْ أَبَانِ
أَوْ لَمَحَةِ الْخَبْرِ فَتَى الْفُتَيَانِ أُولَئِكَ قَوْمٌ شَأْنُهُمْ كَشَانِي
مَا نِلْتُ مِنْ أَعْرَافِهِمْ كَفَانِي وَإِنْ سَكَنْتُ عَرَفُوا إِحْسَانِي

These lines exemplified hiĵā' muqdhī' or hiĵā' bi-'l-tafdīl, especially the second line. Another example of this kind of hiĵā' was quoted from Di'bil b. 'Alī:

أَمَّا الْهَبَاءُ فَدَقَّ عِرْضُكَ دُونَهُ وَالْمَلْحُ عَنْكَ لَمَا عَلِمْتَ جَلِيلُ
فَإِذَا هَبُّ فَانْتِ عَتِيقُ عِرْضِكَ إِنَّهُ عِرْضُ عَزْزَتِ بِهِ وَأَنْتَ ذَلِيلُ

In a third example, a poet stated that his opponent in hiĵā' is nothing and therefore was not worthy to be answered. The poet claimed that those who were equal to him were few and that that was why he was unwilling to answer others in hiĵā'. The lines were (unattributed):

نَبِئْتُ كَلْبًا هَابَ رَفِي لَهُ يَنْبَحْنِي مِنْ مَوْضِعٍ نَائِي
لَوْ كُنْتُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ هَجَوْنَاهُ أَوْ لَوْ بِنْتُ لِلْسَامِعِ وَالرَّائِي
فَعَدَّ عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَانِي أَمْرُو حَلَمْنِي قَلَّةٌ أَكْفَائِي 74

The last two lines illustrated hiĵā' in which tafdīl was used, especially the last.

Some poems on various subjects were quoted, as a kind of amusement (hazl), to relax the reader after so many chapters of serious matter (jidd), al-Mubarrad claimed.⁷⁵ Among these amusing poems are these lines of hiĵā' by Abū al-Shamaqmaq:

وَلَهُ لَحِيَّةٌ تَبَسُّ وَلَهُ مِنْقَارٌ نَسِرُ
وَلَهُ نَلْهَةٌ لَيْثٌ خَالَتُنْ نَلْهَةٌ صَقَرُ 76

and some lines of the rājiz of Abū al-Najm al-'Ijlī, in which he advised his daughter, Barra, after she had been married, how to treat her mother-in-law:

أَوْصَيْتُ مِنْ بَرَّةٍ قَلْبًا حُرًّا بِالْكَلْبِ خَيْرًا وَبِالْحِمَاةِ شَرًّا
لَا تَسْأَلِي نَهْكَأَ لَهَا وَضْرًا وَالْحَيَّ مُمَيِّهِمْ بِشَرِّ طُرَّا
وَلَنْ كَسَوُكَ ذَهَبًا وَدُرًّا حَتَّى يَرَوْا حُلُوَ الْحَيَاةِ مُرًّا

He further advised her:

سُبِّى الْحَمَاءَ وَابْهَتْنِي عَلَيْهَا وَإِنْ أَبَتْ فَأَزْدِلْنِي إِلَيْهَا
ثُمَّ اقْرَأْنِي بِالْوَرِّ مَرْفِقِيهَا وَجَرِّدِي الْحِلْفَ بِهِ عَلَيْهَا
لَا تُخْبِرِي الدَّهْرَ بِذَلِكَ ابْنِيهَا

His description of his own younger daughter was quoted by al-Mubarrad, also, apparently for the sake of amusement:

لَأَنَّ ظَلَامَةَ اخْتِ شَيْبَانٍ يَتِيمَةً وَالِدَاهَا حَيَّانٍ
الرَّاسُ قَمَلٌ كُلُّهُ وَشَيْبَانٍ وَلَيْسَ فِي الرَّجْلَيْنِ إِلَّا خَيْطَانٍ
فَهِيَ الَّتِي بُذِعَتْ مِنْهَا الشَّيْبَانُ

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The last citations to be discussed here are those of rithā', on which al-Mubarrad said a great deal. From his criticism of some poems of rithā' and his praise of others, it may be possible to form some idea of his tastes in this sphere.

The first poem quoted was one by Abū Sa'īd b. Ishāq b. Khalaf, about his sister's daughter, whom he had adopted:

أَمْسَنَ أُمَيَّةٌ مَمُورًا بِهَا الرَّجْمُ لَقَى صَعِيدٍ عَلَيْهَا التُّرْبُ مَرْتَكُمُ
يَا شَيْقَةَ النَّفْسِ إِنْ النَّفْسَ وَالْهَى حَرَسَى عَلَيْكَ وَدَمْعُ الْعَيْنِ مُنْسَبِحُ
قَدْ كُنْتُ أَخْشَى عَلَيْهَا أَنْ تُقَدِّمَنِي إِلَى الْحِمَامِ فَيُبْدِي وَجْهَهَا الْعَدَمُ
فَالآنَ يَمُتُ فَلَهِمْ يُؤَرِّقُنِي بِهَذَا الْغَيُورِ إِذَا مَا أَوَدَتْ الْحَرَمُ
لِلْمَوْتِ عِنْدِي أَبَادٍ لَسْتُ أَنْكِرُهَا أَحْيَا سُرُورًا وَبَى مِمَّا أَتَى أَلَمُ

This marthiya was said to be "not one of those marāthī which express clear concern (jaza') and extended sadness but one of those which contain deep concern expressed with moderation (husn al-iqtisād), inclination to complaint (al-mayl li-al-tashakkī) and reliance on consolation (al-rukūn ilā al-ta'azzī). It is in the style of one who exhorts himself and who has a hard and stern nature". Al-Mubarrad then recited two lines from a marthiya by someone on his brother:

تَجَلَّ رَزِيَانٌ وَتَقَرُّوْا مَصَائِبُ وَلَا مِثْلَ مَا أَتَحَنْتُ عَلَيْنَا بَدُ الدَّهْرِ
لَقَدْ عَرَكْنَا لِلزَّمَانِ مِلْمَةً أَذْمَنْتُ بِمُحَمَّدٍ الْجَلَادَةَ وَالصَّبْرَ

These lines were said to be excellent, because the poet expressed a heavy loss. He had the right to intensify his loss as much as he liked.⁷⁸ It would seem that the main idea that al-Mubarrad required in rithā' poetry was that of consolation. He said that one should keep in mind that this world was full of misfortunes, and that everyone would weep over someone who had passed away, or he himself would be wept over when he died. Man had to be patient and endure the misfortunes of time, and he should realise that this world was a temporary place for him. With regard to misfortunes and loss, people differed, some being better than others in showing understanding, taking consolation and accepting what happened to them, in order to gain their reward in the hereafter and to be of blessed memory (jamil al-dhikr) in this world. An example of rithā' poetry that conformed with this was the two lines of Abū Khirash al-Hudhalī, one of the wise men of the Arabs, on his brother 'Urwa b. Murra:

تَقُولُ أُرَاهُ بَعْدَ عُرْوَةَ لَاهِيًا وَذَلِكَ رُزْءٌ لَوْ عَلِمْتَ جَلِيلٌ
فَلَا تَحْسَبْنِي أَنِّي تَنَاسَيْتُ عَهْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ صَبْرِي يَا أُمِّمَ جَمِيلٌ

Another good example was the two lines of 'Amr b. Ma'adī Yakrib:

كَمْ مِنْ أَخٍ لِي حَازِمٍ بَوَّاتُهُ بِيَدَيَّ لَدَا
أَعْرَضْتُ عَنْ تَذَكُّارِهِ وَخُلِقْتُ يَوْمَ خُلِقْتُ جَدَا 79

Al-Mubarrad concentrated on the idea of consolation. As was his habit when dealing with other genres, he supported his views on consolation in rithā' by quoting from early Arab prose and poetry. "It is said", he pointed out, "that the one who hopes to live for ever and does not adjust himself to misfortunes is 'ājiz al-ra'y'.⁸⁰ It was reported that a man once consoled another for the death of his son and asked him: "Used he sometimes to be absent and far away?" The father replied: "He used to be absent more than he was with us". The man then said to him: "Regard him as absent, and although he will not come back to you, you will go (some day) to him". This idea was expressed by Ibrāhīm b.

al-Mahdī, who, in one of his rithā' poems about his son, wrote these two lines:

وَإِنِّي وَإِنْ قُدِّمَتْ قَبْلِي لَعَالِمٌ بَأْنِي وَإِنْ أَبْطَأْتُ مِنْكَ خَرِيبٌ
وَإِنْ صَبَاحًا نَلْتَقِي فِي مَسَائِدِ صَبَاحٍ إِلَى قَلْبِي الْفَدَاةَ حَبِيبٌ 81

According to al-Mubarrad, hopelessness was the best consolation; as a poet once wrote:

أَيَا عَمْرٍو لَمْ أَصْبِرْ وَلِي فِيكَ جِيلَةٌ وَلَكِنْ دَعَانِي الْبِأْسُ مِنْكَ إِلَى الصَّبْرِ
تَصَبَّرْتُ مَقْلُوبًا وَإِنِّي لَمُوجِعٌ لَمَا صَبَرَ الْعُشَّانُ فِي الْبَلَدِ الْقَفْرِ

and, as Abū Tammām wrote:

تَحَبَّبْتُ لَصَبْرِي بَعْدَهُ وَهُوَ مَيِّتٌ وَقَدْ كُنْتُ أُبْكِيهِ دَمًا وَهُوَ غَائِبٌ
عَلَى أَنَّهَا الْأَيَّامُ قَدْ صِرْنَ كُلُّهَا عَجَائِبُ حَتَّى لَيْسَتْ فِيهَا عَجَائِبُ 82

He quoted some lines from a third poet, consoling 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz for his son's death:

تَعَزَّ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَإِنَّهُ لَمَّا قَدْ تَرَى يُغْذَى الصَّغِيرُ وَيُوكَدُ
هَلْ ابْنُكَ إِلَّا مِنْ سُلَالَةِ آدَمٍ لَكُلِّ عَلَى حَوْضِ الطَّنْبَةِ مَوْرِدُ 83

According to al-Mubarrad, poems of rithā' are extremely numerous (and perhaps poetry was written on no subject more than on rithā' because men were always associated with misfortunes). "What we select are the choice, rare, proverbial and famous poems", he said. Such was a poem by Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, elegizing his son, starting:

نَأَى آخِرَ الْأَيَّامِ عَنْكَ حَبِيبُ فَلِلْعَيْنِ سَحْجٌ دَالِمٌ وَغُرُوبُ

Two lines had already been quoted from this poem, as an example of poetry that contained wise consolation.⁸⁴ Such also was a poem by 'Abd Allāh b. Arāka, elegizing his brother 'Amr, in which the poet "followed the wise path of consolation":

لَعَمْرِي لَيْتَ اتَّبَعْتَ عَيْنَكَ مَا مَضَى بِهِ الدَّهْرُ أَوْ سَاقِ الْجَمَامِ إِلَى الْقَبْرِ
لَتَسْتَنْفِدَنَّ مَاءَ الشُّؤْنِ بِأَسْرِهِ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ تَمْرِيهِنَّ مِنْ ثَبَجِ الْبَحْرِ
لَعَمْرِي لَقَدْ أُرْدَى ابْنُ أَرْطَاةٍ فَارِسًا بِصَنْقَاءِ كَاللَيْثِ الْهَزْبَرِ أَبِي أَجْرٍ
وَقُلْتُ لَعَبْدَ اللَّهِ إِذْ حَتَّ بِأَكْبَا تَعَزَّ وَمَاءُ الْعَيْنِ مِنْهُمْ يَجْرِي

تَبَيَّنَ فَإِنْ لَانَ الْبُكَاءُ رَدَّهَا لِيَا عَلَى أَهْلِهِ فَاسْتَدْرَكَ بِكَاءٍ عَلَى عَمْرُو
وَلَا تَبْلُكَ مَيِّتًا بَعْدَ مَيِّتٍ أَجَنَّهُ عَلِيٌّ وَعَبَّاسٌ وَآلُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ

The last line is about the Prophet.

The poet consoled his brother by telling him that there was no reason to weep over somebody after realising that the Prophet himself had died and that no loss could be greater than his death.

Two lines which were recited by 'Alī b. Abī Tālib at the grave of his wife Fātima were also quoted by al-Mubarrad for their wise consolation:

لَكَلِّ اجْتِمَاعٍ مِنْ خَلِيلَيْنِ فُرْقَةٌ وَإِنَّ الَّذِي دُونَ الْفِرَاقِ قَلِيلٌ
وَإِنَّ افْتِقَادِي وَاحِدًا بَعْدَ وَاحِدٍ دَلِيلٌ عَلَى أَنَّ لَا يَدُومُ خَلِيلٌ

Some poems were criticised by al-Mubarrad, such as this one by an a'rabi:

أَلَا لَهْفَ الْأَرَامِلِ وَالْبَتَامَى وَلَهْفَ الْبَاقِيَانِ عَلَى قُصَى
لَعْمُرَةٍ مَا خَشِبْتُ عَلَى قُصَى مَنَالِفَ بَيْنَ حَجَرٍ وَالسَّلَى
وَلَكِنِّي خَشِبْتُ عَلَى قُصَى جَرِيرَةَ رُحْيٍ فَرَكْتُ حَى
فَتَى الْفَتَيَانِ مَحْلُولٍ مُمَرَّ وَأَمَّا بِإِرشَادٍ وَغَى

He described it as the harshest poetry, because the poet wished that the dead man whom he elegized had not died a natural death (hatfa anfihi) but had been killed. He also criticised him for praising the dead man as one who incited others to do good and evil.⁸⁷ Similar to it was a line by Labīd, elegizing his brother Arbad, who was struck by lightning:

أَخْشَى عَلَى أَرَبَدَ الْخُتُوفِ وَلَا أَرْهَبُ نَوْءَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَسَدِ

According to al-Mubarrad, misfortunes were of two kinds. Some of them could be reduced or controlled by human action. The other kind could not be avoided at all, and in that case one should be wise and console oneself. He quoted 'Alī b. al-Husayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, who remained

calm when his son died. When he was asked why this was, he replied that: "This is something which we were expecting and when it happened we were not surprised". He also quoted the Arab saying:

الْحَذَرُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْوَقِيعَةِ.

A wise man was reported to have said that one might be worried and agitated while expecting something bad to happen, but when it actually happened, he could do nothing but accept it. A good poem of rithā' was one that expressed such a concept. An excellent example is one by Aws b. Hajar, elegizing Fadāla b. Kalada. It starts:

أَيَّتَهَا النَّفْسُ أَجْهَلَ جَزَعًا إِنَّ الَّذِي تَحْذَرِينَ قَدْ وَقَعَا
إِنَّ الَّذِي جَمَعَ السَّحَابَ وَالنُّجُودَ وَالْحَرَمَ وَالْقُوى جُمَعَا
89 أَوْدَى فَمَا تَنْفَعُ إِلَّا شَاخَةً مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَهْنٌ قَدْ جُمُحِلُ الْبِدْعَا

Other examples were given from Laylā al-Akhyaliyya, elegizing Tawba, such as her poem starting:

أَعْيَنِي إِلَّا فَا بَكِي عَلَى ابْنِ حُمَيْرٍ بِدَمْعٍ كَقَبْضِ الْجُدُولِ الْمُتَفَجِّرِ

In this poem, the idea of accepting what has happened is expressed in these lines:

لَأَنَّ قَتَى الْفَتَيَانَ تَوْبَةً لَمْ يُنْجُ يَنْجِدْ وَلَمْ يَلْعَلْ مَعَ الْمُتَقَوِّرِ
وَلَمْ يَرِدْ الْمَاءَ السَّدَامَ إِذَا بَدَأَ سَنَا الصَّبْعَ فِي أَعْقَابِ أَخْضَرِ مُدِيرِ
90 وَلَمْ يَقْدَعْ الْخَنَمَ الْأَلَدَّ وَيَمْلَأِ الْجَفَانَ سَدِيفًا يَوْمَ نَكَبَاءِ قَرْهَرِ

Al-Mubarrad praised al-Khansā' and Laylā for their marāthī, in which they had excelled some of the fuhul. Two poems were quoted from al-Khansā', elegizing her brother Sakhr. One of them starts:

يَا هَخْرُ وَرَادَ مَاءٍ قَدْ تَنَادَرَهُ أَهْلُ الْمِيَاهِ وَمَا فِي وَرْدِهِ عَارُ

and the other:

أَعْيَنِي جُودًا وَلَا أَتَحَدَّ إِلَّا تَبْكِيَانِ لِصَخْرِ النَّدَى

It contains this line:

طَوِيلُ الْبَجَادِ رَفِيعُ الْعِمَا دِ سَادَ عَشْبِرَتِهِ أُمَرَدَا

The line was admired because of its kināya in tawīl al-nijād, a conceit we have encountered before.⁹¹

The marāthī of Ibn Munādhir are described by al-Mubarrad as "sweet" and of "beautiful commemoration" (ta'bīn), because Ibn Munādhir was a ʿālim, a leading and skilful poet (muflīq), and also a very eloquent orator (khatīb misqaʿ). In his poetry there was the firmness of the discourse of the (early) Arabs, because of his culture and his extensive recitation of poetry; and there was the sweetness of the discourse of the muhdathūn, owing to the influence of his period. From time to time his poetry would contain a famous mathal, a fine concept, splendid and noble words, and harmonious discourse. His long poem elegizing ʿAbd al-Majīd b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Thaqafī was a choice one (mukhtāra). It starts:

كُلُّ حَيٍّ لَأَقِ الْجَمَامَ فَمُورِي مَا لِحَيٍّ مُؤَمِّلٍ مِنْ خُلُورِ

Al-Mubarrad quoted the poem, singling out the lines he most admired, beginning:

أَيُّ رَبِّ الْحَيِّنِ الْحَبِينِ بِسُورَا ع وَرَبِّ الْقَصْرِ الْمُنِيفِ الْمَشِيدِ

In these lines the poet spoke of the great kings who had passed away and could not escape the inevitable fate of death. He claimed that, if there was anyone who was allowed to live for ever, it should be ʿAbd al-Majīd:

فَلَوْ أَنَّ الْأَيَّامَ أَخْلَدَنَ حَيًّا لَعَلَّا أَخْلَدَنَ عَبْدَ الْمَجِيدِ

This line was intended as consolation. He then expressed his great sadness for his heavy loss which he intensified:

مَا دَرَى نَعَشُهُ وَلَا حَامِلُوهُ مَا عَلَى النَّعْشِ مِنْ عَفَافٍ وَجُودِ
وَيْحَ أَبَدٍ كَثَّتْ عَلَيْهِ وَابِدٍ دَفَنَتْهُ مَا غَيَّبَتْهُ مِنَ الصَّبْرِ

These two lines were also admired for their conciseness in madīh of a dead man.⁹²

Some marāthī were greatly admired by the Arabs, and considered superior to all other poems of rithāʾ. One such poem was that by Aʿshā Bahila on al-Muntashir b. Wahb al-Bahilī, starting:

يَأْنِي اتَّقِ لِسَانَ لَا أُسْرَ بِهَا مِنْ عَلٍ لَا تَجِبُ مِنْهَا وَلَا تَسْخَرُ

A half-line was singled out by al-Mubarrad from this poem as a noble piece of madīh, namely the second half of this line:

مَنْ لَيْسَ فِيهِ إِذَا خَاوَلَتْهُ رَهَقٌ وَلَيْسَ فِيهِ إِذَا عَايَسَتْهُ عَسَرُ

It expressed the same idea as the wise saying:

إِذَا عَزَّ اخْوَكُ فَهَيْئُ .

A second selected marthiya was that by Mutammim b. Nuwayra on his brother Mālik, in which the poet consoled himself:

وَكُنَّا كَنَدْمَانِيَّ جَذِيمَةٍ حَقْبَةٍ مِنْ الدَّهْرِ حَتَّى قِيلَ لَنِي يَتَقَرَّرَعَا
فَلَمَّا تَفَرَّقْنَا لَأَنِّي وَمَا لِي لَطُولِ اجْتِمَاعٍ لَمْ تَيْتْ لَيْلَةٌ مَعَا
وَمِثْنُنَا بِخَيْرِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ وَقَبْلُنَا أَصَابَ الْمَنِيَا رَهَقٌ كَسَرَى وَتُبْعَا

Other lines of consolation and the expression of patience and acceptance in the same poem were:

وَلَسْتُ إِذَا مَا الدَّهْرُ أَحْدَثَ نَلْبَةً وَرَزَا بَرْوَارِ الْقَرَائِبِ أَخْضَعَا
وَلَا فَرِحَ إِنْ كُنْتُ يَوْمًا يَفْبَطُهُ وَلَا جَزِعَ إِنْ نَابَ دَهْرٌ فَأَوْبَعَا
وَلَكِنِّي أَهْمِي عَلَى ذَلِكَ مُقَدِّمًا إِذَا بَعْضُ مَنْ لَأَقَى الْخَطُوبَ تَلَفَعَا 93

The poems of rithā' cited by al-Mubarrad were almost all in accordance with his concept of inevitable misfortunes and his belief that, in a poem of rithā', the poet, after setting out his great loss and expressing his great sadness in an intensified way, should after all seek wise consolation and demonstrate patience, endurance and acceptance of what had happened with understanding and serenity.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Modern School

4. Ibn al-Mu'tazz

a. A general view

Although we have included him in this school of critics which assumed a moderate attitude towards the dispute concerning the ancients and the muhdathūn, Ibn al-Mu'tazz differed from al-Jāhiz, Ibn Qutayba and al-Mubarrad, in that his Tabagāt was about the muhdathūn only, while the other three did not restrict themselves to them and quoted from both groups.

Ibn al-Mu'tazz himself was one of the great poets of the muhdathūn and a leader in the art of badī'. Abū al-Faraj wrote in his Aghānī, describing the characteristics of Ibn al-Mu'tazz's poetry: "Although in his poetry there are the delicacy of royalty, the eroticism of the 'elegant' and the gossamer-like quality of the muhdathūn, there are also in it many elements that follow the style of the classic poets and do not fall short of the scope of his predecessors, as well as elegancies characteristic of the poetry of kings, in which he could not be expected to resemble the great poets of the Jāhiliyya. It is impossible for one who describes a morning-draught in a variegated and elegant assembly, among drinking-companions and singing-girls, amid fields of flowers, violets and narcissi, and similar trappings - not to mention other kinds of assembly, rich carpets, selected instruments and delicate servants - to turn his verse aside from fine, flowing discourse which is understood by all those who are present, to matted, unkempt discourse and to the description of wild deserts, antelopes, ostriches, camels male and female, camping-grounds, wildernesses and abandoned dwellings; if he does turn aside from

these last, however, and writes well, he should not be criticised, and if he writes well for the most part, moderately to some extent, and less than adequately in some small degree, his deserts should not be totally denied, and he should not be considered to have fallen short completely, in order to publish his faults and conceal his merits.¹

From what was said in the Aghānī, it would seem that the characteristics of Ibn al-Mu'tazz's poetry were those of a combination of the two styles of the ancient and the muhdath poetry, although it was more similar to the latter. The poetry of a poet like him, who was a Caliph, ought to reflect the courtly nature of his own way of life. His descriptions ought not to be of Bedouin items, and he was not obliged to follow the ancients in themes which did not apply to his life. From this point of view it would seem that Abū al-Faraj was speaking about "sincerity and reality" in the poetry of Ibn al-Mu'tazz. He rejected blind imitation of the ancients but still believed that a muhdath poet could reach the standard of the excellent ancient fuhūl. Ibn al-Mu'tazz himself, when discussing a poem by Abū al-Khattāb al-Bahdalī, a muhdath poet, in praise of the Caliph Mūsā al-Hādī, described the poet as one who was "able to combine both the ma'ānī of the ancients and the beauties of the muhdathūn". This sort of style is very much the same as that adopted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz himself, as can be seen from the words of al-Isfahānī.

Ibn Rashīq stated that he had never seen a poet with more perfect and wonderful tasnī' than Ibn al-Mu'tazz "because his craftsmanship (san'a) is concealed (khafiyya) and fine (latīfa), and sometimes it can hardly be detected except by one who is expert in the secret details of poetry (daqā'iq al-shi'r). In comparison with his peers, as it appears to me, he has more elegant poetry and more badī' and variety (iftinān)". Ibn

Rashīq believed that badī' and craftsmanship had reached their peak in Ibn al-Mu'tazz and had been 'sealed' by him.² He added that Ibn al-Mu'tazz was also one of those who were excellent in wine-description, in which he compared with al-A'shā, al-Akhtal and Abū Nuwās. He also compared with the last in hunting-poetry and tard.³ Tāhā Husayn agreed with what Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī said about the poetry of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, describing him as a natural poet (matbū') who had no affectation (takalluf) in his poetry and one who preferred facility and plainness to gharīb. He was careful to observe firmness (jazāla) in his words and maintained that as far as he could. He was interested in luxurious ma'ānī that accorded with his life and his environment and much concerned with descriptive themes. In this genre he excelled other poets with his numerous beautiful tashbihāt.⁴

In his selections from the poems of the muhdathūn in his Tabaqāt al-shu'arā' al-muhdathīn, Ibn al-Mu'tazz was perhaps guided by his own stylistic tendency. The poems that he quoted did not contain gharīb, description of deserts, camels, or other Bedouin themes, with the exception of the introductory tashbīb and atlāl in poems of madīh, the lion-description in the qasīda of Abū al-Khattāb al-Bahdalī in praise of the Caliph Mūsā al-Hādī, which is full of gharīb, and one or two lines of camel and horse-description. In his own poetry he himself used atlāl and tashbīb. Anyhow, he seems to have had a great admiration for the ancients and to have been unable to free himself entirely from their influence. This should be seen as complementing his theory of badī', in which he referred to it as something started by the earlier poets and not invented by the muhdathūn. It may also be seen as connected with his admiration for al-Khalīl b. Ahmad and Khalaf al-Ahmar, whom he mentioned among the muhdathūn, even though they belonged to the 'ulamā''

and ruwāt who favoured the earlier poets.

One of the reasons for his compiling his Tabaqāt al-shu'arā al-muhdathīn was that the people of his time were tired of continual repetition of the poetry of the ancients and of akhbār concerning them, and that they were anxious for a change. This need was satisfied by the poetry of the muhdathūn, as Ibn al-Mu'tazz mentioned in connection with the poet Abū al-Shays.⁵ Another reason seems to have been a political one, and it was associated with the poetry of madih on the Abbasid Caliphs. In his quotations he concentrated on such poetry, in order to affirm the right of the Abbasids to the caliphate. When talking about the poet Abū al-'Ibar, he made it clear that his main concern in his book was to mention every poet who had written madih on the Abbasid caliphs.⁶ He was also interested in rare poems (nādir) which were generally unknown. He said for instance that the poems of Ṣālih b. 'Abd al-Quddūs were well-known and that therefore there was no need to quote more of them.⁷ The same thing applied to Ahmad b. Abī Tāhir, whose poems were said to be known to the khāssa and 'amma alike.⁸ Some of the best poems of poets like Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa and Abū Nuwās, on the other hand, were unknown except to the elite. These rare poems, such as the kāfiyya of Marwān, and other similar poems of his, and Abū Nuwās' mīmiyya, starting:

* يَا دَارُ مَا فَعَلْتَ بِكَ الْإِيَّامُ *

were all excellent poems, which ought to be introduced to the 'amma. Some of Rabī'ā al-Raqqī's poems were also known only to the elite, like the one starting:

وَأَعْلَلْتُ نَفْسِي مِنْكَ بِالْوَعْدِ وَالْمُنَى فَهَلَّا بِيَأْسِي مِنْكَ قَلْبِي أَعْلَلُ

He selected some poems for the instructional benefits that they contained, as appears from his remark on a poem by Salm al-Khāsir in praise of Yahyā al-Barmakī the Abbasid vizier, starting:

بَقَاءُ الدِّينِ وَالْدُنْيَا جَمِيعاً إِذَا بَقِيَ الْخَلِيفَةُ وَالْوَزِيرُ

He said about it: "It is said that he who behaves according to what is

laid down in this poem will be qualified to be a vizier".¹⁰ A final reason, perhaps, for his compiling his Tabaqāt was to present, in parts of it, a practical application of his theory of badī', as set out in Kitāb al-badī'. In his selections from muhdath poetry in the Tabaqāt there are many examples of mahāsin and different kinds of badī', as we shall see.

Criteria of Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his quotations:

Like earlier critics, Ibn al-Mu'tazz did not mention the criteria he used in judging poets and selecting poetry in his Tabaqāt. The fact that people at his time desired a change from the citation of ancient poetry caused him to limit himself to quotations from muhdath poetry, and although this may indicate in him an admiration for this poetry from a general point of view, it does not indicate a standard for good and bad poetry. A study of some of his remarks on poets and their verse may throw some light on his criteria.

The first quality that he required was that of tab', together with facility of poetry (suhūla). Many of his poets were classified as matbū'un, and the most important poets in this group were Bashshār, Abū al-'Atāhiya, al-Sayyid al-Himyarī and Abū 'Uyayna who were said to be the most matbū' of all poets.¹¹ Of these four, Bashshār seems to have been his favourite poet, since he praised him as being very richly endowed with tab', and as having no takalluf at all in his poetry.¹² Abū al-'Atāhiya was also praised for his rich tab' and for the facility of his poetry; he could play with poetry and write it whenever he liked. Most of his discourse was poetry, and sometimes he wrote in metres other than the well known ones.¹³ Ibn al-Mu'tazz describes most of his citations from his poetry as "the most natural poetry and the easiest discourse".¹⁴

The connection between tab^c and facility of poetry was exemplified by the poetry of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya. Tab^c is also connected with spontaneity, as in the cases of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, again, and Abū al-Shays, for whom writing poetry was said to be easier than drinking water; this was what made him the best poet of all.¹⁵

Ibn al-Muʿtazz differed from al-Asmaʿī concerning tab^c, in that, while al-Asmaʿī linked it with tafāwut (variety of levels of excellence in poetic production as a whole or in one poem), as we have seen with al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdī, Ibn al-Muʿtazz admired consistency of levels of excellence both in the whole of a poet's poetry and in his individual poems. He described the poetry of Abū ʿUyayna as "purer than the palm of the hand and containing not a single inferior line".¹⁶ This is probably the same as unity of namat, about which Ibn al-Muʿtazz sometimes spoke.

As a leading poet of badī^c, Ibn al-Muʿtazz might be expected to quote passages from the muhdathūn full of badī^c elements. In fact, like others, he used the term badī^c somewhat ambiguously in describing poems that he admired; it is not always easy to tell whether he meant that they were wonderful poems or that they really contained elements of badī^c itself. Expressions like: "and this maʿnā is badī^c, and no-one wrote anything similar to it" continually face us in the book. An example is this line by Bashshār:

يَا قَوْمِ أَدْنِي لِبَعْضِ الْحَيِّ عَاشِقَةً وَالْأَذُنُ تَعِشِقُ قَبْلَ الْعَيْنِ أَجْيَابًا

Another is his rāʿiyya, starting:

رَأَيْتُ صَحَابِي بِنَحْنَا صِرَاتٍ حُورًا بَعْدَ مَاصِغِ النَّهَارِ

which was described as an admirable poem "because of its maʿānī badīʿa and its high standard of composition and form".¹⁷ The figure of badī^c that Ibn al-Muʿtazz admired most was tashbih. Ibn Rashīq reported that he preferred Dhū al-Rumma to all other poets for his excellent istiʿāra and

tashbīh, especially in the following line:

فَلَمَّا رَأَيْتَ اللَّيْلَ وَالشَّمْسُ حَيَّةٌ حَيَاةَ الَّذِي يَقْنِي حَشَاشَتَهُ نَارِعُ

The expression wa-al-shamsu hayyatun pertained to badī', being isti'āra; the rest of the line was a wonderful tashbīh.¹⁸ Ibn al-Mu'tazz also pointed out Bashshār's skill in writing excellent tashbīh, and said that his similes - even though he was blind - were better than those of all other poets, such as in his line:

19 لَأَنْ مَثَارَ النَّعْجِ فَوْقَ رُوسِنَا وَأَسْيَا فَنَا لَيْلٌ تَهَاوَى كَوَالِبَهُ

Bashshār himself was proud of that line, because in it he was able to combine more than one tashbīh, following Imru' al-Qays, who had done the same, in the line that we have quoted before. Ibn Rashīq praised Bashshār for his correct and excellent tartīb in this line.²⁰

Ibn al-Mu'tazz was also concerned with excellence of words and ma'nā, and perfection of composition, which was what he meant by "ihkām al-rasf".

He claimed these characteristics for a poem of Bashshār, starting:

21 جَفَا جَفْوَةً فَازَوْرٌ إِذْ مَلَّ صَاحِبُهُ وَأَزْرَى بِهِ أَنْ لَا يَزَالَ يُصَاحِبُهُ

A line from this poem was quoted by Ibn Tabātabā as an example of poetry that "comes close to reality":

عَدَتْ عَانَةٌ تَشْكُو بِأَبْصَارِهَا الْقَدْرَ إِلَى الْبَابِ إِلَّا أَنَّهَا لَا تَخَاطِبُهُ

This line was quoted beside a line of 'Antara's describing his horse, and it was admired for the same reason:

فَازَوْرٌ عَنْ وَقْعِ الْقَنَا بَلْبَاتُهُ وَشَكَا إِلَى يَغْبَرَةٍ وَتَحْمُجُ

Two further lines by al-Muthaqqib al-'Abdī on his she-camel:

تَقُولُ وَقَدْ دَرَأَتْ لَهَا وَضِيئِي أَهَذَا دِينَهُ أَبَدًا وَدِينِي
أَلَلَّ الدَّفْرِ حِلَّةً وَارْتَحَالَ أَمَا يُبْقَى عَلَيَّ وَلَا يُقِينِي

were criticised by Ibn Tabātabā on the grounds that the metaphor used in them was very far removed from reality; the two lines quoted from Bashshār and 'Antara were therefore better.²²

Another poem admired by Ibn al-Mu'tazz for its excellent ma'anī was one of madīh on Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik, by Abū Nukhayla.²³

Some poems by other poets were described in terms such as: "And this, as you can see, is a kind of poetry that looks like silk brocade, nay, it is like a string of pearls, with excellence in description and perfection in form and structure (rasf).²⁴ Concerning other poetry he said: "and these words - as you have heard - have the sweetness of fresh water, and the ma'anī are more delicate (aragga) than permissible magic".²⁵ Of the poet 'Umāra b. 'Aqīl, a grandson of Jarīr, he said that "when he starts writing poetry in a certain ma'nā he will not leave it until he has gone deeply into it and finally completed it; he has clear poetry, perfect form and excellent description".²⁶

The ma'nā was an important factor in the fame of poetry, according to Ibn al-Mu'tazz, who described the two following lines by Darast al-Mu'allim as having "travelled widely on earth" because of their good ma'nā:

لَنَا صَاحِبٌ مُوَلَّعٌ بِالْخِلَافِ كَثِيرُ الْخَطَا وَقَلِيلُ السَّوَابِ
أَلَجَّ لَجَاجًا مِنَ الْخَنَفَسَاءِ وَأَزْهَى إِذَا مَا مَشَى مِنْ غُرَابِ 27

The twin measures of excellence of ma'nā and of words are related to what Ibn Qutayba said in his book al-Shi'r wa-al-shu'arā, where he divided poetry into four types, according to excellence of ma'nā and of words. Qudāma b. Ja'far in his Naqd al-shi'r, appeared to have been influenced by both Ibn Qutayba and Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his theory of the combination of the four elements of poetry, metre, rhyme, words and concept.²⁸

Ibn al-Mu'tazz also spoke about the two qualities of fasāha and suhūla. Some of the poems he selected were credited with these qualities. The poet Mutī' b. Iyās praised Ma'n b. Zā'ida in a qasīda which was said to

be fasīha jayyida.²⁹ The marthiya of Ibn Munādhir on 'Abd al-Majīd al-Thaqafī was described as a perfect, fluent masterpiece of poetry and said to be: fahla muhkama fasīha jiddan.³⁰ Ibn al-Mu'tazz linked suhūla with fasāha just as he did with tab. These were the two qualities characteristic of the urjūza of Di'bil b. 'Alī in praise of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn:

يا سَلَمُ ذَاتَ الوُضْخِ العِذابِ
وَرَبَّةَ المِقْصَمِ ذِي الحِضَابِ 31

He said that people desired fasāha in poetry together with excellence, and "they have unanimously agreed that the qasīda of Abū Fir'awn al-Sāsī in praise of al-Hasan b. Sahl combines the two". It opens:

سُقِيَا لِحَيِّ بِاللَّوَى عَهْدُهُمْ
مَنْذُ زَمَانٍ ثُمَّ هَذَا عَهْدُهُمْ 32

After a nasīb occupying four lines, the poet enters on his madīh:

النَّاسُ أَشْبَاهُ مَا قَدْ مَثَّلُوا وَفِيهِمْ خَيْرٌ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُهُمْ
حَاشَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِنَّهُ خَلِيفَةُ اللَّهِ وَأَنْتَ هَيْهَرُهُمْ
فَأَحْسِنُوا التَّدْبِيرَ لِمَا نَاصَحُوا وَأَمِنُوا الْقَتْبَ فَطَالَ نَحْمُهُمْ

The rest of the poem is an amusing description of the poet's family, their donkey and their dog, starting:

إِلَيْكَ أَشْكُو حَبِيبَةً وَأَهْلَهُمْ لَا يَشْبَعُونَ وَأَبْوَهُمْ مِثْلُهُمْ
قَدْ أَكَلُوا اللَّحْمَ وَلَمْ يَشْبَعُوا وَشَرَبُوا الْمَاءَ فَطَالَ شُرْبُهُمْ

This description, besides the 'eloquence' found in the poem by Ibn al-Mu'tazz, may have been a reason why people admired it. The third line of the madīh, incidentally, contains the figure of rujū, which is listed as one of the mahāsin in Kitāb al-badī.³³

Another of Ibn al-Mu'tazz's criteria is that good poetry should have one namat, or consistency in style, form, structure and excellence in all parts. It should also have the qualities of suhūla and salāsa (fluency), and should be free of defects. Such poetry was written by Bashshār, about whom Ibn al-Mu'tazz wrote: "I do not know anyone among people of knowledge

and understanding who denies his superiority or dislikes his poetry, which is purer than the palm of the hand, clearer than a glass, and smoother than sweet water on the tongue". The foregoing qasida rhyming in rā' he described as a poem that belongs to "the silk brocade of poetry that contains no variation of namat".³⁴ Beauty of poetic namat was to be found in the poetry of al-Sayyid al-Himyari³⁵, and also in the qasida of Bakr b. al-Nattāh, in praise of Abū Dulaf. "It is all written in one namat, which silk brocade falls short of".³⁶ Other poems, like that of Muhammad b. Yasir, in which he says:

تَنَلَّى بِهِمْ فِي الْفُؤَادِ دَخِيلٍ وَأَخْلَقَهُ عَزْمُ النَّوَى بِرَحِيلٍ

were described thus: "and this namat - as you see - is but permissible magic".³⁷ One poem by Rabi'a al-Raqqi was described: "and this - as you see - is more fluent than water and sweeter than honey".³⁸

Ibn al-Mu'tazz was also interested in poetry written in short metres. He commented on the following lines by Abū al-Yanbaghi:

أَلَا يَا مَلِكَ النَّاسِ وَخَيْرَ النَّاسِ لِلنَّاسِ
أَتَتَّهَانِي عَنِ النَّاسِ فَأُغْنِيَنِي عَنِ النَّاسِ
وَالْأَفْعُ النَّاسِ وَدَعْنِي أَسْأَلُ النَّاسِ
فَهَلْ سَمِعْتَ فِي النَّاسِ بِشَعْرِ كَلِّهِ النَّاسِ

"these lines have travelled widely on earth and are recited by everyone because they are very light in men's mouths".³⁹ The same quality was to be found in the second example, by Abū al-ʿAdaythil:

قَدْ جَارَ وَاللَّهِ عَلَى جَارِهِ وَاللَّهُ قَدْ أَوْصَاهُ بِالْجَارِ
حَتَّى مَتَى يَا سَيِّدِي أَنْتَ لِي تَمْزِجُ إِقْبَالَاً بِإِدْبَارِ
يَا مَنْ رَأَى فِيهِمْ قَبْلَهُ الـ دِينَارَ فِي رَاحَةِ دِينَارِ

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A third example, again by Abū al-Yanbaghi:

صَبْرًا عَلَى الذَّلِيلِ وَالصَّغَارِ يَا خَالِقَ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ
كَمْ مِنْ حِمَارٍ عَلَى جَوَادٍ وَمِنْ جَوَادٍ عَلَى حِمَارِ

Ibn al-Mu'tazz's comment on the second line was that it "has flown to the remotest parts of the earth, and people recite it admiringly in every majlis, assembly, market and street. A verse of poetry is vouchsafed such fame only if it consists of an excellent ma'nā and sweet words, and if it is light in the mouth".⁴¹

Sweetness and excellence of words was also connected with fasāḥa and brevity. The criterion of brevity was much talked about by al-Mubarrad, as we have seen. When Ibn al-Mu'tazz, too, compared the line of Bashshār:

مَنْ رَاقِبَ النَّاسَ لَمْ يَلْفَرْ بِحَاجَتِهِ وَفَارَ بِالطَّيِّبَاتِ الْفَاتِكُ اللَّهُجُ

with that by Salm al-Khāsir, who borrowed the idea of his master Bashshār:

مَنْ رَاقِبَ النَّاسَ مَا تَنْغَمَّى وَفَارَ بِاللَّذَّةِ الْجَسُورُ

he preferred Salm's line because the poet had expressed the idea in "more excellent words with more eloquence and more brevity". Bashshār himself admitted that Salm had surpassed him in that line because he had presented the ma'nā in more beautiful words.⁴²

We still find critics inclined to give enthusiastic judgements about single verses and declaring a poet to be the best on the strength of a single line that occurs in his poetry. Ibn al-Mu'tazz had the habit of giving such judgements with regard to excellence of ma'nā. Quoting the qasida of Bakr Ibn al-Nattāḥ in praise of Abū Dulaf, he commented on the following line:

لَأَنَّ غَمَامَ الْعِزِّ حَشَوُ الْفَهْمِ إِذَا طَبَقَ الْآفَاقَ بِالذِّمَمَاتِ

"It is acknowledged by all poets that there is no other line to compare with it in beauty and excellence of ma'nā".⁴³ The poet used isti'āra

(لَأَنَّ غَمَامَ الْعِزِّ) to describe the generosity of the family of Abū Dulaf, likening their hands to clouds which shower rain everywhere. It was also said that when the poet 'Alī b. al-Jahm was put in prison, he wrote a poem addressing the Caliph al-Mutawakkil, one of the

lines of which was:

قَالَتْ حَيْسَتْ فَقُلْتُ كَيْسَ بِنَاثِرِي حَبْسِي ، وَآيَ مَهْنَدٍ لَا يُفْعَدُ

When he was crucified he recited:

مَا ضَرَّهُ أَنْ بُرِّعَ عَنْهُ لِبَاسُهُ خَالِ السِّيفِ أَهْوَلُ مَا بُرِّيَ مَسْلُوقًا

On hearing these two lines, people "judged that he was the best poet of all; poets submitted to him and princes feared him".⁴⁴ The poet likened himself when he was put in prison to a sword being put into its scabbard. In the second line he likened himself when he was naked and crucified to a sword being drawn or unsheathed. Ibn Rashīq quoted the second line, together with the two that preceded it:

لَمْ يَنْصَبُوا بِالشَّادِيَاخِ عَشِيَّةَ الْ
نُصَبُوا بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَمْ يَغْيُونَهُمْ
مَا ضَرَّهُ أَنْ بُرِّعَ عَنْهُ لِبَاسُهُ
خَالِ السِّيفِ أَهْوَلُ مَا بُرِّيَ مَسْلُوقًا
اِثْنَيْنِ مَقْلُوقًا وَلَا مَجْمُوعًا
حُسْنًا وَمِلًّا قُلُوبُهُمْ تَبْجِيلًا

as an example of extempore poetry (irtijāl), saying that it demonstrated the poetic power and tab^c of the poet even at a time when he was terrified and in pain. He gave other examples of poetry written in irtijāl by poets who were at the point of death, like Hudba b. Khashram Tarafa b. al-‘Abd and Murra b. Mahkān. According to him, the poetry that they produced in these circumstances had the same degree of excellence as the poetry that they wrote at happier moments. He described the lines of ‘Alī Ibn al-Jahm as having the quality of jazāla, and this may throw some light on Ibn al-Mu‘tazz's views on them.⁴⁵

Ibn al-Mu‘tazz was also concerned with husn al-takhallus or excellent transition from nasīb to madīh and from nasīb to hijā’. He also connected this with excellence of ma‘nā. In the qasīda of ‘Alī b. Jabala in praise of Humayd al-Tūsī, the nasīb began:

دِمْنُ الدَّارِ دُثُورُ كَيْسَ فِيهِنَّ مُجِيرُ

The poet then proceeded to his rahīl, beginning:

وَبِمَا أَعْتَسِفَ إِلَيْهِ سَتَ أَسْدَى وَأُنِيرَ

This continued for twelve lines, and then he switched to madīh:

لِحَمِيدٍ وَحُمِيدٍ النِّجَاءِ الْمُسْتَطِيرِ
قَمَرِ الْأَرْضِ الْهَنِيرِ

Ibn al-Mu'tazz's comment was: "I have never heard a transition from nasīb to madīh more beautiful than this, not to mention the excellence of these ma'ānī".⁴⁶

The poem of Abū Nuwās in praise of al-Faḍl b. Yahyā al-Barmakī was quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. It started with a nasīb:

ذَكَرْتُمْ مِنَ الرِّحَالِ يَوْمًا فَعَمِنَا فَلَوْ قَدْ فَخَلْتُمْ صَبَاحَ الْمَوْتِ بَعْضَنَا

lasting for eight lines and then made the transition to madīh with the line:

سَأَشْكُو إِلَى الْفَضْلِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ خَالِدٍ هُوَاكِ لَعَلَّ الْفَضْلَ يَجْعُ بَيْنَنَا
أَمِيرٌ رَأَيْتَ الْمَالَ فِي حَبْرَائِهِ مَهِينًا ذَلِيلَ النَّفْسِ بِالْفَيْمِ مَوْفَنَا

It appears that this qasīda was also admired for the itrād that the poet introduced in mentioning a series of names successively without hashw or takalluf, in the line of transition from nasīb to madīh. This itrād was a sign of the powerful tab' of the poet, as Ibn Rashīq said, giving examples of it, such as the line of al-A'shā:

أَقْبَسَ بَنَ مَسْعُورَ بَنِ قَبَسٍ بَنِ خَالِدٍ وَأَنْتَ امْرُؤٌ تَرْجُو شَبَابَكَ وَأَنْتَ

Ibn Rashīq preferred the line of Abū Nuwās to those of al-Mutanabbī:

هَافَانُطْرِي أَوْ فَطْنِي بِي تَرَى حُرْقًا مَنْ لَمْ يَذُقْ طَرْفًا فَقَدْ وَاَلَا
عَلَّ الْأَمِيرَ يَرَى ذُلَّ فَيْشَقَعِ لِي إِلَى الَّتِي تَنْكَرُنِي فِي الْهَوَى مَثَلًا

because here the poet made his mamduh a pander, while Abū Nuwās requested his mamduh to unite him with his beloved by helping him with money.⁴⁹

The third reason for Ibn al-Mu'tazz's selecting this poem, besides the

beauty of its transition and its itrād was the fact, referred to before, that the poet made his rahīl on foot instead of on his she-camel:

إليكم أبا العباس من بين من مشى عليها امتطينا الحضري الملسنا
50 فلا نضئ لم تعرف حيناً على لهما ولم ندر ما قرع الفتيق ولا الهنا

The second line Ibn Rashīq described as a riddle, because the poet said that the camels that carried them to the mamduh were their own shoes.⁵¹

A good example of husn al-khurūj from one ma'nā to another were these three lines by Bashshār:

خيل من كعب أعينا أخالما على دهره إن الكريم معين
ولا تبخلنا بخل انت فرقة إنه مخافة أن يرجى نداء حزين
52 إذا جئته في الحق أغلق بابه فلم تطفه إلا وأنت مكين

Another example of excellent transition, this time from nasīb to hijā', was the two lines quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz from the poetry of Muslim Ibn al-Walīd. Although he did not say anything about them except that they were choice, it seems likely that he selected them for their husn al-takhallus:

وَأَجَبْتُ مِنْ حُبِّهَا الْبَاخِلِينَ حَتَّى وَمَقَّتْ ابْنُ سَلَمٍ سَعِيدَا
إِذَا سَبِيلَ عُرْفًا كَسَا وَجْهَهُ ثِيَابًا مِنَ اللَّؤْمِ هُمْرًا وَسُودَا
53 يَغِيرُ عَلَى الْمَالِ فَعَلَ الْجَوَارِ وَتَابَى خَلَائِقُهُ أَنْ تَجُودَا

In Kitāb al-badī' the lines are attributed to Abū al-'Atāhiya under the heading husn al-khurūj.⁵⁴

Ibn al-Mu'tazz also spoke about husn al-ibtidā', or beautiful openings to poems.⁵⁵ We find that in some of the qasīdas and poems that he selected the first line consists of tasrī', as in the qasīda of Bashshār, starting:

جَفَا حَفْوَةً فَازُورَ إِذَا مَلََّ صَاحِبُهُ
وَأَزَرَى بِهِ أَنَّ لَا يَزَالُ يُصَاحِبُهُ

and:

أَيْنَ تَجَنَّى حَبِيبَ رَاحٍ غَضَبَانَا أَصَبَحْتَ فِي سَكْرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ سَكْرَانَا

and:

لَمْ يَلِكْ لَيْلَى وَلَكِنْ لَمْ أَنْهَمْ وَتَفَى عَنِّي الْكَرَى لَهَيْفَ أَلَمْ

and:

56 حَيِّيًا صَاحِبِيَّ أُمَّ الْعَلَاءِ وَاحْذَرَا طَرَفَ عَيْنِهَا الْحَوْرَاءِ

Other examples came from the poetry of Sudayf :

57 أَصْبَحَ الْمَلِكُ ثَابِتَ الْأَسَاسِ بِالْبَطَالِيلِ مِنْ بَنِي الْعَبَاسِ

and from this poem of Marwān Ibn Abī Ḥafsa:

أَمْسَى الْمَشْيَبُ مِنَ الشَّبَابِ بَدِيلًا ضَمِينًا أَقَامَ فِيهَا بَرِيدُ رَحِيلَا

and:

58 لَأَمْ فِي أُمِّ مَالِكٍ عَازِلَا وَلَقَمَرُ الْإِلَهِ مَا أَنْصَفَا كَا

and from this poem of Abū al-Shays:

أَبْقَى الزَّمَانُ بِهِ نُدُوبَ عِضَائِي وَرَحَى سَوَادَ قُرُونِهِ بَبِيضِي

and:

خَلَعَ الصَّبَا عَنْ مَنَكِبِهِ مَشْيَبُ فَطَوَى الذَّوَائِبَ رَأْسَهُ الْخَضُوبُ

and:

59 نَهَى عَنْ خُلُقِ الْخَمْرِ بِيَاضُ لَاحٍ فِي الشَّعْرِ

and his qasida, beginning:

أَشَاقِكَ وَالْبَيْلُ مُلْقَى الْجِرَانِ غَرَابٌ يَنْوُحُ عَلَى غُصْنِ بَانٍ

and:

مَرَّتْ عَيْنُهُ لِلشَّوْقِ فَالِدَمْعُ مُنْسَكِبُ طُلُوعُ دِيَارِ الْحَيِّ وَالْحَيُّ مُفْتَرِبُ

and:

60 يَادَارُ مَالِكٍ كَبَسَ فِيكَ أَنْيْسُ إِلَّا مَعَالِمَ آيَهُنَّ دُرُوسُ

and many others.

As we have mentioned before, Ibn al-Mu'tazz was influenced by his own style of badī' poetry in making his selection from the poetry of the muhdathūn. So far, we have dealt with istitrād, itrād and tasrī'; other kinds also made their appearance in the lines he quoted. For instance, he expressed admiration for these lines of Abū Hayya al-Numayrī:

أَلَا حَىَّ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْجَيْبِ الْمَغَانِيَا لَيْسَتْ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا لَيْسَتْ إِلَيَّ
إِذَا مَا تَقَاضَى الْمَرْءُ يَوْمَ وَلِيلَةٍ تَقَاضَاهُ شَيْءٌ لَا يَمِلُ التَّقَاضِيَا

61

He quoted the first line in Kitāb al-badī' as an example of husn al-ibtidā'.⁶² This figure, in which the poet repeats a certain word in the same line, is called tardīd, and it occurs in the poetry of the muhdathūn more than in the poetry of the ancients. The two lines quoted above were said to be the best lines of tardīd; those who understood poetry well agreed on this.⁶³

Some of the poetry quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz contained what critics called iltifāt, i'tirād or istidrāk. This involved a poet starting one ma'nā, then leaving it for another, and then again returning to the first.⁶⁴

An example of this quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz was the poem of 'Awf b. Muḥallim in which this line occurs:

65 إِنْ الثَّمَانِيْنَ - وَبَلَّغْتَهَا - قَدْ أَحْوَجْتُ سَمِيَّ إِلَى تَرْجَمَانٍ

The words: وَبَلَّغْتَهَا are said to be iltifāt. Ibn al-Mu'tazz defined iltifāt as: "The changing of the course of speech from indirect discourse to direct (addressing the listener), and from direct to indirect (reporting or giving information)". He gave an example from the Qur'an:

« حَتَّى إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَّتْ بِكُمْ بَرِيحٌ طَيِّبَةٌ »

He also gave an example from the poetry of Jarīr, with the line:

مَنْ لَانَ الْخِيَامُ بَدَى طَلُوحُ سَقِيَتِ الْغَبَّةُ أَيْتَهَا الْخِيَامُ

and:

66 طَرِبَ الْجَمَامُ بَدَى الْأَرَاكِ فَهَاجَنِي لَزَلَتْ فِي غُلِّي وَأَيْلُكَ نَاضِرٍ

He also quoted an example of istidrāk from the poetry of Bashshār:

67 نَبَيْتٌ فَاضِحٌ قَوْمُهُ يَغْتَابُنِي عِنْدَ الْأَمِيرِ وَهَلْ عَلَى أَمِيرٍ

The last line, quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz, and Ibn Rashīq under the heading istidrāk, was again quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his Kitāb al-badī', where

it was classified as a line of rujū. Another example was taken from rajaz by Abū Nuwās:

يا خَيْرَ مَنْ كَانَ وَمَنْ يَكُونُ إِلا النّبىّ الطاهرُ الأمينُ
إمامٌ عدلٍ ماله قرينُ استغفرُ الله بلى هارون

Rujū is defined by Ibn al-Mu'tazz as follows: "a poet starts to say something and then refrains from it".⁶⁸ Later, in his quotations from the muhdathūn in madīh poetry, we shall find several similar examples.

Ibn al-Mu'tazz also appreciated ighāl, which some critics called tabligh, and he used it in his poetry. An example was this line of his:

69 وداعٍ دَعَا والبلْبُلُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُ فَكُنْتُ مَكَانَ الطَّنِّ مِنْهُ وَأَعْجَلَا

When we come to his selections of madīh we find him quoting lines like the following one of Marwān Ibn Abī Hafsa:

70 هم القوم: إِنْ خَالُوا أَصَابُوا ، وَإِنْ دَعَوْا أَجَابُوا ، وَإِنْ أَعْلَوْا أَطَابُوا وَأَجْرَلُوا

Ibn al-Mu'tazz seems to have considered the length of the tashbīb or nasīb that introduced a gasida to be an important element in the poem of madīh, since he quoted those which contained very long introductions, like those of Abū al-Shays.⁷¹ Sometimes he only quoted the tashbīb, and sometimes he quoted two or three lines of madīh as well.⁷² He seems to have liked best the tashbīb that wept over departed youth and described grey hair. The best of this was that which aroused men's emotions when recited, such as the lines selected from the madīh poem of Mansūr al-Namrī on Harūn al-Rashīd. The lines of tashbīb are as follows:

مَا تَنْقُضُ حَسْرَةً مِنْهُ وَلَا جَرْحُ إِذَا ذَكَرْتُ شَبَاباً كَبَسَ بُرْجَعُ
أَوْدَى الشَّبَابُ وَفَاتَنِي بِشَرِّهِ صُرُوفُ دَهْرٍ وَأَيَّامٌ لَهَا خُدَعُ
مَا كُنْتُ أَوفَى شَبَابِي كَنهِ غُرَّتِهِ حَتَّى انْقَضَى فَإِذَا الدُّنْيَا لَهُ تَبَعُ
إِنْ كُنْتُ لَمْ تَطْعَمْ ثَلَاثَةَ الشَّبَابِ وَلَمْ تَنْشَجْ بِفُصَيْتِهِ فَالْعُذْرُ لَا يَقَعُ

Describing the emotional effect that these lines had on people, he

commented that the poet "caused the doomsday to arrive with this tashbīb" (aqāma al-qiyāma).⁷³

Like earlier critics, Ibn al-Muʿtazz thought that a good poet was the one who was able to write excellent madih, ghazal, hija' and wasf. An example was Nusayb al-Asqar, who "does not fall short in any of these topics".⁷⁴ Al-Husayn Ibn al-Dahhak was also an example of this kind of poet, being described as one of the muftannin, or those who had variety in their poetry. Besides his excellent poetry in the above mentioned genres, he was also "excellent in mujun, and a man of both seriousness and jocularity (sahib jidd wa-hazl). Critics usually classify him in the seas (levels?) of Abū Nuwās, but he has more pure poetry, and less confusing takhlīt than Abū Nuwās".⁷⁵ Tafannun, or variety in poetry, was also to be found in the work of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, who "has been able to compete with poets in all fields of poetry, and, in addition to that, he is distinguished from them by his ability to describe drinks and garden (riyād) and to write poetry on other subjects in which other poets cannot compete with him. He is known as an excellent writer of madih on kings".⁷⁶ The criteria of tafannun and jidd wa-hazl were mentioned by al-Buhturī before, when he compared Muslim b. al-Walīd with Abū Nuwās and preferred the latter because of his ability in jidd wa-hazl. Al-Jāhiz and al-Mubarrad also shared this liking for the combination of seriousness and lightheartedness. Ibn al-Muʿtazz himself quoted many poems and lines which either he specifically described as mulah and nawādir or contained lighthearted elements, without being particularly designated as such. In addition, he reported a number of amusing anecdotes and incidents, such as that concerning Bashshar and Ibn Harma⁷⁷, and that concerning al-Sayyid al-Himyari and Abū Dulāma.⁷⁸ An example of the comic poetry of the latter was the piece following in which he satirised himself:

أَلَا أَبْلُغُ لَدَيْكَ أَبَادُ لَامَةً فَلَسْتَ مِنَ الْكِرَامِ وَلَا كِرَامَةً
 جَعَلْتَ دِمَامَةً وَجَمَعْتَ لَوْماً كَذَاكَ اللَّوْمُ تَتْبَعُهُ الدِّمَامَةُ
 فَإِنْ تَلَّكَ يَا عُلَيْجُ أَصَبْتَ مَالاً فَبِوَشْكَ أَنْ تَقُومَ بِكَ الْقِيَامَةُ
 إِذَا لَيْسَ الْعِمَامَةُ قَلْتَ قِرْدًا وَخِنْزِيرٌ إِذَا وَضَعَ الْعِمَامَةُ

and another poem:

قَدْ رَضِيَ الْمَهْدِيُّ خُبِيًّا شَكََّ بِالسَّهْمِ فَوَادَهُ
 وَعَلَى بَنِ سَلِيمَا نَ رَضِيَ كَلْبًا فَصَادَهُ
 فَهَنِيئًا لَكُمَا كُلُّ أَمْرٍ يَأْكُلُ زَادَهُ 79

Similar lighthearted lines were cited by Ibn al-Mu'tazz here and there in his Tabaqāt; the reason for his doing so was almost certainly the same as that adduced by his predecessors, namely that of providing his readers with diversion from more serious poetry. This may well also explain the nature of his quotations from the poetry of hijā' and mujūn, as we shall see. It seems that the combination of jidd and hazl was taken as a sign of a powerful poetic ability and tab' in some cases. Similar to this criterion is that which considers a poet's standing to depend on his ability to combine the style of the ancients with that of the muhdathūn. Abū al-Khattāb al-Bahdalī was a good example of this. In his poem of madīh on the Caliph Mūsā al-Hādī, starting:

مَاذَا يَهْجُلُكَ مِنْ دَارٍ بِحَنِيَّةٍ لَالْبُرْدِ غَيْرَ مِنْهَا الْجِدَّةُ الْعُسْرُ

he is described by Ibn al-Mu'tazz as one who "has mastered discourse, is excellent in wasf, constructs well (husn al-rasf), and has been able to combine, in addition to powerful discourse, the beauties of the muhdathūn with the ma'ānī of the ancients".⁸⁰

Ibn al-Mu'tazz used several critical words in his otherwise rather unspecific judgements about poetry. He often used, when describing a particular poem, terms like malīha to mean either "beautiful" or "having amusing ma'ānī", and nādīra to mean "unique". Al-Dī'bilī was said to be

"malīh al-shi'r jiddan"⁸¹. When he described a piece of poetry as malīha sā'ira, he may have meant "famous and recited everywhere", or "witty and therefore famous". An example of this is the following lines by Hammād 'Ajrād:

حُرَيْثُ أَبُو الْفَضْلِ ذُو خُبْرَةٍ بِمَا يَصِلُ إِلَى الْعَدِّ الْفَاسِدَةِ
 تَخَوَّفُ نَحْثَةَ أَضْيَافِهِ فَقَوَّوْهُمْ أَكْلَةً وَاحِدَةً

These two lines were also quoted by Ibn Qutayba in his al-shi'r wal-shu'arā, as was mentioned before. Probably by malāha Ibn al-Mu'tazz meant "joking" or "humour". The many remarks that he made about it demonstrated his interest in the subject. Sometimes he called a poet like Mutī' b. Iyās, who wrote a great deal of poetry on all topics, that is to say that he was a muftann, "a man of jokes", sāhib nawādir.⁸³ Like al-Husayn Ibn al-Dahhāk, he was also described as a khali' and a mājin, a description that indicates a tendency to hazl.⁸⁴ Some qasīdas were described as "long and famous", or "excellent, long and wonderful ('ajība)".⁸⁵ From such comments, it would seem that Ibn al-Mu'tazz gave special consideration to the length of a poem as well as its excellence, and he may have wished to imply that the best poet was tawīl al-nafas. However, other remarks⁸⁶ seem to indicate that Ibn al-Mu'tazz used the standards of multiplicity and excellence, which had already been used by Ibn Sallām, as we have seen.

Nevertheless, we find that Ibn al-Mu'tazz very often made favourable judgements and comments on poems or poets without giving ^{very specific} any reason to justify those judgements. One of the poems of Abu al-Shayṣ had "travelled far away". Another one was described as "far-travelling and widely approved", (min al-sā'ir al-mujāz). A third one was "one of his exquisite poems which has been wide-reaching and far-travelling on earth". This was the one that starts:

يَا دَارَ مَا لَيْسَ فَيْكَ أَتَيْسُ إِلَّا مَعَالِمَ آيَتِهِنَّ دُرُوسُ

One qasīda of Abū Dulāma was "far-travelling and excellent"; a line of Nusayb had "travelled widely on the earth".⁸⁸ Another poem had "travelled like the sun and the wind. The poet received much money for it". This was the poem known as al-gharrā' (the one with a blaze like a horse), which "travelled widely among both 'Arab and 'Ajam", written by 'Alī b. Jabala in praise of Abū Dulaf.⁸⁹

The Lāmiyya of Muslim Ibn al-Walīd was "a famous, far-travelling and wonderful qasīda".⁹⁰ A poem by Rabi'ā al-Raqqī had "travelled to the remote parts of the earth and become like a mathal".⁹¹ Also the mīmiyya of Mansūr al-Namrī in praise of al-Ma'mūn was "a wonderful poem and it became a mathal among men".⁹²

His comments on poets themselves are similar to those on their poetry. It seems that he preferred Bashshār to all other muhdathūn. He described him as muftann bārī, and said that his position in poetry had been achieved by no-one else. Bashshār was the master of the muhdathūn, no-one was superior to him and no-one could run with him in the field of poetry. Although Hammād 'Ajrad was a muflīq and an excellent poet, he was not worthy to be compared with Bashshār and could never approach his position in poetry. Poets used to gather round Bashshār and recite their poems, and they accepted his judgements on them. For that reason he was the master of the poets of his time.⁹³

It seems that for Ibn al-Mu'tazz excellent poets were expected to have mastered fasāha, balāgha and khitāba. Bashshār was counted among those who possessed those faculties.⁹⁴ Sudayf b. Maymūn was said to be a man of letters, a muflīq poet and an eloquent orator "khatīb misqa". His tab and his remarkable ability to write poetry on any subject he liked had made him the best poet of his time.⁹⁵ The three contemporary poets

and friends known as the three Ḥammāds, Ḥammād ʿAjrād, Ḥammād b. al-Zibriqān and Ḥammād al-Rāwīya, were all "mufliq poets and famous orators".⁹⁶

The quality of tabʿ was associated with excellence in poetry, rhetoric and fasāḥa. A poet possessing these qualities should also be a master of mantiq (here, probably, the expression of maʿānī). Ibrāhīm b. Sayyāba was described as being "one of the most eloquent and fluent poets and one of the matbūʿūn. He was also a master of mantiq".⁹⁷ Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf, again one of the matbūʿūn, was said to be mufawwah mantiqī, an eloquent poet who either had the ability to express maʿānī or who had a mastery of logic.⁹⁸ There were other poets, too, who were described as men of letters and knowledgeable, with tabʿ and mantiq. Some of them were excellent in writing rasāʿil, an example being the poet Abān b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd.⁹⁹ It was very difficult, Ibn al-Muʿtazz believed, to find a poet who was excellent in both poetry and rasāʿil. Two who had both abilities were al-ʿAttābī and Abū ʿAlī al-Basīr.¹⁰⁰ However, fasāḥa and tabʿ were the two important factors used by Ibn al-Muʿtazz in comparing poets with one another. Many of those who were declared by him to be the best in their periods were described as possessing these two things.¹⁰¹ The poet who was matbūʿ was in most cases described as muqtadir (able)¹⁰²; he could create (mubdiʿ), had a rich source of poetry, and could write poetry in various genres.

Madīh and wasf.

Ibn al-Muʿtazz was primarily interested in madīh poetry. The way in which he spoke about madīh poets indicated his high opinion of them, even if they were not matbūʿūn. This in itself may suggest that the art of madīh had developed into a kind of sināʿa, with certain established methods to be followed.

The measure of the success of the madīh poet was the amount of money he received from his mamduhs and how widely his poetry was disseminated. It was said that no poet received so much money for his poetry as Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa. In spite of that he was not a matbū.¹⁰³ Muslim b. al-Walīd was said to have had his poetry written in gold by Hārūn al-Rashīd.¹⁰⁴ Another poet who had his poetry written in gold was 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Ḥārithī (p. 275). These stories of poetry being written in gold in the Abbasid era remind us of the story of the mu'allagāt. The importance of the genre of madīh as a measure for a poet's status may also be seen in the comments made about Rabi'a al-Raqqī and 'Alī b. 'Āsim. The former was described as a poet of much excellent poetry but little renown; he fell below his tabaqa for the reason that he lived far from Iraq and did not come to serve the caliphs and mix with other poets. This implies that, by not competing with other poets in writing madīh, he could not attain the position of a master poet. In spite of that, there were some critics who favoured him.¹⁰⁵ Those who favoured him probably did so because of his ghazal poetry. 'Alī b. 'Āsim was one of the most excellent poets and he had in his poetry more mahāsin than even Muslim b. al-Walīd, Abū al-Shayṣ and others of their class, but like Rabi'a al-Raqqī he lived far away from Iraq, although he did once come there and recited madīh on the Caliph. If he had stayed in Iraq, "the necks of the poets would have submitted to him".¹⁰⁶ This 'submission' is simply being surpassed in the art of madīh. Although Ibn al-Mu'tazz quoted only a few lines of wasf, he pointed out a number of poets who were famous for their poetry in that genre. Muḥammad b. Yasīr was said to be the best of all at describing animals and birds, in particular goats.¹⁰⁷ Birds and goats were not very common subjects in early Arabic poetry. Those who described clouds and rain were all surpassed by al-Ḥusayn b. Matīr.¹⁰⁸ The same poem of Ibn Matīr describing clouds and rain that was quoted by Ibn Qutayba was also

quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his Tabaqāt.¹⁰⁹

A line of horse-description by al-'Umānī was quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. It contained the image apparently created by Aws b. Hajar in describing his she-camel. The line of al-'Umānī, which is rajjaz, runs:

لَأَنَّ تَحْتَ الْبَنِّ مِنْهُ أَكْبَا ۖ بَيْضاً صِفْراً يَنْتَهَشْنَ الْقَبْأَ 110

This image is rare in the muhdath poetry quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz.

Al-Buhturī and Abū Tammām:

It is strange that, although Ibn al-Mu'tazz admired very much the "beautiful descriptions" of al-Buhturī, as al-Sūlī reported, he did not select any of these descriptions in his Tabaqāt. He thought that "the sīniyya of al-Buhturī in which he described the Īwān Kisrā, and which was unparalleled in Arabic poetry, the poem in which he described the lake of al-Mutawakkil, starting:

ميلوا إلى الدارِ مِنْ لَيْلَى خَيْطِهَا ۖ نَمِ وَنَسْأَلُهَا عَنْ بَعْنِ أَهْلِهَا

his poem on Ibn Dīnār (the Abbasid admiral), in which he described ships and a sea-battle more fully than any poet had attempted before, addressing the admiral thus:

غَدَوْنَ عَلَى الْهَيْمُونَ صُبْحًا وَإِنَّا ۖ رَأَيْتَ خَلِيئًا فِي ذَوَابَةِ مَنْبَرِ ۖ
إِذَا زَجَرَ النُّوتَى قَوْقُ عَلَايَه

all made him the best poet of his time".¹¹¹

Al-Buhturī was also favoured for his poetry of i'tidhār written to al-Fath b. Khāqān. There was nothing similar to it in Arabic poetry with the exception of what was written by al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī to al-Nu'mān b.

al-Mundhir.¹¹² Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī claimed that there was no muhdath poet who could attain the position of al-Nābigha in that genre except al-Buhturī who had arrived at a standard that no other poet could surpass. Because of his excellence in that art al-Buhturī was called the second Nābigha.¹¹³

Al-Sūlī agreed with b. al-Muʿtazz and al-ʿAskarī about his excellence in this sphere and quoted a number of his poems on the subject.¹¹⁴ One of the most admirable poems was that in which he addressed al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān:

وَمَا كَانَ رَأْيُكَ قَدْحًا فِي فَلَاقَتِي بَعْدَ بَشَرٍ قُلُوبًا

Other critics also greatly admired the qasīda.

Ibn al-Muʿtazz did not quote any lines of iʿtidhār by al-Buhturī, either, except for four in which he begged Abū al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan b. Sahl to return a slave of his whom Abū al-Faḍl had bought from him.¹¹⁵

Of Abū Tammām's poems, on the other hand, thirteen were mentioned as excellent examples of good poetry.¹¹⁶ According to Ibn al-Muʿtazz, Abū Tammām wrote between six and eight hundred poems, and most of this poetry was excellent. That part of it that appeared bad did so only because its words were complicated and incomprehensible. One could not deny the elegant maʿānī, the mahasin and the many innovations in Abū Tammām's poetry. When al-Buhturī was asked to compare himself with him his judgement was that "his excellent (poetry) is better than mine, and my bad poetry is better than his". Ibn al-Muʿtazz accepted this and championed Abū Tammām; this is clear from his comments on what al-Buhturī had said. He believed that al-Buhturī never used coarse expressions and that his words were as sweet as honey, but that he would never be able to emulate Abū Tammām in maʿānī and mahasin; he would simply be drowned in the sea of Abū Tammām. Although he had a rich source of maʿānī, most of them were borrowed from the poetry of Abū Tammām.¹¹⁷ Dāʿūd Sallūm¹¹⁸ believes that Ibn al-Muʿtazz disliked Abū Tammām, envied him, and aimed to destroy his fame, which was based on his skill in badīʿ. This is why, he thinks, Ibn al-Muʿtazz wrote his book al-Badīʿ, in which he proved that badīʿ was not invented by Abū Tammām and his peers among the

muhdathūn, but that it was already present in the Qur'ān, the Hadīth, and early and Islamic poetry. The muhdathūn used it a great deal, especially Abū Tammām, who was so extravagant that he spoilt his poetry, as Ibn al-Mu'tazz wrote.¹¹⁹ Another piece of evidence for Sallūm is the treatise written by Ibn al-Mu'tazz on "The beauties and defects of Abū Tammām's poetry". Part of this treatise was quoted by al-Marzubānī in his al-Muwashshah.¹²⁰ Ibn al-Mu'tazz here displayed a moderate and almost neutral attitude to Abū Tammām. He said that those who preferred him to all poets were exaggerating as well as those who rejected any merit of his. His opinion was that he had reached the ultimate level of both excellence and badness.¹²¹ When discussing his defects (masāwī') he criticised him for using gharīb and the language and style of the 'amma. He also attacked him for the bad openings of some of his poems, such as:

* فَشَنَنْ عَلَيْهِ أُخْتُ بَنِي خُشَيْنِ *

Ibn al-Mu'tazz believed that this was not the right way to address women in ghazal and that the line seemed more like hijā' than ghazal. He thought that he had made such a mistake because of his anxiety to produce tajnīs.¹²² However, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Jurjānī preferred al-Buhturī to Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī for his excellent openings (ibtidā'āt), although he preferred them to al-Buhturī for their beautiful transitions (khurūjāt) and their excellent endings (niḥayāt). Ibn Rashīq agreed with al-Jurjānī about the excellent ibtidā'āt of al-Buhturī, although he believed that he did not always write excellent ones. He usually opened "easily", without any takalluf, and then proceeded excellently.¹²³ Ibn Rashīq described the "openings" of Abū Tammām as magnificent, having beauty, charm and splendour (fakhm al-ibtidā', lahu raw'a wa-'alayhi ubbaha), like:

الْحَقُّ أَبْلَجُ وَالسَّيْفُ عَوَارٍ فِخْزَارٍ مِنْ أَسَدِ الْقَرِينِ قَذَارٍ

and:

السَّيْفُ أَصْدَقُ إِنْ بَاءَ مِنَ الْكُتُبِ فَمِنْ حَدِّهِ الْحَدُّ بَيْنَ الْجِدِّ وَاللَّيْبِ

His ibtidā'āt were characterised by the sculpturing of words (naḥt al-lafz),

and they were of a loud and audible nature. When al-Āmidī compared al-Buhturī and Abū Tammām on the subject he preferred the former and greatly admired his ibtidā'āt very much. Examples of al-Buhturī's ibtidā'āt quoted as excellent were:

عَارَضْنَا أَصْلًا فَخَلْنَا الرَّبْرَبَ حَتَّى أَضَاءَ الْأَقْوَانُ الْأَشْنَبُ

and:

مَا عَلَى الرَّكْبِ مِنْ وَتُوفٍ الرَّكَّابِ فِي مَغَانِي الصَّبَا وَرَسْمِ النَّصَابِي؟

and:

124 * ضَمَانٌ عَلَى عَيْنَيْكَ أَنِّي لَا أَسْلُو *

However, Ibn al-Mu'tazz also criticised Abū Tammām for his failure to write good ghazal, madih and hijā'. He also accused him of plagiarism and claimed that Abū Tammām compiled his hamāsa and wahshiyyāt in such a way as to conceal his plagiarism from other poets. "When I looked in his book of poetic selections known as al-Hamāsa, I found that he neglected most of the excellent poetry; the reason behind that was that he had stolen some of it and so did not like to mention it in his selections. Other (excellent poetry unquoted by him in the hamāsa) was hidden by him and kept for himself to use when he was in need ... ". He also criticised his bad isti'āra, such as the following:

125 شَابَ رَأْسِي وَمَا رَأَيْتُ مَشِيبَ الرَّاسِ إِلَّا مِنْ فَضْلِ شَيْبِ الْفَوَادِ

He quoted some lines in which Abū Tammām used gharīb that would not even fit in the poetry of al-'Ajjāj and Ru'ba. Ibn al-Mu'tazz thought that gharīb was not suitable for the poetry of the muhdathūn because it would seem incongruous beside more familiar words.¹²⁶

It seems that these remarks of Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his kitāb al-badī' and in his treatise on the poetry of Abū Tammām have inspired those scholars who have accused Ibn al-Mu'tazz of holding a bad opinion of Abū Tammām and of envying him because of his excellent badī'. This view, however, does not

seem to be correct. In his introduction to his kitāb al-badī', he mentioned Abū Tammām, among other poets like Bashshār, Muslim b. al-Walīd, and Abū Nuwās, in order to make it clear that although badī' was not invented by them it was much used in their poetry and came to be known by that name in their time. There would be no point in his being envious only of Abū Tammām and not of Bashshār and the others mentioned with him. Moreover it seems that the treatise on the beauties and defects of Abū Tammām's poetry was written at an earlier stage of his life than the Tabagāt, in which we find him a great admirer of Abū Tammām and actually preferring him to al-Buhturī. Indeed the line of Abū Tammām:

* نَشِنَتْ عَلَيْهِ أُخْتُ بَنِي خُشَيْبٍ *

which he criticised in his treatise on the poet's poetry, he quoted in the Tabagāt as the opening of one of Abū Tammām's excellent poems.¹²⁷ Moreover, it should be noticed that we do not have the complete text of the treatise. Al-Marzubānī in his Muwashshah quoted only that part which discussed the masāwī' of Abū Tammām, because he himself was concerned in this book only with the defects of poets and not their merits, and therefore omitted that part which discussed this aspect of his poetry. If we had the complete text we might discover Ibn al-Mu'tazz's criteria for good poetry and how he regarded Abū Tammām in that respect. Since we have not the complete text, it is not easy to form a balanced view, and to claim that he disliked him on the strength of the excerpt in al-Muwashshah is unreasonable. All that we can say here, on the basis of what he wrote in his Tabagāt about Abū Tammām and of other remarks he made elsewhere, is that Ibn al-Mu'tazz seems at any rate to have become an admirer of his. It is quite likely that the relationship between Ibn al-Mu'tazz and al-Sulī, who was a great admirer and supporter of Abū Tammām, influenced Ibn al-Mu'tazz and made him attached to his poetry. Besides that, both Ibn al-Mu'tazz and Abū Tammām were fond of the art of badī', and further, Ibn al-Mu'tazz defended him and his poetry against Ibrāhīm

b. al-Mudabbir, who disliked him and always criticised him. Ibn al-Mu'tazz reported that one day Ibn al-Mudabbir argued with him about Abū Tammām and attacked his poetry. Ibn al-Mu'tazz said to him "Do you speak like that about the man who says:

غَدَا الشَّيْبُ مُخْتَلًا يَفُودُ خُفَّةً سَبِيلُ الرَّدَى مِنْهَا إِلَى الْمَوْتِ مَهْمَعٌ
هُوَ الزُّورُ يُجْفَى وَالْمَعَاشِرُ يُجْتَوَى وَذُو الْإِلْفِ يُقَالَى وَالْجَدِيدُ يُرْفَعُ
لَهُ مَنَظَرٌ فِي الْعَيْنِ أَبْيَنُ نَاصِعٌ وَلَكِنَّهُ فِي الْقَلْبِ أَسْوَرُ أَسْفَعُ

and:

فَإِنْ تَرَمَ عَنْ عَمْرٍ تَدَانِي بِهِ الْمَدَى فَخَانَكَ حَتَّى لَمْ يَجِدْ فِيكَ مَنَزَعًا
فَمَا كُنْتُ إِلَّا السَّيْفُ لَأَقَى ضَرْبِيَّةً فَقَطَّعَهَا ثُمَّ انْتَنَى قَتَّعَ طَعَا

and:

خَشَعُوا لِقَوْلِكَ الَّتِي هِيَ عَنْدهُمْ كَالْمَوْتِ يَأْتِي لَيْسَ فِيهِ عَارُ
فَالْمَشَى هَمْسٌ وَالنَّدَا إِشَارَةٌ خَوْفُ التَّقَامِكِ وَالْحَبِثِ سِرَارُ
أَيَّامُنَا مَهْقُولَةٌ أَطْرَافُهَا يَدُ وَالْبَالِي كُلُّهَا أَسْحَارُ
تَنْدَى عَفَاتِكَ لِلْعَفَاةِ وَتَعْدَى رُفْعًا إِلَى زُورَارِكَ الزُّورَارُ

Ibn al-Mu'tazz said that he recited more lines to Ibn al-Mudabbir from Abū Tammām's poetry and he was "silenced as if I had pushed a stone into his mouth".¹²⁸ The first three lines, describing grey hair, were also quoted by al-Āmidī in his *al-Muwāzana*¹²⁹, and described as poetry that contained excellent, correct and straight *ma'ānī*. The second example, consisting of two lines, was taken from a poem of *rithā'* on Muhammad Ibn Humayd. The opening line was much admired by Ibn Rashīq, who considered it to be the best opening of a *marthiya* in *muwallad* poetry:

أَصَمَّ بِكَ النَّاعِي وَإِنْ كَانَ أَسْمَعَا وَأَصْبَحَ مَعْنَى الْجُودِ بَعْدَكَ بَلَقَا

The two lines quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz occur at the end of the *marthiya*, and Ibn Rashīq quoted them too and commented that Abū Tammām was counted among those who were excellent in *rithā'*.¹³⁰

Ibn al-Mu'tazz is said to have been an impressionistic critic because he expressed admiration for almost all the poets who were quoted and the poems which were cited by him.¹³¹ This may be so, or it may be that he

was naturally able to appreciate the poetry of many different poets, writing in different styles and following different poetic madhāhib. In either case, he was certainly very generous with his praise and his favourable judgements. Whenever he quoted a line of poetry he would praise it and say that the whole of the poetry of that poet was most excellent and deserving of selection. When quoting Bashshār, he wrote: "here is an admirable poem of his - though all his poetry is admirable".¹³² About Marwān Ibn Abī Hafṣa he said: "the poems of Marwān are numerous and if we start to recite the gems of his poetry our book will become too big, because he has nothing but gems".¹³³ He said that all the poetry of Abū al-Hindī, who was famous for his khamriyyāt, was beautiful and excellent.¹³⁴ All of Rabī'a al-Raqqī's poetry was "elegant, sweet, matbū', excellent and easy".¹³⁵ When he quoted 'Awf Ibn Muḥallim he wrote: "here is a poem selected from the poetry of 'Awf, although all his poetry is worthy to be selected and contains no worthless or incomplete line".¹³⁶ He also thought that the "whole of the poetry of Muslim b. al-Walīd was "a beautiful brocade, and no-one can deny that".¹³⁷ He also said that the whole of the poetry of Abū Tammām was beautiful.¹³⁸ He described the poems of al-'Attābī as "all gems containing no worthless line".¹³⁹ When he quoted the following line by 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Hārithī:

لَا إِذَا نَالَ مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَجْدِ غَايَةَ سَمًا طَالِبًا مِنْ تِلْكَ أَسْنَى وَأَرْفَعَا

he commented: "this line is sajdat al-shu'arā' (the prostration of poets), and if we had quoted nothing in our book but the poetry of al-Hārithī, it would be a great thing".¹⁴⁰ The expression sajdat al-shu'arā' meant that the line was so excellent that if poets heard it they would prostrate themselves before it as a sign of admiration. A similar judgement was made on two lines of rithā' by Muslim b. al-Walīd:

فَإِنِّي وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ بَيَوْمَ وَغَاتِهِ لَكَ الْغَمْدُ يَوْمَ الرَّوْعِ زَايِلُهُ النَّصْلُ
فَإِنْ أَعْنَتْ قَوْمًا بَعْدَهُ أَوْ أَنْزَوْهُمْ فَكَالْوَحْشِ يُدْنِيكَ مِنَ الْأَنْسِ الْمَحْلُ

Ibn al-Muṭazz was fascinated by the ma'nā and judged that "no poet will be able to write a similar ma'nā for a thousand years".¹⁴¹ Ibn Ṭabāṭabā quoted the two lines as an example of "a correct, outstanding and beautiful ma'nā which has the best presentation, the most beautiful dress (kiswa) and the most delicate words".¹⁴²

Ibn al-Muṭazz, as has been mentioned, differed widely from al-Asma'ī because the latter had rejected the kind of poetry that had one level of excellence with no defect in a single verse. When a poet's poetry was like that, free of defects, it meant that he was not a matbū', and that he revised his verse again and again. Al-Asma'ī admired the poetry of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī because his poetry had varying levels of excellence. When Ibn al-Muṭazz, on the other hand, wanted to praise a poet's work, he would say that it contained no single worthless line. He even associated this consistency with tab', as is clear from his comments on the poetry of Bashshār and Rabi'ā al-Raqqī. The poetry of Ibn Abī 'Uyayna, one of the four famous matbū'un, as Ibn al-Muṭazz described him, was said to be: "clearer than the palm of the hand, with no defects and no worthless lines".¹⁴³ The impressionistic criticism which may be found in the views of Ibn al-Muṭazz was perhaps inherited by him from the early period of literary criticism. Marwān Ibn Abī Ḥafsa displayed the same tendency in commenting on various Jāhilī poets when their lines were recited to him. His remarks and his enthusiastic judgements were mentioned earlier, in connection with the views of Ibn Qutayba in al-shi'r wa-al-shu'arā'. Whenever he heard some poetry recited, he declared its author the best poet of all. Ibn al-Muṭazz often gave similar judgements, without giving any reason, as for instance, on Mānī al-Majnūn and 'Ā'isha al-'Uthmāniyya.¹⁴⁴ He also spoke of Muhammad b. 'Arūs as one "all of whose poetry is excellent, and he is now the best poet of his time".¹⁴⁵

Perhaps, as Ihsān 'Abbās has suggested,¹⁴⁶ the position of Ibn al-Mu'tazz as a crown prince of the Abbasid Caliphate, and his social status, made of him a kind of moral protector of all the poets of the Caliphate, so that he expressed admiration for them and showed them kindness. This attitude resulted in a lack of objectivity in some of his critical judgements.

What may be said about him is that, although he made use of the critics before him, he sometimes differed from them and followed his own standards. The impressionistic criticism which was current throughout the history of poetic criticism before him may have influenced him, as we have seen, but in spite of that we can form some idea of the criteria that he applied in judging his poets. Among these we have pointed out tab', badī', tafannun, multiplicity, length, beauty of words and correctness of ma'nā, the use of short metres, mantiq, fluency and rhetoric, perfection of structure and composition (husn al-rasf), facility and plainness, purity and clarity of poetry and consistency of levels, without a single worthless line, exaggeration in the ma'ānī of madīh, ghazal and fakhr, riqqa, beauty of openings (ibtidā'āt), and beauty of khurūj (husn al-takhallus) from nasīb to madīh or hijā'; there is also his interest in the namat of the a'rāb.

Poetic genres and quotations

The most important genre to him was madīh quotations which dominate his Tabaqāt al-shu'arā' al-muhdathīn. As has been mentioned, one of his reasons for compiling this book was to collect the poetry of madīh in which the Abbasid Caliphs were praised. Therefore most consideration will be given to quotation from this genre. Other genres covered were ghazal, the poetry of "foolish poets" (al-hamqā), mujūn and hijā' poetry and wine-description. There were a few quotations from Shu'ūbiyya and Zanādiqa

poets and from Shi'ite poetry and some lines in which Qur'ānic verses were inserted. Quotations from mujūn, foolish poetry and hijā' will be discussed together, because it seems that the reason for selecting lines from such topics was a desire for amusement, and that such poetry was introduced as a change from jidd. Wine-description was quoted mainly from Abū al-Hindī, and it was the principal subject that he quoted under the heading of wasf. This may support al-Isfahānī's contention that he was most interested in those genres that fitted in with his own mode of life.

Although his quotations are from muhdath poetry, b. al-Mu'tazz is not hostile to the ancients. On the contrary, he seems to have accorded them a certain superiority over the muhdathūn, at least in connection with the art of badī', which he said had been initiated by them.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, a count of his quotations in the Kitāb al-badī' reveals that ancient and muhdath poets are almost equally represented with a slight preponderance of the latter, as Kratchkovsky observes in his introduction.¹

Moreover, as has been mentioned, Ibn al-Mu'tazz praised the poet who was able to combine in his poetry the ma'ānī of the earlier poets and the mahāsin of the muhdathūn. This combination he achieved in his own poetry; it was described by al-Isfahānī as containing the qualities of the earlier fuhūl and the delicacy of the muhdath poets. This attitude of his towards the two groups makes him a critic who represents what may be called the dualist stage of Arabic poetic criticism. He is a good example of those critics who made an attempt to reach a compromise concerning the ancients and the muhdathūn, and he may even be regarded as the seal of that group of critics; those who appeared after him, such as his own pupil Abū Bakr al-Sūlī, renewed the bitter dispute, and the battle began again between the supporters of the ancient and the modern poets. This stage of poetic criticism was exemplified by the dispute between Abū Tammām and his

supporters on the one hand and al-Buhturī and his supporters on the other. The former represented the new style (badī'), and those who backed him were headed by al-Ṣulī with his two books, Akhbār al-Buhturī and Akhbār Abī Tammām. The former represented the old style ('amūd al-shi'r), and those who backed him had al-Āmidī at their head, with his book al-Muwāzana, in which he collected the views of the supporters of both poets. Since this marks a new stage in the history of Arabic poetic criticism, we have preferred to end this discussion with Ibn al-Mu'tazz, as the last representative of the moderate school that started with al-Jāhiz and included Ibn Qutayba and al-Mubarrad.

b. The quotations in Tabagāt al-shu'arā al-muḥdathīn

The first group of quotations to be discussed, in brief, consists of those related to religious and political matters, and those in which Quranic verses are inserted. Although madīh poetry on the Abbasid Caliphs was quoted by him mainly for its political significance, as we shall see, it will be discussed later, with the exception of those lines which talk about the right of the Abbasids to the Caliphate. The quotations to be discussed here are those related to a poet's political and religious beliefs, whether he was a zindīq, a Shi'ite or a shu'ūbī, the poetry in which the Talibids (Ahl al-Bayt) were praised is also prominent here, and is a part of Shi'ite poetry. The interest of Ibn al-Mu'tazz in these different subjects was associated with his position as an Abbasid Crown Prince, who was concerned with religious and political thought in his state.

The first poet whose religious thought Ibn al-Mu'tazz discussed is Bashshār b. Burd, who was accused of being a zindīq and was executed by the Caliph al-Mahdī. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, who was fond of Bashshār tried his best to prove his innocence by consulting his poetry. He believed that he was put to death for political reasons, such as writing the following lines of hijā' on al-Mahdī and his vizier, Ya'qūb, and calling on the Umayyads to seize power:

بني أمية هبوا حال نؤمكم
 إن الخليفة يعقوب بن داود
 ضاعت خلافتكم يا قوم فالتمسوا
 خليفة الله بين الرزق والعور

Other reasons were also given for his execution. Ibn al-Mu'tazz mentioned a number of indications that Bashshār was a true believer and not a zindīq, for example two lines expressing his belief in the Day of Judgement:

كيف يتبلى طعس في طول
 من سيبكى لحبس بقم طويل
 1 إن في البعث والحساب تشفلا
 عن وقوف برسم دار مجبل

These two lines are perhaps the first criticism of the atḷāl theme from a religious point of view. Bashshār believed that a poet should not waste time weeping over atḷāl but rather prepare himself for long waiting and weeping on the Day of Judgement. Abū Nuwās later transferred the idea to the field of literary criticism, in his khamriyyāt and in his poetry that bears signs of Shu'ūbiyya, to which we shall refer.

A second poet who was executed as a zindīq was Ṣālīḥ b. 'Abd al-Quddūs, whose poetry was famous for hikma and amthāl. Ibn al-Mu'tazz defended him and argued that his poetry was full of allusions to zuhd, death and the grave, and heaven, and exhortations to obedience and worship, good deeds and noble behaviour. His poem that starts:

تَأَوَّبَنِي هَمٌّ فَبِتُّ أَخَاطِبُهُ وَبِتُّ أُرَاقِي النِّجْمَ ، ثُمَّ أُرَاقِبُهُ

was quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz because it contained many lines which indicated that he was not a zindīq. Quoting the following lines from the same poem:

وَلَيْسَ بِعِزِّ الْمَرْءِ إِخْطَاؤُهُ الْفِنَى وَلَا بِاحْتِيَالٍ أَدْرَكَ الْمَالُ كَاسِبُهُ
وَكَلَّتْ قَبْضَةُ الْإِلَهِ وَبَسَطَتْهُ فَلَا ذَا يُجَارِيهِ وَلَا ذَا يُفَالِيهِ
إِذَا كَلَّمَ الرَّحْمَنُ لِمَرْءٍ عَقْلَهُ فَقَدْ كَلَّمْتُ أَخْلَاقَهُ وَمُنَاقِبَهُ

Ibn al-Mu'tazz commented: "I wonder how a zindīq could have written such poetry? How can we believe that the author of that poetry is a zindīq?"²

The third poet whose beliefs were put to the test was Abū al-'Atāhiya, who was also accused of being a zindīq in spite of the extent of his poetry on zuhd, mawā'iz, and the hereafter. Ibn al-Mu'tazz described him as khabīth al-dīn. He believed that, although in appearance Abū al-'Atāhiya was an ascetic, he was, in reality, a dualist (thanawī) who believed in two gods, the god of good (khayr) and the god of evil (sharr).³

The poets who were regarded as zanādīqa seem to have lived a double life, as may have been the case with Abū al-'Atāhiya. Ṣālīḥ b. 'Abd al-Quddūs

and other poets who were called zanādīqa wrote two sorts of poetry. One sort indicated that they were true believers and sincere Muslims, the other indicated that they were not. This phenomenon of dualism in the characters of some muhdath poets, and in their poetic ma'ānī, fascinated Ibn al-Mu'tazz. In fact, he traced this dualism, in various aspects, in madīh poetry and in other genres written by pro-Abbasid and Shi'ite poets. Almost every poet from each group led a double life. While he wrote madīh on the Caliphs he did the same for the Talibids, whom the Abbasids treated as a major political threat. He also found dualism in the characters of other poets. One of these was Abū Sa'd al-Makhzūmī "who claims in his poetry that he is of high rank, but in fact he was of unknown and obscure origin. He also claims that he is a brave man and in fact he was a coward".⁴ Another poet was Muḥammad b. Ḥāzim al-Bāhilī whom Ibn al-Mu'tazz described as "one of the worst of those who persist in demanding (ilhāf), although he always talks about contentment (qanā'a) in his poetry. He is one of those who describe themselves in their poems as the opposite of what they really are, and they become notorious for this. Abū Nuwās belonged to that group of poets. He used to talk in his poetry about pederasty, pretending to admire it, but in fact he liked fornication more than a monkey does. Abū Ḥakima described himself as impotent and incapable of nikāh, although it was said that he surpassed a billy-goat in sexual prowess. The poet Jahshawīhi used to claim in his poetry to be addicted to ubna (passive sodomy), although in fact he used to mount donkeys, not to mention other things. The poet Ibn Ḥāzim (mentioned above) described himself as a contented, honourable man and one who refrained from dishonourable deeds, while in fact he was greedier than a dog. He was ready to travel the length of the Nile for the sake of one dirham".⁵ Ibn al-Mu'tazz also found this dualism in the characters of poets who had the ability to write poetry on both jidd and hazl. Examples of these were al-Husayn b. al-Dahhāk and Abu Fir'awn al-Sāsī.⁶

Concerning poetry that had indications of Shu'ūbiyya he quoted only a few examples, the best of which are two poems by Abū Nuwās. One contains a comparison between the Arabs' way of life and that of the Persians; he favoured the latter and he severely criticised and mocked the Bedouins.

The poem starts:

دَعِ الْأَطْلَالَ تَسْفِيهَا الْجَنُوبُ وَتُبْلِي عَهْدَ جَدَّتْهَا الْخُطُوبُ
وَحَلِّ لِرَاكِبِ الْوَجْنَاءِ أَرْضًا تَحُبُّ بِهَا النِّجْبَةَ وَالنَّجِيبُ 7

The second poem is a famous long gasīda, in which he praised the tribes of Yemen and satirised those of 'Adnān, starting:

لَسْتُ لِدَارٍ عَفْشٍ وَغَيْرِهَا ضَرْبَانِ مِنْ قَطْرِهَا وَحَاصِبِهَا

Ibn al-Mu'tazz commented that Abū Nuwās was said to have been a khārijī and to have been an enthusiastic supporter of the tribes of Qahtān, on whom he wrote a great deal of madih poetry, and whose rival tribes he satirised.⁸ It is unlikely that the political aspects of these two poems were the sole reason for his quoting them. The apparent revolt against the atlāl convention in both probably interested him much more, coupled as it was in one of them with a repudiation of the rahl theme as well:

وَحَلِّ لِرَاكِبِ الْوَجْنَاءِ أَرْضًا تَحُبُّ بِهَا النِّجْبَةَ وَالنَّجِيبُ

This is virtually a rejection of the theory of the Arabic gasīda and its themes, as stated by Ibn Qutayba in al-shi'r wa al-shu'arā'. The same rejection is found in two short poems quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. The first is by 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Umayya:

دَعِ دَارِيسَانَ اللَّوْلُ وَلَكَّ رُبْعَ حَيْلِ
وَلَا تَقِفْ دَارَ سَلَمَ ذَرِّهَا كُلَّ جَهْلِ
وَلَا تَقُلْ: آلَ لَيْلَى قَدْ آذَنُوا بِرَحِيلِ
حَسْبِي حَبِيبٌ مَهْنًا عَمَّنْ غَدَا فِي الْجَمُولِ

The second one is by Abū Hayyān al-Mawsūs:

لَا تَبْلُكْ هَذَا وَلَا الْمَوَاعِيسَا وَلَا لِرُبْعٍ عَمِدَتْ مَا نُوسَا
وَقِفْ بِقَطْرِ بُلَى وَنَزْهَتِهَا وَاحْبِسْ بِهَا عَنْ مَسِيرِ الْعِيسَا
وَأَنْزِلْ لِشَيْخٍ بِالدَّبْرِ مَسْكَنَهُ يَدْعُوهُ أَهْلُ الْكَنَابِ فِئْسِيَسَا 9

Ibn al-Mu'tazz was not against the themes of the old qasīda; indeed, almost all his quotations contain atṭāl introductions, with nasīb and rahīl. He seems to have quoted these exceptional poems that revolted against those themes as a means of diversion. They are more related to the hazl than to jidd.

The insertion of Qur'ānic verses into poetry was admired by people at the time of the muhdathūn and poets competed with one another in writing such poetry spontaneously, to advertise their tab'. Abū Nuwās was distinguished and famous among the muhdathūn for doing this.¹⁰ The practice may be seen against the background of badī' in general. For instance, the following two lines by Bakr b. al-Nattāh, in praise of Abū Dulaf:

نَادَى نَدَاكَ بَأَنَّ يَأْتُوا إِذَا أُمُّرُوا مِنْ يَدِّعِ فَازَ فَأَصْفَى كُلُّ مُسْتَمِعٍ
زُورُوا الْأَمِيرَ وَبَيْتَ اللَّهِ تَشْفَعُوا فَاتَّخَذَ وَجْهَكَ فِينَا كُلُّ مُشْفَعٍ

were described by Ibn al-Mu'tazz as "badī' and tarīf poetry". The poet borrowed the ma'nā from the following Qur'ānic verse:

11 « وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا ... » .

The two lines contain tajnīs in the two words nādā and nadāka.

Quotations from poetry relating to politics are partly those in which poets advocated support for the Abbasids in their claim to the Caliphate. They frequently quoted the Qur'ān in order to affirm their views. On the other hand there were also poems in praise of the Talibids, supporting them as the only rightful claimants to the Caliphate. There were some poets who pretended to be pro-Abbasid but were secret supporters of the Talibids. This attitude may be regarded as a sort of dualism. In their poetry there was madīh for both the Abbasids and their political opponents, as we shall see in Ibn al-Mu'tazz's quotations. There are men like Sudayf b. Maymūn, who attacked the Umayyads in his speeches and his poems, and

fomented revolt.¹² When the Abbasids seized power he congratulated the first Caliph al-Saffāh in a poem of a dualistic nature, in which he praised the Abbasids and elegised the Talibids and Abbasids killed by the Umayyads. The poem starts:

13 أَصْبَحَ الْمُلْكُ ثَابِتَ الْأَسَاسِ بِالْبَهَائِلِ مِنْ بَنِي الْقَبَاسِ

His dualistic character also appears in the poem in which he addresses one of the Talibids, Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Hasan thus:

14 فَانْهَفْ بِبَيْتِكُمْ نَهْفَ بَطَاعَتِنَا يَا بَنِي الْحَسَنِ

Many lines which affirm the right of the Abbasids to rule are quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. Caliphs were urged to appoint their sons as their successors, as in al-'Umanī's urjūza on al-Mahdī, starting:

الجدسه الذي حمده من على عبادہ يعبره

The poem contains lines like:

15 يَابْنَ الذِي كَانَ نَسِيجَ وَجْدِهِ أَثَبْتُ لَهَا رُونَ مَكَانٍ وَرَدِهِ
لَمْ يَشْرِعْ يَشْرِفِي الْقَدَى بِبَرِّهِ وَأَشْفَعُ لَنَا مُوسَى بِهِ مِنْ بَقْدِهِ

In one of his madīh poems on al-Amīn, Abū Nuwās claimed that the right of the Abbasids was confirmed by the Qur'an:

16 وَإِنَّ قَوْمًا رَجَبُوا ابْطَالَ حَقِّكُمْ أَمْسُوا مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي رُسُخٍ وَعِصْيَانٍ
لَنْ يَدْفَعُوا حَقَّكُمْ إِلَّا بِدَفْعِهِمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ آيٍ وَقُرْآنٍ

Marwān b. Abī Hafsa stated that the Abbasids, and not the Talibids, were the ones who were entitled to the Caliphate, because they were descended from al-'Abbās, the Prophet's paternal uncle, who had the right of inheritance, while the Talibids had no such right, being descended from the Prophet's daughter. Marwān wrote:

17 أَنَّنِي بَكُونُ وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِكَائِنٍ لِبَنِي الْبَنَاتِ وَرِاثَةُ الْأَعْمَامِ

Mansūr al-Namrī followed the same line as Marwān; he wrote in one of his madīh poems on al-Rashīd:

يَا نَ الْخِلاَفَةَ لَانَتْ رَارَتْ وَالِدُكُمْ مِنْ دُونَ تَيْمٍ وَعَفُوَ اللهِ مُتَسَّعٌ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ لَا تَقْرَبْ عَقُولَكُمْ وَلَا تُفْطِنُوا إِلَى أَلْسِنَتِهَا الْبِدْعُ
الْعَمُّ أُولَى مِنْ ابْنِ الْعَمِّ فَاسْتَمِعُوا قَوْلَ النَّصِيحِ فَإِنَّ الْحَقَّ يُسْتَمْعُ

In another poem he wrote:

أَلَا لِلَّهِ دُرٌّ بَنِي عَلِيٍّ وَزُورٌ مِنْ مَقَالَتِهِمْ كَبِيرٌ
يُسَمُّونَ النَّبِيَّ أَبَا وَيَّابِي مِنْ الْأَحْزَابِ سَطْرٌ فِي سُطُورِ

He was referring to the Qur'ānic verse:

18 « مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ».

In spite of the quantity of madīh that he wrote on al-Rashīd and his support for the Abbasids, al-Namrī lived a double life and was said to be a secret member of the Shī'a Imāmiyya. He used to write madīh on the Talibids and criticise the salaf. This madīh was the best poetry ever written in their praise, as Ibn al-Mu'tazz described it, quoting several examples.¹⁹

Another poet who wrote madīh poetry on the Talibids was Di'bil b. 'Alī, who wrote the famous tā'iyya starting:

مَدَارِسُ آيَاتٍ خَلَّتْ مِنْ تِلَاوَةٍ وَمَنْزِلٌ وَضَى مُقْفِرُ الْقَرَصَاتِ

This poem was highly praised by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. Di'bil also wrote madīh on al-Ma'mūn as well as on the Talibids.²⁰

The best example of a Shi'ite poet is al-Sayyid al-Himyarī, most of whose poetry is about 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. Some of his poems were quoted and his long qasīda known as al-mudhhaba was praised by Ibn al-Mu'tazz.²¹

In quoting the poetry in which the Talibids were praised, Ibn al-Mu'tazz seems to have contradicted himself, since he belonged to the Abbasid ruling class and he was concerned with affirming the Abbasids' right to

the Caliphate. His attitude in this reminds us of the dualistic character of the poets who praised both the Abbasids and the Talibids. By quoting the poems that praised the latter, he pleased both the Talibids and the ordinary people, who very much respected ahl al-bayt, while by quoting poetry that praised the Abbasids he intended to affirm that they had the right to rule. Through this dualistic approach, he attempted to achieve his political goal, and at the same time to please his opponents, the Talibids. He took the same approach in his own poetry as we shall see.

Quotations from madīh on the Abbasids

The poetry of madīh quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz in his Tabaqāt has particular characteristics. He seems to have been most interested in the content, apart from the elements of badi' that were present. One of these characteristics is the dualism to be found in some of the poems. This dualism expressed itself in different ways. A poet might write combined madīh on two persons in one qasīda, or he might write madīh on one and rithā' on another. Sometimes there might be a combination of hijā' and madīh on two different persons. Dualism can also be found in the ma'ānī of the madīh, where badi' is used, and the dominant elements of this are tajnīs, mugābala, isti'āra and mutābaga. A mamdūh might be characterised with two qualities, each contrasting with the other or contradicting it, such as being a good man in this life and in the hereafter, or as being good for his people and bad for his enemies. Sometimes the poet mentioned "light" in one half of a line and "darkness" in the other half. The mamdūh might also be likened to both the sun and the moon. The poetry of madīh that he quoted is also characterised by mubalagha and ghulū in describing the mamdūh. He differed from all earlier critics in accepting ghulū, and we shall try later to explain his attitude. The main idea in the poetry of madīh-that he quoted was the description of the mamdūh as a means of security, and stability, for the earth and a protector of Islam and the

state. This idea is to be found in the madīh on viziers and governors. We shall also notice poets' assiduity in linking the mamdūh (especially the Caliph) with the Prophet and Islam, and in describing him as an ideal Muslim, a man of the state and a man of religion. He was presented as a man who combined the good qualities of the mamdūh in early Arabic poetry and the qualities of a good Muslim. This combination can also be seen as a sort of dualism. The description of the mamdūh as a means of stability, security and protection for the earth, Islam and the state reflects Ibn al-Mu'tazz's feelings about the situation of disorder, revolt and lack of security in the Abbasid Caliphate at his time. He himself was a victim of such a situation when he was killed after ruling as a Caliph for only one day.

The use of mubālagha or ghulū by poets in describing a mamdūh and in declaring him superior to everyone else had a long history in Arab society and was reflected in personal and tribal mufākhara. It was also reflected in poetic criticism, where we have seen people nominating the best poet or the best poetry of all. Later, every Caliph or vizier wished to be known as the best. The poets of madīh extended the limits of this attitude in declaring their mamdūhūn superior to all others. From that point of view, mubālagha or ghulū became a political and social necessity.

As for the interest of Ibn al-Mu'tazz in the phenomenon of dualism in poetry, the reason may lie in its connection with badī', besides the fact that most poets had a dualism in their characters, which found expression in their madīh on both the Abbasids and the Talibids. The age of Ibn al-Mu'tazz seems to have been essentially an age of dualism, and he seems to have mirrored this.

The first example of madīh poetry in which we see dualistic ma'ānī is the gasīda called al-gharrā' by Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa in praise of Zā'ida b. Ma'n, in which the father of the mamduh was praised as well. Dualism can be seen in the very first line:

لَا مَ فِي أُمِّ مَالِكٍ عَاذِلًا وَلَعَمْرُ الْإِلَهِ مَا أَنْصَفَا

The gasīda continues:

أَيُّنَ لَا أَيُّنَ - مِثْلَ زَائِدِهِ الْخِ بَرَاتٍ إِلَّا أَبُوهُ ؟ لَا أَيُّنَ ذَاكَ
 إِنَّ مَعْنَاً يَحْمِي الثُّغُورَ وَيُعْطِي مَالَهُ فِي الْعُلَا وَأَنْتَ كَذَاكَ
 مَاعِداً الْمَجْتَدِي أَبَاكَ. وَمَا مِنْ رَاغِبٍ يَجْتَدِيهِ إِلَّا اجْتَدَاكَ
 وَدَّ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ مِنْ النَّاسِ لَوْكَ نَ أَبُوهُ لَدَى الْخَيْرِ أَبَاكَ
 قَدْ وَفَى الْبَأْسُ وَالنَّدَى لَكَ بِالْعَقْدِ كَمَا قَدْ وَفَيْتَ إِذْ حَالَفَاكَ
 إِنَّ مَعْنَاً كَمَا كَسَاهُ أَبُوهُ عِزَّةَ السَّابِقِ الْجَوَادِ كَسَاكَ
 كَمْ بِهِ عَارِفاً يَخَالُكَ لِأَبَاكَ وَطُوراً يَخَالُهُ لِأَبَاكَ
 لَكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ بَأْسِهِ يُغْفِرُ الْبَأْسَ سِوَاكَ مَا مِنْ نَدَاهُ قُضِيَ نَدَاكَ
 كُلُّ مَنْ قَدْ رَأَاهُ يُغْفِرُ مِنْهُ نَسَمَ الْخَيْرِ فَيْكَ حِينَ يَرَاكَ
 سَبَقَ النَّاسَ إِذْ جَرَى ثُمَّ صَلَّيْتَ كَمَا مِنْ أَبِيهِ جَاءَ كَذَاكَ
 دَانِيَاً مِنْ مَدَى أَبِيهِ مَدَاهُ مِثْلَ مَا مِنْ مَدَاهُ أُمْسَى مَدَاكَ
 كُلُّ ذِي طَاعَةٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ يَرْجُو لَكَ مَا كُلُّ مُجْرِمٍ يَخْشَاكَ

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In the second line the poet compared the mamduh with his father. Both had the same praiseworthy qualities. Dualism can be seen in the third line where the two are both praised for two qualities which stand in contrast to each other, namely that both of them protect the frontiers of the state, while on the other hand they spend their money generously in search of nobility. He continued to describe them in the same terms and claimed that it was difficult for people to differentiate between them:

كَمْ بِهِ عَارِفاً يَخَالُكَ لِأَبَاكَ وَطُوراً يَخَالُهُ لِأَبَاكَ

In the last line he portrayed the mamduh from two contrasting directions:

كُلُّ ذِي طَاعَةٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ يَرْجُو لَكَ مَا كُلُّ مُجْرِمٍ يَخْشَاكَ

This continued the idea expressed in the sixth and ninth lines, where

ba's and nada were juxtaposed. The gasida can be considered as an excellent example of multiple dualism.

The combination or contrast of nada and ba's is to be found in other poems and in other lines in which two persons are praised. Bakr b. al-Nattāh attributed to both Abū Dulaf and his father 'Isā the contrasted qualities of ba's and nada in his gasida:

بَنَى قَاسِمٌ مَجْدًا رَفِيعًا بَيْوتَهُ وشاد بيوت المجد بالعزَمَاتِ
وَأَشْبَهَ عَيْسَى فِي نَدَاهُ وَبَاسِهِ وفى حبه الإفضال والصدقاتِ

The first line contains two isti'āras, in its mention of the houses of nobility (buyūt al-majd).

In the line already quoted from Abū al-'Amaythil, praising the two brothers al-Fadl and al-Hasan sons of Sahl, we find the contrast achieved by describing one of them as the sun, facing the other, who is described as the moon:

23 لَأَنَّ أَشْكَالَ وَجْهِ الْحَزْمِ بَيْنَهُمَا طَلَّ تَلَاقَى عَلَيْهِ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ

Another distinct sort of dualism is found in the poem of Rabī'ā al-Raqqī which is a combination of madīh on one man and hijā' on another; both of them were called Yazīd. Ibn al-Mu'tazz described the poem as "poetry that has travelled widely in all parts of the earth and has become a mathal for people":

لَشَيْئَانِ مَا بَيْنَ الْيَزِيدَيْنِ فِي النَّدَى يَزِيدُ سُلَيْمٌ سَالِمٌ أَمَلًا ، وَالفَتَى
يَزِيدُ سُلَيْمٌ سَالِمٌ أَمَلًا ، وَالفَتَى أَخُو الْأَزْدِ لِلْأَمْوَالِ غَيْرُ مَسَالِمٍ
فَهَمُّ الْفَتَى الْأَزْدِي لِتَلَاقِ مَالِهِ وَهَمُّ الْفَتَى الْقَيْسِيَّ جَمْعُ الدَّرَاهِمِ
فَلَا يَحْسَبُ التَّخَامُ أَنْتَى هَجْوَتُهُ وَلَكِنِّي فَضَّلْتُ أَهْلَ الْمَكَارِمِ

The poem is full of contrasts. First of all there are the two genres, madīh and hijā'. There are contrasts in sālama al-māla and in li-al-amwālī ghayru musālimi; also in itlāfu mālihi and in jam'u al-darahimi. There is also

tajnis in Sulaym and sālama. This poem was also cited by Ibn Rashīq as an example of hija' mugdhi'.²⁵

A similar poem is one by Abū 'Uyayna in madih on one man and hija' on his brother:

داوُدُ مَحْمُودٌ وَأَنْتَ مُذَمَّمٌ مَجَبًّا لَذَاكَ وَأَنْتَ مِنْ عُودِ
فَلَرَبِّ عَوْدٍ قَدْ يُشْفِي مَسْجِدِ نَفْسًا، وَسَاثِرُهُ لِحُشْنِ يَهُودِ
وَالْحُشْنُ أَنْتَ لَهُ، وَذَاكَ مَسْجِدِ كَمْ بَيْنَ مَوْضِعِ مَسَلَحٍ وَسُجُودِ
دَاوُدُ يَفْتَحُ كُلَّ بَابٍ مُفْلَقِ بِنْدَى بَدِيهِ وَأَنْتَ تَقْفُلُ حَدِيدِ 26

The first line contains badī' in the contrast between mahmūdun and mudhammamun.

One of the earliest poems which contain dualism in its themes and is full of badī' expressed in contrasts is a poem by Abū Dulāma, the genres of which are madih and rithā'. He so combined the two genres as to include both in every line. He wrote the poem when the Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr died and his son al-Mahdī succeeded him, as rithā' on al-Mansūr and congratulatory madih on al-Mahdī. In the first line we see dualism in the word 'aynan, and it continues throughout the poem:

عينان: واحدة تُرَى مَسْرُورَةٌ بِإِمَامِهَا جَذَلَى وَأُخْرَى تَذَرِفُ
تَبْكِي وَتَفْحَلُ مَرَّةً، وَيَسُوءُهَا مَا أَبْهَرَنَ وَيَسُرُّهَا مَا تَفْرِقُ
فَيَسُوءُهَا مَوْتُ الْخَلِيفَةِ مُحَرَّمًا وَيَسُرُّهَا أَنْ قَامَ هَذَا الْأَرَفُ
مَا إِنْ رَأَيْتُ وَلَا سَمِعْتُ كَمَا أَرَى شَقَرًا أُرْجِلُهُ وَآخِرَ أَتْنَقُ
هَلَكَ الْخَلِيفَةُ يَا أُمَّةَ أَحْمَدَ فَأَتَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مَنْ يَخْلُقُ
أَهْدَى لِهَذَا اللَّهِ فَضْلَ خِلَافَةٍ وَلِذَاكَ جَبَانِ النِّعَمِ تُزَخْرِفُ
فَاثْبُتُوا لِمَصْرِعِ خَيْرِكُمْ وَوَلِيَّكُمْ وَاسْتَشْرِفُوا لِمَقَامِ دَا وَتَشَوْفُوا

27

The badī' resides in the continual contrasts in the poem. Of the two eyes, one is happy and the other is sad; tabkī is opposed to tadhaku, yasū'uhā to

yasurruhā, and so on.

A similar poem is one by Abū al-Shayṣ in which he wrote rithā' on al-Rashīd and congratulatory madīh on his successor, al-Amīn. Again, in each line of the poem the poet introduces both genres:

جَرَنُ جَوَارٍ بِالسَّعْدِ وَالنَّحْسِ قَحْنُ فِي وَحْشَةٍ وَفِي أَنْسٍ
 الْعَيْنُ تَبْكِي وَالسِّنُّ ضَاكِكَةٌ قَحْنُ فِي مَائِمٍ وَفِي عُرسٍ
 يُضْحِكُنَا الْقَائِمُ الْأَمِينُ وَبِي كَيْنَا وَفَاةُ الْإِمَامِ بِالْأَمْسِ
 بَدْرَانِ: بَدْرٌ هَذَا بِبَغْدَادٍ فِي الْ حُلْدِ وَبَدْرٌ بِبُغُوسٍ فِي الرَّمْسِ

28

The badī' appears in the contrasts and in tajnīs. The first two words jarat and jawārin constitute tajnīs. Sa'd is contrasted with nahs, wahsha with uns, tabkī with dāhika, ma'tam with 'urs, and yudhikunā with yubkīnā. In the last line we have two moons, one of which is seen in Baghdād and the other is buried at Tūs. The line contains tashbīh, in comparing the two men with moons. This combination of rithā' and madīh, or congratulation, in one poem is a difficult task for a poet, as Ibn Rashīq remarked.²⁹ The first to attempt it was 'Ubayd Allāh b. Humām al-Salūlī who visited Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya when Mu'āwiya died. He gave a short speech in which he consoled Yazīd for his father's death and congratulated him on becoming Caliph. Then he recited the following lines:

فَاصْبِرْ بَزِيدُ فَقَدْ فَارَقْتَ ذَا ثِقَةٍ وَأَشْكُرُ حَبَاءَ الَّذِي بِالْمَلِكِ أَهْضَاكَ
 لَا وَرْءَ أَصْبَحَ فِي الْأَقْوَامِ تَعْلَمُهُ كَمَا رُزِيتَ وَلَا تُعْقِبِي كَعُقْبَاكَ
 أَهْبَحْتُ وَالِي أَمْرِ النَّاسِ كُلِّهِمْ فَأَنْتَ تَعَالَاهُمْ وَاللَّهُ بَرِيعَاكَ
 وَفِي مَعَاوِيَةَ الْبَاقِي لَنَا خَلْفٌ إِذَا بَقِيتَ وَلَا نَسْمَعُ بِمَنْعَاكَ

After this, poets followed his example in combining madīh and rithā' in one poem.³⁰

Dualism is not only to be found in a poem of dual genre, but also in the ma'ānī of one genre, as in madīh where the mamdūh is credited with two contrasting qualities. The most common version is to describe the mamdūh as a man of religion and of worldly life, of dīn and dunyā. This kind of

madīh was much admired by Caliphs, viziers, governors and princes. When poets gathered at the door of al-Rashīd awaiting his permission to recite their poems of madīh, he ordered his doorman to tell them: "Whoever feels himself able to praise us for dīn and dunyā, in concise terms, let him enter and do so". When 'Umar b. Abī al-Sa'lat entered to do as al-Rashīd had required, he asked him to recite his poem:

أَغْيَا تَحْمِلُ النّاقَةَ أُمُّ أُمِّ تَحْمِلُ هَارُونَ
أُمُّ الشَّمْسِ أُمُّ الْبَدْرِ أُمُّ الدُّنْيَا أُمُّ الدِّينِ
أَلَّا بَلَّ كُلُّ الدِّينِ نِيَّ عَدَدْتُ أُرَاهُ مَقْرُونَا
عَلَى مَفْرَقِ هَارُونَ فَدَاهِ الْآدَ مَبْنُونَا

Ibn al-Sa'lat was the only poet to be rewarded by al-Rashīd that day.³¹

The first line quoted above contains the figure tashakkuk, in which the poet expressed doubt as to whether the she-camel was carrying Hārūn or rain (ghayth). In the second line there is another tashakkuk, as to whether it was carrying the sun, the moon, the world or the faith.

The dualism of dunyā and dīn in madīh is known from early times. The Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr is reported to have asked Abū Dulāma about the best line ever written by the Arabs. Abū Dulāma's answer was that "it is a verse to which lads play:

مَا أَحْسَنَ الدِّينَ وَالْدُنْيَا إِذَا اجْتَمَعَا وَأَقْبَحَ الْكُفْرَ وَالْإِفْلَاسَ بِالرَّجُلِ

This is perhaps one of the earliest references to the dualism of dunyā and dīn, although we cannot date it. It also occurs in a line of Jarīr, on

'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz:

فَدَاهُو فِي الدُّنْيَا مَضِيعَ نَصِيْبِهِ وَلَا عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا عَنِ الدِّينِ شَاغِلُهُ

which, if not the source of the ma'nā, was at any rate recommended as an example to 'Abd Allāh b. al-Samt b. Marwān, who had displeased al-Ma'mūn with his line:

أَضْمَى إِمَامُ الْهُدَى الْمُأْمُونُ مُشْتَفِلاً بِالْدِّينِ وَالنَّاسِ فِي الدُّنْيَا مَشَاغِلُ

Al-Ma'mūn's objection was, apparently, to the way in which the ma'nā was expressed, rather than to the ma'nā itself, for someone else commented that the poet had represented the Caliph as if he was "an old woman busy

with her spindle".³²

The ability to produce ma'ānī such as those in the lines of Ibn Abī al-Sa'lat was considered a sign of poetic skill and excellence. This is clear from the predilection of poets for these ma'ānī in their madīh. An example is the poem by Salm al-Khāsir in praise of Yahyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī, in which he claimed that both dīn and dunyā relied on the mamduh. The poem opens:

بقاء الدين والدنيا جميعاً اذا بقي الخليفة والوزير

In two other lines we find the same contrast, together with galīl and kathīr:

وما ان نال من دين ودنيا قليل من هواك ولا كثير
حملت فوادح الأعباء عنا عن الإسلام إن شكر الشكور

In the second line the mamduh was described as a protector of Islam and an insurance for his people against misfortunes. This continued the idea of the first line. These concepts are almost always connected with the abstract ma'ānī of light and brightness, signifying guidance, as in the following line of the same poem:

تفرجت الأمور ببرمكي تضيء له الخباير والسرير³³

Presenting the mamduh as a man of dīn and dunyā, as a protector of Islam and of the state, and as an insurance for his people through his generosity was widespread in the poetry and other writings of the muhdathūn quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. In his message of congratulation to Abū Bakr al-Fatā who had been appointed vizier, Muhammad b. 'Arūs employed these concepts. He wrote to him that his appointment as a vizier "is a victory for dīn and a protection for the ministry; dīn is - thanks to Allāh - protected by you, and dunyā is made green (by your generosity)". He then wrote a poem, from which Ibn al-Mu'tazz quoted the following:

فِيَا زِينَةَ الدُّنْيَا أَبَاً وَوَلَادَةً وَخَالاً وَعَمًّا أَيُّ حَالِيكَ أَشْكُرُ
حِمَايَةَ دِينِ اللَّهِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَانِيٍّ أَمِ الْجُودُ بِالدُّنْيَا كِلَا دَيْنٍ مَقْنَرُ

Dualism and contrast are to be found in the first line where the poet mentioned his father and mother in the first half; in the second half he mentioned his maternal and paternal uncles. He produced takāfu' by speaking of his hālayn.

Sometimes a poet would liken a mamdūh to four different persons, each of whom was famous for a noble quality. The mamdūh was a combination of these four. The poet's main idea was to praise the mamdūh for dīn and dunyā, and in order to do so, he presented as two of the four persons famous men of noble worldly qualities, such as generosity and courage (ba's), and as the other two men famous for religious virtues such as sincerity and nusk (asceticism). Abū al-ʿAllāf al-Nahrawānī is quoted by Ibn al-Muʿtazz as writing on his mamdūh:

تَزِينُكَ خَلَّاتٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ أَرْبَعُ فَثِنْتَانِ لِلدُّنْيَا وَثِنْتَانِ لِلدِّينِ
سَمَاحٌ أَخِي طَيِّ وَبَاسٌ ابْنُ طَالِمٍ وَصِدْقٌ أَبِي ذَرٍّ وَنَسْلُكَ ابْنَ سَبْرِينَ 34

The dualism is apparent in the poet's apportioning two qualities to dīn and two to dunyā. The lines also contain tag̃sīm.

Some poets, when using dīn and dunyā, would introduce contrasting ideas and ascribe to the mamdūh qualities that seem to contradict one another. This produces a kind of takāfu', in a wide sense. The first example is from the poetry of ʿAlī b. Jabala in praise of Humayd al-Tūsī:

بِطَاعَةِ اللَّهِ طَلَّتِ النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمْ وَنُضْحُ هَادٍ أَمِينِ الْمَلِكِ مَا مُونٍ
تَحْمِيدُ يَا قَاسِمَ الدُّنْيَا بَنَاهُ 35 وَتَسْفِيفُهُ بَيْنَ أَهْلِ الْبُكَتِ وَالِدِينِ

This takāfu' occurs in the second line where the mamdūh was described as a generous man, in the first half, and as a fighter who kills those who are disloyal, in the second. Thus we have generosity, which gives life, on the one hand, and fighting, which causes death, on the other hand.

Similar to this are the lines of Ibn Mynādhir praising the Barāmika, in which he described them as making two journeys every year, one to fight the enemies of the Caliphate and the other one to perform the pilgrimage in Mecca. He also used the abstract ma'ānī of light and brightness:

أَتَانَا بَنُو الْأَمْلَاقِ مِنْ آلِ بَرْمَكٍ فَيَا طَيْبِ أَخْبَارٍ وَيَا حُسْنَ مَنَظَرٍ
لَهُمْ رِحْلَةٌ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ إِلَى الْعِدَا وَآخَرَى إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ الْمُسْتَرْ
إِذَا تَرَلُّوا بِطَحَاءِ مَكَّةَ أَشْرَقَتْ يَجِيئُ وَبِالْفَضْلِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ 36

Sometimes the dualism was effected by describing the two hands of the ramdūh, one as giving life through generosity and the other as causing death in war. This is to be found in these two lines of Abū al-Shays praising 'Uqba b. Ja'far al-Khuzā'i:

لَأَبِي مُحَمَّدٍ الْمَرْجِي رَاحَتَا مَلِكٍ إِلَى أَعْلَى الْعُلَا نَهَاضِي
قَبِيدٌ تَدْفُقُ بِالْذِي لَوْلِيهِ وَبِيدٌ عَلَى الْأَعْدَاءِ سَمٌّ قَاضِي 37

The same idea is expressed in three lines of Salm al-Khāsir praising al-Mahdī:

يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ هَمِمْتُ بِدَاةٍ كَمْ فِي يَدَيْكَ مِنَ الذَّمَامِ
كَمْ فِي يَدَيْكَ مِنَ الذِي وَضُرُوبِ الْأَوَانِ الْجَمَامِ
إِنَّ الْخَلِيفَةَ فِي يَدِي فِي سَبَالِ عَقْفٍ وَانْتِقَامِ 38

There is also contrast in 'afw (forgiveness) and intiqām (revenge).

Another method was for the poet to speak of the two days of the ramdūh, one for good and the other harm to his enemies. An example of this is from the poem of Salm al-Khāsir in praise of Yahyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī:

لَا يَوْمَ بِيَدِكَ مِنْ تَفْعٍ وَهَضْرٍ بِحُوطٍ حَمَاهَا كَرَمٌ وَخَيْرٌ

The poem contains other lines of dualistic ideas and of contrasts:

بَلَوْتُ النَّاسَ مِنْ نَجْمٍ وَغُرْبٍ فَمَا أَحَدٌ يَسِيرُ لِمَا تَسِيرُ
فَكُلُّ الْأُمْرِ مِنْ قَوْلٍ وَفَعْلٍ إِذَا عَلِقَتْ بِدَاكِ بِهِ صَفِيرُ
وَفِي كَيْفِكَ مَدْرَجَةُ الْمَنَايَا وَمَنْ جَدَّوَاهَا الْفَيْتُ الْهَلِيرُ

وَأَنْتَ الْعَزُزُّ فِي حَرْبٍ وَسَلْمٍ يضافُ إِلَى مَنَاقِبِكَ الظُّهُورُ
عَرَفْتَ الدَّهْرَ مِنْ خَيْرٍ وَشَرٍّ فَكُلَّ الرَّأْيِ أَنْتَ بِهِ خَيْرُ
فَكُلُّ النَّاسِ بَيْنَ غِنًى وَعِفْوٍ لَدَيْكَ كَلَامُهَا دَرٌّ دُرُورُ
وَمَا تَخْفَى عَلَيْكَ وَأَنْتَ طَبَّ بُلُوتٌ لِلْأُمُورِ وَلَا ظُهُورُ
وَكُنْتَ قَبْلَكَ الْوُزَرَاءُ غَرْقٍ بِغَمٍّ كَبِيرِهِمْ فِيهَا الصَّغِيرُ
39 وَمَا لَنْ جَازَ مَقْطَعٌ كُلِّ حَقٍّ صَعُودٌ فِي هَوَاكَ وَلَا خُذُورُ

Ibn Jabala spoke of the two days of his mamdūh; one of them was bashīr or the bringer of glad tidings and the other was nadhīr or the warner. Besides the dualism, we have the contrast between bashīr and nadhīr. The same idea was continued in other lines:

وَكَلَّابُؤْمِيهِ فِي الْأَ رُحْنٍ بِشِيرٍ وَنَذِيرٍ
أَرْيَحِيٍّ مُنْهَبِ الْمَالِ وَبِالسَّيْفِ شَتِيرٍ
بِيدٍ تَنْهَلُ خَلْفَيْنِ فَتُحْيِي وَتُبِيرِ

The second line described the mamdūh as being both generous and a brave fighter. This was expanded in the third line, in which the poet specified the two functions of the hand of the mamdūh, to give life through generosity and to give death by the sword. We also have the contrast between fa-tuhyī and wa-tubīr in the second half of this line.

Other poets expressed the idea of dualism and produced contrasts by describing the mamdūh as having two faces; one face for generosity and the other for fighting, as Abū al-ʿAllāf al-Nahrawānī wrote:

يَتَلَقَّى النَّدَى بِوَجْهِ كَبِيرٍ وَصُدُورَ الْقَنَا بِوَجْهِ وَقَاحٍ
هَكَذَا هَكَذَا تَكُونُ الْمَعَالِي طَرْقُ الْجِدِّ غَيْرُ طَرْقِ الْمَزَاحِ 40

We have the contrast between hayyiyin in the first half of the first line and wagāhi in the second half. We also have that between al-jiddi and al-muzāhi in the second half of the second line. In the same line we have a repetition of hākadha.

Yet another way of expressing this dualism was to describe the mamdūh as having two clouds; one of ghayth, or abundant rain which gives life to the earth, and the other of torrential rain that causes catastrophes. Again, the mamdūh could be compared with time (dahr), which sometimes brought good luck and sometimes misfortune. An example of this is the two lines by 'Alī b. Jabala praising Humayd al-Tūsī:

أَفَنَنْتَ مَسَاعِيَهُ حِسَابَ الْقَدْرِ لَهُ بِكُلِّ أَلَمَةٍ وَوَهْدٍ
سَجَابَةُ تُغْنِي وَأُخْرَى تُزْدِي كَالدَّهْرِ يَبْعُدُ مَرَّةً وَيُقَرِّبُ 41

Contrasts were produced by akma and wahd in the second half of the first line, by tughnī and turdī in the first half of the second line, and by ya'dū and yu'dī, which also contain tajnīs, in the second half.

However, all these different expressions of dualism in which the mamdūh was described in contrasting terms were in fact an extension of the dualism which we met in the characters of the mamdūhūn and the poets who described themselves in their poems with descriptions contrary to their real characters. We also noticed the dualistic approach in the theory of jidd and hazl and in the combination of the ma'ānī of the ancients and the mahāsin of the moderns. Ibn al-Mu'tazz himself, as we have observed, was influenced by this dualism in his quotations. Dualism seems to have been part of the theory of badī', in a wide sense. The fact that most of the examples quoted contain contrasts and tajnīs, together with other elements of badī' and mahāsin, appears to indicate this relationship, and Ibn al-Mu'tazz was chiefly influenced by the theory of badī' in selecting his

quotations.

Ibn al-Mu'tazz paid considerable attention to the abstract ma'ānī in which the mamdūh was invested with the attributes of light, brightness and beauty. Most of his quotations from the genre of madīh contain these ma'ānī, as we shall see. The idea of endowing Caliphs, kings, and noble men with these attributes was discussed by al-Āmidī in his al-Muwāzana, as one of the points of comparison between Abū Tammām and al-Buhturī. He thought that this method of praising Caliphs and noble men was very good and that it was necessary. A Caliph or a king should be given the attribute of hayba (awe-inspiring appearance) and also that of beauty of face, because a beautiful face increases respect for the Caliph. The Arabs considered a beautiful face as a good omen, because it was a sign of good qualities, while an ugly face was a sign of bad qualities. Al-Āmidī criticised Qudāma, who claimed in his Naqd al-shi'r that the attribution of beauty was not recommended in madīh. He considered that Qudāma was at odds with all nations, Arabs and non-Arabs, all of whom accepted and recommended attribution of beauty in madīh and the attribution of ugliness in hijā'. He then quoted many relevant lines from al-Buhturī's poetry. However, Qudāma's view is supported by 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān's criticism of 'Abd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt for referring to physical attributes in his madīh on him, as for instance:

يَأْتِلِقُ النَّاجُ فَوْقَ مَفْرَقِهِ عَلَى جَبِينٍ لِأَنَّهُ الزَّهْبُ

rather than the spiritual virtues (fada'il nafsīyya) to which he had referred in his madīh on Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr:

إِنَّمَا مَتَّعَ شَهَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَجَلَّتْ عَنْهُ وَجْهِهِ الظَّلَامُ 42

The muhdathūn were, in general, fond of these ma'ānī in madīh, and they repeated them in their poems. Another point to be mentioned here is that most of the examples given by Ibn al-Mu'tazz described the mamdūh as a protector of Islam and as a pious man, and linked him with the Prophet -

if he happened to be a Caliph. Al-Āmidī said that a Caliph should be praised as pious and devout even if he was not so.⁴³ This explains why a poet should describe a Caliph as the light of religion while he was drinking wine with him. It may also explain why poets so frequently credit their mamduhūn with religious virtues.

In bestowing the qualities of beauty, light and brightness, poets would compare the mamduh with the sun and the full moon. Harūn al-Rashīd was always among those to whom such qualities were attributed. Ibn Abī al-Saʿlā wrote of him:

هارون بَدْرٌ باهر زاهرٍ تنجأ به الظلمُ السُّودُ

and:

إِنَّ لِلْمُكَبِّرِ نُورًا ساطِعًا يَفْشِي الْعَيُونَا
أَتُرَوْنَ الْبَدْرَ فِيهِ أَمْ أُمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 44

The second line of the second example contains tashakkuk.

When Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar praised Ishāq b. al-Sabbāḥ al-Kindī, he compared him with the full moon and those who were sitting with him with stars:

لَأَنَّ ابْنَ صَبَاحٍ وَكُنْدَةَ حَوْلِهِ إِذَا مَا بَدَأَ بَدْرٌ تَوَسَّلَ أَجْمًا
عَلَى أَنَّ فِي الْبَدْرِ الْحَاقَّ وَأَنَّهُ تَهَامٌ فَمَا يَزْدَادُ إِلَّا تَتَهَمًا 45

The second line contains tajnis, in the words tamāmūn and tatammama in the second half. It also contains what critics called tatmīm or tamām, another type of which was called ihtirās or ihṭiyāt. A very good example of this is the line by Tarafa:

فَسَقَى دِيَارَكَ غَيْرَ مُفْسِدِهَا صَوَّبَ الرَّبِيعَ وَدِيمَةً تَهْمَى

The tatmīm was produced by the words: ghayra mufsidehā.⁴⁶

In the line of Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar, the "precaution" was: ʿalā anna fī al-badri al-mahāqa. The full moon becomes smaller and smaller and eventually disappears, but the mamduh, although like the full moon, becomes more

perfect and complete.

A mamdūh may be described as a hilāl (new moon); others are likened to stars, as by Rabi'ā al-Raqqī:

47 وإذا المملكُ تنسابروا في بلدةٍ كانوا كواكبها وكنْتَ هلالها

'Alī b. Jabala, in his poem in praise of Ḥumayd al-Tūsī, connected the transition from the rahīl - which took place at night - with the mamdūh, who filled the earth with light, like the moon which drove away the darkness of the night while the poet was travelling. Ibn al-Mu'tazz said "I have never heard a better takhallus from nasīb to madīh than this". The relevant lines are:

وَقَطَا نَارَ غَنَةِ الْمَدِينِ رَدَّ وَالْبَيْتُ كَفُورٌ
لَمْ يُذَرِّ فِي نَوَادِيهِ مِنْ الصَّبْحِ ذُرُورٌ
بَنَواجٍ كَرَّ مِنْهُمْ النَّجَاءُ الْمُسْتَطِيرُ
لِحَمِيدٍ وَصِيدٍ قَمَرُ الْأَرْضِ الْمُنِيرُ 48

In another line he addressed the mamdūh thus:

أَنْتَ لِلصَّبْحِ ضِيَاءٌ كَيْسَ لِلصَّبْحِ تَكْبِيرُ

The description of the mamdūh as a light that drives away the darkness and a light that acts as a guide for men is to be found in other poetry, like the following lines by the poetess 'Anān in praise of Yahyā al-Barmakī:

مَصَابِيحُ يُبْلَغُ نُورُهَا كُلُّ وَاقِدٍ
عَلَى وَجْهِ تَحِيٍّ غُرَّةٍ يُهْتَدَى بِهَا كَمَا يُهْتَدَى سَارَى الدُّجَى بِالْفَرَاقِدِ

In another line she addressed him thus:

49 وَفَعَلَكُ مَحْمُودٌ وَكَفَّلَكَ رَحْمَةٌ وَوَجَّهَكَ نُورٌ ضَوْؤُهُ غَيْرُ خَامِدٍ

As has been mentioned, one of the elements of excellent madīh was to credit the Caliph with piety and other religious virtues, even if these were not appropriate. An example of this kind of madīh, in which the poet - who was drinking wine with the mamdūh - described him as the light of religion, is

these lines of Abū Nuwās:

تَبَّهْ نَدِيمَكَ قَدْ نَعَسَ بِسَقْبِكَ لَأَسَا فِي الْقَلَيْسِ
أَضْحَى الْإِمَامُ مُحَمَّدٌ لِلدِّينِ نَوْرًا بِقُبْسِ
وَرِثَ الْخِلَافَةَ خَمْسَةً وَخَيْرَ سَادِسِهِمْ سَدَسَ
تَبْكِي الْبَدْرُ لِفَتْحِهِ وَالسِّيفُ يَفْحَكَ إِنْ عَبَسَ

50

Here we have tasrī in the first line, with na'as at the end of the first half and al-galas at the rhyme. In the third line we have tajnīs in the two words sādisihim sadas. We also have contrasts in the last line, in the words tabkī and yadhak, and in dihkihi and 'abas.

In another poem he described him as the light of the Caliphate and the rejuvenating power of Islam:

رَفَعَ الْحِجَابُ لَنَاظِرِي فَبَدَأَ بِهِ مَلَكٌ تَقَطَّعَ دُونَهُ الْأَوْقَامُ
كَالْبَدْرِ مُشْتَمِلًا نُبُورَ خِلَافَةٍ لَيْسَ الشَّبَابُ بِمُلْكِهِ إِلَّا سَلَامُ

51

The rajaz poem of al-'Umānī in praise of al-Rashīd also illustrated madīh by attribution of the piety and devoutness demanded by critics. The lines selected by Ibn al-Mu'tazz are the following:

إِلَى أَمْرِي لَهُ أَيَادٍ عِنْدِي وَاجِبَةُ الْحَقِّ وَلَمْ أُؤَدِّ
حَقُوقَهَا وَلَوْ جَهَدَتْ جَهْدِي
هَارُونَ يَا فَرَّخَ فُرُوعِ الْحَمْدِ
وَيَا بَنَ أَشْشِيَاخِ الْخَطِيمِ التَّلْدِ
الْقَائِمِينَ اللَّيْلَ بَعْدَ الرَّقْدِ
لَهُ يَرْجُونَ جَنَّاتِ الْخُلْدِ
لَأَنَّمَا سَيِّمَتُهُ فِي الْبُرْدِ
بَيْنَ كَهُولِ هَاشِمٍ وَالْمُرْدِ
بَدْرٌ بَدَا بَيْنَ نَجْمِ السَّعْدِ

52

Another element of madīh recommended by critics was reference to particular

characteristics and qualities restricted to the Abbasid Caliphs, since they were related to the Prophet and considered to belong to Ahl al-Bayt. A poet should show obedience to them, love them and admit that they have a special status and right among Muslims, according to al-Āmidī in his Muwāzana. The examples he quoted made it clear that disobedience to the Caliphs was disobedience to God. Al-Buhturī wrote addressing al-Mutawakkil:

مَخَافَةُ أَمْرِكُمْ لِلَّهِ عَامٍ وَمُنْكَرُ حَقِّكُمْ لِقِيَانَنَا
وَلَيْسَتْ بِمُسْلِمٍ مَنْ لَمْ يُبَدِّمْ وَلَا يَتَكَبَّرَ وَلَوْ صَلَّى وَصَامَا

and:

نُصَلِّي وَإِثْمَامُ الصَّلَاةِ اعْتِقَادُنَا بِأَنَّكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرُ إِمَامٍ

Another recommended element of madih on Abbasid Caliphs was to mention that they had inherited various belongings of the Prophet, such as his clothes, his turban, his sword, his ring, his stick and his bed. The poet should also mention that the Caliphs were related to the Prophet, that they behaved and acted according to his teachings, and that they inherited his blessings. Al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muttalib, who was the paternal uncle of the Prophet and from whom the Abbasid Caliphs were descended, should be mentioned, with his virtues and his good deeds. Again examples were quoted from al-Buhturī's poetry:

عَلَيْكَ ثِيَابُ الْمُصَلَّى وَوَقَارُهُ وَأَنْتَ بِهِ أَوْلَى إِذَا خَصَّحْتَ الْأَمْرَ
عِمَامَتُهُ، وَسَيْفُهُ، وَرِدَاؤُهُ وَسَيْمَاهُ، وَالْهَدْيُ الْمَشَاكِلُ، وَالنَّجْمُ

In another poem he addressed the Caliph al-Muʿtazz as follows:

وَقَدْ تَرَكَ الْعَبَّاسُ عِنْدَكَ وَابْنَهُ عَلَا طُلُوعَ مَرَمَى النَّجْمِ حَتَّى تَحْبِرَا
هَمًّا وَرَّشَاكَ ذَا الْفِقَارِ وَصَبِرَا إِلَيْكَ الْقَضِيبَ وَالرِّدَاةَ الْمُحْبِرَا
وَأَيْ سَنَاءٍ لَسْتَ أَهْلًا لِفَضْلِهِ وَأَوْلَى بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ حَيٍّ وَأَجْدَرَا
وَأَنْتَ ابْنُ مَنْ أَسْقَى الْحَيَّ عَلَى النَّهْرِ وَتَأَشَدُّ فِي الْحُلِيِّ السَّحَابَ فَأَمْطِرَا

The last line referred to al-ʿAbbās.

A variation on this was to describe their nobility, honour and glory by stressing their connection with al-Kaʿba and the well of Zamzam, with

reference to the noble deeds of al-ʿAbbās such as watering the pilgrims, and performing the prayer for rain at the time of ʿUmar. Examples were quoted by al-ʿAmidī from the poetry of al-Buhturī. He wrote, addressing the Caliph al-Muʿtazz:

لَكُمْ زَعَمٌ وَأَفْنِيَّةُ الْكَلْبِ بَقَا وَالْحِجْرُ وَالْقَنَا وَالْمُحَلِّي

Another example was his lines on al-Mutawakkil:

شَرَفًا بَنَى الْعَبَّاسِ إِنَّ أَبَاكُمْ عَمُّ النَّبِيِّ وَعِيْقُهُ الْمُنْفَرَعُ
إِنَّ الْفَضِيلَةَ لِلَّذِي اسْتَشْفَعُ بِهِ عُمَرُ وَشُفْعُ إِذْ عَدَا يَسْتَشْفَعُ
مَنْ ذَا يُسَاجِلُكُمْ وَخَوْفُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِسِتْقَابَةِ الْعَبَّاسِ فَيَكُم يَسْتَشْفَعُ

The Caliph should be presented as superior to all others, and the poet should be careful not to praise a vizier, a governor or a noble man in the same terms as the Caliph. Examples were again taken from al-Buhturī, who addressed al-Mutawakkil thus:

وَأَنْتَ أَمِينُ اللَّهِ بِالْمَوْفِعِ الَّذِي أَبِي اللَّهِ أَنْ يَسْمُوَ إِلَى قَدَرِهِ قَدْرُ

Such a line ought to be written only on an Abbasid Caliph or a member of the Prophet's family, according to al-ʿAmidī. All the examples quoted contain the same idea of exclusivity.⁵³

A similar idea was propounded by Ibn Rashīq who stated that if the mamdūh was a king, the poet might exaggerate in his maʿānī, without any limits, but if the mamdūh was an ordinary man, he ought not to. Ibn Rashīq and Qudāma both thought that every class of men ought to be praised in terms exclusive to it.⁵⁴

The themes in the lines of madīh quoted by Ibn al-Muʿtazz were those that these successors of his considered appropriate. In the two following lines by Ashjaʿ al-Sulamī of madīh on al-Rashīd, we find a reference to the relationship of the mamdūh with the Prophet and the effect of this in the destruction of his enemies:

وَعَلَى عَدُوِّكَ يَا ابْنَ عَمِّ مُحَمَّدٍ رَصَدَانِ: هُنُوُ السُّبُعِ وَالْإِظْلَامِ

فَإِذَا تَنَبَّهَ رُعْتَهُ وَإِذَا هَدَا سَلَّتْ عَلَيْهِ سَيُوفُكَ الْأَحْلَامُ

Al-Rashīd was so pleased that he said: "By Allāh, this is excellent madīh and correct ma'nā". The contrasts are to be seen in daw' and al-izlām, and in tanabbaha and hadā. Al-Rashīd was further delighted when the poet recited two other lines in which he described him and his parents as having drunk the water of the Prophethood and as being related to the Prophet:

55 مَلِكٌ أَبَوْهُ وَأُمُّهُ مِنْ نَبْعَةٍ مِنْهَا سِرَاجُ الْأُمَّةِ الْوَهَّاجُ
شَرِبَا بِمَكَّةَ فِي ذُرَا بِطَائِفِهَا مَاءَ النُّبُوَّةِ لَيْسَ فِيهِ مَزَاجُ

In other lines, too, his relationship with the Prophet was mentioned, and he was described as a protection for the Caliphate:

قَفَرٌ عَلَيْهِ نَجِيَّةٌ وَسَلَامُ نَشَرْتُ عَلَيْهِ جَمَالَهَا الْأَيَّامُ
فِيهِ اجْتَلَى الدُّنْيَا الْخَلِيفَةُ وَالتَّقْتُ لِلْمَلِكِ فِيهِ سَلَامَةٌ وَرَوَامُ

and:

56 أَدْنَاكَ مِنْ ظِلِّ النَّبِيِّ وَسَيْلَةٍ وَقَرَابَةٍ وَنَشَجَتْ بِهَا الْأَرْحَامُ

The idea of praising the mamduh as a protector of Islam and the Caliphate was transferred to the madīh of viziers and governors. Ibn al-Mu'tazz stated that one of the ways in which a poet could best praise a mamduh of this rank was to say that he gave stability and protection to the Caliphate by his long stand under the shade of swords.⁵⁷ Muhammad b. 'Alī, known as al-Sīnī, praised Tāhir b. al-Husayn in this way:

58 مَقَامُكَ تَحْتَ ظِلَالِ السُّيُوفِ أَقَرَّ الْخِلَافَةِ فِي دَارِهَا

Another governor, 'Abd Allāh b. Hilāl was praised by 'Alī b. 'Asim thus:

59 أَضْحَكْتَ بَيْنَ الدِّينِ بَعْدَ عُبُوسِهِ فِي فَرَسَجَيْنِ وَقَبِيعَةِ الضُّلَالِ
غَادَرْتَ أَيَّامَ الضُّلَالِ لِيَالِيَا وَلِيَالِيِ الْإِسْلَامِ غَيْرِ لِيَالِ
وَالدِّينِ مُتَزَرًّا بِثَوْبِ جَمَالِهِ وَالْكَفْرِ مُتَزَرًّا بِثَوْبِ نَكَالِ

Some poets not only described their mamduh as a protector of the Caliphate but also as a means of security and protection for the whole earth. These ma'ānī are to be found in various lines quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz from different poets. The best examples are the poems of 'Alī b. Jabala in praise of Humayd al-Tūsī and Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī. About the former he wrote:

لَقَدْ مَنَنْتَ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا وَسَاكِينِهَا بَظِلِّ أَمْنٍ بَسِيطٍ غَيْرِ مَهْمُونٍ
أَصْبَحْتَ لِلْمَلِكِ عَرِينًا تَقُومُ بِهِ بِعَمِّ الْكَرِيهِمةِ جَدَّاعِ الْعَرَابِينِ 60

He described him as a guardian of the earth:

صَمِيمَ الْأَرْضِ حَمِيدٌ فَهَوَ لِلْأَرْضِ خَفِيرٌ
مَا أَعَزَّ اللَّهَ جَارًا بِسِوَاهُ يَسْتَجِيرُ
يَا أَبَا غَانِمِ الْغَدِّ مَ عَلَى مَنْ يَسْتَجِيرُ
وَأَبَا الْأَمْنِ إِذَا ضَا قَتَ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ الصَّدُورُ
بِكَ رَكْنَ الْأَرْضِ يَرْسُو وَرَحَى الْمَلِكِ تَدُورُ
أَنْتَ لِلْمَلِكِ نَصِيرٌ وَلَكَ اللَّهُ نَصِيرٌ 61

About Abū Dulaf he wrote:

لَسْتُ أَدْرِي مَا أَقُولُ لَهُ غَيْرَ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ فِي خَفَرِهِ
يَا دَوَاءَ الْأَرْضِ إِنْ فَسَدَتْ وَتُجِيرُ الْبُشْرَ مِنْ عُسْرِهِ 62

'Awf b. Muḥallim addressed his mamduh 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir thus:

يَا بَنَ الَّذِي دَانَ لَهُ الْمَشْرِقَانِ وَأَلَيْسَ الْأَمْنُ بِهِ الْمَغْرِبَانِ 63

He described him and his family as the ornaments of the Caliphate in time of peace and its sword in time of war:

بَنُو مُصَنَّبٍ لِلْمَلِكِ فِي السَّلَامِ زِينَةٌ وَفِي الْحَرْبِ دُونَ الْمَلِكِ بَيْضٌ بَوَاطِرُ
وَكَوْلُ رُوَاقِ الْمَلِكِ مِنْ آلِ مُصَنَّبٍ لُبُوثٌ لِأَعْنَاقِ الْيُوثِ هَوَاسِرُ 64

The poems of madīh quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz were characterised by references to the revolts which had taken place against the Abbasid Caliphate and their suppression by the mamduhūn. The reiteration of this

theme suggests that it was considered particularly apposite for madīh on viziers and governors of provinces at that time, in view of the lack of security and stability in the Abbasid Caliphate. In his own poetry Ibn al-Mu'tazz also referred to the same subject, and he gave as an example of a good vizier one who could suppress revolts and secure the state.

Ibn al-Mu'tazz approved of poems of madīh with exaggerated ma'ānī. Earlier critics had rejected exaggeration, possibly under the influence of the Qur'ān and Hadīth, both of which call for sincerity and truth and condemn takalluf and exaggeration. With the exception of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, in his criticism of Ḥassān b. Thābit, and 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān in his criticism of Kuthayyir, there was perhaps no-one who advocated exaggeration in the ma'ānī of madīh. Ibn al-Mu'tazz's quotations from this genre may have influenced Qudāma, al-Āmidī and Ibn Rashīq, all of whom accepted exaggerated madīh, and believed that levels of madīh should differ according to the differences in rank of the mamdūhūn. Qudāma made it clear that in his opinion description by way of hyperbole was preferable to "staying within limits which mark the middle (between two extremes)". He said that those who had knowledge of poetry, either ancient or modern, held the same opinion. He quoted the tag: "the best poetry is the most lying (aḥsan al-shi'r akdhabuhu)" and remarked that a poet was not expected to be sincere but excellent, whether in madīh or hijā'. He could contradict himself in different poems, provided that he displayed sufficient poetic ability. He also attributed the same views to the Greek philosophers.⁶⁵ Recent scholars have believed that Qudāma was influenced by Aristotle in his views concerning hyperbole in poetry.⁶⁶ In all probability, however, Qudāma was influenced by Ibn al-Mu'tazz's quotations and by other hyperbolic lines from Jāhilī poetry, such as those by Muḥalhil and al-Namr b. Tawlab, and from muhdath poetry, such as those of Abū Nuwās. The influence of Imru' al-Qays' father, who also believed that aḥsan al-shi'r akdhabuhu,

and of 'Abd al-Malik, al-Nābigha, and al-A'shā may be suggested.⁶⁷

Hyperbole may be regarded as a part of Arab life, for we find it in mufākharā and munāfara, in poetry and in speeches. In the field of poetic criticism, we find that critics themselves gave exaggerated opinions about a poem, a line or about a poet himself, in describing it or him as the best of all. The muhdathūn became fond of hyperbole, in madīh, as we shall see from Ibn al-Mu'tazz's quotations. By their time, it had become a social and political necessity, since the mamdūh had to be accorded superiority to all, especially if he was a Caliph. This superiority gave him the right to rule his subjects. It even became a religious necessity in the opinion of some poets, such as Salm al-Khāsir, who believed that al-Mahdī, the Abbasid Caliph, was really the awaited Mahdī (al-Mahdī al-muntazar). In one of his poems he made him superior to all, likening him to halāl and other kings to harām:

وإلى أمير المؤمنين محمد خير الأنام
قالت قريش كلها وهم الكرام بنو الكرام
وخيار من وطئ الحقى من بين كهل أو غلام
ففضل الملوك محمد فضل الحلال على الحرام 68

He wrote another poem in praise of the Caliph Mūsā al-Hadī, to whom he ascribed divine attributes:

لقد جعل الله في راحتيك حياة النفوس وآجالها
وجردناك في كتب الأولين هي النفوس وقتالها
وموسى شبيهه أبى جعفر ومطلي الرغائب سؤالها 69

A mamdūh may be likened to al-Ka'ba, as by Muslim b. al-Walīd:

لا يرحل الناس إلا نحو حجرتي للبيت بفضي إليه ملتقى السبل

and by Ahmad b. al-Hajjāj:

انى اعتصمت باستارين مستلماً لكنين ملتباً والبيت ذا الحجب
فالبيت للأجل المرجو آجله وأنت للعاجل المرجو للرجب 70

Ibn al-Mu'tazz was interested in such poetry from a political, as well as an artistic, point of view. He was one of the Abbasid ruling family and he liked the Caliphs to have their right to the Caliphate affirmed in such poetry as this, by Mansūr al-Namrī:

بُورِكَ هَارُونُ مِنْ إِمَامٍ بِطَاعَةِ اللَّهِ ذَوِ الْعِصَامِ
يَسْعَى عَلَى أُمَّةٍ تَمَشَّى أَنْ لَوْ تَقِيهِ مِنَ الْحِمَامِ
لَوْ اسْتَطَاعَتْ لَقَا سَمْنَهُ أَمْحَا رَهَا قِسْمَةَ السِّهَامِ
يَا خَيْرَ مَاضٍ وَخَيْرَ بَاقٍ بَعْدَ النَّبِيِّينَ فِي الْأَنَامِ 71

'Alī b. Jabala addressed al-Mutawakkil thus:

فَمَا بَيْنَ رَيْكَ جَلَّ اسْمُهُ وَبَيْنَكَ إِلَّا نَبِيٌّ الْهُدَى
وَأَنْتَ بِسُنَّتِهِ مُقْتَدٍ وَفِيهَا نَجَاؤُكَ مِنْهُ غَدَا

Two lines from the poem of Abū al-Khattāb al-Bahdalī in praise of Mūsā al-Hādī described him as the best man of Mudar. No-one was better than him except the Prophet:

يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ عَقَدَتْ كَفَاهُ حُجْرَتُهُ إِلَّا النَّبِيَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ لَهُ
وَفَخِيرَ مَنْ قَلَدَتْهُ أَمْرَهَا مُنَرُّ فَضْلًا وَأَنْتَ بِذَلِكَ الْفَضْلِ تَفْتَخِرُ 72

Abū Nuwās described al-Amin as the best man who ever trod on earth:

وَإِذَا الْهَلْهُ بَنَّا بَلَعَنْ مُحَمَّدًا فَظَهَرَتْ عَلَى الرِّجَالِ حَرَامُ
قَرَّبْنَا مِنْ خَيْرٍ مِنَ وَلِئْلِ الْحَصَا فَلَمَّا عَلَيْنَا حُرْمَةً وَزِمَامُ

and exaggerated further:

يَا نَاقُ لَا تَسْأَلِي أَوْ تَبْلَغِي مِلْكَ تَقْبِيلُ رَاحَتِهِ وَالرُّكْنِ بَسِيَّانِ
مُحَمَّدٌ خَيْرٌ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى قَدَمٍ مِمَّنْ بَرَى اللَّهُ مِنْ لَأْسٍ وَمِنْ جَانِ
هَذَا الَّذِي قَدَّمَ اللَّهُ الْقَضَاءَ بِهِ إِلَّا يَكُونُ لَهُ فِي فَضْلِهِ ثَانِي
هُوَ الَّذِي امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ الْقُلُوبَ بِهِ عَمَّا تُجْهِجُنَّ مِنْ كُفْرٍ وَإِبْهَانِ 73

'Alī b. al-Jahm employed even greater hyperbole in ascribing to his mandūh

Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī - who was not even a Caliph - divine power:

أَنْتَ الَّذِي تَنْزِلُ الْأَيَّامَ مِنْزِلَهَا وَتَنْقُلُ الدَّهْرَ مِنْ حَالٍ إِلَى حَالٍ
وَمَا مَدَدَتْ مَدَى لَحْرِفٍ إِلَى أَحَدٍ إِلَّا قَضَيْتَ بِأَرْزَاقٍ وَأَجَالٍ

It is said that al-Ma'mūn threatened him with execution for "describing a man as equal to God".⁷⁴ 'Alī b. Jabala was fond of such exaggeration and incorporated a similar idea in his lines in praise of Humayd al-Tūsī:

بِطَاعَةِ اللَّهِ لَمَلَّتِ النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمْ وَنَفَعَ هَادٍ أُمِينَ الْمَلِكِ مَأْمُونٍ
أَنْتَ الذَّمَّانُ وَقَدْ تَجَرَّى تَقَرُّفُهُ عَلَى الْأَنَامِ بِتَشْدِيدٍ وَتَلْيِينٍ
لَوْ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَأَنْتِ الْأَيَّامُ قَدْ قَنِينَتْ بِالْمَكْرَمَاتِ وَمَاتِ الْمَجْدُ مِنْ حِينِ

Although the lines are said to have been "rejected by the 'amma, who accused the poet of ignorance in crediting his mamdūh with the power of God", Ibn al-Mu'tazz admired them, defending them on the grounds that it had already been stated in the first line that the mamdūh had achieved such power by obedience to God.⁷⁵ The fact that these poems by 'Alī b. Jabala were much admired and recited by people, as Ibn al-Mu'tazz mentioned, implies that they enjoyed hyperbole in madīh poetry. The examples quoted above from Abū Nuwās, 'Alī b. Jabala and others described the mamdūh as pious and obedient to God, even if the poet knew that this was not true. This practice was commended by al-Āmidī, as we have mentioned. Ibn al-Mu'tazz had the same view, judging from his quotations, but he differed with al-Āmidī in that he sometimes accepted the transference of madīh appropriate to Caliphs to viziers and other men of the state. Al-Āmidī considered that "a major defect in a poet is to praise a non-Caliph for qualities only possessed by Caliphs".⁷⁶

Sometimes hyperbole is ridiculously presented, as in the poem of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb al-Bahdalī in praise of the Caliph Mūsā al-Hādī, whose courage and physical strength he described with great exaggeration. The Caliph whom Ibn al-Mu'tazz reported as "busying himself with drink and listening to songs" was compared with a lion which was described as very strong, brave and fierce, but not possessed of one hundredth of his courage and

strength. The poem, as we have mentioned before, was said to have combined the ma'ānī of the earlier poets and the mahāsin of the muhdathūn.⁷⁷ As has been suggested, hyperbole in madīh, especially on Caliphs, had become a necessity from a political, religious and social point of view. Poets were not expected to be sincere but to exaggerate and please their mamdūh, who was represented as superior to everyone else. Thus, al-Ma'mūn was very pleased when al-Husayn b. al-Dahhāk praised him thus:

رَأَى اللَّهَ عَبْدًا لَمْ يَخِرْ عِبَارِهِ فَحَمَلَهُ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالْقَبْرِ

and is reported to have said to the poet: "O, Husayn, you know that this is the best madīh I have ever been praised with in my kingdom".⁷⁸ On the other hand, a Caliph would become angry if any of his subjects was praised and placed above him. When 'Alī b. Jabala wrote his poem of madīh on Abū Dulaf, describing him thus:

كُلُّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ عَرَبٍ بَيْنَ بَادِيَةٍ إِلَى قَصْرِه
مُسْتَعْبِرٌ مِنْكَ مَكْرُمَةً بَلَّغَتْهَا يَوْمَ مُنْقَرِفِهِ
إِنَّمَا الدُّنْيَا أَبُو دُلْفٍ بَيْنَ بَادِيَةٍ وَمُحْتَفِرِهِ
فَإِذَا وَلَّى أَبُو دُلْفٍ وَلَّتِ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى أَثَرِهِ

al-Mamūn was furious, because a poet who was praising a subject of the Caliph claimed that everyone - including the Caliph himself - borrowed noble deeds from his mamdūh.⁷⁹ At the very beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate, al-Mansūr threatened Abū Dulāma with reprisals if he again recited his rithā' poem on al-Saffāh, his predecessor. The reason seems to have been that the poem was so impressive that when the public heard it they wept over the dead Caliph, who, the poet claimed, had taken generosity with him to his grave and left behind only misers. The poet expressed a wish to die and follow his master quickly. The lines that seem to have angered al-Mansūr are:

مَا نَ الدَّيْ إِذْ مَتَّ يَابَنُ مُحَمَّدٍ فَجَعَلْتَهُ لَكَ فِي التَّرَابِ عَدِيلًا
إِنِّي سَأَلْتُ النَّاسَ بَعْدَكَ كُلَّهُمْ فَوَجِدْتُ أَسْمَحَ مِنْ رَأَيْتُ بِخَيْلًا
الْشَّقَوْنِي أَخَّرْتُ بَعْدَكَ لِلَّذِي بَدَعَ السَّمِينِ مِنَ الْعِيَالِ هَذِيلًا

Al-Rashīd is said once to have doubled the prize of al-ʿUmānī, first because of his poem and secondly because of his speech in which he declared al-Rashīd superior to all other Caliphs from the Umayyad period onwards. The poet claimed that he had praised all Caliphs but that he had never seen among them a man with a more beautiful face and appearance, and with more generous hands, than al-Rashīd.⁸¹ This competition between mamdūhūn was widespread at all levels and not confined to Caliphs. For instance, when ʿAlī b. Jabala wished to recite to Humayd al-Tūsī a poem in his praise, he asked him: "What are you going to say about us? Is there anything left to be said after you have said about Abū Dulaf:

إِنَّمَا الدُّنْيَا أَبُودُلَفٌ بَيْنَ مُعْرَاةٍ وَهَتَفَةٍ
فَإِذَا وَلَّى أَبُودُلَفٌ وَلَّتِ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى أَثَرِهِ

The poet replied that what he had written on Humayd was better than that, and then he recited:

إِنَّمَا الدُّنْيَا حَمِيدٌ وَأَيَادِيهِ الْجَسَامُ
فَإِذَا وَلَّى حَمِيدٌ فَغَلَى الدُّنْيَا السَّلَامُ

Humayd was pleased and rewarded the poet, but the lines are said to have been less famous than those on Abū Dulaf, which were recited by Khāṣṣa, and ʿamma alike, while those on Humayd were known only to the Khāṣṣa and to men of letters. It is said that they were composed extempore and that this was why Humayd was so pleased with them.⁸²

Both mamdūhūn and poets knew that these poems of madīh lacked sincerity, but the former accepted them with pleasure and admiration because they liked to be praised in this way and accorded superiority. The more a poet exaggerated in his madīh, the greater the rewards he received. When al-Rammāh b. Mayyāda was criticised for praising al-Walīd b. Yazīd, who was a dissolute man, he replied that he did not care about his dissoluteness, since he had rewarded him with four hundred she-camels. Al-Rammāh told his critic whose name was Jaʿfar b. Sulayman from the Abbasid family and

who was a governor of Basra, that madīh depended on how great the reward was. Ja'far b. Sulaymān then gave him four hundred she-camels and asked for a poem of madīh like that on al-Walid.⁸³ This attitude may well explain the dualistic behaviour of those poets among the Shī'a who wrote madīh on the Umayyads and the Abbasids; their object was simply to earn money. Their madīh poems on these Caliphs are said to have been more excellent than those on the Ahl al-bayt. This was remarked on in the poetry of al-Kumayt b. Zayd whose behaviour was attributed by Ibn Qutayba to greed for material reward from the Umayyads and the Abbasids in this world; he preferred this to the reward that he might have had in the hereafter if he had limited himself to Ahl al-bayt.⁸⁴

In quoting these madīh poems in which poets exaggerated, Ibn al-Mu'tazz was influenced by the criteria of his own time, in which hyperbole was admired; besides, he was a member of the ruling house and therefore accepted this hyperbole because it represented the Abbasid Caliphs as superior to everyone else and the only ones entitled to the Caliphate. In his own poetry, we find madīh on the Abbasids mainly concerned with their right to the Caliphate. At the same time, following a dualistic path, he wrote madīh on Ahl al-bayt, expressing his love and respect for them but criticising them for claiming the Caliphate. As Tāhā Husayn said, Ibn al-Mu'tazz was a pure Abbasid in his political views and very severe in his opposition to the Talibids. In his political arguments he always cited the following line of Marwān b. Abī Hafsa:

أَنْتَ بَكُونُ وَلَيْسَ ذَاكَ بِكَائِنٍ لِبَنِي الْبَنَاتِ وَرَاثَةُ الْأَعْمَامِ

Ibn al-Mu'tazz wrote a great deal of poetry based on the idea in this line. His political poetry was also characterised by the mention of the frequent revolts by the Talibids against the Abbasid Caliphate.⁸⁵

Concerning his own poetry discussion will be limited to madīh poems on

Abbasid Caliphs, and on their viziers, in which we find some of the qualities that he admired in his quotations from the muhdathun. The poems in which he spoke about his political views and his opposition to the Talibids will be singled out. One of his most important poems on this is that in which he praised 'Alī b. Abī Tālib:

رَثَيْتُ الْحَجَّاجَ ، فَقَالَ الْعُدَاةُ : سَبَّ عَلِيًّا وَبَيْتَ النَّبِيِّ

and defended himself against the accusation that he disliked 'Alī and his descendants.⁸⁶

In one of his poems, which starts:

بَنِي عَمَّانَا الْأَرْدَنِيِّينَ مِنْ آلِ طَالِبٍ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى الْأَدْنَى ، وَعُودُوا إِلَى الْحُسَيْنِ

he called on the Talibids to reach a compromise and reminded them of the relationship that linked them with the Abbasids. His political views appear in those lines in which he requested the Talibids to give up their claim to the Caliphate.⁸⁷ In another poem he repeated the same request, arguing that the Abbasids were the ones who had terminated the Umayyad Caliphate, and so they had the right to inherit it. Besides, the Abbasids had inherited the garments of the Prophet and the Talibids had no reason to claim them. They had also inherited the Caliphate, through their ancestor al-'Abbās, the paternal uncle of the Prophet. Although the Talibids were descended from the Prophet's daughter, they had no right to inherit. Moreover, al-'Abbās had many virtues and had done much good for Islam such as being the Prophet's uncle, standing firm with him at the battle of Hunayn, and leading the prayer for rain at the time of 'Umar. Ibn al-Mu'tazz claimed that the Caliphate was a gift from God to the Abbasids and that the Talibids should realise that it would not become settled and stable except in their hands. This poem starts:

أَلَا مَنْ لَعِينٍ وَتَسْبُكًا بِهَا تَشْكَى الْقَدَى ، وَبُكَاهَا بِهَا

The lines that contain these ideas start:

لَهَجْتُ بَنِي رَحْمَى لَوْ وَعَوَا نَضِيجَةَ بَرٍّ بِأَنْسَابِهَا 88

These political ideas were also presented in a fourth poem, in which he wrote mufākharā about his noble descent and mentioned the virtues of al-ʿAbbās. He also stated again that the Abbasids had inherited the Caliphate from the Prophet. The poem starts:

89 أَيُّهَا السَّائِلِيُّ عَنِ الْحَسَبِ الْأَطْيَبِ مَا قَوْقه لِحَلْقِي مَزِيدُ

As has been mentioned, mention of the relationship between the Prophet and the Caliph was recommended. We have seen examples in the quotations from the muhdathūn. Ibn al-Muʿtazz made use of this theme in his own poems which had a political nature. In a fifth poem he complained of the hostility of the Talibids towards the Abbasids. He boasted that he was descended from al-ʿAbbās and his son ʿAbd Allāh, both of whom had defended the Talibids against Umayyad oppression; they should be grateful to the Abbasids and not hostile. The virtues and deeds of al-ʿAbbās were again rehearsed and put forward as a justification for his descendants' tenure of the Caliphate. The poem starts:

90 سَأْتَنِي عَلَى عَهْدِ الْمَطِيرَةِ وَالْقَهْرِ وَأَدْعُو لَهَا بِالسَّاكِنِيِّ وَبِالْقَطْرِ

In a sixth poem, starting:

طَالَ لَيْلِي، وَسَاوَرْتَنِي الْهُمُومُ، وَلَأَنِّي لَكُلِّ نَجْمٍ غَرِيمُ

he again addressed the Talibids, wondering how long they would continue to claim the Caliphate. He then compared al-ʿAbbās with his brother Abū Ṭalib, giving him superiority because he was a Muslim and because of his virtues and good deeds in Islam. He repeated the theme of the inheritance of the Caliphate, and he warned the Talibids not to dispute it.⁹¹ He tried to produce evidence to support the Abbasids' claim. In a seventh poem, he told the Talibids that God did not will that they should rule, that the people would not accept them, and that they had no reason to force their will on the people. The Caliphate, he claimed, was a gift from God to the Abbasids, who were able to seize power from the Umayyads. The Talibids

should be grateful to the Abbasids, because they had protected them against oppression. The poem starts:

92 أَتَبَى إِلَهُ إِلَّا مَا تَرَوْنَ، فَمَا لَكُمْ عَتَابٌ عَلَى الْأَقْدَارِ يَا آلَ طَالِبٍ

Ibn al-Mu'tazz wrote a very long urjūza starting:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الْمَلِكِ الرَّحْمَنِ ذِي الْعِزَّةِ وَالْقُدْرَةِ وَالسُّلْطَانِ

The poem consists of four hundred and twenty-one lines and in it he expressed his opinions about the Umayyad Caliphate, accusing them of corruption and tyranny. He repeated the idea of inherited right to the Caliphate at the beginning of the poem. He spoke of the life and rule of al-Saffāh, the first Abbasid Caliph, who saved men from the terrible conditions prevailing at the end of the Umayyad era. He also complained of the evil actions of the Qarāmīta against the Muslims. He then moved to the main theme of his poem, which was the superiority of al-ʿAbbās; he produced the same arguments as in his other poems, and he called on the Talibids to renounce their claim to the Caliphate.⁹³ In one of his short poems, starting:

لَمَّا ظَنَنْتُ فِرَاقَهُمْ لَمْ أَرْقُدْ وَهَلَكْتُ إِنْ صَحَّ التَّنَبُّ أَوْ قَدِ

he advised the Abbasids to protect their Caliphate, in lines such as:

94 شَدُّوا أَلْفُكُمُ عَلَى مِيرَاثِكُمْ فَالْحَقُّ أَعْطَاكُمْ خِلَافَةَ أَحْمَدِ

He offered the same advice to the Caliph al-Muktafi:

95 فَاشْدُدْ يَدَيْكَ عَلَى عِزَانِ خِلَافَةٍ لَكَ يَارِثُهَا وَبِقَاؤُهَا الْمَمْدُودُ

In his quotations from the muhdathūn we have seen his interest in abstract maʿānī in madīh, such as the attribution of light, piety and justice, and the representation of the mamduh as a protector of Islam and the Caliphate and as a source of stability and security for the country. These characteristics are to be found also in his own madīh poetry, such as his short poem on al-Muktafi, starting:

لِلْمُكْتَفِيِّ دَوْلَةٌ مَبَارَكَةٌ عَاشَ بِهَا النَّاسُ بَعْدَ مَا مَاتُوا

It continues:

يَلُوحُ مِنْ تَحْتِهِ قَمَرٌ وافى به للسعود ميقَاتُ
خليفةٌ لا يَجِيبُ سَائِلُهُ تُسَرَّنُ به الأرضُ والسمواتُ
ما وَلَدَتْ هاشِمْ لَهْ شَبَهًا من أَيْنَ لا أَيْنَ مثلهُ هاتوا

The attributes of light and beauty appear in many lines, such as:

فَكَأَنَّهُ قَمَرٌ سَرَى فِي لَيْلَةٍ فَظَلَامُهَا عَنْ نُورِهَا مَرْدُورُ

and:

96 وَسَاسَ الْمُلْكَ مِنَّا كُلُّ خُرْقٍ كَمَثَلِ الْبَدْرِ أَشْرَقَ فِي الظَّلَامِ

Hayba and bahā', which were recommended as attributes for the mamduh by al-Āmidī, as we have seen, are to be found in these lines:

وَلَا نَمَّا رَفَعَ الْحِجَابُ لِنَاطِرِ عَنْ صُبْحِ لَيْلٍ قَدْ تَوَقَّدَ فَجْرُهُ
وَتَرَاهُ فِي لَيْلٍ السُّرَى وَلَآئِهِ نَارٌ يَتَلَبَّبُ طَرْفَهُ وَيُقِرُّهُ
97 وَإِذَا بَدَأَ مَلَأَ الْعَيُونَ مَهَابَةً فَتَظَلُّ تُسْرِقُ لِحْظَهَا وَتُسِرُّهُ

The Caliph as a guide to the right path and as a light that fills earth with truth and justice appears in this line:

صِرَاطٌ هَدَى بِقَفْضِي عَلَى الْجَوْرِ عَدْلُهُ وَنُورٌ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ سَالِمُهُ

He was also described, in another poem, as a moon who turned the darkness of night into light, as the best man to whom camels had ever travelled, and as a king by whom the kingdom had been settled:

أَهْلًا وَسَهْلًا بِالْإِمَامِ فَقَدْ جَلَى الدُّجَى ، وَأَنَارَ مَشْرِقُهُ
بَدْرٌ تَنَزَّلَ فِي مَنَازِلِهِ سَعْدٌ بِصَيْحِهِ وَيَطْرُقُهُ
يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ تُرَجَى الْمَطَرُ لَهُ وَيَمُرُّ حَبْلَ الْعَهْدِ مُوثِقُهُ
98 قَرَّ السَّرِيرُ وَكَانَ مَضْطَرِبًا وَأَقْلَسَ تَاجَ الْمُلْكِ مَفْرُقُهُ

The kingdom had been settled and secured by a generous and a just Caliph:

جُمِعَ الْحَقُّ لَنَا فِي إِمَامٍ قَتَلَ الْبُخْلَ وَأَحْيَا السَّمَحَا
يَا أَمِينَ اللَّهِ أَبَدَتْ مُلْكًا كَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ نَهَبًا مُبَاخَا

The theme of protecting and securing the kingdom occurs again elsewhere:

لَقَدْ شَدَّ مُلْكَ بَنِي هَاشِمٍ وَأَبْدَلَهُ بِالْفَسَادِ السَّلَاحَا
إِمَامٌ أَعَادَ الْهُدَى عَدْلُهُ وَلَا قِيَّ بِهِ الْمُرْتَجُونَ نَجَاحَا
99 فَحَرَّدَ عَلَى الْمُلْكِ أَسْلَابَهُ وَأَلْبَسَهُ تَاجَهُ وَالْوِشَاحَا

The Caliph is again praised for spreading security and justice on earth, in lines such as:

هَنَّتَكَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ خِلَافَةً أَتَيْتَكَ عَلَى لُجْبَةِ السَّعَادَةِ وَالْيَمَنِ
وَلَمَّا أَقَرَّتْ فِي يَدَيْكَ عِنَانَهَا نَشَرْتَ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا جَنَاحًا مِنَ الْأَمَنِ
لَقَدْ زَفَّهَا فِي حَلِيظِ رَأْيٍ قَاسِمٍ إِلَى مَلِكٍ كَالْبَدْرِ مُقْتَبِلِ السَّيْنِ
وَلَمْ يَبْطُلِ الْحَقُّ الَّذِي هُوَ أَهْلُهُ وَأَنْفَذَ حُكْمَ اللَّهِ فِي وَالِدٍ وَابْنِ 100

This theme of security and protection recurs in several other poems in the *Diwān*.¹⁰¹ Protection and support for Islam, recommended as themes in *madīh* poetry on Caliphs, also figure in his poetry, for instance:

يَا نَاصِرَ الْإِسْلَامِ يَشْ وَأَسْلَمَ عَلَى رَبِّ الزَّمَنِ
نَشَفَ الْجَمْعَ بِسَيْفِهِ وَنَشَفَ حَزَازَاتِ الْإِلْحَنِ

and:

يَا نَاصِرَ الْإِسْلَامِ إِذَا خُذِلَتْ دَعْوَاتُهُ فَابْتَلَّ وَانْتَفَشَا
كَلِمًا اسْتَفَانَتْ وَقَلَّ نَاصِرُهُ كَلْبَتُهُ وَنَسَعَبَتْ مِنْكُمْ شَا 102

The characteristics of *madīh* poetry on Caliphs that emerge in his quotations from the *muhdathun* and in his own poetry are similar to those recommended later by al-Āmidī. The latter stated that there were certain things that ought to be mentioned when writing such poetry. The examples he quoted from al-Buhturī demonstrate the similarity of his approach to that of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, for instance:

الْيَوْمَ أُطْلِعَ لِلْخِلَافَةِ سَعْدُهَا وَأَصْنَاءُ فِيهَا بَدْرُهَا الْمُتَهَلَّلُ
لَيْسَتْ جَلَالَةٌ جَعْفَرٍ فَلَكَانَهَا سَكْرٌ تَجَلَّلَهُ النَّهَارُ الْمُقْبِلُ

and:

اللَّهُ أَشْرَ بِالْخِلَافَةِ جَعْفَرًا وَرَأَاهُ نَاصِرَهَا الَّذِي لَا يُخْذَلُ
هُوَ أَفْضَلُ الرَّتَبِ الَّتِي جُعِلَتْ لَهُ دُونَ الْبَرِّيَّةِ ، وَهُوَ مِنْهَا أَفْضَلُ

Concerning the Caliph al-Mahdī, al-Buhturī wrote:

زَادَ فِي بَهْجَةِ الْخِلَافَةِ نُورًا فَهُوَ شَمْسٌ لِلنَّاسِ ، وَهُوَ نَهَارُ
وَأَجَارَ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْخَوِّ فِي قَهْلٍ يَنْشَلُّ الْمَجِيرَ الْمَجَارُ

Addressing the Caliph al-Mutawakkil, he spoke of the Caliphate as an

inheritance of the Abbasids and a gift from God to them:

وَأَرَى الْخِلَافَةَ وَهِيَ أَعْظَمُ رُتْبَةٍ تَقَى لَكُمْ وَوَرِاثَةً مَا تُنَزِعُ
وَأَعْظَاكُمْهَا اللَّهُ عَنْ عِلْمِ بَلَمَ وَاللَّهُ يُعْطِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَمْنَعُ

He declared his mamduh superior to all other Caliphs:

فَضْلُ الْخَلَائِقِ بِالْخِلَافَةِ وَاقِفٌ فِي الرُّتْبَةِ الْعُلْيَا، وَفَضْلُكَ أَفْضَلُ
أَوْقَبَتْ عَاشِرَهُمْ فَإِنْ نُسِبُوا إِلَى كَرَمٍ وَإِحْسَانٍ فَأَنْتَ الْأَوَّلُ

Of the Caliph al-Mu'tazz he wrote:

103 أَقَامَ قَنَاةَ الدِّينِ بَعْدَ الْمَوْجَاكِهَا وَأَرْبَى عَلَى شَفْعِ الْعَدُوِّ الْمَشَاغِبِ

In his madīh poetry on viziers, Ibn al-Mu'tazz used the themes to be found in his quotations from the muhdathun on the same subject. The protection, security and stability of the kingdom were predominant. He also employed hyperbole from time to time. The following githā on one of the Abbasid viziers is a good example:

أَدَامَ الْمُهَيِّمِينَ عِزَّ الْوَزِيرِ وَزَادَ الْحَسُودَ عَلَيْهِ هَوَانَا
أَيَا جَابِرِ الْمُلْكِ مَنْ كَسَرَهُ وَيَا مُطَهِّرِ الْحَقِّ حَتَّى اسْتَبَانَا
جَمَعْتَ الَّذِي فَزَّقَ الْعَاذِلُونَ فَبِكَ وَهَيَّيْتَ لِلْمُلْكِ شَانَا
وَمَا شَاءَ رَأْيُكَ فِي الْحَادِثَا نَيْ قَالَ إِلَهُ لَهُ: كُنْ فَمَا نَا

The last line is hyperbolical in equating the power of the mamduh with the divine power; it reminds us of the lines by 'Alī b. Jabala on Humayd al-Tūsī and Abū Dulaf. In three other lines, Ibn al-Mu'tazz employed a kind of dualism, in praising two viziers in the same poem, just as Marwān b. Abī Ḥafsa had done. He represented the two viziers as protectors of the kingdom and loyal assistants to the Caliph in times of difficulty:

نَهَرَ اللَّهُ بِالْوَزِيرَيْنِ مُلْكًا كَانَ أَوْدَى وَاسْتَهْلَكَ الذُّلُّ مِنْهُ
فَأَجَادَا نَصِيحَةً لِلِمَامِ لَنْ دَهَاها فِي شِدَّةٍ لَمْ تَخْنُهُ
هُوَ مِثْلُ الْحُسَامِ بَيْتٌ غِرَارِيهِ فَهَذَا وَذَا يُجَاهِدُ عَنْهُ

The themes of settlement and stability, which we find in madīh on the Caliphs, were transferred to madīh on viziers and the office of wizāra,

as in:

وَرَدَّ إِلَيْهَا أَهْلَهَا بَعْدَ إِقْفَارِ
فَلَاقَتْ نَضَاباً ثَابِتاً غَيْرَ خَوَّارِ

لَقَدْ تَمَرَّ اللهُ الْوِزَارَةَ بِاسْمِهِ
وَكَانَتْ زَمَاناً لَا يَبْقَرُ قَرَارُهَا 104

The characteristics of madīh poetry on viziers, as represented by the quotations of Ibn al-Mu'tazz and by his own poetry, are the same as those commended by Qudāma b. Ja'far and Ibn Rashīq. They agreed that a vizier should be praised as a good adviser to the Caliph and as an intelligent and determined man who was always ready to help the Caliph in times of difficulty.¹⁰⁵ While agreeing with these later critics on this point, Ibn al-Mu'tazz differed with them and with al-Āmidī concerning the propriety of praising a mamdūh only in terms appropriate to his rank and status and not overstepping certain limits. Al-Āmidī stated that neither a vizier, an army leader nor the governor of a province expected to be praised in the same terms in which a Caliph was praised.¹⁰⁶ Ibn al-Mu'tazz was prepared to extend those limits, as we have seen.

Quotations from poets of hijā', mujūn and hamāqa

When describing al-Husayn b. al-Dahhāk as a muftann, Ibn al-Mu'tazz mentioned hijā' as one of the genres that such a poet was expected to master. He described several of the poets whom he quoted as excellent in hijā'. His comments on some of them may give us an idea about the kind of hijā' poetry that he favoured. For instance, Abū al-Yanbaghī was said to be "very quick to harm and defame people's honour (a'rād) with his hijā', very fond of obscenity in poetry, very good at extemporising, and evil-tongued (khabīth al-lisān)".¹⁰⁷ Ibn al-Mu'tazz cited an obscene line of hijā' extemporised by Abū al-Yanbaghī in answer to another poet who had attacked him in this line:

عَجُوزُ أَبِي الْيَنْبَغِيِّ عَجُوزُ سَوَاءٍ بَغِي

Besides obscenity both of words and content, Abū al-Yanbaghī used in his hijā' "foolish words (lafz sakhīf), in order to attract the 'amma and boys

to his poetry". Ibn al-Mu'tazz cited his lines that start:

وَرَجَاءُ الْجَرَّائِي لَوْ دَرَى مَا حُسْنُ رَائِي

and described them as "amusing and interesting".¹⁰⁸

Although this kind of hijā' was both obscene and effective, Ibn al-Mu'tazz appeared to regard the citation of these lines as more in the nature of hazl. Another good example of such poetry is the lines by Di'bil b. 'Alī in reply to Abū Sa'd al-Makhzūmī's obscene hijā' on him, starting:

لَدَعْبَلِ نَعْمَةٌ كَمَنْتُ بِهَا كَيْسَتْ لَهُ مَا حَبِيتُ أُنْسَاهَا

Di'bil was angered by the lines and replied extemporaneously with another obscene poem:

يَا أَبَا سَعْدٍ قَوَّصَرُهُ زَانِيَةُ الْأُخْتِ وَالْمَرْءِ

To make his poem more effective Di'bil gathered together some boys, presented them with fruit, and told them to recite it loudly whenever they saw Abū Sa'd. The latter found it hard to stay in Baghdād and soon left for good.¹⁰⁹ Other poets famous for hijā' were Abū al-Khattāb al-Bahdalī and 'Alī b. al-Jahm. The latter was described as one who "puts his tongue where he likes" which may have meant either that writing hijā' was easy for him or that he wrote it on all classes of people, high and low alike. Mansūr al-Isfahānī was also regarded as an excellent hijā' poet.¹¹⁰

Besides hijā' of this nature, Ibn al-Mu'tazz also cited from the muhdathūn a certain amount of hijā' poetry that dealt with physical appearances, ugliness, dirtiness, etc., and some that depicted its victims in an amusing and a mocking fashion. This kind of poetry he also regarded as an aspect of hazl, and he quoted it as a change from serious poetry. Here too, we find obscene subjects, such as pederasty and adultery, discussed in plain terms. Hyperbole was also used in this sort of hijā' poetry in order to give the worst possible picture of the satirised one. Ibn al-

Mu'tazz's attitude to this kind of hijā' differed widely from that of early critics like Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', Khalaf al-Aḥmar and al-Akḥṭal, all of whom demanded decent and sincere hijā', as we have seen. Another kind of hijā' admired by earlier critics was that called iqdhā'. Ibn al-Mu'tazz was also interested in it, to judge from his quotations, such as the poem that starts:

داود مَحْمُودٌ وَأَنْتَ مُدَمِّمٌ عَجَبًا لَذاكَ ، وَأَنْتَ مِنْ عَوْدِ

and:

لَشَتَّانَ مَا بَيْنَ الْبَزِيدَيْنِ فِي النَّدى بَزِيدٌ سُلَيْمٌ وَالْأَغَرُّ ابْنُ حَاتِمٍ

Both of these poems were mentioned when we spoke about quotations from madīh.

In his quotations from hijā' poetry we find certain mahāsin, notably istitrād, which was much used. The first to use it was al-Samaw'al:

وَنَحْنُ أَنْاسٌ لَأَنزَى الْقَتْلِ سُبَّةً إِذَا صَارَتْهُ عَامِرٌ وَسَلُولُ
يُقَرَّبُ حُبُّ الْمَوْتِ آجَالَنَا لَنَا وَتَكْرَهُهُ آجَالُهُمْ فَتَنَلُولُ

Al-Farazdaq followed him:

لَأَنَّ فَجَاحَ الْأَسَدِ حَوْلَ ابْنِ مَسْعَى إِذَا اجْتَمَعُوا أَفْوَاهَ بَكْرِ بْنِ وَائِلٍ

The istitrād in the first example consists in the fact that while al-Samaw'al was writing fakhr on his people he changed course and satirised 'Amir and Salūl. In the second example, al-Farazdaq produced istitrād by beginning a description of fiḡāḥ al-usd and then switched to hijā' on Bakr b. Wā'il.

Jarīr, in one of his lines, produced multiple istitrād:

لَمَّا وَضَعْتُ عَلَى الْفَرَزْدَقِ مِيسِيًى وَفَنَعَا الْبَيْتُ جَرَعْتُ أَنْفَ الْأَخْطَلِ

He began with hijā' on al-Farazdaq, left him for al-Ba'ith and then left the latter for al-Akḥṭal.¹¹¹

A poem by Bashshār that contains istitrād, an excellent one according to Ibn Rashīq¹¹², was quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz, probably for this reason.

The first two lines of the poem contain the istitrāḍ:

خَلِيلِيَّ مِنْ كُفْبِ أَعْيُنَا أَخْلَاكَ عَلَى دَهْرِهِ، إِنَّ الْكَرِيمَ مُعِينٌ
وَلَا تَبْخَلَا بِحُلِيِّ ابْنِ قَرْعَةَ إِنَّهُ مَخَافَةٌ أَنْ يُرْجَى نَدَاهُ حَزِينٌ 113

'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jurjānī stated that the best kind of hiḡā' was that which was written in a jocular and mocking way and was a compromise between ta'ṛīd and tasrīḡ. The ma'ānī should be easily understood so that the poetry could be learnt by heart. He disapproved of obscenity, abuse and defamation in hiḡā'.¹¹⁴ Ibn Rashīq agreed with him concerning ta'ṛīd and tasrīḡ in hiḡā' and said that ta'ṛīd was admired because it left things unsaid and made the audience think.¹¹⁵ Both Qudāma and Ibn Rashīq agreed that the best hiḡā' could be achieved by disparaging men's moral attributes; Ibn Rashīq added that hiḡā' of men's physical defects, for instance ugliness, was less good. Qudāma made it clear that he totally disapproved of hiḡā' by means of physical description, or by means of satirising a man's parents or ancestors, if it happened that they were bad and he was good.¹¹⁶ In most respects, Ibn al-Mu'tazz's views on hiḡā' coincided with those of these later critics. For example, he appreciated hiḡā' by ta'ṛīd, as we can see from his comments on the following lines by Ibn 'Ā'isha al-Qurashī:

مَنْ يَكُنْ أَبْطَهُ لَأَبَاطِ ذَا النَّدِ قِي فَيَأْجُلَايَ ضِي عِدَادِ الْفَقَاحِ
لِي أَبْطَانِ يَرْمِيَانِ جَلِيسِي بِشَبِيهِ السَّلَاحِ أَوْ بِالسَّلَاحِ

The poet appears to be satirising himself, but actually his lines are ta'ṛīd against someone else. Ibn al-Mu'tazz praised the lines as excellent hiḡā'.¹¹⁷ The principal points on which he disagreed with them were those of obscenity and mockery of physical peculiarities, in both of which he seems to have taken a rather childish pleasure. The lines that he quoted from the hiḡā' poems of Hammād 'Ajrad on Bashshār are good examples of this kind of hiḡā':

وَيَا أَقْبَحَ مَنْ قَرِدَ إِذَا مَا عَمِيَ الْقَرْدُ

and:

لَو طَلَبْتُ جِلْدَتَهُ عَنَبَرًا لَنَتَّيْتُ جِلْدَتَهُ عَنَبَرًا
أَوْ طَلَبْتُ مِسْكًَا ذَكِيًّا إِذَا تَحَوَّلَ الْمِسْكُ عَلَيْهِ خَرًا

Although Hammād 'Ajrad wrote a quantity of hijā' on Bashshār, the latter regarded these lines as the most effective and harmful.¹¹⁸ Another example is provided by a poem of Muhammad b. al-Dawraqī, described by Ibn al-Mu'tazz as fāhisha. He quoted the following line:

يَقُولُ جَلِيسَاهُ إِذَا خَلَوْا بِهِ تَنَفَّسَ يَحْيَى وَيُحَى أُم تَغَوَّطَا 119

The same tendency is evident in his own hijā' poetry, for instance, in this line about a singer:

وَعِنْدَنَا مَنْ يَتَغَنَّى لَنَا لَأَنَّهُ مِنْ فَمِهِ يَخْرَا

and in the following lines:

قَدْ نَتَنَ الْجَلِيسُ مَذْجَتَنَا فَلَكَ مِنْ مَرٍّ بِهِ يَبْهَقُ
فَقَدْزِ إِبْلَيْكَ وَأَشْبِغْهَا فِي الصَّيْفِ بِالْمِرْتَكِ يَا أَتْحَقُ
وَلَا تَقُلْ مَا فِيهَا حِيلَةٌ فَالْحَشُّ قَدْ يَكْنَسُ أَوْ يُلْبَقُ 120

The interest of Ibn al-Mu'tazz in quoting and writing hijā' of this kind may be seen in relation to his notion of hazl and diversion. It may also support our earlier suggestion, that serious kinds of hijā' had lost their importance to some extent. The examples quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz all appear intended to present the satirised one in the most grotesque light, like in the following lines by Mansūr al-Isfahānī:

لَهُ وَجْهٌ خَنَزِيرٍ وَخَيْشَمٌ بَقْلَةٍ وَصُدْرَةٌ مَلَّاحٍ وَتَقْلِيْعٌ حَائِكِ
شَكَا قَسْوَهُ جِنَّةَ الْبِلَادِ وَأَنْسَهَا وَقَدْ خِفْتُ أَنْ يُوْذِيَ خِيَارَ الْمَلَائِكِ
فَلَوْ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِ الْجَحِيمِ لَوَلُّوْهَا إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ قَسْوِهِ الْمُنْتَدَارِكِ
وَقَالُوا: الْعَذَابُ الضَّعِيفُ أَهْوَنُ عِنْدَنَا وَكُلُّهُمْ مُسْتَنْخَرٌ نَحْوَ مَالِكِ

and:

وَجْهٌ الْمَغِيرَةِ كُلُّهُ أَتَقُ مَوْفٍ عَلَيْهِ لَأَنَّهُ سَقْفُ
رَجُلٌ كَوَجْهِ الْبَغْلِ طَلْعَتُهُ مَا يَنْتَقِي مِنْ قُبْحِهِ الْوَهْفُ
مَنْ حَبِثُ نَأْتِيهِ تَبْقَرُو مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَاكَ أَمَامَهُ خَلْفُ
جَفَّتِ الْمَلَاحِجُ عَنْ خِلَائِقِهِ وَلَقَدْ يَلِيقُ بِوَجْهِهِ الْقَذْفُ 121

The same is true of some of his own hijā', such as these lines on a singer called Bid'a:

حَدَّثُونَا عَنْ يَدْعَةٍ فَأَيْنَا فَتَفَنَّتْ فَظَنَّ فِي الْبَيْتِ بُوْقُ
وَإِذَا شَوْكَةٌ تَقَعُّ يَبْسًا فَوْقَهَا رَأْسُ خَارَةٍ مَحْلُوقُ

and the poem that starts:

* 122 يَا رَبِّ لَا تَقْبَلْ صَلَاةَ مَعَاشِرٍ *

Almost all the hijā' poetry quoted or written by him consists either of very short poems or of single lines. He agreed with most of the poets whom we have mentioned, in admiring brevity in hijā'. It would seem that the obscene and apparently savage abuse dispensed in hijā' poetry was not always resented, and indeed was sometimes actually relished, by the victims; some poets, in fact, asked others to satirise them. Abū al-Shamaqmaq paid an a'rābī to do so, and the latter extemporised an obscene poem starting:

مَرَرْتُ بِأَيَّرٍ بَغْلٍ مُسَبِّحٍ فَوَيْفَ الْبَاعِ لَالْحَبْلِ الْمَلُوقِ

Salm al-Khāsir asked Abū Muhammad al-Yazīdī to satirise him in a poem with the same rhyme as Imru' al-Qays' poem starting:

رُبَّ رَاٍ مِنْ بَنِي ثَعْلٍ مُخْرِجِ كَفَيْهِ مِنْ دُسْتَرِهِ

Al-Yazīdī extemporised an obscene poem in which he accused Salm of sodomy.

The poem opens:

123 رُبَّ مَفْمُومٍ بِعَافِيَةٍ نَحْمَلُ النِّعْمَاءَ مِنْ أَشْرِهِ

The connection of hijā', as it had developed, or degenerated, in the hands of the muhdathūn, with poetry of mujūn and hamāqa, both genres of fairly recent growth, is obvious; sometimes, indeed, it is difficult to distinguish between them.

Mujūn poetry

Ibn al-Mu'tazz seems to have been the first critic of importance to

recognise poetry of mujūn, and he quoted it extensively in his selections from the muhdathūn. Critics before him, al-Mubarrad, Ibn Qutayba and others, were more interested in the moral side of poetry, as represented by lines of hikma, mathal, wasiyya, zuhd, and mawā'iz. Poets like Imru' al-Qays and 'Adī b. Zayd were criticised, as we have seen, for "confessing to adultery" and "creeping to the prohibited wives of men". "Poets used to hide such deeds", critics said, "and not reveal them in their poetry". At the time of Ibn al-Mu'tazz there were still some critics who desired a moralistic tone in poetry, such as Muhammad b. al-Qāsim al-Anbārī, who wrote a letter to Ibn al-Mu'tazz objecting to the citation of mujūn poetry by Abū Nuwās. He said that this poetry should not be cited, recorded in books, or transmitted to the next generation. In his reply, Ibn al-Mu'tazz stated that poetry was not based on sincerity or decency, and if it was, then the best poets would be Umayya b. Abī al-Salt and 'Adī b. Zayd because in their poems there was more exhortation than in those of Imru' al-Qays and al-Nābigha. He added that from early times people had recited the poems of the great poets, Imru' al-Qays, al-A'shā, al-Farazdaq, 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, Bashshār and Abū Nuwās, in spite of their immorality; they also recited openly the hijā' poems of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq against one another, even recite in the mosques. Such poems and others similar to them were recited by pious 'ulama''; and indeed, there was no-one among the salaf who prohibited the recitation of obscene and shameful poetry.¹²⁴ This last claim may not have been entirely accurate, because, as we have seen in earlier chapters, the early critics like 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, Mu'āwiya and 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, besides the critics of the old school, all encouraged a moral tendency in poetry. We have also singled out some of the Prophet's ahādīth concerning good poetry. Ibn Sallām and Ibn Qutayba, although in general they followed these critics, were really the first to quote obscene lines by Imru' al-Qays, Suhaym 'Abd Banī al-Hashās and Dābī' b. al-Hārith al-Burjumī. Al-Mubarrad, as we have seen, advocated the use of

isti'āra, in order to avoid obscene words (lafz fāhish). The attitude of Ibn al-Mu'tazz to mujūn and obscenity in poetry seems to have influenced other critics like al-Sūlī,¹²⁵ Qudāma b. Ja'far and al-Qādī al-Jurjānī. Qudāma believed that a poet had the right to employ any ma'nā, regardless of its obscenity; what was required from him was simply that he should attain the highest point of poetic excellence. He therefore criticised those who rejected the following lines by Imru' al-Qays on the grounds that the ma'nā was obscene:

فَمَثَلُ جُبَلِي قَدْ طَرَقْتُ وَمَرَضِعِ
إِذَا مَا بَكِي مِنْ خَلْفِهَا انْصَرَفَتْ لَهُ
فَأَلْفَيْتُهَا عَنْ ذِي تِهَانِمِ مَحُولِ
بَشَقِيٍّ وَتَحْتِ شَيْئِهَا لَمْ يَكُؤَلِ

According to him, obscenity of ma'nā did not prevent poetry being excellent, because a poetic ma'nā was material for the poet just as wood was material for the carpenter. If a piece of wood was of bad quality, it did not necessarily follow that the carpenter was not a skilled one.¹²⁶ 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jurjānī stated that if a poet was not religious, this should not be regarded as a defect in his poetry or as an obstacle to his being excellent from a poetic point of view. If it was so regarded, then the name of Abū Nuwās, and especially the names of the Jāhilī poets should be stricken from the list of poets. Al-Jurjānī believed that this was not the case, because religion and poetry were quite separate from one another.¹²⁷

According to Abū Nuwās, the first poet who openly talked of mujūn was al-Khāriki. Previously poets had concealed such matters, but when Abū Nuwās became associated with al-Khāriki he proclaimed his mujūn, and so did those who followed their way.¹²⁸ The subjects discussed in mujūn poetry are detailed in a famous rajaz poem by al-Fadl b. 'Abd al-Samad al-Raqāshī of which this is the opening line:

أَوْصَى الرَقَاشِيُّ إِلَى فَلَانِهِ وَصِيَّةَ الْمَجْمُودِ إِلَى إِخْوَانِهِ

In this poem he advocated sodomy, wine drinking, gambling, cock-fighting and dog-fighting.¹²⁹ One of the famous poets of mujūn was Wālība b. al-Ḥubāb who also influenced Abū Nuwās, to the extent that "the foolish commons (al-ʿamma al-hamqā)", as Ibn al-Muʿtazz described them, attributed every mujūn poem, by Wālība or any other poet, to Abū Nuwās. Three poems by Wālība on the subject of mujūn were quoted, all of which talk about wine drinking and sodomy.¹³⁰ Other poets of mujūn such as al-Ḥusayn b. al-Daḥḥāk al-Khalīʿ, Jaḥshawīhi and Abū Niʿāma are quoted for their poems on sodomy.¹³¹

Mujūn poetry was clearly very popular, as one might expect, and Ibn al-Muʿtazz said that the extensive poetry by Abū Ḥakīma "elegising his penis (rithāʾ al-matāʿ)" was widely recited. Abū Ḥakīma claimed that he had no equal in this somewhat specialised genre, and poets used to bring him their poems on it for judgement. One such poet was Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir who composed a poem beginning:

أَيُّرِي عَلَىٰ مَعَ الزَّ مَا نِي فَهِنَّ أَذْمَ وَمَنْ أَلْوَمُ

Ibn al-Muʿtazz quoted some of Abū Ḥakīma's poems, including the famous one, in which he described his impotence:

132 أَيُّهَا الْأَيُّرُ تَنْبَهُ خَلَعَ الْحِشْفُ إِزَارَهُ

"Foolish" and poor poets

Ibn al-Muʿtazz quoted from the poets of these two groups also for the sake of amusement; their common characteristic was that their poems were full of mockery and fun. They made fun of themselves and of their families in order to amuse people and earn money. Some of them dressed and behaved foolishly, even though they were not really foolish. The main reason for their emergence appears to have been poverty, to judge from what Ibn al-Muʿtazz had to say about some of them.

The examples that we shall take are Abū al-ʿIbar and Abū al-ʿIjl as "foolish" poets and Abū al-Shamaqmaq and Abū Firʿawn al-Sāsī as poor poets. The "foolish" poets were also called poets of raṭāza and raqāʿa, meaning "stupidity", "folly", or "nonsense". Although Ibn al-Muʿtazz described their poetry as "useless", he quoted a great deal of it. Abū al-ʿIbar himself, who was the master of the "foolish" poets, described his own poetry as "cold" and "laughable". Ibn al-Muʿtazz described him as "one who was cultured and a man of letters, but when he realised that foolishness and fun were easily marketable he used them and gave up rationality. He then became a leader in raqāʿa".¹³³ "Other poets of foolishness, like Abū al-Sawwāq, Abū al-Ghūl, Abū al-Sayyāra and those of their tabaga made him their chief and adviser".¹³⁴ He was once asked: "Why is the Tigris wider than the Euphrates, and why is cotton whiter than kam'a (truffles)?" His answer was: "Because the sheep has no beak and because the tail of the peacock is four spans".

(لأن الشاة ليس لها منقار وذنبا الطاووس أربعة أشبار)

"With such ignorant utterances (jahālāt) he used to praise Caliphs and satirise kings", said Ibn al-Muʿtazz.¹³⁵ The following poem provides a good example of his poetic method and demonstrated his approach to amusing people:

أنا أنا أنت أنا أنا أبو القبرنة
أنا الفنى المحقوقوا أنا أخو المجنة
أنا أحرر شعري وقد بجى برذنة
فلو سمعت بشعري فى الدس والوترنة
لسقرقر سقرنفر وماتا رنة
لكنك تقهق حتى تمسك البطنة 136

In this poem the foolish poet was making publicity for his poetry. He exhibited his irrationality in the first line where he introduced himself as "I am I" and "^{you are I} I am you". In the second line he admitted that his

foolishness had made him rich. The rest of the poem is about his poetry and he calls on people to come and listen to it, so as to be amused. Ibn al-Mu'tazz's account of the other foolish poet, Abū al-'Ijl, tells us that poverty was the main reason for the appearance of these poets. He described him as "one of the most cultured of men of letters and of wise men and one of the best poets and the zurafā". He knows grammar and gharīb very well and he knows the ayyām and the akhbār of people. He has some knowledge of philosophy. Nevertheless he was always in financial difficulties. When he realised this, he assumed the guise of foolishness and in one year he gained a lot of money". Here again we find the kind of dualism that we have found in others. Abū al-'Ijl himself in one of his poems addressing the Caliph al-Mutawakkil, mentioned that poverty was the cause of his becoming a "foolish" poet. When al-Mutawakkil visited Damascus, Abū al-'Ijl met him, riding on a cane, wearing a khuff on one foot and a shoe on the other. A boy servant, wearing a loose outer garment with sleeves and a tall head-dress, was walking in front of him. When al-Mutawakkil saw this he smiled and called Abū al-'Ijl a madman. The latter recited the following:

شبهه شبه على العقل ماهو من شكلى
صاحبه مفلولس قليل ذى الحيللى
قد استرحت من ال لوام والعزلى
فما أبالى ما الذى قلت وما قيللى
وحقق قد صبر ذى العالم خولا للى
آمل أن يحملنى حقق على بغللى
من عند ذى السبى والمنعم المفضللى
أمير دين المؤمنين المتوكل لى

Al-Mutawakkil laughed, rewarded the poet very generously, and inscribed in his ring: "hamuqta fa-nabulta".¹³⁷

The best examples of poor poets are Abū al-Shamaqmaq and Abū Fir'awn al-Sāsī, both of whom wrote a good deal of poetry full of mockery of themselves

and their families. Some of the poets of both these classes, whose function was rather similar to that of the western jester, that is to provide amusement for the wealthy and leisured, were regarded as zurafā'. There are many poets in the Tabaqāt of Ibn al-Mu'tazz mentioned as being zurafā', such as Bashshār, Abān b. 'Abd al-Hamīd, Abū Dulāma, whose poetry was said to be full of jokes and nawādir, 'Awf b. Muhallim, and Abū Nuwās, about whom Ibn al-Mu'tazz wrote: "Although a great man of letters and knowledge, he was khalī'an mājinan wa-fatan shātiran. However, he was a sweet man and a zarīf People were charmed by his zarf and sweetness and by his many jokes He had good relations with viziers and noble men, with whom he used to sit on friendly terms. From them he learnt zarf and refinement, and he became a model for everyone, khāssa wa-'amma, and was very much admired ...".¹³⁸

It is difficult to give a definite meaning for zarīf because the word zarf itself is a rather vague word. In his book Akhbār al-zurraf wa-al-Mutamajjinin, Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Jawzī (d. 597) gave several definitions of zarf. According to him "zarf may lie in the beauty and grace of the face, in the shapeliness of the stature, in the eloquence of the tongue, in the sweetness of the manner of speaking (mantiq), in smelling sweet and in feeling disgust with dirtiness and disapproved deeds; it may also lie in nimbleness, in the power of the mind, and in elegance of joking; it may also lie in generosity and openhandedness, in forgiveness and in other fine qualities (khisāl latīfa). It is "as though zarīf were derived from zarf, meaning "a container", and the person who is zarīf were a container of every fine thing. Anyone who has only some of those qualities can also be called zarīf ...". He then quoted other views on zarf and zarīf. Al-Hasan al-Basrī said: "If a thief happened to be a zarīf he could escape punishment". That meant that he would defend himself with eloquent arguments, Ibn al-Jawzī explained. Ibn al-A'rābī and

al-Asma'ī defined zarf as: "excellence and eloquence of discourse". Al-Kisā'ī said: "a zarīf is one who is beautiful of face and tongue". Others said "zarf resides in dress", meaning the selection of beautiful and suitable dress. Others explained zarf as: "the enduring of difficulties". There are further definitions that we need not quote here.¹³⁹

In the following two poems by Abū al-Shamaqmaq we find him mockingly describing the miserable condition in which his family lived. The first is an eulogy of al-Mansūr and it starts:

عاد الشَّمَقَقُ فِي الْحَسَارَةِ وَصَبَا وَحَنَّ إِلَى زَرَارِهِ

In the madīh section he wrote:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلِكُ الَّذِي جَمَعَ الْجَلَالََةَ وَالْوَقَارَهُ
وَرِثَ الْمَكَارِمَ صَالِيًّا وَالْجُودَ مِنْهُ وَالْعِمَارَهُ
إِنِّي رَأَيْتُكَ فِي الْمَنَاءِ وَأَعَدَّتْكَ حَيْلُكَ الزَّيَارَهُ
فَعَدَوْتُ نَحْوَكَ قَاصِدًا وَعَلَيْكَ تَصْدِيقُ الْعِبَارَهُ
أَنْتَ أَتَانِي بِالْمَدَى وَالْجُودَ مِثْلَكَ لِي الْبَشَارَهُ
إِنَّ الْعِيَالَ تَرَكْتَهُمْ بِالْمَقْصَرِ خَيْرُهُمُ الْعُقَارَهُ
وَشَرَابُهُمْ بُولُ الْحِمَارِهِ رِيزَاجُهُ بُولُ الْحِمَارِهِ
ضَجُّوا قَفْلْتُ تَصَبَّرُوا فَالْبَحْثُ يُقَرَّنُ بِالصَّبَارِهِ
حَتَّى أَزُورَ الْهَاشِمِيَّ يَا أَخَا الْفَضَارَةِ وَالنَّصَارِهِ
وَلَقَدْ غَدَوْتُ وَلَيْسَ لِي إِلَّا مَدِيحُكَ مِنْ تَجَارِهِ

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The second poem contains the lines:

مَا جَمَعَ النَّاسُ لَدُنْيَاهُمْ أَنْفَعُ فِي الْبَيْتِ مِنَ الْخَبْرِ
وَالْخَبْرُ بِاللِّحْمِ إِذَا نِلْتَهُ فَأَنْتَ فِي أَمْنٍ مِنَ التَّرُّزِ
وَقَدْ دَنَا الْفِطْرُ وَصَبَّابُنَا لَيْسُوا بِذِي ثَمَرٍ وَلَا أَرْزِ
وَذَاكَ أَنَّ الدَّهْرَ عَادَاهُمْ عِدَاوَةُ الشَّاهِينَ لِلْعُزِّ
كَأَنْتَ لَهُمْ عَنَزَةٌ فَأَوْدَى بِهَا وَأَجْدَبُوا مِنْ لَبَنِ الْعَنَزِ
فَلَوْ رَأَوْا خُبْرًا عَلَى شَاهِقٍ لَأَسْرَعُوا لِلْخَبْرِ بِالْجَمْرِ
وَلَوْ طَاقُوا الْقَفْرَ مَا فَاتَهُمْ وَكَيْفَ لِلْجَائِعِ بِالْقَفْرِ

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Abū Fir'awn al-Sāsī, who was one of the mukaddīn, described his poverty in many poems full of mockery and jokes. In one he described himself and his family as follows:

إليك أشكو عيبةً وأهملهم
قد أكلوا اللحم ولم يشبعهم
لا يعرفون الخبز إلا باسمه
وما رأوا فاكهةً في سوقها
لا يشبعون وأبوهم ضلهم
وشربوا الماء فطال شربهم
والتمر حيثان فليس عندهم
وما رأوها وهي تنحو نحوهم

In another poem he mocked his house which contained nothing to be stolen but was always locked because the poet did not want people to see its miserable condition:

ليس إغلاقي لبابى أن لي
رأى أغلقه كي لا يرى
منزل أوطنه الفقر فلو
لا ترانى لازياً في وصفه
فيه ما أخشى عليه السرقة
سوء حالى من يجوب الطرق
دخل السارق فيه سرقة
لو تراه قلت لي: صدقاً

In a third poem he called himself the "father and mother of poverty". He mocked his children and compared them, with their black faces, to small ants. While he wandered the streets begging, they clung to various parts of his body:

وعيبة مثل فراخ الذر
جاء الشتاء وهم بشر
حتى إذا لاح عمود الفجر
وبعضهم ملتصق بصدري
استيقظهم إلى أصول الجذر
فارحم عيالي وتول أمرى
أنا أبو الفقر وأُمُّ الفقر
سود الوجوه كسواد القدر
بغير قميص وبغير أزر
وجاءني السبع غدوت أسرى
وبعضهم منجمر بحجري
هذا جميع قصتي وأمرى
كثبت نفسي كنية في شعري

Quotations from ghazal poetry

In his selections from the poetry of ghazal, Ibn al-Mu'tazz quoted only a

few poets, like Bashshār, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf and Rabiʿa al-Raqqī, whom he preferred to all other ghazal poets, quoting a large amount of his poetry. He said of him: "His ghazal poetry excels most of the poems of earlier poets. I have not found anyone who has more tabʿ and more correct ghazal than Rabiʿa".¹⁴³ On another occasion, he compared him with Abū Nuwās and considered him superior in ghazal. He wrote: "Rabiʿa was better than Abū Nuwās in the poetry of ghazal, because that of Abū Nuwās was full of coldness, while that of Rabiʿa was perfect, sweet and easy".¹⁴⁴ The qualities that he appreciated are more or less self-explanatory, apart from "correctness of ghazal", the precise sense of which we can perhaps determine from the quotations of Rabiʿa's poems. We find there the traditional physical descriptions of women, such as likening them to branches of the bān tree, to sandhills (kathīb and nagā), to the sun, and to deer. We also find descriptions of their mouths and their scents, which were likened to those of wine, ginger and cloves. All these descriptions had been used by poets from the earliest times, and although Ibn al-Muʿtazz clearly enjoyed them, since he quoted them frequently, it does not seem that they were his principal consideration in favouring the ghazal of Rabiʿa. What was more important was the quality of riqqa which he also found in the ghazal of ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya and al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf. By riqqa he meant the same as the other critics in whose pronouncements we have so often encountered the term before.

The critics who followed Ibn al-Muʿtazz also held similar views, as may be seen from the statements of Qudāma b. Jaʿfar and Ibn Rashīq. The former differentiated between ghazal and nasīb, defining ghazal as the actual loving of women, with the associated activities of pursuit and wooing. Nasīb, on the other hand, was the poetry that mentioned the manners of women, their love affairs with the poet, and his adventures with them.

This meant that nasīb was the expression of ghazal. In spite of this distinction, however, Qudāma's view of excellent nasīb was similar to that of Ibn al-Mu'tazz of excellent ghazal, even though the latter did not explain his view, and we can only infer it from his quotations. According to Qudāma, excellent nasīb is that which is full of evidence of great love and suffering on the part of the poet, clearly showing his longing. It should demonstrate submission, obedience and humility, and be free from hardness and dignity. There should be no limitation to the expression of the feelings of love or the demonstration of delicacy and weakness.¹⁴⁵ Ibn Rashīq followed Qudāma in differentiating between nasīb and ghazal. He regarded nasīb, taghazzul and tashbīb as one thing.¹⁴⁶ However, both were concerned with the nasīb or tashbīb with which a poet opened his poem, while Ibn al-Mu'tazz was talking about ghazal as a separate genre of poetry. This is why he quoted poems which deal only with ghazal, as well as quoting lines of nasīb as part of poems of madīh. Because he regarded ghazal as a separate genre, he linked 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ā, al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf and Rabi'ā al-Raqqī, who (with some exceptions in the case of the latter) had written poetry only in ghazal and no other genres. He is distinguished from most other critics before and after him by his interest in the poetry of ghazal as a separate poetic genre. Other critics mostly speak of nasīb and/or tashbīb.

In his selections from ghazal poetry, taken mainly from the poetry of Rabi'ā al-Raqqī, we find the traditional physical descriptions of women, as in the following lines:

يا رصاصاً يا رصاص الك رُخَّ يا ذات العُقاصِ
والشَّنايا الفَرَّ لالبر قِ تَلالاً في النِّشاصِ
ثُمَّ رِذْفٍ كَنَقارِهِ لِ وأَحْشاشٍ خِصاصِ

and:

لَقَدْ أُعْطِيتُ رِداً ثَقِيلاً وَقَدْ حُجِّلْتُ مالا تُحْمِلُنَا

إِذَا رُئِيَ الْقِيَامُ تَحَالَ دِعْمًا مِمَّا نَعْلِكُ الْقِيَامَ قَتَقْدِينَا
إِذَا هَلَلَتْ ثُمَّ سَجَدَتْ قُلْنَا أَلَا لَيْتَهَا سَجَدَتْ سِنِينَا
فَمَا الشَّمْسُ الْمَضِيَّةُ يَوْمَ دَجٍ بِأَحْسَنِ مَكَدٍ يَوْمَ نَبْذَلُنَا

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These descriptions recur frequently in al-Raqqī's poetry, and are to be found in the quotations from other poets. Al-Yazīdī wrote:

قَضِيْبُ الْبَانِ قَامَتُهُ وَيَخْطُو يَدْعِي نَقًا بَفَعُ بِهِ الْإِزَارُ

Isa b. Zaynab wrote:

يَهْتَرُ كَالْفَصْنِ فِي غُضَارَتِهِ زَيْنَهُ بِالرَّحِيقِ مَوْلَاهُ
أَسْفَلُهُ كَالْكَثِيبِ تَحْسِبُهُ وَكَالْقَضِيْبِ الرَّشِيقِ أَعْلَاهُ

Similar descriptions were given by Darast al-Mu'allim:

وَقَدِّ مَائِلٍ يَحْكِيهِ نُحْنُ عَلَى دَعِيٍّ مِنَ الرِّدْفِ الثَّقِيلِ

and Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Salām:

بَدْرٌ يَلُوحُ عَلَى نُحْنٍ يُجَاذِبُهُ رَدْفٌ يَمْهُورٌ إِذَا مَا اهْتَرَزَ رَيَانَا 148

Exaggeration was used in ghazal, as was the case in other types of poetry quoted by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. One of the poets he quoted was Muhammad b. al-Qāsim, who described the thinness of his beloved's waist as thinner than the breeze or a glance of the eye:

مَنْ جَلَّ حُسْنًا وَدَقَّ حَتَّى دَقَّ عَنِ الْحَزِّ وَالنَّسِيمِ 149

The beloved is incomparable, as al-Raqqī wrote:

خُلِقْتَ مِنْ مِسْكَةٍ وَالنَّاسُ خَلَقَهُمْ مِنْ لَازِبِ الْيَمِينِ مِنْ هَلَمَّالِهِ الْقِيمِ

and as Muhammad b. Yasir wrote:

عَلَى بَدْعٍ لَهَا بَرَى اللَّهُ خَلْقَهُ فَصَوَّرَهُ فَرْدًا بِغَيْرِ مَثِيلِ 150

The customary expression of rigga is to be found in lines quoted from various poets. Al-Qisāfī begged his beloved to forgive him and be kind:

أَنَا أَصْبَحْتُ بِأَمْنَى وَسَوْلى وَرَجَائِي لِحَسَنِ وَجْهِكَ عَبْدًا
فَأَجْرُنِي مِنَ الْقَلَى وَاعْفُ عَنِّي وَاسْقِنِي مِنْ رُضَابِ رَيْقِكَ شَهْدًا 151

Muhammad al-Yazīdī was prostrated by his love:

152 يَا قَهْرَ الْكَرِّخِ إِنَّ عَبْدَكَ غَرِيقُ شَوْقٍ صَرِيعِ اسْتِقَامِ

Ishāq b. Khalaf had humbled himself and begged for mercy or death:

153 وَنَقَرْتُ إِلَيْكُمْ بِخَضَعِ الْمُسْتَكِينِ
فَارْجُوا ضَرِّي وَإِلَّا فَارْجُوا وَقْتْلُونِي

Humility and acceptance of the injustice were expressed by al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf:

154 أَمْتِنِي فَهَلْ لَكَ أَنْ تَرُدِّي حَيَاتِي مِنْ مَقَالِكِ بِالْفُرُورِ
أُرَى حَبْلَكَ بَيْنِي كُلَّ يَوْمٍ وَجَوْرِكَ فِي الْهَوَى عِدْلًا فَجُورِي

The ghazal poetry of Rabiʿa al-Raqqī, most of which was quoted by Ibn al-Muʿtazz, is full of the rigga which the latter demanded:

155 أَنَا لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَاصِي لَجُنُونِي بِرَخَاصِي
ثُمَّ لِلنَّاسِ جَمِيعاً مِنْ أَدَانِي وَأَقَاصِي
وَلَقَدْ عَذَّبْتِي رَوْحِي فَحَتَّى مِنْكَ خَلَاصِي

Ibn al-Muʿtazz described the following lines of his as "the most natural poetry and the easiest speech":

156 صَاحٍ إِنِّي غَيْرُ صَاحِي أَبْدَأُ مِنْ حُبِّ دَاحٍ
صَارَ قَدْماً حُبِّ دَاحٍ فِي فَوَادِي الْمُسْتَبَاحِ
أَنَا وَاللَّو قَتِيلٌ لَكَ مِنْ غَيْرِ جَرَّاحٍ
لَبِئْسَ كُنْتُ حَمَاصاً لَكَ مَقْصُودِ الْجَنَاحِ

His submission, his servility and his longing are all expressed in these lines:

زَجَرْتُ الْقَلْبَ عِنْدَكَ فَلَمْ يُطْعِنِي وَيَأْبَى فِي الْهَوَى إِلَّا اعْتَرَامَا
إِذَا مَا قُلْتُ أَقْصِرْ اسْأَلُ عَنْهَا أَبَى مِنْ صَرْمَكُمُ إِلَّا أَنْهَرَامَا

and in these:

157 أَعْتَمَةُ الْخَلْقِ الْعَلَقَ الرَّهِينَا بَعِثْكَ وَارْحَمِ الصَّبَّ الْحَزِينَا
رَبِيعَةٌ مَقَرَّمٌ بِكَ مُسْتَهَامٌ بَحْنٌ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ شَوْقٍ حَنِينَا

Abū al-Hawl al-Himyārī described his suffering from love:

يَا مَهْنَىٰ هَذَاكَ جِسْمٍ صَحِيحٍ قَدْ بَرَانِي هَوَاكَ بَرَى الْخِلَالِ
لَوْ تَحَمَّلْتَ الْجِبَالَ عَشْرَ الذِّبْيِ مِنْ هَوَاكَ لَأَيَّقَنْتَ بِزَوَالِ

Abū al-Asad al-Tha‘labī spoke of the leanness of his body as a result of his intense love:

رُوحِي مُقِيمٌ بَيْنَ اثْنَابِي مُسْتَوْفِرٌ عَنْ جَسَدِي نَابِ
نُفِيتُ حَتَّى مَا بَقِيَ مَسْلَكٌ فِي جَسَدِي مَجْرَى الْأَوْصَابِ
لَمْ يَبْقَ إِلَّا حَرَكَاتُ الْهَوَى مِنْهُ وَعَيْنِي ذَاتُ تَسْكَابِ
مَنْ بَرِنِي - يَجْسِبُنِي لَمْ أَمُتْ - أَرَدَّهُ فِي شَيْءٍ مُرْتَابِ
أَيَّ رَسَقَامٍ وَهَوَى فَادِحٍ وَأَيَّ ضَرْبٍ حَلَّ اثْنَابِي
لَوْ لَمَسُونِي مَلَأَ أَيْدِيهِمْ لَمْ يَجِدُوا غَيْرَ اثْنَابِي

Isma‘īl b. al-Fattāk also described his leanness, with some exaggeration, and begged his beloved to listen to him and have mercy on him:

يَشْكِي فَهَلْ أَنْتَ لَهُ رَاحِمٌ رَايِكَ أُمُّ أَنْتَ بِهِ عَالِمٌ
مَنْ يُعَرِّ الثُّوبُ عَنْ جِسْمِهِ فَكَيْسَ الْأَشْبَعِ قَائِمٌ 158

The poet Ibn Shāda exaggerated rather more when he likened himself to a line (khatt) in thinness:

يَا أَقْدَرَ النَّاسِ عَلَى عِلَّتِي مَا لِي أَنْتِ النَّاسُ بِهَا قَلْتُ
قَدْ صِرْتُ زَهْقًا فَوْقَ فَرْشِ الْهَوَى كَأَنْتِ مِنْ دِقَّتِي خَطُّ 159

In two other lines, very much admired by Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, Ibn Shāda went too far, in describing himself as thinner than a wire:

هَذَا نَدَا يَسْقُطُنِي لِلْبَلَى عَنْ فُرْشَتِي أَنْفَاسُ عَوَادِي
لَوْ حَسَدَ السِّلْكُ عَلَى دِقَّتِي خَلَقًا لِلْأَمْسَى بَعْضَ حُسَايِ 160

All of this displayed various aspects of the riqqa that was considered indispensable for good ghazal. The spirit of ‘udhrī ghazal, which Ibn al-Mu‘tazz appears to have considered acceptable, is to be found in some of al-Raqqī's lines, such as:

وَلَوْ لَا فِتْنَتِي بِكَ - فَاعْلَمِيهَا -
 إِذَا صَلَّيْتُ رِبْعَةً ثُمَّ صَامًا
 أَقَامَ الْحُبُّ حُبَّكَ فِي فُؤَادِي
 وَحَبِي فِي فُؤَادِكَ قَدْ أَقَامَا
 سِلَانَا وَأَمَقَ كَلْفٍ مُعْنَى
 بِصَاحِبِهِ وَمَا يَبْغَى حَرَامَا

and:

فَزُرْتُهَا وَاقْعًا طَرَفِي عَلَى قَدَمِ
 وَقَدْ تَلَبَّسْتُ جِلْبَابِي مِنْ ظِلْمِ
 فَكَانَ مَا كَانَ لَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِهِ أَحَدٌ
 وَمَا جَرَحْتُ وَمَا عُلِّلْتُ بِالْحَرَمِ 161

Ibn al-Mu'tazz perhaps considered the linking of love and religion (regarding love as a kind of religion for the poet) that was part of the 'udhrī tradition as an indication of the extent of the poet's love and thus as an expression of riqqa. This is clearly illustrated by al-Qisāfi who claimed that his beloved was his dīn and dunyā:

لِلنَّاسِ دِينَ وَدُنْيَا يُشْغَلُونَ بِهَا
 وَمَا لِنَفْسِي شُغْلٌ غَيْرَ ذِكْرِيكَ 162

A similar sentiment was expressed by Abū Hilāl al-Ahdab, who wrote, linking his beloved with religion:

فَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا بِي بِالْحَصَى فَلَقَ الْحَصَى
 وَبِالرَّيْحِ لَمْ يَسْمَعْ لَهْنَهُ هَبُوبُ
 وَلَوْ أَنَّي اسْتَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ كَلَّمَا
 ذَكَرْتُكَ لَمْ تُكَلِّبْ عَلَيَّ ذُنُوبُ 163

Both poets claimed that they continuously mentioned their beloved women as proof of their great love and suffering.

Another much admired expression of riqqa was the poet's declaration that he would be content with very little from his beloved. This was regarded as a sign of great sincerity in love. Ibn al-Mu'tazz was among those who liked this conceit. He quoted a number of lines in which poets expressed it. Al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf, in one of his lines, begged his beloved for a "false promise":

مَا ضَرَّ مَنْ قَطَعَ الرَّجَاءَ بِخُلَّةٍ
 لَوْ كَانَ عَلَّلَنِي بِوَعْدٍ كَاذِبٍ 164

Abū Hilāl al-Ahdab claimed that he would be content with a promise from his beloved if there is no possibility of union:

165 لكنني أقنع يا سبدي دون وصالٍ أنْ تَمْنِيَنِي

Ibn al-Mu'tazz quoted the following lines by Abū al-'Atāhiya as an example of excellent ghazal:

بَسَلَتْ كَفّاً نَحْوَكُم سَائِلًا ما ذا تَرَدُّونَ على السَّائِلِ
إِنْ لَمْ تُنْبِلُوهُ فَقُولُوا لَهُ قَوْلًا جَمِيلًا بدل النَّائِلِ
أَوْ كُنْتُمْ الْعَامَّ على عُسْفٍ وبلى فَهَنُوهُ إلى قَابِلِ

"This poetry", he said, "because it is so delicate, has an effect on the hearts of women like the effect of sweet cold water on a thirsty man".¹⁶⁶

He described the ghazal of Abū al-'Atāhiya as "very soft, similar to the discourse of women and in accord with their natures, as is the poetry of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a and al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf". He quoted a further poem by Abū al-'Atāhiya, as having the same admirable characteristics:

أَعْلَمْتُ عُنْبَةَ أَنْيَ منها على شَرَفٍ مُلِيلُ
وَشَكَّوْنُ مَا أَلْقَى إِلَيَّ ها والمدايحُ تَسْتَهْلُ
حَتَّى إِذَا بَرَمَتْ بِهَا أَشْكُو كما يشكو الأَذْلُ
قَالَتْ: فَأَيُّ النَّاسِ يَلُمُّ ما تقولُ فَقُلْتُ كُلُّ

"It is said that men of letters agreed that they had never heard a rhyme more suitable in its place than that of Abū al-'Atāhiya (in his last line):

fa-qultu kullu".¹⁶⁷ Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī made a similar comment on this line and said that the word kull fitted nowhere in poetry except in that line of Abū al-'Atāhiya. He quoted a line by Ibn Tabātabā, in which the poet used kull and said that the word was "uneasy" in its place and that it was artificially used:

168 فيا لاهي دعني أعالى بقيمتي فقيمة كلِّ الناس ما يحسنونه

Ibn al-Mu'tazz did not agree with the strictures of earlier critics on 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, that he had written nasīb on himself, rather than on

his beloved. He was prepared to accept this somewhat cynical approach on the part of 'Umar, perhaps because it was also evident in the poetry of Rabi'a al-Raqqi, whom he so much admired. Similarity between 'Umar and al-Raqqi is not confined to this manifestation of arrogance however. We find further similarity in descriptions of the adventures of the poet when he goes at night to meet his beloved, and of his adventures with women at the time of pilgrimage. Ibn al-Mu'tazz was aware of the tendency of al-Raqqi to imitate 'Umar b. Abi Rabi'a, and he quoted the following lines as an example:

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 أَلَا حَبِذَا لَيْلِي وَأَتَرَابُهَا الْأَلَى وَعَدَنَكَ مِنْ لَيْلِي وَمِنْهُمْ مَوْعِدَا
 فَأَقْبَلْتُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثَلَاثًا وَأَرْبَعًا وَتَشْتَبِيَنِي يَمَشِينِ الْهُوَيْنَا تَأْوِدَا
 يَهَانُ مَرْوُطُ الْخَرِّ يَلْحَقُهَا الْحِمَا وَيَسْتَحِبُّنِ بِالْأَعْطَافِ رَيْطًا مُقَمِّدَا
 فَلَمَّا التَقِينَا قُلْتُ أَهْلًا وَمَرْحَبًا تَبَوَّأْنَا بِالْأَبْلَحِ السَّهْلِ مَقْعَدَا

Similarity between 'Umar and al-Raqqi can again be seen in the following lines by the latter, in which he told of his adventure with a woman whom he met during the pilgrimage. The poem contains dialogue similar to that used by 'Umar in his poetry. In it al-Raqqi describes himself as the "allurement of all nations" and the "Satan of his own nation":

لَا قِيَّتْ مَرَّةً عِنْدَ اسْتِغْلَامِ الرُّكْنِ غَانِيَةً غُرَاءَ وَاصِحَةِ الْحَذِينَ كَالصَّنَمِ
 مَرْتَجَةً الرَّدْفِ مَهْمُومٍ شَوَاكِلَهَا تَمْشِي الْهُوَيْنَا كَمْشَى الشَّارِبِ الثَّلَمِ
 تَقُولُ قِيْنَاتُهَا وَالرَّدْفُ يَقْعِدُهَا مَنْ خَلَفَهَا: قَدْ أُتِيَتْ الرُّكْنَ فَاسْتَلَمِ
 فَاسْتَلَمْتُهُ ثُمَّ قَامَتْ سَاعَةً قَدَعَتْ فَكَمْتُ أَدْعُو وَلَوْلَا تِلْكَ لَمْ أَقُمْ
 حَتَّى إِذَا انْصَرَفْتُ سَلَمْتُ فَالْتَقَتْ فَقُلْتُ: إِنْ لَكَ مِنْ هَمٍّ وَمِنْ سَدَمِ
 قَالَتْ: وَمَنْ أَنْتَ؟ قُلْتُ التَّابِعَاتُ لَهَا هَذَا رَبِيعَةٌ هَذَا فِئْتَةُ الْأُمَمِ
 هَذَا الْمُقْنَى الَّذِي كَانَتْ مَنَاسِبُهُ نَأْتِيكَ فَاسْتَتِرِي بِالْبُرْدِ وَالْقَتَمِ
 شَيْطَانُ أُمَّتِي لِأَقَاكِ مَحْرَمَةٌ فَبِإِلَالِهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاعْتَصِمِ
 قَالَتْ: أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّي مِنْكَ وَاسْتَشِرِّي بِغَادَةِ رَحْمَةِ الْأَطْرَافِ كَالْعَتَمِ
 قُلْتُ: الزَّمَامُ وَعَهْدُ اللَّهِ خُنْتُ بِهِ لَا عَهْدَ لِلْغَادِرِ الْخَنَارِ لِلذَّمَمِ
 أَلَمْ تَقُولِي نَهْمٌ؟ قَالَتْ بَلَى وَهَمًّا مَنِّي وَهْلٌ يُؤْخَذُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالْقَهَمِ

تُبْنَا وَصَمْنَا وَصَلَيْنَا لِمَا لَقْنَا وَلَمْ تَنْبُ أَنْتَ مِنْ ذَنْبٍ وَلَمْ تَنْهَمْ
فَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي عَلَى بَذْلِ لَهَا مَقَاتِي وَبَخْلَهَا وَقَرَعْتُ السِّنَّ بِالنَّدَمِ
فَأُبْعَدَ اللَّهُ إِنْسَانًا وَأَشْحَقَهُ آدَامٌ وَوَدَّ لِإِنْسَانٍ وَلَمْ يُدِمِ 170

In the same poem he told of another adventure with a woman. As the women of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a did, she sent a message to him by her maid. She revealed her intense love for him and asked him to visit her. He spoke of his visit to her at night in the same terms in which 'Umar did in many poems. Again, as in many of 'Umar's poems, the woman was the lover who pursued the poet:

دَسَّتْ سَعَادُ رَسُولًا غَيْرَ مَتَّهِمْ وَصِيفَةٌ فَاتَتْ إِيَّانَ مُنْكِتِهِمْ
جَاءَ الرَّسُولُ بِقِرْطَاسٍ بِخَاتَمِهِ وَفِي الصَّحِيفَةِ سَحَرٌ خُطٌّ بِالْقَلَمِ
فِيهِ فِتْنَةٌ هَوَى ظَلَّتْ تُفَتِّبُهُ عَلَى الْجَهْلِ وَمَا يَخْفَى عَلَى الْفَهْمِ
وَقَدْ فَهِمْتُ الَّذِي أَخَذْتُ فَقُلْتُ لَهَا بُوحَى بِلَا وَنَعَمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْكَلَمِ
قَالَتْ: تَعَالِ إِذَا مَا شِئْتَ مُسْتَتِرًا وَالْحَكْمُ حُكْمُكَ يَا رَقِيٍّ فَاحْتَكِمِ
أَقْدِمُ رَبِيعَةً فِي رَجَبٍ وَفِي سَعَةِ فِي غَيْرِ قَهْرَاءَ وَالظُّلُمَاءُ فَاعْتَنِمِ
فَزَرَّتْهَا وَاقِعًا طَرَفِي عَلَى قَدَمِي وَقَدْ تَلَبَّسْتُ جِلْبَابِي مِنْ ظُلْمِ
فَكَانَ مَا كَانَ لَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِهِ أَحَدٌ وَمَا جَرَحْتُ وَمَا عُلِّلْتُ بِالْحَرَمِ

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'Umar's beloved often complained that he was disloyal to her and left her for another; we find the same idea in the ghazal of al-Raqqi. 'Umar wrote in one of his poems:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ رَأْسَهَا مِرَارًا وَقَالَتْ إِذَا رَأَيْتَنِي: اخْتَرْتَ ذَلِكَ أَنْتَا
حِينَ أَثَرْتَ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ غَيْرِي وَتَنَاسَيْتَ وَصَلْنَا وَمَلَلْنَا
قُلْتَ لِي قَوْلَ مَا زَحَّ تَسْتَبِينِي بِلِسَانٍ مَقُولٍ إِذَا حَلَفْنَا:
عَا شَرِي فَأَخْبِرِي فَمَنْ سَوْ جَدِّي وَشَقَائِي عَوَّشَرْتَ ثُمَّ خَبَرْتَا
فَوَجَدْنَاكَ إِذْ خَبَرْنَا، مَلُولًا طَرَفًا، لَمْ تَكُنْ كَمَا كُنْتَ قُلْتَا
قُلْتَ مَهْلًا، عَفْوًا جَمِيلًا! فَقَالَتْ: لَا وَعِيشِي، وَلَوْ رَأَيْتُكَ مُنَا

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Al-Raqqi wrote:

قَالَتْ فَوَادِكُ بَيْنَ الْبَيْتِ مُنْتَسِمٌ مَا حَاجَتِي فِي فَوَادِكُ مِنْكَ مُنْتَسِمٌ
أَنْتَ الْمَلُولُ الَّذِي اسْتَبَدْتُ بِى بَدَلًا قَفَّسْتُ بِى وَشَرَيْتَ اللُّؤْمَ بِاللَّحْمِ
قَدْ كُنْتُ أَقْسَمْتُ أَنَّى هَوَاكَ فَمَا بَرَى يَمِينِ قَدْ أَغْلَطْتُ فِي الْقَسَمِ
173 اسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ قَدْ رَفَى الْفَوَادِ وَمَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ يَا رَقِيقٌ مِنْ رَحِمِ

Al-Raqqī did not write a great deal of poetry in this vein, but the same idea is apparent in these lines:

قُلْتُ شِعْرًا يُنْزِلُ الرَّاعِ صَمٌّ مِنْ رَأْسِي الصِّيَامِ
وَالْفَوَانِي مُعْجَوِيَاتٌ مَوْلَعَاتٌ بِأَقْتِنَامِ
174 قَدْ تَوَاصَيْتَنِي بِحَبِي حَيْذَا ذَاكَ التَّوَاصِي

Ibn al-Mu'tazz was perhaps somewhat confused concerning the criteria by which he judged ghazal poetry, because, while he clearly admired the riqqa to be found in the ghazal of 'Umar, Abū al-'Atāhiya, al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf and al-Raqqī, at the same time he accepted the less submissive line sometimes taken by 'Umar and al-Raqqī. In addition to this, he contradicted himself in ^{both} taking riqqa as a standard for judging ghazal and also accepting what other critics rejected, namely what they called al-mujārāh fī al-mahabba. In this the poet treated his beloved in accordance with her treatment of him. If she was kind to him he would be kind to her. This meant that the poet put himself on equal terms with his beloved, and, instead of displaying riqqa displayed dignity and hardness, as al-Ahwas did:

فَإِنْ تَصِلِي أَصْلَكَ وَإِنْ تَبِينِي بِهِجْرَ بَعْدَ وَصْلِكَ لَا أُبَالِي

This approach had a long tradition. We have mentioned that Labīd expressed the same view in ghazal when he wrote:

فَاَقْطَعُ لُبَانَةً مِنْ تَعْرِفَنِي وَصْلَهُ وَلَشَّرُ وَاصِلٍ خَلَقَ صَرَامَهَا
as did al-Nābigha al-Taghlibī:
بَخِلْنَا لِبُخْلِكَ لَوْ تَعْلَمِينَ وَكَيْفَ يَغِيبُ بِخِيلٍ بِخِيلًا

Even Jamīl Buthayna sometimes abandoned his riqqa:

وَلَسْتُ وَإِنْ عَزَّنَ عَلَيَّ بِقَائِلٍ لَهَا بَعْدَ صَرْمٍ يَا بَثْنِي صِلِينِي

However, critics, especially Qudāma, rejected al-mujārāh fī al-mahabba and demanded riqqa; some indeed, as we have seen, even complained about poets' wishing for bad fortune for their hard-hearted mistresses.

Ibn al-Mu'tazz actually quoted lines by al-Raqqī and others in which they threatened their beloveds. Al-Raqqī threatened her that if she killed him (through unrequited love) his tribe would take revenge:

يَا غَنِّمْ رُدِّي فَوَادَ الْهَائِمِ الْكَمَدِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُطْلَبِي بِالْعَقْلِ وَالْقَوَدِ
تَبْهَتْنِي بِدَلَالٍ مِنْكَ يَقْتُلُنِي وَقَدْ رَمَيْتِ فَمَا أَخْطَأَتْ عَنْ كِبَرِي
إِنْ تَقْتُلِينِي كَذَا ظَلَمًا بِلا تِرَةٍ فَلَسْتُ فَائِزَةً قَوْمِي بِنِي أَسِيرِ

and again:

فَاتَّقِي الرَّجْمَ فِينَا وَاحْذَرِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامِ
مَشْهُدًا يُؤْخَذُ بِالْأُ قَدَامَ فِيهِ وَالنَّوَاصِي 175

Abū Hilāl al-Ahdab was quoted as saying:

يَا سَادَتِي طَبِيعُكُمْ قَاتِلِي ظَلَمًا وَمَا قَتَلْتِ بِالْذَّبِّ 176

Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ahnaf was hardly submissive:

فَإِنْ يَقْتُلُونِي لَا يَفُوتُوا رَهْمَتِي مَصَالِيَتَ قَوْمِي مِنْ حَنِيفَةٍ أَوْ عَجَلِ 177

Bashshār was mildly censorious, but warned others:

حَبِّيًا صَاحِبِيَّةً أُمَّ الْعَلَاءِ وَاحْذَرَا طَرَفَ عَيْنِهَا الْحَوَارِ
عَذَّبْنِي عَذَابًا اللَّهُ بِهَا تَشْتَهِي مِنَ الْأَهْوَاءِ 178

Al-Qisāfī was minded to kill his beloved:

وَلَقَدْ هَمَمْتُ بِقَتْلِهَا مِنْ حُبِّهَا كَيْمَا تَكُونَ خَصِيمَتِي فِي الْحَشْرِ 179

When we come to Ibn al-Mu'tazz's own poems of ghazal, we find that, as Karam al-Bustānī observed in his introduction to the Diwān, he was strongly influenced by ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa in poetry describing night visits to his

beloved.¹⁸⁰

In the poem that starts:

رَعَيْنَ كَمَا شِئْتَ الرَّبِيعَ سَوَارِجاً كُلَّجَ الْبَحْرِ بَقْلاً وَأَعْشَاباً

he described his visit to her as follows:

وَلَيْلَةَ حُبٍّ قَدْ أَطَعْتُ غَوِيَهَا وَزُرْتُ عَلَى حَدٍّ مِنَ السَّيْفِ أَحْبَاباً
فَجِئْتُ عَلَى خَوْفٍ وَرُقْبَةٍ غَائِرٍ أَكَاذِرُ حُرْساً غَضَاباً وَحُجَاباً
إِلَى ظُهْيَةٍ بَانَتْ تَرَى فِي مَنَامِهَا خِيَالِي ، فَأَدْنَانِي ، وَمَا لَانَ كَذَاباً

In another poem he wrote:

وَرَسُولٌ يَقُولُ مَا تَعْبُرُ الْأَلْفَا طُ عَنْهُ ، حَلَوُ الْحَدِيثِ أَدِيبُ
وَلَنَا مَوْعِدٌ ، إِذَا هَذَا النُّورُ أَمُّ لَيْلًا ، وَاللَّيْلُ مِنَّا قَرِيبُ

in a third one:

وَبَيْضَاءُ تُعْطَى الْعَيْنَ حُسْنًا وَنَفْسَةً تَشَفَّلَتْ بِهَا عَقَرُ الشَّجَابِ وَأَقْنِيَتْ
تَسْمُونَ لَهَا وَاللَّيْلُ قَدْ لَاحَ نَجْمُهُ فَلَاقِبْتُ بَدْرًا فِي الدُّجَى ، حَيْثُ لَاقِبْتُ

and in a fourth:

لَهَا أَتْنِي رُسُلُهُ بِالرِّضَا أَنَسَيْتُ مَا مَرَّ عَلَى رَأْسِي
وَلَمْ أَزَلْ وَاللَّيْلُ يَسْتَرْمِلُنَا مِنْ دُونِ رُقَابٍ وَحُرَاسِي
أَشْكُو إِلَى تَحْمَرَةِ عَيْنِيهِ مَا قَاسَيْتُهُ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ الْقَاسِي
فِي لَيْلَةٍ مَا مِثْلَهَا لَيْلَةٌ لَسْتُ لَهَا مَا عِشْتُ بِالنَّاسِي 181

He described women in the same conventional terms that are found in the ghazal of al-Raqqī and other poets whom he quoted. He compared his beloved with a branch of the Pan tree and with a sandhill:

قُلْ لِعُصْنِ الْبَانِ الذِي يَتَشَنَّى تَحْتَ بَدْرِ الدُّجَى وَفَوْقَ النِّقَا

and:

يَا قَضِيْبًا نَاعِمًا فِي نَقَا أَحْسَنَ رِيحًا ، فَاثْنِي ، وَاسْتَوِي 182

He observed the convention of "being content with little" from his beloved, and that of showing complete submission to her:

قُدْمَنَ عَلَى مَنَعِي وَدُمْتُ مَطَالِبًا وَلَا تَشَى إِلَّا مَوْعِدُ وَرَجَاءُ

and:

عَلَّيْنِي بِمَوْعِدٍ وَأَمْلِي مَا حَبِيتُ بِهِ فَعَسَى بَعَثَ الزَّمَانُ بِيخْتِي فَيَنْتَبِه 183

and:

يَبْتِيهِ عِنْدِي وَأَنَا أَخْفَعُ لَمْ لَانَ ذَا بَخْتِي فَمَا أَهْمَنُ

and:

وَتَجَنَّتْ بِي لَتَقْدُرَنِي أَنَا أَهْوَاهَا عَلَى غَدْرِ

and:

أَيَا مَنْ يُجَارِيَنَّ غَدْرَهُ وَيَبْتَئُ لِلْهَمِّ خُوي جِيوشَا
هَجَرَتْ، فَهَتَّ أَيَا سِبْدِي أَتَأْذَنُ بِالْوَصْلِ لِي أَنْ أُعِيشَا 184

In most of his ghazal poetry he took this recommended approach, eschewing al-majārah fī al-mahabba, which was supposed to indicate a less than total commitment to the beloved. Nevertheless, although he normally followed the correct path and proclaimed his submission, on one occasion, at any rate, he permitted himself a flicker of revolt, by almost threatening his beloved:

أَرَأَيْتَ يَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ هَذَا أَخُوكُمْ قَتِيلٌ، فَهَلْ مِنْكُمْ لَهُ الْبَيْعَ شَأْرٌ؟ 185

Further similarity between him, 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a and al-Raqī is to be found in the following poem, in which he used dialogue, and represented the woman as the lover and himself as the beloved:

أَفْدَى الَّتِي قُلْتُ لَهَا وَالْبَيْنُ مِنَّا قَدْ دَنَا :
بِالْحَزَنِ بَعْدِي فَأَتَيْسِي قَالَتْ: إِذَا قَلَّ الْعَنَا
قُلْتُ لَهَا: حُبُّكَ قَدْ أَزْ حَلَّ مِنِّي الْبَدَا
قَالَتْ: فَمَا جِئْتَنِي؟ كَذَاكَ دُبْتُ أَنَا 186

Conclusion

The most striking feature of the criticism to which Arabic poetry was subjected from all quarters throughout the period under discussion is, of course, its concentration on single lines, or short passages, at the expense of complete poems, or even sections of poems, to say nothing of the whole dīwān of a poet. It is true that some people, e.g. al-Jāhiz, made more generous gestures than others in the direction of a more comprehensive appreciation of poets' works, but in most cases this is little more than lip-service to the concept of qirān, which, like so many terms employed by the critics and practitioners of poetry at this time, had a somewhat imprecise significance. Not infrequently, too, complete poems appear to have been cited for a purpose other than strictly critical: either in order to assemble a dīwān, often a tribal or a regional one, or in order to present poems that were unfamiliar and not easily available elsewhere. This may itself suggest one reason for the tendency of critics to cite single lines, or short extracts. Clearly, the very nature of Arabic poetry, with its largely end-stopped and independent lines would facilitate this practice, given that the line was the unit of interest, but also, in an age when quotation was preponderantly from memory - owing to the difficulty of looking up and citing references when the pagination of different copies of the same work was inconsistent -, if a poem was at all familiar, there would be little need to cite more than one or two lines in order to bring to the mind of the reader or listener associated lines from the same passage, if not the whole poem. It is not impossible, then, that in some cases the citation of a single line, or two or three, particularly when this is unspecifically commendatory or deprecatory, may be a short-hand method of referring to a rather longer passage, and that the praise or dispraise may not be confined to the one or two lines actually cited. While this does not necessarily help us to understand for

what qualities the passage is being praised or dispraised, it does somewhat diminish the bafflement that we sometimes experience when confronted with fulsome, but undefined, praise for one line. The fact remains, however, that on a large number of occasions criticism is directed only at the more limited target, and it is clear that no wider context is involved.

The habit of making apparently extravagant judgements on the ability of a poet on the basis of one line is also prevalent. We are frequently told of someone's declaring a particular poet, often a rather unlikely candidate, to be the best poet of all, on account of a particular line of his, and sometimes, by implication, on account of a particular image or figure - even a particular usage - within that line. It is perhaps significant that such judgements are always given at second hand, that is to say that they are always reported, never made by the author of a work. It seems probable that they were not, in most cases, intended to be taken too seriously; they were perhaps of the same kind as the hyperbole in madīh-poetry, and the underlying conventions were perfectly well understood. Sometimes they may represent a momentary enthusiasm, a temporary concentration on the work of one poet to the exclusion of all others; sometimes they may be the expression of politeness towards a poet who is present or, in the case of a dead or absent poet, whose tribe or supporters the speaker wishes to please. In the majority of instances, however, I suspect that they are simply a particularly lavish way of saying: "I like this line (or poem)." This would go some way towards explaining apparent contradictions or changes of mind concerning these absolute judgements as to who was the best poet.

Much of the criticism that we have encountered in the course of this study has been explicitly concerned with superficialities; very little has touched on the deeper aspects of poetry. The critics' instincts seem to

have been sound, allowing for certain prejudices and differences in personal taste that are inevitable, but they lacked the means to rationalise these instincts. They were thus compelled, in expressing the judgements to which these instincts led them, to fall back on a whole range of comparatively unimportant-seeming details, discussion of which served as a substitute for a more penetrating examination of the poetry. This attitude was no doubt encouraged by the fairly general view of poetry as a craft, in which the technical details were of great importance. The nature and purpose of the product tended to be taken for granted, or perhaps disregarded. There is, generally, in Arabic literature, a tendency for writers to be preoccupied with lists and classifications, often of the most trivial things; sometimes this has a hagiographical purpose, such as with the lists of the first people in Islam to do such and such; sometimes it has an antiquarian or archival purpose; sometimes it has perhaps a lexicographical purpose, but more probably simply that of being somewhat indelicate, such as with al-Jāhiz' catalogue of the names for the excrement of various animals and birds. Connected with this preoccupation are, I think, the increasingly complicated and detailed lists of figures of speech, types of ma'ānī, and so on, that appear in works on poetry and balāgha. One also has the impression that this excessive concern with the superficial details of poetry, which distracted the critics from examining and explaining what the poets were attempting to do, fed back to some extent to the poets themselves and produced in them too a similar excessive concern. Nowhere do we really find a statement, even in fragmentary form, of the rationale and aesthetics of poetry. There is some development in this direction, with al-Jāhiz, for example, but it is scarcely followed up. It is remarkable how similar the critics and the poets are to one another in the way in which they talk about poetry, even if they differ somewhat in what they say. They also, in the manner that is so familiar to us in

many areas of Arabic literature, follow one another to a very considerable extent, freely borrowing each other's opinions and even each other's citations, without always feeling obliged to acknowledge these borrowings.

When we try to see behind this facade of details, the terms of which at least have the merit of being not too difficult to grasp - allowing for changes of usage, and, particularly in the earlier period, uncertainty as to whether they are being used in a technical sense or not - we find ourselves faced with a considerable degree of vagueness. Terms like jazāla, suhūla, līn, and even fasāha, no doubt conveyed more or less precise meanings to those who used them, but it is difficult to tell from the contexts in which they are used just what those meanings were. Critics have an irritating habit of attributing a quality absolutely to a line or passage, without indicating the elements that bestow on it that quality, and without (which would be equally, or even more, helpful) giving examples of the opposite quality. To some extent, no doubt - since we must always bear in mind that poetry was intended to be recited rather than read - effects of sound are involved, such as a preponderance of liquids, gutturals or dentals, and probably subtle dissonances and assonances, such as we have found occasional references to, and it would perhaps be possible, if laborious, to analyse a sufficient number of lines and passages that are credited with particular qualities, in order to arrive at an idea of what they connoted in this respect. This would be made more difficult by inevitable variations in taste between individual critics. It seems likely, however, that these qualities also refer to the use of words from the point of view of 'register', that is to say, the appropriateness or otherwise of certain lexical items to the context in which they are used. There are a number of instances of poets' being criticised for using one word rather than another in a particular place or context, and such examples, if sufficient could be found, might again suggest to us what the criteria for these qualities were. There are, however, two obvious

difficulties: first, it is quite likely that in any given instance the critic is merely displaying an idiosyncratic preference and that others would not necessarily agree with his judgement (although it is possible that here one is underestimating the force of tradition and conformity in linguistic matters among the Arabs of the period); secondly, where the use of a word or phrase is simply criticised, without a preference for an alternative being expressed, we are not sufficiently aware of the options open to the poet to appreciate the basis on which he made his choice or that on which his choice was criticised. In any case, disregarding the further difficulty of differentiating on grounds of 'register' between different words for a particular period, it is likely that the qualities referred to were perceived almost instinctively, as the result of the combination of a number of factors, which the critics themselves would have been hard put to it to analyse. We shall probably never be in a position fully to define these qualities, except in the broadest terms, along the lines indicated.

Another striking feature of classical Arabic criticism is its prescriptive nature, particularly as regards the ma'ānī. Critics are extraordinarily dogmatic on the correctness or otherwise of certain ma'ānī. There is a certain inconsistency in this, in that a number of critics consider that the lafz is of paramount importance, and that the embellishment of another poet's ma'nā by a novel means of expression is the principal indication of poetic talent. Some, like Ibn al-Mu'tazz, say that poetry is not concerned with honesty or decency, thus implying that 'correctness' of ma'nā is unimportant. Others, on the other hand, declare that they prefer a 'correct' ma'nā indifferently expressed to an 'incorrect' ma'nā expressed in the most brilliant fashion. Prescriptiveness with regard to ma'ānī is evident in some critics in all genres of poetry, but nowhere is there such a consensus on the point as in nasīb and ghazal. The riqqa

that has so frequently appeared in this study as being regarded as desirable in these genres appears to be most inflexible, and poets are most frequently criticised for introducing 'incorrect' or 'inappropriate' ma'ānī into their poetry in this genre. No doubt, as has been suggested, traditional etiquette has something to do with this, but I suspect that a more important factor is the conventional response, either verbal or mental, to a given situation that has always played such an important role in Arab society. Failure to observe these conventions amounts to a breach of good taste, and this is what provokes the outraged reaction that we so frequently observe. In fact, the indignation showered on such breaches of taste appears often to indicate a literal-mindedness on the part of the critic, since it is fairly clear that, for instance, threats that vengeance will be taken for the poet killed by love, or a cavalier dismissal of the unkind beloved, are essentially light-hearted conceits introduced to vary the abject servility and solemn protestations of the conventional love-poem. It would seem, however, that critics did not, in general, appreciate the intrusion of humour into a basically serious genre. Humour was not objectional in itself, but its place was in hiġā', to some extent, and in the types of poetry specifically designated as hazl. It was sometimes considered praiseworthy to be able to compose poetry in both a serious and a jocular vein (jidd wa-hazl), but the two apparently had to be kept separate. It is perhaps surprising that Imru' al-Qays continued to command almost universal approbation, seeing that much of his poetry, including his Mu'allaga, incorporates substantial elements of cynical humour, particularly in the amatory passages. In this, however, as in so much else, Imru' al-Qays was perhaps a law to himself; alternatively, the critics may not have appreciated that he was so often composing in a playful mood, for they contented themselves with deploring his immorality. We find the same literal-mindedness in connection with the figures of tatmīm and ihṭirās, although it is not clear whether this is to be attributed to the poets

themselves or to those who identified and classified the figures. Wishing that rain may fall on a place, provided that it does no harm, may also be an indication of an ironic sense of humour.

Another sphere in which prescriptiveness in the matter of ma'ānī is particularly evident, although this appears comparatively late in the development of the genre, is madīh. The critics lay down firm rules as to the kinds of eulogy that may be appropriately lavished on mamduhūn of different ranks, and they criticise deviations from these rules. Even Ibn al-Mu'tazz, who is not greatly concerned, on the whole, with the 'correctness' or otherwise of ma'ānī, joins in here. In this genre, although it may be possible to see such prescriptiveness as an attempt by self-appointed arbiters to regulate the canons of poetry, the situation is probably more complex. It is obvious from remarks by various mamduhūn that they themselves took a keen interest in the eulogies that were composed on them and were swift to complain about any inadequacies of the level and manner of flattery. Al-M'amūn's complaint about the use of the word mushtaghil to describe him (mashghul seems to be acceptable) indicates a fairly subtle awareness of the use of false 'register'. A number of these comments depict the mamduhūn as demanding the use of certain ma'ānī in madīh composed on them. The Abbasid caliphs' requiring to be praised for their religious and secular merits, for example, presumably indicates their appreciation of the value of such madīh as political propaganda. Ibn al-Mu'tazz was concerned to publicise the legitimacy of the Abbasid claim to the caliphate; this, once would imagine, lay behind his inconsistent interest in 'correct' ma'ānī in this genre. It is only to be expected that, while demanding the most fulsome, but not ridiculously extravagant, acknowledgement of their own merits, the caliphs should attempt to restrict the level of flattery lavished on their subordinates, in an understandable desire to prevent a debasement of the currency, and

that these subordinates should, in their turn, do the same. Thus it may be that the canons laid down by the critics merely reflect the actual situation that they found, which had been regulated either by the mamduhūn themselves or by the poets in intelligent anticipation of requirements.

The position of madīh as by far the most important genre of poetry - no poet could seriously be considered such if he did not engage in it, or even if he lived so remote from a centre of power that his madīh-poems could not command wide circulation - presumably reflects both the economic status of the poet and the use of poetry just mentioned as the principal medium of political, and other, propaganda. Madīh first emerges as a dominant theme when, with the loosening of the bonds of purely tribal society, the poet ceases to be maintained by his tribe as their propagandist, and ceases also to be able to wander freely in the desert, accepting the hospitality of other tribes, in return, perhaps, for the diversion of his poetry, and becomes dependent on patrons for his livelihood. That the 'correct' ma'ānī for madīh should have quickly become established and should have remained more or less constant, with refinements on the lines indicated above, is not particularly surprising; there are, after all, a limited number of virtues for which a man can be praised, and the continuity maintained by linking these with the ancient Arab virtues was of obvious advantage to caliphs and governors who were anxious to emphasise the antiquity and legitimacy of their dynasties. It is more surprising that the conventional introduction to the madīh, the atlāl, nasīb and rahīl, and their variants, should also have persisted. We are still far from understanding the objects of the poets of the tribal qasīda: why precisely they should have confined themselves to the immensely stylised representation of certain narrowly circumscribed aspects of Bedouin life, couched in terms that might almost be called

cliches at the third or fourth repetition, let alone the hundredth. Many of the themes of early poetry are straightforward: battle poetry, fakhr, personal or tribal, regrets for one's lost youth, rithā' - all these have a perfectly clear object. What may be called the gasīda proper, however, which is a combination of a number of different themes, atlāl, nasīb, rahīl, wasf, hunting scenes, the watching of a far-off storm, appears to have no particular object in itself, even though one can see that the individual sections fall into certain recognisable and poetically effective genres. The Mu'allaga of Imru' al-Qays is the classic example of this kind of gasīda, but there are many more. It is possible to suggest that the earliest such poems were exercises in nostalgia and that the sequence of motifs represented a loose train of thought within this basic theme but why so few variations were attempted on this remains a mystery. Just as much of a mystery is why certain elements, and these principally those that traditionally served as an introduction to the tribal ode, should have been so conscientiously retained when the main object of the poem became the eulogy of the patron. Ibn Qutayba's celebrated rationalisation, which appears to refer to this later development, will scarcely serve; it is surely a further example of the literal-mindedness with which critics accepted poetic themes at their face-value. It is difficult not to feel that the persistence of such motifs reflects the excessive veneration that the Arabs have always shown for something once successfully done - a kind of instant manufacturing of an invariable tradition, coupled perhaps with the desire to demonstrate the continuity with their past of a present that was rapidly altering out of all recognition. This, however, scarcely explains why these particular motifs should have been singled out for perpetuation, and indeed it amounts rather to a statement of the nature of the phenomenon than of the reason for it.

It is noticeable that many of the lines cited by the critics and anthologists - the distinction is often a small, if not negligible, one - are of

a gnomic or aphoristic nature; indeed they are frequently referred to as anṭhāl, although the generic term hikma is perhaps more appropriate. Encapsulation of a point in a line of poetry has always been popular, particularly with those whose appreciation of poetry is limited. Structuralism has been described as the literary criticism of those who hate literature; the aphorism, epigram or gnome might perhaps be characterised as the verse of those who distrust, or are embarrassed by, poetry. Some early works of criticism rely so heavily for their citations on such lines that they almost give the impression of having been designed more as dictionaries of quotations than analyses of poetry. They may be taken as representing popular educated taste, and, no doubt, as being sources for further quotation for the would-be adīb. The apt quotation has again always been a feature of Arabic rhetoric, and the ability to produce one was indispensable for those aspiring to consideration in learned circles.

That a moralistic or admonitory tone in poetry was approved of in early Islam by men such as ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is also hardly surprising. This amounted to hikma in a religious setting. Although such sentiments continued to be appreciated, however, critical opinion was by no means unanimous on the merits of religious themes in poetry. The Islamic poetry of Ḥassān b. Thābit was generally approved of, and Abū ʿUbayda, principally for pious reasons, it would seem, gave him the highest rank among Islamic poets. (He also, however, elsewhere classed Kuthayyir as the best poet of Islam, so such a ranking is hardly definitive). Al-Asmaʿī, on the other hand, enunciated a theory of khayr and sharr, maintaining that sharr, by which he seems to have meant worldly matters, was the proper concern of poetry, and that khayr, meaning such topics as the hereafter and the rewards and punishments associated therewith, made for poor poetry. He specifically said that the Islamic poetry of Ḥassān b. Thābit, whose Jāhilī poetry he admired, became layyin, perhaps meaning that the robust qualities of poetry

concerned with pagan life could not be transferred to poetry concerned with matters of vital, but less immediate and palpable, importance. Perhaps Abū Nuwās' mocking, and blasphemous, use of religious themes is a reflection of this view. The considerable popularity enjoyed by the ascetic poetry (zuhdiyyāt) of poets like Abū al-ʿAtāhiya should not necessarily be taken as contradicting this kind of feeling, which was shared by many critics; this poetry, while incorporating a good deal of moralising and exhortation, is far more concerned with the transitory nature of man and this world than with the life to come, and is, in a sense, an off-shoot of the nostalgic poetry of the atlāl. The "ubi sunt?" theme has a perennial appeal. The only kind of specifically religious poetry of the earlier period to command almost universal acclaim was that of the Khawārij. This is much concerned with the next life and rewards and punishments, but it was probably admired more for its other characteristics. It has a great deal in common with Jāhilī poetry in the motifs that it employs, particularly with regard to battle-scenes, which are comparable with those of ʿAntara and similar poets, but also with regard to wasf. It is also a kind of tribal poetry, except that the focus of loyalty has shifted from the tribe proper to the sect (one might almost say the umma), and we find in it the fakhr and esprit de corps that we associate with this. We also find a motif of longing, in this case longing for martyrdom in battle, or at least longing to join with the rest of the Khawārij in fighting the infidel caliphs; a good deal of it is also concerned with rithā for fallen relatives or comrades. Its language, however, is much simpler than that of the Jāhilī poems, although there are frequent reminiscences of this; and, on the whole, it is stark and unadorned. I suspect that this poetry, if any did, exemplified for critics the quality of jazāla; certainly very many of them, and probably many of the educated public at large, appreciated it, even those who, as far as we know, utterly rejected the politics, and the uncompromising religious fervour, of the Khawārij. It is an interesting example of

poetry that was appreciated for its own sake, regardless of the ideas that inspired it. The poetry written in praise of the Talibids also attracted a similar admiration from those who were their political and religious adversaries.

The whole controversy concerning the respective merits of the muhdathūn and their predecessors is a complex and somewhat confused one. No poet or critic appears to have been exclusively on one side or the other; those who were most firmly entrenched in their championship of the ancients did, occasionally, admit that there was something to be said for some of the muhdathūn, and those who favoured the latter nevertheless constantly harked back to ancient poetry in their judgements, comparing, for example, Bāshshār with Imru' al-Qays and Abū Nuwās with al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī. This reference to the ancients as standards by which to judge any poetry was more or less involuntary; even those who proclaimed their independence in the matter were bound to do so, given the overwhelmingly important part that the ancient poetry had played in literature, and indeed life in general, up to this period. The dispute seems to have arisen largely as a result of the muhdathūn's irritation with the carping of the philologists concerning their usages and grammar, even if not all of them were uncompromisingly hostile to the new style of poetry. The question of badī' is also bound up with this controversy and is, if anything, more difficult to resolve, not so much from the point of view of which poets were considered to use badī' extravagantly, as from the rather more fundamental point of view of what badī' actually was and how it arose. As so often in questions concerning Arabic poetry, we find ourselves in the tiresome situation of not really knowing what it is that we are investigating. Badī' is always explained as a system of tropes and figures of speech that became progressively more elaborate and more painstakingly codified, and clearly this tangible system played a large part in it; there is also, however, a more abstract element present, which receives

little or no attention, largely because neither its practitioners nor its critics were altogether aware of its presence, and thus concentrated on the symptoms to the neglect of the condition itself. S.P. Stetkevych has recently suggested that badi' was in some way connected with Mu'tazilism, and this suggestion has some plausibility. It seems almost indisputable that underlying the verbal and figurative manifestations there was an attitude of mind, and approach to the art, or craft, of poetry that distinguished its adherents, to a greater or less degree, from their predecessors, and from their contemporaries who did not subscribe to it. The actual system of tropes and figures would scarcely have been sufficient by itself to provoke such a furore; when badi' is discussed by the critics, one always has the feeling that one is in some way missing the point, and this is almost certainly because the critics were subconsciously aware that something lay behind it. This 'something' may well be an attitude of mind associated with Mu'tazilism, but this connection may be too restrictive; it is just as likely that it was an attitude induced by the general expansion of mental horizons that was the result of contact with the conquered peoples of the Arab empire. It is outside the scope of this study to pursue this question very far, but it would be surprising if the foreign stimuli that had such a profound effect on other aspects of Arab intellectual activity had not also to some extent affected poetry, especially since a large number of poets were of foreign birth or parentage. The kind of effect that these stimuli are likely to have had is the instilling of a more sophisticated attitude to literature, which, with the exposure of the Arabs to a considerable expanse of the Near and Middle East, and with the recruitment to the ranks of the literary those with experience of other literatures, was no longer confined to the narrow, if admirable, range of the Qur'ān, the Hadīth and early Arabic poetry; at the same time they would almost certainly have instilled an increased awareness of the possibilities of the manipulation of

language. Non-native speakers, or those who had some knowledge of another language, might well have been more conscious than the Arabs themselves, proud as they were of their linguistic heritage, of the way in which Arabic, as a formally patterned language, lent itself to play on words and roots. They would have availed themselves of such opportunities to compensate for this lack of acquaintance with the full resources of the vocabulary that their predecessors had used to embellish their poetry, a vocabulary that was, in any case, becoming unfamiliar to many native Arabs themselves. Of course, the poetry of the ancients was not devoid of these rhetorical devices; Ibn al-Mu^tazz pointed out that badī' was to be found in it, and the remarks of a number of early poets and critics indicate some awareness of various figures. It is unlikely, however, that they employed them as anything except occasional felicities; it is the consciousness with which the muhdathūn manipulate them that distinguishes their style. They themselves were inclined to credit Bashshār with the initiation of badī'; this may or may not be justified, but it must have been at about that time that the conscious, or even self-conscious, exploitation of Arabic began. It is not difficult to see why this should have provoked such an outcry. In the first place, many would have regarded the practice of badī' as a prostitution of the language, not to say the art, of the revered earlier poets; the muhdathūn would have been accused of not taking these things seriously. In the second place, the attitude behind this irresponsibility, associated as it was with Greek falsafa, Persian zandaqa, and who knows what other foreign and infidel undesirabilities, would have alienated orthodox Muslims. The muhdathūn, for their part, would have had little patience with the obscurantism and anti-intellectualism of these, particularly when they purported to be judging their work from a literary standpoint. It is obvious that, in some cases, it was at the actual figures of badī', or rather at the excessive use of these, that criticism was levelled, as in the case of

Abū Tamīm, who clearly sometimes forces his poetry into the framework of badi' to the detriment of his imagery and indeed his intelligibility. Abū Nuwās, on the other hand, is frequently referred to as being a great exponent of badi', but in fact his poetry appears to be reasonably free from the devices that we normally associate with the term. In his case, it seems probable that it was his attitude, questioning, mocking and joking, in which foreign influences can be plainly seen, that earned him this reputation.

The question of plagiarism occurs frequently. In view of the very large number of lines, half-lines and phrases that are common to the poetry of various poets, particularly in earlier times, one might expect many accusations of direct verbal plagiarism, and it is true that, for instance, Tarafa was accused of plagiarising a line from Imru' al-Qays' Mu'allaga for his own. This, however, would have been such a shameless and obvious theft, that it is scarcely conceivable, whatever the anecdotal literature may say, that it could have been anything but a quotation, intended as a compliment to Imru' al-Qays rather than as an act of larceny against him. Strangely enough, however, critics are generally, it would seem, far more concerned with the borrowing of ma'ānī than with that of lines, and it is often difficult to see why the use of a ma'nā, which sometimes does not appear to be very close to the supposed original, should occasion this kind of accusation. It must, in any case, have been almost impossible to produce an entirely original ma'nā on any, let alone every, occasion, and it is quite clear that poets did not, on the whole, even attempt to do so. The critical attitude appears to have been that a ma'nā might be borrowed only for purposes of improvement; failure to achieve this was construed as straight plagiarism. However, there are so many ma'ānī, as well as lines and phrases, that are common to a number of poets, that it is hard to resist the suspicion that most critics were simply striking out at

random against poets whom they happened, for some other reason, to dislike or to disapprove of, and that they were perfectly prepared to disregard similar, or more blatant, borrowings when it suited them. The accusations of plagiarism, which do not in fact appear to have been taken very seriously, do at all events emphasise the importance accorded to the ma'nā as opposed to the lafz.

In early times, hijā' occupied a position second only to that of madīh in the repertoire of the seriously considered poet, and critics discussed it at some length. It was generally agreed that it should be both sincere and decent in order to be counted as a creditable part of a major poet's production, and there was a further consensus on the superiority of hijā' bi-al-tafdīl, as being the most effective and satisfactory variety.

Humour, as in hijā' mugdhi', was not considered out of place, but the mocking of physical ugliness or disability was regarded as tasteless.

Hijā', in fact, was clearly an important weapon in the armoury of the tribal poet, and was taken very seriously as a poetic genre. It probably reached its peak, in notoriety, if not in quality, with Jarīr and al-Farazdaq; after this period it appears to have degenerated, both in nature and in status, to the extent that Ibn al-Mu'tazz classes it with hazl.

The reasons for this are not made clear, but it is not difficult to see why it should have happened. In the first place, there seems to have been a distinct tendency in many of the early Abbasid poets to indulge in obscenity and scurrility for its own sake; this appears in the rise of the new genres of mujūn and khalā'a and inevitably had its effect on the hijā' of the period. At the same time, the increased authority and dignity of the caliphate, and the greater remoteness of the caliphs and their officials from the people, must have meant that hijā' could no longer with relative impunity be composed on men with any pretensions to high office; it declined into abuse of unimportant personal enemies, and indeed

sometimes simply became a type of self-mockery that the indigent used to divert wealthy patrons, after the fashion of European jesters.

One of the most prized characteristics in a poet, from the earliest times, was tab^c; this implies both naturalness of language and imagery and what we now somewhat uninformatively style "talent". Tab^c is almost as unspecific a term as "talent", and its connotations can best be grasped from its opposite, takalluf. Again, it would be helpful if the critics gave firmly contrasting instances of poems in which these two characteristics were apparent, and indicated precisely how they were to be discerned; as so often, we are hindered by our lack of knowledge of the options open to the poet in the process of composition, and our inability to see what he might have achieved had he possessed the opposite characteristic to that with which he is credited. Takalluf, at any rate, it would seem, generally involved considerable reworking of the original draft of a poem, but it is also implied that it was the loss of spontaneity involved in this process that was the object of disapproval. There is some inconsistency in the fact that, while deploring takalluf, many critics considered one of the signs of excellence in poetry to be an evenness of style that could only be achieved by means of takalluf. Al-Asma^c_ī was almost alone in preferring a variable quality of style; in this he was faithful to his professed admiration for tab^c.

These, it seems to me, are the principal points that emerge from this examination of the remarks made, in various circumstances, by the poets and critics of the classical period of Arabic concerning the subject with which they were more or less intimately involved. There is not a great deal of individuality to be found in these remarks; there are differences of opinion and of emphasis between different writers, and some of them have to consider phenomena that have not had to be considered before, but,

in the main, there is a large degree of dependence on those who have gone before, particularly in the way that the subject is approached. Arabic criticism is, in many respects, as conventional as the poetry with which it deals. In spite of this homogeneity of tone, however, and in spite of the fact that the critics were tolerably vocal on the subject, it is disappointingly difficult to derive any very great benefit from what they said. The problem is that we have really so little understanding of their terms of reference, and they scarcely ever felt called upon to explain these. Every so often one feels that a true insight may in fact be attainable, but the prospect always recedes again. It may be possible to extract more solid data from a really detailed examination of lines quoted as instances of particular virtues or faults, but I suspect that much of what we are eventually able to say about the classical criteria for good and bad poetry will always remain speculative.

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