

The Qur'an and *Adab*  
The Shaping of Literary Traditions  
in Classical Islam

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2. *Mu'allaqā* (dated 16th/17th century CE) by the pre- and early Islamic poet Labid b. Rabi'a (d. c. 40/660). MS AP 6 (fol. 62v), Library of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut.

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The Qur'an and the Aesthetics of  
*Adab: Hikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim*  
*al-Baghdādī* by Abū'l-Muṭahhar  
 al-Azdī (fl. Fifth/Eleventh Century)\*

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SARAH R. BIN TYEER

THIS CHAPTER seeks to show the influence of the Qur'an on the aesthetics of *adab*, namely in *Hikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*,<sup>1</sup> which was written by Muḥammad Abū'l-Muṭahhar al-Azdī (fl. fifth/eleventh century).<sup>2</sup> By the 'aesthetics of *adab*', I mean an approach that 'has to give an account of literary aesthetic features making it clear in what sense . . . they can be said to be properties of literary works'.<sup>3</sup> I therefore seek to emphasise the unique and defining properties of *adab* in terms of its style, content and structure. This calls for attention to be given to the diction and artistic language of Azdī's *Hikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*, its engagement with the semiosis of the Qur'an (i.e. the process by which meaning is created in the Qur'an) and the narrative structure of the *hikāya*. When discussing narrative structure here, it is useful to cite Tzvetan Todorov, who defines the 'grammar of narrative' as one which progresses from equilibrium to disequilibrium, and back to equilibrium.<sup>4</sup> The grammar of narrative is virtually universal, but the dynamics of what causes or constitutes disequilibrium, and how or even why equilibrium is achieved, is not particularly universal.

\* The arguments made in this chapter first appeared in a more extensive form throughout Sarah R. bin Tyeer's work, *The Qur'an and the Aesthetics of Premodern Arabic Prose* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Permission to reuse the arguments was kindly granted by Palgrave Macmillan.

*Adab*'s distinct concern with the moral, with which Qur'an-inspired ethics are concerned, helps us understand the intricacies of narrative resolution and why such resolution 'feels right', the plot devices and the literary techniques. In this respect, *adab*'s concern with the moral is translated in the literary work's own sense of balance (*mīzān*) and equilibrium (*i'tidāl*). In the system of *adab*, the aesthetic, moral and linguistic mechanisms contribute to the sense of order and equilibrium, and hence meaning. Depending on the context, Stefan Sperl maintains that *i'tidāl* (equilibrium) 'may be rendered as harmony, symmetry or balance. Generally speaking, it may be said that *i'tidāl* is the manifestation in the physical sphere of 'adl, or "justice", in the abstract, spiritual sphere.'<sup>5</sup> In this respect, what constitutes narrative resolution is the work's own sense of finding a *mīzān*, the restoration of *i'tidāl*; in some cases, this is also aptly termed poetic justice.

In this chapter, I will use 'Qur'anic methodology', or to borrow Oleg Grabar's words 'the hermeneutics of the Qur'an for the Arts',<sup>6</sup> to establish *qubḥ* (ugliness) as a conceptual literary, moral and aesthetic category informed by the Qur'an. This methodology will be used to help us understand how disequilibrium in the narrative structure of *Ḥikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī* manifests itself as ugliness in the various guises of folly, profanity or sheer debauchery. This undertaking should not be understood as a moralistic reading of the tale or of literature in general using Qur'anic parameters. Rather, it should be viewed as an effort to consider what Roy Mottahedeh points to as the 'moral vocabulary' present in pre-modern literary works that 'explains its own mechanics . . . and offers us a useful language for literary criticism . . . [Such a vocabulary] is used to describe the dynamics of character and suggest a dynamic between reader and text.'<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the universal themes of disorder, chaos or *qubḥ* found in *Ḥikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī* have been and are still often read in terms of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque – that is, as acts aimed at subversion of the recognised powers that be (with respect to tradition, authority, the state, religion, etc.).<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this is because there is an erroneous perception that there is a lack of a useful vocabulary for literary criticism within the Arabic literary system and/or an attempt

to comparatively read and group world literature thematically. Despite noble intentions, this, more often than not, produces universal and unanimous conclusions that often divorce the literature under discussion from the literary, linguistic, semiotic and cultural systems to which it belongs. In this chapter, I draw comparisons between the Bakhtinian carnival methodology and the Qur'anic methodology that I develop here to show why a Bakhtinian reading of this *ḥikāya* (and perhaps other similar literary works that are beyond the scope of this chapter) not only does a disservice to the work and diminishes our literary appreciation of it, but also propagates literary clichés and stereotypes. My aim, therefore, is first to establish *qubḥ* as a conceptual literary, moral and aesthetic category informed by the Qur'an. I will then draw comparisons between my reading of *Ḥikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī* based on Qur'anic methodology and Bakhtinian readings in order to argue that the Qur'an offers tools and vocabulary useful for literary criticism.

### **The Art of Nonsense: *Ḥikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī***

According to Charles Pellat, 'the noun *ḥikāya*, starting from the meaning of "imitation", has come to mean . . . "tale, narrative, story, legend", and is additionally used 'to indicate a textual copy as well as an account of the facts'.<sup>9</sup> The *ḥikāya* discussed here orbits around the protagonist, Abū'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī, who invites himself into a house and starts reciting the Qur'an at a gathering to secure his welcome in the manner of a party-crasher (*ṭufaylī*).<sup>10</sup> Those assembled in the house urge him to loosen up and enjoy the drinking and sexual relations, which is what he had secretly hoped and come for in the first place. What follows is a one-man show of debauchery which manifests itself on two levels – the level of action, evident in Abū'l-Qāsim's drinking and persistent and indiscriminate sexual advances towards women as well as men, and the verbal level, expressed in his relentless verbal abuse of the people around him. The *ḥikāya* continues with Abū'l-Qāsim's binge drinking, until he eventually passes out and wakes up invoking God and reciting the Qur'an at the crack of dawn.

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The *ḥikāya* is enclosed between two events of Qur'an recitation and invocation – one at the beginning and the other at the end; the events and language used in-between these two instances are marked with vulgarity and obscenity. The *ḥikāya* thus situates its definition of disequilibrium (or lack of *i'tidāl*) between two manifestations of what it represents as equilibrium (*i'tidāl*). What then is the function of the Qur'an in a work that is categorised as belonging to the literary genre of nonsense, vulgarity, obscenity and/or folly (*sukhf*)? What is *sukhf*? How does the Qur'an define and evaluate nonsense, and where does it belong in the Qur'anic matrix of the conceptual meaning of *ḥusn* (beauty) and *qubḥ* (ugliness)?

### **The Qur'an's Portrayal of *qubḥ*: A Moral and Aesthetic Concept**

The Qur'an mentions a derivative of the root 'ugly' (*q-b-h*) once in Q. 28:42, *We made Our rejection pursue them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the maqbūhīn*.<sup>11</sup> It is made in reference to Pharaoh, his cohorts and an entire class of individuals who will be punished in the hereafter. In some English translations of the Qur'an, the Arabic passive form *maqbūh* (uglyfied) is translated as 'despised' or 'rejected', and in some translations 'hideous'.<sup>12</sup> If the Qur'anic premise is the situating of the *maqbūhīn* in the geographical space of hell, it then becomes a logical necessity to construct an analysis of *qubḥ* (ugliness) around hell, which, as the Qur'an maintains, is a site of rejection and exclusion.<sup>13</sup> Hell, then, becomes not only associated with ugliness (*qubḥ*), as the verse affirms, but it is also understandably perceived as the antithesis of heaven, the latter being the prototype of beauty (*ḥusn*). Extrapolating further, the punishment in hell, hellfire, is the tangible essence of the abstract *qubḥ*; the Qur'an describes the inhabitants of hell as *maqbūhīn*, thereby classifying them as 'rejected' and also imposing on them the state of *qubḥ* by virtue of their place (being outside of God's mercy), their immorality (their excesses and transgressions) and the punishment they will suffer in the next world (hellfire).

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In the Qur'an, therefore, *qubḥ* is both a moral and an aesthetic concept. The aesthetic dimension of *qubḥ* is not explicit within Q. 28:42, but can be inferred from the place of reference, hell. In the verse, some aspect of hell (hellfire) appears to produce punitive aesthetic consequences (disfigurement) because of some moral failure. Such aesthetic consequences of punishment are extensively demonstrated throughout the Qur'an, such as in Q. 18:29, *If they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like molten metal, scalding their faces*, and Q. 10:27, *as though their faces were covered with veils cut from the darkness of the night. These are the inmates of the Fire*, to mention a few examples. This inference of the relationship between the aesthetic and the moral is also seen in the lexical entries of the word 'qubḥ'. Arabic lexicons, starting with the pioneering *Kitāb al-'Ayn* by al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. c. 175/791),<sup>14</sup> progressing through to *Lisān al-'Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311)<sup>15</sup> and ending with *Muḥīṭ al-muḥīṭ* by Buṭrus al-Bustānī (d. 1300/1883),<sup>16</sup> not only show consistency in defining the term as an antonym to beauty and highlighting its interrelated aesthetic and moral quality, but they also refer to Q. 28:42 and the situating of the *maqabūhīn* in hell.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in this chapter, I am not concerned with examining solely moral badness/sin (*sayyi'a*; root: *s-ū-'*) in the Qur'an and Arabic literature, but am interested in how this moral badness/sin manifests itself on the literary and aesthetic planes, and its relationship to *adab*. To build a semantic investigation based only on the linguistic Qur'anic prescriptions of sin in order to trace the occurrences of the bad deed as an antonym of the good/beautiful deed (*ḥasana*) would restrict the discussion to the moral only, and would exclude the aesthetic component of the word 'qubḥ'.

The correlation between the aesthetic and the moral is not only seen in the Qur'anic definition of *qubḥ* and/or *ḥusn*, or in the response of the lexical entries to the term in the Qur'an. This relationship extends to the definition/function of 'literature' in the premodern period, where the literary and the moral converge. According to Geert Jan van Gelder:

The equivalent of 'literature' in the modern variety of Classical Arabic (often called Modern Standard Arabic) is *adab*. There are

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some contexts in the ‘classical’ period where ‘literature’ may be the best rendering, e.g. when the great historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), in his Introduction, discusses ‘*ilm al-adab*, translated by Franz Rosenthal as ‘the science of literature’. However, the word *adab* includes usually far more, and sometimes less, than what we normally understand by ‘literature’. It may mean ‘good manners or good breeding’, ‘politeness’, ‘erudition’, ‘knowledge needed for a specific purpose or profession’, or ‘repertoire of belletristic texts needed for polite conversation’. On the other hand, it would not normally refer to religious texts such as the Koran or the extensive body of so-called Tradition literature, on the sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632), texts that cannot be omitted from discussions on the literary canon.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to note the Qur’an’s centrality in a discussion on the aesthetics of *adab*. The Qur’an’s locus of ‘beautiful’ speech and language, as part of abstract beauty, is paradise. The Qur’an describes this speech as ‘peaceful’. In other words, this is a kind of speech that is devoid of disharmony, disorder, confusion or any conceptual antonym of peace. The Qur’an maintains that the inhabitants of paradise are protected from all forms of deformed speech,<sup>19</sup> as seen in the following examples: *There they will hear only peaceful talk, nothing bad* (Q. 19:62); *They pass around a cup which does not lead to any idle talk or sin* (Q. 52:23); *They will hear no idle or sinful talk there, only clean and wholesome speech* (Q. 56:25–6); *There they will hear no vain or lying talk* (Q. 78:35). The Qur’an’s exclusion of these negative forms of speech and language from paradise ultimately signals that these adjectival categories – ‘idle’, ‘sinful’, ‘nonsensical’, ‘unclean’, ‘unwholesome’, ‘vain’ and ‘untruthful’ – are to be associated with things that are aesthetically lacking and immoral. The Qur’an also defines beautiful speech self-referentially. The Qur’an refers to itself as the *best explanation* (*aḥsana tafsīra*), which is discussed in the context of the arguments in Q. 25:33, *They cannot put any argument to you without Our bringing you the truth and the best explanation*; the superlative beauty here is a reference to the intellectual qualities of reasoning proper. As David Damrosch argues, ‘The Qur’an equates understanding with belief, demanding



much more than the modern reader's "willing suspension of disbelief".<sup>20</sup> The Qur'an also refers to itself, in terms of both content and style, as the most beautiful/excellent speech (*aḥsana'l-ḥadīthi*),<sup>21</sup> as seen in Q. 39:23, for example, *God has sent down the most beautiful of all teachings: a Scripture that is consistent and draws comparisons; that causes the skins of those in awe of their Lord to shiver*. Both references validate the two qualities that make it superlative in beauty – *aḥsan* – through two important factors, which the Qur'an also reflexively speaks about regarding its discourse: truth (Q. 3:3, Q. 17:105, Q. 35:31, Q. 38:84, Q. 39:2) and clarity (Q. 12:2, Q. 43:3). Beauty, as a category, subsumes rational and aesthetic qualities. This is reflected in the studies of the stylistics of the Qur'an, which pre-modern rhetoricians, exegetes, grammarians, and even modern and contemporary Arab poets and scholars have methodically discussed in tandem with its inimitability, which is at the heart of what constitutes its superlative beauty.<sup>22</sup>

The grammatical structure of the aforementioned verses of the Qur'an on the nature of speech in paradise situates the inhabitants of paradise as people who would not hear any form of linguistic ugliness (*qubḥ*). It is understandable that the inhabitants of paradise would not indulge in *qubḥ* because neither the place nor their own moral character, which is characterised by beauty, *a priori*, would deem it plausible. In the world, though, however much a person might shield him/herself from *qubḥ* and refrain from resorting to its use, he/she will still be subjected to these structures of speech that are essentially part of the composition of the world and ubiquitous in the environment. This not only indicates a certain vulnerability towards these forms of aural *qubḥ*, but also the inevitability of not being able to escape these structures of speech because of their universality and commonness. In other words, the Qur'an acknowledges the impossibility of being able to remain untouched by what is considered *qabīḥ* or 'ugly speech', in the Qur'anic definition, as long as one is interacting in the world.

As we extrapolated from Q. 19:62, Q. 52:23, Q. 56:25–6 and Q. 78:35 above, the forms and structures of speech that are considered inherently *qabīḥ* by virtue of their exclusion (*ib'ād*) from the paradisiacal space are those that involve 'lying' (*kadhib*),

‘nonsense’ (*laghw*) and ‘sinful actions’ (*ta’tthim*). According to the various explanations given by the Egyptian grammarian Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Naḥḥās (d. 338/950) in *I‘rāb al-Qur‘ān*, *laghw* ‘diverts one from good actions and tempts one into evil’ (*mā yaṣuddu ‘an al-khayri wa yad‘ū ilā’l-sharr*).<sup>23</sup> Verbally, Naḥḥās maintains that *laghw* in speech is ‘meaningless, not plausible, vacuous’ (*mā lā yufīd ma‘nā*);<sup>24</sup> in Q. 56:25 and Q. 78:35, this is ‘untrue, sinful and/or meaningless talk’ (*al-bāṭil wa-mā tu’ttham fihi wa-mā lā ma‘nā lahu*);<sup>25</sup> in Q. 23:3 and Q. 25:72, it is what ‘should never have been said’ (*mā yajib an yulghā*).<sup>26</sup> He further states that *laghw* is also that in which ‘reality is obscured and is meaningless’ (*mā lā yu‘raf lahu ḥaqīqa wa-lā yuḥaṣṣal ma‘nāhu*).<sup>27</sup> It is also what is ‘not in keeping with decorum or good taste’ (*mā lā yajmul*) in speech (*qawl*) or behaviour (*fi‘l*).<sup>28</sup> In the definitions of *laghw* offered, it appears that they encompass both lying and sinful actions; *laghw* becomes an all-embracing term that includes all forms of speech excluded from paradise. *Sukhf*, dependent on meaninglessness and sometimes debauchery, is subsumed under *laghw*; thus, it could only find its register in the aesthetics of hell.

### **Qubḥ: A Literary Device Shaping Narrative Structure**

Azdī’s use of *qubḥ* as a literary device in *Ḥikāyat Abī’l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī* serves to highlight the destructive versatility of the principal character and his abandonment of reason. *Qubḥ* – in the service of anti-reason and folly (*sukhf*) – is employed in the *ḥikāya* as a literary device to amalgamate different literary types/personas in the persona of the protagonist, Abū’l-Qāsim, and thereby contribute to the shaping of the *ḥikāya*’s narrative form. Abū’l-Qāsim is described by Azdī in the preface as being a microcosm reflecting all types of social behaviours, and hence representing the varying levels of morality (*akhlāq*), of fifth/eleventh-century Baghdadis.<sup>29</sup> Azdī’s reference to the ‘morals’ of Baghdadis is simply a situating of the work within the definition of *adab* as the confluence of the literary on the one hand and the moral on the other, on both individual and social behaviour. Abū’l-Qāsim, being a microcosmic imitation (*ḥākiya*) of several types, is an exaggeration of the types

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Azdī intends to depict: the party-crasher (*ṭufaylī*), the person who spouts anti-Persian sentiments in response to anti-Arab sentiments (*shu'ūbiyya*) and the libertine (*mājin*). These types refer to literary genres, not just social types/personas, and they have found their way into the corpus of *adab*.

The structure of the *ḥikāya* as well as the inclusion of several literary types and different topics bespeak a continuous incoherence, even chaos, that could only be provided through an overall *sukhf*. As Sinan Antoon writes, '*sukhf* relies on the deliberate confusion and conflation of modes and registers to such an extent that categorization itself is jammed'.<sup>30</sup> This chaos is perceptible in the structure of the *ḥikāya*, which alternatively appropriates prose, poetry and anecdotes in a literary collage motivated by the *sukhf* of the protagonist.<sup>31</sup> Both behavioural and linguistic actions cease to conform to established definitions of order, harmony, rules of meaning, and, hence, beauty. In the *ḥikāya*, this is observed in the behaviour of the protagonist, which is facilitated by the literary composition itself.

*Sukhf* is a transgression against perceivable logical rules. *Lisān al-'arab* maintains that *sukhf* is 'shallowness in the intellect' (*riqqat al-'aql*).<sup>32</sup> In this respect, it is contrasted with the rational faculty, reason. Van Gelder maintains that *sukhf* as a genre is 'foolishness; obscenity or nonsensical poetry'.<sup>33</sup> His classification is in accordance with both the lexical etymologies and the historical development of *sukhf* as a genre. While obscenity is not always consistently traceable in anecdotes relating to *sukhf*,<sup>34</sup> James Montgomery notes that the inclusion of obscenity in the genre of *sukhf* began with the Būyids, al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995) and Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 391/1001); during this period, obscenity was in vogue.<sup>35</sup>

In the *ḥikāya*, the fixed setting of the house in which the party takes place and the unchanging characters as comprised by the other guests do not allow ample room for the orderly representation of the three observed literary types/personas – the *ṭufaylī*, the anti-*shu'ūbiyya* speaker and the *mājin*. It is only through illogical *sukhf*, in the character of Abū'l-Qāsim, that it becomes possible to shift and merge these types, topics and even literary genres. It stands to

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reason that adopting *laghw*, which is a chief characteristic of this *ḥikāya*, as a class of speech, allows Azdī the versatility to move between types, genres and registers of speech without having these appear contrived or artificial.

### The *ṭufaylī*/non-*ṭufaylī*

The social behaviour trait portrayed by Azdī, which is also exemplified as a literary type in its own right, is the *ṭufaylī* type.<sup>36</sup> The figure of the *ṭufaylī* received considerable attention in premodern Arabic *adab*. In his book, *al-Taṭfīl*, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) lays out the unspoken rules followed by *ṭufaylīs*, who cultivated the art of party-crashing by establishing a code amongst themselves. The behaviour of Abū’l-Qāsim deviates from this code. According to al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *ṭufaylīs* take the trouble to make themselves likeable to their hosts and this usually involved them uttering words of praise (*madīḥ*) to the host, as well as charming and refined (*ẓarf*) witticisms. Abū’l-Qāsim’s attitude is quite the opposite; he neither praises the host, or the guests, nor presents himself as charming and refined (*ẓarīf*). His entrance is marked by a recitation from the Qur’an, which is not unusual in the case of party-crashers;<sup>37</sup> in this case, it is praise to God. The act of giving praise to God in the form of the recitation of the Qur’an places the individual performing it, in this case, Abū’l-Qāsim, in the semantic and behavioural matrix of paradise: beautiful actions and speech being the equivalent of order and beauty (*ḥusn*) – narrative equilibrium. The recitation of the Qur’an functions as a continual stream from the otherworld to this world – ‘a piece of paradise is present’.<sup>38</sup> Contrary to what Shmuel Moreh argues, the aim of such juxtaposition of beauty against ugliness (*ḥusn/qubḥ*) is not to create blatant mockery or flippancy.<sup>39</sup> It has been established that Azdī’s aim from the beginning is to carve a niche for his work within the corpus of *adab*. Given the craze for literary vulgarity and obscenity that was in vogue at the time, it becomes quite difficult for the author of the *ḥikāya* to engage with *qubḥ* without also engaging with *ḥusn* as the antithesis of the *qubḥ* that he is portraying in his work. The paradoxical aim is to produce

a literary work of impeccable *qubḥ* and for it to be recognised as such; this task, though oxymoronic in its description, requires a *chiaroscuro* effect, where both concepts become highly conspicuous through their strong contrast of each other. Therefore, to read the work within the limited parameters of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque does a disservice to the work. Most importantly, the work never challenged the definitions of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. It never inverted these definitions, as is often the case in carnival mockery, as shall be further explained in due course. The *ḥikāya* presented both concepts of *qubḥ* and *ḥusn* as they are. So, as mentioned above, Abū'l-Qāsim breaks the first rule of *tatfīl* (the expected behaviour of the *ṭufaylī*), namely by abandoning *ẓarf*. In further contravention of the *ṭufaylī* code, he does not wait for the food to be served but rather demands food when he pleases and enumerates the types of food he wishes to eat. Abū'l-Qāsim's requests are not just confined to food; he asks for clothes, horses, and men and women for his own sexual pleasure.<sup>40</sup> Within this context, Abū'l-Qāsim's representation of the *ṭufaylī* type is akin to what may be described as 'Doppelbödigkeit'.<sup>41</sup> He simultaneously embodies two concrete realities, with one cancelling out the other. In this case, he is, paradoxically, both a *ṭufaylī* and an obnoxious guest, but his offensiveness cancels out his typology as a *ṭufaylī*; his attitude does not match the code of *tatfīl*.<sup>42</sup>

Abū'l-Qāsim possesses an impressive arsenal of linguistic skills and knowledge, qualities seen in some *ṭufaylīs*, since the activity of *tatfīl* required them to be, at least, socially pleasing. However, he uses his linguistic skills in a way that makes him unwelcome in the house. Although the *ṭufaylī* ought to refrain from speaking as much as possible to be able to consume copious amounts of food, this appears to be something Abū'l-Qāsim finds quite challenging. Unlike *ṭufaylīs*, Abū'l-Qāsim is not satisfied by food but rather by incessant and relentless talk. He starts insulting the assembled guests one by one. The plot's strategy here is multi-layered. Abū'l-Qāsim transgresses against both beauty and meaning proper through engaging in *qubḥ* as he insults the guests (he engages in *laḡhw*); he also transgresses against reason proper ('*aql*) manifest in the logic of *tatfīl*, that is, he goes against all reasonable codes of

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*taṭfīl* by insulting and ridiculing the people in the house. He establishes himself as a *ṭufaylī* initially but becomes ridiculous (*sakhīf*) through abandoning both decorum and reason proper (*‘aql*) and the codes of party-crashing (the *‘aql* of *taṭfīl*). The author’s deliberate technique, of course, should be read within the context of the reactions that Abū’l-Qāsim may invite, which induce more disequilibrium or lack of *i’tidāl* in the *ḥikāya*. This could be read as the escalation of the degree of *sukhf* itself, to invite more *qubḥ*, justified in the narrative by generous imbibing.

Abū’l-Qāsim’s insults gradually take the form of remarks on the quality of his company’s clothes and lifestyle. He then ventures to list what he deems as the standards of fashion and impeccable grooming and *le bon vivre* (as related to perfume, food and drink, houses and furniture). He lists these categories and compares what he sees around him in this house in Isfahan to what he is used to in Baghdad.<sup>43</sup>

#### The anti-*shu‘ūbī/shu‘ūbī*

The categories of comparison mentioned by Abū’l-Qāsim encompass aspects of the material culture of medieval Arab-Islamic civilisation that ‘mirrored the territorial expansion of the Islamic empire’ in their diversity and richness.<sup>44</sup> The criteria of comparison raises several questions. Abū’l-Qāsim, while in Isfahan, maintains that the Arabs, Baghdadis in particular, excelled in perfecting these aspects of material culture, while the Persians did not. Could this be construed as anti-*shu‘ūbī* propaganda?

While *shu‘ūbī* propaganda prevailed for part of the tumultuous Abbasid reign (132–656/750–1258), the movement had subsided by the fifth/eleventh century.<sup>45</sup> *Shu‘ūbiyya* is mainly defined by its ideological and social agenda as an anti-Arab movement led by the Persians during the Abbasid reign. It aimed at disparaging the Arab literary, cultural and historical heritage in favour of Persian cultural values. However, *shu‘ūbiyya*, as most historians attest, is much wider in its intricacies than the waging of mere literary war between the Arabs and Persians; it involved sectarianism, and several civil and regional conflicts.<sup>46</sup> *Shu‘ūbiyya* is a theme traceable in many an

*adab* work;<sup>47</sup> it would not be unusual then to look for a vestige of this discourse, however faint, in Azdī's *ḥikāya*. The author's choice of Baghdad and Isfahan as well as the categories of comparison and registers of language deploy the spirit of *shu'ūbiyya* discourse for the progression of the narrative. Azdī's *ḥikāya* was composed during the Būyid period (334–440/945–1048), which was renowned for its tolerance and humanism; the empire 'extended patronage to all with talent, creating an eclectic and dynamic cultural milieu'.<sup>48</sup> However, the Būyid's 'adopted imperial Iranian titulature and insignia and promoted some Persian cultural traditions'.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the seemingly jocular anti-Persian sentiments conveyed in the work of Azdī may be a remnant of an anti-*shu'ūbi* discourse, or they may reflect a certain nostalgia for the lost power of the Abbasid golden age, now that the political power had shifted to the Būyids who seemed to be advocating the Persian culture as part of their policy. Whatever the case, these sentiments could only be read within the literary technique of Azdī as a justification for constructing an entity for the purposes of *hijā'* (invective poetry), the most serious mode devoted to verbal assaults and profanities in Arabic poetry, with a historical pretext.

Abū'l-Qāsim's anti-*shu'ūbiyya* takes the form of a prolonged diatribe constructed in the manner of a comparison between the cities of Baghdad and Isfahan. It uses the aforementioned categories of 'material realia', with Baghdad being the favoured entity in this comparison until the end, when suddenly Abū'l-Qāsim changes tack and favours Isfahan.<sup>50</sup> The section praising the beauty of Baghdad's singing-girls (*qiyān*) takes upon itself several categories of assessment related to their hair, physique, face, skin colour, conversation skills and gait.<sup>51</sup> This is all, of course, in keeping with the tradition of the *ghazal* (love poem). However, when Abū'l-Qāsim shifts to describing the singing-girls of Isfahan, the assessment criteria and register shift to images of monstrously hyperbolic body parts, almost non-existent hygienic practices, the eliminatory functions of the body, or metaphors that conjoin the physiques of these women with animal images.<sup>52</sup> Abū'l-Qāsim features their ugliness, from his perspective, in a language dependent on *laghw*. The *hijā'*-like insults to the singing-girls of Isfahan range from the

mildly deprecating, for example, of their not fitting the culture's nor the age's norm of standard physical beauty,<sup>53</sup> to the highly offensive that capitalises on the idea of their indecorous 'backstage' life (i.e. eliminatory functions of the body). In his seminal work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman uses the imagery of a theatre to describe the intricacies of social interactions and people's conduct. The actions and registers described by Abū'l-Qāsim in an attempt to uglify the women of Isfahan belong to what Goffman describes as the 'backstage' because it is unfit to be part of what is publicly presented. Like the backstage work of the theatre, all audiences are aware of these actions' existence but do not often perceive them as *certainly* real because they never get a chance to see them, and, more importantly, prefer not to see them.<sup>54</sup>

This unrepresentable matrix of life feeds into the category of all that is indecorous, nonsensical and not in 'good taste' (*mā lā yajmul*) of speech and/or behaviour – a category of *laghw*. This category understands its own unarticulated *qubḥ* and embarrassment; its hard-to-measure repulsiveness in turn arouses intense feelings that correspond to its nature, thereby associating this particular *qubḥ* with *qubḥ* proper (the grand narrative of *qubḥ*), because it transgresses the boundaries of its own placement as a hidden aspect of life. Metaphors that aim to describe unpleasant behaviour and/or unattractive physical features often resort to the 'backstage' register to express the unseemly nature of the entity depicted. In other words, the subject of the metaphor is portrayed as something that should be neither seen nor heard. This is adduced by the highly ridiculous (*sakhīf*), distorted and unrealistically disfigured descriptions of the women of Isfahan in the rest of the *ḥikāya*. Most of these metaphors utilise sexually charged registers; however, far from aiming to solicit or deliver any remotely erotic hypotheses, they play on transgressing the established human aesthetic form through *laghw*. The Qur'an conceptually juxtaposes the human form/physique with the concept of beauty: the human form is regarded as beautiful through the use of the verb 'to perfect and beautify' as a synonym for 'to shape' in Q. 40:64, *He shaped you, formed you well* (*wa ṣawwarakum fa-aḥsana ṣuwarakum*). It



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also describes the human form as possessing the best/most beautiful structure for human functions and activities in Q. 95:4, *We created man in the finest state (aḥsan taqwīm)*. The metaphorical deformation of the body transgresses the boundaries of reason through its *sukhf*. By creating a literary hell through linguistic distortion, a mirroring of the aesthetics of hell is achieved through the aesthetics of corporeal disfigurement. Its aim is to morally humiliate, as is the case with the punishments of hell.

The introduction of Persian entertainers as a category in the *ḥikāya* could then be read as a justification to include a class of people at whom Abū'l-Qāsim can direct his insults. The entertainment value of this choice is obvious. *Hijā'* offers amusement to everyone except the victim of the verbal assault.<sup>55</sup> The represented inferiority of the entity of *hijā'* is directly linked to the unseen aspects of life. The scatological and sexual aspects and the respective linguistic registers of these metaphors are communicated as unseen because of their inappropriateness. In this respect, the Persian entertainers are represented as being as ugly as the register of these metaphors. After explicitly deriding the Persians for their lack of grace and beauty, Abū'l-Qāsim then shifts the categories of comparison to entertainment in the form of male and female entertainers.<sup>56</sup> This shift enables the introduction of another type: the libertine (*al-mājin*). As a *mājin*, Abū'l-Qāsim not only flirts with both a Persian woman and a young man after his diatribe, but also recants and praises Isfahan instead at the end, and, in turn, insults Baghdad. This again points to the idea of the representation of full but also empty types in keeping with the notion of *Doppelbödigkeit*, which is facilitated by *sukhf*.

### **The *mājin/zarīf***

After Abū'l-Qāsim compares Baghdadi female entertainers with their Isfahani counterparts, he is prompted to speak more about them to one of the men in the assembly.<sup>57</sup> The man's impatience to listen to a sample of the charming, witty anecdotes (*nawādir*) of the female entertainers (*mughanniyāt mājināt*), as being told by Abū'l-Qāsim, obliges the latter to shape-shift into yet another type:

a refined, charming man (*zarīf*); his recounting of the anecdotes themselves qualifies him to play the entertaining and pleasant type.<sup>58</sup> However, Abū'l-Qāsim does not qualify as the *zarīf* because of his subsequent engagement with *mujūn*.

There are two dimensions to *mujūn* as exemplified in the *ḥikāya*, which are in keeping with the definitions of *mujūn* itself. The Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) defines *mujūn* and *zarf* almost synonymously as a way with words and double-entendres; he maintains that it 'takes away the original meaning of the words and clothes it in a different connotation' (*ṣarf al-laḥẓ 'an ḥaqīqatihi ilā ma'nā ākhar*), and he calls it 'an indication of strong intelligence' (*wa dhālik yadull 'alā quwwat al-fiṭna*).<sup>59</sup> The other side of *mujūn* can be seen in the definitions of the philologist Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. after 395/1005), who astutely observes the relationship between humour and *mujūn* but differentiates between them. He defines *mujūn* succinctly as audaciousness (*ṣalābat al-wajh*) and shamelessness (*qillat al-ḥayā*).<sup>60</sup> Though culturally linked to humour, as noted by 'Askarī's inclusion of the word in his chapter on humour-related terms, it is not conflated with them. Yet, it would not be surprising to see *mujūn* and jesting (*ḥazl* or *mizāh*) together in the same context.

Azdī shows consciousness of the nuances in the definitions of *mujūn* and utilises them both in his work. He introduces the *mājin* by having Abū'l-Qāsim mention the type itself to his audience in his description of the female entertainers of Baghdad. Abū'l-Qāsim's own understanding and definition of *mujūn* becomes clear through the anecdotes he narrates. The *zarf* becomes a by-product of his recounting of the anecdotes. The anecdotes are sometimes true to the definition of *zarf* in terms of their charm and sometimes they remain close to *mujūn* in terms of their shamelessness and audaciousness. This introduction of the term '*mujūn*' and the stories within the context of the *ḥikāya* itself show that Azdī is aware that there is a distinction between *mujūn* and *sukhf*, and that within *mujūn* itself there are nuances which lean on one side to *zarf* and on the other to *sukhf* in its shamelessness, as seen in the anecdotes related by Abū'l-Qāsim and also in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Akḥbār al-zirāf wa'l-mutamājinīn*. It also shows that Azdī's attempt to

present these nuances of *mujūn* captures the *zarf* quality as an out-of-character instance for Abū'l-Qāsim but continues to represent his *mujūn* as audaciousness and shamelessness, as befitting the overall atmosphere of the *ḥikāya*. In this respect, the introduction of *zarf* and *mujūn* can also be seen as cancelling each other out in the same way that the other types cancelled each other out.

Azdī depicts Abū'l-Qāsim's *mujūn* as debauchery, visible through his indiscriminate lusting after men and women.<sup>61</sup> It becomes clear how the *ḥikāya* achieves its climax after Abū'l-Qāsim's chaotic sexual advances act as a prelude to his tirade – after a young man insults him. These failed sexual advances, that highlight his *mujūn*, provide a dramatic exit cue to his character. Joseph Horowitz reads the tirade as a case of collateral damage due to excessive drunkenness, and maintains '[w]hen the wine goes to his head he becomes importunate and vulgar, till finally, being forced to drink still more deeply, he falls asleep'.<sup>62</sup> It is clear from the beginning that Abū'l-Qāsim does not need the wine for his excessive vulgarity. Rather, the wine is employed by the author as a literary proxy for the unrestrained, ugly behaviour (*qubḥ*), exemplified by Abū'l-Qāsim's audacious and foolish acts. Wine, an impurity (*najāsa*),<sup>63</sup> becomes a metonym of *qubḥ*, as it invokes transgressions and, by extension, the semiosis of hell. Abū'l-Qāsim's universe of anti-reason is invoked through an item (wine) that facilitates *sukḥf*. The abstract moral concept of impurity invokes *qubḥ* and finds aesthetic articulation in the effects of its consumption. This is evident in the manner in which the author employs wine consumption, which becomes directly proportional to the *sukḥf* of Abū'l-Qāsim throughout the *ḥikāya*. Azdī gradually makes Abū'l-Qāsim an unwanted guest through his behaviour and verbal assaults in order to achieve closure for the *ḥikāya*. However, the paradox here lies in the fact that although Abū'l-Qāsim is indeed an unwanted guest, he is not met with straightforward hostility and he is not kicked out of the house; instead, he is met with exaggerated hospitality and is given wine to drink as a ploy, to sedate him and relieve the guests of his biting tongue.<sup>64</sup> It is obvious that even hospitality in the *ḥikāya* is subject to anti-reason measures and takes the form of *sukḥf*.

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### The diction (language) of *qubḥ*

I have thus far explained how *qubḥ* – manifest in *sukḥf* (nonsense) – is used as a literary device to merge genres, several characters within the microcosmic persona of Abū'l-Qāsim, and unrelated topics in the *ḥikāya*. The structure of the work itself depends on nonsensical organisation. In a similar manner, the author's use of diction bespeaks a needed harmony between the deliberately chaotic narrative structure that invokes disorder of content and the verbal *qubḥ* that matches the disharmony on the level of language itself. But from where does this ugly (*qabīḥ*) speech derive its register?

In the preface, the author describes Abū'l-Qāsim's speech as eloquent (*mustafṣaḥa*) at times and scandalous (*mustafḍaḥa*) at others.<sup>65</sup> Azdī describes Abū'l-Qāsim as a 'foolish and obscene old man' (*shaykh sakhīf*)<sup>66</sup> who comes up with 'amusing folly and obscenity' (*sukḥf malīḥ*).<sup>67</sup> *Sukḥf* – a conscious aspect of disorder and *qubḥ* – is evident in Abū'l-Qāsim's own characterisation, as the author introduces this character as someone who is foolish and lacking in reason, and thereby associated with *qubḥ*. In this respect, it is clear how the author brings disequilibrium to the tale through *sukḥf* by engaging with lack of reason – a category of *qubḥ* – that finds its register in the semiotics of hell. The engagement with *qubḥ* is conveyed through the diction's direct employment of the register of hell. The author's introductory poem describing Abū'l-Qāsim at the beginning of the *ḥikāya* emphasises this conceptual link:

An old man burned in hell before dying  
generous and giving where transgressions are.  
A scholar, a theologian: profound and reflective.  
An imam of depravity or a sent messenger!  
If you reproached him – and he must be reproached! –  
and hoped that the foolish old man would repent,  
you would realise that you are talking to an idiot old man,  
like a donkey: dim-witted.  
He is called to abandon sin,  
so he seeks refuge in God from guidance!<sup>68</sup>

The description of Abū'l-Qāsim as someone who has been burned in hell before actually dying is worthy of examination. Abū'l-Qāsim's lack of reason is highlighted through his description: he is 'foolish' (*sakhīf*), 'an idiot' (*ablah*), 'like a donkey' (*mithl al-ḥimār*) and 'dim-witted' (*mughaffal*). These unreasonable traits are all expressions of *qubḥ* and are thus associated with hell. The featuring of hell in the first line is a reflection of the conceptual register of these classifications, therefore a cause of disequilibrium as previously mentioned in the discussion of the *ḥikāya*. The use of the Islamic title 'imam' serves to quantify the degree of the protagonist's folly, since it is a title indicative of one's quantifiable learnedness in the sciences of Islam, and thereby one's vast knowledge and wisdom. In this respect, the honorific serves to represent the ultimate status of folly for Abū'l-Qāsim by quantifying something that has no limit (folly) through a title that is evaluative of reason. This does not become an inversion of the title itself, *à la* carnivalesque. It is a portrayal of the magnitude of his folly through a quantifying title (e.g. king of folly, head of folly, etc.). The poem then lists the reasons that qualify him for this association with hellfire as lines 2 and 4 maintain. From line 5 onwards, the behaviour of Abū'l-Qāsim is ultimately correlated with lack of reason. In the *ḥikāya*, the only explanation that frames the choices of Abū'l-Qāsim's behaviour is his *sukhf*. This reinforces the aforementioned categorical association of *qubḥ* with lack of reason. The closing line of the poem pithily proves his folly. His reaction to reproachful words encouraging him to mend his ways is to seek refuge in God. The author here highlights the complete abandonment of reason in Abū'l-Qāsim's equating advice with situations/things that one ought to seek refuge in God from. His misplaced reaction is one that is devoid of reason and highlights an incorrigible folly. Abū'l-Qāsim's actions are therefore not portrayed as contemptuous or mocking, but rather as destructive foolishness.

This destructive folly is adduced throughout the *ḥikāya* and most vividly in Abū'l-Qāsim's own angry outburst at the end. After insulting everyone, he describes himself using the register of hell and all aesthetic correlations and moral behaviour associated with

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the matrix of hell itself to induce extreme aesthetic and moral *qubḥ* and repulsiveness:

You dog! . . . Look at me with your eyes and listen to me with your ears! Do not move your hands or shoulders! Just you wait! My friends are more numerous than the wicker of Basra; the mountain oaks; and the mustard seeds of Egypt. They are more numerous than the lentils of the Levant; the pebbles of the Arabian Peninsula; and the thorns of the Qāṭūl. They are more numerous than the wheat of Mosul; the date pits of Ahwaz and the olives of Palestine! . . . You wait! Do you know me or not? I eat sand and defecate a rock; I swallow date pits and defecate palm trees! You wait! I am the angry sea-waves, the impenetrable lock. I am the Fire, the highwayman. I am the grinder when it revolves! I walked two weeks without a head! I am the forefather of thievery and brigandry! I am Pharaoh! I am Hāmān! I am Nimrod, the son of Canaan! I am the uncircumcised devil! I am the bare-fisted bear! . . . If Satan saw me, he would turn around . . . I witnessed the *ghoul* giving birth and carried the devil's coffin! . . . I killed a thousand and am on my way to the next thousand. This is my face till the Day of Judgement! I am a bribe taker! Do you need something from Mālik, the guardian of hell? . . . You wait! By God! I will put you in my pocket and forget you until you rot! . . . I will inhale you and never sneeze you out except in hell!<sup>69</sup>

The language Abū'l-Qāsim uses to describe his extreme repulsiveness and *qubḥ*, in an attempt to intimidate another person, links itself to unsavoury characters and aspects of hellfire. The *ḥikāya*'s purpose here is to communicate Abū'l-Qāsim's *qubḥ*, exemplified in his lack of boundaries and his transgression, which is obvious from the language. He describes himself as both Pharaoh and Hāmān, the members of the aforementioned class of rejects, the despised and disfigured (*maqḅūhīn*) in Q. 28:42. He then calls himself the devil but claims to have surpassed the devil, or perhaps he insinuates that he has even killed him, viz. he is more devilish than the devil, as he mentions that he has attended the latter's funeral. He then rhetorically inquires, 'Do you need something from Mālik, the guardian of hell?' (*hal laka ḥāja ilā Mālik khāzin*

*jahannam?*).<sup>70</sup> Abū'l-Qāsim here evokes the definitive *qubḥ* by referring to himself as the guardian and chief of all things *qabiḥ* (ugly): aesthetic and moral alike. The final image in this selection of his tirade informs the person being insulted that Abū'l-Qāsim shall keep him in his pocket until the former rots; then, Abū'l-Qāsim will breathe him in and only sneeze him out in hell. This episode, full of transgressions and excesses leading to *qubḥ*, thus culminates with the imagery of hell. In all the images used, Abū'l-Qāsim alternates between assuming both human and non-human statuses through the different personae he evokes; yet the human characters invoked are ultimately related to hellfire. This conscious portrayal by Azdī of Abū'l-Qāsim's *sukḥf* linguistically and aesthetically as concomitant and associated with hellfire, and ultimately with *qubḥ*, proves the meaning of *qubḥ* as lack of reason, as transgression and excess. Thus, there is a mirroring of hell, as has been previously delineated and as is evident in the above passage.

The disorder and *qubḥ* created in the *ḥikāya*, despite being defined and acknowledged as such, does not resolve itself with Abū'l-Qāsim's excessive drunkenness and passing out. Both the opening and ending of the *ḥikāya* frame and structure this disorder cleverly. The *ḥikāya* opens with Abū'l-Qāsim's Qur'an recitation from *Sūrat al-Nūr* (Q. 24). The verse (*āya*) refers to the men who are not distracted (*tulḥīhim*), either by commerce or profit (Q. 24:37). However, the men sitting in the company of Abū'l-Qāsim do not seem to be conducting business transactions, but seem to be pre-occupied with less important events. The *āya* is aptly chosen for more than the mentioning of the motif of distraction (*lahw*) that completely engulfs the atmosphere of the *ḥikāya*. In other words, 'The notion of some activities being *laghw* and *lahw* (idle and distracting) ([Q.] 23.3; [Q.] 31.6) is clearly intended to distinguish between activities worth pursuing and those that ought not to be taken up.'<sup>71</sup> The association of *lahw* and *laghw* here only highlights the 'idle and distracting' as a characteristic of the 'meaningless', as has been previously discussed, as well as *laghw*'s categorical association with *qubḥ* aesthetically and morally.

Extended symbolic references to the recited *Sūrat al-Nūr* are found not only at the beginning of the *ḥikāya* but also at the end.

The ending of the *ḥikāya* describes Abū'l-Qāsim's exit at the break of dawn.

He falls into deep sleep and he hears what is heard first at the break of dawn and says: 'Morning has dawned and the Worlds' dominion is in God's hands. Greetings new day! Greetings to the witnessing angel scribe! Write in the name of God the most merciful and the most compassionate', says Abū'l-Qāsim: 'I testify that there is no God except God, alone, with no partners, and Muhammad is His messenger. God, we believe in what the verse says: *'Alif Lam Mim! There is no doubt in this Book!'* [Q. 2:1–2] <sup>72</sup>

Here, the break of dawn, through its association with the light (*al-nūr*), becomes both metaphysical and existential.<sup>73</sup> The Qur'an repeatedly refers to light and darkness as metaphors for guidance versus misguidance, order versus disorder, reason versus lack of reason, which all ultimately correlate with heaven and hell and *ḥusn* versus *qubḥ*, respectively, as in Q. 2:257.<sup>74</sup> The light is metaphysical in the sense that it associates the timing of the call for prayers with the end of Abū'l-Qāsim's activities and the culmination of narrative disequilibrium. It thus invokes the paradisiacal conceptual matrix of order and the cessation of disorder. The light also becomes existential as it marks the beginning of a new day and all daylight-related activities therein (beginning with the dawn prayers). It thus recognisably associates Abū'l-Qāsim's activities with 'night' and 'darkness' also, both existentially and metaphysically, as they refer to metonymic *qubḥ*. The *ḥikāya*'s conception of *qubḥ* is inspired by the aesthetics of the Qur'an, with the emphasis at the end on the cessation of disorder and the return of equilibrium.

Abū'l-Qāsim's burning in hell before dying dissolves the time-space boundaries of the literary narrative, or what Bakhtin calls the chronotope. He defines the chronotope as the 'intrinsic connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. It expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space).'<sup>75</sup> As the space of the *ḥikāya* (i.e. the house) is static, unchangeable, it appears as



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though the character of Abū'l-Qāsim emerges out of the *ḥikāya* with no development with regard to the narrated time. However, as the narrative moves between the here–hereafter chronotope (heaven/hell/heaven), the character slips from the time–space of hell (the literary representation of the category of *qubḥ* and its conceptual link to hell) into that of heaven through the reciting and invoking of the Qur'an (at both the beginning and the end of the *ḥikāya*). The *ḥikāya*'s use of artistic language shows a conscious engagement with the categories of *qubḥ* and *ḥusn*, manifest in its conceptual link to hell and, in turn, paradise. This explains the time–space fluidity in the *ḥikāya* as far as the presence of hell in Abū'l-Qāsim's verbal abuse, sexual harassment and overall debauchery is concerned. Temporally speaking, the Qur'anic conception of hell and heaven is not of a creation at the end of time, 'but one that co-exists with this world';<sup>76</sup> by extension the Qur'an's suggestion of salvation is not postponed to a future time and space, and neither is its promise of punishment. The dissolution of the time–space boundaries between this world and hell, as noted in the artistic language of the *ḥikāya*, are seen in activities marred by conceptual *qubḥ*. In turn, the dissolution of the time–space boundaries between this world and paradise are seen in the narrative underlying Islamic rituals, such as Qur'an recitation, ablution, fasting and pilgrimage, which all 'establish a conceptual link to paradise'.<sup>77</sup>

#### **The Bakhtin factor**

In the introductory section of this chapter, it was noted that Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, which more often than not is called upon in reading literary manifestations of disequilibrium or lack of *i'tidāl*, disorder and chaos, does not suit this investigation. However, a number of studies discuss this and other similar works using the carnivalesque model; they resort to Bakhtinian parameters in an attempt to assess their literary merits.<sup>78</sup> This process forces students and scholars of Arabic literature to read these works through modern terms and theories and to project certain modern viewpoints regardless of how these works were understood when

they were first created. Hämeen-Anttila rightly argues against such readings; with respect to the *Maqāmāt* of Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 397/1007), for example, he says, ‘al-Hamadhānī plays with allusions. He does have a message underneath the surface, but the message has to be sought in what contemporaries may have thought, not in any 20th-century patterns.’<sup>79</sup> Moreover, such readings isolate these literary works from their Arabic literary system and disregard the works’ relationships to other literary works, viewing them instead through models (in this case Bakhtinian) that are anachronistic and anachronistic to the literary system in question. The main purpose of carnival is ‘freedom . . . the courage needed to establish it, the cunning required to maintain it, and – above all – the horrific ease with which it can be lost’.<sup>80</sup> It is very difficult to see how the carnival, viewed in this light, cannot be political, and these modernistic readings hastily place the literary work in an antagonistic position against the state, religion, or any form of recognised or institutional authority in favour of a Bakhtinian reading, notwithstanding the hermeneutical risks involved in such readings.

I have explained the essential figuring of hell as a site of criticism, punishment and humiliation and a semiotic matrix for *qubḥ*, disorder and chaos in the *ḥikāya*. Hell’s prominence in the *ḥikāya* and its association with the protagonist’s behaviour establishes the concept of *qubḥ* as a literary, aesthetic and moral category. Bakhtin mentions the essential burning of ‘hell’ at the beginning of carnivals to indicate liberation from all fear.<sup>81</sup> The symbolic defeat of fear then launches afterwards all that is known to fit the term ‘carnavalesque’: excess, transgression and acts of ‘decrowning’ that allude to the crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king. These acts refer to the symbolic shuffling and stripping away of authority and to the upside-down world of the carnival. However, the *ḥikāya*’s protagonist does not ‘burn hell’. He invokes hell, not with purpose of defeating it but with the purpose of associating himself with it linguistically, morally and aesthetically. He indirectly remembers hell through reciting the Qur’an and invoking the paradisiacal matrix of *ḥusn*, and he defines his own moral *qubḥ* in opposition to this paradisiacal matrix of *ḥusn*. As noted above, the Bakhtinian

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carnival *pretends* to defeat hell briefly in order to celebrate its definition of freedom. At this juncture, therefore, one ought to ask, what did freedom mean in premodern Arab-Islamic culture? Was it a universal concept into which the Bakhtinian carnivalesque could readily fit?

The concept of a free man/woman (*hurr*) originally had a strong moral undercurrent in both pre-Islamic and Arab-Islamic cultures because of its antithesis to the state of slavery.<sup>82</sup> After the advent of Islam, within the social, legal and philosophical realms the term 'freedom' was not divorced from the moral aspects. To be 'free' meant to possess the will to be a 'good' person and be free of all desires.<sup>83</sup> This notion becomes understandable when viewing freedom as the possession of noble qualities.<sup>84</sup> Addressing the question of freedom as 'choice' (*ikhtiyār*) in relationship to 'free will' (*hurriyya*) should also complement this discussion.

In Islam, *ikhtiyār* was never seen together with *hurriyyah*, nor was it felt as one aspect of the complex structure of freedom . . . Human freedom of will was largely restricted to the ability of making a choice with regard to individual situations. This development, it may be added, had its roots in pre-Islamic times and began before the theological discussions of Muslim scholars attempted to shape Near Eastern intellectual history.<sup>85</sup>

It becomes clear, then, that *ikhtiyār* does not actually feature in the definition of freedom; it is mainly restricted to the ability of a person to *make* a choice. The splitting of philosophical and semantic hairs is further highlighted by the explanation of the term by Abū 'Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) in his letter to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023).

We say: *ikhtiyār* (choice) is derived etymologically from *khayr* (good, best). It is the infinitive of the eighth conjugation of this root. Saying 'someone chose something' is about the same as saying 'He did what was good for him', that is, good either in reality or in his opinion, even if it was not good for him in reality.<sup>86</sup>

It figures then that the concept of 'choice' evokes an assessment of what may or may not be 'good' for someone; the ability to make a

choice is therefore presented as an indirect measurement of rationality and/or reason (*'aql*) and not freedom as such. This is because people are essentially free to make a choice.

In the aforementioned introductory poem at the beginning of the work, Azdī portrays Abū'l-Qāsim's behaviour (choice) as a direct outcome of a deficiency in reason (*'aql*). This deficiency in reason and ultimately choices was measured as such using multiple synonyms of folly. Abū'l-Qāsim is thus free to do whatever he wants but his choices are not justified, even by him, through the parameters of freedom but rather through the parameters of *'aql*. Readings that wish to regard these themes as solely carnivalesque in their shifting of authority or religious powers in an upside-down world of mockery will not only have to disregard the definition of freedom as such and also the meaning of choice (*ikhtiyār*) as part of the Arabic literary system but also an entire set of literary, aesthetic and moral categories of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*.

Images of excess, transgression and folly are represented in the *ḥikāya* as contrary to reason: *qabīḥ*. They are not celebrated in the Bakhtinian sense of the word nor do they contribute to 'fertility, growth, and a brimming-over abundance',<sup>87</sup> as Bakhtin posits they do. Another category, which is also quintessentially universal and overlaps with the Bakhtinian carnival, is profanity. Profanities and oaths were not initially related to laughter, but they were excluded from the sphere of official speech because they broke its norms; they were therefore transferred to the familiar sphere of the marketplace. In the carnival atmosphere, they became associated with laughter and became ambivalent.<sup>88</sup> In the Arab-Islamic culture, however, profanities are never ambivalent. They were never ambivalent in Abū'l-Qāsim's aforementioned angry diatribes throughout the *ḥikāya* and especially at the end. *Hijā'* was actually a part of official speech, propaganda and verbal warfare between tribes in pre-Islamic times as well as after the advent of Islam. It continued to be a form of speech acknowledged by tribes, heads of tribes, caliphs, monarchs, institutions and individuals alike.<sup>89</sup> While, more often than not, it was not an occasion for laughter, it did offer amusement for those who were not directly involved in it, as van Gelder maintains.<sup>90</sup> In some cases, *hijā'* might

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very well have been inspired by the language and expressions of the marketplace,<sup>91</sup> as anecdotes from *Kitāb al-Aghānī* have maintained,<sup>92</sup> but not restricted to it; *hijā'* is part of the corpus of *adab*.

A consideration of the issue of the representation of reason as an intellectual faculty, or lack thereof, is of utmost importance at this point. Madness and folly, according to Bakhtin, permit one to see the world with different eyes.<sup>93</sup> At its pinnacle, folly as exemplified in the *sukhf* of Abū'l-Qāsim does not present the reader with versions of truth or renewal. Abū'l-Qāsim deliberately negates everything he says, as seen in the *ḥikāya* when he criticises Isfahan then praises it, then does the reverse for the city of Baghdad, for instance. He does not stand by anything he says; the folly depicted in the *ḥikāya* cannot be compared with the folly of the carnival that subverts to offer some truth as Bakhtin maintains. Bakhtin's folly is a folly that subverts its own definition insofar as it offers some 'truth' and if applied to the *ḥikāya* would turn *qubḥ*/ugliness, disorder and chaos into that which is beautiful and moral. The same holds for Bakhtin's explanation of profanities and hell as they subvert their own definition. In this respect, it becomes clear how the destabilisation and subversion of all definitions and concepts take place in the Bakhtinian model; this cannot be held true in the model before us. The *ḥikāya* does not subvert the definition of folly, profanity or hell; they are held true and stable. *Qubḥ* is recognised as an antithesis to *ḥusn* and the protagonist is seen for what he is: a fool. He does not subvert or mock established norms; rather, he takes responsibility for his choices even though they are foolish.

It has been shown how *qubḥ* functions as an aesthetic, moral and literary category in the literary process. In its utilisation and depiction of *qubḥ*, the *ḥikāya*'s structure, linguistic register, vocabulary and aesthetic register all engaged with the Qur'an's semiotics of paradise and hell as the loci conceptually linked to *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*, respectively. The language of the literary work thus does not become a random or accidental language but an artistic language that centralised the Qur'an as its source of poetic diction and aesthetic features.

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### But is it *adab*?

In the preface of the *ḥikāya*, Azdī uses the term *adab* to refer to several sources and literary works that informed his work. He says:

As for the *adab* that I choose: it is the rhetoric of the Bedouins; old poetry; unusual creative endeavours of the late notable *littérateurs* and the original tales that were fashioned by the contemporaneous distinguished poets. This is what I know of the *adab* of others. I own it and I tell the best of what they created and competed with, and I complement this with poetry of my own and epistles that I wrote and *maqāmāt* that I have attended.<sup>94</sup>

Azdī's all-inclusive grouping of several sources under the term *adab* makes his definition the closest to that of Wolfhart Heinrichs, who maintains that:

when Islamic culture reached maturity in the fourth/tenth century, *adab* had three major acceptations that were categorically different from each other: 1) 'good, correct, polite behaviour', 2) 'a genre of anecdotal and anthological literature which serves as a quarry of quotable materials (*muḥāḍarāt*) for the bel-esprit', and 3) 'a body of knowledge in the linguistic and literary field which comprises the genre of literature just mentioned, but includes further ancillary disciplines like grammar etc.'<sup>95</sup>

Azdī's compilation of these literary materials and his naming them *adab* to produce his own work – albeit in a fashion contrary to *adab* as a behaviour – attest to the fact that he considers his own work as part of the *adab* corpus. This literary pastiche should not be read as the work of an author wanting in talent and hence utilising other authors' works, neither should similar passages of other literary works found in the *ḥikāya* be used to attribute the work to another well-known author by reason of the content.<sup>96</sup> In the preface, Azdī informs the reader that this work is made of his choice of selections of *adab*, old and new.<sup>97</sup> It must be noted that not only did the official author of the *ḥikāya* have access to other literary works, but he also deliberately included them. The sources of the author therefore are not original, according to his own statement. Azdī's technique

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is not unusual. Such a conclusion can also be adduced from Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ's (d. 255/868–9) implicit views on creativity and originality: he maintains that all meanings are available everywhere and to all people (*al-mā'ānī maṭrūḥa*) and that the most important factors of creativity are form and structure (*al-shakl*).<sup>98</sup> This is not to misunderstand Jāḥiẓ and say that he de-emphasised content. Rather, '[h]e was simply trying to show that content may be revealed only through adequate form'.<sup>99</sup> The *ḥikāya*, in fact, prides itself on being an experimental and original work in form.

The *ḥikāya* shows a tangible invocation of *adab* as decorous behaviour, a corpus of literary works and a literary system. Through its literary appropriations of other *adab* works, notwithstanding the established distinction between popular<sup>100</sup> and canonical,<sup>101</sup> Azdī places his own work within the *adab* niche. The content of his work may seem contrary to *adab*, allowing it to enjoy a hybrid status, but its structure is affirmative of the definition of *adab*. The *ḥikāya* also engages with *adab* as a moral system, through its reliance on the categories of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* as defined in the Qur'an and their conceptual links to paradise and hell, and manoeuvres these appropriations in the structure and the artistic language of the *ḥikāya* itself. Various scholars have enumerated the influence of the Qur'an not only on Arab-Islamic culture in general<sup>102</sup> but also on *adab*.<sup>103</sup> In the *ḥikāya*, a microcosm of *adab*, the dynamics of narrative equilibrium, the artistic language and the linguistic register take their cue from the Qur'an. The Qur'an presents an evident demarcation between pre-Islamic and Islamic conceptual thought in Arab-Islamic civilisation. This demarcation is ultimately translated in language – the conventional carrier of concepts<sup>104</sup> – and so is translated, in turn, in cultural creative expressions such as *adab* and art, in the creative process itself and ultimately in diction.

The examination of *qubḥ* presented an opportunity not only for extracting the meaning of *ḥusn* and highlighting the aesthetics of *adab*, but also for understanding *adab*'s internal mechanics. According to Claudio Guillén, 'A [literary] system is more than a combination or a sum of its components. It implies a certain

dependence of the parts on the whole, and a substantial impact of the basic interrelationships.<sup>105</sup> In other words, it is not only necessary to examine *qubḥ* to recognise *ḥusn* and *i'tidāl*, but it is also important to understand what informs the conceptual categories of the *qabīḥ* and the *ḥasan*. This in turn sheds light on the literary system's own aesthetic and moral mechanics, both of which contribute to that system's sense of order and equilibrium and hence meaning. Literature, Guillén maintains, 'presents itself or functions historically as a system – i.e., as an order (of interacting parts) and a cluster of orders, changing and yet enduring through the centuries'.<sup>106</sup> In this respect, it becomes understandable that 'the individual work of art did not merely become an additional unit in a sum of separate units. It entered a structural whole, a system, among whose parts significant and reciprocal relations existed. The inability to perceive these relations is what one might call the "atomistic fallacy" in literary studies.'<sup>107</sup>

Throughout, this chapter has been adamant that there exists an Arabic literary system with an inherent structure, and that this should be called upon for meaningful criticism. It has also shown that a model developed from the Qur'an, when applied to the *ḥikāya*, challenges many of the preconceived ideas and constrained conclusions about this work as well as other works. *Ḥikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī* does exhibit themes observed in ancient Greek and Roman literature as well as premodern European literature due to the universality of the themes that the category of *qubḥ* unearths. However, as previously mentioned, these intersecting themes between premodern Arabic literary works and ancient and/or premodern European literature do not automatically render them 'carnavalesque' or 'subversive' in the Bakhtinian sense. This conjecture becomes clear in light of the uniqueness of the artistic language of the literary work discussed throughout, which bespeaks the semiotic influence of the Qur'an on conceptual literary, moral and aesthetic categories. Reading these works comparatively requires more than grouping them thematically as universal expressions that yield similar conclusions.

The presence of a moral vocabulary, which has been highlighted throughout this chapter, offers a key not only to understanding



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the works' internal mechanics but also to viewing the works as part of a collective whole and highlighting the role of the Qur'an in the language and thought of *adab*. This call for the return to philology in the humanities has been reiterated by Edward Said. Philology is defined, rather playfully, by Roman Jakobson as the 'art of reading slowly';<sup>108</sup> other definitions regard it as 'close reading (the literary critics) or historical-grammatical and textual criticism (the self-described philologists)'.<sup>109</sup> Sheldon Pollock defines philology as 'the discipline of making sense of texts'.<sup>110</sup> In the same vein, Said views the return to philology as a path towards apposite reading in the humanities: 'reading for meaning'.<sup>111</sup> Reading has its roots in Islamic humanism; it is a deliberate practice and a patient act that goes back to the history of the Qur'an itself. Darío Villanueva says that:

Said reminds us that the word *Qur'an* means 'reading' in Arabic and that the practice of *ijtihad* – personal and lingering reading, a sort of close reading – in the context of Islamic humanism shares the same goal as an unrenounceable humanist engagement to which comparative literature has much to contribute: teaching how to read well, which in our times means being a member of one's own literary tradition while remaining an eager visitor to the culture of the Other.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, the Qur'an is capable of reminding us to 'read for meaning' merely through its history. It is capable of offering a methodology for reading a literary text beyond cursory, often Pavlovian, box-ticking and platitudes: an attitude that goes against the humanities as a discipline. One does not need to state that such attitudes, while divorcing literature from its culture when it should not be divorced, also incongruously project onto these literary works, through the distorting mirror of subjectivity, a 'fabricated clash' between the sacred and the profane, between Islam and human creative activity under the pretext of what this practice understands or rather misunderstands as 'secular criticism', which is sometimes used to promulgate ungrounded and, occasionally, unfair arguments. Aamir Mufti reminds us of Edward Said's understanding of 'secular criticism':

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[It] is a practice of unbelief; it is directed, however, not simply at the objects of religious piety but at secular ‘beliefs’ as well, and, at its most ambitious, at all those moments at which thought and culture become frozen, congealed, thing-like and self-enclosed . . . At no point is *secular* used in his work in simple opposition to the religious per se.<sup>113</sup>

The practice of ‘unbelief’ is to shed one’s prejudices before encountering the text or before intellectual encounters at large; it is not an ‘unbelief’ understood in the religious or spiritual sense. In fact, the Qur’anic methodology advanced in this chapter corroborates ‘secular criticism’ as Said advanced it and as we understand it. The establishing of the Qur’an’s role generates a healthy ‘unbelief’ of the frozen and self-enclosed literary judgements that have become dogmas and a system of belief in themselves. This chapter has methodically and critically established the Qur’an’s role in the system of *adab*, using the *ḥikāya* as a model, structurally, in the grammar of narrative; aesthetically, in the conceptual categories of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* and their semiotics in this work; and linguistically, in the semantic relationships the diction conducts with the Qur’an specifically and the Islamic tradition generally, as well as with the literary system. It thereby offers hermeneutical solutions, key terms and a language through which literary criticism can interpret *adab*. In doing so, this interpretation has resisted certain received ideas about this work and opposed ‘every kind of cliché and unthinking language’, which is the essence of humanism.<sup>114</sup> That being done, the interpretation of *adab* presupposes there is also a misinterpretation of *adab* that relies on several proxies that not only diminish our appreciation of the literary work but also reduce, if not hinder, the possibilities of developing Arabic poetics and advancing a responsible language for literary criticism.

#### NOTES

- 1 Muḥammad Abū’l-Muṭahhar al-Azdī, *Ḥikāyat Abī’l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*, ed. Adam Mez (Heidelberg, Carl Winter’s Universitäts Buchhandlung, 1902). Apart from Adam Mez, in his introduction (in German), and ‘Abbūd al-Shālji, who attributes Azdī’s work to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (see Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī [attrib.], *al-Risāla al-Baghdādiyya*, ed. ‘Abbūd al-Shālji [Beirut,

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- Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1980), the text has not been comprehensively studied as a literary work in its own right. A recent exception is Emily Selove's *Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim: A Literary Banquet* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016), in which she draws comparisons between Azdī's *ḥikāya* and other banquet literature (ancient Greek and Roman, and contemporary Arabic). See, also, Francesco Gabrieli, 'Sulla Ḥikāyat Abū l-Qāsim di Abū l-Muṭahhar al-Azdī', *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 20 (1942), pp. 33–45; Monica Balda, 'Marginalité et éloquence contestataire: Le personnage d'Abū l-Qāsim dans la Ḥikāyat Abī-l-Qāsim d'Abū l-Muṭahhar al-Azdī', in Cristina de la Puente, ed., *Identidades Marginales* (Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003), pp. 371–93. Passing references to Azdī's work may also be found amongst other discussions pertaining to premodern drama or the *maqāmāt* (literary work consisting of alternating prose and verse); see Clifford E. Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld, Vol. I: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden, Brill, 1976), pp. 20, 30 and 66–7; Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 95, 97, 99, 101, 114, 116, 118, 131, 134; Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama: A History of a Genre* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2002), pp. 84–7; Rosella Dorigo Ceccato, 'Drama in the Post-Classical Period: A Survey' and Dwight R. Reynolds, 'Popular Prose in the Post-Classical Period' – both appear in Roger Allen and Donald S. Richards, eds, *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 349–51 and 352, and 264 respectively.
- 2 The exact dates of the author are unknown, but the estimation of the fifth/eleventh century is supported by Mez's finding of a reference to one Abū'l-Muṭahhar in *Dumyat al-qaṣr* by 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Bākharzī (d. 467/1075); see Azdī, *Ḥikāyat*, pp. xiv–xv. Hämeen-Anttila (*Maqama*, p. 87), however, argues that Azdī may have known Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 397/1007), which would make him a contemporary of the latter; this then situates Azdī in the fourth/tenth century not the fifth/eleventh century. See Clifford E. Bosworth, 'Abū'l Muṭahhar al-Azdī', *EAL*, vol. I, pp. 39–40.
  - 3 Stein Haugom Olsen, *The End of Literary Theory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 2.
  - 4 Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Grammar of Narrative', in idem, *The Poetics of Prose* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 108–19.
  - 5 Stefan Sperl, 'Islamic Spirituality and the Visual Arts', in Vincent Cornell and Bruce Lawrence, eds, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Islamic Spirituality* (forthcoming). For more on the term *i'tidāl*, see J. Christoph Bürgel, 'Adab und *i'tidāl* in ar-Ruhāwīs *Adab aṭ-ṭabīb*: Studie zur Bedeutungsgeschichte zweier Begriffe', *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 117 (1967), pp. 90–102.
  - 6 Oleg Grabar, 'The Qur'an as a Source of Artistic Inspiration', in Fahmida Suleman, ed., *Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions* (Oxford, Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2007), p. 38.
  - 7 Roy P. Mottahedeh, 'Ajā'ib in *The Thousand and One Nights*', in Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh, eds, *The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 37–8.

- 8 For example, Moreh (*Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World*, p. 96) reads Azdi's *Ḥikāyat* as a 'mockery' of Shi'i piety and sees all the religious references as 'blasphemy'.
- 9 Charles Pellat, 'Ḥikāya', *EP*, vol. III, pp. 367 and 368.
- 10 The *ṭufaylī*, or party-crasher, is a popular character type found in *adab* literature.
- 11 Qur'an translations in this chapter are taken from Muhammad A.S. Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'an. A New Translation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 12 Muhammad Abdel Haleem translates *maqḥūhīn* as 'despised', while Abdullah Yusuf Ali translates it as 'loathed and despised'; George Sale translates it as 'shamefully rejected'; Thomas B. Irving as 'they will look hideous'; Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley as 'they will be hideous and spurned'. Other translations are those by Arthur J. Arberry and Laleh Bakhtiar who render it as 'spurned'; Muhammad Asad as 'bereft of all good'; Edward H. Palmer as 'abhorred'; John Medows Rodwell as 'covered shall they be with shame'; Nessim J. Dawood as 'damned'; and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall as 'hateful'. See Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*; Abdullah Yusuf Ali, tr., *The Qur'an*, 5th edn (Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions, 2001); George Sale, tr., *The Koran, Commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed* (London, Scatcherd and Letterman, 1821); Thomas B. Irving, tr., *The Qur'an: The First American Version* (Brattleboro, Amana Books, 1985); Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley, tr., *The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English* (Norwich, Bookwork Publications, 1999); Arthur J. Arberry, tr., *The Koran Interpreted* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1955); Laleh Bakhtiar, tr., *The Sublime Qur'an* (Chicago, Kazi Publications, 2007); Muhammad Asad, tr., *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar, London, Dār al-Andalus, 1980); Edward H. Palmer, tr., *The Qur'an*, 2 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1880); John Medows Rodwell, tr., *The Koran* (London, Dent, 1911); Nessim J. Dawood, tr., *The Koran*, 4th edn (London, Penguin Books, 1974); Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, tr., *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (Beltsville, MD, Amana Publications, 1996).
- 13 See *Sūrat Hūd* (Q. 11:44, 60, 68 and 95) and *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn* (Q. 23:41).
- 14 al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, ed. Maḥdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, 8 vols (Baghdad, Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa'l-I'lām, 1980), vol. III, pp. 53–4.
- 15 Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 7 vols (Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1997), vol. V, pp. 187–8.
- 16 Buṭrus al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-muḥīṭ*, 2 vols (Beirut, 1867–70), vol. II, p. 1652.
- 17 See Aḥmad Ibn Fāris al-Qazwīnī, *Mujmal al-lughā*, ed. Hādī Ḥasan Ḥammūdī, 5 vols (Kuwait, al-Munazzama al-'Arabiyya li'l-Tarbiya wa'l-Thaqāfa wa'l-'Ulūm, 1985), vol. III, p. 138; Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāgha* (Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1979), p. 488; Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī, *al-Takmila wa'l-dhayl wa'l-ṣila li-Kitāb Tāj al-lughā wa ṣaḥāḥ al-'arabiyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Alim al-Taḥāwī, 6 vols (Cairo, Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1970–77), vol. II, pp. 80–81; Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Firūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, ed. Naṣr al-Hūrīnī, 4 vols ([Cairo], Maṭba'at Būlāq, 1884–5), vol. I, p. 239; Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'arūs*, ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, 40 vols (Kuwait, al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1965–2001), vol. IV, pp. 162–3.

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- 18 Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Classical Arabic Canon of Polite (and Impolite) Literature', in Gillis J. Dorleijn and Herman L.J. Vanstiphout, eds, *Cultural Repertoires: Structure, Function and Dynamics* (Leuven, Peeters, 2003), pp. 45–6.
- 19 Inhabitants are not only protected from unpleasant speech in paradise, but from physical (the fiery punishment of hell) as well as emotional and/or psychological unpleasantness. See Muhammad A.S. Abdel Haleem, 'Paradise in the Qur'an', in idem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Styles* (London, I.B.Tauris, 1999), pp. 95–6.
- 20 David Damrosch, 'Foreword: Literary Criticism and the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16, no. 3 (2014), p. 6.
- 21 Afnan H. Fatani, 'Language and the Qur'an', *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Oliver Leaman (Abingdon, Routledge, 2006), pp. 356–72. See also Navid Kermani, *Balāghat al-nūr: Jamāliyyāt al-naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī*, tr. Muḥammad Aḥmad Maṣṣūr *et al.* (Beirut, Dār al-Jamal, 2008), pp. 29 ff. (orig. pub. as *Gott ist schön: Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* [Munich, C.H. Beck, 1999]).
- 22 See, for instance, 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im Khafājī and 'Abd al-'Azīz Sharaf (Beirut, Dār al-Jil, 1991); idem, *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im Khafājī (Cairo, Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1969); Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī, *I'jāz al-Qur'an*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣāqir (Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1954); Kermani, *Balāghat al-nūr*. See also, Issa J. Boullata, ed., *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'an* (Richmond, Curzon, 2000); Adūnis ['Alī Aḥmad Sa'id], *al-Naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī wa āfāq al-kitāba* (Beirut, Dār al-Adāb, 1993).
- 23 Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Naḥḥās, *I'rāb al-Qur'an*, ed. Zuhayr Ghāzī Zāyid, 5 vols (Beirut, 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1988), vol. IV, p. 59.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Naḥḥās, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'an al-karīm*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī, 6 vols (Mecca, Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā, 1409/[1988]), vol. IV, p. 342.
- 26 Ibid., p. 442.
- 27 Ibid., vol. VI, p. 263.
- 28 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Baghdādī Khāzin, *Lubāb al-ta'wīl fī ma'ānī al-tanzīl*, 7 vols (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1979), vol. V, p. 32.
- 29 Azdī, *Hikāyat*, p. 1.
- 30 Sinan Antoon, 'The Poetics of the Obscene: Ibn al-Ḥajjāj and *Sukhf*' (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2006), p. 207, n. 394.
- 31 Hāmeen-Anttila, *Maqāma*, pp. 84–5. Hāmeen-Anttila also identifies the *maqāmāt* in question (*al-Baghdādiyya*, *al-Dīnāriyya*, *al-Sāsāniyya*), but is not inclined to believe that Azdī borrowed these from Hamadhānī and is doubtful that the latter might have borrowed from Azdī. He, however, entertains the possibility that there could be a common third source or that the two authors knew each other. See idem, 'Al-Hamaḍānī and the Early History of the *Maqāma*', in Urbain Vermeulen and Daniel de Smet, eds, *Philosophy and Arts in the Islamic World* (Leuven, Peeters, 1998), pp. 83–96.
- 32 Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. III, pp. 259–60.
- 33 Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Some Brave Attempts at Generic Classification in Premodern Arabic Literature', in Bert Roest and Herman Vanstiphout, eds,

- Aspects of Genre and Type in Pre-Modern Literary Cultures* (Groningen, Styx Publications, 1999), pp. 15–31. For a discussion on *mujūn* in poetry, see Julie Scott Meisami, ‘Arabic Mujūn Poetry’, in Frederick De Jong, ed., *Verse and the Fair Sex* (Utrecht, M. Th. Houtsma Stichting, 1993), pp. 8–30.
- 34 It should be mentioned that *Kitāb al-Aghānī* relates anecdotes of entertainers and poets, such as Abū’l-‘Ibar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Hāshimī (d. c. 252/866), ‘performing’ *sukhf* that could be qualified as indecent because of its engagement with nudity, though it is far from erotic. See Antoon, ‘The Poetics of the Obscene’, p. 72, n. 191.
- 35 James E. Montgomery, ‘Sukhf’, *EP*, vol. IX, p. 804. Cf. Antoon (‘The Poetics of the Obscene’, p. 20), who maintains also that it is with Ibn al-Ḥajjāj that *sukhf* became associated with obscenity and scatology as well.
- 36 In his *Kitāb al-Tatfīl* (The Book of Party-Crashing), Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī offers a definition of *ṭufaylīs*, as well as anecdotes and poetry on them. Moreover, he offers a philological discussion of the origin of *tatfīl*, whose etymology he traces to various possibilities, notably to ‘*al-ṭafl*, which means the onset of night upon day in its darkness’. He comments, ‘The *ṭufaylī* is [thus] likened to darkness that sets on the people (his victims) [who are bewildered by] the manner of his intrusion in regard to his identity and why he is invited, if he is at all invited.’ See Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Tatfīl* [a.k.a. *al-Tatfīl wa ḥikāyāt al-ṭufayliyyīn wa akhbārihim wa nawādir kalāmihim wa ash‘ārihim*] (Damascus, al-Qudsī, 1927), p. 9. The English words currently in circulation that are used to describe a *ṭufaylī* are ‘sponger’, ‘party-crasher’ and ‘parasite’, but these do not do justice to the word, either in its etymology or meaning; they only perhaps describe a metaphoric similarity to the activity of the *ṭufaylī* and bear the same moral indignation in their assigning. The real distinction, however, lies in the fact that the Arabic *ṭufaylī*, unlike the English terms, is derived solely from the emotional effect *ṭufaylīs* have on the hosts and invited guests. See also, Fedwa Malti-Douglas, ‘Structure and Organization in a Monographic *Adab* Work: *Al-Tatfīl* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40, no. 3 (1981), pp. 227–45.
- 37 Some clever *ṭufaylīs* possessed impressive knowledge of the Qur’an. They would ‘employ the quotation of qoranic verses in order to justify their action and achieve material gain’. See Ulrich Marzolph, ‘The Qoran and Jocular Literature’, *Arabica* 47, no. 3 (2000), p. 483.
- 38 Christian Lange, ‘The Discovery of Paradise in Islam: The Here and the Hereafter in Islamic Traditions’, Inaugural Lecture, Utrecht University, 16 April 2012, p. 6 (available at Utrecht University Repository, <http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/250805>).
- 39 Moreh maintains that the ‘very title of *Ḥikāyat Abī’l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī* suggests that the work is a repertoire of theatrical scenes played in tenth-century Baghdad, put together by the author to mock Shi‘i piety and depict everyday life in Baghdad’. Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World*, p. 96.
- 40 Azdī, *Ḥikāyat*, pp. 91–2. This part is found in the *Maqāma Sāsāniyya* by Hamadhānī, but without the sexual references.
- 41 Literally it means ‘double-floored-ness’, but more generally it means ‘ambiguous’. I am indebted to Stefan Sperl for introducing me to this word.

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While not a literary term in itself, it captures the feeling of being faced with two concrete realities (as is the case in the *hikāya*) which, at the same time, are hollow realities: that which is hidden undermines the feeling of concreteness one stands on.

- 42 Malti-Douglas, 'Structure and Organization in a Monographic *Adab* Work', p. 236.
- 43 Azdi, *Hikāyat*, pp. 35–49.
- 44 See Glaire D. Anderson, 'Food and Diet', *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopaedia. Volume I*, ed. Josef W. Meri (Abingdon, Routledge, 2006), p. 264.
- 45 Clifford E. Bosworth, 'Shu'ūbiyya', *EAL*, vol. II, p. 717.
- 46 See Fārūq 'Umar, *al-Fikr al-'arabī fī mujābahat al-shu'ūbiyya* (Baghdad, Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfiyya al-'Āmma Āfāq 'Arabiyya, 1988).
- 47 See Bosworth, 'Shu'ūbiyya', *EAL*, vol. II, p. 717.
- 48 Issa J. Boullata, 'Abbasids', *EAL*, vol. I, p. 7.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Azdi, *Hikāyat*, pp. 21–105.
- 51 Ibid., pp. 51–7.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 61–5.
- 53 The epitome of feminine beauty, as described in classical Arabic poetry, was a woman who was tall, with broad shoulders, a narrow waist and wide hips: someone with an 'hourglass figure', so to speak. See Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, *Jamāl al-mar'a 'ind al-'arab* (n.p, 1969).
- 54 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London, Allen Lane, 1969), p. 129.
- 55 Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Hijā', *EAL*, vol. I, p. 284.
- 56 Azdi, *Hikāyat*, pp. 49–70.
- 57 Ibid., p. 70.
- 58 For the characteristics of *zarf*, see Abū'l-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Akhbār al-zirāf wa'l-mutamājinin*, ed. Bassām 'Abd al-Waḥhāb al-Jābī (Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2001), p. 42. See also, Abū'l-Ṭayyib Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Washshā, *al-Zarf wa'l-zurafā'* (Cairo, 1907).
- 59 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Akhbār al-zirāf wa'l-mutamājinin*, p. 27.
- 60 Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *al-Furūq al-lughawiyya* (Cairo, Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1934), p. 211.
- 61 This behaviour is represented as libertinism, hence it is classified as *mujūn*. See the fifteen words associated with *mujūn* from the poetry of the second/eighth century in which male homosexuality makes seven entries under different terms. See 'Alī Zuwayn, *Alfāz al-ḥaḍāra min khilāl al-shi'r al-'arabī fī'l-qarn al-thānī al-hijrī: Dirāsa wa mu'jam*, 2 vols (Abu Dhabi, Hay'at Abū Ḍaby li'l-Thaqāfa wa'l-Turāth, 2006), vol. I, p. 349.
- 62 Joseph Horowitz, 'Abū'l-Ḳāsim', *EP*, vol. I, p. 133.
- 63 Impure objects and substances include wine, urine, faeces and blood, to name a few. For a comprehensive discussion of *najāsa* and a full list of things that are considered impure, see Ze'ev Maghen, 'Ablution', *EI THREE* (Brill Online).
- 64 Azdi, *Hikāyat*, p. 122.
- 65 Ibid., p. 1.
- 66 Ibid., p. 133.
- 67 Ibid.

- 68 Ibid., p. 4. All English translations of quoted material from the *hikāya* are my own.
- 69 Ibid., pp. 137–9.
- 70 *Mālik khāzin Jahannam* is the guardian of hellfire; he is described in a prophetic hadith as the ugliest man one could possibly imagine (one whose ugliness exceeds the imagination). Muḥammad b. Ismāʿil al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut, Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2001), pp. 1247–8. See also Christian Lange, ‘Hell’, *EI THREE* (Brill Online).
- 71 Oliver Leaman, ‘Laghw and Lahw’, *The Qurʾan: An Encyclopedia*, p. 354.
- 72 Azdī, *Ḥikāyat*, pp. 145–6.
- 73 For more on this, see Afnan H. Fatani, ‘Nur’, *The Qurʾan: An Encyclopedia*, pp. 467–8.
- 74 See *Sūrat al-Baqara*, Q. 2:257: *God is the ally of those who believe: He brings them out of the depths of darkness and into the light. As for the disbelievers, their allies are false gods who take them from the light into the depths of darkness; they are the inhabitants of the Fire, and there they will remain.*
- 75 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, tr. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 84.
- 76 Lange, ‘The Discovery of Paradise in Islam’, p. 8.
- 77 Ibid., p. 17.
- 78 For example, Muhsin Jasim Musawi treats some aspects in the *Thousand and One Nights*, such as *nabīdh* – a fermented drink generally understood to have been less intoxicating than alcohol (*khamr*) – as a ‘carnavalesque stimulus’. See Muhsin Jasim Musawi, *The Islamic Context of the Thousand and One Nights* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 171. In like manner, James Monroe also reads the *isnād* in the *Maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī as a parody of the hadith genre, a reading with which Hämeen-Anttila rightly disagrees. See James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badīʿ az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative* (Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1983); Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, p. 46. The contracted *isnād* in the *Maqāmāt* is meant to act as a clue to the work’s unreliable narrator, the wandering scholar ʿĪsā b. Hishām, in a direct reference to an important aspect of beautiful speech: truth, hence reliability. Thus, it becomes difficult to see the merits of reading this technique as a ‘parody’ of the whole genre.
- 79 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, p. 114.
- 80 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, tr. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984), p. xxi (orig. pub. as *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* [Moscow, Khudozhestvenia Literatura, 1965]).
- 81 Ibid., pp. 90–91.
- 82 Franz Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom Prior to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, Brill, 1969), p. 10.
- 83 Ibid., pp. 81–5.
- 84 The key quality of this nobility of character was generosity (*jūd*), expressed in terms of generosity of spirit and magnanimity of character. A person possessing qualities contrary to this definition (e.g. jealousy, envy and cowardice) was deemed akin to a slave, even if the person was legally free. See *ibid.*, pp. 81–99. The moral dimension of freedom (*hurriyya*) may also be traced in premodern Arabic book titles or in literary phrases such as *hurr al-kalām*, which, as Rosenthal maintains, ‘does not refer to “free speech” but to speech of a high literary quality’. See *ibid.*, p. 10.



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- 85 Ibid., p. 12.
- 86 Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and Abū 'Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb Ibn Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil wa'l-Shawāmil*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo, Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa'l-Tarjama wa'l-Nashr, 1370/1951), pp. 220–26, cited in Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*, p. 19. [Rosenthal's translation].
- 87 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 19.
- 88 Ibid., p. 17.
- 89 For more on *hijā'*, see Geert Jan van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly: Attitudes Towards Invective Poetry (Hijā') in Classical Arabic Literature* (Leiden, Brill, 1988).
- 90 van Gelder, 'Hijā'', *EAL*, vol. I, p. 284.
- 91 For example, the poet Ibn al-Ḥajjāj would eavesdrop on the verbal assaults uttered in the market and record them; he would ask people in the market the following day about meanings he did not understand. See van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, pp. 81–2.
- 92 See Antoon, 'The Poetics of the Obscene', pp. 68 ff.
- 93 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 273. Seeing the world with different eyes through madness and folly is an established category in Arabic literature, but it does not involve the Bakhtinian carnivalesque. For a classification of the types of fools in Arabic literature and culture (the romantic fool, the wise fool, the holy fool), see Michael Dols, *Majnūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, ed. Diana E. Immisch (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 313–422.
- 94 Azdī, *Ḥikāyat*, p. 1.
- 95 Wolfhart Heinrichs, 'The Classification of the Sciences and the Consolidation of Philology in Classical Islam', in Jan Willem Drijvers and Alasdair A. MacDonald, eds, *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-modern Europe and the Near East* (Leiden, Brill, 1995), pp. 119–20. For more on the definition of *adab*, see Nuha Alshaar, 'Introduction. The Relation of *Adab* to the Qur'an: Conceptual and Historical Framework' (chapter 1), pp. 6–16, and 47 n. 21 in this volume.
- 96 As pointed out in n. 1 above, 'Abbūd al-Shālījī believes that the real author of the tale might not be Azdī but Tawḥīdī. He adduces this mainly because of the similarity in style found in some of Tawḥīdī's works and the work under discussion. See Tawḥīdī [attrib.], *al-Risāla al-Baghdādiyya*, pp. 9–11.
- 97 Azdī, *Ḥikāyat*, p. 1.
- 98 Iḥsān 'Abbās, *Tārīkh al-naqd al-adabī 'inda'l-'arab* (Beirut, Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1986), p. 99.
- 99 Krystyna Skarżyńska-Bocheńska, 'Some Aspects of al-Jāḥiẓ's Rhetorical Theory', *Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies* 3 (1990), p. 104.
- 100 An understanding of the term 'popular' is best viewed through Harry Norris's summation of Mia Gerhardt's analysis of the matter. He writes: 'Mia Gerhardt has suggested that Arabic popular literature of the early 'Abbasid period drew its inspiration from three main sources: Persia, the bedouin society of the Arabian peninsula and the Baghdad of Hārūn al-Rashīd (170–93/786–809) and al-Ma'mūn (198–218/813–33)'. See Harry T. Norris, 'Fables and Legends', in Julia Ashtiany et al., eds, *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Vol. II: 'Abbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 136, and Mia Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of the*

- Thousand and One Nights* (Leiden, Brill, 1963), pp. 121–30. Although the *hikāya* under discussion is a product of a much later Baghdad than the one Gerhardt specifies for popular literature, it drew its inspiration from the life and culture of the city. For more on popular literature, see Harry T. Norris, ‘Fables and Legends in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times’, in Alfred F.L. Beeston *et al.*, eds, *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 374–86.
- 101 That is, belonging to ‘a body of writings or other creative works that have been recognized as standard or authoritative’. See Trevor Ross, ‘Canon’, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. Irene Rima Makaryk (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 514.
- 102 See Walid Saleh, ‘Word’, in Jamal Elias, ed., *Twenty-One Words in Islam* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2010), pp. 356–76; Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, tr. Shawkat M. Toorawah (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009) (orig. pub. as *Écrire et transmettre dans les débuts de l’islam* [Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2002]); Muḥammad Zaghāl Sallām, *Athar al-Qur’ān fī taṭawwur al-naqd al-‘arabī ilā ākhir al-qarn al-rābi‘ al-hijrī* (Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1961).
- 103 See Wadād al-Qāḍī, ‘The Impact of the Qur’an on the Epistolography of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yahyā al-Kātib (d. 132/750)’ (chapter 11), pp. 341–79 in this volume.
- 104 See Paul Henle, ed., *Language, Thought and Culture* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1958); Shukri B. Abed, ‘Language’, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, eds, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, Routledge, 1996), pp. 898–925.
- 105 Claudio Guillén, ‘Poetics as System’, *Comparative Literature* 22, no. 3 (1970), pp. 195–6.
- 106 Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 4.
- 107 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 108 Cited in Sheldon Pollock, ‘Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World’, *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 4 (Summer 2009), p. 933.
- 109 *Ibid.*, p. 934. Pollock does not name names in these references but refers to the fact that he cites them in his article.
- 110 *Ibid.*, p. 934.
- 111 Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 70.
- 112 Darío Villanueva, ‘Possibilities and Limits of Comparative Literature Today’, *Comparative Literature and Culture* 13, no. 5 (2011), p. 8. Available at <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1915&context=clweb>.
- 113 Aamir R. Mufti, ‘Critical Secularism: A Reintroduction for Perilous Times’, *boundary 2* 31, no. 2 (2004), pp. 2–3.
- 114 Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 43.