

4

The Literary Geography of Meaning in the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī

Sarah R. bin Tyer

This chapter will analyze the city/cities in the *maqāmāt* of Badī° al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 395/1007) and Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. °Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122), proposing that the city plays a meaning-making role in their work, offering us interpretative strategies through their literary geographies. Both the semantic and legal geographies in the work of these two authors will be highlighted through two main foci. First, in the case of al-Hamadhānī, I propose that the text’s cities belong to the geography of the “familiar,” where the language use of the protagonist, Abū’l Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī, would be readily comprehensible as the linguistic play that it is inside the Arabic literary geography he inhabits. His metaphors, stylistics, and inverted use of language would not be understood as literal but as a game. In this respect, the space of the familiar becomes a metonymy of semantic stability and the tools of *adab* offer us deeper insights into the *maqāmāt* and a richer reading experience. Second, I argue that the literary geography acts as a frame to both moral and legal stability in the *maqāmāt* of these authors. In al-Ḥarīrī’s *maqāmāt*, the protagonist, Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī, abuses the stability of the city’s legal geography for his benefit. While the legal framework of the city may not be productive for al-Iskandarī, the protagonist of al-Hamadhānī’s *maqāmāt*, the city and its laws are conducive to al-Sarūjī’s plans. The city therefore acts as a border in the *maqāmāt* for both semantic as well as moral and legal stability and law enforcement.

The *Maqāmāt*: One City is Not Enough

One of the most famous premodern Arabic genres, the *maqāma*, is a prosimetric genre that combines both rhymed prose known in Arabic as *sajʿ* and poetry.¹ As Rina Drory defines it, it is a “collection of short independent narratives written in ornamental rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) with verse insertions, and [that] share a common plot-scheme and two constant protagonists: the narrator and the hero.”² Most *maqāmāt* follow this scheme with different adaptations according to the individual author.³ Invented by al-Hamadhānī, the genre is partially inspired by the life of the mendicants or *al-mukaddīn* and their anecdotes.⁴ Al-Hamadhānī’s “interest in low life is very probably an inheritance from Ibn ʿAbbād who collected around him both scholars interested in low life (and obscenity, for that matter) as well as globe-trotters and witty beggars like Abū Dulaf.”⁵ However, these types of anecdotes are not fully comparable to the elaborate constructed metaphors, virtuosity, and subject matter covered by the protagonists Abūʿl-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī and Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī in their corresponding *maqāmāt*, nor should the usage of *sajʿ* in the *maqāmāt* be attributed to an imitation of the Bedouin mendicants.⁶ As of the fourth AH/tenth AD century, *sajʿ* was “increasingly used for official correspondence and then for historiography and other forms of prose composition.”⁷ The *maqāmāt* depend on accounts related to us by way of a narrator of the author’s creation. Generally, in each *maqāma* the fictional narrator encounters his respective protagonist: al-Hamadhānī uses the narrator ʿĪsā b. Hishām, who relates his encounters with the protagonist Abūʿl-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī, while al-Ḥarīrī relies on the narrator al-Ḥārith b. Hammām, who describes his encounters with Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī. Integral to the *maqāmāt* as a genre is the perpetual travelling of their protagonists to different cities, which Abdelfattah Kilito (ʿAbd al-Fattaḥ Kiliṭū) reads as an aspect that makes the *maqāmāt* resemble contemporaneous travel accounts of geographers like al-Iṣṭakhrī (d. 346/957–8), Ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 378/988), and al-Muqaddasī (d. 380/991).⁸ This also, notably, marks the *maqāmāt* as a distinctly urban genre.

One question the *maqāmāt* raise is how cities function within the narrative, whether as setting or when the names of specific cities are simply mentioned. We might ask why ʿĪsā b. Hishām repeatedly mentions his geographical coordinates. In a tale found in *The Thousand and One Nights*, “The Hunchback Cycle,” it is related that one of the events happened in China. However, the king, the hunchback, and the protagonists, Muhsin J. al-Musawi

maintains, are all under Islamic jurisdiction.⁹ Setting the tale in China here serves the narrative purpose of leaving the familiar realm of Baghdad or Cairo in order to step into the unfamiliar. Yet, this unfamiliar is still familiarly Arab-Islamic as al-Musawi argues, perhaps even a literarisation of empire expansion. Unlike the foreign, mythical, mysterious, and supernatural cities in the *Nights*, the cities featured in the *maqāmāt* of both al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī are all part of the domestic and familiar; they are not foreign. These cities are part of the authors' cartography, placed within the texts for the reader to create meaning from their literary geography.

It is instructive to ask where Abū'l Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī and/or Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī are located geographically. In almost every *maqāma* by al-Hamadhānī, °Īsā b. Hishām begins by justifying his travel or presence in a certain city. For instance, in *al-maqāma al-azādhīyya*, he explains his presence in Baghdad by stating that he is there to buy some dates for retail at the seasonal date market. Household or cotton trade is the reason that °Īsā goes to Balkh in *al-maqāma al-balkhiyya*. In *al-maqāma al-sijistāniyya*, he justifies going to Sijistān to meet an unspecified pressing need. We know that he traveled to Yemen, Shīrāz, Damascus, and Ḥomṣ, to mention a few of the cities that comprise his geography, and that he went on the Ḥajj as well. He also twice relates that he had to escape – but does not say from where – when he was accused of theft or of earning money illegally.¹⁰ °Īsā is not just an itinerant merchant who sometimes gets into trouble while conducting business, he also relates that he was in the region of the Caspian Sea fighting with the army.¹¹ Thus, it seems that the figuration of these cities and the overall expanded geography that creates an image of a globetrotting charlatan and a merchant are meant to represent a believable geography for the audience of the *maqāmāt*. Al-Hamadhānī's literary creation of a verisimilitude for the audience is successful. Rather than being epistemologically barren, it could be argued that the cities' collective roles lend a sense of reality and purpose to the *maqāmāt* of both al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī.

Writer/Reader Contract: Centers and the Literary Institutions

As °Īsā travels to the different cities of the *maqāmāt*, it is acknowledged that he is a stranger amongst strangers. Yet, in each city to which he travels there is inevitably a single person he recognizes, namely al-Iskandarī. °Īsā's serendipitous meetings with al-Iskandarī every time he travels tell us that al-Iskandarī occupies all of the same spaces at the same time; it may be that he is not actually anywhere in particular, but rather inhabits all of these spaces simultaneously. If indeed

al-Iskandarī is everywhere, it may be useful to ask who or what is al-Iskandarī. Perhaps al-Hamadhānī's incongruent figuration of al-Iskandarī – sometimes as a young man, sometimes an adolescent, and at other times an older man with greying hair, a madman, or even an Imam – alludes to his nature. Al-Iskandarī, as he himself says, is everywhere because he is an object of deception. He refers to himself as “*jawwālat al-bilād wa jawwābat al-ufuq ...*”:

*I am a mighty wanderer over the countries,
And a great traverser of the horizons.
I am the toy of time,
And am continually on the road.*¹²

Irrespective of the city in which he is present, he lives outside the texts of the *maqāmāt*. Al-Iskandarī is what Umberto Eco calls “a fluctuating character”: he “exhibits a *core of properties* that seem to be identified by everybody,”¹³ °Īsā and the readers included. Like other fluctuating characters across world literature (Don Quixote, Gatsby, Madame Bovary, etc.), al-Iskandarī and al-Sarūjī live independently of the text: “Being independent of the text and of the possible world where they were born, [the characters] are (so to speak) *circulating among us*, and we encounter some difficulties in not considering them real persons.”¹⁴ The literarisation of the circulation of al-Iskandarī, and later al-Sarūjī, is manifest in what both al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī do to make these characters the travelers that they are.

The concept of the “fluctuating character” is equally evident in the *maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī. In his preface to the *maqāmāt*, al-Ḥarīrī anticipates literal-minded critics and readers. He attributes the construction of his work not only to his predecessor al-Hamadhānī as the author and founder of the *maqāmāt* genre, but to the two fictional protagonists:

و بعد، فإنه قد جرى ببعض أندية الأدب الذي ركدت في هذه العصر ربحه، و خبت مصابيحها،
ذكر المقامات التي إبتدعها بديع الزمان، و علامة همذان، – رحمه الله تعالى – و عزا إلى أبي
الفتح الإسكندري نشأتها، و إلى عيسى ابن هشام روايتها، و كلاهما مجهول لا يعرف، و نكرة لا
تتعرف. فأشار من إشارته حُكم، و طاعته غُثم، إلى أن أنشئ مقامات أتلو فيها تلو البديع [...]
مما أملت جميعه على لسان أبي زيد السروجي و أسندت روايته إلى الحارث ابن همام البصري

(al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt al-ḥāriri*, 15–16)

[...] And now to proceed, it so happened that in some belle-lettrist circles, whose energy had stagnated and light had dimmed, the *maqāmāt* that Badī° al-Zamān – “the wonder of the age” and the “scholar of Hamadhān,” may

God have mercy on his soul – had created were mentioned. He attributed their origin to Abū'l Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī and their narration to ʿĪsā b. Hishām. They are both anonymous and unidentified: unknown. So he whose signal is a command and whose obedience is prized beckoned that I fashion *maqāmāt* following in the footsteps of Badīʿ al-Zamān [...] which I composed as by the tongue of Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī and attributed their narration to al-Ḥārith b. Hammām.

Al-Ḥārīrī considers Abū'l Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī to be the protagonist who established the genre and ʿĪsā b. Hishām as the one responsible for its narration.¹⁵ Both characters are referred to as anonymous and unidentified (*majhūlun lā yuʿraf wa nakiratun lā tataʿarrāf*), i.e. fictional characters.¹⁶ In the quote cited above, al-Ḥārīrī does not stop at the extraordinary talent of al-Hamadhānī as an author – who he fully acknowledges and praises – but extends the success of the *maqāmāt* to the characters themselves. His emulation of al-Hamadhānī recognizes that for the genre to function and be understood as such, the characters must now be recognized as part of this convention, and so too is their globetrotting from city to city. Not only was his emulation successful, but as Wolfhart Heinrichs maintains, the *maqāmāt* of al-Ḥārīrī qualify as a “best-seller” in medieval Arabic literature despite the fact that there was not yet “a market for the masses.”¹⁷ Al-Ḥārīrī’s *maqāmāt* acknowledged, classified, and participated in the literary institution of the *maqāmāt* at a specific historical moment, thereby generically grouping his work with that of al-Hamadhānī’s.¹⁸ Fredric Jameson has noted that, “[g]enres are essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public[.]”¹⁹ Like any institution, people can join, participate and even reshape this institution.²⁰

The literary and cultural institutions that the genre of the *maqāmāt* rest upon are a social contract that binds readers and writers/literary works. This contract stipulates that the genre depends on several “centers” for the process of meaning-making to occur. To further elaborate, al-Iskandarī’s eerie presence in every city ʿĪsā visits and their uncanny encounters tell us that Abū'l Faṭḥ is not a person but an idea. When he meets Abu'l Faṭḥ in Azerbaijan, a shocked ʿĪsā wonders about the scope of the latter’s deception that reaches as far as this land (*balagha hādhihi l-arḍa kayduk*).²¹ The phrase serves to highlight the gravity of his deception, here measured geographically by the distance from a center in ʿĪsā’s mind as well as al-Hamadhānī’s readers – a cartography of deception, so to speak. Otherwise, we could only question

Azerbaijan's far-ness in reference to what center, i.e. far from what? Is it the capital, Kufa, or the cities of Baṣra or Baghdad or Alexandria, which Abū'l Faṭḥ claims as his home?²² This imagined center, be it Kufa or Baghdad, which is as tangible in the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī as it is in the Abbasid polity, seems to be a subtle feature in the *maqāmāt*. The notion of a center is at the heart of the *maqāmāt* for al-Hamadhānī if for nothing other than °Īsā's reactions to al-Iskandarī's presence in cities remote from an imagined center, perhaps the Abbasid capital. The concept of a center is not strictly limited to the geographical level as the exchanges between °Īsā and al-Iskandarī show; it also translates linguistically. The idea of a "center" (semantic, linguistic, etc.) is the unspoken contract between the writer and his/her readership and it is these centers with which al-Hamadhānī plays rhetorically.

Rhetoric and the Limits of Semantic Geography

Beyond their collective role in adding a sense of reality and purpose to the narrative, cities serve a semantic purpose. °Īsā b. Hishām's many encounters with the swindler Abū'l Faṭḥ are marked by two paradoxical things: common language games and linguistic consistency despite the many different locations. In other words, Abū'l Faṭḥ is self-described as "*jawwālat al-bilād*" (globetrotter) yet his language use and techniques are consistent in all the different places he inhabits. His metaphors, stylistics, and inverted use of language are bound to be understood within their geography. Meaning, rather than literal, his linguistic rhetoric is a game played in the cities in which he travels, inevitably meeting °Īsā and other victims. But if the geography is a specifically Arabic literary geography, there is the question of what this means in terms of *adab* and/or in reference to a literary work.

The presupposition in the *maqāmāt* is that °Īsā is a stranger amongst strangers in every city in which he finds himself, yet he inevitably meets the same familiar person at the end of each *maqāma* in a famous recognition scene. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila speaks of the moment of "recognition" as characteristic of the structure of al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*.²³ In an Arab-Islamic context, recognition or *anagnorisis*, Philip F. Kennedy proposes, is "... commensurate with the emergence of certain truth."²⁴ Al-Iskandarī is a charlatan, a master of disguise, who swindles people and °Īsā knows it. °Īsā only realizes the truth of al-Iskandarī during the recognition scene, which is then usually followed by the envoi of verses – lines of poetry or quotations put in the mouth of the protagonist to summarise his philosophy and explain his behavior.²⁵ It is thus the content of this envoi that contributes to the

affirmation of al-Iskandarī's identity as a charlatan as the place within the text where the "emergence of truth" takes place. The envoi changes in every *maqāma* but what is fairly stable and fixed within it is a rhetorical technique used by al-Iskandarī: beautifying the ugly and uglifying the beautiful (*taḥsīn al-qabīḥ wa taqbīḥ al-ḥasan*).²⁶ The philologist Abū Maṣṣūr al-Tha'ālibī (d. 429/1038), who was rightly "fascinated by al-Hamadhānī's talents,"²⁷ considered this technique to be the height of excellence and eloquence: "*taḥsīnu al-qabīḥi wa taqbīḥu al-ḥasani idhā humā ghāyatā l-barā'ati wa-l-qudrati 'alā jazl l-kalāmi fī sirri l-balāghati wa siḥri al-ṣinā'a.*" ([B]eautifying the ugly and uglifying the beautiful is the ultimate [marker] of skill and ability when shaping words using the secrets of rhetoric and the charm of the craft.)²⁸ In the final scene of almost every *maqāma*, the envoi perpetually condemns *'aql* (reason and moral force) and presents it as unnecessary while deception, lies, and madness are praised. These views follow the disclosure of al-Iskandarī and immediately enable 'Īsā to recognize him. The truth emerges and builds what constitutes an essential aspect of recognition as al-Iskandarī speaks about madness being the only reason and states that one must "repel time with folly."²⁹ The very words of al-Iskandarī invite us to mistrust him even though they are charming and eloquent, according to 'Īsā. We, like 'Īsā, are bound by an unspoken semantic contract or accord established by a cognitive agreement to deem him a charlatan as per the title of this rhetorical technique (beautifying the ugly and uglifying the beautiful). This demands an implicit consensus regarding what is "beautiful" or "ugly" in the first place in order for the technique to work. His praise of madness and folly and the shunning of reason do not match this implicit semantic contract.

Despite the protagonists' constant movement, they remain in what Kīlīṭū calls "the familiar" (*al-ma'lūf*), that is the Islamicate.³⁰ Abū'l Faṭḥ and 'Īsā understand each other on both the linguistic and cultural levels, as does the anonymous third narrator who transmits their narrative to the audience, and likewise for the texts' premodern readers, as Jaakko Hämeen-Antilla argues.³¹ The "familiar", Kīlīṭū suggests, is not something that creates a semantic crisis for them – as it does for Sindbad, whom Kīlīṭū uses for this example. In other words, there is a certain semantic stability in this geography that creates a linguistic and literary framework for both the protagonists and for us as readers of the *maqāmāt*. The tools offered by al-Hamadhānī through al-Iskandarī are thus in his rhetorical techniques that, despite its imagined geographical variations, are semantically stable, and despite their eloquence, are understood as deception. The envoi becomes a site for reading Abū'l Faṭḥ's strategies in

the same manner as it is rhetorically used to “beautify the ugly and uglify the beautiful.” The limitations of this semantic stability are precisely the geography of the “familiar” from which Abū’l Fath and ʿĪsā never depart: the Islamicate or cities where semantic stability stand for the tools of *adab* that allow the detection of deception as part of this geo-semantic consensus.

At this juncture, it is pivotal to remember the question of the function of the city/cities in the *maqāmāt* by thinking about the relationship of a literary technique to the “city.” As Robert Tally Jr. notes, narrative is “a spatially symbolic act in establishing a literary cartography for the reader.”³² To further explain, Emily Apter evokes the concept of “language borders” to refer to the issues ensuing from ignoring the politics of the “Untranslatable” in literary studies, meaning terms, words, or units that do not travel freely from one language to another. Because these words, Apter argues, are part of a network, part of a whole, they form relationships with each other and therefore contain complex layers within themselves. One could add that the layers are not just linguistic but also cultural and temporal.³³ The process of meaning-making in language and literature cannot be a universal process. To assert that there are defining Arab-Islamic literary terms and aesthetic features of the works should not be understood as the inability of literature to be read outside its culture, or an essentialising practice. Rather, it is an effort to enhance the reading of *adab* both inside and outside its culture and be sensitive to the alterity of this literature without denying the literary texts’ aesthetic integrity. A failure to read the literary devices inside their literary geography (*adab*) would ensue in a distortion, mistranslation, or retranslation (hence rewriting) of the aesthetics and literary techniques of al-Hamadhānī specifically, the *maqāmāt* in general, and *adab* altogether.

In *What is Literature?* Jean Paul Sartre tells us that the reception of the work is not an “external” fact about it; it is an integral dimension of it and its “consumption” is part of its process of production.³⁴ With respect to the *maqāmāt*, al-Ḥarīrī, as one of the readers and consumers of al-Hamadhānī, understood and worked with the techniques the latter provided. The “language borders” or cities therefore function on both the narrative and meta-narrative levels. The literary geography of *adab* upholds a semantic center where the rhetorical techniques performed by the protagonists play a role in their reception. These literary devices are unveiled inside the aforementioned semantic “center” or what Kīlīṭū refers to as the “familiar.” The limits of this semantic geography are the threshold of *adab* and language where the *maqāmāt* cease to work on both the fictional and referential levels, and mistranslation begins.

Like al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī also works with the concept of the “borders” as the threshold of law and order, in the broadest sense, in the city.

The City and the Borders of the Law

Before venturing further into the use of city “borders” in the narrative of the *maqāmāt* by both authors, it is imperative to shed light on how premodern scholars defined the “city.” In his *Maqāyīs al-Lughā*, Ibn Fāris tells us that a city (*madīna*) is so-called because of the jurisdiction and enforcement of the law (*li-annahā tuqāmu fīha tā^catu dhawī l-amr*).³⁵ He analyzes this through the root (*d.ī.n*), which he traces to its meaning that denotes “obedience” and “yielding” (*al-inqiyād wa l-dhull*).³⁶ Al-Fīrūzabādī adds, that to become a city-dweller or civilized (*tamadyan*) is to live a life of ease and comfort (*tana^cum*).³⁷ Al-Shirwānī explains a city (*madīna*) in terms of superlative expansion and compares it to its smaller version, town (*balad*), which is bigger than a village (*qarya*).³⁸

Al-Hamadhānī uses the city skillfully in his *al-maqāma al-madīriyya*. The *maqāma* opens with ʿĪsā and Abū’l Faṭḥ in Baṣra where a well-loved *madīra* dish, a kind of meat stew, is being served. Abū’l Faṭḥ reacts negatively to it and demands that it be taken away, much to the disappointment of the rest of the guests. He then relates a story that takes place in Baghdad, explaining his reaction to the *madīra*. One of the city’s merchants had invited Abū’l Faṭḥ to be a guest at his house, where the *madīra* dish was expected to be served – as most readers know, the meal never arrives. The host instead behaves like a typical city-dweller in al-Fīrūzabādī’s definition: he indulges his guest in extended description of all the items of ease and comfort in his house. As they walk through the city, the merchant engages in small talk; he praises his wife’s impeccable cooking skills, their love and devotion to each other, and her virtues. He then starts commenting on the quarter in which he lives, comparing it to other neighbourhoods in the city and the status held by each. As they reach the merchant’s house, he begins by commenting on the craftsmanship of the door and its various parts that come from different cities and sellers. The merchant then calls the servant with the water basin, telling Abū’l Faṭḥ about the servant’s Greek origins, the ewer’s Syrian brass, its Iraqi workmanship, moving on to the napkin’s fabric from Jurjān, then continuing to describe all the items in his household and their cities of origin. From the outset, Abū’l Faṭḥ is bored by the man’s incessant talk about his wife and other pleasantries that all seem to revolve around comfort and luxury, “*wa ṣadda^canī bi-ṣifāti zawjatihī ḥatta intahaynā ilā maḥallatihī*” (he bored me with his wife’s virtues

till we reached his quarters).³⁹ While the merchant revels in the craftsmanship of the table, an irritated Abū'l Faṭḥ straightforwardly enquires “*hādhā al-shaklu fa-matā l-aklu*” (this is the make but when is the meal?)⁴⁰ But when he realizes that the promised meal will probably never arrive, or rather when his patience is exasperated and he cannot indulge his host in small talk any longer, Abū'l Faṭḥ excuses himself to “discharge a need” in order to escape what he perceives as an empty promise on the merchant’s part.

The *maqāma* highlights two salient features of life in the city and its corresponding system of laws. Throughout the merchant’s descriptions, the merchant’s sense of civility and cosmopolitanism is expressed through his knowledge not only of his city, its quarters, and artisans but also through the best of what other cities could offer in terms of items of luxury and comfort. Al-Hamadhānī’s skill here lies in acting like a literary cartographer; he charts both the city streets and the larger regional geography, choosing which sites to include or omit in the discussion between al-Iskandarī and the host through the mention of famous or national crafts from different countries.⁴¹ In the host’s house, al-Hamadhānī essentially draws a map, which need not be a geometrical grid, for “a map may also constitute itself in words.”⁴² The map refers to the marks of civility and the thriving of the city of Baghdad as well as other mentioned cities as the *maqāma* traverses several cultural spaces through a single social setting.

The merchant’s listing of items, their source, and excellent craftsmanship as an expression of civility are not received well by Abū'l Faṭḥ, who does not reciprocate the small talk nor seem the least interested. Yet, despite Abū'l Faṭḥ’s boredom with the man’s conversation, he must obey a certain decorum – the city’s – and remain silent and nod, at least in the beginning. Even when his patience withers and he wants to escape, decorum demands that he excuse himself without embarrassing either himself or the host. He alludes to the need to relieve himself. The city here appears as a space governed by a social law that even in extreme circumstances cannot be broken. Abū'l Faṭḥ cannot obey the city’s decorum and prolong the niceties, pleasantries, and small talk that govern life there. His character – an outcast that thrives outside the boundaries of the city – wants to devour the meal without the social context of its emotional and intellectual investment expressed as an interest in the host’s life.

The “obedience” and “yielding” about which Ibn Fāris speaks, cited above, are not to be narrowly understood as laws in the exclusively legal sense – they also translate into unspoken social laws and decorum that ought

to be observed even when they stretch the limits of one's ordinary tolerance. In the *maqāma*, this is manifest in Abū'l Faḥ's companions, who respect his aversion to the *madīra* because of his individual experience despite that it runs counter to their own wishes; although they outnumber him, a sense of respect for his feelings must be observed as part of an unspoken social code. It is clear that Abū'l Faḥ, through demanding that the *madīra* be taken away, disregards the social context in the selfish and anti-social imposition of his own will over the desire of the group and spoils what could have been a pleasant gathering over a meal. His disregard for decorum, expressed as socially improper behaviour and lack of concern for the group's feelings, parallels the same tactless indifference to his host's feelings in his earlier encounter. His behaviour on both occasions serves only his own interests and needs; it reflects his borderline values that thrive outside the city's boundaries, running against the law, social integration, the observation of politesse and decorum such as the inhabitants of the city would presumably observe.

In the *maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, the city also features several times as a border governed by the law. Whereas Abū'l Faḥ thrives outside the city in his *kudya* and does not seem able to function properly in social settings, Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī abuses the city to his benefit through *kudya*. And in this, he does not seem to be alone. Al-Ḥārith b. Hammām, al-Ḥarīrī's narrator, tells us in *al-maqāma al-Iskandariyya* that as a traveller, he is abiding by a useful piece of advice from the wise: “*annahu yalzamu l-adība l-arība idhā dakhala l-balada l-gharība an yastamīla qādiyahū wa yaṣtakhlīṣa marādīyahū li-yashshudda zahrabu* °*inda l-khiṣāmi wa ya' mana fī l-ghurbati jawra l-ḥukkāmi.*” (The *adīb* should keep the company of the intelligent when venturing into a foreign city; he should befriend its judge and vie for his approval to cover his back in the event that a dispute should befall him, thus taking discretion against the ruthlessness of rulers during travel).⁴³ The city appears to be a benevolent ally to al-Sarūjī and his narrator.

In *al-maqāma al-Iskandariyya*, al-Sarūjī's wife goes to the judge to complain about her husband's selling of all of their furniture; she also complains about his voluntary unemployment under the pretext that his craft is no longer in demand. The judge feels for the woman and demands that the husband justify his behaviour. Al-Sarūjī, in a very long poem, explains to the judge how the likes of him, whose entire fortune is eloquence (*siḥru l-kalām*), poetry (*al-qarīd*), and speeches (*al-khuṭab*), are like outcasts: “*ka'annahum fī °irāṣihim jīyafun / yub°adu min nataniha wa yujtanabu.*” (As if there is a cadaver in their courtyard / putting off everyone with its stink)⁴⁴ People

like him cannot support themselves or their families. The judge is touched by al-Sarūjī's destitute conditions so he orders that he and his wife receive money from the alms (*ṣadaqāt*) appointed for the poor. The narrator Ibn Hammām knows that it is al-Sarūjī all along but says nothing until after the couple has left. He then encourages the judge to send someone after the pair so that they can check their identity. Unlike al-Hamadhānī's narrator, al-Ḥarīrī's narrator, al-Ḥārith b. Hammām, uncovers al-Sarūjī's tricks before anyone else within the narrative, meaning the narrator is always one step ahead; al-Sarūjī's intelligence, then, is surpassed by others, namely Ibn Hammām and the readers. As a narrator, Ibn Hammām exhibits little weakness in front of al-Sarūjī's verbal seduction, rather the latter's victims do. The judge's messenger comes back confirming what the readers already know. When the judge sends for their arrest, the messenger fails to do so because they have already traveled far away from the city. The city here functions as a space of law and order. Despite this, it is not a space that is entirely avoided by al-Sarūjī, rather he uses these laws to his advantage.

In *Kitāb al-Sultān*, Ibn Qutayba relates an anecdote through a chain of transmission referring to a piece of advice by Kisrā (Khosrow); the latter says, “*lā tanzil fī baladin laysa fīhi khamsatu ašhyāʾ in: sultānūn qāhir, wa qāḍin ʿādil, wa ṭābībīn ʿālim, wa sūqīn qāʾima, wa nahrīn jāri.*” (Do not reside in a country that does not have five things: a powerful ruler, a rightful judge, an expert physician, a thriving market, and a flowing river.)⁴⁵ Al-Sarūjī uses Khosrow's advice and manipulates the judge after he fabricates the dispute with his wife because of their extreme poverty. According to the law, the righteous judge ensures that they receive assistance as a result of their condition. Now that the law is enforced in al-Sarūjī's favor, the city appears to be conducive to his *kudya*. The boundaries of law and its jurisdiction are applied within the city, whereas outside the borders he is no longer within the domain of the judge or the law: the reason that the messenger informs the judge that al-Sarūjī is far away “*mukhbīran bi-naʾyihī.*”⁴⁶ The *maqāma* simply summarises the *modus operandi* of the protagonist and highlights the function of the city as a space governed by a particular social and legal system.

In another example, the same depiction of city boundaries is repeated in *al-maqāma al-shiʿriyya*. Here, al-Sarūjī fabricates a dispute with his adopted son and goes to the judge to complain that his son has plagiarised his poetry. The judge demands that the father recite both the original and the plagiarised poems to render a better judgment. After toing and froing with poetry between father and son, the judge is amazed by their talent and intelligence

and gives them both money, asking them to treat each other amicably. As Ibn Hammām follows the two men, al-Sarūjī tells him to enlighten the judge about the latter’s stupidity and his manipulation of the judge’s emotions (“*bayyin lahu ghabāwata qalbihi wa til^c ābi bi-lubbihī*”).⁴⁷ Yet al-Sarūjī only says this once he is outside the jurisdiction of the judge (“*ajaznā himā l-wālī wa afdāynā ilā l-fadā³ al-khālī*”) because he knows that the judge will not be able to arrest him.⁴⁸ When the judge realizes al-Sarūjī’s deception, Ibn Hammām informs him that it is futile to chase after al-Sarūjī (“*ashfaqa minka li-ta^c addī tūrihi fa-za^c ana^c an baghdghada min fawrihi*”).⁴⁹ The judge, however, tells us that the only reason he is not resolute in chasing al-Sarūjī until he catches him is the latter’s *adab*, exhibited in the poetry that he has heard, even though he is furious and feels humiliated. He may realize that he would be overestimating his own power by demanding that al-Sarūjī be pursued wherever he is, or he may be defending his previous judgment about al-Sarūjī’s poetry, i.e. that his poetry remains excellent and that he had judged well. He even urges Ibn Hammām not to relate the story to anyone lest people in the city lose respect for him, forcing him to take an oath. And though Ibn Hammām tells us that he kept the oath and was loyal to the judge – a loyalty comparable only to that of al-Samū³al⁵⁰ – it is he who narrates these very events.

Similarly, in *al-maqāma al-ma^c arriyya*, al-Sarūjī and his son also deceive the judge with eloquence and manage to trick him into giving them some money. When the judge summons them after he realizes that he has been the victim of their deception, his first response upon confrontation is an expression of his admiration for al-Sarūjī’s eloquence: *lillāhi darrukka fa-mā a^c dhaba nafathāti fika lawlā khidā^c un fika!* (To God be attributed your goodness, how sweet is the breath of your mouth! [...] if it were not for the deceit in you!).⁵¹ The judge advises al-Sarūjī to mend his ways because not every judge is going to act as he did in this situation. It appears that both judges in these two *maqāmāt* have balanced al-Sarūjī’s use of eloquence as an offset to his trickery. The judge refers to al-Sarūjī’s mouth as the source of the sweetest words while recognizing the deception that comes out of it. Notably, the judge does not penalize him; the fact of his forgiveness is an implied confidence in his correct judgment of al-Sarūjī talent.

Conclusion: The Topography of Affective Power

Part of the literary geography charted by al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī is their use of cities, geography, and space for their affective power. The very presence of the court of law as part of the city in the *maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī is

distinguished from other spaces or institutions and hence the rest of the narrative by what Robert T. Tally Jr. calls the place's "affective power" that is established within both the author's and readers' minds.⁵² The affective power of the place in turn plays a role in the meaning-making tools given to the reader. The court, a metonym of law and order, and hence the city at large, contradicts the machinations of the protagonist and his enterprises. Yet he twists it to work for him. The abuse of one of the city's virtues in this case highlights both the audacity of al-Sarūjī and his inventiveness. The most unexpected place of the trick solicits a reaction that is proportional to the decorum and respect demanded by the place, and yet it does not get that respect. The reversal of expectations in this case maximises both the message and the entertainment value of the *maqāmāt*. A similar use of the dynamics of the space's affective powers is also observed in al-Hamadhānī's protagonist al-Iskandarī as a pretentious Imām who dupes people at the mosque during the day while sharing drinks at the tavern at night in *al-maqāma al-khamriyya*, for instance. The "affective power" of the place is likewise used to highlight the themes of each *maqāma*.

Both authors have employed the city and its social spaces extensively in their *maqāmāt*. Rather than featuring elaborate details of the city, the city represents a "border": a semantic space highlighted by what has been referred to earlier as the geography of the "familiar" as well as a space governed by several laws. That being said, it appears that the *maqāmāt* operate from the moral element of space. To quote Robert T. Tally Jr. again, "literary works serve a cartographic function by creating a figurative or allegorical representation of a social space, broadly understood."⁵³ Therefore, the role of these moral spaces in general is part of their essential meaning-making tools; they are not to be understood as conceptually vacuous geographical references in the background. Moral does not mean "moralistic" but rather what constitutes the elements of *adab*. The highly satirical nature of the *maqāmāt* feeds on these stark contrasts between actions and language, social spaces and social relations. The presence of the city, its meaning-making "borders," institutions, and other social spaces like mosques, taverns, etc. are not to be treated as an "... empty container to be filled with actions or movements[.]"⁵⁴ Rather, this literary geography offers us an opportunity for an enhanced understanding of the work on a deeper level.

Notes

1. For more on this, see Heinrichs (1997: 249–77).
2. Drory (2000: 190).

3. Ibid. (190). For more on this, see also Hämeen-Anttila (2002).
4. Bosworth (1976: 1: 30); Ḥasan (1986: 145).
5. Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 20).
6. Sources document Bedouin (*a^crāb*) mendicants' eloquence that only used *saj^c* (rhymed prose) in their speech. One should not define real mendicants' "eloquence" here as one that is comparable to the language of Abū'l-Faḥḥ, at least as seen in the examples of the Bedouin's usage of *saj^c*, which drew the attention of some literati such as Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, for instance, because of the graceful nature of the language and the decorative and metaphorical aspects of it as such. For more on this, see Ḥasan (1986: 162–4).
7. Al-Hamadhānī, trans. Prendergast (1915: viii).
8. Kīlītū, *al-maqāmāt* (1993: 12).
9. Al-Musawi (2009: 152).
10. See *al-maqāma al-Asawadiyya* and *al-maqāma al-Adhirbijāniyya*.
11. *Al-maqāma al-Qazwīniyya*.
12. Al-Hamadhānī, trans. Prendergast (1915: 52).
13. Eco (2009: 87).
14. Ibid.
15. Al-Ḥarīrī (1981: 15).
16. Ibid. (15).
17. Heinrichs (1997), 262.
18. For more on the historical view of genres versus genres as institutions, see Devitt (2008: 168).
19. Ibid.
20. This is Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's statement, which precedes Jameson's, see Devitt, *ibid.*
21. Al-Hamadhānī (2005: 54).
22. For a discussion on Abū'l Faḥḥ's name and origins and their symbolic relationship to his travels, see Birari, "Travelling in Hamadhānī's Maqāmāt".
23. Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 50). For a discussion on the entire structure of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī, see also *ibid.* (45–51).
24. Kennedy (2009: 47).
25. See Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 51). This is part of the author's explanation of the structure of the *maqāmāt*.
26. See al-Thaʿālibī (1994). See also van Gelder (2003).
27. Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 27).
28. Al-Thaʿālibī (1994: 21).
29. See al-Hamadhānī (2005; 96); al-Hamadhānī, trans. Prendergast (1915: 75).

30. Kiliṭū (2001: 13).
31. Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 114).
32. Tally Jr. (2011).
33. See Apter (2013).
34. Sartre, *What is Literature?* Cited in Eagleton (2003: 72–3).
35. Ibn Fāris (1999: vol. 2, 319); al-Maqdisī (1418 AH: vol. 3, 357–8).
36. Ibn Fāris (1999: vol. 2, 319).
37. Al-Zabīdī (n. d., vol.36: 158).
38. Al-Shirwānī (n. d.: vol. 6, 346).
39. Al-Hamadhānī (2005: 125); al-Hamadhānī, trans. Prendergast (1915, 91).
40. Al-Hamadhānī (2005: 134); al-Hamadhānī, trans. Prendergast (1915: 97). In this context, Prendergast’s translation choice of the word ‘make’ for *shakl* refers to the artistry of the finely made table.
41. See Tally Jr. (2013: 45).
42. Ibid.: 46.
43. Al-Ḥārīrī (1981: 68–9).
44. Ibid.: 72.
45. Ibn Qutayba (n. d.: vol.1, 6).
46. Al-Ḥārīrī (1981: 75).
47. Ibid.: 178.
48. Ibid.: 177.
49. Ibid.: 179.
50. Al-Samū³al was in his fortress, when a man came to him with the former’s son as a captive. Al- Samū³al had Imrū³ al-Qays’ weapons hidden with him and so the man asked Al- Samū³al to give him the weapons or his son would be killed. Al- Samū³al refused to hand over the weapons and kept his promise and so his son was killed.
51. Al-Ḥārīrī (1981: 68).
52. Tally Jr. (2013: 83).
53. Tally Jr. (2011).
54. Tally Jr. (2013: 119).

Works Cited

- Apter, Emily (2013), *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, London and New York NY: Verso.
- Al-Askarī, Abū Hilāl (1971), *Kitāb al-Ṣināʿatayn*, Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.
- Birari, Mohammed (2006), “Travelling in Hamadhānī’s Maqāmāt: Connotations and Significances,” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 26, 138–58.

- Bosworth, Clifford Edmund (1976), *The Medieval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2 vols.
- Al-Dabbagh, Abdullah (2010), *Literary Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Universalism*, New York NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Devitt, Amy J. (2008), *Writing Genres*, Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Drory, Rina (2000), "The Maqama," in *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 190–210.
- Eagleton, Terry (2003), *Literary Theory*, Minneapolis MN: Blackwell Publishing.
- Eco, Umberto (2009), "On the Ontology of Fictional Characters: A Semiotic Approach," *Sign System Studies* 37: 1, 2: 82–98.
- Goodman, Lenn E (1988), "Hamadhānī, Schadenfreude and Salvation Through Sin," *JAL* 19, no. 1: 27–39.
- Al-Hamadhānī (1915), *The Maqāmāt of Badī^c al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*, trans. W. J. Prendergast, London: Luzac.
- Al-Hamadhānī (2005), *Maqāmāt*, Muḥammad ^cAbduh (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-^cIlmiyya.
- Hämeen-Anttila, Jaakko (2002), *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Al-Ḥarīrī (1981), *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, Yūsuf Biqā^cī (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī.
- Ḥasan, Aḥmad Ḥusayn (1986), *Adab al-Kudya fī l-^cAṣr al-^cAbbāsī*, Latakia: Dār Akwār li-l-Nashr wa l-Tawzī^c.
- Heinrichs, Wolfhart (1997), "Prosimetrical Genres in Classical Arabic Literature," in *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl (eds), Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 249–77.
- Ibn Fāris (1999), *Maqāyīs al-Lughā*, ^cAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Harūn (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Jīl.
- Ibn Qutayba (n. d.), *Uyūn al-Akhhbār: Kitāb al-Sulṭān*, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-^cArabī.
- Kennedy, Philip F. (2009), "Islamic Recognitions: An Overview," in *Recognition: The Poetics of Narrative: Interdisciplinary Studies on Anagnorisis*, Marilyn Lawrence and Philip Kennedy (eds), New York: Peter Lang, 26–61.
- Kilīṭū, ^cAbd al-Fattāḥ (1993) *al-Maqāmāt: al-Sard wa l-Ansāq al-Thaqāfiyya*, trans. ^cAbd al-Kabīr al-Sharqāwī, Casablanca: Dār Tobqāl.
- Kilīṭū, ^cAbd al-Fattāḥ (2001), *al-Maqāmāt: al-Sard wa l-Ansāq al-Thaqāfiyya*, trans. ^cAbdel al-Kabīr al-Sharqāwī, 2nd edition, Casablanca: Dar Tobqal.

- Al-Maḡdisī (1418 AH), *al-Furūʿ*, Abū'l Zahrāʾ Ḥāzim al-Qāḍī (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya.
- Monroe, James T. (1983), *The Art of Badiʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*, Beirut: American University of Beirut.
- Al-Musawi, Muhsin J. (2009), *The Islamic Context of the Thousand and One Nights*, New York NY: Columbia University Press.
- Al-Shirwānī (n. d.), *Ḥawāshī al-Shirwānī ʿala Tuḥfat al-Miḥtāj bi-Sharḥ al-Minhāj*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- Tally Jr., Robert T. (2011), “On Literary Cartography: Narrative as a Spatially Symbolic Act,” *NANO: New American Notes Online*, Issue 1, <https://www.nanocrit.com/issues/issue1/literary-cartography-narrative-spatially-symbolic-act> (accessed 27 November 2017).
- (2013), *Spatiality*, New York NY and London: Routledge.
- Al-Thaʿālibī (1994), *Taḥsīn al-Qabīḥ wa Taqbiḥ al-ḥasan*, ʿAlāʾ ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Muḥammad (ed.), Cairo: Dār al-Faḍīla.
- van Gelder, Geert Jan (2003), “Beautifying the Ugly and Uglifying the Beautiful,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 68, no. 2: 321–51.
- Al-Zabīdī (n. d.), *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Dār al-Hidāya, n. p.