Geert Jan van Gelder
University of Oxford

Poetry for Easy Listening: *Insijām* and Related Concepts in Ibn Ḥijjah´s *Khizānat al-Adab*

If one considers the history of the indigenous Arabic tradition of poetics and rhetoric one cannot help being impressed by the ever-growing terminological sophistication in the study of figures of speech, the schemes and tropes of '*ilm al-badī*'. In the late third/ninth century the poet and prince Ibn al-Mu'tazz set the trend in his modest but seminal treatise with a mere handful of terms: five principal ″novel″ kinds called *badī*' and some thirteen further ″embellishments″ *(maḥāsin)*. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba', who died early in the Mamluk period, in 654/1256, discusses 125 kinds,[1] claiming to have discovered thirty of them himself. From then on, the rate of growth decreases. Nearly two centuries later, Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434) lists 142 kinds,[2] and another three hundred years on 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī distinguishes 150 kinds.[3]

A study of these works, which also serve as anthologies of prose and above all poetry, might give an impression of the increasing sophistication and artfulness of the poetry itself, or even its growing artificiality and obscurity. To some extent there is truth in this, although the poetry in these works is carefully selected in order to illustrate the schemes and tropes, the puns and ornaments, and is therefore not truly representative of poetic practice as a whole. It is well known that general works on Arabic literary history often speak of ″decadence″ after the Abbasid period. This decadence is seen, on the one hand, in the alleged ornateness and flowery rhetoric of elite style, and on the other hand in the alleged influence of so-called Middle Arabic and the colloquial language, resulting in simplification and the infringement of ″pure″ syntax and style by ″vulgarisms.″ In short, according to this view one either finds what is obscure and difficult but vapid and trivial, or what is simple but stylistically marred and, as often as not, equally empty, trivial,

---

[1]He himself says 121; see *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr* (Cairo, 1383), 621.

[2]I have used the edition Būlāq 1291 [1874] of the *Khizānat al-Adab* along with a modern (but uncritical) one by 'Iṣām Sha'aytū, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1987). The references are given to both, separated by a slash.

[3]'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt al-Azhār* (Būlāq, 1299); Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician or The Schemer´s Skimmer. A Handbook of Late Arabic badī' drawn from 'Abd al-Ghānī an-Nābulusī´s* Nafaḥāt al-Azhār 'alā Nasamāt al-Asḥār (Wiesbaden, 1998).

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

and banal. ″The best of them,″ said Nicholson in his *Literary History of the Arabs,* speaking of poets in the Mamluk era, ″are merely elegant and accomplished artists, playing brilliantly with words and phrases, but doing little else.″[4] These words are quoted by Homerin, reviewing the neglect of poetry from the Mamluk period;[5] in fairness to Nicholson, one should add that he admits that ″until they have been studied with due attention, it would be premature to assert that none of them rises above mediocrity.″

It is extremely unlikely that the reigning view on the superiority of the older poets will ever change, but the generally negative and disparaging remarks on post-Abbasid poetry may well be replaced by more balanced judgements as post-Abbasid poetry is slowly beginning to be investigated in more detail. Here I shall concentrate on the concept of stylistic and poetic ″easiness″ as we find it in Ibn Ḥijjah′s work on *badī‘*. Ibn Ḥijjah, poet and *kātib,* wrote his *Khizānat al-Adab* on the model of *Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah al-Badī‘īyah* by the well-known poet Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349): both works are commentaries on *badī‘īyah* poems composed by the authors themselves, in *basīṭ* meter and rhyming in *-mī,* in praise of the Prophet (like, before them, al-Būṣīrī′s celebrated ode), each verse of which exemplifies a particular figure of speech or stylistic embellishment. *Khizānat al-Adab* contains a large quantity of poetry from all ages, much of it from post-Abbasid or Mamluk times. Since normally a figure of speech or trope does not exceed the compass of one or two lines, most of the quotations are short, but one also finds longer fragments and poems, including *muzdawijah*s of 133 and 158 couplets.

Most of the ″embellishments″ are thought of as features that are somehow changed from or added to an underlying basic utterance: a metaphor instead of the literal word, a pun, antithesis, syntactical or semantic parallelism that can be superimposed on plain expressions. Instead of adding, one could presuppose other mutations: suppression in the case of ellipsis and conciseness, permutation in the case of some syntactic rearrangements. There are also ″figures″ that cannot so easily be described, for instance the more impressionistic concepts of *nazāhah,* ″chaste diction,″ particularly when in biting lampoons one manages to avoid obscenities,[6] or *salāmat al-ikhtirā‘,* ″originality.″[7] The same is valid for a few chapters that deal with easy diction and smooth style, which form the subject of this article.

---

[4]R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, Cambridge, 1966), 448.

[5]Th. Emil Homerin, ″Reflections on Arabic Poetry in the Mamluk Age,″ *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 63–85.

[6]*Khizānah,* 95–96/1:172–74.

[7]Ibid., 493–98/2:362–69.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

The most important of these is the section on *insijām,* ″fluency.″[8] It is obviously a concept that is dear to Ibn Ḥijjah, for the section is the longest of all by a wide margin, apart from the only section that surpasses it, the very extensive chapter on *tawriyah.*[9] A later author, Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, who completed his large-scale *badī‘īyah* commentary *Anwār al-Rabī‘* in 1093/1682, goes even further, making *insijām* by far his longest chapter.[10] The term *insijām* is derived from a root denoting flowing, streaming, and pouring forth of water. In the metalanguage of *badī‘,* the dominant semantic fields are those of jewelry, embroidery, and other sartorial imagery;[11] it is appropriate that the limpidity of streaming water is used for what comes down to the *absence* of ornament. For, paradoxically, *insijām* is a kind of *badī‘* that is defined by being devoid of *badī‘*.[12] ″Water″ implies not only smoothness and fluency, but sparkle and lustre: in Arabic, as in English, one speaks of the ″water″ of a sword. It is unique among drinks and food in that its tastelessness is praised and called sweetness. Ibn Ḥijjah´s description of *insijām,* given at the beginning of the chapter, is as follows:

> By *insijām* is meant that [the text] flows like water when it runs down *(inḥidār),* because it is free from complexity *(‘aqādah),* so that it would almost stream forth *(yasīl)* in its elegance *(riqqah),* because of the smoothness of its construction *(suhūlat tarkībih)* and the sweetness of its diction *(‘udhūbat alfāẓih)*. . . . The scholars of *badī‘* are unanimous in defining this kind of *badī‘* as being remote from artificiality and free from kinds of *badī‘ (an yakūna*

[8]Ibid., 236–74/1:417–76. See also Usāmah ibn Munqidh, *Al-Badī‘ fī Naqd al-Shi‘r* (Cairo, 1960), 131–32; Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 429–32; idem, *Badī‘ al-Qur’ān* (Cairo, 1957), 166–67; Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ismā‘īl Ibn al-Athīr, *Jawhar al-Kanz* (Alexandria, 1983), 297–77; Ṣāfī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah al-Badī‘īyah* (Damascus, 1982), 264–65; al-Suyūṭī, *Sharḥ ‘Uqūd al-Jumān* (Cairo, n.d.), 153 (wrongly claiming the introduction of *insijām* into *ʿilm al-badī‘* for himself); ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt al-Azhār*, 295–303 (cf. Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician*, 118–19, no. 162).

[9]*Khizānah,* 295–435/2:39–251.

[10]‘Alī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, *Anwār al-Rabī‘ fī Anwā‘ al-Badī‘,* ed. Shākir Hādī Shukr (Karbalā’, 1968–69), 4:5–194.

[11]Among the few who have dealt with this topic is Abdelfattah Kilito, ″Sur le métalangage métaphorique des poéticiens arabes,″ *Poétique* 38 (1979): 162–74.

[12]*Khizānah,* 236/1:417; cf. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 429; idem, *Badī‘ al-Qur’ān,* 166; al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ,* 264; al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt,* 295.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

> *ba'īd min al-taṣannu' khālī min al-anwā' al-badī'īyah),* except when this happens easily and unintentionally.

He adds that *insijām* in rhymed prose means that the rhymes appear to be unintentional and spontaneous. In the Quran it is seen in the occasional short passages that scan as poetic meters; Ibn Ḥijjah gives examples at some length.[13] Another paradox seems to be lurking here: *insijām* in metrical speech implies that it sounds almost like prose, and conversely, when prose chances to come out according to one of the recognized poetic meters, it is *insijām* too. As far as we can judge, *insijām*, as a separate section in lists of *badī'*, started its life precisely as the last-mentioned kind: prose that fortuitously turns out to be metrical, for this is how Usāmah Ibn Munqidh, the first to do so, defines and illustrates the term in his work on *badī'*.[14] *Insijām* in its broader sense is first found in Ibn Abī al-Iṣba'.

Immediately after defining *insijām* Ibn Ḥijjah says that ″most of the poetry of al-Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Anṣārī, *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of Ḥamāh… corresponds to this definition.″ This poet, also known as Ibn al-Raffā', died early in the Mamluk period, in 662/1264;[15] later in the chapter, Ibn Ḥijjah quotes six fragments or short poems by him, with a total of 57 lines, which illustrate his ″amatory fluency″ *(insijāmātuh al-gharāmīyah).*[16] It appears that *insijām* and love poetry are closely connected, for Ibn Ḥijjah says at the outset that the masters of this style are *ahl al-ṭarīq al-gharāmīyah,* ″the people of the amatory path,″[17] or *aṣḥāb al-madhhab al-gharāmī.*[18] This love may be profane or mystical, or even both at the same time; it is not always possible to distinguish between the two categories. Before we look at the poetry in more detail, consider the following short text, a lover's complaint:

> Khabbirūhū tafṣīla ḥālī jumlatan; fa-'asāhū yariqqu lī wa-la'allah!
> Kam tanaḥnaḥtu idh tabaddá, ḥidhāran min raqībī, wa-kam takallaftu

---

[13] *Khizānah,* 236–38/1:417–21.

[14] Usāmah, *Badī'*, 131–32; he discusses prose that is unintentionally metrical but does not mention the Quran. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba', *Taḥrīr*, 429 discusses the Quranic phenomenon and refers to a book of his, *Al-Mīzān,* on this topic. See also Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Al-Fawā'id* (Cairo, 1327), 219–20; al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1975), 3:296–97 (ch. 58).

[15] Ibn al-Raffā', 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin, was born 586/1190; see Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt,* 18:546–56, where he is highly praised for his beautiful and artful poetry, full of wit *(nukat),* punning (*tawriyāt),* easy rhymes, ″sweet syntax″ *(al-tarkīb al-'adhb),* correct diction, and eloquent ideas.

[16] *Khizānah,* 249–51/1:436–39.

[17] Ibid., 236/1:417.

[18] Ibid., 238/1:421.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

su‘lah! Laysa lī ‘an hudá hawāhu ḍalālun, akthara al-lawma ‘ādhilī aw aqallah. Rukkibat fī jibillatī nashwatu al-‘ishqi; wa-ṣa‘bun taghyīru mā fī al-jibillah.

Sādatī, ‘āwidū riḍākum wa-‘ūdū ‘an jafākum, fa-mā baqiya fīya faḍlah! Dhubtu shawqan, fa-‘ālijūnī bi-qurbin; muttu ‘ishqan, fa-ḥanniṭūnī bi-qublah! Wa-ishghulūnī ‘an lā’imin mā atānī bi-rashādin atat′hu āfatu ghaflah: Qultu, ″Billāhi, khallinī!″, fa-tamādá. Wa-qalīlun man yatruku al-sharra lillah.

[Tell him the details of my state, and all of it; perhaps he will have pity on me, maybe . . . ! How often did I say ″Ahem″ when he appeared, being wary of my watchful guard; how often did I feign a cough! I do not stray from the right path of loving him, however much or little critics may reproach me. Intoxication by love′s passion is a part of me by nature: and it is hard to change what′s in one′s nature.

My masters, let me have your favor once again, after your harshness, for I cannot bear it any longer! I′ve pined away with passion; cure me now with nearness! I′ve died of love; embalm me with a kiss! Distract me from a censurer—as soon as he tells me how to behave, he′s plagued by inattentiveness: I say, ″For God′s sake, leave me!″ But he perseveres. Few people will abandon evil ″for God′s sake.″]

A pleasant piece of literary prose? Perhaps the recurrent rhyme in *-lah* has given the game away: it is in fact poetry, by the above-mentioned Ibn al-Raffā‘, as the following layout makes clear.[19]

Khabbirūhū tafṣīla ḥāliya jumlah
fa-‘asāhū yariqqu lī wa-la‘allah
Kam tanaḥnaḥtu idh tabaddá ḥidhāran
min raqībī wa-kam takallaftu su‘lah
Laysa lī ‘an hudá hawāhu ḍalālun
akthara al-lawma ‘ādhilī aw aqallah
Rukkibat fī jibillatī nashwatu al-‘ish-
qi wa-ṣa‘bun taghyīru mā fī al-jibillah
Sādatī ‘āwidū riḍākum wa-‘ūdū

[19]Ibid., 249–50/1:438. In the ″prose″ version I have cheated a bit in giving prose forms instead of ″poetic″ deviations and rhymes (thus *ḥālī*, *jumlatan, ‘ishq, baqiya*, whereas the poem has *ḥāliya, jumlah, ‘ishqi, baqī*).

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

‘an jafākum fa-mā baqī fīya faḍlah
Dhubtu shawqan fa-‘ālijūnī bi-qurbin
muttu ‘ishqan fa-ḥanniṭūnī bi-qublah
Wa-ishghulūnī ‘an lā’imin mā atānī
bi-rashādin atat´hu āfatu ghaflah
Qultu billāhi khallinī fa-tamādá
Wa-qalīlun man yatruku al-sharra lillah

[Tell him the details of my state, and all of it;
perhaps he will have pity on me, maybe . . . !
How often did I say ″Ahem″ when he appeared, being wary of
my watchful guard; how often did I feign a cough!
I do not stray from the right path of loving him,
however much or little critics may reproach me.
Intoxication by love´s passion is a part of me by nature:
and it is hard to change what´s in one´s nature.
My masters, let me have your favor once again,
after your harshness, for I cannot bear it any longer!
I´ve pined away with passion; cure me now with nearness!
I´ve died of love; embalm me with a kiss!
Distract me from a censurer—as soon as he
tells me how to behave, he´s plagued by inattentiveness:
I say, ″For God´s sake, leave me!″ But he perseveres.
Few people will abandon evil ″for God´s sake.″]

This gives an idea of what Ibn Ḥijjah calls ″fluency″: no intricate word-play, the few antitheses are simple (line 3: *hudá*/*ḍalāl, akthara*/*aqalla;* line 5: *riḍākum*/*jafākum*), as is the syntactic, semantic, and phonetic parallelism in line 6. Both halves of the poem (lines 4b and 8b) end with a maxim-like sentence, the latter being a little joke in that it gives a twist to the imprecation *billāh* in 8a, and using the colloquial *lillah* with short *a* in the last rhyme. If, as the earliest known treatment of *insijām,* by Usāmah Ibn Munqidh, suggests, the ″figure″ was originally conceived as prose unintentionally coming out metrically, as poetry, then an important criterion is apparent artlessness. A test for poetry would consist in writing it out as prose, as I have done above, and see how long it takes for a new reader to discover that it is in fact poetry.

Ibn Ḥijjah quotes some 112 different poets in the chapter (including himself, with a piece of 19 lines).[20] Many are well-known, others are obscure or wholly

[20]Ibid., 274/1:475.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

unknown. The majority are late, but there are some lines by early poets: Imru' al-Qays, with a line from his *Mu'allaqah* (″A-gharraki minnī anna ḥubbaki qātilī . . .″) and the line that ends with the well-known words ″. . . wa-kullu gharībin lil-gharībi nasībū″ [a stranger is related to every other stranger].[21] Many other early poets are also represented by a few lines. Poets from the Abbasid era are better represented, some by longer quotations, such as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (30 lines) and Mihyār al-Daylamī (26 lines). High scores among pre-Mamluk poets are for Bahā' al-Dīn Zuhayr (d. 656/1258), with 48 lines, and especially Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), with 130 lines (half of them from what looks like a conflation of his two *Tā'īyah*s), which is remarkable in view of the profusion of figures of speech in his verse. Among the Mamluk poets are al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf and his father 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī, Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Nubātah, Ibn al-Wardī, and Burhān al-Dīn al-Qīrāṭī. I shall quote and translate short poems or fragments by all five of these.

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-'Afīf al-Tilimsānī, nicknamed al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf, ″the Decent Young Man″ (*ẓarīf* also means ″elegant, witty, charming″) was born in Cairo in 661/1263 and died at Damascus at the very young age of 26, in 688/1289, two years before his father.[22] Ibn Ḥijjah quotes seven pieces or fragments by him, with a total of 51 lines, all of them love lyrics. His verse is indeed smooth and fluent, though not without obvious rhetorical craftsmanship. An example:

Lā takhfi mā fa'alat bi-ka al-ashwāqū
wa-ishraḥ hawāka fa-kullunā 'ushshāqū
Fa-'asá yu'īnuka man shakawta la-hu al-hawá
fī ḥamlihī fa-al-'āshiqūna rifāqū
Lā tajza'anna fa-lasta awwala mughramin
fatakat bi-hi al-wajanātu wa-l-aḥdāqū
Wa-iṣbir 'alá hajri al-ḥabībi fa-rubbamā
'āda al-wisālu wa-lil-hawá akhlāqū
Kam laylatin as'hartu aḥdāqī bi-hā
wajdan wa-lil-afkāri bī iḥdāqū
Yā rabbu qad ba'uda al-ladhīna uḥibbuhum

[21] *Dīwān,* ed. Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1969), 357; it does not sound very authentic.

[22] Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1949), 1:258, S1:458; J. Rikabi, ″Ibn al-'Afīf al-Tilimsānī,″ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 3:697; F. Krenkow-[M. Yalaoui], ″Tilimsānī,″ *EI*^{2}, 10:499-500; D. J. Wasserstein, ″Ibn al-'Afīf al-Tilimsānī,″ *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature,* ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York, 1998), 1:308; Shawqī Ḍayf, *'Aṣr al-Duwal wa-al-Imārāt: Miṣr wa-al-Shām,* Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī, no. 6 (Cairo, 1984), 695–97; Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt* (Beirut, 1973–74), 3: 372–82; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī,* 3:129–36. *Dīwān al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf,* ed. Shākir Hādī Shukr [thus in preface; on title page and cover: Shakr] (Beirut, 1405/1985), with some 2500 lines.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

‘annī wa-qad alifa al-rifāqa firāqū
Wa-iswadda ḥaẓẓī ‘indahum lammā sará
fīhī bi-nāri ṣabābatī iḥrāqū
‘Urbun ra’aytu aṣaḥḥa mīthāqin lahum
an lā yaṣiḥḥa ladayhimū mīthāqū[23]

[Don´t hide what love has done to you:
display your passion; we are lovers all.
If you complain of love to someone, he
may help you bear it: lovers are all friends.
You must not grieve, you´re not the first who loves
and has been killed by murderous cheeks and eyes.
Be steadfast when your love deserts you, for
you may be reunited. Passion has its ways.
So many nights I kept my eyes awake,
love-sick, besieged by thoughts all round.
Lord! Those I love are far from me;
parting from friends is part of normal life.
My luck with them has blackened, with
the scorching fire of passion burnt.
They´re Bedouin nomads, most reliable, I find,
in that one never can rely on them.]

The ″fluency″ consists in the absence of difficult words and intricate syntax. The few instances of word-play are simple: *aḥdāq* and *iḥdāq* (line 5), *rifāq* and *firāq* (line 6). A sprinkling of antitheses adds clarity to the ideas expressed (hiding/displaying, grief/steadfastness, parting/union). As in the poem quoted above, several lines end with a general statement resembling a maxim (lines 1, 2, 4) and the poem is rounded off (at least in the curtailed version given in the *Khizānah*) with a neat paradox, a line that stands out in being the only one that does not contain a reference to love or lovers.[24] There is a contrast or even a conflict, not resolved, between on the one hand the optimistic and consoling first four lines, addressed to the lover (or perhaps spoken by the lover to himself), and on the

[23]*Khizānah,* 252/1:441; cf. *Dīwān*, 161, which adds one line after vs. 1 and three more at the end. In line 6, *Khizānah* has *al-firāqa firāqū*, which does not make sense; the version of the *Dīwān* has been followed instead. In the last line one might read *yaṣiḥḥu,* instead of the subjunctive, since no wish or effect is involved.

[24]Vs. 1 has *ashwāq, hawá* and *‘ushshāq*, vs. 2 *hawá* and *‘āshiqūn,* vs. 3 *mughram,* vs. 4 *ḥabīb* and *hawá,* vs. 5 *wajd,* vs. 6 *uḥibbuhum,* vs. 7 *ṣabābatī.*

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

other hand the unredeemed misery described in the second half of the poem, where the second person singular (comfortingly included in ″all of us″) is replaced by the first person singular throughout, apparently isolated from ″them.″ It could be argued, of course, that such sudden changes of mood are normal in the love-stricken.

Ibn Ḥijjah also quotes the following four lines by him:

Bi-tathannī qawāmika al-mamshūqī
wa-bi-anwāri wajhika al-ma'shūqī
Wa-bi-ma'nan lil-ḥusni mubtakarun fī-
ka wa-qalbin ka-qalbiya al-maḥrūqī
Jud bi-waṣlin aw zawratin aw bi-wa'din
aw kalāmin aw waqfatin fī al-ṭarīqī
Aw bi-irsālika al-salāma ma'a al-rī-
ḥi wa-illā fa-bi-al-khayāli al-ṭarūqī[25]

[By the swaying of your slender body,
and the lights of your beloved face,
By a rare and novel beauty in you,
and a heart burnt black like my own heart:
Come live with me, or visit me, or promise me,
or say something, stop briefly on the street,
Or send a greeting with the wind; if not,
then visit me at least at night in dreams!]

This little poem is more unified than the previous one; it consists of only one sentence that is long but transparent, neatly divided into two equal halves. The lines are devoid of any puns, and employ none but the simplest metaphors; the only art lies in the artless diction and the pleasing anticlimactic series in the last two lines, in which the requests become, on the whole, progressively longer and emptier.

More intricate word-play and greater frequency of it are not incompatible with *insijām*. Here is a piece by the father of al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf, 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (610–690/1213–1291).[26] By calling him one of the *'ārifūn,* Ibn Ḥijjah indicates that the verses should be given a mystical interpretation:

---

[25]*Khizānah,* 252/1:441. In the *Dīwān* (167–68) the poem has 13 lines, of which Ibn Ḥijjah offers 1, 2, 4, and 5. Instead of *wa-qalbin ka-qalbiya al-maḥrūqī* the *Dīwān* has *wa-khaṣrin ka-qalbiya al-masrūqī*.

[26]Krenkow-[Yalaoui], ″Tilimsānī″; Brockelmann, *GAL,* 1:258, S1:458.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

Ludh bi-al-gharāmi wa-ladhdhati al-ashwāqī
wa-ikhtar fanā'aka fī al-jamāli al-bāqī
Wa-ikhla‘ sulūwaka fa-huwa thawbun mukhlaqun
wa-ilbas jadīda makārimi al-akhlāqī
Wa-tawaqqa min nāri al-ṣudūdi bi-shurbatin
min mā'i dam‘ika fa-huwa ni‘ma al-wāqī
Wa-idhā da‘āka ilá al-ṣibā nafasu al-ṣabā
fa-ajib rasūla nasīmihi al-khaffāqī
Wa-idhā sharibta al-ṣirfa min khamri al-hawá
iyyāka taghfalu ‘an jamāli al-sāqī
Wa-ilqa al-aḥibbata in aradta wisālahum
mutaladhdhidhan bi-al-dhulli wa-al-imlāqī
A-wa-laysa min aḥlá al-maṭāmi‘i fī al-hawá
‘izzu al-ḥabībi wa-dhillatu al-‘ushshāqī[27]

[Take refuge in love and the pleasure of passion
and seek your extinction in beauty that lasts.
Take off the old cloak, now worn out, of your solace;
and get yourself dressed in a new set of virtues.
Seek protection ´gainst fire of rejection by drinking
the water of tears: they´re the safest protection.
When the zephyr invites you to amorous folly,
obey then the messenger sent in its fluttering breeze.
And when you have drunk the unmixed wine of passion,
be careful to notice the cupbearer´s beauty.
And meet those you love, if you wish to be one with them,
while you relish in being submissive and poor.
For isn´t this one of the sweetest ambitions in love:
the beloved exalted, and humbled the lovers?]

The poem is based on an often-expressed paradox: a lover´s true happiness exists in being miserable, and it ought to be his highest ambition to be lowly and submissive. This is expressed through various instances of paronomasia: *ludh*/*ladhdha*, *mukhlaq*/*akhlāq*, *tawaqqa*/*wāqī*, *ṣabā*/*ṣibā, mutaladhdhidh*/*dhull,* and of antithesis: *fanā'*/*bāqī, ikhla‘*/*ilbas*, *mukhlaq*/*jadīd*, *nār*/*mā', ‘izz*/*dhillah*. Combined, these two figures suggest a punning antithesis of *ladhdhah* ″pleasure″ and *dhillah*/*dhull* ″submission″ that here, exceptionally, goes beyond the confines

[27] *Khizānah,* 260/1:453.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

of a single line (see lines 1, 6 and 7) and is reinforced by the fact that the very first word, *ludh* (from a different root), is a palindrome of *dhull*. Yet, in spite of all this apparent artifice, one can understand that Ibn Ḥijjah cites it as an example of *insijām* ″that stirs the passions and ardent emotions.″

Not all poems quoted are on love secular or mystical. The longest poem, by Ibn Nubātah (686–768/1287–1366), is a *muzdawijah* of 158 *rajaz* couplets in praise of the ruler of Ḥamāh, al-Malik al-Afḍal. After a brief description of nature, it turns into a hunting poem, with a brief panegyric at the end.[28] The poem reads smoothly indeed, and approaches prose not only in being relatively free of obscure diction and far-fetched imagery, but also because it is basically a narrative, from the beginning of the hunt (line 23: ″When the time for the shoot[29] approached, we set out . . .″) until the returning, with a heavy bag (lines 137–39: ″God, what a fine and blessed sight, the manner we returned from the mountain´s summit, our hands filled with the spoils, thankful for the bounty bestowed upon us, thronging round the Victorious King, al-Malik al-Manṣūr[30] like comets round the luminous moon″). Within a framework of verbs in perfect tense at intervals (*sirnā . . . ḥattá nazalnā . . . wa-ibtadara al-qawm . . . wa-aqbalat mawākibu al-ṭuyūr . . . sirnā . . .*, etc.), the action and scenes are depicted in the intervals by means of circumstantial clauses, extended attributive clauses, similes (*ka-annahā . . .*), exclamative sentences (*fa-yā la-hā . . ., fa-ḥabbadhā . . ., kam . . ., wāhan la-hā . . .*) and other constructions. Shooting turns to hawking and to hunting with hounds and cheetahs, and all of it underlines both the bounty and the bloodshed that is customarily ascribed to rulers in panegyric poetry. Ibn Ḥijjah, praising the poem, says that ″If the Sharīf could have seen it, he would have sponged off of *(taṭaffala)* the breeze of its verses [i.e., plagiarized them], and he would have acknowledged that *The Chanter and the Groaner* does not chant and warble as sweetly.″ He refers to Ibn al-Habbārīyah (d. ca. 509/1115) and his collection of poems in *rajaz* meter with mostly animal fables, even though Ibn Nubātah´s poem is more akin to the model set by Ibn al-Mu'tazz and Abū Firās.[31]

Ibn Ḥijjah is enthusiastic, too, about a poem by Ibn al-Wardī (691–749/1292–1349) which is a versified deed of purchase, improvised when challenged on 14 Ramaḍān of the year 715/1316.[32] It begins as follows:

---

[28]Ibid., 267–72/1:466–72. The edition of the poem by Muḥammad As'ad Ṭalas in *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī* 2 (1952): 302–10 has 177 couplets.

[29]With pellets, *ramy al-bunduq,* for shooting birds.

[30]Ibn Ḥijjah explains that al-Malik al-Afḍal´s earlier name was al-Malik al-Manṣūr.

[31]See, e.g., James E. Montgomery, ″Abū Firās´s Veneric *Urjūzah Muzdawijah*,″ *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 2 (1999): 61–74, esp. 69.

[32]*Khizānah,* 272–73/1:473–74. The date, as can be expected here, is given in the poem itself.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

Bi-ismi ilāhi al-khalqi hādhā mā ishtará
Muḥammadu ibnu Yūnusa ibni Sunqurā
Min Māliki ibni Aḥmada ibni al-Azraqī
Kilāhumā qad ʻurifā min Jilliqī

[In the name of the God of all creatures: this is what has been
bought
By Muḥammad Ibn Yūnus Ibn Sunqur
From Mālik Ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-Azraq,
Both known persons from Damascus.]

Truly fluent like prose, it is versification, *naẓm,* but not everyone would call it poetry, *shiʻr*. It is perhaps not strange that the poem is not found in Ibn al-Wardī's *Dīwān*.[33] Ibn Ḥijjah could have used the second and third hemistichs of this fragment as illustrations of another "figure" of *badīʻ*, called *iṭṭirād* (lit. "uninterrupted sequence"), which consists in using personal names in poetry in a seemingly artless manner.[34]

The Egyptian poet Burhān al-Dīn al-Qīrāṭī (726–81/1326–79),[35] a friend of Ibn Nubātah, is represented with three fragments taken from one poem, the first two being the following:

Akhadhat Bābilu ʻanhū / baʻda tilka al-nafathātī
Fa-huwa ghuṣnun fī inʻitāfin / wa-ghazālun fī iltifātī
Ḥasanātu al-khaddi minhū / qad aṭālat ḥasarātī
Kullamā sā'a faʻālan / qultu «Inna al-ḥasanāti . . .»
Wa-li-sū'i al-ḥaẓẓi ṣārat / ḥasanāti sayyi'ātī
Aʻshaqu al-shāmāti minhū / wa-hiya asbābu mamātī
. . . . . .
Bi-abī laḥẓu ghazālin / qā'ilin fī al-khalawāti:
"Inna lil-mawti bi-aqdā- / ḥi jufūnī sakarātī"
Qultu "Qad mittu gharāman" / Qāla lī "Mut bi-ḥayātī"[36]

---

[33] *Dīwān Ibn al-Wardī*, ed. Aḥmad Fawzī al-Hayb (Kuwait, 1986).

[34] *Khizānah,* 199–201/1:351–53; cf. Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-ʻUmdah fī Maḥāsin al-Shiʻr wa-Ādābihi wa-Naqdih*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut, repr. 1972), 2:82–84; Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʻ, *Taḥrīr,* 352–54, Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician,* 43 (no. 64), where it is rendered "flowing identification."

[35] Ḍayf, *ʻAṣr al-Duwal,* 292–95; Brockelmann, *GAL,* 2:14, S2:7.

[36] *Khizānah,* 273/1:474.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

[Babylon took from him
some of these magic spells:[37]
He is a twig the way he bends,
a gazelle the way he turns.
The beauties of his cheek
have prolonged my miseries.
Whenever he behaves badly
I say, «Surely the good deeds . . .»[38]
But to my misfortune my good deeds
have turned into evil deeds.
I am in love with his moles
though they be the causes of my death.
. . . . . .
O, how dear to me is the glance of a gazelle
saying in the desert,[39]
″Death´s throes[40] are in
the cups of my eyelids″
I said, ″I am dying of passion!″
He replied to me, ″Die, by my life!″]

The usual motifs—the twig, the gazelle, magic charms, cheeks, moles or beauty spots, and finally death by love—make for easy listening, together with the smooth syntax, short lines, and easy diction. There is hardly anything deep in such a poem, although one notices little touches that lift it above the wholly trite. By saying that the ″prehistoric″ Babylonians derived their magic from the beloved, it is suggested that he[41] is a timeless, primeval being, perhaps an angel fallen from heaven like Hārūt and Mārūt. The lover, in turn, pretends to have fallen: in love and into sin. His beloved´s bad deeds have literally been ″taken away″ by the incompleteness of the Quranic quotation as well as by his beauty; conversely, the lover´s goodness has turned into badness as stated in the next line and implied by

[37]Babylon is associated with the fallen angels Hārūt and Mārūt and with magic.

[38]« . . will take away the evil deeds» (Quran 11:114).

[39]Ḍayf, who quotes these lines (*ʿAṣr al-Duwal,* 293, omitting vss. 4–5), places this line at the beginning. He interprets *qāʾil* as from the root *qyl* (″taking a midday nap″), which is possible. In the version quoted by Ibn Ḥijjah ″saying″ is more appropriate, since the following line must be spoken by the ″gazelle.″

[40]Literally, ″intoxications,″ hence the ″cups.″

[41]Ḍayf, child of his time, assumes that the beloved is female.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

the mention of drunkenness further on. There is an obvious play on the two meanings of *ḥasanāt,* aesthetic and moral ″beauties.″ The last word is a linguistic joke, playing on two meanings of the preposition *bi-* in ″by my life″: either an implied oath: ″(I swear) upon my life,″ or literally ″by means of my being alive.″

There are two other sections in *badī‘* lists, including Ibn Ḥijjah′s *Khizānah,* that are not wholly unlike *insijām.* Ibn Ḥijjah deals with them in two much shorter consecutive sections. The first is *suhūlah*,[42] which means, of course, ″easiness, smoothness, facility″; as we have seen, Ibn Ḥijjah uses the word when describing *insijām.* He is aware that the concepts are related, as appears from the following:

> *Suhūlah* is mentioned by al-Tīfāshī in connection with the figure of *ẓarāfah* (″elegance″);[43] some people associate it with *insijām.* It is mentioned by Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī in his book *Sirr al-Faṣāḥah (The Secret of Eloquence),* where he says that it consists of the words being free from artificiality, complexity, and tortuousness in the expression *(khulūṣ al-lafẓ min al-takalluf wa-al-ta‘qīd wa-al-ta‘assuf fī al-sabk).*[44] Al-Tīfāshī defines *suhūlah* as ″easy expressions, that are distinguished from others even to those literate people who have the least taste, and which bespeak of a sensitive feeling, a fine nature, and a sound reflective mind.″[45]

Almost all the illustrations are from Bahā’ al-Dīn Zuhayr, ″who holds the reins of this kind.″ No attempt is made to distinguish between *insijām* and *suhūlah* and it is doubtful that Ibn Ḥijjah would insist on a distinction; he is bound to follow his

---

[42]*Khizānah,* 554–7/1:478–81; cf. al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ*, 311–13; Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, *Anwār,* 6:270–78 (calling it *tas′hīl*); al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt,* 311–16; Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician,* 119 (no. 163), where it is translated as ″smoothness.″

[43]Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī (d. 651/1253), author of works on precious stones and sex, also wrote a work on *badī‘* which has not been preserved. See al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ*, 72; Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 91; Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafá Tāshkubrī′zādah, *Miftāḥ al-Sa‘ādah wa-Miṣbāh al-Siyādah* (Hyderabad, 1977–1980), 1:182 (spelled as al-T.ghāshī); Bahā’ al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Subkī, *‘Arūs al-Afrāḥ fī Sharḥ Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ,* in Mas‘ūd ibn ‘Umar al-Taftāzānī et al., *Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ* (Cairo, 1937) 4:467 (here spelled as al-Shāshī). Before al-Tīfāshī, Usāmah Ibn Munqidh *(Badī‘*, 134–39) offered a chapter on *al-ẓarāfah wa-al-suhūlah.*

[44]Not found in the consulted editions of Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī (d. 477/1074), *Sirr al-Faṣāḥah* (Cairo, 1932 and Beirut, 1982). Until this point, Ibn Ḥijjah is quoting, or near-quoting, al-Ḥillī′s commentary (*Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah*, 311), which has *ṭarāfah* instead of *ẓarāfah*).

[45]*Khizānah,* 554/1:478.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

model, al-Ḥillī, who, in turn, merely collected those terms of *badī‘* that were current. Judging by the examples, *suhūlah* seems to be applied even more than *insijām* to poetry that is ″easy,″ in that it avoids difficult words, difficult syntax, and difficult thoughts. One example, by al-Bahā’ Zuhayr, is on the old conceit of offering to return a kiss as if it were a present that could be given back:[46]

> Man lī bi-qalbin ashtarī- / hi min al-qulūbi al-qāsiyah
> Wa-ilayka yā malika al-milā- / ḥi waqaftu ashkū ḥāliyah
> Innī la-aṭlubu ḥājatan / laysat ‘alayka bi-khāfiyah
> An‘im ‘alayya bi-qublatin / hibatan wa-illā ‘āriyah
> Wa-u‘īduhā la-ka lā ‘adim- /ta bi-‘aynihā wa-kamā hiyah
> Wa-idhā aradta ziyādatan / khudhhā wa-nafsī rāḍiyah[47]
>
> [Who has a heart for me that I could buy, a hard one!
> To you, O king of pretty ones, I′ve come with my complaint.
> I want one thing; it will not be unknown to you:
> Please make me happy with a kiss: a gift, or else a loan;
> You′ll have it back precisely as it was, my dear!
> But if you′d like some more, please take them, it′s my pleasure.]

The other, following section is entitled *ḥusn al-bayān,*[48] a term that should be taken in a vague and general sense, such as ″beautiful exposition, or clarity of expression.″ Ibn Ḥijjah describes it as follows:

> They say that it means the clear expression *(ibānah)* of what is in the soul in eloquent words that are remote from intricacy *(lubs)*, since the intention of it is to utter the sense by means of a lucid picture *(ikhrāj al-ma‘ná ilá al-ṣūrah al-wāḍiḥah)* and to convey it to the understanding of the recipient in the easiest manner.

---

[46]Cf. the joke told in Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyūn al-Akhbār* (Cairo, 1925–30), 2:55 and other sources; see Ulrich Marzolph, *Arabia Ridens* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), 2:47 (no. 175).

[47]*Khizānah,* 556/2:480–81; Bahā’ al-Dīn Zuhayr ibn Muḥammad, *Dīwān,* ed. and transl. Edward Henry Palmer (Cambridge, 1876–77), 1:297–98 (text), 2:331 (rhymed translation, changing the gender of the addressee). The *Dīwān*′s version has ten lines (Ibn Ḥijjah quotes 2–3, 5–8). Some lines are quoted in *The Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* [Cairo, n.d.], 2:42–43).

[48]*Khizānah,* 557–58/2:482–83; see al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ*, 309–10; Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, *Anwār,* 6:290–95; al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt,* 321–22; Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician*, 112–13 (no. 153, translated as ″articulateness″); Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 489–93; idem, *Badī‘ al-Qur’ān*, 203–6; Badr al-Dīn Ibn Mālik, *Al-Miṣbāḥ* (Cairo, 1341), 92–93, al-Suyūṭī, *‘Uqūd,* 140.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

In view of the more precise sense of ″imagery″ that the term *bayān* carried in Ibn Ḥijjah´s time, according to the more formal and scholastic study of eloquence and style, one might believe that here, too, he refers above all to imagery, seeing moreover that he speaks of a ″picture/image.″ Yet in the rest of the chapter and its illustrations this is not borne out.

Although *insijām* and related terms were introduced in studies on *badī‘* at a relatively late stage, this does not mean that the concepts of fluency and seeming ease were absent from earlier phases. Both terms for eloquence, *bayān* and *balāghah,* near-synonyms before they acquired more specialized technical meanings, stress the clarity and communicativeness of eloquence that seem to favor easiness over obscurity. Ja‘far Ibn Yaḥyá al-Barmakī is reported to have described true *bayān* as ″what is far from artifice *(ṣan‘ah),* free of complexity *(ta‘aqqud),* and not in need of interpretation *(ta’wīl)*″; this view was endorsed by al-Jāḥiẓ and many others.[49] *Suhūlah* is mentioned often, usually favorably. It is the first of forty-six stylistic traits of the poetry of ‘Umar Ibn Abī Rabī‘ah listed in *Al-Aghānī* and attributed to Muṣ‘ab Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Zubayrī (uncle of al-Zubayr Ibn Bakkār, d. 256/870).[50] Particularly common is the concept of the ″seemingly easy,″ often expressed as *al-sahl al-mumtani‘,* or *al-muṭmi‘ al-mumtani‘* but found in other expressions. Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ is reported to have defined eloquence as ″what an ignorant person hears and thinks (mistakenly) he can do equally well.″[51] Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (d. 235/850) called the poetry of Manṣūr al-Namarī ″easy of diction, difficult to aspire to″ *(sahl kalāmuh, ṣa‘b marāmuh).*[52] Ismā’īl, son of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Yaḥyá *al-kātib* (d. 132/749), defined a good prose writer as ″he who writes a letter so that people reading it imagine they can do as well, but when they try they cannot.″[53] Al-Aṣmā‘ī is credited with a definition of poetry as ″what is concise, easy, delicate, and subtle of meaning; if you hear it you think you can reach that level, but if you try it, you find it far from your grasp. All the rest is mere versification.″[54] Ibrāhīm, son of al-‘Abbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf, describing his father´s

[49]Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn* (Cairo, 1968), 1:106; Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyūn al-Akhbār,* 2:173.

[50]Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Cairo, 1927–74), 1:120–21.

[51]‘Alam al-Hudá ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá, *Amālī al-Murtaḍá: Ghurar al-Fawā’id wa-Durar al-Qalā’id* (Cairo, 1954), 1:137.

[52]Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Ewald Wagner (Wiesbaden, 1958–), 1:17.

[53]From ‘Abd Allāh al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Kuttāb,* ed. by Dominique Sourdel as ″Le «Livre des secrétaires» de ‘Abdallāh al-Baġdādī,″ *Bulletin d´Etudes Orientales* 14 (1952–54): 149.

[54]Al-Muẓaffar ibn al-Faḍl al-Ḥusaynī, *Naḍrat al-Ighrīḍ fī Nuṣrat al-Qarīḍ* (Damascus, 1976), 10.

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

poetry, said he had never found anything by a modern poet that was ″more difficult while being easy″ *(aṣ'ab fī suhūlah)*.[55] Similar sayings abound.

This preference for easy comprehension in poetry seems to contrast with the opinion that the basic difference between poetry and prose is that the former tends to obscurity and the latter to limpidity. In his epistle on the difference between prose and poetry, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Hilāl al-Ṣābī (d. 384/994) wrote that as a consequence of its prosodic restrictions ″the most splendid *(afkhar)* poetry is what is obscure *(mā ghamuḍa)* and only gives up its purport after some delay,″ whereas ″the most splendid epistolary prose *(tarassul)* is what has a clear meaning and gives up its purport as soon as one hears it.″[56] Al-Ṣābī, himself a prose writer, exaggerates: certainly in his day, the prestigious epistolary style tended to rival or surpass poetry in obscurity and ornateness. The issue of obscurity in Arabic literary criticism, from the scattered remarks by al-Jāḥiẓ to the important contribution on the topic by the sixth/thirteenth-century theorist Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, has been studied by Albert Arazi in his article on this epistle.

Although critics and theorists, ancient and modern, often pay lip-service to the ideals of clarity and easiness in general terms, these are not very rewarding concepts to them since, like happy families to novelists, they offer few opportunities to show one's critical and analytical skills. Easy poetry offers not enough of a challenge, nor does the concept of easiness itself. We must be grateful to Ibn Ḥijjah and other writers of *badī'īyah* commentaries that they did not disdain to deal at length with easy poetry, stooping from being critics to being ″merely″ consumers of pleasant verse. To them, *insijām* and related ″figures″ are an excuse for quoting good or occasionally excellent poetry which does not depend primarily on artifice. The chapters serve to redress the balance to some extent between the artful and the seemingly artless. It is not strange that the *insijām* chapter is so extremely lengthy in Ibn Ḥijjah's *Khizānah* and Ibn Ma'ṣūm's *Anwār al-Rabī'*: it helped them to give their works more of the character of a representative anthology. ″Fluency″ is neither absent from the poetry of the Mamluk period, nor particularly common in it: it is found in all periods. The phrase ″easy listening″ in the title of

[55]Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī,* 8:365; cf. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣinā'atayn* (Cairo, 1971), 67; Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-Ādāb* (Beirut, 1972), 685.

[56]Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Al-Tadhkirah al-Ḥamdūnīyah,* ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās and Bakr 'Abbās (Beirut, 1996), 6:357; Albert Arazi, ″Une épître d'Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl al-Ṣābī sur les genres littéraires,″ in M. Sharon, ed., *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honor of Professor David Ayalon* (Jerusalem, 1986), 473–505 (see 498); Ziyād al-Zu'bī, ″Risālat Abī Isḥāq al-Ṣābī fī al-Farq bayna al-Mutarassil wa-al-Shā'ir: Dirāsah Tawthīqīyah Naqdīyah,″ *Abḥāth al-Yarmūk* 11 (1993): 129–65 (see 156).

DOI: 10.6082/M1RV0KT2. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: 10.6082/M1FQ9TQV. See https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV to download the full volume or individual articles.

this paper suggests pleasant rather than great poetry, and it is true that many of the poems that show *insijām* do not seem to tax the listener, just as some muzak, meant to be relaxing and reassuring, has been purged of dissonants or ″difficult″ features. Nevertheless, there are many other poems that, though easy to listen to, hide deeper layers of meaning and thought for those listeners who make an effort.

DOI: **10.6082/M1RV0KT2**. (**https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RV0KT2**)

DOI of Vol. VII, no. 1: **10.6082/M1FQ9TQV**. See **https://doi.org/10.6082/M1FQ9TQV** to download the full volume or individual articles.