GHAZAL AS WORLD LITERATURE I

Transformations of a Literary Genre

edited by

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and

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BEIRUT 2005

ERGON VERLAG WÜRZBURG
IN KOMMISSION

Umschlaggestaltung: Taline Yozgatian

Das Bild auf dem Umschlag zeigt die kalligraphische Gestaltung eines persischen Gedichts (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. Supplement persan 1425, p. 28).
Druckprojektbetreuung: Ruth Hartmann

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie ; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.ddb.de abrufbar.

ISBN 3-89913-406-0

Ergon-Verlag, Dr. H.-J. Dietrich
Grombühlstr. 7, D-97080 Würzburg

Druck: Dergham sarl
Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier
Printed in Lebanon

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IBN ḤAJAR AND THE ARABIC GHAZAL OF THE MAMLUK AGE

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Introduction

In the 9th/15th century, as al-Suyūṭī tells us in his biographical dictionary of the VIPs of the century, seven "shooting stars" were sparkling in the heaven of poetry in Egypt, for it happened at this time that seven of the most important poets bore the name *Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad*, hence engendering the word play "the seven *Shihāb al-Dīn*s" = "the seven *shuhub*" = "the seven shooting stars."[1] Today, however, one would need quite a large telescope to detect even a faint glimmer of these celestial bodies which had once shone so brightly. Due to the almost complete neglect, or may I even say, the contempt and disparagement this literary epoch has suffered from both modern Western and Arab scholars alike, the works of these poets have yet to be edited or even studied, and none of the seven has been granted an entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* or the *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature*.

There is, however, a single exception. One of these Shihāb al-Dīns was none other than Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, whose fame as the most ingenious scholar of ḥadīth in post-formative Islam has endured. Yet most people are quite surprised when they learn that Ibn Ḥajar was also a gifted and prolific poet, highly esteemed by his contemporaries, praised by al-Suyūṭī, and considered a great master of the *tawriya* by Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, who fills many pages of his *Khizānat al-adab* with quotations from the work of Ibn Ḥajar.[2] The importance that Ibn Ḥajar assigned to his own poetic production is shown by the fact that he himself composed three different recensions of his Dīwān, of which at least two

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1 al-Suyūṭī: *Naẓm al-ʿiqyān fī aʿyān al-aʿyān*, ed. Philip K. Hitti. New York 1927, entries 20, 34, 37, 39, 42, 43.

2 Cf. Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī: *Khizānat al-adab wa-ghāyat al-arab*. 2nd. ed., 2 vols. Beirut 1991, vol. 2, 226-8. – It is quite characteristic for the state of our knowledge about Mamluk poetry that even the author of the article on Ibn Ḥajar in the *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature* does not mention Ibn Ḥajar's literary efforts.

have survived, a larger and a smaller one.[3] We will focus our attention on the smaller recension, a selection of precisely those of his poems which Ibn Ḥajar considered to be especially brilliant as well as exemplary for their respective genre. Hence, this Dīwān shall allow us to construct a preliminary but representative image of the poetry in the middle period of the Mamluk Age.

The Theme of Love in Ibn Ḥajar's Dīwān

For his Dīwān Ibn Ḥajar designed a sophisticated plan to present the material. His arrangement of the poems is based on the number seven. The poems are organized into seven chapters and each chapter is comprised of seven poems, yielding a total of 49 poems (if one disregards the exceptional structure of Chapter Seven). The following chart lists the chapter headings, the total number of lines in each chapter, the number of lines dedicated to love poetry, and the percentage of these lines in the respective chapter:

chapter	lines total	lines about love	% love
1 *al-Nabawiyyāt*	348	126	36
2 *al-Mulūkiyyāt*	325	93	29
3 *al-Amīriyyāt*	338	129	38
4 *al-Ghazaliyyāt*	186	186	100
5 *al-Aʿrāḍ al-mukhtalifa*	309	12	4
6 *al-Muwashshaḥāt*	147	135	92
7 *al-Maqāṭīʿ*	150	106	70
Total	1803	787	43

Chapter Four is dedicated entirely to the *ghazaliyyāt* and it is this chapter that will naturally attract our main attention. But it would be rash to confine ourselves exclusively to the ghazal section because this is not the only chapter that contains love poetry – indeed, the contrary is the case. In fact, *all* chapters contain some sort of love poetry. Therefore, in order to obtain an overview of the different forms of love poetry in the Mamluk age, we must also take the other chapters into consideration.

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[3] Cf. my review of Nūr ʿAlī Ḥusayn's edition of Ibn Ḥajar's *Dīwān* in: *Mamlūk Studies Review* 4 (2000), 267-69. All references in this article are to the following edition: Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʿAmr: *Uns al-Hujar fī Abyāt Ibn Ḥajar*. Bayrūt 1409/1988.

Chapter One, *al-nabawiyyāt*, is made up of seven poems in praise of the Prophet, a genre that enjoyed great popularity only from the 7th/13th century onwards. By the time of Ibn Ḥajar though, it was considered a more or less indispensable part of all poetry. Many poems in praise of the Prophet open with a nasīb. It was, however, not easy to decide the degree of eroticism that could be tolerated within this pious genre. Yūsuf al-Nabhānī, the compiler of a famous collection of *madā'iḥ nabawiyya*, had originally intended to leave out all poems that contain descriptions of beautiful girls and youths; he changed his mind however when he realized this would mean abandoning some of the most beautiful poems.[4] Perhaps even some of the seven poems by Ibn Ḥajar (which are completely included in al-Nabhānī's anthology) might have been subjected to this objection: for example, in poem no. 3 we find a rather detailed poetic description of a beautiful youth in lines 13 to 18. But in general, Ibn Ḥajar's nasībs to his *madā'iḥ nabawiyya* are unobjectionably chaste. It deserves to be noted, however, that all of his seven poems in praise of the Prophet start with a nasīb that on average takes up more than a third of the poem.

Chapters Two and Three contain examples of Ibn Ḥajar's secular panegyric poetry. Chapter Two, *al-mulūkiyyāt*, is dedicated to poems in praise of the caliph and of several princes, mainly from the Rasūlid dynasty of Yemen, one of the few Arabic-speaking dynasties of this time whose court heartily welcomed poets. The dearth of poetry-loving princes in the Mamluk period was more than compensated by the great number of *a'yān* who were interested in poetry and often composed poetry themselves on a more or less professional level. Seven odes on such members of the military and civilian elite form Chapter Four, *fī l-amīriyyāt wa-l-ṣāḥibiyyāt*. The formal standards of panegyric poetry had remained more or less the same since the time of Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī. The poems are usually bipartite and start with a nasīb that can continue either the tradition of the pre-Islamic nasīb or that of the often homoerotic ghazal in the tradition of Abū Nuwās and other poets from the early Abbasid period.[5] Both types are represented in Ibn Ḥajar's poems, as the distinction between both categories had weakened by the onset of the Mamluk period and motifs from both traditions are often intermingled in a single nasīb.

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4 Yūsuf b. Ismā'īl al-Nabhānī: *al-Majmū'a al-Nabhāniyya fī l-Madā'iḥ al-Nabawiyya*. 4 vols. Bayrūt s.a., vol. 1, 14f. Cf. also the discussion in Ibn Ḥijja: *Khizānat al-Adab*, vol. 1, 36-40.

5 On this distinction cf. Thomas Bauer: *Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*. Wiesbaden 1998, 185-97; and id.: The Arabic Ghazal: Formal and thematic aspects of a problematic genre. To appear in: A. Neuwirth, J. Pfeiffer and B. Sagaster (eds.): *The Ghazal as a Genre of World Literature*. Würzburg (BTS 84).

There is only one single poem (no. 7 of the *mulūkiyyāt*, in praise of the caliph) in which Ibn Ḥajar refrains from starting with an amatory prelude. As in the poems of the first chapter, the nasīb takes up about one third of the poem.

The following Fourth Chapter, *al-ghazaliyyāt*, is entirely dedicated to love poetry. The length of its seven poems ranges from between 12 to 51 lines, clearly surpassing the average of the Mamluk ghazal. In most of these poems motifs from the nasīb and ghazal traditions occur together, though in most of them an elegiac tone prevails. An interesting combination of both is presented in the sixth poem. Here seven lines form a kind of introduction in the vein of the old Arabic nasīb. This part (so to say the nasīb to a ghazal, if this formulation would not reduce the term nasīb to a formal parameter) is followed by twelve lines in which the poet describes the lover's union with a beautiful youth. Such "visit poems" were quite popular in Abbasid times, especially with Ibn al-Muʿtazz, but it seems somewhat surprising to find a Mamluk scholar of ḥadīth engaged in this genre.[6]

There is not much to say about Chapter Five, in which different subjects such as private correspondence and elegies are presented. Only the first poem has a short nasīb.

Much more interesting is Chapter Six, the section comprising *muwashshaḥāt*. This form of strophic poetry became increasingly popular during the Mamluk age, eventually even surpassing the ghazal in the *qarīḍ* metres during the Ottoman period. The content of the *muwashshaḥāt* is hardly distinguishable from that of the *ghazaliyyāt*. Both deal almost exclusively with love and they do so in a more or less identical way. The style of the *muwashshaḥāt* seems to be somewhat lighter, making less use of more elaborate and complex rhetorical devices. Only a single *muwashshaḥ* deals with a subject other than love. It is no. 6 in which, after a nasīb, the poet praises the Ḥanafite chief qāḍī. This proportion is probably typical for the Mamluk *muwashshaḥ*. For although in principle every poetic subject can be dealt with in the form of a *muwashshaḥ*, love poetry remains its proper domain.

Of equal relevance for the study of love poetry is section seven, *al-maqāṭīʿ*, dedicated to epigrams, each of which is comprised by exactly two lines. These two-line epigrams started their proper career in the 3rd/9th century[7]

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6 In: *Liebe und Liebesdichtung*, 510-2, I called such poems "Besuchsgedichte" because many of them start with the word *zāra* or *zārat* "he/she came to visit me."

7 On the history of the Arabic epigram cf. Geert Jan van Gelder: Pointed and Well-rounded: Arabic Encomiastic and Elegiac Epigrams. In: *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 26 (1995), 101-40.

and reached the absolute peak of their popularity in the Mamluk age when many a book was dedicated exclusively to the collection of such epigrams.[8] It is therefore not surprising that Ibn Ḥajar included a chapter of epigrams in his Dīwān, even at the expense of violating his principle of arrangement, since seven epigrams would be an all too meagre number to make up a whole chapter. Ibn Ḥajar thus decided that ten epigrams would equal one qaṣīda. Consequently the chapter is comprised of, at least in theory, seventy epigrams.[9] The main subject of these epigrams is again love. Fifty-three of its 75 epigrams can be reckoned as belonging to the ghazal genre. In these two-liners, topics characteristic for the ghazal are presented in an epigrammatic, pointed form. Among them we find epigrams on young men whose names or professions are used for a play on words or some similar point. These poems represent the Arabic counterpart to the Persian and Turkish *shahrāshūb* genre. Considering the stylistic predilections of the Mamluk era, it is not surprising that the point of many of these epigrams is formed by a *tawriya*. The *tawriya*, a form of *double entendre*, was considered by the Mamluk poets to be the most noble and exalted stylistic device, and Mamluk *literati* were proud of the fact that their age surpassed the previous periods of Arabic literature in the art of the *tawriya*.[10] In the translations appended I have marked the *tawriya*s by underlining one of the meanings the poet alluded to and giving the other in italics. In the following example, the last word can either be interpreted as a form of the noun *shafatun* "lip" or the verb *shafā* "to heal" (p. 340):

سَألُوا عن عاشِقٍ في قَمَرٍ بادٍ سَنَاهُ:
أسْقَمَتْهُ مُقْلَتَاهُ؟ قُلتُ: لا بل شَفَتَاهُ!

They asked about one who is passionately in love with a moon radiant with splendour:
"Did his beloved's eyes cause him sickness?" – "No," I responded, "<u>his lips</u> / *they healed him*!"

Summing up, we can see that a total of 43% of the lines in Ibn Ḥajar's Dīwān deal with love. Love is thus a topic (*gharaḍ*) of first-rate importance in this Dīwān. Even more lines are dedicated to the subject of love than

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8 The most widespread collection of *ghazal* epigrams was the *Marātiʿ al-Ghizlān fī l-Ḥisān min al-Ghilmān* by Ibn Ḥajar's comtemporary Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Nawājī (788-859/1386-1455). This anthology, in which many of Ibn Ḥajar's epigrams are cited, is extant in many manuscripts but still awaits edition.

9 As a matter of fact, it is comprised of 75, for whatever reason.

10 Cf. S.A. Bonebakker: *Some Early Definition of the Tawriya and Ṣafadī's Faḍḍ al-Xitām ʿan at-Tawriya wa-'l-Istixdām*. The Hague et al. 1966.

to that of praise. If my impression of Mamluk poetry proves correct, it may even be possible to generalize this observation. Whatever the case, it is certain that love poetry played a dominant role in Mamluk literature and that in comparison to the preceding periods of Arabic literature its importance had increased. If we take into account the stylistic and formal plurality in which love poetry manifests itself during Ibn Ḥajar's time, it is perhaps no exaggeration to even state that the Mamluk age was the "Golden Age" of Arabic love poetry.

The arrangement of Ibn Ḥajar's Dīwān can also give us some hint as to the perception of the ghazal genre in this epoch. It is generally assumed that the Arabic ghazal is defined by its content, whereas the Persian and Turkish ghazal is defined mainly by its form. Whereas this is certainly true in general, I have argued elsewhere that it is not appropriate to entirely neglect formal criteria when defining the Arabic ghazal.[11] As Ibn Ḥajar's Dīwān shows, the theme of love is not identical with the ghazal genre, although Arabic terminology permitted no distinction to be made between both usages. If Ibn Ḥajar had been asked about the main topic of his introductions to panegyric odes, his *muwashshaḥāt*, and most of his epigrams, he would have called it ghazal – what else could he have called it? Furthermore, the ghazal was perceived as a distinct poetic genre, as is shown by the fact that Ibn Ḥajar included a separate chapter in his Dīwān comprising of his *ghazaliyyāt*. Obviously the poems that could be assigned to this chapter had to fulfil certain formal requirements, such as being in the traditional qaṣīda form (i.e. non-strophic poetry), as being longer than epigrams, and as not forming to the first part of a polythematic ode. As far as the themes and motifs of love poetry are concerned, there is hardly any distinction between those used for introducing panegyric qaṣīdas and those used in independent ghazal poems. The distinction between the nasīb tradition and the ghazal tradition that is still very apparent in Abbasid times plays a minor role in the Mamluk era.

Ibn Ḥajar's "Red Sea Ghazal"

After this general survey it may be instructive to have a closer look at an individual ghazal poem. Of course it is not possible to find a single poem that contains everything characteristic of the Mamluk ghazal. On the contrary, the poem chosen here displays several features that are rather

11 Cf. note 5 above.

untypical, such as its extraordinary length and its polythematic structure. Nevertheless, it contains some traits that give this poem a distinctly Mamluk flavour, allowing us to recognize that the Mamluk ghazal is not simply, as it may sometimes seem to be at a brief glance, an unoriginal imitation of the Abbasid ghazal. The selected poem is no. 7 in the *ghazaliyyāt*-section of Ibn Ḥajar's Dīwān. Due to the circumstances of its composition and the basic situation portrayed in it, I will call it Ibn Ḥajar's "Red Sea ghazal." Text and translation are given in an appendix to this article.

Nostalgia and City Panegyric

Ibn Ḥajar's poem is one of the longest ghazals I am aware of. With its 51 lines it is considerably longer than even most of his polythematic panegyric odes. Whereas ghazals of 20 to 25 lines are quite common, 51 lines are exceptional for a ghazal in all periods of Arabic literature. If it were a Persian or Turkish poem, its length would have disqualified it from even being called a ghazal. What is even more striking is the fact that this ghazal is a polythematic poem. Three sections are discernible which can respectively be called "city panegyric" (1-14), "travel account" (15-36), and "general *tashawwuq*" (37-51). All three sections are unified by a single situation: the poet undertakes a sea voyage taking him from his home in Cairo to the Ḥijāz. On this journey he expresses his love and his yearning for all that he loves and has now left behind.

With its melancholy, its longing for a distant place and past love affairs the mood of this first section is reminiscent of that of a traditional nasīb. As is the case with poem no. 6 of the ghazal section, one is again tempted to speak of a nasīb introducing a ghazal. The beloved of the first part is Egypt, the poet's homeland. The literary motif of the "longing for one's homeland" (*al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān*) is well attested in all periods of Arabic literature.[12] One should note, however, that Ibn Ḥajar shared the exuberant interest of his contemporaries in the genre praising the Prophet. In this genre it became customary to direct the *ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān* not at one's own homeland, but to express one's longing for the Holy Cities in the Ḥijāz. It is thus not without irony that the poet, who happens to be on a journey to the Ḥijāz, expresses his longing for the country that he has just left behind. His yearning goes, so to say, in the wrong direction, and we are hence

12 Cf. the contributions by Wadad al-Qadi, Kathrin Müller, Susanne Enderwitz, and Yumna el-Id in: A. Neuwirth et al. (eds.): *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*. Beirut 1999, 3-84.

prepared for a confrontation with the dark side of pilgrimage. This is not the only case in which life's inconsistencies are raised as a subject in this poem. After all, despite its often light and witty character, the ghazal was reckoned among the earnest genres (*al-jiddiyyāt*), not among the jocular ones (*al-hazliyyāt*).[13]

Egypt is treated in these lines in the manner of a city panegyric (or, as we should perhaps say in this case, country panegyric), a genre still awaiting further study.[14] This city panegyric serves here to introduce the general theme of travel. Furthermore, its motifs are imbued with images and formulations of the ghazal. Already the "moons" mentioned in line 1, which will make their more obvious appearance in line 10 (*aḥbābī*), call to mind the beloved (mentioned in the plural). In line 2, the poet seeks "union" (*waṣl*) with the beloved, in this case Egypt. Wine (hinted at in line 3) and a garden establish the appropriate environment for the amorous encounters of lines 12-14. While Egypt itself seems to put the beloved at the poet's disposal in these lines, they nonetheless outstrip Egypt's fragrance (line 6) and her natural beauties. The beloved themselves are depicted in a way typical of the (mostly homoerotic) ghazals of the Abbasid and Mamluk age. They are not identical with the single beloved of the rest of the poem, who is the poet's wife and could by no means be portrayed in this way. But this description gives the poet the possibility to compose at least a few somewhat erotic lines, which create a necessary counterbalance within this unusually pensive ghazal.

The image of Egypt in this passage is that of undisturbed harmony. Egypt is the unattainable beloved, a utopian place where there is harmony between man, culture, poetry and nature: man is represented by the lyrical first person and the inhabitants of this country (line 7); culture is represented by the Qur'ān (lines 2 and 5); poetry is alluded to in the name of the poet Bashshār (line 1); and nature is described in several places. In several respects, Egypt takes the place of the Najd, which is the classical object of nostalgia in the Arabic nasīb,[15] or of the Ḥijāz in *madīḥ nabawī* and mystical poetry.

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13 Cf. the structure of Ibn Sūdūn's *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-ʿAbūs*, in: Arnoud Vrolijk: *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face*. Leiden 1998, in which the *ghazal* poems are assorted to the first section (*al-jiddiyyāt*).

14 Some notes can be found in Geert Jan van Gelder: Kufa vs. Basra: The Literary Debate. In: *Asiatische Studien* 50 (1996), 338-62; in the same vol. on p. 290 the partial translation of an ode on Damascus by the present author.

15 Cf. Jaroslav Stetkevych: *The Zephyrs of Najd*. Chicago 1993.

Marital Bliss and Maritime Forlornness

The city panegyric ends with a transition (line 15) that leads into an illustration of the poet's pitiful state, trapped on a vessel amidst the tyrannic ocean. The passage that follows, extending to line 36, is what I would call a travel account. It starts with six lines which form perhaps the most original part of the whole poem, a description of the ship on which the poet travels.[16] In this paragraph the poet displays a distinct sense of humour and irony; nonetheless there is a serious background. The description is cast in the form of a riddle and made up of a series of conceits based on the equation of the ship with a mount or, as in the last line of the series, with a house. The images that are obtained by means of metaphor are subsequently tested for their congruence with the real word. This test reveals a discrepancy between both. The result is a paradox that in turn leads the attention of the listener back onto the path of its linguistic construction. This technique was developed in the 3rd/9th century and extensively used in the ghazal by poets like Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908) and al-Waʾwāʾ (d. c. 370/980).[17] Although still widely used in Mamluk times, this device was not developed further into an overall basis of poetry, as in the case of the "Indian style" of the Persian ghazal. Instead, it was relegated to secondary status in Arabic Mamluk poetry by the *tawriya*. In the passage in question, one of the paradoxes is obtained by a *tawriya*, not a metaphor. In line 18 the poet makes use of the double meaning of the word *jāriya,* which may mean either "ship" or "slave girl." By taking for granted the wrong meaning "slave girl," the poet obtains the paradox that for her part this slave girl enslaves everybody who "penetrates" her (another *tawriya*, since *tabaṭṭana* has a different meaning if it is related to the meaning "ship" or to the meaning "slave girl").

It is perhaps no coincidence that this line stands out in terms of its subject as well as its stylistic basis. The subject of untamed and dangerous sexuality that is presented here by means of a linguistic ambiguity gives a clue to the role of the ship in this ghazal. Obviously the ship is the counter-image to the beloved, who turns out to be the poet's wife. The ship and the sea embody everything that is outside the bonds of society. Even the regularities of everyday experience are suspended. The mount is quicker

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16 The subject was not entirely new. Already in pre-Islamic times the poet Bishr ibn Abī Khāzim had complained about his maritime experiences. This poem and other pre- and early Islamic descriptions of seafaring are discussed in detail by James E. Montgomery: *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah*. E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust 1997, 166-208. I do not think, however, that Ibn Ḥajar alludes to these poems.

17 Cf. Bauer, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung*, 134ff.

on rugged than on flat ground (line 17) and it makes the traveller immobile while it is constantly on the move (line 21). No wonder then that it is not the object of love. It has only sexuality to offer, a sexuality that is either devouring (line 18) or ambiguous, as line 19 shows. An Arab reader could hardly have overlooked the sexual connotation of the pair of opposites "back" vs. "belly" that had already been introduced into Arabic literature by al-Jāḥiẓ.[18] Whereas the paradox of this line is once more based on a metaphor, in line 20 the poet again reverts to a different device. It is called *taʾkīd al-dhamm bi-mā yushbih al-madḥ*, "blame in the disguise of praise." There is no good in this ship, he says, save that her passengers are driven by fear and despair to read the Qurʾān and to pray. Praying and studying the Qurʾān is a good thing, but the way it is obtained is not good at all. But we realize that even negative phenomena may have a positive result. And, what is even more important, the poet introduces here another central subject of this ghazal. It is the striving to overcome the dangers and vagaries of life through cultural activity.

Now, after the poet has taken us with him on the ship, he describes a sleepless night he spends on board, a night full of yearning and despair. The passage starts with a reference to the theme of resorting to cultural activities again (line 22), gradually moves from the expression of loneliness and pain to the affirmation of sincere love and ends with a remarkable final passage, one which forms a clear counterpoint to the equally remarkable passage with which it started. This concluding section runs from lines 33 to 36. In these four lines the poet expresses his tender feelings in a very simple style. He asks the wind to deliver his greetings to the beloved and to assure her of his lasting love. This is not unusual. What is really unusual however is line 35, where the poet asks the wind to bring greetings to his beloved, adding "but don't tell her anything about my illness, my lasting sleeplessness, and my permanently running tears, lest this may cause her pain." Obviously the poet is afraid that even from such a long distance his wife's calm may be disturbed. She is still, after all, in Egypt, the realm of harmony as it was depicted in the first part of the poem.

A statement like this is contrary to what lovers normally do in ghazal poetry. Usually they are very keen to inform the beloved about their pain as a lover.[19] But in these cases the beloved is almost always a person whose favour has still to be won or to be regained, whereas in this poem the

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18 Cf. al-Jāḥiẓ: *Risāla fī Tafḍīl al-Ẓahr ʿalā l-Baṭn*, trans. William M. Hutchins: *Nine Essays of al-Jahiz*. New York et al. 1988. 167-73.

19 Cf. the theme of "accusation" in Bauer: *Liebe und Liebesdichtung*, 426-54.

beloved is obviously the poet's own wife, as we can detect from both this line and line 33. What we therefore have in this poem is a scene of marital bliss, an expression of the mutual love of a married couple.

A love poem on the poet's own wife is a rare find amongst Arabic, (and perhaps even more so) Persian and Turkish ghazals. It is conceivable that in the case of Ibn Ḥajar this may be due to the fact that he was a religious scholar. This though is obviously not the case. In most of his other poems, the young men and women who are depicted as the object of love do not differ at all from those of other poets; nor is his love poetry more chaste and spiritual than that of his more worldly colleagues. The fact that Ibn Ḥajar makes his own wife the subject of a poem reflects rather a general tendency of Mamluk literature to deal with more private and personal matters than was the wont of the centuries before.

The *aʿyān* of Mamluk society, the scholars, *qāḍī*s and civil servants, had taken over the role of the primary addressee of poetry from the princes and generals. They composed panegyric odes to each other of the most prestigious kind, commemorated each other's death in their elegies and elevated what was once only occasional poetry, undemanding artistically, such as congratulatory poems or poems accompanying presents, to the level of works of art. As a result, the Mamluk era became a period of Arabic literature in which life and poetry were perhaps more intimately intertwined than at any other time. In this context it is not surprising to find a poet who composes a sophisticated poem about his longings for his own wife and publishes it in his Dīwān.

The Ambiguities of Life and Language

Finally, let us take a brief look at the last section of the poem, starting at line 37. It is a very general expression of the pangs of unfulfilled love. The beloved here is not necessarily identical with that of the middle section. One of the functions of this section is to create a counterbalance to the first section, the city panegyric, which it matches almost exactly in length, thus providing the poem with a symmetrical structure. Further, this section adds a number of *tawriya*s to the poem. Altogether at least 16 lines of the poem contain a *tawriya*.[20] Nearly half of them are to be found in this last section, which we can thus consider to be more or less made up of *tawriya*s. Whereas we find nearly all comparisons in the first section (lines 1, 2, 12, 29),

[20] Cf. lines 1, 7, 8, 18, 22, 26, 28, 30f., 36, 38?, 39, 40, 43, 44, 47, 50, 51.

the middle section is dominated by the metaphor and the last by the *tawriya*. The distribution of semantic stylistic devices thus corresponds to their historical development, but also forms a line of gradually increasing ambiguity.

Western and Arab scholars alike often regarded the *tawriya* as a nice but superficial intellectual game. Perhaps a poem like the present one can show that there is more to this game and can give us a hint of the deeper meaning of the *tawriya* in the Mamluk age. Ibn Ḥajar's poem is a ghazal, but it is not only a poem about love: it also deals with loss, loneliness, anxiety, uncertainty, and the feeling of being a stranger in an alien and unpredictable world. However, Ibn Ḥajar was a scholar and like almost all poets of this period he had trained as a religious scholar, a fact that certainly accounts for the popularity of the *tawriya* in this age. As a scholar, there was one fixed point in his life, namely scholarship, i.e. reading, studying, writing, composing poetry, in sum, all manner of creatively handling language which pursued the aim of detecting and interpreting the divine law governing this world. This is alluded to several times in the poem. Besides the numerous references to Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, to historical figures and to literature in general (as in line 38, from which we can conceive that poetry is more reliable than reality), I will only point out line 22, where the poet declares that books are his only comfort. But even this final and sole comfort is something ambiguous, for books cannot provide absolute certainty as language itself is ambiguous. The poet shows us this in this very line, in which the word *asfār* can either be read as the plural of *safar* "journey" or as the plural of *sifr* "book." And this ambiguity is demonstrated amply by the many other *tawriya*s in this poem.

The famous poet and writer Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, Ibn Ḥajar's contemporary and admirer, advises everybody to study the *tawriya* carefully and quotes a statement from al-Zamakhsharī: an understanding of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* can help a great deal in mastering the *tawriya* because all these texts are governed by the same law of ambiguity.[21] The *tawriya* is therefore nothing other than the human imitation of the ambiguity inherent to the divine revelation itself. Man will never succeed in giving a definite interpretation of it, will never get beyond a certain level of probability and will never be in the possession of absolute certainty. Therefore, our poet's hope to overcome the uncertainty of the world and the forlornness of the stranger by taking refuge in the world of learning is denounced by the text

21 Cf. Ibn Ḥijja: *Khizānat al-Adab*, vol. 2, 40.

itself, by the ambiguity of its own words. Thus we can understand why the poem ends with two lines of despair and hopelessness, two lines which we can only hope that his wife never read. In these lines the poet declares that all his endeavours to find security have been in vain and, of course, he expresses this with five *tawriya*s. Every *tawriya* has a second meaning pertaining to an overall field of economy.

Since ambiguity and uncertainty are necessarily inherent to the texts themselves, thereby reflecting the basic condition of our life in this world, even the study of texts and the reading of books cannot provide the comfort the poet was seeking. The harmony that was first projected into an ideal image of Egypt, but was lost by setting out for a journey, is not regained. Though the structure of the poem is conspicuously symmetrical, the poem does not end where it started. The initial harmony, which already was of a utopian kind, cannot be restored. The poem thus undergoes a development that can be illustrated by the following chart:

1 city panegyric (14 lines): *harmony established*

2 sea journey (21 lines)

2.1 ship – [negative]: *temptation, harmony disturbed*

2.2 poet – [transition]: *attempt to find harmony in culture*

2.3 wife – [positive]: *harmony must not be disturbed*

3 *tawriya* passage (15 lines): *harmony challenged*

In the end, there remains only a last refuge, and this is to accept the divinely ordered ambiguity of life and to celebrate it in one's own creative play with words. For the poets in the Mamluk age with their scholarly training, the play with words must have been more than a mere play. It must have been a reflection of their own perception of the condition of man in this world. And it is, I think, easy to understand now that no other style could have matched better Ibn Ḥajar's desire to express the strangeness of men in this world, which is the final message of this *ghazal*.

Ibn Ḥajar's poem has a structure reminiscent of that of the polythematic qaṣīda. Nevertheless, it is clearly recognizable as a *ghazal*, even if we disregard the author's own assignment. The poem's immediate subject is love. This theme remains visible in all its different sections, so that there is no need to modify the definition of the *ghazal* as principally being a monothematic poem about love. Behind the theme of love we notice,

however, a profound preoccupation with existential questions concerning one's own life. In pre- and early Islamic times poets such as Labīd, Zuhayr, or Kaʿb would have dealt with such a subject in *fakhr* poems. This genre had ceased to play any role in the Mamluk period. Instead, the ghazal had opened itself to the treatment of private and personal matters of the most different kinds. With its personal subject and the virtuoso employment of the *tawriya* this poem shows two typical features of Mamluk poetry. At the same time, it is an excellent example of how the ghazal genre possessed a capability for development and its versatility. Furthermore, this poem shows that the Mamluk age is certainly not the least interesting period of Arabic literature and may encourage further studies in this fascinating field.

Appendix: Text and Translation[22]

١ متى يتجلّى أُفْقُ مصرَ بأقماري[23] وأروي عن اللُقْيا أحاديثَ بَشّارِ

٢ وأقرأُ آيَ الوصل من صُحْف أوجهٍ مواضعُ ختْمِ اللَثمِ فيها كأعشار

٣ وأهتزُّ كالنشوانِ من فَرَح اللقا بلا مِنَّةٍ عندي لكاسات خَمّار

٤ إلى مصرَ واشوقاً لمصرَ وأهلِها تشوُّقَ صبٍّ للنَوَى غيرِ مُختار

٥ ويا وحشتي يا مصرُ منكِ لبلدةٍ لداخلها بالأمن بُشرى مِنَ الباري

٦ تَهُبُّ نسيماتُ الشمال بأرضها فينشقّ منها الأنفُ جَوْنةَ[24] عطّار

٧ مُحسَّدةٌ لا قَدْحَ فيها لعائب على أنّ زَنْدَ الفضل من أهلها واري

٨ إذا فاخروها قام صارمُ نِيلها بمقياسِ صدقٍ كاسراً كلّ فخّار

٩ مراتعُ لذّاتِي ومَلهَى شبيبتي ومبدأُ أوطاني وغايةُ أوطاري

١٠ ومَنْزِلُ أحبابِي ومَنْزِه مُقلتِي ومطلعُ أقماري ومغرب أفكاري

١١ لبستُ ثياب اللهو فيها خلاعةً وقامت على خَلعي عذاريَ أعذاري

١٢ فكم من غزالٍ لي بِها كغزالةٍ تملّكَ روحي بِالتفات وإسفار

١٣ ومِن قمرٍ للبدر من نورِ وجهه سرارٌ ومَحْقٌ بعد تِمٍّ وإبدار

١٤ ينمُّ علينا عرفُه حين ينثني فيهْزَا بأغصانٍ ويُزري بأزهارِ

١٥ أأحبابَنا أُصلِيتُ في البحر بَعدَكم بناري[25] وأنتمْ في رياضٍ وأنْهار

١٦ رمتْني النوى حتى ركبتُ مطيَّةً أحاديثُها فيها غرائبُ أسمار

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22 تابعت تحقيق شهاب الدين أبي عمر الذي نشر تحت عنوان (أنس الحجر في أبيات ابن حجر) في بيروت عام 1988/1409 وقارنت نصه بتحقيق ديوان ابن حجر العسقلاني لفردوس نور علي حسين ، مدينة نصر 1996/1316، وأثبت الاختلافات في الحاشية .

23 تحقيق حسين: بأقمار

24 تحقيق حسين: جُونة

25 تحقيق حسين: بنارٍ

١٧ إذا السهلُ أوفى أبطأت في مَسيرها وتسرعُ في الأمواج سيرًا بأوعار
١٨ وجاريةٌ لكنّها تسترقُّ مَن تَبَطَّنَ فيها مِن عبيد وأحرار
١٩ وإن[26] رُحِلَتْ في البطنِ تمشي سريعةً على ظهرها فاسمعْ عجائب أخباري
٢٠ ولا خيرَ فيها غير أنّ نزيلَها نديمٌ لقرآن مُديمٌ لأذكار
٢١ وأعْجَبُ ما أحكيه أنّي مسافرٌ مُقيمٌ ولكن منزلي أبداً ساري
٢٢ وفي سفري لم ألقَ لي من مؤانسٍ سوى الكُتْبِ أجلو الهمَّ منها بأسفار
٢٣ أبيتُ سميرَ الأُفق أحسبُ أنكم كواكبُه حتى تعشَّقتُ سُمَّاري
٢٤ وفارقتُ أنفاسَ الحبيب وثغره فطال الدُجى من فقد صبحي[27] وأسحاري
٢٥ بكى ناظري بالدمع والدمِ والكرى فمُذْ نفِدَتْ طُرّاً بَكاكُمْ بأنوار
٢٦ فما أظلم الدنيا بعيني وقد نأتْ وُلاة غرامي العاذلون وأقماري
٢٧ لبستُ ثياب الليل حزناً على اللقا وصرتُ لِذيل الدمع ايَّة جرّارِ
٢٨ وما في ضميري غيركُمْ مذْ فقدتُكُمْ فحذْفُكُمُ عن مقلتي حذفُ إضمار
٢٩ وأنتمْ مُنى روحي وهَدْيُ بصيرتِي وتنويرُ أبصاري وتيسيرُ إعساري
٣٠ نزلتُمْ بقلبي وهْو عمّارُ حبّكمْ فأضرمتمُ[28] دار الضيافة بالنار
٣١ ففي البينْ لا تبغُوا له القتلَ إنَّ مِن علامةِ أهلِ البغي مقتَلُ عمّارِ
٣٢ لعلَّ[29] النوى ليستْ بعارٍ لأنَّني عهدتكمُ لا تُغْمضون على عار
٣٣ فيا نسماتِ الريح بالله بلِّغي سلامي على روحي المقيمة في داري
٣٤ سليها تسامِح مقلتي بمنامها لتحظى بطيب الوصل مِن طيفها الساري

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26 تحقيق حسين: إذا
27 تحقيق حسين: من بعد صبحِ
28 تحقيق حسين: فأحرقتُمُ
29 كذا في تحقيق حسين ، وفي تحقيق ابي عمرو: أظنّ

٣٥ ولا تخبريها عن سقامي يسوؤها ولا سهري الباقي ولا دمعيَ الجاري
٣٦ وقولي لها إنّي على عهد حبِّها مقيمٌ وإن لم تُطْوَ شُقَّةُ أسفاري
٣٧ رحلتُ بلا قلبٍ و لا أَنَسٍ ولا لذيذ منامٍ وهْي أُنْسي وتذكاري
٣٨ وأذكر داراً قد حوَتْ طِيبَ عَرفها فأرتاحُ في الأشعار للرَنْد[30] والغار
٣٩ ومَن رضيَ الآثارَ من بعد عينه فمَنْ لَي مِن معشوقِ قلبي بآثار
٤٠ فإنْ أصبحَتْ مَنْ هامَ قلبي بِحسنها[31] مهاجرةً أَمْسَتْ دموعيَ أنصاري
٤١ كفى حزَناً أن لا نصيرَ سوى البكا لتخفيف أحزاني وإخفاء أسراري
٤٢ وما استعبرَ العُشَّاقُ إلا ليدفعوا يدَ الحُزْنِ جهلاً عن قلوبٍ بأبصار
٤٣ أُسِرُّ غرامي من عذولٍ وحاسدٍ فإعلانُ صبري لا يشابه إسراري
٤٤ بُليتُ بمن لم يدرِ مِقدارَ صبوتِي فيا لَهَفِي بعد الرحيل على الدارِ
٤٥ وأَبسمُ لكن لو بدا لكَ باطني ظهرتَ على نارٍ به ذاتِ إعصار
٤٦ ورُبَّ صديقٍ ضاقَ بالبين صدرهُ وما كلُّ مَن لاقى الفراق بصبَّار
٤٧ يقول أُواري لوعَتِي[32] أو أبُثُّها وما حالُ زندِ الصبر قلتُ له واري
٤٨ لقد غرَّني داعي الفراق فها أنا وردتُ ولم أعلم عواقب إصداري
٤٩ حليفٌ لأشجانٍ طليقُ مدامعٍ صديقٌ لأحزانٍ أسيرٌ لأفكاري[33]
٥٠ وأنفقتُ عُمري للوصول إلى اللقا فما نِلْتُ ممّا أرتجي عُشْرَ مِعشار
٥١ سوى أنَّ همِّي في فؤادي مقرَّرٌ وراتبُ دمعي بعدهم مطلقٌ جاري

30 تحقيق حسين: للزند ، وهو خطأ بيّن
31 تحقيق حسين: بحبّها
32 كذا في تحقيق حسين ، وفي تحقيق ابي عمرو: لومتي
33 تحقيق حسين: لأفكار

1 When will the horizon of Egypt be disclosed again by my moons? When will I transmit again the traditions of the bringer of glad tidings / *Bashshār* about reunion?[34]
2 And when will I read the verses of union from the leaves of faces in which the seal imprints / *complete recitation* of kisses resemble the *ʿushr*-marks.[35]
3 And out of the joy of reunion sway as if I were drunk without having received the benefit from the cups of a wine merchant?
4 To Egypt, oh yearning for Egypt and its people, a yearning like that of a man struck by excessive love who did not opt for separation.
5 Oh my loneliness, oh Egypt, oh what a country you are! The creator himself has brought the glad tidings that he who enters it will enjoy security.[36]
6 Oh country where the north wind's soft breezes blow, from which the nose can smell a perfumer's jar!
7 Despite all envy the faultfinders can find nothing to reprove / *no means to kindle the fire of reprove*, and yet the flint of bounty strikes bright flames in the hands of its inhabitants.
8 When the faultfinders vie in glory with Egypt, the cutting sword of the Nile rises and defeats all boasters / *shatters all pottery* with the Nilometer of truth.
9 Egypt, pasture of my pleasures, delight of my youth, my first homeland, my last desire,
10 Abode of those who I love, pleasure ground of my eyeballs, place where my moons rise and my thoughts set.
11 There I put on the garment of amusements dissolutely, while my excuses fulfilled their duty to stripe me off all restraint.
12 How many a gazelle resembling a rising sun did I have there that seized my spirit when it turned its face and when it began to shine,[37]

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34 In the excellent commentary by Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʿAmr in his *Uns al-Ḥujar fī Abyāt Ibn Ḥajar* the reader can find a comprehensive treatment of the rhetoric devices in this poem. In general, I will not repeat his notes here.

35 The mention of the *ʿushr* marks, which mark every tenth of the Qur'ān, and the words *āy* and *ṣuḥf* (*metris causa* for *ṣuḥuf*) suggest that the word *khatm* is also a *tawriya* that went unnoticed by Abū ʿAmr. *Khatm* (or *khatma*) is the term for the recitation of the entire Qur'ān or a collection of *ḥadīth*. Ibn Ḥajar composed one of his odes in praise of the Prophet on the occasion of a *khatm* of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī.

36 Allusion to Q 12/99: *udkhulū Miṣra in shāʾa llāhu āmininā*.

37 Note the *laff wa-nashr*: *iltifāt* refers to *ghazāl*, *isfār* to *ghazāla* "rising sun."

13 And many a moon who, by the light of his face, made the full moon wane and darken after it had been full and bright.
14 As he bends to and fro, his fragrance spreads to us. Thus he derides the twigs and disparages the flowers.
15 Oh my beloved! After I have left you, I have been set on fire on the sea while you stay amidst meads and rivers.
16 Distance has afflicted me to such a degree that I even ride a mount about which one can only report by telling the most strange nightly tales.
17 When she approaches the smooth land, she slows down her course, but when the billows surge, she speeds up in rugged ground.
18 A slave girl / *ship* is she, but whosoever penetrates her / *enters her belly* is made her slave, be he a slave or a free man!
19 Though people – now listen to my amazing stories! – travel in her belly, she moves along quickly on her back![38]
20 There is no good in her save that he who boards her will be a confidant of the Qur'an and a persevering prayer.
21 But the strangest thing I can relate is that I am an immobile traveller whose home is constantly on the move!
22 On my journey I could not find a companion apart from writings. Thereby I removed my anxiety by means of books / *journeys*.
23 I spent the night (sleepless) as a conversation partner of the horizon and imagined you to be its stars until I started to fall in love with my nightly entertainers.
24 I parted with the breath and the teeth of my beloved. Therefore night's darkness had no end, since I have lost my daybreak and my dawn.
25 My eye wept tears and blood and sleep, and after they all had been consumed completely, it wept its sight for you.[39]
26 How dark / *tyrannical* has the world become in my eyes since / *though* those in charge of my passion / *torment* are far away: the reprovers and my moons!
27 I put on night's garment out of grief (over the impossibility) to meet you – how had I to drag the trail of tears!

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38 Due to its protruding form, the lower, submerged part of the ship is considered to be its back. Therefore, the ship is an inversion of a camel.

39 *Nūr al-ʿayn*, the "light of the eye" (cf. German "Augenlicht") is the eyesight. I did not imitate this image in the translation. The rhetoric device is called *mushākala*, cf. Abū ʿAmr's commentary.

28 Ever since I have lost you, I don't have anybody in my mind apart from you. Therefore, your being removed from my eyes engenders the removal of my thoughts / *elision of elipsis*.
29 You are the desire of my soul, the guideline of my insight, the lightening of my eyesight, the relief of my distress.
30 You took lodgings in my heart, which is the habitation / *ʿAmmār* of my love for you, but then you set fire to the guest house!
31 So do not unjustly seek by your parting to kill the heart / *ʿAmmār*, for we know that it is the wont of those who seek injustice to kill ʿAmmār![40]
32 Maybe, though, there is no shame in separation, since I have always known you as a person who could never tolerate anything shameful.
33 Oh ye wind's breezes, by God, bring my greetings to my spirit that dwells in my home!
34 And ask her the favour to grant my eyes her vision in my dreams so that her nightly apparition may attain a pleasant union with me!
35 But don't tell her anything about my illness, my lasting sleeplessness, and my everflowing tears, lest this may cause her pain,
36 And say to her that I will immovably stick to my love for her, even if I have not come to an end with the hardships of travel yet.[41]
37 I departed without heart, without sociability and without the sweetness of sleep, since she is my intimacy and towards her are dedicated all my thoughts.
38 I think of a house that is filled by the scent of her perfume. Therefore, in reading poetry I find my pleasure if I come across laurel and bay-tree.
39 But who is satified with traces after having had the real thing? And who will even bring me tidings from the beloved of my heart?
40 If she whose beauty is the passion of my heart has gone far away / *become one of the Muhājirūn*, my tears will come to my aid / *be my Anṣār*.
41 It is sad enough that there is no helper besides weeping to soften my sorrows and to conceal my secrets.

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40 ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir was a companion of the Prophet. "A notable prophecy attributed to Muḥammad concerns the death of ʿAmmār at the hand of the 'rebel band,' which he condemns to Hell" (H. Reckendorf in: *EI²:Encyclopaedia of Islam²* , I, 448b).

41 Abū ʿAmr points to a *tawriya* in the word *muqīm*, which may also mean "staying at the same place" (as opposite to "travelling"; cf. line 21). I did not mark this in the text since it is already reflected in the word "immoveably."

42 The reason why passionate lovers shed tears is that in their ignorance they try to remove the hand of grief with their glances from the heart.
43 I conceal my passion from those who censure and envy me, but my manifestation of steadfastness does not bear any resemblance to my concealment / *something that would bring me joy.*
44 I have been afflicted with love for one who does not know the extent of my desire for him – oh my grief, after departure, for the abode / *him who knows*![42]
45 I smile, but if you could see what happens inside me, you would notice in me a fire with a whirlwind.[43]
46 Many a friend whose equanimity had been disturbed by departure – not everyone who endures separation is a patient endurer –
47 Used to ask: Shall I conceal my anguish or reveal it? What is the state of the firestick of endurance? And I answered: Conceal it! / *It has taken fire*![44]
48 I have been beguiled by one who urged me to part. Here I am now, plunged into an affair the outcome of which I do not know:
49 A confederate of grief, one whose tears have been set free, a friend of sorrows, a captive of my lonely contemplations.
50 I spent my whole life with the endeavour to attain / *for the receipt of* union, but I did not gain a hundredth of what I had hoped for.
51 (I gained nothing) but grief that has settled down / *has been assigned to me* in my heart and steady / *a set pension of* tears that have been set free / *exempted (from taxes)* after my separation from you and are running / *are my salary.*[45]

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42 "He who knows" (*ad-dārī*) should, of course, be spelt with final *yā'*. But this is irrelevant in the case of a *tawriya.*

43 Q 2/266: *fa-aṣābahā i'ṣārun fīhi nārun fa-ḥtaraqat.*

44 Contrary to Abū ʿAmr, I would consider the device in this line an *istikhdām*, not a *tawriya* proper, since both meanings of *wārī* are actually needed.

45 If I correctly understand al-Nābulusī's notes on the *tawjīh* (cf. Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician or The Schemer's Skimmer*, Wiesbaden 1998, no. 67), Ibn Ḥajar's lines present several *tawriya*s and not a *tawjīh*, since the lines give a correct meaning even if we suppose the technical meanings of the words to be intended. This is also Abū ʿAlī's analysis. I am not so sure, however, as far as line 2 is concerned.