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How the *Qaṣīda* Sees:
Vision, Poetic Knowledge, and the Transformative Capacity of Poetry from Al-Andalus to the Maghrib

By

Lubna Safi

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Near Eastern Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Critical Theory

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Maragaret Larkin, Chair
Professor Alexander Key
Professor Stefania Pandolfo

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Abstract

How the *Qaṣīda* Sees: Vision, Poetic Knowledge and the Transformative Capacity of Poetry from al-Andalus to the Maghrib

by

Lubna Safi

Doctor of Philosophy in Near Eastern Studies

Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory

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Professor Margaret Larkin, Chair

This project considers the ways poets and critics conceived poetry as functioning visually. In twelfth-century al-Andalus, Arabic rhetorical criticism conceptualized poetry as having the power to transform feeling and cause action primarily because it evoked images and made one see. They called this poetic capacity, *takhyīl* (image-evocation). In twentieth-century Morocco, poet and critic Mohammed Bennis approached the visual dimension of the poem to experiment with the possibilities of a new kind of writing that, in overturning established modes of seeing in the poem, would bring forth a new vision (*ruʾya*) of the world. I propose that poetic visuality at both moments operates in the slippage between literal, physical vision and a metaphorical, imagined one.

Engaging literary critical, optical, and poetic sources, *How the Qaṣīda Sees* unravels poetic seeing as a specific experience of sociality within the praise poem (*qaṣīdat al-madḥ*). The main contention here is that considering how the praise poem works visually nuances our understanding of its social role and reveals how poetry simultaneously shapes, and is shaped by, a larger perceptual culture. The main modes of poetic seeing I examine in this dissertation are: *takhyīl*'s capacity to make one "see what cannot be seen" (*ruʾyat mā lā yurā*), calligraphic visual poems, and the poetic motif of the *ṭayf al-khayāl* (the phantom of the beloved). One outcome of reading the poem's visuality is the throughline that connects Andalusī and Maghribī poetry. My claim here is that twentieth-century Moroccan poetry was able to elaborate a new poetics within a larger (experimental) visual culture, which in drawing from an Andalusī-Maghribī visual inheritance, could free itself from colonial aesthetic impositions.

Finally, throughout the dissertation, I trace in the concept of poetic knowledge, which emerges from the dynamic of poetic seeing and the poem's social role, a poetics that encompasses a poet's personal vision as it reaches for a collective one; a poetics that attempts to transform the reader's ways of being in, and seeing, the world.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Introduction

This dissertation is about how language, specifically poetic language, moves us. The angle I've chosen to answer this question is the visual—how poetry stakes a claim to our sense of sight, and makes things visible in and through the poem. This is, of course, not the only way a poem moves us. The poem can move us through connecting us to a certain feeling, it can make us recall memories, it can move us by making new associations, its obscurity can challenge us, its rhythm can literally move us by making us sway. This list can potentially go on for pages (and whole books have been written about this). The dissertation's ambition in asking how poetic language makes us see, will in fact also make us think about the intersection between seeing and the other ways the poem moves its reader. To ask how poems make us see might seem simply like another way of asking how poems make us imagine. I've deliberately chosen not to phrase it in this way for two reasons. The first is that the sources in this dissertation discuss the question of seeing in the mind, but they do so in a way that suggests this isn't only a metaphorical seeing. The second reason is that, one kind of poetry I analyze in what follows relies on literally seeing the poem.

This introduction gives an overview of the dissertation's themes—seeing, poetic knowledge, and the poem's social life—and guiding principles. Each chapter touches on all three themes, though it might lean more heavily on one or another. A guiding principle of this dissertation is that though modes of seeing are both embedded and change across time, they can be reactivated and made legible in different moments. This is why I speak throughout the dissertation in terms of a perceptual culture.[1] To uncover the full extent of a perceptual culture, I look at sources ranging from poetry to optical treatises, from manifestos to philosophical texts. As Samer Akkach has already pointed out, studying ways of seeing does not mean pursuing a static metaphysical state or a cultural disposition isolated from the developments, influences, and changing aesthetic preferences across time and culture. What we see is shaped by our socio-cultural context, which includes the things we read. For this reason, I am interested in situating poetry within a larger perceptual culture which attends to the way vision shapes and is shaped by the literary among other external influences. My starting point is that poetry mediates our knowledge of the world by directing our attention, shaping our perceptions, and creating harmony and dissonance where there was none. This dissertation shows how poetry does this.

First, a confession: this all began with a poetic motif and a definition. Let's begin with the poetic motif, which appears in the *qaṣīda*. When I use the term *qaṣīda*, I refer to the tripartite genre often translated into English as 'ode.' The three parts are as follows: an amatory introduction called the *nasīb*, followed by a *raḥīl* section that details the poet's journey through a wilderness before arriving at the end to the parts that praise or lampoon, called *madīḥ* and *hijāʾ* respectively. The appearance that concerns us here happens in the *qaṣīda*'s *nasīb* when the poet encounters the abandoned campsite of a beloved (the *aṭlāl*), and in her place, he finds her phantom, the *ṭayf al-khayāl* (often shortened to either *ṭayf* or *khayāl*). The *ṭayf al-khayāl* is an

[1] In *What is Islamic Art* Wendy Shaw uses this term as an alternative to "art history" because perceptual culture evokes dynamism and precludes the stagnant (or in her words "preordained") hierarchies of senses and materiality assumed by focusing on history. For Shaw it emphasizes reception over production, which is where I differ with her because a perceptual culture also considers production as well as reception in the way it takes into account the ethos/habitus of certain ways of seeing conditioned by optics, exegesis, poetry, etc. while also informing them. This is why in my reading in the dissertation, I consider shifts in ways of seeing art and poetry as both indicative of a larger perceptual culture as well as being shaped by and shaping it. Wendy M. K. Shaw, *What Is "Islamic" Art?: Between Religion and Perception* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

apparition meant at once to manifest the form of the beloved as well as move the poet onto his journey. The first part of the compound, *ṭayf*, means to circle around. The *khayāl* is, importantly, often moving in the *qaṣīda*. When awakening the pre-Islamic poet, usually around dusk while his companions sleep, the *khayāl* hovers among the saddles and moves in a way that is both unclear and frightening to the poet. Or the *khayāl* comes to the poet in the night, often with night travelers (as we'll see in chapter two). Beyond its movement within the poem, the *khayāl* moves across eras and genres. From the effaced ruins of the aṭlāl it becomes a mainstay of love poetry beginning in the ninth century, then a fixture in mystical poetry in the fourteenth century, a character in the *maqāma* in the nineteenth century, and a poetic image in the twentieth century. The *khayāl* seems destined to keep returning.

And now the definition. The *Lisān al-ʿarab* entry for the root *kh-y-l*—the same root for the second part of the *ṭayf al-khayāl* compound—defines it primarily as "to believe" (*ẓanna*), and cites the Andalusī poet Ibn al-Hāniʾ who explains that the proverb "those who hear believe" (*man yasmaʿ yakhal*) refers to a supposition that has been verified, *yakhāl* being derived from "to imagine" (*takhayyal ʾilā*). *Al-khāl*, according to the entry, is a cloud, and "the promising cloud" (*al-saḥāb al-mukhayyil*) is the one that "if you see it, you think it is a rain cloud." A sky that has clouded over has "*akhālat*," made believe, and if one is referring to the cloud itself it is "*makhīla*." *Akhyalnā* and *akhyalat*, the sky *khayyalat* and *takhayyalat* all mean "that the sky readied for rain, so it thundered and there was lightning, but if the rain falls the designation *al-takhayyul* no longer applies."[2] Clouds, like the *khayāl*, are wispy things but they stand out. They exist in the present yet are thick with possibility. The definition here gives clouds as preparation for believing and thinking. A cloud promising rain, in Arabic poetic tradition, turns into an image of a person's generosity.

Together—cloud and phantom—and their shared *kh-y-l* root is a second guiding principle of this dissertation. I connect the promising cloud al-*khāl* and *ṭayf al-khayāl* to other modes of seeing in poems. Andalusī critics, as I'll explore in chapter one, conceptualized poetry as having the power to transform feeling and cause action primarily because it evoked images. They understood poetry as a form of *takhyīl*, a term contemporary Moroccan thinker Abdelfattah Kilito described as "uncomfortable to translate" but can approximately be rendered as "image-evocation."[3] In Andalusī poetics, the concept emphasizes the visuality of the poem and foregrounds it in both the poem's creation and reception. *Takhyīl* refers both to the poet's personal vision, one communicated through language, as well as to the listener's re-vision and interpretation of the poem. In the twentieth century, this investment in seeing becomes about actually seeing otherwise, a change in the way one sees that becomes a change in the way society sees and interacts with the world. In the premodern period, a poet was understood to embed practices of seeing which were activated by the reader (and one of the main ways that moved the reader by making them "see what was not there" "*ruʾyat mā lā yurā*"). The figures in this

[2] From the *Lisān al-ʿArab entry for kh-y-l*:

وقال ابن هانئ في قولهم من يسمع يَخَلْ: يقال ذلك عند تحقيق الظن، ويَخَلْ مشتق من تَخَيَّل إلى. والخالُ: الغَيْم ؛والسحابة المُخَيِّل ... التي إذا رأَيتها حَسِبْتها ماطرة،وقد يقال للسحاب الخالُ، فإذا أَرادوا أَن السماء قد تَغَيَّمت قالوا قد أَخالَتْ، فهي مُخِيلة، وإِذا أَرادوا السحابة نفسها قالوا هذه مَخِيلة. وقد أَخْيَلْنا وأَخْيَلَتِ السماءُ وخَيَّلَتْ وتَخَيَّلَتْ: تهيَّأَت للمطر فرَعَدَتْ وبَرَقَتْ، فإِذا وقع المطر ذهب اسم التَّخَيُّل.

[3] Abdelfattah Kilito, *Les séances: récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhânî et Harîrî*, La Bibliothèque arabe, Collection Hommes et Sociétés (Paris: Sindbad, 1983), 254.

dissertation suggest a throughline between twelfth/thirteenth century al-Andalus and twentieth-century Morocco.

How the Qaṣīda Sees is interested in what poetry can do and the visual strategies poets have used to achieve this. My argument about poetry and seeing is this: in both al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia) and the Maghrib (Morocco), poetic vision was conceptualized, analyzed, and read as both literal and metaphorical. The main question of this dissertation is poetic vision and how poetry frames seeing through processes, metaphors, and correspondences that shape the way readers interact with the world around them. What can poetry do? In this dissertation, the poem can bring about material change for the poet—whether in monetary gain or status change, or more aspirationally an ethical and aesthetic recommitment in the social and cultural realms. A caution against taking the heroics of the poem too seriously: While the poem is crucially invested in seeing a change, often this change remains in the margins of the poem, in the transformation the poet and speaker undergoes from beginning to end. The poem, while being capable of transforming its subject, is never a substitute for real action in the world. The poets I read below understand this. If the poem moves its reader, the change can be as minor as moving the reader's eyes. But as we'll see, even this change shouldn't be dismissed as inconsequential. It can be manipulated to extend the movement, to make it mean more than it might seem to at first glance.

As I consider the work of language in generating perception and vision in the poem, I am aware of the difficulty of translating one perceptual culture into another. The art historian Wendy Shaw has noted some of the difficulties of this kind of work. Framing the problem in terms of taking 'the gaze' as a model for thought, Shaw articulates the biases of the Cartesian empirical subject whose "transcendent position" becomes the privileged mode of knowledge. "The act of thinking about Islam," she writes, "of defining the discourse of sight in Islam through translations of its terminologies, lies within this episteme, in that it aims to translate one realm of perception for the benefit of another, an English-speaking one."[4] Like Shaw, I am wary of the translation I undertake in relating the experience of perception. Adding to this is the difference in Arabic poetry's cultural importance and its long history as a form that powerfully challenged the authoritarian regimes installed by the European transcendent subject that Edward Said uncovered in his reading of Orientalist Scholarship. For the Moroccan poet Mohammed Bennis to issue a manifesto that addresses directly poetry and writing's role in changing the public's ways of seeing and being shows just how embedded the poetic is in everyday social and cultural experience. Poets have gone to prison, been exiled, and killed for writing what they wrote.

The poet's power has long been tied to the idea of the poet as visionary and seer whose gaze is that of the "feeling knower," encapsulated by the word *shāʿir*. In the pre-Islamic context, a poet was considered to receive poetic inspiration through the intervention of spirits (*shayāṭīn or jinn*). The poet, whose language was seen to have magical effect, was also connected to the sorcerer or *kāhin*. This idea had not entirely died out by the advent of Islam. In tenth-century al-Andalus Abu ʿAmir al-Mansur (d. 1002 A.D.) in his campaign against Barcelona was accompanied by a contingent of forty poets believing that satirical poetry would, in effect,

[4] Wendy Shaw, "Naẓar, Subjectivity, and the Gaze" in *Naẓar: Vision, Belief, and Perception in Islamic Cultures*, ed. Samer Akkach, Islamic History and Civilization 191 (Boston: Brill, 2022), 52.

destroy the enemy.[5] The conceptual hold of the oracular poet continued into the modern period, according to Muhsin al-Musawi, with the belief that the poet's vocational commitment was enhanced by exceptional prophetic power. It was also folded into the literary revolutionary's search for "a new way of looking," which meant, as Robyn Creswell teases out, that the poet was no longer a mere craftsman, but also a seer or possessor of visions.[6]

An understanding of the perceptual culture to which the *qaṣīda* belongs also means acknowledging the impact Quranic discourse of vision and visuality had without overdetermining its effect on poetry. That is, while certain interpretations of the Quran impacted ideas about figuration, vision, and iconism, the poem isn't determined by them. The problem of God's figuration, for example, was primarily a verbal phenomenon not a plastic one. The difficulty facing the exegetes was that several instances in both the Quran and the *ḥadīth*, if interpreted literally, would justify anthropomorphism. *Tashbīh* (as the theologians called it) is the problem of language taken to signify both the corporeal and divine realms, taken, that is, at face value. Comparison was not understood, if taken literally, to be one that was innocuous because comparison meant equating and making two things similar. This is why accounts of the way language works to convey meaning became especially important for the theologians, and why for the ʿAbbāsid rhetorician and grammarian ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d.1078 A.D.), meanings that suggested fantastical logic (which he would explain as *takhyīl*) were not possible under the category of metaphor because of its use in the Quran.

And there are competing interpretations, which often collide with one another, and subvert our expectations. Taking the Andalusī jurist and theologian Ibn Ḥazm's *ẓāhirī*-inflected interpretation as an example, one might think he endorses anthropomorphism as someone who reads verses at face value would.[7] But Ibn Ḥazm does not in fact read the Quran in this way—nor

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[5] James Monroe depicts Andalusī court culture in his introduction to Abū ʿĀmir Aḥmad Ibn Shuhayd, *Risālat At-Tawābiʿ Wa z-Zawābiʿ*, translated by James T. Monroe, University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies 15 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

[6] Muhsin J. al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2006), 4; and Robyn Creswell, *City of Beginnings: Poetic Modernism in Beirut*, Translation/Transnation 43 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 78.

[7] Ibn al-Ḥazm's *Taqrīb li-ḥadd al-mantiq* gives an example of poetry's impact on the larger perceptual culture:

واما التخيل فقد يسمعك صوتا حيث لا صوت، ويريك شخصا ولاشخص. قال تعالى «يخيل إليهم من سهرهم أنها تسعى» فأخبر تعالى بكذب التخيل.

As for *takhyīl*, it can make you hear a voice where there is no voice, and see a person and there is none. God said: "[their ropes and staffs] seemed to him from their magic that they were moving [like snakes]" and thus God informed us of the mendacity of *takhyīl*. ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrīb li-ḥadd al-manṭiq, wa-al-madkhal ʿalayhi bi-al-alfāẓ al-ʿāmmiyya wa-al-amthila al-faqhiyya.* ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās. (Bayrūt: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1959), 576.

Ibn Ḥazm gives another example in *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*. ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, al-Ṭabʿa 2 (Bākistān: Jāmiʿat Abī Bakr al-Islāmiyya, 1988), 63:

وقالوا: ونرجح بان يكون الاشتقاق يؤيد أحد النصين، ومثلوا ذلك بالشفق، وادعوا أن اشتقاقه الحمرة.
قال على: ما سمعنا هذا في علم اللغة، ولا علمناه، ولا سمع لغوي قط أن الشفق مشتق من الحمرة. وانما عهدنا الشعراء يسمون الحمرة والبياض المختلطين في الخدود بالشفق على سبيل التشبيه فقط.

does he buy into the Ḥanbalī addition of *bi-lā-kayf*, a roundabout that takes the Quran at its literal word without questioning how—which seemed to take responsibility away from the interpreter. Instead, Ibn Ḥazm maintains the doctrine of absolute oneness (*tawaḥḥud*) and he differentiates between assigning names and anthropomorphism—one is a quality of language and the other claims an ontological similarity between two things. On the other end of the interpretive spectrum, Ibn al-ʿArabī, a Sufi mystic and poet, also bypasses anthropomorphism by understanding the Quran through the doctrine of *khayāl*. According to the poet-mystic, the *khayāl* (often translated as imagination or imaginal when appended to the term "world") is a reality or presence that manifests in multiple ways.[8] The *khayāl* gives sensory form (*ṣūra maḥsūsa*) to those things in reality without outward form. For instance, the imagination receives knowledge in the form of milk or Islam as pillars.[9] When the *ḥadīth* says to worship God "as if you see him" or when God says in the Quran "wherever you turn, there is the face of your Lord" (2:115), Ibn al-ʿArabī understands the face here as reality given form. Because the human imagination (the *khayāl* is also a faculty) deals only in sensory forms, God is not figured in language, rather he gives a visual form (image) to the essence or reality of things.

Centuries before Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Quranic exegete al-Zamakhsharī also side-stepped a literal/figurative interpretation of the anthropomorphic verses, explaining the hands in the verse, "the earth shall be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand" (39:67) as a visualized form of an abstract notion. He calls this depiction

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They said: we think that derivation supports one of the two texts, and they likened that to the dusk, which they claimed is derived from "redness."
Ali said: We have not heard this in linguistics, nor did we have knowledge [of its being the case], nor has a linguist ever heard that dusk is derived from red. However, we are accustomed to poets calling the mixed redness and whiteness of the cheeks "dusk" only as a metaphor.

While Ibn Ḥazm denounces the derivation of dusk from redness (*ḥumra*), he intriguingly attributes the cause for this derivation to poetry and to the comparison (*tashbīh*) that the poets make between the redness on a white cheek and the colors at dusk. I'm drawn to this instance because it shows an attention to a perceptual capacity that is translated between linguistic disciplines that results in differing interpretations of language. The comparison between the cheeks and the dusk—an intensely visual image relying on comparing the colors of the sky to the perceptible reddening of blushing cheeks—leads to interpretations which Ibn Ḥazm finds erroneous in some contexts. Moreover, it conveys a sense of the perceptual culture at large—the way images from poetry seep into linguistic interpretation of other kinds of texts.

[8] These are: 1) in the cosmos where existence is identical to imagination 2) in the macrocosm, where the intermediate world between the spiritual and corporeal worlds is imaginal 3) in the microcosm, where the human soul considered as a reality distinct from spirit and body pertains to imagination. William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*, 1st ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 117.

[9] This is image comes from a *ḥadīth*:

The messenger said: "While I was sleeping, I saw that a cup full of milk was brought to me and I drank my fill till I noticed (the milk) its wetness coming out of my nails. Then I gave the remaining milk to Umar Ibn Al-Khattab. The companions of the Prophet asked, "What have you interpreted (about this dream)? O Messenger," he replied, "(It is religious) knowledge."

Bachelard will give this example centuries later in his work on the material imagination. Milky water in poetry, he says, has at its basis a material component which is primordially linked to well-being. Gaston Bachelard and Colette Gaudin, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie: Selections from Gaston Bachelard*, Rev. ed. (Spring Pub, 1987), 60.

(*taṣwīr*), or giving visual form to an abstract notion of God's majesty or omnipotence before the eyes (*takhyīl*). Unlike al-Jurjānī, al-Zamakshari tenders *takhyīl* as a Quranic technique for visualizing abstractions like God's omnipotence as a hypothetically posited but tangible corporeal image.[10] Elsewhere, when God says, "And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy" (*ikhfaḍ lahumā janāḥa al-dhullī min al-raḥma*), according to al-Zamakhsharī, the substratum in reality for putting forward a wing for humility does not exist, thus his can be understood as a technique of "comprehending the intelligible in the form of what can be sensed" (*taṭhīm al-maʿqūl fī-sūrat al-maḥsūs*). The answer to anthropomorphism was not to read the Quran figuratively but to make recourse to a visual sensory experience. In this middle ground, the language of the Quran maintains its discursive power by rendering the image real to the faculty of the imagination without necessarily being God's reality.

I have so far touched on only one of the themes of this dissertation. Another one, which comes out of the ideas on poetic seeing, is poetic knowledge. A warrior and poet addresses his beloved's ruins and asks: "Have the poets left any place to patch/ Or did you know her dwelling only after strained imagination."[11] Scholars have focused on, and rightly so, the frustration implied in the first hemistich. ʿAntara ibn Shaddād's (d. 608 A.D.) frustration is the frustration behind the cliché "there's nothing new under the sun" (an impasse for any writer at some point in their journey, though unlike the warrior-poet ʿAntara, our writer's journey isn't usually through the desert wilderness). What interests me here is the second hemistich where the poet asks himself whether he *knows* his beloved's abode after having imagined it (*tawahhum*). In other words, the poet asks whether he only knew the abode through its image. The implication of the first rhetorical question—that the poets have left no place to patch, i.e. the figurative "places," "homes," or "verses" (*abyāt*) in which the poet could reside renders the dwelling in the second hemistich as an alternative to the first. In this transition from first to second question, ʿAntara has given us a real dwelling (*dār*) of his departed beloved in place of the hypothetical dwelling of places/verses. Even as he uttered this question of "knowing" at the *aṭlāl*, it followed the half-verse that makes the past visual. "Places to patch" is a visualization of the poet's place in a longer poetic tradition, but the poet also evokes the past in the transformation from *tawahhum* to *maʿrifa* (from imagination to knowledge). The second hemistich thus, according to Hassanly Ladha, is "a process of evocation and overturning" of discursive convention. In the use of the word "*mutaraddam*" the poet offers place through the visual metaphor of weaving. He has thus revised an inherited knowledge or in Ladha's words, "supplanted" it.[12] Though ʿAntara uses the word *maʿrifa*, the other word for knowledge *ʿilm* is also closely related to an important term—*ʿalam* (a mark, sign, or inscription) of the deserted abode or the material trace of the immaterial phantom— making the pre-Islamic *nasīb* a compelling source for untangling the

[10] Wolfhart Heinrichs in *Takhyīl : The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics*, eds. G. J. H. van Gelder and Marlé Hammond, (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2008), 228. And see also Heinrichs encyclopedia entry "*Takhyīl*," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill, April 24, 2012).

[11] The verse in Arabic:

هَل غادَرَ الشُعَراءُ مِن مُتَرَدَّمِ أَم هَل عَرَفتَ الدارَ بَعدَ تَوَهُّمِ

[12] Hassanaly Ladha, "Allegories of Ruin: Architecture and Knowledge in Early Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 50, no. 2 (July 15, 2019): 89–122. "As an object of poetic thought, the imagined and so absent dwelling marks the loss and supplanting (as opposed to just supplementing or patching) of inherited knowledge" (101).

relationship between the visual, poetic form, and knowledge.[13] In this dissertation, I understand poetic knowledge as the embedded practices of seeing that make up and shape the metaphors and images (a sense experience that has undergone change within and through the poem.) It is thus, as ʿAntara shows, the ability to present what is absent, and in ʿAnatara's verse as in this dissertation, one major absence that cannot be seen is the past. At the center of poetic knowledge, then, is seeing, and often it's seeing what cannot be seen.

The encounter with the past, whether taking the form of a phantom or a deserted campsite, asks to be deciphered. In other words, it demands an interpretation from someone.The final theme of this dissertation is the poem's social life—when a poem makes its demands, who is listening to or reading it? What does it do to the reader who encounters it? The poems I read in what follows aren't (to anachronistically cite the poet John Stuart Mill) "overheard speech."[14] They are decidedly addressed to someone. I mentioned earlier that the *qaṣīda* ends either in *hijāʾ* or *madīḥ* (and scholars have pointed out that lampooning is a form of anti-praise). Praise can easily be misconstrued as insincere. Like love, praise is simultaneously general and specific. The poet must negotiate the fraught work of exemplarity, of being specific while being expected to make outstanding a hermetic experience (one's individual appreciation for a patron) using generic conventions. Praise poems run the gamut from felicitation (*tahniʾa*), to presented requests, to admonishments (*ʿitāb*) and the anti-praise or invective of *hijāʾ*, which signaled the poet's desire to terminate his relationship with the patron.[15] *Qaṣīdat al-madḥ* is a form in which the modes of address, vocabulary, and the ways in which it is spoken have acquired symbolic power, and its emblematic function is to display the attributes of the patron.[16] *Madīḥ* also binds the individual to a sociality that exceeds the subject, and the first three chapters will look at how understanding the praise poems visually is central to this sociality.[17] One of the main fields of the poem's life was the court, as it was among the ʿAbbāsid's, where its delivery constituted an important ritual. Court poetry, and specifically *madīḥ*, was a way to ensure the continuity of the ruler and of the social order. Its form and language drew from a fixed paradigmatic structure of feeling, but poets found ways to play freely within its fixture. Whether a poet praised the ruler for living up to the ideal or chastised him for not, the poet always reminded the ruler of the ideal. In chapters two and three, we'll see how Andalusī poets did so by visually evoking the ideal, by making up an image of the ruler in their praise poems. The last chapter, set in the twentieth

[13] There is of course, too, the connotation of *shiʿr* and *shāʿir* with forms of knowing. Franz Rosenthal in *Knowledge Triumphant* mines this connection between poetry and mental activity in pre-Islamic poetry (more on this in chapter one below). Ladha's recent article, "Allegories of Ruin: Architecture and Knowledge in Early Arabic Poetry" also reads a relation in early Arabic poetry between attempts to articulate an architectonic form and the nature of knowledge.

[14] John Stuart Mill in his essay "What is Poetry?"

[15] Beatrice Gruendler, *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn Al-Rumi and the Patron's Redemption.*, RoutledgeCurzon Studies in Arabic and Middle-Eastern Literatures (Abingdon: Routledge Imprint, 2003), 4.

[16] Aziz al-Azmeh's book *Muslim Kingship* and Ross Brann's volume *Languages of Power in Islamic Spain* read the *qaṣīda's* ceremonial and symbolic power. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997); and Ross Brann, *Languages of Power in Islamic Spain*, Occasional Publications of the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Program of Jewish Studies, Cornell University, No. 3 (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1997).

[17] I get this idea of *madīḥ* as extending the subject's sociality from Ladha's article, "From Bayt to Stanza: Arabic *Khayāl* and the Advent of Italian Vernacular Poetry," *Exemplaria* (Binghamton, N.Y.) 32, no. 1 (2020): 4.

century, will also focus on a kind of *madīḥ*—the praise of the city as a way to move beyond poetic models that hew to the language of nationalism and *waṭan*.

In the eleventh century, in the wake of the Umayyads' declining rule (756-1031 A.D), poets found themselves in a time of drastic change, the rise of *shuʿūbiyya* and Andalusī pride, the appearance of fiefdoms known as *ṭawāʾif* after the caliphate's fall. Seville (Isbhbīliya) was the center with poets like Ibn Zaydūn (d. 1071 A.D.), Ibn ʿAmmār (d. 1086 A.D.), Ibn al-Labbāna (d. 1113 A.D.), and Ibn Ḥamdīs (d. 1133 A.D.) under the patronage of the city's ruler al-Muʿtamid Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 1095 A.D.), who was himself a poet. Al-Andalus experienced another bout of upheaval in the twelfth century as the Murābiṭūn (1050-1147 A.D.), the Berber/Amazīgh rulers from Morocco, took power after the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif*. The poets of this chapter are from this period. Ibn Khafāja (d. 1138 A.D.) and Abu al-ʿAbbās al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī (d. 1126 A.D.). In this period the poet and philosopher Ibn Bājja (d. 1138 A.D.) invented the *zajal* and the poet Ibn Quzman (d. 1160 A.D.) perfected it. Finally, under the Almohads (1147-1248 A.D.), there was another revival of poetry. The poets here were al-Ruṣafī (d. 1177 A.D.), the converted Jewish poet Abū Isḥāq Ibrahim ibn Sahl of Seville (d. 1252 A.D.), Hāzim al-Qarṭājannī (d. 1285 A.D.) (featured in the first chapter), Ḥafsa bint al-Hājj al-Rakūnīyya (d. 1191 A.D.), and the mystic Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240 A.D.).

Andalusī poetry divides the field of al-Andalus studies. On one side are those scholars who believe it to be distinguished by a Roman influence, citing the strophic poem known as the *muwashshaḥa* that appeared in the early tenth century peppered with words from existing Romance languages. On the other side are scholars who see it as a derivation of ʿAbbāsid poetry. While Andalusī poets took part in *muʿarada* of ʿAbbāsid poems (a practice of emulating a poem's rhyme, meter, and theme), the idea of Andalusī fascination with, and hewing to, all things Mashriqī has some truth to it, yet it doesn't tell the whole story. Andalusī poetry isn't merely a derivative of its ʿAbbāsid counterpart. The scholarly bifurcation is between those who believe that al-Andalus is, to use Ross Brann's term, "exceptional," and those who see it as a waystation on the road to European self-actualization. In the latter camp, orientalist scholars like Henri Pérès and A.R. Nykl, whose work reflects al-Andalus through the prism of translation and transmission.[18] Recent scholarship has nuanced al-Andalus's relationship both to Europe and to the Arabic East. Some of this attitude lingers in the work of scholars who engage al-Andalus from the vantage of a "golden era," or "lost garden."[19] Salma Khadra Jayyusi, for instance, considers Andalusī poetry as an "extended frontier" that brings together tradition and innovation, but she ultimately questions whether this poetry can be considered "frontier" at all. Jayyusi concludes that Andalusī poetry does not show any awareness, formally, of intersecting two cultures. Even though the poets themselves wrote in a bilingual milieu, formal Arabic poetry remained inexorably wedged to the East, and produced in a context where the Arabic language

[18] Henri Pérès, *La poésie andalouse en arabe classique au XIe siècle; ses aspects généraux, ses principaux thèmes et sa valeur documentaire*, Publications de l'Institut d'études orientales, Faculté des lettres d'Alger 5 (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1953).

[19] For more on how and when the notion of al-Andalus as a lost paradise came about see Justin Stearns, "Representing and Remembering Al-Andalus: Some Historical Considerations Regarding the End of Time and the Making of Nostalgia." *Medieval Encounters*, volume 15, 2009, 355–374. Sterans investigates the portrayal of al-Andalus in historical texts and concludes that it is not nostalgia that characterizes al-Andalus but rather these texts frame al-Andalus instead as a place of wonders, *jihād* and eschatological unfolding.

and its formal poetic qualities were front and center.[20] David Wacks, focusing on the Jewish Poet Todros Abulafia, characterizes his poetry under the patronage of Alfonso X as a negotiation of Hebrew-Andalusī, Christian, and troubadour poetics—what he aptly terms a "diasporic aesthetics"—which characterizes not only Abulafia's poetry, but the condition of Andalusī poetics itself.[21] Stitched throughout the scholarship is a thread that claims for al-Andalus an exceptional status, a thread that is productive because it recognizes the place of al-Andalus in the larger imaginary, an "exceptionalism" that according to Brann has been a feature of al-Andalus and Sefarad's own self-mythology.[22] It's clear that the image of al-Andalus is potent in the cultural, literary, and historical imagination,[23] but al-Andalus has created its own images and this dissertation shows how to read the ways Andalusī poetry makes itself distinct by its own images and in what its poetics make possible.

The triad of poetic seeing, poetic knowledge, and the poem's social life is still operative in my discussion of twentieth-century Morocco poetry. The poet is still a visionary, and poetic knowledge becomes a named term to think through the twentieth century poem's circulation, its role in anti-colonial resistance, and its ability to affect, and transform, the reader. Moroccan literary and visual arts were engaged in a process of rethinking the imposed vision of colonial paradigms. This was part of the exigencies of *ḥadātha* (modernity), and the choices the poet made were considered with a fine-tooth comb, because even as there was a willingness to cast off colonial impositions, there was a resistance to questioning the political mythemes of the nationalist parties that took over in the wake of colonial rule. The claim I make about how twentieth-century Moroccan writers elaborated a poetics within a growing experimental visual culture, which in seeking to free itself from colonial imposition, drew from an Andalusī-Maghribī visual inheritance, takes this dynamic into account.[24]

In his 1983 work *Maghreb Pluriel*, Moroccan novelist and literary critic Abdelkebir Khatibi theorizes "the Maghreb as a horizon of thought" ("le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée"). My project looks toward this horizon. The argument that unfolds in what follows is that poetic visuality operates in the slippage between literal, physical vision and a metaphorical, imagined one. This visual poetics of the Andalusī and Maghribī poem indicates a complex relationship between aesthetics and conceptualization (seeing and knowing) that is shaped by,

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[20] Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Andalusī Poetry: The Golden Age," eds. Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Manuela Marín. *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 333-42.

[21] David Wacks, "Poetry in Diaspora: From al-Andalus to Provence and Back to Castile". *Double Diaspora in Sephardic Literature: Jewish Cultural Production Before and After 1492,* Bloomington Indiana University Press, 2015, 64-96.

[22] Ross Brann, *Iberian Moorings: Al-Andalus, Sefarad, and the Tropes of Exceptionalism*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021.

[23] Eric Calderwood, *On Earth or in Poems: The Many Lives of Al-Andalus* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2023).

[24] While I make this connection unproblematically, there is some contention that this throughline, which makes modern Moroccan culture a continuation of Andalusī culture, was forged and perpetuated during the French and Spanish colonial periods. For more about this see Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla and Eric Calderwood, "What Is Moroccan Literature? History of an Object in Motion," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 52, no. 1–2 (April 16, 2021), 97–123, and Eric Calderwood, *Colonial Al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

and simultaneously shape, linguistic, doctrinal, and political stakes. The four chapters in this dissertation treat both literal and metaphorical adaptations of vision as case studies in theorizing the poem's capacity to move its reader. In the first and last chapters, I am helped in showing this by the poet-critics' reading of the poems, and in the middle chapters, it is my reading of the poems that drives the theorizing. Moving between well-known and more obscure works of Andalusī literature, I propose a historical and cultural genealogy that shows writers contending with poetic visuality as a structural feature of the poem, and a paradigmatic kind of seeing that interacts with and shapes the reader's own vision. At the same time, I keep critical track of the relationship between poetry and knowledge that unfolds in the interstices of rhetorical criticism and the poem. My goal is to uncover a concept of poetic knowledge coordinated by formal and conceptual interactions of seeing and feeling and to explore the aesthetic and conceptual frontiers where poetry and social change shade into one another.

Chapter 1, "The Visuality of Andalusī *Balāgha*," examines the emergence and development of *takhyīl* in twelfth-century rhetorical criticism from al-Andalus. The first chapter establishes the main genealogy of thinking poetry through sight within the Andalusī rhetorical-critical tradition beginning with Abū ʿAlī Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq (d. 1064 A.D.) and culminating in the work of Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī (d. 1283 A.D.) and Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1330). This chapter also attends to lesser studied works in this lineage of Andalusī thinkers including Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 1127), Ibn ʿAmīra al-Makhzūmī (d.1259 A.D.), and Ibn al-Bannāʾ al-Marākishī (d. 1324 A.D.). Because of the encyclopedic nature of Andalusī writing, much of what might be considered literary-critical work is available in a variety of sources, such as commentaries on poetic texts, psychological treatises, and books on grammar and logic. For example, the grammarian and philosopher al-Baṭalyawsī mentions *takhyīl* in passing in his commentary on a verse by Abū ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī.[25]

This chapter also discusses both the poetic image and the ocular image of physical vision by reading a treatise on optics by the astronomer and mathematician al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Haytham (d. 1039 A.D.) in his *Kitāb al-Manāẓir* (*The Book of Optics*). I analyze the ways that *takhyīlī* poetics intersect with modalities of physical sight by bringing Ibn al-Haytham's process of vision to bear on poetic perception. I explore the interplay of *ṣūra*, *khayāl*, and *maʿnā* in this text to understand how they constitute the difference between what Ibn al-Haytham terms "glancing perception" (*al-idrāk bī mujarrad al-taʾammul*) and "contemplative perception" (*al-idrāk bī-l-taʾammul maʿ taqaddum al-maʿrifa*).[26] The Arabic tradition of optics (*ʿilm al-manāẓir*) demarcated its domain of inquiry early on from that of geometry by posing the fundamental problem of *ḥaqīqa* and that which "appears" (*yaẓhar*). The trilateral root *n-ẓ-r* connotes the contemplation of a thing with the eye as well as what is known from looking with the eye and with the heart, and later comes to indicate seeking meaning through memory, in the same way that what is sensibly perceived is sought through the senses.[27] I rely on this notion that *naẓar* signifies a desire—and thus a desiring subject—implied in the word *ṭalab* (to seek the appearance (*ẓuhūr*) of a thing) and is

[25] This is found in al-Baṭalyawsī's *Sharḥ al-mukhtār min luzumiyyāt abī al-ʿalaʾ*.

[26] Translation by A.I Sabra.

[27] Al-Munāwī, *al-Tawqīf ʿalā Muhimmāt al-Taʿārīf*. The definitions are: *Zayn al-Dīn al-Razī, Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*; تأمل الشيء بالعين *Al-Ṣāḥib bin ʿAbbād, Al-Muḥīṭ fī l-Lugha*; من نظر بالعين ونظر بالقلب. This definition is also given in Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab*.

thus not a passive act. [28] From this, I argue that Ibn al-Haytham's process of vision parallels the way Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī (d. 1283 A.D.) describes *takhyīl* in his *Minhāj al-bulaghāʾ wa sirāj al-udabāʾ*. I also follow the thread that links *takhyīl* and knowledge through discussions in poetics and optics around the faculties of perception and the perceiver's visual readiness (what these sources called "the prepared soul").

Chapter 2, "How the Andalusī *Qaṣīda* Sees," brings together poetic thinking, political power, and collective seeing through readings of three Andalusī poets. In their praise poems to powerful patrons, I read a poetic mode of address that makes use of the classical poetic image of the phantom of the beloved (*ṭayf al-khayāl*) to evoke and shape for the patron a specific world, thus shifting the power dynamics between patron and poet. This chapter focuses on the works of two Andalusī poets, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Khafāja (d. 1138 A.D.) and Abu al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Hurayra al-ʿUtbī (d. 1126 A.D.), known as al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī (the blind poet of Tuleda). I examine the way both poets portray a dissimulated reality that reveals it as within grasp, if one were only to notice it (usually the poet notices it as a result of the *mamdūḥ*). In this chapter, *takhyīl* is understood as the poet's accepted perceptions and assumptions, and the way these are conveyed to the listener (recipient) who then assimilates them as part of their own perception, constructing, with the guidance of the poet, an image of the world. I examine the specific images and language of their praise poems, which are replete with invocations to the patron to "see" and "imagine." This poetic mode of address aims to evoke for the patron a particular perception of the world, through the personal seeing and imagining of the poet, a mode which has a powerful capacity to transform the world the patron sees.

The *ṭayf al-khayāl* makes its official appearance in this chapter.[29] In my reading of the poetry, I attend to the way that each poet not only makes use of the trope but also refigures the *ṭayf al-khayāl* in a kind of conventional renewal that reiterates how the confrontation with the image is transformative. That is, in the continued reiteration of the trope, (and if we think back to the "knowing" of the abodes of ʿAntara's *qaṣīda*) the relation between attempts to articulate this convention and to inscribe the material world into language at the figural level foregrounds the *qaṣīda's* epistemic investments. Ultimately, language's power to spill over into the world of the poet-audience (patron) relationship, is understood to affect the hearer's subjectivity and to engender certain feelings in the patron. The *ṭayf al-khayāl* serves as an anchor for my own thinking through of the interplay between metaphorical and physical vision, between the physical and mental world which the *qaṣīda* navigates in an attempt to affect a material change in the patron's world. I read an awareness of the image's transformative capacity into the *khayāl's* renewal in the *qaṣīda*s of Ibn Khafāja and al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī.

Chapter 3, "Going in Circles: al-Jilyānī's Visual Poems" turns to a literal kind of poetic seeing and reads a twelfth-century poem that visually reinterprets the praise poem and makes

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[28] In her introduction to an edited issue of the Brill journal *Muqarnas* titled *Gazing Otherwise: On the Modalities of Seeing In and Beyond the Lands of Islamic,* Olga Bush notes the etymological connection, in the Western philosophical tradition, between "theory" and "beholding"; an affinity also shared by the Arabic terms *naẓarīya* ("theory") and *naẓar.* Bush elucidates a theory of the gaze in al-Andalus exemplified by two of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's verses that are inscribed on the walls of the Alhambra. Ibn al-Khaṭīb's verses speak of a reciprocal gaze in which the object through the poetic trope of prosopopoeia, in which the inanimate palace (or object of the gaze) speaks for itself, thereby transforming momentarily into a subject.

[29] While I have not yet come across any premodern text that discusses the affinity of *takhyīl* with the *ṭayf al-khayāl,* Marlé Hammond questions this possibility in her contribution to the collected essays on *takhyīl.* See G. J. H. van Gelder and Marlé Hammond, *Takhyīl : The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics* (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2008).

visible such elements of poetic craft as rhythm and repetition. In ʿAbd al-Munʿim ibn ʿAmmār ibn Ḥassān al-Jilyānī's (d. 1206 A.D.) *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, which consists of visual poems he called *mudabbajāt* ("brocaded forms") written to his patron Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the ideas I have about *takhyīl* and *ṭayf al-khayāl* are further concretized. The reason I'm calling this poetic "seeing" is because the *mudabbajāt* attempts to make its reader see what cannot be seen. In this chapter, the central experience is visual, and the poet relies on the patron's ability to physically *see* the poem before his eyes to render its primary aesthetic experience. But the unusual and difficult process of reading the *mudabbajāt* upends the poet-patron dynamic in a way that doesn't rely on familiarity. Instead, as we'll see below, the poet has the power not only to shape the patron's ways of seeing, but to teach the patron *how* to see. While the poet doesn't use the term *takhyīl*, I argue that this genre of Andalusī poem (which the poet himself attributes to al-Andalus because of his origin there) collates the practices and ways of seeing of the first two chapters. That is, the *mudabbajāt* enact a kind of seeing that is literal and in the case of the visual poem, a seeing that makes the metaphorical literal and vice versa. This is the same double seeing of *takhyīl* and the *ṭayf al-khayal*. Still in the realm of *madīḥ*, the poet's praise becomes a visual iteration of the past as he describes (and praises) his patron's victories against the crusaders.

The first three chapters each explore one pole of the literal and metaphorical poetic seeing, showing how both are operative. The last chapter combines the two. In twentieth-century Morocco, poet and critic Mohammed Bennis approached the visual dimension of the poem to theorize the possibilities of a new kind of writing and poetic seeing (*ruʾya*). In chapter 4, I draw a throughline from the twelfth to the twentieth century through the two kinds of visualizations examined in earlier chapters—both the concept of image-evocation and visual poetic form. In "Seeing the Words of Poets," I read twentieth-century Moroccan poet-critic Mohammed Bennis's visual poems (*al-shiʿr al-handasī or al-shiʿr al-baṣarī*), which resemble al-Jilyānī's in their use of *khaṭṭ* (calligraphy), alongside his theory of writing to analyze his critique of modes of vision in contemporary Moroccan poetry. When the visual element of a poem is no longer just incidental but rather structural, the poet draws attention to language's materiality, and foregrounds its capacity to mean beyond linguistic signification. The visual shape of the poem also confronts the reader with an image in which both the poet's and reader's visions interact, and like in *takhyīl*, this kind of visual arrangement of words on a page guides the reader in the unfolding of meaning, while also asking the recipient to construct the text alongside the poet.

The visual poem demands a process of reading in which a pattern is abstracted from the verbal framework. In this kind of "image-evocation," the image is no longer merely a mental one, though the same material—language—is what evokes it. Yet, the role of language has shifted, from one in which the image emerges from the verbal framework to one in which the image transcends the verbal. Bennis ultimately seizes this opportunity to make the material mark of language, *khaṭṭ*, into the image of a suppressed Maghribī past, waiting sedimented in the image to be recovered by the discerning poet. The materiality of the poem's text is not only a modern question. The *qaṣīda* in its two-hemistich structure is built like a tent, and its development from this two-column structure signaled both a sonic and spatial shift. Bennis's visual poems allow me to discuss poetic seeing situated in its transhistorical connection to the premodern poetics of seeing, and to show the ways the past is mobilized in the present for liberatory ends. The *qaṣīdat al-madḥ* becomes in this chapter, the praise of a city, and through my reading of its twentieth-century iteration, I continue to track how poetry summons its "own vision of things."

Finally, in the dissertation's coda, I meditate on poetic knowledge as a method of this dissertation. To do so, I invoke the help of Mohammed Bennis and Abdelkébir Khatibi along with other notions of poetic knowledge from the twentieth-century Francophone anticolonial liberatory discourses of Édouard Glissant and Aimé Césaire. Poetic knowledge conceptually allows me and these thinkers to unpack the disruptive force of the poetic image in a way that seriously connects aesthetic experience to various possibilities of liberation. In its modest ambition, this dissertation unfetters the boundaries between disciplines and undoes the assumption that the Moroccan literary tradition remains alienated from an Arabic literary and visual inheritance. In "The Aesthetic Imperative," Huda Fakhreddine calls out a discipline that "has us under the impression that modern Arabic is haunted, plagued even, by a pressing need to achieve contemporaneity with world literature."[30] As a result of being studied under the 'Western gaze,' Arabic culture (as happens to all cultures peripheral to the 'West') has been cut off from its literary tradition. To be modern in Arabic poetry means to be different/other to one's own self, a literary culture undergoing a crisis of identity in its pursuit of relevance. I have tried in this dissertation to recreate "the thickened presence" of Arabic poetry[31] that undoes the classical/modern divide, resists an essentializing view of the *qaṣīda*, and where possible translates Arabic poems into consequential meaning-making units in English, with the conviction that even when the translation falls short, the attempt itself captures that transformative disclosure of which poetry is capable.

At stake in investigating how theories of art connect to theories of knowledge is our understanding of how a culture conceives, interacts with, and shapes their world. The *ṭayf al-khayāl, takhyīl*, and the visual poems encompass the poet's vision—a personal sight and imagining—but also a collective vision. This shared act of seeing (and reading), has implications for broader cultural and disciplinary questions in which this dissertation intends to intervene. This has important consequences for later aesthetic thought whose innovations and contributions are often molded in relation to a predecessor (as we saw with ʿAntara's unpatched places). If the poet asks whether he only knew the abode through its image, what does it mean to know the *khayāl* through its image? What do we know about the *khayāl*? Ladha tells us that it resists signification, but in its resistance it leaves a mark, an *athar* (which is also the root that gives us *taʾthīr,* or an affective impact). This project reads the traces and marks left by the poem's attempt to contain something that moves—for its perceived capacity to transform the poet and reader. Moreover, the poem's *athar* tracks all the way from the twelfth to the twentieth century. Thus, this kind of investigation is key for recovering the continuities between the pre-modern and modern Arabic poetic tradition. Moroccan literature has generally been examined through a postcolonial framework that privileges the French canon as a metric of literary modernity. This further divorces Maghribī literature from the heterogeneity of Arabic and Muslim intellectual and aesthetic histories. In reading Morocco the way I have, my project restores its place in an Arabic poetic discourse that tends to sideline the Maghrib and al-Andalus. By examining poetic seeing, poetic knowledge, and the poem's social life, *How the Qaṣīda Sees* sheds light on the aesthetic as well as political impact of poetry from an understudied corpus in Arabic and Middle

[30] Huda Fakhreddine, "The Aesthetic Imperative: A History Poeticized," in *Manifestos for World Thought*, eds. Lucian Stone and Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh, Future Perfect: Images of the Time to Come in Philosophy, Politics and Cultural Studies (London ; Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd., 2017). For more on this dynamic see also, Maha AbdelMegeed, *Literary Optics: Staging the Collective in the Nahda*. Middle East Studies beyond Dominant Paradigms. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2024).

[31] Fakhreddine, 152.

Eastern Studies. Ultimately, this project rethinks the paradigm and liberatory potential of poetic form and aesthetic experience in light of literary critical and poetic work from the Global South.

Chapter 1: The Visuality of Andalusī Balāgha

Perhaps because he was writing at a moribund Andalusī age, Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406 A.D.) came to the conclusion that Andalusī rhetorical criticism was inferior to the Mashriq. Maghribī and Andalusī *balāghīyūn* were simply unable to meet the demands of the discipline. He elaborates on his reasoning for this inferiority in the *Muqaddima*:

وبالجملة فالمشارقة على هذا الفن أقوم من المغاربة وسببه والله أعلم أنه كمالي في العلوم اللسانية والصنائع الكمالية توجد في العمران والمشرق أوفر عمرانا من المغرب كما ذكرناه أو نقول لعناية العجم وهو معظم أهل المشرق كتفسير الزمخشري وهو كله مبني على هذا الفن وهو أصله وإنما اختص باهل المغرب من أصنافه علم البديع خاصة وجعلوه من جملة علوم الأدب الشعرية وفرعوا له ألقابا وعددوا أبوابا ونوعوا أنواعا وزعموا أنهم أحصوها من لسان العرب وإنما حملهم على ذلك الولوع بتزيين الألفاظ وأن علم البديع سهل المأخذ وصعبت عليهم مآخذ البلاغة والبيان لدقة أنظارهما وغموض معانيهما فتجافوا عنهما.[32]

In general, the *mashāriqa* are better at this art than the *maghāriba*, and the reason for this, and God knows best, is that [*ʿilm al-bayān*] is universally applicable among the linguistic disciplines. Universal sciences are found across civilizations, and the East is more advanced than the Maghrib, as we mentioned. We can also attribute the divergence between the Mashriq and Maghrib to the care of the non-Arabs, and they are most of the people in the Mashriq. For example, the *Tafsīr* of al-Zamakhsharī, is built entirely on this science; *ʿilm al-bayān* is the root principle of his *Tafsīr*. On the other hand, the people of the Maghrib specialized in the sub-discipline of *badīʿ*, and they made it one of the sciences of poetry and subdivided it into

[32] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn: wa-hiya al-juzʾ al-awwal min tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn al-musammā dīwān al-mubtadaʾ wa-al-khabar fī tārīkh al-ʿArab wa-al-Barbar wa-man ʿāṣarahum min dhawī al-shaʾn al-akbar*, ed. Khalīl Shiḥādah and Suhayl Zakkār, al-Ṭabʿa 1, (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 762.

different rubrics, enumerated chapters and varied its types, claiming that these were recorded from the speech of the Arabs. Their obsession with embellishing words was the only thing that made them do this, for the discipline of *badīʿ* is easy to learn. They found it difficult to acquire the disciplines of *balāgha* and *bayān* because of the precision needed for their inspection and the ambiguity of their contents, thus they avoided them both.

Ibn Khaldūn's dismissal of *ʿilm al-badīʿ* as a "lesser" discipline registers the term's fraught relationship to the concept of *bidʿa* (religious innovation) and the early Mashriqī debates over the merits of the *muḥdath* (modern) versus the *maṭbūʿ* (ancient) poet.[33] These debates were absent in Andalusī *balāgha* because the appreciation of *muḥdath* and the appreciation of ancient poetry were not mutually exclusive. Andalusī poetic taste, according to Iḥsān ʿAbbās, emerged in the knot of admiration for Mashriqī *muḥdath* poetry and a deep seated reverence for pre-Islamic poetry, which foreclosed the possibility of a dynamic like the one that played out in the Mashriq. Instead, Andalusī *balāghiyyūn* turned their attention to the poetic image (*ṣūra*) and to the question of taste.[34] A turn which led ʿAbbās to conclude, like Ibn Khaldūn, that the critical tradition in al-Andalus was stagnant.

Some of the Andalusī and Maghribī *balāghiyyūn* who unwittingly earned Ibn Khaldūn's disdain, and who are the major figures of this chapter, are Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 1127 A.D.), Abū al-Walīd Ibn Rushd (d.1198 A.D.), Ibn ʿAmīra al-Makhzūmī (d.1259 A.D.), Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī (d.1283 A.D.), Ibn al-Bannāʾ al-Marākushī (d. 1324 A.D.), and Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1330 A.D.), all of whom defined the poetic with *takhyīl*. Roughly translated as "image-evocation," *takhyīl* defines poetry's capacity to evoke an image in the mind and move the recipient (*al-mutalaqqī)* to either feel or act in response to the demands of the image. The term circulated first in *falsafa*, particularly in the writings of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950 A.D.) and al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037 A.D.) who claimed the capacity to evoke images as poetry's ultimate aim and what distinguished it from other discourses. Working under the schema of the context theory, which included Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* as part of the *Organon*,[35] the *falāsifa* needed to figure out how the subjective arts of rhetoric and poetry were

[33] For instance, al-Jāḥiẓ found no contradiction between a poet who employs *badīʿ* and a *maṭbūʿ* poet. Ibn al-Muʿtazz similarly suggested that *muḥdath* poetry contained nothing that wasn't already in the Qur'ān and in pre-Islamic sources. This stance as Suzanne Stetkyvch points out has the effect of evacuating the newness of this style of poetry in an attempt to defend it from the accusation of innovation (*ibdāʿ*). See Stetkevych, Suzanne. *A Reformulation of Badīʿ: Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ʿAbbāsid Age.* Brill, 1991. The categories, while not ethnocentric in nature, tended to be leveraged in this way. *Maṭbūʿ* designated the "naturally talented" Arab-born poets, while *maṣnūʿ* designated a more labored style, and was often used for non-Arab born poets.

[34] Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Tārīkh al-naqd al-adabī ʿinda al-Arab: naqd al-shiʿr min al-qarn al-thānī ḥattā al-qarn al-thāmin al-Hijrī*, Al-Ṭabʿa 1, (ʿAmmān: Dār al-Shurūq lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 1993), 474.

[35] The Syriac translators of Aristotle transmitted this schema into the Islamic context, which is the result of Simplicius's (533 A.D.) inclusion of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* as part of the *Organon*——what is known in philosophy today as the 'context theory.' Simplicius unwittingly instigated a question that would unfold centuries after his death: how do the arts of rhetoric and poetry fit into the larger canon of Aristotelian logic? The *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, both considered logical arts by Muslim philosophers, fit awkwardly among the other six treatises (*Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics, Topics,* and *Sophistical Refutations*) that make up the *Organon*; each with its own syllogistic form.

part of logic proper—how it created objective certainty (*yaqīn*).[36] The Muslim philosophers solved this problem by extending the idea of *idhʿān* (acquiescence), to all the syllogistic arts, and made *takhyīl*, their notion of an imaginative assent that mimics the validity of *taṣdīq*, a quality of poetic statements.[37]

In the Umayyad Period (929-1031 A.D.), grammarians and philologists were the most likely sources of *naqd* (critical writing). However, another current of writing on poetry emerged as an alternative to the grammarian's focus on word choice and syntax. Poets such as Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (d. 940 A.D.), Ibn Shuhyad (d. 1035 A.D.), and Ibn al-Rashīq al-Qayrawānī (d. 1065 A.D.) penned works on poetry that focused instead on poetic merit over the linguistic correctness that grammarians favored. However, these poets relied mostly on the main currents of Mashriqī *balāgha* in their writings on poetry. For instance, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (*The Unique Necklace*) championed poetic and metric purity along the lines of early Mashriqī criticism, and he devoted an entire chapter to the virtues of Masrhiqī sources. Ibn Shuhayd in his *Risālat al-Tawābiʿ wa al-zawābiʿ* (*Treatise of Familiar Spirits and Demons*), which exists today only in fragments reconstructed from references in other sources, amplifies the poet's objection to the grammarians' and philologists' arbitrary poetic taste, and instead adopted the ideal of the creative and inspired poet. Ibn al-Rashīq, like Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, gathered and disseminated much of Mashriqī *balāgha* standards in his *al-ʿUmda fī maḥāsin al-jazīra* (*The Deliberation in the Merits of the Peninsula*). He writes that the most eloquent *waṣf* (poetic description) is that which "turns hearing into seeing ("*mā qalaba al-sammʿa baṣaran*").[38]

This chapter will be about how poetry turns into seeing. The focus of this chapter's poetic visuality will be on the concept of *takhyīl* and its development in twelfth and thirteenth-century Andalusī rhetorical criticism. Recall the definition of the root *kh-y-l* I cited in the introduction, which entangled seeing with believing and knowing. *Takhyīl* is the verbal noun derived from *khayyala*. As Kamal Boullata shows with terms like *khaṭṭ* (calligraphy), *rasm* (drawing), *ṣūra* (form, image), and *baṣar* (sight/insight),[39] visual and conceptual codes are inextricably connected

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[36] Deborah Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, Islamic Philosophy and Theology 7, (E.J. Brill, 1990), 182. Black has written about the outcomes of the context theory, one of which is that acquiescence emerged as a way to unify the syllogistic arts.

[37] Black, *Logic*, 182. The term *takhyīl* is used in the *Muqqadima* to refer to the mental faculties. Ibn Khaldun describes how the powers of external senses are graded and ascend upwards to rational power. From common sense to imagination (*al-takhyīl*) to the estimative (*al-wahm*), and finally to memory (*al-ḥifẓ*), the soul wants to proceed to active intellection as this is its primary and God-bestowed disposition. In other words, the external senses are what allow us to have inward perception. Ibn Khaldūn, 76-77.

[38] Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda fī maḥāsin al-jazīra.* Edited by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī. (Al-Maktaba al-ʿaṣriyya, 2001), 294. At first glance, it appears that Ibn al-Rashīq aligns poetry with truth when he claims that most of poetry falls under the category of waṣf. He implies this much when he writes that the difference between *waṣf* and *tashbīh* is that the former is rooted in *ḥaqīqa* and the latter in *majāz*. But there is an element that exceeds straightforward reproduction even in Ibn al-Rashīq's visualizing *waṣf*. "If they praise it, they praise it, and if they censure it, they censure it" but he believes that when poets praise or censure they tend to exaggerate the description.

[39] The other etymology that captures the conceptual and perceptual—*baṣar* and *baṣīra*—came to signify a deeper level of vision and understanding often used in religious textual traditions. We'll see al-Qarṭājannī use the expression *al-nāẓir* to refer to someone who seeks further knowledge of craft and *balāgha*. In her study of al-Jurjānī, Larkin describes the *ṣūra* as "a concept that means both form and content, it is the identity of epistemology and aesthetics." These valences are at play in my reading of the ways the *balāghiyyūn* employ and

at the linguistic level,[40] and *takhyīl* is part of this larger perceptual culture's vocabulary. In the first section, I trace some of *takhyīl's* history, specifically in the work of the ʿAbbāsid rhetorician and grammarian ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī as well as its development in Mashriqī and Andalusī *falsafa* before its adoption as poetry's *sine qua non* in Andalusī poetics. Section two dives into how Andalusī *balāgha* understood *takhyīl*. Finally, the third section begins to move toward a concept of poetic knowledge, which is the throughline that connects my reading of twelfth-century Andalusī poetics to twentieth-century Moroccan poetics.

The connection between seeing and knowing is relevant, as well, to *naẓar* (its trilateral root *n-ẓ-r* connotes the contemplation of a thing with the eye, what is known from looking with the eye and with the heart, and later comes to indicate seeking meaning through memory. The *Lisān al-ʿarab* also mentions "*al-fikru fi al-shayʾ, tuqaddiruhū wa tuqīṣuhū minka*" "to think of something is to appraise and consider it").[41] This etymology was excavated in the nineteenth century to derive the word "theory," *naẓariyya.*[42] That is why, in a brief excursus, I suggest the work of the poetic image and that of physical vision, as detailed by al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Haytham (d. 1039 A.D.) in his *Kitāb al-Manāẓir* (*The Book of Optics*), share similar articulations.[43] I track how *takhyīl* and *naẓar* rely on a similar process of supplementation to form an image in the mind[44]—in *takhyīl*, the conceptual image is supplemented by a visual process, and in *naẓar* the visual image is supplemented by a conceptual process. For this reason, I translate *takhyīl*, when

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understand the term. Larkin, Margaret. *The Theology of Meaning: ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Theory of Discourse*. American Oriental Series 79, (American Oriental Society, 1995), 131.

[40] Kamal Boullata, *There Where You Are Not*, (Munich, Germany: Hirmer Publishers, 2019), 369.

[41] The primary meaning, is of course, to see (the sense-perception of the eye), but immediately Ibn al-Manẓūr cites a usage of the term to signify the capacity to see with both the eyes and with the heart. For more on the heart as an organ of perception see Shaw, *What Is "Islamic" Art?*, 2019.

[42] In her introduction to an edited issue of the Brill journal *Muqarnas* titled *Gazing Otherwise: On the Modalities of Seeing In and Beyond the Lands of Islamic*, Olga Bush notes the etymological connection, in the Western philosophical tradition, between "theory" and "beholding"; an affinity also shared by the Arabic terms *naẓariyya* ("theory") and *naẓar*. According to Najwa Ghneem, 'theory' entered the Arabic dictionary at the end of the 19th century. Boutros al-Bustani (1819-1883) in his dictionary *Muḥit al-Muḥit*. See Najwa Ghneem, "Modernist Critical Theory as a Combination of Classical Arab Heritage and Modernist Western Culture." *Advances in Literary Study* 10, no. 2 (2022): 239.

[43] Ibn al-Haytham divided his work on optics according to the three modes of vision: Books I-III dealing with the problems of rectilinear vision, Books IV-VI with vision by reflection, and book VII with vision by refraction (A.I. Sabra ix). The footnotes in section two will mostly focus on Book II. Ibn al-Haytham's theories of vision were well-known in al-Andalus. Additionally, scholars believe that Ibn al-Haytham composed a commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*. Jābir ʿAsfur in *Mafhūm al-shiʿr* mentions a lost treatise by Ibn al-Haytham called *Risāla fi ṣināʿat al-shiʿr muntajiza min al-yūnānī wa al-ʿarabī.* Jābir ʿAṣfūr, *Mafhūm al-shiʿr: dirāsa fī al-turāth al-naqdī*, (al-Qāhira: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1978), 167-8.

[44] Hans Belting explains Ibn al-Haytham's use of *khayāl* as the changing conditions such as distance and the position of light source that transform the properties that the object inherently possesses. He gives the example of an object looking larger when it sinks deeper into water in Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad : Renaissance Art and Arab Science*, 1st English language ed. (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 106. Ibn al-Haytham's term for specular images is *khayālāt* (though he may refer to the *khayāl* as a *ṣūra* seen inside a mirror). Alhazen and A. I. Sabra, *The Optics of Ibn Al-Haytham : Books I-III : On Direct Vision*, Studies of the Warburg Institute 40 (Warburg Institute, University of London, 1989), 68.

possible, as "image-evocation" rather than as "imagining," preferring to emphasize the dual visuality of *takhyīl*—both physical and conceptual—as well as to keep separate the understanding of *khayāl* in Sufi discourse and its later use in modern Arabic writing to render 'imagination.' My goal in this chapter is to highlight one way that Andalusī critics conceived of poetry as operating visually. I read rhetorical criticism alongside the paradigm of vision in the discipline of optics as a way to explain how vision operates through figurative language.

Section 1: Some Historical Background on *Takhyīl*

The earliest mention of *takhyīl* in a *balāgha* text, according to Wolfhart Heinrichs, is found in *Kitāb al-Ṣināʿatayn* (*The Book of the Two Disciplines*) by Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. 1005 A.D.) who defined *takhyīl* as "giving the impression of praising while lampooning and vice versa."[45] While, al-ʿAskarī's *takhyīl* doesn't map onto the meaning it has in *falsafa*, or the one it acquires in later *balāgha* texts, the definition nonetheless alludes to *takhyīl*'s fraught ties to deception.[46] It would be nearly a hundred years before *takhyīl* reemerged in a significant way in the work of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078 A.D.). In *Asrār al-Balāgha* (*The Secrets of Eloquence*) in the context of the question of poetry as *ṣidq* or *khaẓib* (truth or falsehood), al-Jurjānī offers two kinds of *maʿānī* (poetic content) which he divides into *takhyīlī* (imaginative) and *ʿaqlī* (conceptual). The *takhyīlī* type, al-Jurjānī asserts "can only approximately be inventoried" and "cannot be neatly divided into subdivisions and categories."[47] *Takhyīlī* meanings have an airy quality. At first glance, they take you by surprise, causing you to feel wonder (*taʿajjub)* because an image (*ṣūra*) emerges in a form "you had never expected" and leads to a fascination (*khalāba*) "you didn't have before."[48] And in true Jurjānī fashion, he asserts

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[45] van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 2008. ʿAbbāsid critics embraced *takhyīl* after al-Jurjānī incorporated the term into his discussion of mental concepts, which he divided into imaginary (*takhyīlī*) and intellectual (*aqlī*). Al-Jurjānī gives a summary of *takhyīl*: "What I mean by 'make-believe' (*takhyīl*) here, is that poetry in which the poet ascertains something which is baseless, makes a claim that cannot be scientifically proven and makes a statement in which he deceives his own self, showing it what it does not see" (37). Heinrichs translates *takhyīl* as 'make-believe' in part perhaps because al-Jurjānī's notion of *takhyīl* extends beyond the mere evocation of an image to the realm of what the latter considers fantastical and impossible description. More on al-Jurjānī's *takhyīl* below.

[46] In the edited volume on *takhyīl* Heinrichs considers the possibility of a connection between the different uses of *takhyīl* across disciplines. Ultimately, however, the connection appears to be tennous. However, part of my argument is that this connection becomes much more legible when considering the visuality of *takhyīl* in al-Andalus.

[47] van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 32. I refer to both the translation of the text by van Gelder and Marlé Hammond as well as to the Arabic text (Hellmut Ritter edition) in my reading of *Asrār al-Balāgha*. I will indicate the Arabic pagination in the footnotes from here on. ʿAbd al-Qāhir ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī. *Asrār al-balāgha. The Mysteries of Eloquence*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, (İstanbul Üniversitesi. Istanbul: Govt. Press, 1954), 245.

واما القسم التخييلي فهو الذي لا يمكن ان يقال انه صدق وان ما اثبته ثاتب وما نفاه منفي. وهو مفتن المذاهب، كثير المسالك، لا يكاد يحصر الا تقريبا، ولا يحاط به تقسيما وتبويبا.

[48] van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 58. al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha*, 281.
ومدار هذا النوع في الغالب على التعجب وهو والى امره، وصانع سحره، وصاحب سره، وتراه ابدا وقد افضى بك الى خلابة لم تكن عندك، وبرز لك في صورة ما حسبتها تظهر لك.

that the ensuing wonder resides in the form (*ṣūra*) the meaning (*al-maʿnā*) takes. He offers a verse by Ibn al-Muʿtazz to illustrate the way *takhyīlī* meanings work:

الشيب كُرهٌ وكرهُ ان يفارقني أعجِبْ بشيءٍ على البغضاء مودود[49]

White hair is abhorrent. Abhorrent, too, is that it leave me
strange that something so loathed should be so dear.

The speaker's loathing of, and longing for, white hair arrests al-Jurjānī. He considers this verse a strong example of *takhyīl* because it relies on a real association between white hair and old age. The *takhyīl* doesn't reside there, rather it's in the second part of the verse that al-Jurjānī notes its brilliance. White hair is detested because it conveys a nearness to death. Yet, Ibn al-Muʿtazz reimagines the connection between white hair and death as one between white hair and life and he couches his desire for life in terms of this second, newly imagined relationship. Thus, *takhyīlī* meanings generate new possibilities for an image, reworking the potential inherent in an existing comparison.[50] In fact, the more sedimented an association, the more difficult it becomes to shift its context and so the stronger the *takhyīl*. Al-Jurjānī relates this when he comments on a verse by Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī that "the poet was fortunate insomuch as his road had been paved, for the comparison of ripples woven on the surface of ponds to the rings of a coat of mail was well known already. He went one step further, turning them into chains."[51]

We can already see in al-Jurjānī's work how *takhyīlī* meanings are tied to the recipient's capacity to see otherwise (whether this is seeing the white hair of old age as an image of life rather than death, or seeing the violent motion and quickness of water as madness and tying to it the image of a chain). These meanings evoke images of something other than what it is, or has been known to be, arrived at by a process of *qiyās* (logical reasoning), and the feeling one has after having worked through to arrive at the unexpected relation is wonder.

وجملة الحديث أن الذي اريده بالتخييل ههنا ما يثبت فيه الشاعر أمرا هو غير ثابت اصلا ويدعي دعوى لا طريق الى تحصيلها ويقول قولاً يخدع فيه نفسه ويُريها ما لا ترى. فاما الاستعارة فإن سبيلها سبيل الكلام المحذوف في أنك إذا رجعت إلى أصله وجدت قائله وهو يثبت امرا عقليا صحيحا ويدعي دعوى لها سنخٌ في العقل.[52]

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[49] al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha*, 246.

[50] In her study of al-Jurjānī, Larkin describes the *ṣūra* as "a concept that means both form and content, it is the identity of epistemology and aesthetics." These valences are at play in my reading of the ways the *balāghiyyūn* employ and understand the term. Larkin, Margaret. *The Theology of Meaning : ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Theory of Discourse*. American Oriental Series: V. 79. American Oriental Society, (1995): 131.

[51] van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 47.
وإنما ساعده التوفيق، من حيث وطئ له من قبل الطريق فسبق العرف بتشبيه الحبك على صفحات الغدران بحلق الدروع، فتدرج من ذلك إلى أن جعلها سلاسل

al-Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 265. The verse referenced here is:

وماء على الرضراض يجري كأنه افاع عراها الذعر تطلب موئلا
كأن بها من شدة الجري جنة وقد ألبستهن الرياح سلاسلا

[52] Ibid, 253.

In summary, what I mean by *takhyīl* here, is that in which the poet affirms something which has no basis, makes a claim with no way to arrive at it, and makes a statement in which he deceives his own self, showing it what it does not see (*yurīhā mā lā tarā*). As for metaphor, its path is the path of elided speech in that when you return to its root principle you come upon a speaker who is affirming something rational and sound and making an assertion rooted in reason.[53]

To show the soul what it does not see—al-Jurjānī's *takhyīl* is visual, a deceptive one to be sure, built on wishfulness or the poet's fancy, yet, he is still drawn to *takhyīlī* meanings, even as he precludes them from the category of *istiʿāra*. Because *takhyīlī* content might not have any truth-value, they jeopardize other kinds of figurative language, especially as metaphors exist extensively in the Quran.[54] Al-Jurjānī's *Asrār al-Balāgha* was among the few ʿAbbāsid *balāgha* texts that dealt with *takhyīl*, which did not garner the same attention nor gain the status that it did in al-Andalus. While ʿAbbāsid critics focused on the specific mechanisms of *majāz* (figurative language), Andalusī critics turned their sights to the poetic processes of *muḥākā* (comparison) and *takhyīl* as central aspects of what constituted the poetic.

In *takhyīl* scholarship, the term phantasmagoria is often used as a label for a kind of *takhyīl* that al-Jurjānī elaborates in *Asrār al-Balāgha*, which describes a fusion of figurative elements often forming a composite statement in which a combination of more than one topic and analogue magnify the subject in a way that can be described as "fantastic."[55] Often, this results in a naturalizing of the shared term between the topics and analogues, as when the confluence of gazelle, singer, and cupbearer hinge on a shared quality such that the gazelle signals the animal, the singer, and the pourer of wine, because a main component to takhyīl, according to al-Jurjanī, is an element of feigned ignorance or forgetfulness (*tanāsī*). Another more practical reason that scholars have used "phantasmagoria" is to distinguish *takhyīl* in rhetoric from its use in philosophy and logic. This distinction is situated within a larger scholarly preoccupation with a common element by which to bridge *takhyīl* across the different disciplines. However, because Andalusī criticism inherited the term from the philosophical tradition, the connection between *takhyīl* in *falsafa* and *takhyīl* in poetry criticism is not as difficult to discern. Andalusī critics used the term to establish both a concept and poetic practice of *takhyīl*, which as I'll show, hinges on elements shared between *falsafa* and *balāgha*, including the evocation of an image in its parts, different kinds of compositeness (akin to the term *tarkīb* in which the syllogism is constructed), and the superimposition of two images.

Takhyīl in Andalusī falsafa

The tradition of *takhyīl* in al-Andalus has the ʿAbbāsid philosophers Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's and al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā to thank. Prompted by the inclusion of Aristotle's *Poetics* and

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[53] I have modified the van Gelder and Hammond translation on page 37.

[54] Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, 143. Larkin points out that al-Jurjānī excludes *takhyīlī* meanings from the category of *istiʿāra* because for al-Jurjānī, the Qur'an, is replete with comparisons bearing ontological truths, while *takhyīl* on the other hand shows "a discrepancy between the reality and the message."

[55] Wolfhart Heinrichs "*Takhyīl*: Make-Believe and Image Creation in Arabic Literary Theory"; Beatrice Gruendler, "Fantastic Aesthetics"; and Marlé Hammond, "From Phantasia to Paronomasia: Image-evocation and the double entendre in Khalil Hawi's 'The Mariner and the Dervish'" in van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 2008.

Rhetoric as part of the syllogistic arts of the *Organon*, al-Fārābī identified poetry as image-evoking speech (*kalām mukhayyil*) that moves the listener either towards or away from what it describes. Poetic statements did so through a process he called *muḥākā* (a term I'll translate either as imitation or comparison depending on the context), which produced images that (if successful) bypassed the recipient's *taṣdīq* (logical verification). He called the acceptance of these images *takhyīl*. For al-Fārābī, poetry imitates a thing by evoking images through figurative language, which causes the recipient to recoil from, or desire, the thing being evoked without first verifying the proposition the poetic statement offered. In this way, al-Farābī departed from Aristotle, by bringing the idea of image-evocation into the context of poetry.[56] Al-Fārābī's linchpin in understanding poetics and rhetoric as logical disciplines is the notion of poetic *takhyīl* as parallel to the philosophical processes of *taṣawwur* and *taṣdīq*.[57]

Ibn Sīnā in a treatise on poetry, *Al-Fann al-tāsiʿ min al-jumla al-ʿulā fī al-manntiq fī al-shiʿr*, that appears in the ninth part of his magnum opus *Kitāb al-Shifā'* as a commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*, will follow al-Fārābī's analysis in considering the rhetorical or epideictic manner of poetry. In the first chapter, "On Poetry in General, the Types of Poetic Forms and the Kinds of Greek Poetry," Ibn Sīnā lays out a blueprint for his discussion, including a definition of poetry that repeats the literary critic Qudāma ibn Jaʿfar's (d. 932/948 A.D.) poetry as "*kalām, mawzūn, muqaffān, dāll ʿalā maʿnā*". Ibn Sīnā adds the qualifier *mukhayyil* to *kalām* making poetry "imaginative speech, composed of utterances that are measured, prosodic—and, in Arabic, rhymed." Ibn Sīnā himself points this out when he says that the logician should analyze poetry because *it is* imaginative speech: "It is the [proper] concern of the logician to examine poetry with regard to its being imaginative. The imaginative is the speech to which the soul yields, accepting and rejecting matters without pondering reasoning or choice."[58] The Arabic word that the translator renders as "yield" and Deborah Black as "acquiescence" is *idhʿān*—a response that parallels *taṣdīq* (intellectual assent) *takhyīl* (imaginative assent). Ibn Sīna discussed poetry in the paradigmatic language of syllogism, and the poetic syllogism's power results in the paradox that "even though it does not attempt to cause assent to occur…it does appear to cause assent."[59] The assent described here produces feelings of wonder and pleasure that lead one to avoid or seek out an object.

Still, the *falāsifa* considered *takhyīl*, unlike its counterpart, *taṣawwur*, to be the image (*shabaḥ*) of a concept, failing to engender any real *taṣdīq*, only its consequences in the form of feeling or action.[60] Ultimately, even though they were dealing with poetry within the context of

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[56] van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 6. The terms *shiʿr*, *muḥākā* and *takhyīl* appear together first in *Kitāb al-Shiʿr*. According to Matar, al-Farābī paid particular attention to his uses of *kh-y-l* derivatives and he introduced a wide spectrum of them in his writings, specifically to try to characterize the operation as he understood it in relation to poetry. Nabil Matar, "Alfārābī on Imagination: With a Translation of His 'Treatise on Poetry,'" *College Literature* 23, no. 1 (1996): 100–110.

[57] van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 8.

[58] Ismail M. Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle: A Critical Study with an Annotated Translation of the Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 62. Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Shifā*, 24.

[59] Black, *Logic* 210.

[60]al-Fārābī's characterization of *takhyīl* would lead Marlé Hammond to wonder whether it was possible that he "was influenced by the poetic trope of the phantom beloved" (van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 277).

knowledge production, the *falāsifa* concluded that poetry was discourse made up of false premises, and while *takhyīl* had some cognitive functions, it mostly bore the brunt of instructive and emotive ones. Their lack of attention to actual poems aside, both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā *takhyīl* to an internal faculty they called *al-quwwa al-mukhayyila* (the imaginative faculty), which reworks images acquired from sense-perception. As a creative faculty, *al-quwwa al-mukhayyila* has the potential to bring about real action, which established its legitimacy in the eyes of the *falāsifa*.[61] They located a prophet's access to revelation in the *quwwa mukhayyila* that gave the prophet access to metaphysical truths through images, which could then be conveyed to the *ʿāmma* (the masses).[62]

Over a hundred years after Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja (d. 1139 A.D.) arrived on the Andalusī philosophy scene. His work popularized logic and the use of *burhān* (demonstration).[63] In his *Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid* (*The Management of the Solitary*)—a text that reveals his philosophical influences to be undoubtedly al-Fārābī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, the tenth-century esoteric philosophers from Baghdad—he lays out a theory of self-knowledge intended for the "solitary" (a term with echoes of the one who enjoins God's oneness, or *tawḥīd*). Though he doesn't write explicitly about poetry and so doesn't discuss *takhyīl*, Ibn Bājja outlines his philosophy of spiritual forms (*ṣūwar rūḥānīya*) involved in thinking, feeling, and action. These mental forms are either corporeal, universal, or particular; the latter is further subdivided into the idea or concept, the impression (*rasm*), and the image in the common sense (*ṣanam*).[64] Each signifies a form apprehended by the *sensus communus* (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*), the *mutakhayyila* (imagination), and the *dhākira* (memory). These faculties exist *in potenia* (*bi-l quwwa*) until they are moved (*bi-l fiʿil*) by the apprehension of a form. Ibn Bājja describes the relationship between the faculties and the body:

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[61] Nabil Matar, "Alfārābī on Imagination: With a Translation of His 'Treatise on Poetry,'" *College Literature* 23, no. 1 (1996): 103. Matar makes this point about action in his essay on the Imagination in al-Fārābī: "For Alfarabi there was an imagining in and by the *al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*, a transitive imagining; and there was an imagining that was doubly transitive, active on something. Here Alfarabi was going beyond the distinction between imagination as a capacity a) to retain images, and b) to manipulate them, to a function of the imagination that allows it to act upon and to create imaginings by causing them in external things--as is shown in *Kitāb ul-ḥurūf*: "*tukhayyil fil-jawhar ma laysa huwa al-jawhar.*"

[62] Deborah Black asks whether the imitations of the intelligibles in images in the imaginative activities of poets and prophets differ significantly from the philosopher's own activity of contemplating with certainty the intelligibles known in some corresponding image (Black, *Logic*, 201).

[63] With the exception of Ibn Massara (d. 931 A.D.) who engages with al-Kindī and Shelomo Ibn Gabirol (d. 1058 A.D.), *burhān* as a method flourished after the turbulent period in al-Andalus, which ʿAbbas calls *fatrat al-khawf min al-ḍayaʿ* (494). See also Puerta Vílchez, José Miguel, and Consuelo Lopez-Morillas. *Aesthetics in Arabic Thought : From Pre-Islamic Arabia through al-Andalus*. Handbook of Oriental Studies. The Near and Middle East 120. (Brill, 2017), 121, and the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on Ibn Bājja.

[64] Ibn Bājja uses the word *ṣanam* (meaning the resulting image, but which has connotations of the idol [thinking of the icon]. Vilchez writes that Ibn Sīnā adds a religious overtone to the term by speaking of *ʿābid al-ṣanam.* The concept is not Aristotle's, and is a result of Matta's translation. "The Muslim scholar uses it to explain that the pleasure produced by mimesis comes not directly from the idol but from the form in which it was fashioned" (Vilchez, *Aesthetics*, 305).

فإن الصور المتخيلة إنما تصير في القوى بالأحوال التي يلحقها البصر. فلذلك كل من كان على المجرى الطبيعي وأخطر بباله صورة ما روحانية، فهو يخطرها بالحال المرئية، فهو يحدق نحوها. ولكثرة الأحوال الروحانية الموجودة للصورة المحسوسة في النبيل تكثره حركات العين وتحديقاته كأنه ينظر إلى واحد واحد منها.[65]

The imagined forms occur in the faculties in the same states as they are seen. For this reason, anyone possessing a sound nature, and a spiritual form occurs to him, it occurs in a visible state (*ḥāl marʾīya*). Thus one looks towards it (*yaḥduq naḥwaha*). And because of the abundance of spiritual states that exist for sensible forms in a noble person, the eye's movement and glances multiply it, as though the eyes were looking at each form one by one.

Here, the eye's movement, the physical effect on the body, suggest that these forms are pictorial. The eye literally senses them and moves, showing the impact of visualization on the body. The relationship between the perceptual faculty, sense perception, and the body in Ibn Bājja's description is one strand of the direction that Andalusī *balāgha* will take in its discussions of poetic *takhyīl*. For the *balāghiyyūn*, visualization will have consequences beyond the eye's movement, extending to the real possibility of action (*fiʿil*). As I show in what follows, like Ibn Bājja's spiritual forms, *takhyīl* relies on images that appear before the eyes, and which evoke a reaction, even one as small as moving the eye.

Writing at the same time as Ibn Bājja, Abū al-Walīd Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 A.D.) followed al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in declaring that *al-aqāwīl al-shiʿriyya* (poetic statements) are synonymous with *takhyīl* and *muḥākā*.[66] He spends more time with Aristotle's *Poetics* and focuses on the methods poets use to evoke images: 1) *al-nagham al-muttafiqa* (harmony), 2) *al-wazn* (meter) and 3) *al-tashbīh* (comparison or description).[67] Describing one kind of *muḥākā/takhyīl*, Ibn Rushd intriguingly puts forth doubt (*shakk*) as a gauge for effective comparisons.[68] The example he gives is of the Cancer constellation which because the imagination (*wahm*) connects the stars causing the viewer to actually *see* a crab attesting to a real comparison between the two.[69] Though this example proves to be something of a red herring

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[65] Ibn Bājja, *Rasāʾil Ibn Bājja al-Ilāhiyya.* Edited by Mājid Fakhrī. *al-Dirāsāt wa-al-nuṣūṣ al-falsafīyya* 1, (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1968), 88.

[66] Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-shiʿr*. Shurūḥ Ibn Rushd li-kutub Aristū. Uṣūl al-ʿAraboyya. (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1986), 54. "*Al-aqawīl al-shiʿriyya hiya al-aqāwīl al-mukhyyila*." In his explanation of how poetic statements produce *takhyīl*, Ibn Rushd cites the use of terms like *mithl*, *kaʾnna*, and *ikhāl*. These will be part of a discussion in chapter 3. According to Rebecca Gould, Ibn Rushd approximated the Greek sense of *poiesis* through the Arabic term *takhyīl*: "Poiesis, not mimesis, was uppermost in Ibn Rushd's mind when he distinguished between the "poetic statement [*qawl al-shiʿrī*] that urges belief [*al-iʿtiqād*]" and the "poetic statement that urges character [*al-ʿāda*]" (72/78). Whereas the latter "impels us to an action [*ʾaʿmāl*]," the former "only influences us to believe that something exists or does not exist, not to seek it or reject it" (72/78)." Rebecca Gould, "The *Poetics* from Athens to al-Andalus: Ibn Rushd's Grounds for Comparison," *Modern Philology* 112, no. 1 (August 2014): 1–24.

[67] Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-shiʿr*, 54.

[68] There is evidence that Ibn Rushd had read Ibn al-Haytham, most likely his treatise *On the Rainbow and the Halo* based on an objection the former makes to the latter's notion of synthesis, as well as his having composed a treatise on astronomical visual phenomena himself (see Alhazen, and A. I. Sabra. *The Optics of Ibn Al-Haytham: Books I-III : On Direct Vision*. Studies of the Warburg Institute 40 (Warburg Institute, University of London, 1989), 6.

[69] Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-shiʿr*, 91.

because Ibn Rushd is adamant that representations need to bring about certainty. He makes this point throughout the *Talkhīṣ*, but particularly in his discussion of poetic narrative (*al-qiṣaṣ al-shiʿrīya*) where he says the best *takhyīl* "makes the listener see (*yurī*) it as though it were seen (*manẓūr*) and perceptible (*mahsūs*)."[70] This kind of *takhyīl* is found in the poetry of the ancients, as well as in the poetry of al-Mutanabbī, who, Ibn Rushd tell us, had refused to describe what befell his patron Sayf al-Dawla if the poet had not witnessed it himself.[71] Ibn Rushd insists that poets employ known comparisons in service of poetry's truth-value, an insistence that justifies his assertion that the use of familiar comparisons in poetry is a sign of heightened capacity because it gathers "the function of poetical statements—that is, moving the soul—together with excellent understanding."[72] All that goes into constructing a poetic statement is held to this end. Poetry achieves its aim—"to encourage certain voluntary actions and stop others" (*ʾan yaḥuththu ʿalā ʿamal baʿḍ al-ʾafʿāl al-ʾirādiyya wa-ʾan yakuffu ʿan ʿamal baʿḍihā*)—by presenting the reader with an image of what occurred as though seen by the eye.[73]

Making clear that poetic language must be free from equivocal expressions and farfetched metaphors, Ibn Rush insists this includes: impossible and distorted representations (*muḥākā*), representing rational beings as irrational ones, comparing a thing to its contrary, using words with ambiguous meanings, and resorting to rhetorical persuasion rather than poetic representation.[74] Barring its unclarity, a poet's biggest faux-pas is his alignment with those in positions of authority, and Ibn Rushd criticizes panegyric poets specifically for resorting to falsehood in order to praise the actions of their patrons. Poetry, Ibn Rushd believes, should consist of what is possible and what exists because the poet, in order to influence and motivate another to voluntary (good) action, must do so based on what is and not on what isn't.[75] Praise poets perplexed Ibn Rushd, who saw a moral responsibility in representing the world in poetry. Because Ibn Rushd, according to H.A.R Habib, recognized "an internal connection between poetic representation and human emotion, based implicitly on a correspondence between the 'external' world of objects and the 'internal' world of human perception," the dangers of

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فمنها أن تكون المحاكاة لأشياء محسوسة بأشياء محسوسة من شأنها أن توقع الشك لمن ينظر اليها وتوهم أنها هي لاشتراكها في أحوال محسوسة—وذلك مثل تسميتهم لبعض صور الكواكب سرطانا، ولبعضها ممسك الحربة لأنها من جهة الشكل يمكن ان يتوهم انا هي هي.

[70] Ibid, 101.

[71] Ibid, 102.

[72] Ibid, 134. Salim Kemal argues that the insistence on truth is to promote communication, interest, and feeling, which seems to make poetry a truth-telling discourse: "The influence truth has upon the soul, by this reading, is that poetic representations and imitations generate actions, and if the metaphors they contain are untruthful, the actions they produce will be confused or self-thwarting." Salim Kemal, *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroës: The Aristotelian Reception*, Culture and Civilization in the Middle East, (Routledge Curzon, 2003), 282-3.

[73] Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-shiʿr*, 59.

[74] Ibid, 128-131.

[75] Ibid, 77.

falsehood in poetry have far reaching and dire consequences both for the poet and for the recipient.[76]

To summarize briefly, the *falāsifa* concluded that poetry manipulates images in order to generate unusual or remote similarities between objects which are then taken as symbolic of universal concepts, as in the example that all beautiful objects can be evoked by likening them to the image of the moon. They called this process of evoking images *takhyīl*, which conveys both "image-making" and its psychological effect (the assent of the recipient to the image that bypasses true logical verification, or *taṣdīq*). *Takhyīl*'s main work, which will be carried over into rhetorical criticism, is that influences the soul into desiring, or being repelled by, the thing being described. The *falāsifa* cared less about how a poetic image is evoked (that is, the particular mechanics of language) and more about whether poetry was a syllogistic form, and thus whether it produced knowledge.

Section 2: Andalusī *takhyīl* and its *balāgha*

It's difficult to write a history of Andalusī *balāgha* with so many sources lost to us. Still, thankfully, the work has been done. Iḥsān ʿAbbās and Raḍwān al-Dāya both begin with the commentary tradition, an important source of Andalusī poetic taste, and of the early concerns of the *balāgha* tradition. One of the earliest Andalusī references to *kh-y-l* in poetry is by the grammarian Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 1127 A.D.) in his *al-Intiṣār min-man ʿadal ʿan al-Istibṣār* (*Defense Against the One who Failed to Justly Apprehend*), written in response to Abū Bakr Ibn ʿArabī's commentary on the poet Abu al-'Alā' al-Maʿarrī. In his commentary, al-Baṭalyawsī doesn't mention *takhyīl*, and only uses the form "*yukhayyal ʾilayka*." What I take from this is that poetry and *takhyīl* were already intricately tied together by the early twelfth century, a shift that occurred after the eleventh century with the work of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.

Between the mid-twelfth and early thirteenth century, the *balāgha* texts still pursued the ways poetry moved the recipient, though, tellingly, there was also a tendency to catalog. This is when we get the famous *Dhakhīra fī mahāsin ahl al-Jazīra* by Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī (d. 1147 A.D.) and the *Rāyāt al-Mubarrazīn* by Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī. The tendency for collating, gathering, and preserving Andalusī poetic and literary production contended with a period known as *fatrat al-khawf min al-ḍayāʿ* (period of the fear of perdition). Other critics during this time included Ibn ʿAbd al-Ghafūr (d. after 1147 A.D.), Ibn Khiyāra al-Mawā'nī (d. 1169 A.D.), Ibn Diḥya al-Kalbī (d. 1235 A.D.). Al-Kalbī described gifted poets as adept in the craft of *muḥākā* and *takhyīl*. Similarly, Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī perceived the ʿAbbasid poet al-Maʿarri to be among "the best who mastered the ways of *takhyīl*."[77] Finally, Abū Bāqī al-Rundī (d. 1285) is part of this generation of critics, though he was mostly a compiler of critical writings, bringing together in his *al-Wāfī fī naẓm al-qawāfī*, elements from Ibn al-Rashīq's *ʿUmda* and Ibn ʿAbd Rabhih's *ʿIqd*. However, in a different vein of poetic visuality, al-Rundī was one of the first Andalusī poets to compose visual poems (a topic I'll take up in the third chapter of this dissertation).

[76] M.A.R Habib, "The Literary Criticism of Ibn Rushd," accessed August 28, 2023, https://habib.camden.rutgers.edu/publications/essays/ibn-rushd/.

[77] ʿAbbās, *Tarīkh al-naqd al-adabī*, 537.

In the middle of the thirteenth century, *takhyīl* was still being slipped into discussions without much glossing, as though, like the term poetry, it didn't need any clarification. Abū al-Muṭarrif Aḥmad bin Abdallāh bin al-Ḥusayn bin Aḥmad Ibn Amīra al-Makhzūmī, known simply as Ibnʿ Amīra (d. 1259 A.D.), references *takhyīl* in *al-Tanbīhāt ʿalā mā fī al-tibyān min al-tamwīhāt* (*Notes on the Equivocations in al-Tibyān*), a commentary on Ibn al-Zamalkānī's *Al-Tibyān fī ʿilm al-bayān*. In it, Ibnʿ Amīra operates with the assumption that the aim of figurative language is to engender *takhyīl*. In one moment, responding to Ibn al-Zamalkānī's claim that the *kināya* (metonymy) "*ʿaẓīm al-ramād*" ("of great ashes") is more eloquent because it enfolds the judgment of generosity within the expression, Ibn ʿAmīra says, that it has nothing to do with the judgment being included in the *kināya*. Rather, he writes:

> إن القول يكتسب رونقا بأن لا يستعمل على وضعه الأصلي، بل بأن تُعيَّنَ دلالته، وذلك لأن اللفظ علامة على المعنى ومن تمامه وكماله أن يكون له في نفسه حال يكون بها ذا رونق حتى يجمع الى الدلالة حسن التخييل.[78]

Speech gains beauty not in its original use (*waḍʿihī al-aṣlī*), rather, when a new signification is assigned to it, and that is because a word is the signifier of a meaning and part of its perfection and beauty is that it is in itself beautiful such that along with signification there is beautiful *takhyīl*.

In another moment, to explain the use of the phrase "you reside in my chest" (*anta fī ṣadrī*) as *majāz* (figurative), Ibn ʿAmīra writes that the poet made, "the *khayāl* of a thing [another] thing" (*jaʿala khayāl al-shayʾi al-shayʾa*)."[79] Much like al-Jurjānī—who is one of Ibn ʿAmīra's silent interlocutors as al-Zamalkānī engages heavily with al-Jurjānī's *Dalāʾil ʾIʿjāz al-Qurān* (*Evidence of the Inimitability of the Quran*)—Ibn ʿAmīra is interested in the mental working through of signification. This is apparent in his objection to al-Zamalkānī's reasoning for what constitutes a term as *ḥaqīqa* (literal) or *majāz* "if you examine the phrase 'so-and-so is a lion' you would find the *tajāwuz* (figuration) in the meaning not in the utterance." Ibn ʿAmīra responds: "What has been dismissed is that the utterance as such has not the aspect of *ḥaqīqa* or *majāz* [in itself], rather it is correct to attribute it to either of the two based on its signification of a *maʿnā*. Thus, if it were taken for an attribute of the *maʿnā* for which it was set down then it is *ḥaqīqa*, if not, then *majāz*."[80] While Ibn ʿAmīra doesn't spend much time with *takhyīl*, I've cited him to show its prevalence in discussions around poetry and figurative language and investments in language's capacity to go beyond literal meaning to move the recipient. The influence of *falsafa* on *baglāha* is also clear in Ibnʿ Amīra's definition of *ʿilm al-bayān*, that it "enriches the capacity of understanding what human beings want or what is wanted from them by causing the

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[78] Ibnʿ Amīra, *al-Tanbīhāt ʿalā mā fī al-Tibyān min al-tamwīhāt*. Al-Ṭabʿa 1. Ed. Mohammad Ibn Sharīfa, (The Prince Ghazi Trust for Quranic Thought, Morocco: 1991), 55.

[79] Ibid, 61.

[80] Ibid.
ومن يذهب عنه أن اللفظ بما هو لفظ لا نسبة له الى حقيقة او مجاز، وإنما تصحّ نسبته إليهما عند الدلالة على المعنى، فإذا أُخذ بالنسبة إلى المعنى الذي هو راتب الدلالة عليه فهو الحقيقة، وإن لم يكون فهو المجاز.

occurrence of *taṣdīq* in it and the compliance of their soul to it."[81] It would come down to Ḥazīm al-Qarṭājannī to peel off this nonchalance and draw out the full weight of the *takhyīl's* implications.

Excursus

For Ibn al-Haytham vision is an interpretive act. He distinguishes between two kinds of vision—"glancing" perception *(al-idrāk bī mujarrad al-taʾammul)* and "contemplative" perception *(al-idrāk bī al-taʾammul maʿ taqaddum al-maʿrifa*). In the first kind of vision, manifest properties appear when sight "glances" at an object, while more subtle properties are perceived through "contemplation." In his paradigm of the visual process, glancing vision does not "reveal what the object truly is (*ḥaqīqat al-mubṣar/veritas rei visae*), nor can it serve as a means of verifying the object."[82] Rather it is with contemplative perception and one's previous knowledge of the perceived object that allows for the object's recognition and verification. Immediate perceptual experience is, in most cases, supplemented by memory. This constitutes the majority of what is seen. In other words, not everything the sense of sight apprehends (*idrāk*) is through pure sensation.

The perception of such properties as similarity, distance, transparency, and color intensity requires an additional step that exceeds sense-perception.[83] Throughout the *Kitāb al-Manāẓir*, the visual process approximates, either with certainty or conjecture, between the perceived form and the "true" or "real" form of the object.[84] Seeing, or coming to know or recognize (*maʿrifa*) an object, involves a process of both memory and comparison using the faculty of judgment. Recognition is based on a process of comparison to a likeness that already exists in the imagination: "It is for this reason that recognition cannot take place without remembering, because if the first form were not present to the memory, sight would not perceive the similarity of the two forms, nor would it recognize the object."[85] This remembering, or presencing of a first image, is also necessary for visually perceiving properties like intensity, transparency, and distance according to Ibn al-Haytham.[86]

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[81] Ibid.

انها صناعة تفيد قوة الإفهام على ما يريده الإنسان أو يراد منه بتمكن من إيقاع التصديق به وإذعان النفس له.

As Suaad al-Mana notes, Ibn ʿAmīrā in the *Tanbihāt* gives a number of examples of verses that exerted a positive influence over caliphs and refers to the role of *takhyīl* in encouraging virtuous deeds by way of *madīḥ* (van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 115).

[82] Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen) and A. I. Sabra, *The Optics of Ibn Al-Haytham : Books I-III: On Direct Vision*, Studies of the Warburg Institute 40 (Warburg Institute, University of London, 1989), 103.

[83] Ibn al-Haytham and Sabra, *The Optics of Ibn Al-Haytham*, 216.

[84] Ibid, 104.

[85] Ibid, 129.

[86] The art historian Jamal Elias writes about Ibn al-Haytham's theory of vision in his book *Aisha's Cushion* as a way to understand Islamic perceptual culture and the nature of appearances and vision. Elias writes that, "Ibn al-Haytham believes that under perfect optical conditions and with a sound mind, "the object as perceived in the mind is identical to the object viewed. The implications such a theory holds for the nature of the visual image, resemblance,

In the second section, Ibn al-Haytham explains that sight perceives the particular properties from which it then perceives them in composition and harmony. Among these properties are color, distance, position, solidity, shape, size, continuity, number, motion, rest, roughness, smoothness, transparency, opacity, shadow, darkness, similarity and dissimilarity, all of which produce beauty in and of themselves (though not in all situations) and some in conjunction with one another. This kind of piecemeal deliberation on particular elements that are beautiful in themselves, and which contribute to beauty when joined together with other elements will be how Ḥāzim al-Qarṭajānnī explains the poet brings an image to life by evoking its parts. Beauty, Ibn al-Haytham believes, is an effect in the soul: "It is these particular properties that separately produce beauty—and by 'producing beauty' I mean that they produce in the soul an effect such that the form appears beautiful…For light produces beauty, and thus the sun, the moon, and the stars look beautiful, without there being in them a cause on account of which their form looks beautiful and appealing other than their radiant light. Therefore, light by itself produces beauty."[87]

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I am not alone in seeing in Ḥazīm al-Qarṭājannī's (d. 1283 A.D.) work the pinnacle of Andalusī thinking about poetry and *takhyīl*. Al-Qarṭājannī was a poet, grammarian and rhetorician from Cartagena, but he left al-Andalus after the fall of the Almohad empire and found himself in Morocco under Ḥafsid rule where he wrote his magnum opus, the *Minhāj al-bulaghāʾ wa-sirāj al-udabāʾ* (*The Path of the Eloquent and the Lamp of the Lettered*). The *Minhāj* is made up of four parts: *alfāẓ*, *maʿānī*, *mabānī,* and *asalīb*, and its language is that of *falsafa*—its fixtures are mental images (*al-maʿānī*), sense perception (*al-ḥiss*) and apprehension (*idrāk*), the faculties (*al-quwwa*), and of course speaking of poetry in terms of poetic statements (*aqawīl shiʿrīya*) and, of course, *takhyīl*.[88] Al-Qarṭājannī is interested in how the *maʿānī* are apprehended and how in arranging their specific forms they move the soul to incline towards (*al-mayl ilayhā*) or flee from *(al-nufūr ʿanhā*) what is being evoked. In other words, the *Minhāj* is equally interested in the poet's impulses and compositional techniques, as it is in poetry's reception. The discussion in the first sections of the *Minhāj*—a lot of which is missing, but can be gleaned from

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and recognition are immense: if the image in the mind is perfect, then reflections as well as representations can be identical to, or at the very least indistinguishable from, their prototypes…If an image is identical to the object it represents, then it has to share in the prototype's qualities, which lends an ontological authenticity and value to the image that would not hold were it simply a representation" in Jamal J. Elias, *Aisha's Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 96.

Additionally, Nadir El-Bizri writes that for Ibn al-Haytham, the eidetic essence of a thing, which is represented by its *ṣūra al-kulliyya*, is accessible only by way of the imagination. The co-presence of these images—of the *ṣūra al-kulliyya* and the *ṣūra* observed by vision—exist in a relationship of contingency. The former must always be verified by the latter even as the observed image is formed in the mind on the basis of the *ṣūra kullīya.* This reaffirms what I mentioned earlier concerning the co-presence of two 'images.' Nader El-Bizri, "A Philosophical Perspective on Alhazen's *OPTICS*," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (September 2005): 193.

[87] Ibn al-Haytham and Sabra, *The Optics of Ibn Al-Haytham*, 200.

[88] The first section, *alfāẓ*, is no longer extant.

what is extant and from what he references throughout—establishes a foundation for the *maʿānī* through the concept of the *ṣūra*:

إن المعاني هي الصور الحاصلة في الأذهان عن الأشياء الموجودة في الأعيان. فكل شيء له وجود خارج الذهن فإنه إذا أدرك حصلت له صورة في الذهن تطابق لما أدرك منه، فإذا عبر عن تلك الصورة الذهنية الحاصلة عن الإدراك أقام اللفظ المعبر به هيئة تلك الصورة الذهنية في أفهام السامعين وأذهانهم. فصار للمعنى وجود آخر من جهة دلالته الألفاظ. فإذا احتيج الى وضع رسوم من الخط تدل على الألفاظ من لم يتهيأ له سمعها من المتلفظ بها صارت رسوم الخط تقيم في الأفهام هيأت الألفاظ فتقوم بها في الأذهان صور المعاني فيكون لها أيضا وجود من جهة دلالة الخط على الألفاظ الدالة عليها.[89]

The *maʿānī* are images that occur in the mind of existing things as they are in specific instances. For everything has an existence beyond the mind and if it is perceived, it will have an image in the mind corresponding to what is perceived of it. If one expresses that mental image that results from perception, then the utterance expressing it establishes the shape of that mental image in the understandings and minds of the listeners. So the *maʿnā* has another existence in terms of the words that signify it. If someone who was unable to hear them spoken, was in need of writing them out (lit. draw using calligraphy) then the physical/visual form takes the place of the *maʿānī* in the mind, and thus will have another existence in the written script that indicates it.

Al-Qarṭājannī describes here a set of forms (*ṣuwar*) that a thing may take, beginning from its existence in the world to its existence in other representable forms. He doesn't establish a hierarchy between the forms, merely offering each as a different kind of existence (*wujūd*). Poetry's primary forms are mental images (*maʿānī*), understood as both the trace of apprehended sense-perceptions as well as the utterance (*lafẓ*). And while al-Qarṭājannī mentions the visual script (*khaṭṭ*), he ultimately designates this form beyond the purview of *ʿilm al-balāgha*, though as I show below, the visual arts are never far as a touchstone for al-Qarṭājannī, and script in the form of visual poetry was establishing itself as an art form in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (more on this in the next chapter). As we'll see, the cornerstone of al-Qarṭājannī's poetics is the relationship between the *maʿānī* and their apprehension, and the way the recipient reconstructs them visually. Around this pole al-Qarṭājannī's *takhyīl* will orbit, and to it he will anchor the success of any poetic statement.

By the time al-Qarṭājannī gives us his definition of *takhyīl*, he has already gone through Ibn Sīnā, whose defining quality for poetic statements, as we saw above, is that it is speech capable of evoking images (*kalām mukhayyil*). For al-Qarṭājannī, *takhyīl* is:

ان تتمثّل للسامع من لفظ الشاعر المخيّل أو معانيه او أسلوبه ونظامه، وتقوم في خياله صورة او صور ينفعل لتخيّلها وتصوّرها، أو تصوّر شيء آخر بها انفعالا من غير روية الى جهة من الانبساط أو الانقباض.[90]

To represent something for the hearer through the poet's image-evoking expression, ideas, or style and composition, so that one or more images appear in the hearer's imagination that, when

[89] Ḥāzim ibn Muḥammad al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ Wa-Sirāj al-Udabāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb Ibn al-Khawja, al-Ṭabʿa 3 (Tūnis: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya lil-Kitāb, 2008), 17.

[90] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 79.

they are imagined or figured (*taṣawuurihā*), or when another thing is figured through them, produce feelings of attraction or repulsion independent of any reflection.

Al-Qarṭājannī, however, goes beyond *al-muʿallim al-thānī* (the second teacher), and designates *takhyīl* as the defining quality of poetic statements, when he adds to the received definition of poetry as "*kalām mukhayyīl mawzūn mukhtaṣṣ fī lisān al-ʿarab bī-zīyādat al-taqfīya ʾilā dhālik*" ("speech that is image-evoking and metered, and in the language of the Arabs distinguished by rhyme") "*wa ʾiltiʾāmihī min muqaddimāt mukhayyīla ṣādiqa kānat aw kādhība, la yashtariṭ fīhā bimā hīya shʿir ʾilā al-takhyīl*" (and being composed of image-evoking propositions—whether true or exaggerated—with the only condition being [that these propositions] lead to *takhyīl*).[91]

I want to linger with the use of the term *kadhib*—which I've translated above as "exaggerated"—as an opposition to *ṣidq*. Poetry as either truthfulness or falsehood is a long and varied debate and has been dealt with by other scholars.[92] Briefly, poetry as *ṣidq* or *kadhib* was one of the earliest issues the critics tackled. In the ʿAbbāsid East, under the sway of *al-ʾiʿtizāl* (rational theology), poetry's goal became the advancement of some kind of knowledge, resulting in further emphasis in *naqd* on finding the *maʿānī* and pointing out *sariqā* (instances of "plagiarism"). Reacting to this, ʿAbbāsid critics turned their attention to a combination of *lafẓ* and the poetic image, and tendered this against poetry's truth-value.[93] Critics like Ibn Ṭabāṭabā (d. 815 A.D.) who were influenced by *kalām* saw poetry as governed by truth, and on the other side, and critics like Qudāma ibn Jaʿfar (d. 948 A.D.) who were influenced by *falsafa* saw poetry as primarily consisting of false premises. Qudāma redefined *kadhib* in the context of criticism, making it synonymous with exaggeration (*ghulū*). This is the understanding of *kadhib* that al-Qarṭājannī uses in the *Minhāj*, though unlike in the Mashriq, in al-Andalus those who believed poetry was mainly falsehood were not only the *falāsifa*, but also the *mutakallimūn*, to whom al-Qarṭājannī primarily responds.[94]

Returning to al-Qarṭājannī's definition of *takhyīl*, we see that it occurs in four ways—in the poetic idea (*al-maʿnā*), in the arrangement of ideas (*al-ʾuslūb*), in the words (*alfāẓ*) and in the versification and prosody (*naẓm and wazn*). These correspond to the four parts of the *Minhāj*. Each of these four ways engenders an image in the mind to which the recipient reacts without

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[91] Ibid.
الشعر كلام مخيل موزون، مختص في لسان العرب بزيادة التقفية إلى ذلك. والتئامه من مقدمات مخيلة، صادقة كانت أو كاذبة، لا يشترط فيها بما هي شعر غير التخييل.

[92] See Lara Harb, *Arabic Poetics: Aesthetic Experience in Classical Arabic Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, UK ; Cambridge University Press, 2020); José Miguel Puerta Vílchez and Consuelo Lopez-Morillas, *Aesthetics in Arabic Thought : From Pre-Islamic Arabia through al-Andalus*, Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section One, The Near and Middle East: Volume 120 (Brill, 2017); Margaret Larkin, *The Theology of Meaning : 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Theory of Discourse*, American Oriental Series 79 (American Oriental Society, 1995); and Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Tārīkh al-Naqd*, 1993.

[93] ʿAbbas, *Tārīkh al-Naqd*, 17. According to ʿAbbās, the reason critics held a torch for *ṣidq* was because the *muʿtazila* emphasized reason to which poetic taste answered.

[94] In a humorous counter, al-Qarṭājannī draws a comparison between the story of a man who thought he could cure a sick friend by learning medicine from a book in one night with the way some *mutakallimūn* thought they had understood the secrets of *balāgha* by reading a few books. In al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 76-77.

active reflection either inclining towards, or contracting from, what is being evoked. It might be pertinent here to reflect a little on this idea of seeking or avoiding what the image produces. This language echoes Aristotle's description of mental images in the *De Anima:* "Images belong to the rational soul in the manner of perceptions, and whenever it affirms or denies that something is good or bad, it pursues or avoids (it). Consequently, the soul never thinks without an image."[95] It may thus be tempting to search the *De Anima* for clues on *takhyīl's* origins, but as Anne Sheppard notes, scholars looking to Greek poetics, particularly to the concept of *phantasia* (Aristotle's name for the faculty of the imagination), do not find answers there.[96] Instead, we first get the combination of *takhyīl*, poetry, and *muḥākā* (the specific poetic mechanism) in al-Fārābī's work. Al-Qarṭājannī is following the strand of thinking from al-Fārābī through to Ibn Rushd which takes the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mukhayyila*) as central to poetic composition.

What implicates *takhyīl* in the possibility of poetic—and beyond that even, artistic—production is its connection to sensible experience, which it translates back and forth into conceptual and material forms:

> وطرق وقوع التخييل في النفس: إما أن تكون بأن يتصور في الذهن شيء من طريق الفكر وخطرات البال، أو بأن تشاهد شيئا فتذكر به شيئا، أو بأن يحاكى لها الشيء بتصوير نحتي أو خطي أو ما يجري مجرى ذلك، أو بأن يحاكى لها صوته أو فعله أو هيأته بما يشبه ذلك من صوت او فعل او هيأة، او بأن يحاكى لها معنى بقول يخيله لها وهذا هو الذى نتكلم فيه نحن في هذا المنهج أو بأن يوضع لها علامة من الخط تدل على القول المخيل، أو بأن تفهم ذلك بالإشارة.[97]

The ways *takhyīl* takes place in the soul are either by imagining something in the mind through thought and fancy, or by witnessing something and recalling in it something else, or by imitating something of it through engraving or calligraphy or in similar other ways, or by imitating its voice or action or shape with an analogous sound, action, or shape similar to that, or by simulating a meaning for it through discourse that causes the soul to imagine/image it, and this is what we are discussing in this work, or by writing it down, or by understanding it through gesture.

Al-Qarṭājannī here lists the various ways that *takhyīl* can occur. There is an almost associative quality in his description, beginning with an image in the mind ("by seeing

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[95] Aristotle, *De Anima,* III, 7, 431a, 14-17.

[96] Anne Sheppard, "Preface" in van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 2008. Sheppard traces a connection between Longinus's uses of *phantasia* to mean seeing images in the "mind's eye" through enthusiasm and emotion, and visualization and vividness (*energeia*) in Aristotle's work. Ultimately, Sheppard concludes that *phantasia* in the *De Anima* is more akin to 'imagination' in general and not the phenomenon of visualization that *takhyīl* connotes. *Phantasia* is absent in the *Poetics*, and as noted above in the summary of *falsafa's* incorporation of the term, it was al-Fārābī who made the connection between *takhyīl* and poetry. The term *tawahhum* was used by Ḥunyan Ibn Isḥāq to translate *phantasia*, while others including Matta used *takhyīl*. In the end, *takhyīl* won out. Jābir 'Aṣfūr, *al-Ṣūra al-fanniyya fī al-turāth al-naqdī wa-al-balāghī* (al-Qāhira: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1974), 23. Quintilian also defines images from phantasia as being "presented to the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us" leading Katrina Kohl to define *phantasia* as a kind of visualization (van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 135).

[97] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghā'*, 79.

something and recalling in it something else") and progressing further into the realm of representation. Thus, *takhyīl* runs the gamut from being evoked by the stuff of thought (*fikr*, *khaṭarāt al-bāl*), being seen by the eye (through *khaṭṭ* or *naḥt*), or represented as a *ṣūra* through imitating (*muḥākā*) sound, form, idea (*maʿnā*), or gesture. In other words, the sensible and conceptual are inextricable in *takhyīl* and this duality will become important for al-Qarṭājannī as he lays out a poetics of image-evocation.

While *takhyīl* engages all senses, sight seems to be at the forefront of reactions to poetic statements precisely because of a visual component to *muḥākā*, which al-Qarṭājannī tells us originates from experiences of imitation in childhood:

لما كانت النفوس قد جبلت على التنبه لأنحاء المحاكاة واستعمالها والالتذاذ بها منذ الصبا، وكانت هذه الجبلة في الإنسان أقوى منها في سائر الحيوان فإن بعض الحيوان لا محاكاة فيه أصلا، وبعضها فيه محاكاة يسيرة: إما بالنغم كالببغاء وأما الشمائل كالقرد، اشتد ولوع النفس بالتخيل، وصارت شديدة الانفعال له حتى أنها ربما تركت التصديق للتخيل. فأطاعت تخيلها وألغت تصديقها. وجملة الأمر أنها تنفعل للمحاكاة انفعالا من غير روية، سواء كان الأمر الذي وقعت المحاكاة فيه على ما خيلته لها المحاكاة حقيقة، أو كان ذلك لا حقيقة له فيبسطها التخييل للأمر أو يقبضها عنه. فلا تقصّر في طلبه أو الهرب منه عن درجة المبصر لذلك. فيكون إيثار الشيء أو تركه طاعة للتخيل غير مقصّر عن ايثارة أو تركه انقياد للرؤية.[98]

Since souls were molded to be aware of all aspects of *muḥākā*, to use it, and to enjoy it since childhood, and since this instinct in man is stronger than in all animals, some animals do not have [the capacity for] *muḥākā* at all, and some have a slight capacity—either with melody, like the parrot, or gestures, like the monkey—the soul's penchant for imagination is strong. It reacts so intensely that it might leave *truth-telling* for *image-evocation*. It obeys what it imagines and negates [certainty through] *tasdīq*. In summary, it reacts to the *muḥākā* without any reflection, whether what has been represented was indeed evoked accurately, or whether there was no accuracy to it, thus image-evocation (*takhyīl*) makes the soul reach towards or pull back from the matter in no less significant a way than does sight. Thus, drawing to or away from [a thing] in obedience to *takhyīl* does not fall short from one's drawing to or away from it in compliance with vision.

This paragraph contains several important points about *takhyīl*: the first, which is presented at the end of the excerpt, is *takhyīl's* effect on the soul as compared to physical vision. Al-Qarṭājannī's approximation of poetic visualization to the way physical vision impacts the body reveals how visuality is operative in the *Minhāj* as a way to explain poetry's emotional force. The second point is the soul's willingness to accept *muḥākā*—the poetic mechanism that structures *takhyīl*—because of its innateness to human disposition that is continually developed from childhood as we learn from the world how to imitate.

One way we can see this visuality worked out compositionally is in al-Qarṭājannī's emphasis on the importance of assembling and evoking the image by its parts in a way that is perceivable to the recipient. He returns to this point several times in the *Minhāj*, and in its earliest reference al-Qarṭājannī compares this to the way *rasm* (painting) works—beginning with the most obvious and incrementally building upon the preceding part. This process prioritizes clarity, centers the recipient, and involves them in the image-evocation that reconstructs the

[98] Ibid, 102.

object in the mind through the evocation of its parts as they appear to the eye. Al-Qarṭājannī clarifies this when he writes, "In representing the parts of a thing one must arrange them in words according to how they are found in that thing. This is because *muḥākā* through sounds is to hearing what *muḥākā* through colors is to vision, and people's souls have become accustomed to having images of perceptible objects and the like depicted for them in the way they are [actually] arranged."[99] An accustomed way of seeing motivates al-Qarṭājannī's rule for *takhyīl*. In this way, he brings poetry into the orbit of perception and explains that because the soul has been accustomed to perceiving things in a specific way, the description must accord with the actual order. The reason for this, again, is that human beings are accustomed from childhood to imitate and represent.[100] The ability to manipulate forms in a way that communicates to the recipient a clear image in the mind, is as much the result of a habitus of seeing as it is about the role that poetry plays in society.[101]

Throughout the *Minhāj*, al-Qarṭājannī approximates the role of the poet in this process with that of the *muṣawwir* who depicts (*yuṣawwir*) the outline of a thing, and then turns to detail after detail such that when evoking the image of a person, a poet would start with depicting the head and go from there.[102] But of course, the poet has an advantage over the *muṣawwir*—the poet can depict even those images that aren't real or can't be apprehended through the senses, as long as they can be comprehended by the mind. Additionally, the poet who wants to prioritize a certain meaning, can begin with what's lesser known, as long as it's in service of clear and eloquent presentation. In this stipulation, al-Qarṭājannī hints at the poet's responsibility to ease the recipient's comprehension, if not conceptually, then at least sensibly. This means representing

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[99] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 92.

ويجب في المحاكاة أجزاء الشيء أن ترتب في الكلام على حساب ما وجدت عليه في الشيء لأن المحاكاة بالمسموعات تجري من السمع مجرى المحاكاة بالمتلونات من البصر. وقد اعتادت النفوس ان تصور لها تماثيل الاشباح المحسوسة ونحوها على ما عليه ترتيبها.

[100] Ibn Sīnā in *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* attributes two causes to *shiʿriyya*. The first is the pleasure of imitating and its origin in childhood and the second is man's natural love of harmonious combinations and melodies. *Takhyīl* distinguishes the poetic arts from the other logically demonstrable ones in that it requires a subjective response provoked by an intrinsic pleasure with regards to the manipulation and re-creation of forms. For Ibn Sīnā, this response is evoked by imitation (imaginative representation) and is implicated in both cognitive and quasi cognitive processes. He writes, "for this reason, learning is pleasant not to philosophers alone but to common people due to the imitation that is in it, and because learning consists of a certain representation of a thing in the "seat" of the soul" (Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary,* 78, Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* 37).

[101] This reflects the two strands of *takhyīl* identified by Ulfat Rūbī as formation (*al-tashkīl*) which relates to the structure of the poetic statement and its effect (*al-taʾthīr*) which relates to its interpretation; or what ʿAṣfūr distinguishes as the sensible and the abstract. Hammond describes Ulfat Rūbī as solving the gap between the emotional force and the intellectualized form in al-Jurjānī's conception of *takhyīl* (van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 280). See also ʿAṣfūr, *al-Ṣūra al-fanniyya*, 45.

[102] The outline/detail of the image in poetry finds its analogy in Ibn al-Haytham's theory of vision in the two visual processes of *al-idrāk bī mujarrad al-taʾammul* and *al-idrāk bī al-taʾammul maʿ taqaddum al-maʿrifa*.

what is both sensible and abstract in ways that can be perceived by the senses.[103] He writes later that:

> وأيضا فإن الأقاويل الشعرية يحسن موقعها من النفوس من حيث تختار مواد اللفظ وتنتقى أفضلها وتركب التركيب المتلائم المتشاكل وتستقصى بأجزاء العبارات التي هي الألفاظ الدالة على أجزاء المعاني المحتاج إليه حتى تكون حسنة إعراب الجملة والتفاصيل عن جملة المعنى وتفاصيله، يكون التخييل كما قدمت، يجب فيه تخييل أجزاء الشيء عند تخييله حتى تتشكل جملته بتشكل أجزاء، فتقوم صورته بذلك في الخيال الذهني على حد ما هي عليه خارج الذهن، أو أكمل منها إن كانت محتاجة الى التكميل.[104]

In addition, poetic statements are well received by souls when [the soul] chooses from among the material of *lafẓ* the best of it and composes the appropriate uniform composition and examines the parts of expressions which are the utterances that signify the parts of *maʿānī* needed until the combinations and distinctions beautifully (*ḥasana*) express the combination and distinction of the *maʿnā*. And so it will be necessary, as I've mentioned, so that the whole may be evoked as the parts are evoked, in this way the image (*ṣūra*) arises in the mental imagination (*al-khayāl al-dhihnī*) just as it exists outside the mind or more perfect than it (if it needs to be perfected).

The bi-lateral relationship between physical vision and poetic composition emerges in the last line as the object being evoked is formed in the mind's eye as it appears beyond the mind. A poet does this through the combination of word, syntax, grammar with ideas and phrases that best evoke the poet's meanings (*maʿānī* here understood as concepts). Al-Qarṭājannī is thinking of the conceptual operation governed by syntax and grammar that activate in poetic discourse sense-experience. This is why poetic statements create an image of the object in the mind. In these terms, poetry relies primarily on sense-perception to ease the recipient towards conceptual apprehension, even as the concept the soul apprehends need not be verified logically. In this way, al-Qarṭājannī routes the reader's sense-perceptual experience into the poem.

Fortunately, al-Qarṭājannī offers a personal aesthetic preference of what this evocation of the image looks like at the level of the poem. He cites two verses (in a rare move as the *Minhāj* is famously low on *shawāhid* compared to other works of its genre) of the kind of *takhyīl* that he finds most effective, when he writes:

> ثم يقال لمن اعترض بأن محاكاة الشيء يجب أن تكون التحرك لها أقل من التحرك لمشاهدة أن تمثلنا في المحاكاتين بالدمية والمرآة على جهة ما التسامح. وإنما ينبغي أن يمثل حسن المحاكاة في القول بأحسن ما يمكن أن يوجد من ضروب تصاوير الأشياء وتماثيلها. فأقول، إن من أحسن ما يرى من ذلك تصور أشعة الكواكب والشمع والمصابيح المسرجة في صفحات المياه الصافية الساكنة التموج من الخلجان والأدوية والمذانب والأنهار. وكذلك نكثل أفانين شجر الدوح بما ضم من ثمر وزهر في صفحات الماء الصفو إذا كان الدوح مطلا عليه. فإن اقتران طرتي الغدير الدوحية بما يبدو من مثالها في صفاء الماء من أعجب الأشياء وأبهجها منظرا. ونطير ذلك من المحاكاة في حسن

[103] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 98.

> ومن ذلك الجهة الإدراك. وينبغي أن تكون المحاكاة في الأمور المحسوسة حيث تساعد المكنة من الوجوه المختارة بالأمور المحسوسة. وبها يحسن بأن تحاكى الأمور غير المحسوسة حيث يتأتى ذلك ويكون بين المعنين انتساب. ومحاكاة المحسوس بغير المحسوس قبيحة.

[104] Ibid, 105.

الإقتران أن يقرن بالشيء الحقيقي في الكلام ما يجعل مثالا له مما هو شبيه به على جهة من المجاز تمثيلية أو استعارية كقول حبيب:

دِمنٌ طالما النَقتْ أدمُعُ الـ ـــمُزنِ عليها وأدمُعُ العُشّاقِ

وقول ابن التنوخي:

وأنّكَ في دُونَ الوِشاحِ وشاحُ لما ساءَني أنْ وشَّحتني سُيوفُهُمْ

فحسن اقتران أدمع العشاق، وهي حقيقة، بأدمع المزن، وهي غير حقيقية، واقتران الوشاح الذي هو حقيقة بالوشاح المراد به التزام المعتنق وهو غير حقيقي، يجري في حسن موقعه من السمع والنفس مجرى موقع حسن اقتران الدوح الذي له حقيقة يمثاله في الغدير ولا حقيقة له من العين. فإن المسموعات تجري من السمع مجرى المتلونات من العين.[105]

Furthermore, to him who objects that the imitation of a thing necessarily produces less movement than direct observation, one should reply that in our analogy, when we used the statue and the mirror for the two kinds of imitation, we took some liberty. For in a beautiful imitation in speech one ought to use the most beautiful model that can be found, among the various kinds of depictions and images (*tamāthīl*) of things. In my view one of the most beautiful things that may be seen in this respect is the depiction (*taṣawwur*) of the rays of stars, burning candles or lamps on the surfaces of clear, still waters, such as bays, wadis, brooks, and rivers. A similar thing is the representation of the branches of large spreading trees, with the fruit and blossoms they hold on the surface of clear water if the tree towers over it. The conjunction of the two lines of foliage of the brook lined with trees, with the image (*mithāl*) appearing in the clear water, is one of the most wonderful things and the most delightful scenes. Its counterpart in representation in speech is the beautiful conjunction found when a real thing is joined with something that is an image of it and which resembles it, by way of figurative speech (*majāz*), either analogously or metaphorically (*tamthīlya aw istaʿāriyya*); as in the verse by Abū Tammām:

Vestiges [of a deserted campsite], where the clouds' tears
Have so often met with lovers' tears.

Or the verse by Ibn al-Tanūkhī:

It did not vex me that their swords were all around me like a sash,
While you, more closely than that sash, were like a sash to me.

The beautiful conjunction of the lovers' tears, which are real ones, with the tears of the clouds, which are not real, and the conjunction of the 'sash' or encirclement, which is real, with the non-real 'sash' by which the clinging of someone who embraces is

[105] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 112.

intended: all this has the same beautiful impact on the ear and the soul as the conjunction of real tree-tops with their non-real image (*mithāl*)[106] in the brook has on the eye.[107]

Al-Qarṭājannī gives this opinion after pointing out a potential objection to the main claim he's making in the *Minhāj*—that poetry has the ability to move the soul in the same way (and oftentimes in a greater capacity) as seeing something. He is thinking here of the different forms of existence I mentioned above—not only of those forms we see in our day to day life that move us (the physical being of our loved ones, the beauty of nature), but also of other kinds of representation (in mirrors, sculptures). Although al-Qarṭājannī may seem to have settled on the necessity of both kinds of forms—a 'real' image and a represented one—the 'real' image is itself a representation. What he really wants is for two images to coincide: one to evoke the real object and the other to evoke a representation of it. The confluence of two images, which differ in degree but not in kind, one closer to its *ḥaqīqa* (reality) and the other understood figuratively, is in fact the coexistence of two facets of the object—one which is a reflection or image of the other. And in the two examples he cites, we also get two different ways a poet can accomplish this. In Abū Tammām's verse, the "real" image of a lover's tears are mirrored in the rain as tears. In al-Tanūkhī's verse, these images are further complicated by a linguistic image of *washaḥ*—both its meanings are figurative, and there is also the visual *jināS*. These two examples fall under a broader aesthetic available to us, according to al-Qarṭājannī, in the moonlight or branches reflecting off the water's surface, which seems to play out a kind of real world *takhyīl* that can then be imitated in language.[108] As if the world itself engages in representation.

A similar reflective process also occurs in vision, which culminates in recognition occurring when an observed phenomenon is coupled with a remembered one. In Ibn al-Haytham's theory of vision, the image takes on an "imaginary reality" (*ḥaqīqa khayālīya*), or visual spirit, which is activated out of habit to form immediate judgments and perceptions. In the process of seeing, the imaginative faculty supplements the perception of visual objects with its form as a *ḥaqīqa khayālīya* resulting in a visualized totality. In both poetry and physical vision, what is being evoked or seen produces an image in the mind of the recipient and the image that is

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[106] al-Qarṭājannī uses the word *mithāl* here (which James Montgomery has translated as image) to characterize the mutual reflection of the real object and its representation (in poetry as well as its reflection in the water). Elsewhere, al-Qarṭājannī cites a translation of Plato by Hunayn Ibn Isḥāq, which uses the term *mithāl* (in order to translate the word "ideal") and which conveys the kind of idealism the term carries even in this Arabic iteration:

Plato says in his *Politics* that we do not blame an image-maker/painter if he paints the image of a human and does so that all his limbs are done to the utmost degree of beauty, we don't say to him that no human can have this image, that is because an example/ideal (*mithāl*) needs to be complete. And as for the rest of what it acts for as an example/ideal, its beauty is to the degree of its sharing in that example/ideal (al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghā'*, 105).

[107] I have relied on an existing translation of this passage by James Montgomery in van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl,* 111.

[108] van Gelder's study of al-Qarṭājannī's poetry concludes that his poetic sensibility in the *Minhāj* is backed in his poetry—that is, the use of imagery, both literal and figurative. Van Gelder notes its more than average use, though he argues that *takhyīl* is a little too obvious, too-showy of its logic and the way a poet's imagination works, whereas most people see poetry's ambiguity and vagueness as desirable *takhyīl* clarifies too much and shows poetry's hand. G. J. H. van Gelder, "The Lamp and its Mirror Image: Ḥāzim al-Qartājannī's Poetry in the Light of his Path of the Eloquent and Lamp of the Lettered," in van Gelder and Hammon, *Takhyīl*, 273.

the product of vision is then supplemented by what has a visual spirit (i.e. exists as an image in the mind prior to the rapid syllogistic processing of the mind in the visual process, or as the known *maʿnā* in poetry). The coexistence of an image in the mind with that of the perceived image blurs the ontological divide between the two and highlights the role of the imagination in both poetic and physical vision. Each relies on the visual elements in what is being evoked (for the poetic) and what is being seen (for physical sight). Then, from these visual elements, an image is formed, reflected in the mind through light in vision and through language in poetry.

Takhyīl after al-Qarṭājannī

The mathematician and astronomer Ibn al-Bannāʾ al-Marrākushī (d. 1324 A.D.) in his only *balāgha* work *Al-Rawḍ al-marīʿ fī ṣināʿat al-badīʿ* (*The Fertile Garden in the Craft of Rhetorical Figuration*) though he inherits *takhyīl's* conceptual centrality to poetry, pays it little attention.[109] He mentions *takhyīl* for the first time in his definition of poetry, which he writes is "discourse composed of false statements that are image-evoking (*muhkayyila*) by way of poetic imitation (*muḥākā*) in which [souls] are stirred through illusions."[110] Ibn al-Bannāʾ's addition of "false statements" (*aqawīl kādhiba*) to the received definition gives away his feelings about poetry.[111] In the second chapter of the *Rawḍ*, under the heading "*aqsām al-lafẓ min jihat tawājuh al-maʿnā naḥwa al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd*" ("the parts of an utterance from the aspect of its direction towards an intended meaning") which includes *khurūj* (deviation), *tashbīh* (comparison), *tabdīl* (substitution), and *tafṣīl* (elaboration). Ibn al-Bannāʾ describes both the mutuality and unevenness of comparing two things:

وقد يتكفآن في ذلك بأن تكون في أحدهما صفة تقتضي تقديمه على الآخر صفة تقتضي تقديمه على الأول فيكون كل واحد منهما راجحا من وجه مرجوحا من وجه، فيصح عكس التشبيه فيهما بالسوية. وقد يُجعل المرجوح بالتخيل الشعري راجحا، وهو من ترجيح المجاز فيعكس التشبيه لأجل ذلك.[112]

Two things can be reversed such that one can have an attribute that demands it take precedence and there exists in the other an attribute which demands it be prioritized over the first. Thus, it is that one outweighs one aspect and is outweighed in another aspect. It is possible for this comparison to be inverted equally. Poetic *takhyīl* may therefore make the outweighed into the

[109] Interestingly, Ibn al- Bannāʾ's text performs the kind of classificatory work that comes to be associated with this discipline (a charge that much modern scholarship wields against the Andalusī critics, and perhaps the source of field-wide avoidance of these critics because they are seen as derivative of ʿAbbāsid *nuqqād*), yet does not meditate much on the nature of *majāz*.

[110] Abū al-Muṭraf Aḥmad Ibn ʿAmīra, *al-Tanbīhāt ʿalā mā-fī-l tibyān min al-tammwīhāt*, ed. Muḥammad ibn Sharīfah, al-Ṭabʿa 1 (Morocco, 1991), 81.
الخطاب بأقوال كاذبة مخيلة على سبيل المحاكاة يحصل عنها استفزاز بالتمويهات.

[111] In the last pages of the *Rawḍ*, Ibn al-Bannāʾ gestures to another work in which he distinguished the difference between *ḥikma* and *shiʿr*, though this treatise seems no longer to be extant, it is clear from this remark that Ibn al-Bannāʾ did not consider poetry to be a source of knowledge, though it serves, as it had for centuries, as a pedagogical tool for understanding the complexity of Qurʾānic discourse.

[112] Ibn al-Bannāʾ, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad. *al-Rawḍ al-murīʿ fī ṣināʿat al-badīʿ*. (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribīya, 1985), 103.

outweighing; this is the rebalancing of figurative language (*majāz*), in which the order of the comparison is reversed.

He cites a verse by al-Buḥturī (a popular citation in the Andalusī-Maghribī corpora):

في طلعة الشمس شيء من محاسنها وفي القضيب نصيب من تثنيها[113]

In the rising of the sun, is some of her beauty
and the branch has an allotment of her flexibility.

In this example, the sun's beauty being evoked through a woman's beauty, following al-Bannāʾ's logic, suggests that the sun, which traditionally occupied the vehicle, can equally occupy the status of the tenor in a metaphor or comparison. Like Ibn Rushd, Ibn al-Bannāʾ adheres to *takhyīl* as strict visualization as he considers *muḥākā* to be a depiction of what can be seen, and when it deviates from this it is no longer called *muḥākā* but *ʾikhtirāʿ* (invention). To explain this, he cites this verse by al-Waʾ-Waʾ al-Dimashqī:

فأمطرت لؤلؤًا من نرجس وسقت وردًا وعضّت على العُنّاب بالبرَد

[Her tears] rained pearls of narcissus and watered
the roses and bit down on the jujube with hail

Ibn al-Bannāʾ objects to this verse because the comparison does not represent anything that has been seen or can be seen.[114] The poet invented this comparison, and Ibn al-Bannāʾ only allows it based on precedent (as other critics have allowed it), and on his belief that poetry consists mostly of falsehood. Although Ibn al-Bannāʾ considers *takhyīl* the defining element of the poetic, he seems neither interested in what makes it more eloquent nor how it transforms language or induces one to act or feel in a certain way.[115] Rather, he focuses on the elements of *badīʿ* which he believes constitute a verse's beauty.

To Ibn al-Bannāʾ's contemporary, Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1330 A.D.), *takhyīl* is important for all literary discourse not just poetry and is one of the ten categories of eloquence he lists in *Al-Manzaʿ al-badīʿ fī tajnīs asālīb al-badīʿ* alongside brevity (*ʾijāz*), allusion (*ishāra*), exaggeration (*mubālagha*), description (*waṣf*), demonstration (*muẓāhara*), clarification (*tawḍīḥ*), figurative expansion (*ittisāʿ*), digression (*inthināʿ*), and repetition (*takrīr*). *ʿIlm al-bayān*, he offers, deals with poetry in a general way, with *takhyīl* being its main

[113] Ibid. Al-Sijilmāsī also cites this verse for his example of unnatural comparison. See below.

[114] Ibid, 104.

[115] Very little scholarship in English exists on Ibn al-Bannāʾ's *Rawḍ*. Suaad al-Mana's work which appears in the volume on *takhyīl* and is translated by Marlé Hammond is the only one I have found. However, Ibn al-Bannāʾs scientific treatises have been the subject of much study. See Ahmed Djebbar in *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives*, eds. J. P. Hogendijk and A. I. Sabra, Dibner Institute Studies in the History of Science and Technology, Cambridge, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003).

component. Al-Sijilmāsī's definition of poetry is Ibn Sīnā's and al-Qarṭājannī's: "Poetry is speech that evokes images (*mukhayyil*), composed of metered speech, and among the Arabs, rhymed." He clarifies each part of this definition, explaining that *mukhayyil* means, "speech which is composed of an aspect or an attribute of a thing for another without its being overtaken by it" and adding this citation from Ibn Sīnā, "to which the soul inclines such that it extends towards certain matters and draws away from matters without reflection or thought."[116] Al-Sijilmāsī brings *istiʿāra* (metaphor), *tashbīh* (comparison), *mumāthala* (analogy), and *majāz* (figurative language) under the category of *takhyīl* because each works through being "image-evoking speech" (*al-qawl al-mukhayyil*).[117]

Al-Sijilmāsī defines *tashbīh* as "speech that evokes an image of the existence (*wujūd*) of a thing in another either through one of the tools of comparison that have been set down such as the letter *kaf* or the particle *kaʾnna* or *mithl*, [all of which are particles of comparison] or through some aspect of substitution."[118] He recruits Ibn al-Rashīq's *ʿUmda* to show how description works through comparison and to emphasize that a comparison approaches one or some aspects of the thing being compared without taking it up entirely. In other words, the first image remains present to the listener, miming the way objects and their images or reflections in poetry worked in al-Qarṭājannī's *takhyīl*. Al-Sijilmāsī's first category under *tashībh*, what he calls "natural comparison" (*ʿalā al-majrā al-ṭabīʿī*), takes an abstract object and compares it to something concrete as in the verse, "A night as a crow spreading its wings/ and ink flowing on the surface of the page."[119] An "unnatural" comparison (*ʿalā ghayr al-majrā al-ṭabīʿī*) compares what is lesser known with what is more known, as in the verse by al-Buḥturī: "In the rising of the sun is something of her beauty/ and the branch has an allotment of her flexibility."[120] The reason he calls this comparison "unnatural" is that the verse flips the tenor of comparison, making the woman's beauty the vehicle by which to depict the sun's beauty.

Among the four, *tashbīh* is the lowest form of the image, progressing from there towards *istiʿāra*, which al-Sijilmāsī defines as:

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[116] al-Sijilmāsī, al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad. *al-Manzaʿ al-badīʿ fī tajnīs asālīb al-badīʿ*, al-Ṭabʿa 1, (al-Ribāṭ: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1980), 219.

ان القول المخيل هو القول المركب من نسبة او نسب الشيء الى الشيء دون اغتراقها، تركيبا «تذغن له النفس فتنبسط عن امور وتنقبض عن أمور من غير روية وفكر.

[117] According to Lara Harb, al-Sijilmāsī equates *muḥākā*, that is the means of producing poetry, with *takhyīl*, its effect. Harb, Lara. *Arabic Poetics: Aesthetic Experience in Classical Arabic Literature*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. (Cambridge, UK ; Cambridge University Press, 2020), 125.

[118] al-Sijilmāsī, *al-Manzaʿ al-badīʿ*, 220.
والتشبيه هو القول المخيل وجود شيء في شيء إما بأحد أدوات التشبيه الموضوعة له كالكاف وحرف كأن او مثل. أما على جهة التبديل والتنزيل.

[119] Ibid, 227. The verse is from Imruʾ al-Qays's *muʿallaqa*:
وليل كما مدّ الغراب جناحه وسال على وجه السجل مداد

[120] Ibid, 228.

أن يكون اسم ما دالاً على ذات معنى راتباً عليه دائما من اول ما وُضع، ثم يلقّب به الحين بعد الحين شيء آخر لمواصلته للأول بنحوٍ ما من أنحاء المواصلة أيّ نحو كان، تخييلا لذات المعنى الأول الموضوع عليه الإسم في الشيء الثاني الملقب به حين اللقب، واستفزازا، من غير أن يجعل راتبا للثاني دالا على ذاته.[121]

For a name to signify the essence of the *maʿnā* placed for it since the day it was set down, and for it, every once in a while, to call up another thing because of connection to the first by an aspect of connection, evoking the image of the essence of the first concept for which the name was set down in the other thing that it comes to name, as a way to provoke (a feeling), without making it signify the essence of the second thing.

His use of *mukhayyil* and *mukhayyil ilayhī* for *mustaʿār minhū* and *mustaʿār lahū* suggests that even more than comparison, *istiʿāra* comes closer to the kind of image to which poetic statements aspire. And yet, surpassing *istiʿāra* in its capacity to image is the third category, *mumāthala* or *tamthīl*, which shares much with *istiʿāra*, however instead of merely "borrowing" a term, the *mumāthala* extends this "borrowing" to make of the object being described or evoked a *mithāl.* Al-Sijilmāsī disputes much of what has been categorized as *mumāthala* stating that there are those who call anything that sounds proverbial an example of this type of *takhyīl*. For him, *mumāthala* approaches *kināya* (metonymy), writing that, "the *takhyīl* or *tamthīl* of a thing for another thing that contains some attribute and some kind of gesture or likeness to it…such that [the poet] intends to signify a meaning, so he uses utterances that signify other meanings."[122] The Andalusī poet Ibn Khafāja is heavily cited in these sections, and these verses which feature the *ṭayf al-khayāl* is a peek of what is to come in the next chapter:

يا حبّذا، والطيف ضيف طارق، طيف على شحط أجدَّ مزارا

تلوي الشمول به قضيبا ربما عاطى سوسان هناك عرارا[123]

How pleasant! That the phantom is a guest come knocking in the night
a phantom stranded and so hurried in his visit
the north winds bend him as though he were a branch, perhaps
he gave through his white sides (*sawsān*) a yellow flower (*ʿarār*)

One of *mumāthala*'s conditions, according to al-Sijilmāsī, is the use of utterances that are not intended for their original meaning. In the verse cited above, *sawsān* and *ʿarār* give a kind of form to the *ṭayf al-khayāl*, though the terms themselves do not generally signify a kind of body. The critic's attention to embodiment in his citation of a *ṭayf al-khayāl* verse registers the visuality of *takhyīl*—the way it embodies not only through the *khayāl* itself, but through other images that give the *khayāl* a body. Finally, the pinnacle of *takhyīl* is *majāz,* which earns its spot because it

[121] Ibid, 235.

[122] Ibid, 244.
لتخييل والتمثيل للشيء بشيء له إليه نسبة وفيه منه إشارة وشبهة والعبارة عنه .

[123] Ibid, 248.

bestows a kind of *yaqīn* (certainty), convincing the recipient that the false premises that make up the verse are in fact true. It's the category under which the strangest, and for al-Sijilmāsī, the most moving speech falls. The most cited poets in this section are Ibn Khafāja and Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, their verses giving shape, voice, and movement to inanimate things.

While Ibn ʿAmīra and Ibn al-Bannāʾ were equivocal with regards to *takhyīl's* specific mechanisms, al-Sijilmāsī emphasizes that it occurs through careful thought and inspection (*munāẓara*), thus extrapolating it not only for the poet's role in composing verses, but also the the critic's and listener's.

فلا مشاحة في العبارة بعد تحقيق المعاني وقياسها في النفس و تصورها في الذهن فقد ما جرت العادة في الصناعة النظرية بالوصية للناظر والتحذير له أن يلمح بالألفاظ ويقف تصوره عليها، وبأن يتقدم أولا فيقرر المعاني في نفسه ويتصورها أتم تصور يمكنه، ثم يطبق عليها الألفاظ. ولعمري إنها لوصية من قد أزمع تعريف طرق النظر الصادق، وأخذ باليد الى الكمال.[124]

There is no confusion in the phrase after inspecting the meanings, measuring them in the soul and visualizing them in the mind. For it is customary in this discipline to command the beholder and caution them to glimpse with words and to stop to conceive and picture them, and to do this first—to determine the meanings in themselves and visualize them as fully as they can, then apply the words to the meanings. By my life, it is the advice of one who has resolved to define true vision and lead the way to perfection.

For instance, he writes in his explication of the second type of *tashbīh* (*al-tashbīh al-murakkab*, composite comparisons), that *takhyīl* here is composed "by inspecting (*munāẓara*) the two aspects for their form and similarity in the degree to which the comparison is intended."[125] Al-Sijilmāsī ends this section with a caveat, stating that what exemplifies this type of figurative language comes down to the virtues of what is being evoked. He does not dismiss *takhyīl*, as Ibn al-Bannāʾ does. Rather, he agrees with an anonymous opinion given in response to one of al-Maʿarrī's verses that "*takhyīl* is good, but the *khayāl* is despicable,"[126] an opinion he shares with al-Fārābī. In other words, the process of *takhyīl* itself is good, even if what it produces isn't to the critics' liking. This assertion seems to sever the *khayāl* from *takhyīl*.

Section 3: The Poetic Image and the Possibility of Knowledge

[124] Ibid, 249.

[125] Ibid, 230.
فينتظم التخييل بالمناظرة بين الجنبتين لأشكالهما واشتباههما في النسبة إلى القصد التشبيه منه.

[126] Ibid, 261.
ولعمري إن التخييل لصحيح ولكن الخيال خسيس.

Following the Quran's lead, the *balaghiyyūn* tied poetry's deceitful nature to vision.[127] In their insistence on poetry's capacity to deceive in the way magic does, they returned to an almost pre-Islamic notion of the poet as soothsayer.[128] Al-Baṭalyawsī and Ibn al-Rashīq both link poetry to magic by connecting its effects to the magicians' illusions cited in the Quran in the story of Moses.[129] The poet Ibn Khafāja, who was al-Baṭalyawsī's contemporary, refute this view and with the entire binary of truthfulness and falsehood and defend poetry in the introduction of his *dīwān*. Suspicious of poetry's aims, certain *balāghiyyūn* distanced its specific mechanisms from the Quran (think of al-Jurjānī precluding *takhyīlī meanings* from *ʾistiʿāra*).

As we saw above with al-Qarṭājannī, a certain kind of visual preparedness, brought on by a practice of imitation from a young age, informs how one reacts to poetry. I linger on his notion of "readiness" (*ʾistiʿdād*)—the human capacity to create, apprehend, and appreciate imitation. Preparedness is the hinge that binds poetry to a kind of knowledge. This notion of preparedness has a history in the *naqd* and *balāgha* traditions of both the Andalusīs and the ʿAbbāsids period—what critics have called *qubūl al-nafs*. Ibn al-Rashīq, expanding on Bishr Ibn al-Muʿtamir and Ibn Qutayyba, writes: "And what brings about a thought, according to *falsafa*, is [when] a man lies on his back. In any case, nothing opens the lock of the seas of fancy like working in the early hours after waking, for the soul is united, its senses haven't dissipated into frivolity or the seeking after livelihood, or any other thing that comes into its consciousness,"[130] which, Iḥsān ʿAbbās points out, is a reformulation of Abū Tammām's advice to al-Buḥturī that al-Qarṭājannī cites in the *Minhāj* as we'll see below. Ibn al-Rashīq pays particular attention to the poet's readiness, reprising the long discourse around the poet's capacity for poetic composition, which in contemporary discussions came in the guise of *ṭabʿ* and in earlier discussions in the

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[127] Deception was also a concern in the field of optics. In its early days, the nascent discipline of optics debated over clarity and accuracy as well as the veracity (truth correspondence) of vision (though it was concerned more with the former than the latter). The need for a science of optics emerged from the problem of truth correspondence to what appeared to the eye and the issue was demonstrated through the appearance of angular shapes as circles and rectilinear shapes as circular. *ʿIlm al-Manāẓir* was thus a discipline in search of conformity with reality (yuṣādif al-ḥaqīqa), one that demystifies and justifies "what appears to sight" (*mā yaẓhar li-l baṣar)* within and beyond ordinary realms of vision. The tradition of early optics dealt with the concept of appearances terminologically through passive and active modes that are involved in vision. Such terms include *yubṣar*, (what is looked at/seen), *yunẓar* (what is viewed), *yuẓhar* (what appears), and *yurā* (what is seen), *yuẓʿan annhu yurā* (what is thought to be seen), and *qad yutawahhumu an yubṣa*r (what is imagined to be seen). Elaheh Kheirandish, "The Many Aspects of "Appearances": Arabic Optics to 950 AD" in Hogendijk and Sabra, *The Enterprise of Science in Islam,* 67-8.

[128] Cantarino interprets the *falāsifa's* declaration of the poetic as false, deceitful or *kadhib* discourse (especially by al-Fārābī) that they came close to a kind of pre-Islamic conception of the poet as soothsayer, though he assures the reader that this is more of an analogy because the philosophers never believed in a supernatural poetic process. Cantarino in fact cites Ibn al-Rashīq's words that the poet sees what no other can as a way to characterize this general attitude towards the poet in pre- and early Islam. Vicente Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age: Selection of Texts Accompanied by a Preliminary Study*, Studies in Arabic Literature 4 (Brill, 1975).

[129] ʿAsfūr, *al-Ṣūra al-fanniyya*, 89.

[130] ʿAbbās, *Tarīkh al-naqd al-adabī*, 450.
ومما يجمع الفكرة من طريق الفلسفة استلقاء الرجل على ظهره، وعلى كل حال فليس يفتح مقفل بحار الخواطر مثل مباكرة العمل بالأسحار عند الهبوب من النوم. لكون النفس مجتمعة لم يتفرق حسها في اسباب اللهو او المعيشة او غير ذلك مما يعيها.

possession of poets by *jinn*.[131] The readiness I discuss below encompasses both the poet and the recipient.

Readiness: the recipient's perspective

We read earlier how the soul delights in *muḥākā* because it's an innate disposition that is nourished from childhood. In addition to the quality of the *muḥākā*—the way it aptly figures what is being evoked through word, meaning, arrangement, or style—"the movement (*taḥarruk*) of souls to imaginative sayings is only according to readiness (*ʾistiʿdād*)," writes al-Qarṭājannī.[132] To emphasize this point, al-Qarṭājannī gives further evidence of the soul's pleasure in *takhyīl* when he describes its attraction to ugly forms in art:

ومن التذاذ النفوس بالتخيل أن الصور القبيحة المستبشعة عندما قد تكون صورها المنقوشة والمخطوطة والمنحوتة لذيذة إذا بلغت الغاية القصوى من الشبه بما هي أمثلة له، فيكون موقعها من النفوس مستلذا لا لأنها حسنة في أنفسها بل لأنها حسنة المحاكاة لما حوكي بها عند مقايستها به.[133]

It is part of the soul's pleasure in *takhyīl* that ugly and abominable images when they are engraved, calligraphed and carved images may be pleasurable if they reach the utmost resemblance to what they are examples of, so their position in the souls is one of pleasure, not because they are good in themselves, but because they are good in representing the object when compared to it.

Nothing proves to al-Qarṭājannī the delight and pleasure that the soul gets from skillfully crafted art like the representation of ugly things.[134] It's an instance that makes clear human willingness to ignore the ugliness of what's being represented in favor of its image in a beautiful representation. I want to point out here his use of the visual arts as a way to explain *takhyīl*'s pleasure—the visual works as a touchstone for his thinking about the way poetry moves the soul. Finally, al-Qarṭājannī adds one more point, citing Ibn Sīnā's reasoning for *takhyīl's* success in attracting the soul: "pleasure (*iltidhādh*) in *muḥākā* and *takhyīl* is perfected when the soul has previously perceived (*qad sabaqa li-l-nafs iḥsās*) of the things being evoked and there has been some prior experience of it (*taqadama la-hā ʿahd bihī*)."[135] Al-Qarṭājannī's stipulation reveals his

[131] See Ibn Shuhayd's *Risālat al-Tawābiʿ*.

[132] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 106.
فتحرك النفوس للأقوال المخيلة إنما يكون بحسب الاستعداد، وبحسب ما تكون عليه المحاكاة في نفسها، وما تدعم به المحاكاة وتعضد مما يزيد به المعنى تمويها والكلام حسن ديباجة من أمور ترجع إلى لفظ او معنى او نظم او أسلوب.

[133] Ibid, 102.

[134] Ibid, 106. Additionally, al-Qarṭājannī adds that there are two kinds of dispositions in the soul which allow it to be moved by poetry:

1. The soul has a state and an inclination which it is conditioned to be moved by a certain utterance.
2. The soul believes that poetry is an arbiter that demands of noble souls that they respond to its claims.

[135] Ibid, 103. This capacity is what leads to learning in the latter, and citing Ibn Sīnā in the *Minhāj*: "for teaching is a kind of portrayal of something on the slate of the soul" (106). Ibn Sīnā has a beautiful word for this kind of human instinct towards the representational, he calls it *shiʿriyya* (see footnote above).

understanding of *takhyīl* as activating sensible experience for both the creation and interpretation of poetry. What this ultimately signals, beyond the points I've already articulated regarding his emphasis on sensible experience in poetry, is its potential to involve the recipient in a process of meaning-making that isn't passive, but that reactivates, and even transforms, prior experience.

So far, al-Qarṭājannī is rehearsing Ibn Sīnā's points on why *takhyīl* impacts and moves the soul, but unlike Ibn Sīnā who confines *takhyīl* as an affect (*infiʿāl*) of wonder, al-Qarṭājannī understands *takhyīl* in much more pictorial terms. When I cited the rare moment in which al-Qarṭājannī gives us his own aesthetic preference, sketching out the conjunction of two images, one of the branches and their reflection in the water, and the other, the two images of tears, he has added another point: the real world's own suggestion of comparison. Al-Qarṭājannī enjoys such verses for their ability to depict what seems to play out in the world, and which the poet can learn from, centering the sense of sight while drawing on other senses. His attention to the ways that comparisons and representations in a poem differ only in degree from their appearance before the eyes, allows him to see the impact of the doubled image—the thing evoked and its form in the world held together by the poem—because the recipient sees the image in a way it's not usually encountered. Which is why, he raises and answers an imagined objection in this way:

وربما قال قائل: إذا كانت الأقاويل الشعرية منها ما يخيل الشيء ويمثله نفسه بتعرف صورة الشيء مما أعطاه ومثله القول المخيل، كالذي يحاكي بالدمية صورة امرأة فتعرف صفاتها بها، ومنها ما يترك فيه المعنى المخيل للشيء ويخيل بما يكون مثالا لذلك المعنى، كالذي يتخذ مرآة قيقال الدمية بها فيريك تمثالها فتعرف أيضا صورة الشيء المحاكى بالدمية بالتمثال الذي يبدو للدمية في المرآة. وقد رأينا من يرى الدمية او تمثالها في المرآة لا يتحرك لها ولا لتمثالها بنسبة مما كان يتحرك لرؤية الشخص الذي حوكيت صورته بالدمية. فيجب على هذا ان لا يكون التحرك لما يتخيل من الشعر بنسبة من التحرك لمشاهدة الأشياء التي خيلت. وأنتم تقولون إن الأقاويل الشعرية ربما كان التحرك لما يتخيل من محاكاتها أشد من التحريك لمشاهدة الشيء الذي حوكي، وابتهاج النفس بما تتخيله من ذلك فوق ابتهاجها بمشاهدة المخيل. فيقال له أولا: أن الدمية والشخص الذي صورت على صورته يختلف اعتبارهما في تحريك النفوس. فالدمية تحركها بالتعجيب من حسن محاكاتها وابداع الصنعة في تقديرها على ما حكي بها، والشخص الذي هو تمثال له ان كان مستحسنا فإنه يحرك النفوس بالصبابة الى حسنة وما يتعلق لها به من أرب اذا كانت الدمية صورة جارية مثلا، فربما كان تحريك الدمية من طريق التعجيب اكثر من تحريك الذي هي تمثال له من هذا الطريق، بل الأمر في الأكثر على ذلك والقول المخيل قلما يخلو من التعجيب بل كأنه مستصحب له من أقل ما يمكن من ذلك في القول المخيل الى اكيثر ما يمكن. والتعجيب في القول المخيل يكون اما من جهة إبداع محاكاة الشيء وتخييله كما ذلك في الدمية، ويكون من جهة كون الشيء المحاكى من الأشياء المستغربة والأمور المستطرفة. واذا وقع التعجيب من الجهتين المذكورتين على أتم ما من شأنه أن يوجد فيهما فتلك الغاية القصوى من التعجيب. وللنفوس الى ما بلغ هذه الغاية تحريك شديد.

Possibly someone will say: Some poetic utterance evokes the image of a thing [directly] and presents a likeness of the thing itself, because the form of that thing is recognized from that which these image-evoking words give and portray, as when someone imitates the form of a woman with a statue by means of which her attributes may be recognised. In other utterances the motif that (directly) evokes an image of a thing is omitted, and it is evoked by what could serve as a model (*mithāl*) for that motif, as when one takes a mirror and puts it opposite the statue, thus showing you her image (*timthāl*) so that you would also recognise the form of the thing that is imitated by the image of the statue that appears in the mirror. Now we have seen that he who sees the statue or its image in the mirror is not moved by either this statue or its image to the same

degree that he is moved by seeing the person whose form is imitated by the statue. Therefore it necessarily follows that being moved by image-evoking poetry cannot reach the same degree as that which results from the direct observation of the thing that is evoked. Yet you say that mobilization caused by the imitation evoked by poetic utterances is often stronger than that caused by direct observation of the thing imitated, and that the soul's delight in what it imagines surpasses its delight in [actually] observing what has been evoked in an image.

Then one may answer him, saying, firstly, that the movement of the soul caused by the statue and the person in whose form it is made should be considered to differ in kind. The statue moves by causing amazement through beautiful imitation and striking craftsmanship such that it implies the thing it imitates. The person of whom it is a model, however, moves the soul—if he is deemed beautiful—on account of the ardent love of his beauty and other ambitions one may have in this connection, for instance if the statue portrays a girl. It happens that the movement caused by the statue, in the manner of causing amazement, is greater than the movement caused by that of which it is a likeness, in the other manner. In fact, this is what happens in most cases. Image-evoking speech rarely fails to cause amazement, in fact it regularly accompanies it, from the slightest to the maximum possible degree in image-evoking speech. Amazement caused by such speech is either on account of the striking imitation of something and its image-evocation, as was the case with the statue, or an account of the fact that the imitated thing belongs to the class of curious and rare matters. If the amazement occurs from both of the aforementioned sides in the most perfect way possible in either, then that is the ultimate in terms of amazement. Souls are strongly moved towards things that have attained this ultimate degree.[136]

The imagined objector raises the point that there are two kinds of imitation in poetic statements: the first is a direct imitation of a thing, and he likens this to a statue of a woman. The second type of imitation evokes by means of a model (*mithāl*) of the imitation "as when one takes a mirror and puts it opposite the statue, thus showing you its image (*timthāl*) so that you would also recognize the form of the thing that is imitated by the image of the statue that appears in the mirror."[137] In other words, there is a direct portrayal of the thing (as in the statute) and an indirect portrayal of it (that is likened to the reflection), which we could understand in poetry as the difference between description and metaphor (likening a thing through the attributes of something else). Al-Qarṭājannī's response to the imagined objector's question of how poetry that evokes with an image can move one to the same degree (if not more) than if the thing were seen itself, gets to the heart of my question about the power of poetic visuality.[138] His answer shows

[136] I have relied, in part, on Montgomery's translation (van Gelder and Hammond, *Takhyīl*, 111).

[137] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 111. *M-th-l*: *mathal* (likeness) was used by the early philologists to talk about *istiʿāra* (applying the *mathal* to the topic (the thing you want compared), see Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Istiʿāra in Arabic Poetics*, 1. Aufl., Abhandlungen Für Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes ; Bd. 44, 2 (Deutsche Morgenländische Ges., 1977), 7; Wendy Shaw: "The ambiguity of the word *mithāl* as a similitude, parable, or allegory also suggests that this intermediary world relates instructive stories, a means of reading through the physicality of words toward their teachings," in Shaw, *What Is "Islamic" Art?*, 41; Ibn al-Rashīq explains *waṣf* by *tamthīl* of an object in the heart of the listener, see Akiko Motoyoshi Sumi, *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry:* Waṣf*, Ekphrasis, and Interarts Theory*, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures 25 (Brill, 2004), 16.

[138] Montgomery's translation renders «يختلف اعتبارهما في تحريك النفوس» as "should be considered to differ in kind." This might appear misleading as I believe that al-Qarṭājannī doesn't think they move one differently, but that the

that the movement of the soul to each of these is different, but that they differ in degree and not in kind. For the former, the soul is moved by amazement at skillful depiction and craft while the person upon whom the statue is modeled moves one for more motivated reasons. But al-Qarṭājannī, goes beyond this. His answer interweaves *taʿajjub*—an affect that is inextricably tied to *takhyīl*—to illustrate the degree by which these responses differ.[139]

As an aesthetic experience, *taʿajjub* brings together contemplation with a moment of misconstrual, and in doing so produces pleasure. Prior to al-Qarṭājannī, Ibn Sīnā had proposed *taʿajjub* as one of the pleasures induced by *takhyīl*,[140] either because of the quality of its appearance, the strength of its sincerity, the strength of its popularity, or its masterful depiction.[141] Al-Qarṭājannī reiterates this point, alerting us to the continued importance of this effect for *balāgha*, when he writes:

وللنفوس تحرك شديد للمحاكيات المستغربة لأن النفس إذا خيل لها في الشيء ما لم يكن معهودا من أمر معجب في مثله وجدت من استغراب ما خيل لها مما لم تعهده في الشيء ما يجده المستطرف لرؤية ما لم يكن أبصره قبل. [142]

And souls have a strong movement for strange representations, because if it is evoked to the soul in a way that's not familiar to it, the soul will find admiration in the strangeness of the evocation of what it had not known before, [in the same way] to finding something strange that one has not seen before.

In fact, *taʿajjub* seems to work as it does because it registers a conceptual misfiring—familiarity and strangeness coincide as the *muḥākā* approaches the thing being depicted, evoking its familiar form. *Takhyīl* induces a sense of strangeness, and as I pointed out above a sense of rightness, at language's capacity to evoke an image so close to the emulated object. This strangeness is the source of a pleasure only available in response to reading, or listening to, a poem.

To describe this pleasure, al-Qarṭājannī resorts again to an analogy he has used before, likening the process of *takhyīl* and *muḥākā* with looking at an object reflected on a surface. He does so because imagining an object through the image of another elicits the same sense of wonder as seeing something through a transparent glass. Behind this analogy is an approximation

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motivation that moves one differs in kind. The image is not the same, (one is a representation and the other isn't), but its reaction is elicited by the same means (namely visually).

[139] For a study of 'wonder' in Arabic language *balāgha* see Lara Harb, *Arabic Poetics: Aesthetic Experience in Classical Arabic Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, UK ; Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[140] Selim Kemal locates wonder at the crux of an aesthetic-intellectual experience. Wonder is the response that emerges from our grasping the meanings of the poetic utterance. If we can't grasp the meanings, we can't "feel wonder or give assent." Salim Kemal, "Philosophy and Theory in Arabic Poetics," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 20, no. 2 (1989): 93.

[141] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 74.

[142] Ibid, 85.

of the way transparency[143] and *takhyīl* work—both the thing evoked and the attributes that lead to its evocation are present, one being more "transparent" while still maintaining its own attributes. This is the logic of the doubled image, which "holds" two forms—the thing and its likeness. Absent from his analogy of the mirror and the glass is the concern common in writings about the nature of perception during this time—the simultaneous ability of mirrors and reflective surfaces to reveal and deceive—a fear we saw above among some *balāghiyyūn*. Al-Qarṭājannī isn't concerned outright with deception. The imagined objection excerpted above registers a larger anxiety of the time regarding the ability of poetic images to move the soul (as compared to the emulated object), and the anxiety is perhaps also registered in al-Qarṭājannī's discussion of the ontological possibilities of the poetic image (more on this below). Yet it remains a weak undercurrent, addressed obliquely, and countered easily by remembering his insistence on the benefits that outweigh any fear of a perceived deception.

A reflected (or doubled) image induces wonder either because of its exceptional and rare depiction or by evoking rare things. Al-Qarṭājannī, like Ibn Sīnā before him, appeals to the intellect as the epitome of poetic experience (both of the poet's and the recipient's). He writes of different kinds of *maʿānī* as they occur to the soul—those thought up and imagined by everyone, then thoughts that occur to some and not others, and finally those meanings that rarely occur and when they do, require a form of deduction.[144] (The poet who approaches these latter *maʿānī* receives al-Qarṭājannī's highest praise.) Additionally, *takhyīl* and *yaqīn* are not mutually exclusive because "a thing may be imagined and formed as it truly is (*ʿala ḥaqīqatuhū*)."[145] In fact, al-Qarṭājannī writes against a larger current of thought endorsed by the *mutakallimūn* that believes that description (*tashbīh*) and imitation (*muḥākā*) are the qualities in poetry that make it false discourse. This doesn't mean that he sanctions full poetic license, as he, too, has misgivings about poetry that strays towards *ifrāṭ*—a term that has ethical connotations of excess—and is no longer economical (*bi-lā iqtiṣād*).[146]

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[143] Ellen Philpott-Teo writes about the importance of transparency (*shafīf*) in Ibn al-Haytham's theory of vision. Transparency as both property of vision (the coating of the eye), necessary for it (transparent air or water), and as a form/meaning (a kind) of beauty. She argues that the agency of transparency is key to understanding Ibn al-Haytham's visual theory and its rational, embodied approach to visual perception in Akkach, *Naẓar*, 125.

[144] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 170.

[145] Ibid, 62.

[146] In the *Minhāj*, the question of *ḥaqīqa*/*majāz* was couched in terms of *ṣidq* and *kadhib*. Following Ibn Sīnā, al-Qarṭājannī wants to move away from thinking of poetry through the dichotomy of *ṣidq/kadhib*, though he still uses its language. In the section that offers poetry's definition as "metered and rhymed speech whose goal is to make desirable to the soul what it intends to make desirable, and to make repulsive to it what it intends to make repulsive" (71), al-Qarṭājannī elaborates that the best of poetry is: "what is of perfected *muḥākā* and form (*hayyʾa*), strong in its desire and truth or conceals its falsity (*kadhib*), and its strangeness is carried through" (ibid). He continues to emphasize that the worst poetry is that which, "is of repulsive *muḥākā* and form, apparent in its *kadhib*, devoid of strangeness (*gharāba*)" (72). Jābir ʿAṣfūr believes that in defending poetry against the accusation by some *mutakallimūn* that poetic statements are necessarily false, al-Qarṭājannī also avoided the idea prominent among the *falāsifa* that poetry was inferior to truth (*al-Ṣūra al-fannīya*, 95). However, ʿAṣfūr still maintains that al-Qarṭājannī's motivation for not wanting technical (or what he calls disciplinary) language in poetry is because he did not believe, like the *falāsifa*, that poetry could be a source of knowledge.

As previously mentioned, al-Qarṭājannī establishes the existence of the *maʿnā* as an object in the world, as an image in the mind, as an utterance, and as a written form.[147] This steers al-Qarṭājannī towards considering the ontological possibilities of language, which he does in a section titled, "A signpost for discerning the different ways of looking into the soundness of meanings and their integrity from impossibility that comes from excessive hyperbole."[148] Here, he discusses the realms of possibility in poetry, attempting to differentiate between them through different ontological terms: 1) *wājiban* (necessary/given) 2) *mumkin* (possible) 3) *mumtanaʿ* (inaccessible) and 4) *mustaḥīl* (impossible).[149] Interestingly, he spends time explaining the categories of *mumtanaʿ* and *mumkin*, which do not appear to be as ontologically straightforward. Al-Qarṭājannī explains that *mumtanaʿ* is what can be imagined (*yutaṣawwar*) though it does not likely exist, such as compositing the limbs of one animal onto the body of another. What is *mustaḥīl* cannot be imagined or given form, such as a thing that goes up and down at once, for instance, what the *balāghiyyūn* in the East called an irrational, and thus a bad image.[150] Al-Qarṭājannī describes the impossible in poetry as "one of the ugliest of what could occur to an ignoramus and wrongdoer of this craft."[151] He welcomes hyperbole as long as it can be pictured, which is why he censures any attempt to depict the 'impossible' in poetry, because the recipient cannot visualize it. While he disagrees with those critics who approved of taking hyperbole to the limit of impossibility (*iḥāla*) for their lack of proper knowledge of *balāgha*, he also acknowledges that some critics confused exaggeration and *istiḥāl* because of their inability to recognize what is possible in hyperbole.[152] Al-Qarṭājannī follows up with a reminder to the reader that poetry need not be truthful because poetry may rely on false statements though it often does not affect listeners in the same way that truth does.[153] What matters, in the end, is poetry's capacity to move the soul, and in fact, al-Qarṭājannī's poetics allows the poet to inch along the spectrum of the possible/impossible toward new possibilities because what matters, ultimately, is that the depiction be moving.

Readiness: the poet's perspective

The discussion of the image's ontological possibility addresses the recipient's readiness to be moved by an image, as it takes into account how well the verse can convey an image to the

[147] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 17.

[148] Ibid, 117.
معرف دال على طرق المعرفة بأنحاء النظر في صحة المعاني وسلامتها من الاستحالة الواقعة بالإفراط في المبالغة.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid, 133. ʿAṣfūr believes that the reason al-Qarṭājannī draws a strict boundary between impossibility and possibility in poetry is because he's adamant on maintaining the integrity of the outside world (*al-Ṣūra al-fanniyya*, 75).

[152] See Ibn al-Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, 50.

[153] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 120. In another section where he discusses the *waḍʿ* of meanings, he specifies that in those verses that convey a serious intention to its reader/listener, what is impossible cannot take the place of what is possible, etc. Here, al-Qarṭājannī reiterates once again that the problem with the impossible is its inability to be pictured and given form (*Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 128).

reader. Yet, al-Qarṭājannī is equally interested in the poet's readiness to produce the poetic image. He extends the mental processes introduced by Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī into eight phases—the first four are those in which the poet figures out the arc of meaning, then how best to convey this arc, then figures out the arrangement of the motifs within this arc, then imagines fashioning the motifs and their composition into evocative expressions. These are followed by four more stages in which the poet conceives of what to convey poetically (the *maʿnā*) according to a specific end, chooses the meter, then produces an expression that fits the chosen meter, and finally calls up a second *maʿnā* that supplements the first in case the first falls short in commanding an entire verse.[154] The poet can train himself, according to al-Qarṭājannī, to move through images (*khayālāt*) with speed to the extent that he does not need to exert himself mentally to come up with new images. He uses the example of a reader who immediately recognizes words without having to read individual letters to illustrate how the process of poetic composition can become second nature.[155]

In a section of the *Minhāj* titled *Mabānī*, al-Qarṭajannī describes specific capacities a poet's needs to possess in order to compose poetry because *naẓm* is a craft (*ṣināʿa*) that requires a natural disposition (*tabʿ*), in his words "a completeness in the soul in understanding the secrets of speech and an insight into its purposes and its ways" and evidence of this *tabʿ* are "the intellectual forces and thoughtful guidance from which the poets' varied ideas emerge."[156] He enumerates ten necessary capacities: 1) the capacity to make comparisons (*al-quwwa ʿalā al-tashbīh*), 2) the capacity for conceiving the major premises of poetry, their intent and the

[154] Ibid, 96-7.

[155] To illustrate the centrality of recognition (*maʿrifa*), Ibn al-Haytham uses the written script. Recognition is based on a process of comparison to a likeness that already exists in the imagination: "It is for this reason that recognition cannot take place without remembering, because if the first form were not present to the memory, sight would not perceive the similarity of the two forms, nor would it recognize the object" (Ibn al-Haytham and Sabra, *The Book of Optics,* 129). This remembering, or presencing of a first image, is also necessary for visually perceiving properties like intensity, transparency, and distance. Similar to al-Qarṭājannī's use of the written script, Ibn al-Haytham describes the speed with which a reader who has previously encountered a word grasps its form (and thus ordering of letters and meaning) in contrast to one who has not. The literate person can recognize immediately the words *abjad* and their connotation of the Arabic language without necessarily taking in letter by letter (similarly when this literate person comes across God's written name). When this same literate person encounters a strange word (or a foreign one) then the process of contemplating the word, and breaking it down to the letter, becomes necessary for discerning its meaning. The nature of contemplative perception (which presumably was the case for human nature at its first sight) similarly involves such composition; for the perception of the identity of a new form will only occur after inspecting the features of that new formand discerning them distinctly (Ibn al-Haytham and Sabra, *The Book of Optics,* 130). The speed by which comparison in the process of vision occurs is instantaneous, and though this theory of visual perception points to the workings of the ratiocinative faculty, this does not imply that perception is simply an intentional act of consciousness. This unconscious aspect of vision parallels the way poetry moves its recipient to an affective reaction, the feelings of attraction and repulsion that come about without recourse to active reasoning. Both the process of vision as outlined by Ibn al-Haytham and poetry conceived as image-evoking discourse rely on forms of reasoning/comparison that are imperceptible and that function within a heightened temporality.

[156] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 177.

النظم صناعة آلتها الطبع. والطبع هو استكمال للنفس في فهم أسرار الكلام، والبصيرة بالمذاهب والأغراض التي من شأن الكلام الشعري أن ينحى به نحوها، فإذا أحاطت بذلك علما قويت على صوغ الكلام بحسبه عملا، وكان النفوذ في مقاصد النظم وأعراضه وحسن التصرف في مذاهبه و أنحائه إنما يكونان بقوى فكرية واهتداءات خاطرية تتفاوت فيها أفكار الشعراء.

meanings associated with the intent (*al-quwwa ʿalā taṣawwur kullīyyāt al-shiʿr wa al-maqāṣid al-wāqiʾa fīhā wa-l-maʿānī al-wāqiʿa fī tilka al-maqāṣid*), 3) the capacity for conceiving the form the *qaṣīda* will take (*al-quwwa ʿalā taṣawwur ṣūra lilqaṣīda*), 4) the capacity for imagining the meanings by feeling them and drawing upon all their aspects (*al-quwwa ʿalā takhyīl al-maʿānī bi-l shuʿūr bihā wa ijtilābihā min jamīʿ jihātihā*), 5) the capacity for realizing the ways by which the *maʿānī* are compatible with one another (*al-quwwa ʿalā mulāḥaẓat al-wujūh al-latī bihā yaqʿ al-intisāb bayna al-maʿānī*), 6) the capaicty to come up with good expressions that signify those meanings (*al-quwwa ʿalā al-tahadī ilā al-ʿibarāt al-ḥasnat al-waḍʿ wa al-dalāla ʿala tilka al-maʿānī*), 7) the capacity to maneuver expressions in order to balance them (*al-quwwa ʿalā takhyīl fī taṣīr tilka al-ʿibarāt mutazina*), 8) the capacity to transition from one section of the *qaṣīdā* to another (*al-quwwa ʿalā ʾiltifāt min ḥayz ilā ḥayz*), 9) the capacity for transitioning between the sections (as well as verses) (*al-quwwa ʿalā taḥsīn waṣl baʿḍ al-fuṣūl bi-baʿḍ*), and finally, 10) the faculty of discernment (*al-quwwa al-māʾiza*), which gives the poet the ability to differentiate between good and bad language by looking at the language itself and at the way this language can be composed most effectively.[157]

Reading this list of capacities, it becomes clear that they are not all equal, and some, are not simply capacities but are innate qualities, signaling perhaps the idea that for al-Qarṭājannī, poets are born and not made. The last capacity he lists above, *al-quwwa al-māʾiza*, stands out. Earlier in the *Minhāj*, al-Qarṭājannī mentions this faculty when he describes what capacities a poet needs to effectively convey their intention, singling out four faculties: *al-quwwa al-mulāḥaẓa* (the faculty of attention), *al-quwwa al-ḥāfiẓa* (the faculty of retention), *al-quwwa al-māʾiza* (the faculty of discernment), and *al-quwwa al-ṣāniʿa* (the faculty of creation). He writes,

لا يكمل لشاعر قول على الوجه المختار إلا بأن تكون له قوة حافظة وقوة مائزة وقوة صانعة: فاما القوة الحافظة فهي ان تكون خيالات الفكر منتظمة، ممتازا بعضها عن بعض، محفوظا كلها في نصابه. فإذا أراد مثلا ان يقول غرضا ما في نسيب او مديح او غير ذلك وجد خياله اللائق به قد أهبته له القوة الحافظة بكون صور الأشياء مترتبة فيها على حد ما وقعت عليه في الوجود، فإذا أجال خاطره في تصورها فكأنه اجتلى حقائقها. وكثير من خواطر الشعراء تكون معتكرة الخيالات، غير منتظمة التصور، فإذا أجال خاطره في أوصاف الأشياء وخيالاتها اشتبهت عليه واختلطت وأخذ منها غير ما يليق بمقصده وبالموضع الذي يحتاج فيه الى ذلك.[158]

A poet does not perfect his speech in the right way unless he has a preserving faculty, a discerning faculty, and a creative faculty. As for the faculty of memory it is such that the forms/images of thought (*khayālat al-fikr*) are organized, each distinct from the other, preserved in their places (*niṣābih*). Thus, if the poet wished, for example, to say something of the *nasīb* or *madīh* or any other topic, the poet finds the form (*khayaluhū*) that is suitable for that topic and which the poet recalls through the memory faculty which organizes the (*ṣuwar*) of things based upon their order in existence. So if the poet ponders (sets his mind) on picturing it (*taṣwwurihā*), it is as though he disclosed its truth/reality (*ḥaqāʾiqihā*). A lot of poets' thoughts occur through

[157] Ibid, 78. The way al-Qarṭājannī describes the three levels revolves around those poets with a strong capacity to picture the *kulliyyat* of speech and their intents and meanings. Although he says that the lesser poets are not poets at all, there seems to be the capacity for upward mobility. In the sections after this one he describes what elements a poet should look out for in composing verses in meter.

[158] Ibid, 38.

muddied images, and unorganized image-making, so if the poet ponders the attributes of a thing and its images were mixed up and looked alike, the poet ends up taking from that what is not appropriate for the purpose and placement needed.

Al-quwwa al-māʾiza not only governs the poet's capacity to seamlessly blend (*yulāʾim*) composition, style, and meter, it also presages a poet's taste, making it easier for the poet to discern beautiful arrangements and compositions. Interestingly, al-Qarṭājannī doesn't mention an imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mukhayyila*) nor a formative faculty (*al-quwwa al-muṣawwira*), which the *falāsifa* mention. Rather, *takhyīl* and *taṣwīr* govern four of the above capacities of a poet, and along with the *al-quwwa al-māʾiza* appear to be innate to a poet's ability to compose good poetry.

Ultimately, al-Qarṭājannī falls under the *tabʿ* camp of the debate. Indeed, he classifies poets based on a hierarchy—the highest class of poets can conceive of the full meanings of poetry and arrange them, while the other two classes are derivative, though he still considers them capable poets because they have all ten capacities at some level (those who don't have them are not poets at all).[159] This makes sense, too, when we remember that he believes that poets are a source of wisdom, a belief, he writes, that once used to govern people's appreciation of poetry, and yet (al-Qarṭājannī bemoans this point) poets have lost this status. Instead, the language of the market has permeated poems without containing any of what distinguishes it as poetry (*sawāsīyat al-ṣūq bi-kalām ṣuwarihī fī ṣurat al-shiʿr*).[160] This, coupled with an influx of poets who, al-Qarṭājannī claims, have no real knowledge of poetry has diminished its place in society.

Beyond the attention given to the poet's innate capacities, the *Minhāj* rescues a poet's understanding of human psychological states from the careless hold of *falsafa*. This is clear in the repeated return to the poet's ability to compose poetry in a way that moves the soul, but it's also at the crux of al-Qarṭājannī's own attention to the verses he cites. Al-Qarṭājannī, as poet and critic, believes that attending to psychological states in order to better and more effectively move the soul has been at the center of Arabic poetry from its beginnings in pre-Islamic Arabia.[161] This is why his aesthetics of the rare, the strange, the already known but newly encountered, have a sheen of the objective and conventional—that which causes one to be moved (*taʾthīr*) is embedded in the Arabic poetic tradition. His approach to poetry leans into the kind of work the *Minhāj* sets out to be: both a guide for the poet as well as the critic. These psychological states are operative at every stage of the *qaṣīda*, from knowing what benefits *ḥuẓūẓ al-nufūs* to the *ḥuẓūẓ al-badan*[162] to a certain knowledge of how to balance persuasive statements (usually associated with *khiṭāba*) and the evocative statement, which sets apart poets like al-Mutanabbī, who "beautifully placed persuasive statements amid his *takhyīlī* verses because he begins with

[159] Ibid, 179.

[160] Ibid, 109.

[161] Ibid, 266.

[162] Ibid, 144.

his *takhyīlī* verses and ends with persuasive ones."[163] The *Minhāj* serves the poet by alerting him/her to the ways poetry moves the reader.

Poetic Knowledge

Thus far, it might seem that poetry approaches a kind of knowing, and hence the possibility of something called 'poetic knowledge,' only in its relation to other kinds of knowing. That is, poetry might require previous knowledge (or preparedness), and is certainly an intellectual activity, activating memory and experience, and is in relation to this kind of knowledge through the faculties, but does not itself create knowledge. Franz Rosenthal in *Knowledge Triumphant* distills twelve broad categories from the many definitions of *ʿilm* across different premodern Arabic discourses and traditions:[164]

A. Knowledge is the process of knowing and identical with the knower and the known, or it is an attribute enabling the knower to know.
B. Knowledge is cognition (*maʿrifa*)
C. Knowledge is a process of "obtaining" (*d-r-k, ḥ-ṣ-l*) or "finding" through mental perception.
D. Knowledge is a process of clarification, assertion,and decision (*bayana*, *mayyaza*, *athbata*, *qaṭaʿa*)
E. Knowledge is a form (*ṣūra*), a concept or meaning (*maʿnā*), a process of mental formation and imagination (*taṣawwur* "perception) and/ or mental verification (*taṣdīq* "apperception").
F. Knowledge is belief.
G. Knowledge is remembrance, imagination, an image, a vision, an opinion.
H. Knowledge is a motion.
I. Knowledge is a relative term.
J. Knowledge may be defined in relation to action.
K. Knowledge is conceived as the negation of ignorance.
L. Knowledge is the result of an intuition coming from outside or as the result of introspection.

The classifications above reflect discourses ranging from *falsafa* to *taṣawwuf*, and thus the nebulous and expansive ways in which knowledge has been defined allow poetry to comfortably slot into any of them. And indeed, as Rosenthal and other scholars have pointed out, poetry has always been imbricated in notions of knowledge production. In the pre-Islamic poetic tradition, the words *shāʿir* and *shiʿr* meant "one who knows," and "knowledge" respectively, with the understanding that this was knowledge as a heightened form of reality and truth.[165] This belief in a poet who knows, has fallen out of favor by al-Qarṭājannī's time (a fact he as a

[163] Ibid, 264. Also see al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 276 for what happens psychologically at the conclusion of speech.

[164] Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant,* 6.

[165] Ibid.

poet-critic thoroughly laments), but which he certainly revives in his emphasis on the natural disposition of a poet to compose poetry through innate faculties and capacities. This emphasis is not on a poet's knowledge necessarily, but rather on the capacity to create, which, as a mental activity, is both constituted by what the poet already knows and from which something new can be created. Drawing out those qualities of poetic *takhyīl*, which I'll argue led poetry into the realm of knowledge, I focus on poetic knowledge as motion, defined in relation to its possibility to induce one to act, and arising primarily out of a visualization that activates the intellect through the visual dimensions of the poetic image.

Poetic *takhyīl* brings poetry into the orbit of knowledge when conceived in relation to both motion and action. Poetry moves (*tuḥarrik*)—to move its recipient to feel or act in a certain way—is contingent upon the poet's ability to maneuver and compose poetry in a way that is contingent upon *ḥusn al-takhyīl*.[166] And while one verse can certainly move the recipient, this characteristic isn't curtailed to the *qaṣīda*'s smallest unit, and can occur within the *qaṣīda* as a whole:

ان الحذاق من الشعراء المهتدين بطباعهم المسددة الى ضروب الهيئات التي يحسن بها موقع الكلام من النفس من جهة لفظ او معنى او نظم او أسلوب لما وجدوا النفوس تسأم التمادي على حال واحدة وتؤثر الانتقال من حال الى حال، ووجدوها تستريح الى استئناف الأمر بعد الأمر واستجداد الشيء بعد الشيء، وجدوها تنفر من الشيء الذي لم يتناه في الكثرة اذا أخذ مأخذ واحدا ساذجا ولم يتحيل فيما يستجد نشاط النفس لقبوله بتنويعه والافتتان في أنحاء الاعتماد به، وتسكن الى الشيء وان كان متناهيا في الكثرة إذا أخذ من شتى مآخذه التي من شأنها أن يخرج الكلام بها في معاريض مختلفة واحتيل في ما يستجد نشاط النفس لقبوله من تنويعه والافتتان في أنحاء الاعتماد.[167]

The clever poets—those who are guided by their natural dispositions, which lead them to the forms deemed beautiful by the soul in terms of wording, meaning, arrangement, or style—discovered that souls tired of persisting in one state and preferred to move from one state to another. They also discovered that [souls] were at ease with renewing a matter [after its been offered] and making new one thing [after its been given], and found that [the soul] recoiled from what was not communicated with variety and had only one simple form, in that which no artful means were attempted to implore the soul to accept and to be fascinated with different ways of recognizing it. The soul would move toward one thing even though its multiplicity was unlimited, if [the poet] took from among the many presentations and approaches that language could take what finds appeal with the soul such that it accepts it from its variety and is fascinated with the different ways of recognizing it.

Here, al-Qarṭajannī describes poetry moving in a kind of equilibrium—it provides options though the range of options is finite, and it doesn't remain glommed onto the same place, resulting in boredom, or what he calls elsewhere *saʾāmat al-nafs*. He also conveys his understanding of the longer literary tradition, a sense of how poetry has always worked. *Takhyīl* isn't an imposition onto the poetry of his time, it is a theory drawn out from what poets have always understood to be the way poetry works. Interestingly, the word that he uses to describe what a poet needs to do to maintain the recipient's attention, is *yaḥīl* whose root means *to change*

[166] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 63.

[167] Ibid, 266.

or alter; a term he uses throughout the *Minhāj* to describe the poet's handling. Yet, movement in poetry is also the transition internally within the verse, a lack of which endangers the poem's ability to move its listener, because the internal movement within a verse or passage sets up the larger effect that moves the recipient in their reading of the poem.

The language of movement is not only *ḥ-r-k*, but also *f-ʿ-l* because *takhyīl* causes the soul to move by reacting to the images produced—not only in psychological reaction, but in real action. At several junctures, al-Qarṭājannī uses this formulation, "*fiʿl al-shayʾ*" as he does here:

فأما طرق التهدي إلى تحسينات الأشياء وتقبيحاتها بالمحاكاة فإنه لما كان المقصود بالشعر إنهاض النفوس الى فعل شيء أو طلبه أو اعتقاده او التخلي عن فعله او طلبه او اعتقاده بما يخيل لها فيه من حسن او قبح وجلالة او خسة وجب أن تكون موضوعات صناعة الشعر الأشياء التي لها انتساب إلى ما يفعله الإنسان ويطلبه ويعتقده. والأقاويل الدالة على تلك الأشياء من حيث تخيل لها تلك الأشياء. فتحسن المحاكاة وتقبيحها إما أن يتعلقا بفعل أو اعتقاد، أو يتعلقا بالشيء الذي يفعل أو يعتقد.[168]

As for the ways towards beautifying things or making them ugly in representations, when what is meant in poetry is to awaken souls to do something, or to ask for it, or to believe it, or to abandon its action, demand, or belief in what is evoked of its goodness or ugliness, majesty, or meanness, it becomes necessary that the subjects of poetry must be the things that have some affiliation with what a person does, asks for, and believes. And those statements that indicate those things in terms of evoking them. Thus, making a representation beautiful or ugly is either related to an act or belief, or to the thing that one does or believes.

While he doesn't give examples of what form this action might take, or instances where such an action in fact occurred, his differentiation between belief (*ʾiʿtiqād*) and action shows that *f-ʿ-l* here is to be understood in addition to passive change.[169] Again, this all results from an encounter in which the poetic statement communicates something that appeals to the soul.

I want to end by returning to one of the many analogies to visual representation that al-Qarṭājannī employs to explain how poetry effectively achieves its aim. In one such instance, the poet-analogized-as-sculptor, which occurs several times in the *Minhāj*, al-Qarṭājannī describes how the poet uses *muḥākā* to represent a thing to the recipient:

وكما انى المحاكي باليد قد يمثل صورة الشيء نحتا أو خطا فتعرف المصور بالصورة، وقد يتخذ مرآة يبدي لك بها تمثال تلك الصورة فتعرف المصور أيضا بتمثال الصورة المتشكل في المرآة، فكذلك الشاعر تارة يخيل لك صورة الشيء بصفاته نفسه، وتارة يخيلها لك بصفات شيء آخر هي مماثلة لصفات ذلك الشيء. فلا بد في كل محاكاة من أن تكون جارية على أحد هذين الطريقين: إما أن يحاكي لك الشيء بأوصافه التي تمثل صورته، وإما بأوصاف شيء آخر تماثل تلك الأوصاف. فيكون ذلك بمنزلة ما قدمت من أنّ المحاكي للشيء، بأن يضع له تمثالا يعطي به صورة الشيء المحاكى، قد يعطي أيضا هيئة تمثال الشيء وتخطيطه بأن يتخذ له مرآة يبدي صورته فيها. فتحصل المعرفة بما لم يكن يعرف: إما برؤية تمثاله، وإما برؤية صورة تمثاله. فيعرف الشيء بما يحاكيه، أو بما يحاكي ما يحاكيه.[170]

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[168] Ibid, 93.

[169] Ibn ʿAmīrā gives a number of examples of poems that exerted a positive influence over caliphs and refers to the role of poetic *takhyīl* in encouraging virtuous deeds by way of eulogy and boasting (*al-Tanbīhāt*, 117-8).

[170] al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj Al-Bulaghāʾ*, 83.

And just as the imitator by hand may represent the form/image of a thing through engraving or calligraphy in such a way that you know the image of what is being depicted through its depiction, or he might bring to you a mirror that shows you the image of that model so that you know the image of what is being depicted through the image formed on the mirror, likewise, the poet sometimes imagines for you the image of a thing with its own attributes, and at other times he imagines it for you with the attributes of another thing that are similar to the attributes of that thing. Every *muḥākā* must be carried out in one of two ways: either the thing imitates with its descriptions that represent its image, or with the descriptions of another thing similar to those descriptions. So this would be similar to what was presented above, that the one who imitates a thing, by putting up a statue for it to give the image of the thing that is imitated, may also give the shape and outline of the statue of the thing by taking a mirror to it to show its image. One thus obtains knowledge of what was not known, either by seeing the statue, or by seeing the image of the statue. So the thing becomes known by what imitates it, or by what imitates what imitates it.

The last sentence stands out for the way al-Qarṭājannī puts *muḥākā* and *maʿrifa* in relation. Translating the latter term as recognition, would not capture the valences of the compelling statement: "*fa taḥṣul al-maʿrifa bi-mā lam yakun yuʿraf*." *Maʿrifa*, translated as knowledge,[171] however, allows *takhyīl* to become the poet's way of schematizing sensory experience in order to produce (*ḥ-s-l*) understanding. The way the poet does so is either directly or indirectly: the statue being the poet's direct evocation of the desired image, and the mirror being the poet's indirect evocation of an image through the attributes of another thing. What's appealing about this analogy is the connection it makes between *timthāl* and *tamthīl*.[172] The term aptly reminds us of the apparent and material nature of representation—its visuality—in the nearness of the term used for both the sculpted image and the one carved out of language.

[171] According to Rosenthal, the terms *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa* were often used as plain synonyms, but were also differentiated enough to be used for defining each other (*Knowledge Triumphant*, 4).

[172] Harb explains that *tamthīl*, "in the sense of "poetic analogy" makes one "see" a meaning by "enacting" it and making it visible through imagery (*Arabic Poetics*, 93). Heinrichs mentions that, according to the theologian Abū Ḥafṣ, *takhyīl* is a special kind of *tamthīl* ("Takhyīl and its Traditions," 234). For al-Jurjānī, failure to distinguish between *istiʿāra* based on *tamthīl* and that based on *tashbīh* has theological implications—excessive literalism in interpreting the Quran and thus accepting anthropomorphism (Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, 85)

Chapter 2: How the Andalusī *Qaṣīda* Sees?

A poet argues with his lover. He writes a poem about an apology. It is a wispy apology because it appears to him in a dream. His lover has sent her phantom to him "when awake he would not reconcile." Her phantom finds the poet's phantom, but he remains unmoved. If Abū Nuwās wanted to turn over a common poetic motif (and knowing his history within the Arabic poetic tradition he most likely did), his choice to make the *ṭayf al-khayāl* unmoving feels almost tongue-in-cheek.[173] Even in its impassivity Abū Nuwās's *khayāl* registers a transformation of the conventional. When the *khayāl* makes its appearance in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, it is both within reach and elusive—within reach because the poet sees the image; out of reach because it presents a nearly irretrievable loss. And this vision, how does it impact the poet—will it make the poet go mad? Will it frighten or call to the poet? Will the vision be nightmarish or comforting? Regardless of the form it takes, the *khayāl's* appearance moves the poet, often in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* moves onto the *raḥīl* section, and barring that, at least it would have moved the poet emotionally.[174]

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[173] Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān Abū Nuwās*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir lil-Ṭibāʿa wa-al-Nashr, 1962).

دست له طيفها كيما تصالحه في النوم حين تأبى الصلح يقظانا
فلم يجد عند طيفي طيفها فرحا ولا رثى لتشكيه ولا لانا

She sent to him her phantom in order to make up
in sleep when awake he would not reconcile
But her phantom did not find with my phantom any favor nor
lament to complain, and remained unmoved.

[174] Renate Jacobi believes the *ṭayf al-khayāl* was originally conceived as a "real" apparition, and that the concept of a dream vision "was in fact a secondary rational interpretation of the phenomenon. According to Renate Jacobi, besides frightening the poet, "the *khayāl* brings back memories of the past and excites former passions. Thus its function is similar to that of the "deserted campsite"; it reminds the poet of something he wants to forget." The nightmare quality is suggested, according to Jacobi, in verbs like *iʿtara*, meaning "to befall" or "to render insane."

This chapter will be about the kinds of seeing implied by the *ṭayf al-khayāl*.[175] The phantom anchors my thinking through the interplay between metaphorical and literal vision, between the physical and mental world that the *qaṣīda* navigates in an attempt to affect a material change in the poet's and patron's world. I show the different ways that the Andalusī *khayāl* guides and structures the recipient's gaze, in a way that takes into account, and extends, the *qaṣīda*'s communicative potential.[176] Despite its immaterial form, the *khayāl* makes things happen, conventionally in the poet's departure and the *qaṣīda's* transition into the *raḥīl*. In other words, the *khayāl* registers the connection between *seeing* and movement (understood in all its dimensions to include action or aesthetic change). In my reading below, the poetic history of the *khayāl* is crucial. In its reiteration, the poet performs a kind of conventional renewal that draws on the confrontation with an image that was understood to be transformative. Ultimately, I argue that through the interplay between an attempt to rearticulate a formal convention and to inscribe the material world into language at the figural level, the *khayāl* can be read as a site for the *qaṣīda's* socio-ethical and aesthetic investments.[177]

The Andalusī *khayāl* in this chapter hovers over the *madīḥ*, or praise poem. Because the *khayāl* figures seeing in the *qaṣīda*, I turn in the *madā'iḥ* of Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Khafāja (d. 1138 A.D.), known as *al-jannān* ("the gardener of al-Andalus"), and Abu al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Hurayra al-ʿUtbī (d. 1126 A.D.), better known as al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī ("the blind poet of Tuleda"), to invocations to the patron to see what the poet wants seen. I offer a reading of the poems below with an eye to the ways the poet strategically shifts the patron's focal point as the *qaṣīda* progresses. Both poets make use of the *qaṣīdat al-madḥ*'s affordances—a genre in which the modes of address and vocabulary have acquired symbolic power—in displaying the attributes of the patron.[178] I read in their explicit invocations for the patron to "see" and

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"The *Khayāl* Motif in Early Arabic Poetry." *Oriens* 32 (1990): 53-58. To this point, Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 1044 A.D.), in his work *Ṭayf al-khayāl*, cites Abū Tammām, agreeing with him that one of the *khayāl's maʿānī* is of an appearance of one's thought—"Sleep, for the *khayāl* has not visited you, rather in your thinking you visited the *ṭayf al-khayāl*." al-Murtaḍā Sharīf, *Ṭayf al-khayāl*, ed. Muḥammad Kaylānī, n.d., 15.

[175] Marlé Hammond notes that the analogy between the *ṭayf* and the philosophical (specifically Fārābian) concept of *takhyīl*. She asks "is it possible that his *takhyīl* was influenced by the poetic trope of the phantom beloved?" If so, it would lend, according to Hammond, a "'culturally authentic' dimension to the origins of the concept as it was elaborated in Arabic poetics" in van Gelder and Hammond. *Takhyīl*, 277.

[176] The *qaṣīdat al-madḥ's* communicative aspect has been much studied under the rubric of Speech Act Theory primarily by Beatrice Gruendler in her monograph on Ibn al-Rūmī, *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn Al-Rūmī and the Patron's Redemption.* Similarly, Rebecca Gould in her article, "The Much-Maligned Panegyric: Toward a Political Poetics of Premodern Literary Form" demonstrates how the structure of the panegyric subverts a patronage-based economy through its glorification of poetry in the guise of enacting the patron's elevation.

[177] In this, I follow Hassanly Ladha in claiming that the *nasīb* becomes a site that "acknowledges the performative power of language not merely to mirror, but literally to "build" or inscribe the world." Ladha, "Allegories of Ruin," 90. While Ladha's interests lie in the articulation of architectonic forms in the *qaṣīda* (both in its structural and linguistic dimensions), I reframe this part of Ladha's claims as inscribing/forming the world not through "building" metaphors, but a visual vocabulary that draws attention to its own modes of vision/visuality (the *ṭayf*, reports of seeing, imagining etc.).

[178] For more on the *qaṣīdat al-madḥ's* role as a ceremonial insignia of power see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "The Qaṣīdah and the Poetics of Ceremony: Three ʻĪd Panegyrics to the Cordoban Caliphate," in *Languages of Power in Islamic Spain*, ed. Ross Brann, Occasional Publications of the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Program of Jewish Studies, Cornell University 3 (Bethesda: CDL, 1997), 1–48.

"imagine" a poetic mode of address that aims to evoke a particular view of the world through the personal seeing and imagining of the poet. This, I claim, is done through the use of the image of the *ṭayf al-khayāl*, as well as through different iterations of the *kh-y-l* root in the poem. In what follows, I show how Ibn Khafāja and al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī's praise poems make available a visual perceptual experience through the *khayāl*.

Why Andalusī madīḥ?

Poetry of the ninth and tenth centuries under the Caliphate of Cordoba (756-1009 A.D.) was still attempting to find its footing. Poets, many who were travelers from the Mashriq that had settled in al-Andalus, turned to ʿAbbāsid poetry for a blueprint with which to approach the *qaṣīda*. One of the earliest figures in this poetic scene is the poet Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (d. 940 A.D.). We have his *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd* to thank for some of the earliest extant Andalusī poetry. However, while early Andalusī poetry contained examples of emulation —a practice known as muʿarada that was to continue on for much of the Andalusī poetic tradition—this idea of Andalusī fascination with, and hewing to, all things Mashriq followed the Andalusī tradition even into scholarship on its poetry well into the twentieth century. Yet, al-Andalus's poetry is not merely a derivative of ʿAbbāsid poetry.[179] This is clear when we consider the early development of a genre in al-Andalus, which took elements of the *ghazal* and *nasīb* and adapted it into the colloquial language of the region, a genre whose name would sound the doubling of these two forms in the *sh* sound at its center. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbīh was one of the early poets who composed *muwashshaḥāt*.[180] Despite their popularity, the *ghazal* and *muwashshaḥa* weren't favored in the Umayyad court, which preferred the praise poem's to consolidate the power of an expanding caliphate.

In the eleventh century, in the wake of the Umayyads' declining rule, poets found themselves in a time of drastic change, including the rise of *shuʿūbiyya* and Andalusī pride, the appearance of fiefdoms known as *ṭawāʾif* after the caliphate's fall, and the increase in the *rithāʾ al-mudun* as Andalusī cities were lost to Christian forces.[181] While this paints a tumultuous

[179] Stetkevych, "The Qaṣīdah and the Poetics of Ceremony", 23. Stetkeyvch examines the *qaṣīda* as it intersects with, and reinforces, power. She argues that the function of the panegyric *qaṣīda* as a symbol of allegiance to the caliph as well as its appropriation as an insignia of power and authority is both essential and formative of an Andalusī lyric. She reads three *qaṣīdas* including one by Ibn Darrāj al-Qasṭallī (d. 1030 A.D.) examining the way historical events are poeticized and thus mythologized through their incorporation into the larger topos of a ritual ceremony, namely the recurring *ʿĪd* festival. By incorporating these events into "sacred time" these *qaṣīdas* function as "ritual of homage particular to distinct historical moments," but also as vehicles that validate the event. She also discusses the role of *muʿāraḍa* throughout, citing Iḥsān ʿAbbās, who addresses this issue in his *Tārīkh al-adab al-andalusī: ʿaṣr siyyādat Qurṭuba*. Imitation and competition here are a means of appropriating insignias of power (the *qaṣīda* of the East as well as the poets of the East are those insignias of power).

[180] In addition to the *ghazal*, other genres abound, such as the *urjūza*, a tradition of epic poetry in both the Romance and Arabic contexts which developed and reached its zenith in al-Andalus around the 10th century. For more on this see Monroe's analysis of a historical *urjūza* by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in James Monore, "The Historical *Arjūza* of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, a Tenth-Century Hispano-Arabic Epic Poem," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91, no. 1 (1971): 67–95.

[181] Elinson's most compelling argument is that Ibn Shuhayd's *rithāʾ* describes the loss of Cordoba as the loss of an Arabic literary culture—it is a loss not just of the city, but of empire and the status of the poet. See Alexander

picture of the time, poetry patronage was not difficult to come by for the discerning poet. There was a demand for poets among the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif* who strove to establish their legitimacy, just as the Umayyad caliphate had, through the political potency of the *qaṣīda*. Some of the most well known poets of al-Andalus composed poetry in this era including Ibn Ḥazm (known famously for his treatise on love, the *Ṭawq al-Hammām*, d. 1064 A.D.), Ibn Darrāj al-Qastallī (d. 1030 A.D.), Ibn Shuhayd (d.1035 A.D.), Samuel ibn Naghrillah (d. 1056 A.D.), Ibn Gabirol (d. 1058/70 A. D.), Ibn Zaydūn (d. 1071 A.D.), Abū Bakr Ibn ʿAmmār (d.1086 A.D.), Wallāda bint al-Mustakfī (d. 1091 A.D.), and al-Muʿtamid Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 1095 A.D.).

Al-Andalus experienced another bout of upheaval in the twelfth century as the Murābiṭūn (1091-1145 A.D.), the Berber/Amazīgh rulers from Morocco, took power after the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif's* short reign. As had happened previously, the tumult bled into the poetic scene though it did not hinder it. James Monroe characterizes the poetic landscape of al-Andalus during this era as one under pressure to adapt to the decline of courtly patronage in light of a disinterested ruling elite.[182] The shift, which Alexander Elinson registers as one toward the *maqāma*, marks a change in al-Andalus's relationship to the poetic past "from one of respect, to a more complex and uneasy one."[183] Al-Andalus before Ibn Khafāja and al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī's time had faced the East for guidance—the poets had turned to the work of *muḥdath* poets, and the critics had leaned on ʿAbbāsid rhetorical criticism for standards by which to judge Andalusī poetry. Al-Andalus in the middle of the twelfth century had a grasp on its literary identity.[184] Both Ibn Khafāja and al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī's work demonstrates an ease and adaptability with the genre of *madīḥ*.

We saw in the previous chapter that *takhyīl* was connected to praise poems early on. One of the first definitions of *takhyīl* was "giving the impression of praising while lampooning and vice versa" by Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī. The *takhyīl*/ *khayāl* root gives me another less evident connection between seeing and praise—the cloud in the *kh-y-l* definition. As I mentioned in the

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Elinson, "Loss Written in Stone: Ibn Shuhayd's Rithaʾ for Cordoba and its place in the Arabic Elegiac Tradition," *Transforming Loss into Beauty: Essays on Arabic Literature and Culture in Honor of Magda Al-Nowaihi*, (American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 79–114.

[182] James Monroe and Mark Pettigrew, "The Decline of Courtly Patronage and the Appearance of New Genres in Arabic Literature: the Case of the *Zajal*, the *Maqāma*, and the Shadow Play," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 34, no. 1 (2003): 138–77. See also "Hispano-Arabic Poetry during the Almoravid Period: Theory and Practice" in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lynn White, Jr., (University of California Press, 1974), 65-98. In which he concludes that the *zajal* became conventional and high literature succeeded in reshaping popular literature in its image.

[183] Alexander Elinson, *Looking Back at al-Andalus: The Poetics of Loss and Nostalgia in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Literature*, (Brill, Leiden, 2009), 151.

[184] Ibn Khafāja scholarship in the Western academy, perhaps aiming to individuate the Andalusī tradition from its ʿAbbāsid counterpart, consistently investigates his poetry for individuality and unique style. These scholars describe a so-called "Khafājī" style that renders the natural world in terms of a subjective, human experience of it, and Ibn Khafāja does this, these scholars assert, through an experimental syntax and a sophisticated use of the rhetorical style of *badīʿ*. See Arie Schippers, "The Rise of the Individual Style in Andalusian Arabic Poetry: The Case of Ibn Khafaja (1056-1138)," *Fragmenta*, volume 3, 2009, 71–80, and "Mannerism and Individuality: the poetry of Ibn Khafāja (1058-1139), Moshe Ibn Ezra (1055-1138) and Yehudah Ha-Levi (1074-1141)," *Ben Ever la-Arav*, volume 4, issue 7, 2008.; Raymond Scheindlin, "Is There a Khafājian Style? Recent Studies on Ibn Khafāja"; and James Monroe, "Hispano-Arabic Poetry during the Almoravid Period: Theory and Practice," Medieval and Renaissance Studies, edited by Lynn White, Jr., University of California Press, 1974. Jayyusi and Marín, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, 382.

introduction, the Arabic literary tradition made rain clouds a poetic convention for praising the patron or ruler. My choice to focus on the *madīḥ* over other Andalusī poetic genres comes down to the social, political, economic and ethical aspects of poetry which find their nexus in the praise poem and the structure of patronage it enables. The *qaṣīdat al-madḥ*, unlike the uniquely Andalusī genres of the *muwashshaḥa* and *zajal*, obscures its socio-ethical role beneath its politico-economic one (but I want to stress, here, that the praise poem is not overly determined by the economic component as we'll see soon). The other reason I focus on the *madīḥ* is more aesthetic—the value that praise poetry, by its nature, gives to description. Akiko Moytoshi Sumi has argued that *waṣf* in the context of *madīḥ* becomes itself a form of praise—description as a mode to extol the qualities and attributes of a patron.[185] Sumi explains how the *qaṣīda* functions as the ruler's image, its crucial work is to convey a "portrait" of the patron. As such the *qaṣīda* was an image of the patron. Even though she examines poetry in its relation to visual art, for Sumi, the visuality of the *qaṣīda* is a prosthetic, revealing the limits of a culture averse to the visual as understood in terms of the representational image. As far as we're concerned here, a too-constrained view of the contours of "visual description" obscures our understanding of the *qaṣīda* as a form capable of making real change happen. The work of description in the *madīḥ*, then, will serve in what follows as a launching point for thinking about how the poet directs the patron's vision. In route, we'll have to expand the conventional link between poetic image and description.

Section 1: Ibn Khafāja's *khayāl*

Ibn Khafāja's life, spent in Shuqr near Valencia, was bisected by two reigns—the *mulūk al-tawāʾif* and then the *murābiṭūn*—and his work by two phases, which he describes in the introduction of his *dīwān*, arranged and collated by him, and which has survived intact. The two phases, which do not mirror the ethos of the two political states, are first, his early work, in which he exclusively composed love poetry following in the style poets like al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 1016 A.D.), ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Ṣūrī (d. 1028 A.D.), Mihyār al-Daylamī (d. 1037 A.D.), and al-Mutanabbī (d. 965 A.D.). After a self-imposed hiatus, and the arrival of the *murābiṭūn* to the Iberian Peninsula, with Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn (d. 1066 A.D.) in command, Ibn Khafāja entered the second phase as he was enfolded into Ibn Tāshufīn's court. This is when he composed the *madāʾiḥ* that are the focus of this chapter. In the introduction to his *dīwān*, he not only scoffs at the nobility whom he had previously refused to panegyrize, but also calls out a still-lingering belief that poetry is deceitful:

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[185] Arguably, the first place one encounters poetic visuality is in discussions of *waṣf* by Ibn al-Rashīq in the *al-ʻUmda fī maḥāsin al-jazīra*, which describes *waṣf* as the transformation of hearing into seeing that denotes both revelation (*kashf*) and demonstration (*iẓhār*). For Ibn al-Rashīq, most of poetry falls under the category of *wasf*. He claims that the best kinds of *waṣf* represent the object in such a way that the listener envisions it with his/her own eyes. In the chapter dedicated to the subject, he offers two verses by al-Nābigha to demonstrate how the best description gives a visual form to the eye.

Because Sumi is interested in interarts theory, she translates *waṣf* as ekphrasis, following a definition of the latter offered by Patricia Cox Miller in the introduction to "The Poetry of Thought" as "composing descriptions that bring a particular subject so vividly before the eyes of the listener that they were transformed into a spectator." Akiko Motoyoshi Sumi, "Poetry and Portraiture: A Double Portrait in an Arabic Panegyric by Ibn Zamrak," *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry: Waṣf, Ekphrasis, and Interarts Theory,* Brill, 2004, 155-194.

واني استرسلت في إثبات ما صدر عني من ذلك في صدر عمري، ومبتدإ أمري، استرسال ثقة بإغضاء أهل الفضل، وحملة السيادة والنبل. ولم أحتفل بنقد أقوام، في مساليخ أنعام، يراءون الناس ولا يذكرون الله إلا قليلا، ولا يعلمون، مع ذلك، أنه يستجاز في صناعة الشعر، لا في صناعة النثر، أن يقول فيه «إني فعلت» و«إني صنعت» من غير أن يكون وراء ذلك حقيقة، فإن الشعر مأخذ وطريقة، وإذا كان القصد فيه التخييل، فليس القصد فيه الصدق، ولا يعاب فيه الكذب، ولكل مقام مقالٌ. [186]

And I carried on to set down—what I had composed [of poetry] at the beginning of my life, and at the beginning of my concerns [in poetry] confident that the wealthy would be inattentive while the leaders and nobility would engage. I did not concern myself with [or celebrate] the criticism of those in sheep's skin who act hypocritically towards others and rarely remember God, and who, despite that, do not know that it is permissible in poetry, not in prose, for one to say "I did" and "I made" without there being any literal truth behind it. For poetry is a path and an approach**,** and if its purpose is image-evocation (*takhyīl*), then its purpose is not truthfulness and lying. Therefore, any mendacity it contains should not be censured. Each station has its own means of expression.

Ibn Khafāja sidesteps the debate over poetry's truthfulness by pointing out that poetry's aim is the evocation of images rather than the production of truth (*wa idhā kāna al-qaṣdu fī-hi al-takhyīl fa-laysa al-qaṣdu fī-hī al-ṣidq*).[187] While Ibn Khafāja doesn't elaborate on his use of *takhyīl* (the critics had much more to say about as the first chapter showed), he nevertheless reveals the stronghold takhyīl had in the Andalusī tradition. In the rest of his introduction, Ibn Khafāja cites examples, in a reflective attention to his own work, of the different kinds of poems he composed over his lifetime, often drawing parallels with poets like Miḥyār and al-Ṣūrī, and thus reminds his raiders of his place in a broader poetic tradition.

One of the most translated of Ibn Khafāja's poems into English is a *bāʾiyya* (poem rhyming in the letter *bāʾ*) in which the poet's speaker addresses a mountain. The poem begins with a resonant verse, that employs *jināS*: "By your life, if it's the strong south winds (*al-najāʾib*), or the backs of excellent camels (*al-janāʾib*) that quickens my saddle."[188] Beyond the linguistic doubling of *jināS*, Ibn Khafāja's poems have a tendency toward the double image—often strikingly involving the eye.

يُقَلِّبُ منّي العَزمُ إنسانَ مُقلَةٍ لها الأُفْقُ جَفنٌ وَالظَّلامُ سَوادُ[189]

Determination causes me to turn around like the pupil of an eye

[186] I refer to the edition edited by Muṣṭafa Ghāzī and based on the manuscript extant at the San Lorenzo library in the Escorial. Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, 10.

[187] Iḥsān ʿAbbas considers Ibn Khafāja to be one of the first poet-critics after a period known as *fatrat al-khawf min al-ḍayāʿ* (the fear of perdition) a period in which there was a marked lack of enthusiasm for poetry and in the weakened state of poetry, there was a weak *naqd* tradition. ʿAbbas understands Ibn Khafāja's use of *takhyīl* as a way to steer away from moralizing in poetry. ʿAbbas, *Tārīkh al-naqd al-adabī*, 496-499.

[188] Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, 215.

بِعَيشِكَ هَلْ تَدْرِي أَهُوجُ الْجَنائبِ تَخُبُّ بِرَحْلي أمْ ظُهورُ النَجائبِ

[189] Ibid, 132.

which has the horizon as its eyelid and the darkness its iris.

This verse superimposes one image onto another, as a way to concretize an abstract concept like determination. The doubling hinges on the double meaning of *insān*—both human being and pupil[190]—which gives the image of an eye looking out at the horizon and the speaker himself as an object of determination. The grammatical construction makes determination (*al-ʿazm*) the subject of the verb and the poet its object, and turns the poet into a literal instrument of sight. Elsewhere in the *dīwān*, we get this image:

وإسوَدٍ يَسبَحُ في لجَّةٍ لا تَكتُمُ الحَصباءَ غَدرانُها

كأنَّما في شَكلِها مُقلَةٌ زَرقاءُ والأسوَدُ إنْسانُها

How many a black [man] is swimming in a fathomless sea
[so limpid] its waters don't conceal the pebbles
As if its shape were a blue eye
and the black [man] its pupil[191]

Establishing first the water's clarity, Ibn Khafāja invokes both a literal and metaphorical clarity in the image of a man as an iris in blue water shaped like an eye. Sweeping the two images together hinges, again, on the double meaning of *insān*. Yet, while it seems that this is merely an example of a topic and analogue extended over two verses, the pebbles emphasize the outsized image of a human pupil—both are perceptible by different means, the first due to the water's clarity, the second becomes perceptible as a result of language. Put differently, the second verse which constitutes a specific interpretation (a poetic reading) of the first verse hinges on a third term that comes out of the latter—the clarity of the water in the first verse allows for the interpretive move of the second. In their associative quality, these verses call on the recipient to hold onto two distinct images—one literal and the other figurative.

Arguably, one of the most potent instances of doubling in the Arabic literary tradition is the *ṭayf al-khayāl*, which is both the beloved's embodiment as well as a thing distinct in itself. The *khayāl* as embodiment is superimposed both visually and linguistically onto the beloved as a poetic idea (*maʿnā*) as well as form (*ṣūra*). I use "superimpose" as a way to acknowledge the *khayāl* as a visible image, a gesture, if you will, to something the poet actually *sees*, which the poet wants the recipient to see as well. The *khayāl* is not a metaphor, but instead a visual double entendre in which the image of a thing and what it ostensibly conjures are held together momentarily in the mind. Understood in this way, the *khayāl* is a trace, the imprint of a particular sense experience superimposed back onto the world from which it was experienced, but this time with a poetic difference in a kind of "grafting" of language onto the world.[192] Twelfth-century

[190] Or the image reflected in the black's of the pupil when something faces it. Edward Lane, Arabic-English lexicon, entry for *i-n-s*.

[191] Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, 363.

[192] I am thinking here alongside Hassanly Ladha, who writes that the "the phantom-ruin—the *aṭlāl* or *khayāl*—thus reveals itself to be not simply a trope, but also the grafting of language in the world, the inscription of history on nature." Ladha, "Allegories of Ruin," 115.

Andalusī poets, when they employ the *khayāl*, are centuries and miles removed from its origin in the desert, and so have a different relation to it than the pre-Islamic poet. Yet in each reiteration, the *khayāl* retains its perceptual quality, and at the same time works on a variety of conceptual levels: praise, loss, vulnerability among others.

Ibn Khafāja reaches for the *khayāl* as often in his *madīḥ* as he does in his love poetry. In his poems, the *ṭayf al-khayāl* flits in out of verses, reminds the poet of his beloved (the patron), becomes the object of the poet's disappointment, and even assumes the position of the *mamdūḥ's* rival.[193] Poem 130 in the *dīwān* begins with a short *nasīb*. The poet, noting the *mamdūḥ*'s absence, renders his response in an image of tears that have become "fluent" after having been speechless:

1 أما وخيالٍ قَد أطافَ فَسَلَّما لقَد هاجَني وَجْدٌ أناخَ فَخيَّما

2 وَأذكَرني عَهداً تَقَادَمَ باللِّوى وَعَصراً خَلاَ بينَ الكَثيب إلى الحِمى

3 وَحَطَّ قِناعَ الصَّبرِ والليلُ عاكِفٌ فَأَفصَحَ دَمْعٌ كَانَ بالأمسِ أَعجَما[194]

1 How many a *khayāl* has encircled and greeted me,
a burning passion, which brought me to my knees to encamp, has stirred me
2 It reminded me of a time long past in the curving sand
and of a time gone by from the sand dune to the protected pasture
3 It put down the mask of patience while the night persevered,
and tears that had been yesterday speechless spoke clearly

Ibn Khafāja does not make the *khayāl* here a stand-in for the *mamdūḥ*. The phantom brings with it a taunt, a reminder of a loss amplified by distance and by the vagaries of an unfulfilled promise. The effect, which goes full bore in its use of *wāw rubba* ("oh, how many"), is nearly too much for the speaker to bear, who leans harder on depictions of the inanimate to articulate the pain. What's interesting here is that verses bring to their description of tears the same terminology *faṣīḥ* and *aʿjam* that one would use to describe the tongue—a movement that the poet presumably hopes to elicit from the reader. Silence which turns into feeling. Instead, the *khayāl* succeeds where the poet has seemingly failed. The *khayāl* has moved the poet to tears.

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[193] In a *madīḥ* written to Abu Ishāq on the occasion of his conquest of Qūriyya:

وَيَلزَمُهُ النَّصْرُ حُبّا لَهُ فَإنْ سَارَ سَارَ وَإنْ حَلَّ حَلَّ
فما يَطرُقُ الطيْفُ غابا له وَلو كان أغْفى به أو غَفَلْ

Victory accompanies him out of love for him,
whenever he moves, it moves, and whenever he lands, it lands
So that the phantom does not enter at night a forest he owns,
Even if he were asleep or heedless in it

Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, 103.

[194] Ibid, 172.

In a one hundred verse *madīḥ* to Abu Yaḥyā Ibn Ibrahīm, Ibn Khafāja begins the *nasīb* with a striking set of images coordinated and made visible by the *khayāl*:

1 سَمَحَ الخَيالُ على النَّوى بمَزارِ والصُّبحُ يَمسَحُ عَن جَبينِ نَهارِ

2 فَرَفَعتُ من نارى لِضيفٍ طارِقٍ يَعشو إليها من خَيالٍ طارِ

3 رَكِبَ الدُّجى أَخشِن بها من مَركَبٍ وطَوى السُّرى أحسِن به من سار

4 وأناخَ حَيثُ دُمُوعُ عيني مَنهَلٌ يَروى وَحيثُ حَشايَ مَوقِدُ نار

5 وَسَقى فأرْوى غُلَّةً من ناهِلٍ أروى بجانِحتيهِ زَندَ أُوار

6 خَلَعَ الهوى ثَوْباً عَليه منَ الضَنى قَد شَفَّ عَنهُ فَهوَ كاسٍ عارِ

7 يَلوى الضُّلُوعَ من الوُلُوعِ لخَطرَةٍ مِن شيمِ بَرقٍ أو شَميمِ عَرارِ

8 والليلُ قد نَضَحَ النَّدى سِربالَهُ فانْهَلَّ دَمْعُ الطَّلِّ فَوقَ صِدارِ

19 لَبِسَ المَجَرَّ على السَّوَادِ فَخِلتُهُ مُتَرَهِّباً قَد شَدَّ مِن زُنَّارِ[195]

1 The *khayāl* allowed distance to visit me
as the dawn wiped the day's forehead
2 So I raised my fire brand to a guest visiting in the night
heading towards it [seeing it] from a passing shadow
3 He rode the darkness, how rough he rode, unlike any camel
and folded the night journey's distance, how well he did, unlike any night rider
4 He came down where my tears are a wellspring
that flow forth, and where my insides are kindling for fire
5 He watered and satiated the burning thirst of one longing for it
and kindled with his two wings the blazing flint
6 He cast off desire like clothes, exhaustion having worn it out
and it shone through, revealing him as a bare vessel
7 Ribs bend with passion from a passing thought,
from observing a flash of lightning or the fragrance of the *ʿarār* plant
8 The dew sprinkled over night's garment,
so the dew's tears poured down upon my vest
9 [The *khayāl*] donned the galaxy's blackness, so I imagined it
a monk, pulling tight on his waist belt.

In each of these first verses, are paired images—the *khayāl* and the dawn (further paralleled in the echo between *samaḥa* and *masaḥa*), the fire and the *khayāl*, the ship and the night journey, the tears as wellspring and the bowels as kindling. The *khayāl* has flown to the poet and engaged him in an exercise of poetic depiction. This is a different *khayāl* than the one

[195] Ibid, 33. This is the second poem in the self-arranged *dīwān* and is composed in the *kāmil* meter.

that appears to the pre-Islamic poet. While the pre-Islamic *khayāl* evoked loss and absence, this *khayāl* not only brings news of proximity and nearness—of time and place as *mazār* refers to both—but also replenishes the poet's physical and emotional scarcity. The poet is thirsty, the *khayāl* offers him water, the poet is yearning, the *khayāl* "kindled with his two wings," the burning of the poet's desire. This *khayāl* appears as an image of abundance. Its interactions with the poet feed its physical form, which Ibn Khafāja lingers with over two verses. In verse six, the *khayāl* throws desire off like a garment and becomes transparent to the poet. In the following verse, the *khayāl* "bends ribs" (*ḍulūʿ*) evoking a formal movement (a kind of aesthetic rapture) at "observing lightning" and sensing the "fragrance of the 'arar plant." In verses eight and nine, the images in each hemistich assume a relation of cause and effect (the poet's tears, adduced to the night dew (*al-ṭal*), are doubly evocative because of the echo of the *aṭlāl*, the place where the pre-Islamic poet conventionally stood to cry; the donning of darkness as garment causes the poet to think the *khayāl* is a monk). Intriguingly, the ninth verse employs the verb "*khiltu*" (more on this verb in section two of this chapter), as a way to both distance and make near the *khayāl's* appearance. The use of *khiltu* in this instance draws out something about the *khayāl* that moves it out of the realm of standard *nasīb* imagery and extends to it an equivalence not often given to the *ṭayf*—that of a monk. Through the *khayāl*, the image-making poetics of the poem become available to the poet.

If the reader had been swept up by the *khayāl's* energy and vibrancy, the poet appears in the last verse with his own "seeing" to remind the heedless reader of the poem's deliberate maker. With this reminder in tow, the next nine verses return to depicting the natural world as *seen* through the *khayāl*.

10 وَوَرَاءَ أسْتارِ الدُّجى مُتَمَلْمِلٌ يُلقِي بِيُمْنى تارَةً ويَسارِ

11 ما طَالَعَتهُ بَرقَةٌ نَجدِيَةٌ إلا اجتَلَتها نَظرَةٌ استِعبارِ

12 مُتَرَقِّبٌ رُسُلَ الرِّياحِ عَشيَّةً بِمَساقِطِ الأَنواءِ والأنوَارِ

13 وَمَجَرِّ ذَيلِ غَمامَةٍ لَبِسَتْ بِه وَشىَ الحَبابِ مَعاطِفُ الأنْهارِ

14 خَفَقَتْ ظِلالُ الأيكِ فيه ذَوَائِباً وَارْتَجَّ رِدفاً مَائجُ التَّيارِ

15 وَلَوى القَضِيبُ هُناكَ جيداً أتلَعا قَد قَبَّلَتهُ مَباسِمُ النُّوارِ

16 باكَرْتُهُ والغيمُ قِطعَةُ عَنبَرٍ مَشبوبَةٌ والبَرقُ لفحَةُ نارِ

17 والرِّيحُ تَلطِمُ فيه أردافَ الربى لَعِباً وتَلثِمُ أوجُهَ الأزهارِ

18 ومَنابِرُ الأشْجارِ قَدْ قامَت بها خُطَباءُ مُفصِحَةٌ من الأطيارِ

10 And behind the curtains of night, one is muttering
holding forth, sometimes the right hand, other times the left
11 A lightning bolt from *najd* has not appeared to him
except that a tearful look contemplated it
12 Nightly, he looks out for the messengers of the wind
in the settings of storms that predict rain

13 He wore the tail of a cloud (like) decoration
(like) bubbles of water at the bends of rivers
14 The shadows of thickets trembled in him (like) tufts of hair
and immediately, the swelling currents trembled
15 The branches bent there (like) a craning neck
the blossom's mouth kissed
16 I went to him in the morning, the clouds were pieces of amber
lit up, and lightening a lick of fire
17 As the wind struck against the haunches of the hills
playfully and kissed the faces of flowers
18 And in the minarets of trees
eloquent sermons rose up from the birds

If, as I said, the *khayāl* is a vehicle of the poet's vision, the poem makes the patron see at several levels: the poet makes the patron see, the patron sees himself as the cause of the poet's composition, and the poem being seen a certain way is also a result of the poet's composition. The poem manages all three layers. Verse eleven makes the shift that takes the reader out of the entanglement of the first two levels by gesturing to the natural world's attention to the *khayāl* and to the poet's composition. At the hinge of the term *istiʿbār*, which connotes expression, tears, and crossings, the patron's see the visible phenomena in the poetic expressions. Verses thirteen to fifteen sketch the *khayāl* through deliberate figurative description (which you can tell from my insertion of 'like' in the translation). The personified night, lightning bolt, clouds, and wind, are laid out by a different logic from that of the earlier verses—an image given in the first hemistich makes possible an interpretation of a natural phenomenon in the second.[196] The poet emphasizes the *khayāl as* an appearance (left and right hand appearing in the night sky), as well as the storm clouds (tufts of hair that trembled), all of which, in the end, render the poet an observer to the theater of the *khayāl.* We get a repetition of images (of lightning, clouds, flowers) as well as the repetition of movement (bending, the downward movement of wind), a repetition that tightens the arena of the *khayāl*'s depiction, and in this way, the natural world materializes for the poet (and patron) as perceivable through the image of the *khayāl* that develops across each verse.[197] One thing I have not mentioned is the *khayāl's* own seeing, which the poet describes as

[196] Monroe identifies this tendency in Ibn Khafāja's work who he writes is "intensely concerned, not only with cramming as many metaphors into his lines as possible, but with the precise logical dependence of one upon the other, that is to say, with composition that transcends the unit of the individual line." Monroe, "Poetry During the Almoravid Period" 71.

[197] For more on Ibn Khafāja and nature poetry see J.C. Bürgel, "Man, Nature and Cosmos as Intertwining Elements in the Poetry of Ibn Khafāja." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 14 (1981): 31–45. This article attempts to identify the characteristics that make up the "distinct" style of Ibn Khafāja's poetry. Bürgel identifies two dominant characteristics: 1) humanization (projection of nature into man/projection of human features onto nature) 2) an intertwining of macrocosm and microcosm. The poems read are mostly Ibn Khafāja's nature poems. His style, for the author, is emblematic of a distinctly Andalusī style because of the poet's use of personification "not only of objects, but also of "forces naturelles" such as love and death, spring and youth, joy and pain" (43). See also Salma Khadra Jayyūsī, "Nature Poetry in Al-Andalus and the Rise of Ibn Khafāja" in Jayyusi and Marín, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, 365-97. Jayyūsī looks first at the forms relationship to the pastoral before moving on to the particular voice, techniques, and metaphors that Ibn Khafāja avails himself of in his composition of *nawriyyāt*, *rawḍiyyāt*, and *al-rabīʿiyyāt.*

mutarraqib ("to monitor," but here I like "to keep an eye on"). The *khayāl* is seen but it also looks back. Importantly, in these eighteen verses, the *khayāl* is both an image, but also as involved in a process of image-making.

More often than not, Ibn Khafāja will use common features of the *nasīb*—the *diyār*, the *khayāl*, and the *suʾāl al-aṭlāl*—to render his relationship to the *mamdūḥ*. He prizes the *khayāl* above all, and it's with the *khayāl* that we see the bends in his poetics. In a *qaṣīda* addressed to Abū al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Rabīʿ, whom Ibn Khafāja describes in his short preface to the poem as *ṣāḥib qurṭuba*, the speaker laments the distance separating him from the *mamdūḥ* and sets out by night through a dizzying array of barren and vast landscapes standing between him and the patron. Like the previous *qaṣīda*, this one also roughly follows the tripartite structure with *nasīb*, *raḥīl*, and *madīḥ* sections that are somewhat porous. The first four verses impress upon the reader the physical—and more importantly, emotional—distance between the poet and the *mamdūḥ*:

1 ماذا عَليكَ وَقد نأيتَ دِيارَا لَو طَافَ بِي ذَاكَ الخَيالُ فَزارَا

2 وَنَظَمتُ مِن قُبَلٍ بِصَفحِةِ جيدِهِ عِقدًا وَقَد لَبِسَ العِناقَ شِعارَا

3 فيمَ التَّعَلُّلُ في هَواكَ وَقد طَوى منِّي الضَّنى وَبِكَ النَّوى أسرَارَا

4 وَلَرُبَّما ضَنَّ النَسيمُ بنَفحَةٍ تَندى على كَبِدٍ تَذُوبُ أُوَارَا[198]

1 What difference does it make to you when you have departed an abode
if the phantom circles around me and visits?

2 And I arranged on the surface of his neck,
a necklace of kisses, and he wore the embrace as a symbol

3 What distraction is there in your love
when grief has emaciated me while you are far away

4 How often fresh air holds back a breath
that quenches a heart melting from thirst

The verses here look to the *khayāl*, whose nearness stands in for the *mamdūḥ*'s distance. Preoccupied by this distance, which the poet emphasizes by the use of *qad* and the past tense *nāʾayta*, the *khayāl* acts almost as a diversion. I say almost because though the poet tries, he is unable to (or perhaps won't) relinquish his attention from the *mamdūḥ*. The first and third verses reroute the conventional questioning of the *aṭlāl* (the abandoned campsite) to the *mamdūḥ*. In the second verse, the poet arranges (*naẓamtu*) a necklace on the *khayāl's* neck, playing on the association of *naẓm* with poetic composition, tweaking the association between the necklace and praise to make his composition visualizable to the patron, which is also emphasized by the word *shiʿār* (poetic symbol).

[198] Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, 142. This is the ninety-ninth poem in Ibn Khafāja's *dīwān*, which consists of forty-eight verses in the *kāmil* meter.

Unlike in the previous *qaṣīda*, the poet directly interacts with the *khayāl*. Whereas previously the *khayāl* externalized the process of image-making, here the poet insists on his role in the image-making process. He does this to ready the reader for the image-making to come, which will not only alert the reader to the centrality of image-making to this poem, but will also directly lay bare its effect:

12 وصبا إليها أسمرٌ أعدَيتُهُ فلوى مَعَاطِفه لها تخطارا

13 وَأَدَارَ في وَرقاءَ تَسّجعُ مُقلةً زَرقاءَ لَم يُطبِق لَها أشفَارا

14 وَمَشى يَتيهُ بِها اختِيالاً أجرَدٌ في شُقرَةٍ لو سالَ سالَ نُضَارا

15 تَستَرقِصُ الأعْطافَ مِن طَرَبٍ بِه شِيَةٌ تَدُورُ على العُيُونِ عُقارَا

16 لو كُنتَ شاهِدَهُ وَقَد مَلأَ المَلا رَكضاً وَشَدَّ عَلى الكَمىِّ حَضارَا

17 لرَأيتَ فيما قَد رَأيتَ وَقَد بَدا نَاراً تَكُونُ إذا جَرى إعصارَا

18 أَستَعطِفُ الأَسماعَ إطرَاءً لَه في صُورَةٍ تَستَعطِفُ الأَبصَارَا

12 And a brown horse I spurred strove towards her,
he bent his neck to her, lashing his tail from side to side
13 And he turned toward a cooing ash-colored dove;
an azure eye whose lids do not shut.
14 A fine short-haired horse swaggered, (he was) bewildered by her
if his red-hair flowed it would flow gold
15 He makes necks dance out of passion for him
his variegated colors that go around intoxicating the eyes
16 If you were to witness him when he had filled the looming desert
and surpassed the valiant by quickening his pace
17 You would envision in what you see, and what appeared a fire
that would be, if it spread, a whirlwind.
18 I entreat the hearing ears in praise of him
in a form that entices the eye's favor

Different modes of seeing accumulate in these verses both through a direct attention to vision—*shāhidahu, raʾayta, qad badā, abṣār*—but also in the way the image of the horse is described, made, and takes up space and fills the eye. Ibn Khafāja describes the horse's movement as inclining, or striving (*ṣabā*), towards the dove and emphasizes this movement with another form of inclining, or bending (*lawā*), in the second hemistich. A motion here associated with the sense of being willing or favorably disposed extends into the next verses: "he makes necks dance out of ecstasy for him/his variegated colors that go around intoxicating the eyes."[199] In fact, Ibn Khafāja insists on the horse as *an image to be seen*. The use of the conditional (*law*) does two interesting things visually: 1) It makes vision a contingent and imagined action and 2)

[199] In another redaction of the poem, the verb is *tastarqiṣu* instead of *yastarqiṣu* which changes the subject but not the overall point I am trying to make here.

inscribes the act of seeing as a precondition for the poetic image even as the verse puts forward a conditional. In other words, the poet describes a horse, as though seemingly given, but then reminds us that the image of the horse is only accessible to us in our imagination, and thus we witness the horse fill "the looming desert" and outrun "the brave warrior" because the poet has given the horse its specific form and directs our vision.

The poet alerts us to the imaginal structure of this *qaṣīda*—to the interconnection of the seen and the imagined—and invites us to take up the image of the horse as real by predicating its reality on a conditional vision "if you were to witness him" (*law kunta shāhidahu*). The doubling of *raʾayta,* "you would envision in what you saw" (*la raʾayta fī mā qad raʾayta*) makes two kinds of seeing possible—one understood to be an imagined seeing that occurs as a response to the conditional and the other takes this conditional seeing to be real, insisting that one would indeed *see* the horse.[200] The real sense of the horse is highlighted further in the second hemistich in the construction of *taḥqīq* (verification) afforded grammatically by *wa-qad badā* (something akin to "indeed he did appear") in the first hemistich of verse seventeen. A vision ultimately that is *mere* appearance as the *qaṣīda* asserts that were the horse to run, and the patron were to see it, he would see not fire but a whirlwind (*iʿṣār*). Moving between a vision understood to be metaphorical and another given as actual, Ibn Khafāja lurches the patron back into the folds of a vision that the poet explicitly directs. In verse eighteen, Ibn Khafāja does not mince words—he explicitly points out the poet's role in the creation of the image. He moves the audience with that fine-haired horse's image and the way he does this, he asserts, is through fashioning a form that appeals to the listener's vision. While the proclaimed goal of poetry had been that it was listening which did this work (this was the main take of the Mashriq), here Ibn Khafāja stakes his claim that poetry does what it does by moving the eyes—and he's not only declaring it but also showing us how in this poem.

It might seem so far that the diversion initiated by the *khayāl* has titled the *qaṣīda* off track. But in many ways, the poem in staying with the image of the horse, hasn't veered too far off the beaten path of the *raḥīl*. In the next sequence of images, Ibn Khafāja extends the semantic potential of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*'s images of wilderness (the clouds, lightning, Spring, and the East Wind) to make visible the *mamdūḥ's* generosity:

21 في أَجرَعٍ خَلَفَ الرَّبيعُ بِه ابنَهُ كَرَماً فَأَخصَبَ رَبوَةً وَقَرارَا

22 هَفَتِ الصَّبا مِنهُ بِمَسرى دِيمَةٍ هَطلاءَ قَرَّ بها العَجاجُ وَقارَا

23 وَكَفَت فَسالَت فِضَّةً وَلَرُبَّما طَبَعَت بِكُلِّ عَرارَةٍ دينارا

24 نَثَلَت بِه زُرقُ النِّطافِ سَوَابِغا زُرقا وَجَرَّدَتِ الشِّعابُ شِفارَا

25 فَكَأَنَما فُلَّت هُناكَ كَتيبَةٌ فَرَمَت به عَنها السِّلاحَ فِرارَا

21 In a rocky, sandy land Spring left his son
out of generosity and so fertilized the peaks and plains

[200] *Raʾayta* here also doubles as a form of judgment, a semantic connection that the *jināS* of this verse makes explicit.

22 The East Wind blew[201] from it in the nocturnal journey of a downpour
and the dust settled, sedated

23 It gathered and gushed forth silver and how often
it imprinted on every ox-eye plant a *dīnār*

24 The pure blue downpour removed a loose-fitting garment
and shredded the mountain paths into blades

25 As though a brigade were subdued there
that threw off its weapons there in escape

Spring is a tried and true measure of generosity. The poet revises the association when he plays on the *mamdūḥ's* name. The patron is, after all, Ibn Rabīʿ, a moniker which translates to "the son of spring"), a move reminiscent of Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī. While Abū Tammām puns on al-Muʿtaṣim's name, Ibn Khafāja composes an entire semantic field out of Ibn Rabīʿ's, which more closely resembles al-Mutanabbī's play on Sayf al-Dawla's name.[202] The lyrical East wind (*ṣabā*) fortifies the association of the *mamdūḥ* and his father with abundance as the wind descends either from Spring or Spring's son (the poem leaves it ambiguous, but this is after all a *madīḥ* and any praise of either the father or the son would be praise for the other). The *ṣabā* removes with the pure water (*zurq al-nitāf)* a loose fitting garment (*sawābigha*), an image mirrored at the linguistic level in the *jināS* of *zurqan* and *zurq*. Even more, the images aren't only of abundance. A protection also descends with the wind, making the mountains an impasse filled with blades, and leaving a brigade ready to battle. If the *mamdūḥ's* generosity was readily available in his name, the poet goes beyond this easy association and shows how this generosity extends to the land, turning it into a fortress able to defend itself. The point is not small or merely conventional. Detail by detail, Ibn Khafāja makes the *mamdūḥ* the main reason for the perceivable transformation in the landscape, in the same way the *khayāl* made visible the natural world in the previous *qaṣīda*.

As usual, the *qaṣīda* transitions to the *madīḥ*, and returns to the problem of distance posed in the *nasīb.* The shift is triggered by an accusation that the poet's verses are not worthy in their praising of the *mamdūḥ* (Is Abū al-Ḥusayn and what I claimed making small/ of Abū al-Ḥusayn when what I claimed were grand?"). A disembodied response comes to the poet in the form of a *taḥiyya* (greeting), and the *qaṣīda* arrives full-circle back to the poet's attempt to remedy the distance problem:

45 فَسَرَت إلَيَّ مَعَ الرِّكابِ تَحيَّةٌ عَقَدَتْ عَلَيَّ مِن العُلى أَزرَارَا

46 هَزَّازَةٌ ناءَتْ بِعِطفَيْ عِزَّةٍ حَتَّى جَرَرْتُ عَلى المَجَرِّ إزَارَا

[201] *Haffat* has the meaning of yearning.

[202] Abū Tammām's verse:

تَدبيرُ مُعتَصِمٍ بِاللَّهِ مُنتَقِمٍ لِلَّهِ مُرتَقِبٍ في اللَهِ مُرتَغِبِ

al-Mutanabbī has several verses, including:

حَقَرتَ الرُدَينِيّاتِ حَتّى طَرَحتَها وَحَتّى كَأَنَّ السَيفَ لِلرُمحِ شاتِمُ

47 هَدَرَتْ جِنَايَةَ صَرْفِ دَهْرٍ جَائِرٍ نَفَضَ المَشِيبَ بعارِضَيَّ غُبارَا

48 وَإذا حَنوتَ ولا سَلَوْتَ فإنَّما أنتَ القَرِيبُ وَإنْ شَحَطتَ دِيارَا

45 A greeting traveled by night with the riding camels
it tied tent supports onto me from on high

46 [The greeting] shook the two sides of my stature
until I dragged my clothes upon the tracks of the ground

47 It made the crimes of an unjust Fate pointless
and shook off gray hair in my cheeks like dust

48 For if you are compassionate and do not forget
you will be near even if your abode is distant

In both its movement and qualities, the greeting is reminiscent of, and mirrors, the *khayāl* at the beginning of the poem. It is in a word, the *khayāl's* double. The *taḥiyya*, like the *khayāl*, represents a specific kind of relation to the *mamdūḥ*, one that is not based on physical proximity, yet remains perceivable. Coming as it does from the patron, it cinches the distance between the speaker and the *mamdūḥ* even though his spatial proximity to the speaker has not changed. Yet, unlike the *khayāl,* then, the greeting is not an imagined closeness—it gathers the *mamdūḥ's* affection, compassion, and remembrance and affects the poet, shaking him enough that he drags (*jararrtu*) his clothes on the ground. It bears the weight of the patron's strength (*ʿizza*) because it implies the embodiment of his speech.[203] The greeting is also depicted as righting the wrong of an unjust Fate, which by this the speaker means his old age (indicated by the gray hair that Fate has dusted onto his cheeks). Thus, the *taḥiyya* takes the place of the *khayāl*, shakes the speaker and knots tent supports onto him in a reversal of the same act described in the poem's opening when the speaker ties a necklace around the *khayāl*. Though grammatically the last line (and the *mamdūḥ*'s nearness) is predicated on a condition (*idhā ḥanawta*), what the speaker posits as the condition for the proximity—the *mamdūḥ*'s compassion—has already taken place in the course of the the speaker's traversal through the *qaṣīda*'s transformed landscape. Here, the return to the imagery of the *diyār* again suggests a difference from the pre-Islamic poet's conceptualization of abandonment. Instead, in Ibn Khafāja's *qaṣīda*, the *mamdūḥ*'s proximity to the abodes is not a prerequisite for his nearness. We have arrived at a conceptual transformation.

Due to the whims of Fate—"And perhaps if Time, even if it were hard in some states/ would be compassionate and draw the *wazīr* near (for) a visit"—the impossible proximity to the *mamdūḥ* seems hardwired into the *jināS* between 'perhaps' (*ʿasā*) and 'hard' (*ʾasā*). Yet the poem manages the impossible. In the image of the greeting which contends with a difficult Time (or Fate) and emerges victorious. The *khayāl* to *taḥiyyya* pipeline demonstrates how images are conceived as visually perceptible and are thus able to move the listener (as well as the speaker). The *khayāl-to-taḥiyya* gives Ibn Khafāja a vocabulary for parsing that which is not immediately

[203] Stefan Sperl also points out the tight connection between the different parts of the ʿAbbāsid *qaṣīda* in *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structural Analysis of Selected Texts: 3rd Century AH/9th Century AD-5th Century AH/11th Century AD* , Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge ; Cambridge University Press, 1989).

concrete: the transformation of the poet through his journey towards the *mamdūḥ*. It is the image coming back full circle (the circle will be an important part of poetic visuality as chapter three will show). In the previous poems, the *khayāl* generated a visual terrain. It gave the poet a thread, with which to direct the recipient's gaze. The gossamer-thin *khayāl* of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, in Ibn Khafāja's poems, becomes a way to lay bare the poem's image-making, a visuality encouraged by the doubling inherent in the *khayāl* as well as the associations it calls up. In Ibn Khafāja's adept hands, the *khayāl* is not only the image of thought, it is language as image-making.

Section 2: The uses of *khiltu*

The peculiar difficulty of the *ṭayf al-khayāl* is that it often requires the poet to remind the reader of the poet's *own* exertion and adeptness with image-making. We saw this above when Ibn Khafāja interrupted his description of the *khayāl* with his own seeing "so I imagined it" (see verse nine of the first poem above), and later when he arranged a necklace on the *khayāl's* neck. Because the image is convincing as an externalization of the poet's gaze, Ibn Khafāja often points out his own seeing and imagining. Let's consider the sixth *qaṣīda*, a poem written for the *wazīr* Abū Muḥammad Ibn ʿAmmār, which takes both the *nasīb* and *raḥīl* sections as a chance to rewrite poetic convention in praise of the patron:

1 حَدَرَ القِناعَ عن الصَباحِ المُسفِرِ وَلَوَى القَضيبَ على الكَثيبِ الأَعْفَرِ

2 وَتَمَلَّكَتْهُ هِزَّةٌ في عِزَّةٍ فارتَجَّ في وَرَقِ الشبابِ الأخضَرِ

3 مُتَنَفِّسا عَن مِثْلِ نَفحَةِ مِسكَةٍ مُتَبَسِّماً عَن مِثْلِ سِمطَي جَوهَرِ

4 لو كُنت حَيثُ تَرى الهِلالَ وَوَجهَهُ لوَقَفتَ شَكّا وِقفَةَ المُتَحَيِّرِ

5 سَلَّت عَلَيَّ سُيوفَها أجفانُهُ فَلَقيتُهُنَّ مِنَ المَشيبِ بِمِغفَرِ

6 مُتَجَلِّدا أتَأَى بِنَفسى أن أرى هذا الهِزَبْرُ قَتِيلَ ذاكَ الجُؤذُرِ[204]

1 He lowered the mask from the veiled morning
and he caused the branches to bend upon a sandy dune hill
2 His shaking dignity overtook him
it shook the young green leaves
3 Breathing, from the likes of a whiff of musk
smiling from the likes of two strings of jewels
4 If you were where you could see the moon and his face
you would have stood in doubt, in the attitude of one bewildered
5 His eyelids drew their swords on me
I found in them a helmet against old age
6 With patience, I take pride in my soul because I can see
this lion as the slain victim of that wild calf.

[204] Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, 48.

The first verses describe morning's arrival as a perceivable instance of the *mamdūḥ*, after which Ibn Khafāja draws attention to the poem's image-making beginning in the third verse through the use of *mithl* to mean not an approximation or example, but rather form. He thus encapsulates the "breathing" and "smiling" *mamdūḥ* in relation to poetic motifs. In the next verse, the optative voice recalls a common poetic move that identifies the *mamdūḥ*'s face with the moon's, but the overall effect, according to the poet, is bewilderment (*ḥayyra*). There is a sense of delight, also, in seeing the visual *jināS* in the written version of the fourth verse's *ṣadr* and *ʿajiz*, both of which begin with *l-w* (*law kunta, la-waqafta*). The *qaṣīda* continues the thread of the lion-calf imagery, until halfway through we arrive at a metapoetic reflection in which the poet's gaze is reconsidered as a moment of imagining:

23 ولَقَد خَلَوتُ بِهِ أُقَسِّمُ نَظرَتي ما بَينَ جُؤذُرِ رَملَةٍ وَغَضَنفَرِ

24 يَثنى مَعاطِفَه وَأذرِفُ عَبرَتى فإخالُهُ غُصُنا بِشاطِىءِ جَعفَرِ

23 I withdrew to him, splitting my glance
between the wild calf and a powerful lion
24 He folds his flanks and I shed tears
to imagine him a branch on the shore of a creek

Drawing attention to both the eye in its capacity to look, but also to feel, the *qaṣīda* throws a kind of wrench in the description of the calf and lion by including an image of the "branch on the shore creek" This image is preceded by the verb *akhāl*, which like the use of *khiltu* mentioned above, draws attention to the act of image-making. Ibn Khafāja's use of the passive tense draws attention to the poet as directing this see-making, because while the agent might be unnamed, he has already told us in the first hemistich who generates this imagining.

40 وَجَرى الحديثُ بِبعضِ ذِكرى طاهِرٍ فَجَعَلتُ جَزلَ وَقُودِها من عَنبَرِ

41 وَطَفِقتُ أذْكِيها وَأَذكُرُ ذِهنَهُ فإخَالُ ذَاكَ وَهذه من عُنصُرِ[205]

40 Conversation flowed with the mention of a pure one
I made from the amber an abundance of kindling
41 And immediately set about feeding [the kindling] while recalling his intelligence
imagining him [emanating] from my core

Ibn Khafāja makes visible both the poetic act and the conversation about the *mamdūḥ* through the image of fire and its kindling, which moves between the literal and figurative across these two verses. The memory of the *mamdūḥ* becomes the kindling for the conversation and recalls an earlier verse in which the poet plays on the polyvalence (in another metapoetic moment) of the term *kitāb*—"I would substitute the lines of writing with lined squadrons, and come to him with soldiers."[206] Figuring memory in this way, Ibn Khafāja draws on a parallel

[205] I have kept the form *ikhāl* as it is transcribed in the Ghāzī *dīwān*, but would like to note that this is an irregular form of the first person *akhāl*.

[206] Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, 50:

31 لنسختُ أسطارَ الكِتابِ كتائباً مُصطفة وطَرَقتُهُ في عسكر

between his ability to build fire (or passion) for the *mamdūḥ's* memory, but also analogizes this act into a literal visibility (the memory becomes visible in the growing fire). Unlike the first instance which took the reader out of the development of images, the use of *ikhāl* here works within the context of burning fire, seamlessly connecting the act of image-making with the light of the fire.

Al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī's early life and upbringing has fallen to obscurity. Not much is known about the date or the place of his birth. We know that he died around 1131 A.D. at a young age. Though he was from Tuleda, he spent the majority of his time in Seville (known to the Andalusīs as "Ḥomṣ"), at the time a vibrant gathering place for scholars, literary figures, and poets, especially those who wrote *muwashshaḥāt*. The blind poet was known in his time, both in al-Andalus and the Mashriq, as a master of the *muwahshahaḥa*, and composed several to patrons. He is cited in Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima*, though his work has unfortunately not received the scholarly attention it deserves (certainly not the same attention given to Ibn Khafāja's work).

While he was known for his *muwashshaḥāt* (and *madīḥ-muwashshaḥāt*), al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī also composed praise poems. In one to the Almoravid ruler Alī ibn Yusuf ibn Tāshufīn, al-Tuṭaylī meanders between a reality that reveals the extent of the *mamdūḥ*'s glory and another one threatened by his disappearance.[207] The *qaṣīda* starts off with conventional *madīḥ* language that centers the patron's praiseworthy traits in relation to the natural world, time, and glory. Al-Tuṭaylī, who is known for his love poetry, also nods to the unbearable affection he has for his patron:

9 الى مَلِكِ المُلوكِ هفا بِلُبي وَقَد سَئِمَتْ نَواظِرَها العيونُ

10 هوىً لو غيرُ ذِكْراهُ حَبَتْهُ لكُنتُ أقولُ سُكرٌ أو جُنونُ

9 For the king of kings, there is a yearning in my core
and my eyes have tired of its own glances

10 [It is] a love, if it loved the memory of other than him

Two other earlier instances of "reading" in the poem are:

14 اقرأ على الجَزع السلام وقل له سقيت من سبل الغمام الممطر
17 والمح صحيفة صفحتى فاقرأ بها سطرين من دمع بها متحدر

Al-Nowaihi writes of the *jināṣ* employed in this line, that: "The similarity also takes on a visual aspect, the lines of writing being compared to the lined squadrons of soldiers. It is emphasized by the etymological connection of the words "*kitāb*" and "*katāʾib*,", which is the plural of "*katība*", one of whose meanings is a piece of writing. The verb "nasakhtu" adds to that, for besides meaning to substitute, it also means to copy or transcribe, so that we have here a *tawriya*. The relationship of these words is explored in its functional, visual, and semantic dimensions." Magda M. Al-Nowaihi, *The Poetry of Ibn Khafajah: A Literary Analysis*, Studies in Arabic Literature, v. 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 86.

[207] Abu al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī, *Dīwān al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī*, ed. Kamal Abu Deeb, (Sharikat al-Muʾasasa al-ḥadītha li-l-kitāb, 2014), 222. Poem 65 in the *dīwān* is in the wāfir meter. He mentions that this *qaṣīda* was performed before Ibn Tāshufīn during the time when his son, Alī Ibn Yūsuf was the successor. Verse 38 which I analyze below is addressed to Yusuf ibn Tāshufīn's son.

I would have said it was drunkenness or madness

The connection between language, sight, and creation are beautifully encapsulated in the ninth verse in the poet's eyes having tired of their own glances, in other words, of the image-making that the eyes as the vehicle of the perceptual process in the poem make possible. The poet alludes to the strength of his love for the patron, which for anyone else would feel like drunkenness or madness.

31 وَدونَكَ كلُّ مَوْمَاةٍ فَيَاحٍ كأنَّ نهارَها قَلبٌ حَزينُ

32 وَنَتْ فيها الرِّياحُ الهوجُ كأنَّ ظُهورَها العُليا بُطُونُ

33 إذا سَرَّحْتَ طَرفَكَ قُلتَ بَحرٌ يَذِلُّ الطرفُ فيه ويَستَكينُ

34 وقَد لَمَعَ السَرابُ فَقُلتَ ماءٌ وجالَ الضبُّ فيه فَقُلتَ نونُ

35 كأنَّ هِضابَها والآلُ يَنْزُو بها مَوجٌ تَراقَصَ أوْ سفينٌ

36 وَأخرى مِثلُها إلا غَواشٍ كأنَّ قعيدَها مَيْتٌ دَفينُ

37 كأنَّ عِمادَها كُثْبانُ رَملٍ إليكَ وَقد تَكونُ لها شُئونُ

38 وليَّ العَهدِ لي بهواكَ عَهدٌ كأنَّ مَدائحي منه يَمينُ

39 سَدَدتَ مَفاقِري وأشَدْتَ باسْمي فَذَلَّ الصَّعْبُ وَانفادَ الحَرونُ

40 وَخُيِّلَ ليْ الغِنَى فَنَطَقتُ عَنهُ لِعِلمي أنَّه مما يَكونُ

31 Intervening between us, every expansive desert
as though its day were a saddened heart

32 The violent winds diminished to such an extent
as though its heights were depressions

33 If you released your glance, you would say it was a sea
eyes are lowered by it and become submissive

34 The mirage glistened and you said "water"
and the lizard wandered in it and you said "whale"

35 As though a dancing wave or a ship
were jumping in the heights and mirages

36 And others like it except that they are calamities
as though their keepers were dead and buried

37 As though its pillars were sandhills to you
though they may be to others momentous

38 O heir apparent, I have for love of you, an oath
as though my praise poems were (because of your love) a promise

39 You fulfilled my lack and built up my name
and so hardship was diminished and the stubborn brought down

40 An image of wealth was evoked to me and so I spoke of it
to my knowledge it is what might be

The poet repeats *kaʾanna* a total of six times in these ten verses. The last line uses the term *khuyyila lī* which I've translated above as "an image was evoked to me," and which connects this evocation to being (*mima yakūnu*) through the fact of utterance (*nutq*). Verse 33 and 34 constitute an instance of the poet's eyes being directed by the patron—the first hemistich of verse 34, takes a common optical illusion (the mirage) and identifies it as what can be visibly seen, after which the second hemistich then takes this logic and makes the water real and so the scuttling lizard becomes a fish. The images in the verses that follow the eyes being lowered (in verse 33) have the most concentration of the use of *kaʾanna* and evoke the poet's as well as the patron's impact on what can be seen/imagined. The similarity between the images of a ship/water and the desert move beyond merely the connotations with a mirage and invoke a history of comparison between these two images (antithetical as they are). What allows their comparison, and indeed their evocation, is their qualities of movement (verbs used: glisten, wanders, dances). Al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī can rely on the visual movement evoked for a turn towards what the patron sees and which becomes what the poet/audience sees as this interaction is written into the *qaṣīda*. The lizard/whale and the mirage/water reaffirms a bilateral comparison that the patron and poet draw on from both the tradition as well as the visual sensory cues available—the water/mirage allows the evocation of lizard/fish. The two-verse "break" that the poet takes from the imagistic tendency of the *qaṣīda* before the final verse reaffirms the poet-patron relationship, ensuring the patron knows that the poet's verses up until that point have been in more than one sense generated by/for the patron. Additionally, verse 35 puts into question what is visible—what appears as real or is imagined, by what should appear easily—high and standing out from a distance—instead is couched in the same *kaʾanna* structure. Al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī, though enacts processes of see-making, leans more heavily than his contemporary Ibn Khafāja on the idea that the eyes tend to deceive.

Finally, the last verse evokes an image of wealth which it posits through the articulation of the *qaṣīda* itself. The poet uses *khuyyila lī*, a passive form of the verb that leaves the agent of the action ambiguous, though here it refers to the patron who has directed the poet's gaze towards this image and which then the patron needs to fulfill in order for the *qaṣīda* to be validated. The passive form emphasizes the whole process of envisioning, while also being a formal way for the poet to presume a generosity that hasn't been expressed. The very image of the *mamdūḥ* that makes possible this *takhyīl* is one that has been created in the poem. The poet creates a figure of the patron, makes it visible to him in this way because it is an image, and so guides the patron towards his own image through the poet's image-making. This comes after a schema that delineates the poet's and the patron's respective roles in the poet-patron dynamic: in verse 38, addressed directly to the son and heir of Yusuf ibn Tashfīn, the longing of the poem that grows from the patron's promise of love (reiterated in the play on the root ʿ-*h*-*d*), by the second

hemistich, translates explicitly the implied *jināS* in the root betweenʿ*-h-d* as heir and as oath (as we will see by the end of the *qaṣīda*, ʿ*-h-d* as knowledge) into the *madīḥ* as a promise (*yamīn*), one which emerges from the poet's yearning and love for the patron. At the poet's doubling of ʿ*hd* the patron sees the movement from 'heir' to 'oath.' And in this way, the praise poem generates its own (image of) wealth.

The blind poet, however, isn't entirely convinced that the eye sees correctly, and he engages this conviction in a *madīḥ* to the judge Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAshra that appeals to the heightened senses of his patron:

1 تَناصُرُ الشيبِ في فَوْدَيْه خِذلانُ إنَّ الزيادةَ في النُّقصان نُقصانُ

2 لا تغتَررْ بعيونٍ يَنظُرونَ بها فإنما هيَ أحداقٌ وأجفانُ

3 كم مُقلَةٍ ذهبت في الغيّ مذهبها بنَظرَةٍ هي شانٌ أو لها شانُ[208]

1 The triumph of white hair on his temples is a disappointment
improvement in loss is still loss

2 Do not be deceived by the eyes through which they look
for they are [simply] pupils and eyelids

3 How many eyes went astray as they did
by a glance that was momentous or had a momentous goal

The first verses establish a conciliatory tone for the *qaṣīda*—reducing the accumulation to its opposite, diminishing eyes to the material, bodily form, and disparaging the eyes' action further by what they couldn't handle. The poet ends the first section beseeching the patron not to "see," while also attributing to him a shepherd's ability to oversee and protect, and denying that sight is simply an ability for anyone with eyes:

5 فانْظُرْ بعَقلِكَ إن العينَ كاذِبَةٌ واسمَعْ بِحِسِّكَ إن السَمعَ خَوَّانُ

6 ولا تَقُل كلُّ ذي عينٍ لهُ نَظَرٌ إن الرُعاةَ تَرى ما لا يرى الضانُ

5 So look with your reason, for the eye lies
and listen with your senses because hearing is disloyal

6 And don't say that everyone with an eye can see
shepherds see what the sheep does not

Disavowing hearing entirely, the poet nuances the sense-perceptual experience by acknowledging that the ability to see does not necessarily mean having a discerning sense of sight. Sight and knowledge are intimately connected in this *qaṣīda* and rest on the singular abilities of the poet to discern it for the patron. In diminishing and denying certain modes of perception, the poet controls a narrative that enjoins the possibility of knowing based not on what

[208] al-ʾAʿmā al-Tuṭaylī, *Dīwān* 231. The poem is in *al-basīṭ* meter.

appears, but instead on the poet's own vision. The poet further drives the point of what is seen and assumed in the next verses. While not a *raḥīl*, this section contains many of its themes including journeying to the patron, danger encountered in that pursuit, and the wrong that the poet in striving towards the patron aims to rectify.

8 واخْلَع لُبُوسَكَ من شحٍ ومن أملٍ لا يقطَعُ السيفُ إلا وهو عريانُ

9 وَصاحِبٍ لم أزلْ منهُ على خَطَرٍ كأنَّني عِلمُ غيْبٍ وهو حَسَّانُ

10 أغراهُ حظٌّ تَوَخاهُ وأخطأني أما دَرى أن بعض الرِزقِ حِرمانُ

11 وَغَرَّهُ أن رآهُ قَد تَقَدَّمَني كما تَقَدَّمَ بِسمِ اللهِ عُنوان

12 إني استَجرتُ على ريبِ الزمانِ فَتى إلا يَكُنْ ليثَ غابٍ فهو انسانٌ

8 Strip your clothes of stinginess and hope,
the sword does not cut unless it is naked

9 From how many a companion I am still in danger,
as though I were the unknown and he, the beautifier

10 A share which he strove towards seduced him and so he wronged me
does he not know that some kinds of wealth are in fact deprivation

11 What seduced him more was that he saw himself preceding me
the way that a title precedes "in the name of God"

In verse 10 and 11, the poet repeats the theme of deception he introduced in the second verse, and sets up the companion who is seduced by the perception of what isn't, as the foil by which the patron later on can then correct what has transpired. Verse 10 also echoes that structure of negation in the first verse. The correction happens in fact to the poet's own perception in line 12, in the very act of his seeking out the patron: "I have sought protection from the doubt of fate, (since I was) a young boy/ Thinking it was a lion of the forest, but rather [realized] it was human." What stands out here, again, is the reduction of threat, whereas in the next verse he elevates the patron (and plays on his name to do so). In verses 17 and 18, we get the personification of nature as a way to attribute or posit a quality:

17 دُجُنَّةٌ تَصِفُ الأنوارَ غُرَّتُها وَنبعَةٌ يَدَّعي أعطافَها البانُ

18 عصا جَذيمَةَ إلا ما أُتيحَ لها من أمرِ موسى فجاءَتْ وهي ثعبانُ

17 A dark cloud whose white speck clarifies the blooms
and a wellspring that the willow tree claims for its sides

18 Only a staff except for what was allowed for it
by Moses's orders, and so it became a snake

In the second verse, predication happens with allusion to a moment in the Quran when Moses throws down his staff and it turns into a snake that attacks and defeats the magicked rods of Pharaoh's magicians. In this moment, the magicians witnessing the reality of a miracle, prostrate and proclaim their allegiance to Moses and his God over Pharaoh.[209] In the Quranic narrative, this moment demonstrates the miraculousness of prophetic revelation by showing the inferiority of magic—the distinction centering on the revelation of a difference between appearances and reality. The implication of the Quranic story is to expose the magician's illusory images in contrast to Moses's real snake. Bringing this context into the poem, al-Tuṭaylī reaffirms the veracity of his own images. He has been setting this up for the patron from the start—his images are as real as a prophet's. Anyone else's are simply the hoax of magic. This is the same justification which critics of poetry also used in attacking it against the validity of the Quran as we saw in the first chapter. The image of eyes returns in the last part of the poem in verses 20 and 21:

20 يَكادُ يُخلَقُ مُهراقُ الدِماءِ بها فلا تَقُل هي أنصابٌ وأوثانٌ

21 مَوتَى فإن قَلِقَتْ أجفانُها عَلِمَتْ أنَّ الدُروعَ على الأبطالِ أكفانُ

22 نَفسي فِداؤكَ لا كَفؤاً ولا ثَمَناً وَلو غَدا المُشتَري منها وكيوانُ

23 والتبرُ قَد وَزَنُوهُ بالحديدِ فما ساوَى وَلَكن مقاديرٌ وأوزانُ

20 Bloodshed was almost created by [the staff]
so don't say it is merely statues or idols

21 Lifeless their eyelids became agitated, they would learn
that armor on warriors are [in fact] shrouds

22 My life is to dedicated to you, with no reward or price
even if Jupiter and Saturn were to depart from it

23 They may weigh gold against iron
but they aren't the same, it's nothing but measurements and weights

In the final verse, the poet returns to the structure of the poem's opening in which he diminished criticisms of the patron, but this time he imputes to an abstract quality a material weight that is then dismissed as merely a lack of equivalence (in other words, what is considered valuable is merely measurements and weights). These last lines problematize any accusation of transaction on the poet's part. Given, however, the way it begins and the way it ends, the *qaṣīda* provides us with the paradigm by which to understand such an exchange as one in which the poet in guiding the patron's vision towards (or in this case away) from a particular perception of reality, substitutes his own vision (or understanding). This interpretive move reminds the patron

[209] This is also the only use of a derivative of *takhyīl* in the Quran (20: 66)

قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى

of the necessity of poetic interpretation in sense experience—what the patron had thought was a given (the weight of gold against iron) in the poet's hands is diminished to mere semblance.

The *ṭayf al-khayāl* and the references to seeing and imagining in Ibn Khafāja's and al-Tuṭaylī's praise poems draw out a process of image-making that demonstrates the poet's attention to the patron's perceptual experience. In chapter one, we saw how the simultaneity of two images held at the same time—one being a reflection of the other, or in *balāgha's* terms, one being the literal and the other the figurative image—was explained by the critics as one of the main strategies for moving the recipient and came to be identified as belonging to the most beautiful verses. In this chapter, the *khayāl* generated the patron's double in the poem. Creating the patron's image enabled the poem's own image-making poetics, which it then used to focalize the patron's vision of things. Drawing attention to the visual, whether through the *ṭayf al-khayāl* or through the uses of *khiltu*, this chapter has added to the understanding of the image's vitality, keeping in mind that the poets extended conventional use, but still relied on a larger perceptual culture that understood the shades of a motif or the meanings of word derived from the same root. What is seen in the poem activates instances of prior seeing—whether in the poem or in the world. When they succeeded in generating an imagistic field, the poets intervened to remind the reader and patron of his role through direct references to seeing and imagining. The praise poems forced the poet to show his hand—a point the poet of the next chapter will take literally.

Chapter 3: Going in Circles: al-Jilyānī's Visual Poems

What does it mean to see a poem? The previous chapter answered this question by turning to strategies of image-making—for example, the use of a poetic motif like the *ṭayf al-khayāl* by twelfth-century poets to direct the patron's gaze. This chapter locates another mode of the twelfth-century poem's image-making. Here, the poem isn't subtle—it demands to be seen. The physician and poet ʿAbd al-Munʿim ibn ʿAmmār ibn Hassān al-Jilyānī (d. 1206 A.D.) compiled a *dīwān* of his visual poems called the *Dīwān al-tadbīj*. In this chapter, I look at his visual compositions, poems he called *mudabbajāt*, a term that means 'figured' or 'brocaded' pieces and which, according to Julia Bray, is a term of the poet's own invention.[210] Their consist geometric shapes—squares, circles, ovals—are evocative of the natural world—rivers, stars, branches. The *mudabbajāt* require the reader to re-compose the poem (often a *mudabbaja* contains several poems) by piecing together the verses embedded in its shapes.

In the first chapter, I showed how the praise poem facilitated perception by virtue of both the *madīḥ's* socio-economic role, which was leveraged both consciously and unwittingly and evinced a poetic visuality that relied on visual forms sedimented in the *madīḥ* tradition. One instance I discussed is the established poet-patron relationship, which allowed the poet to enact this process of "seeing" by using previous poetic conventions already familiar to the patron. This altered the poet-patron dynamic by centering image-making as a way to map the poet's vision to the patron's, and ultimately move the patron to act in accordance with that vision. In this chapter, the central experience is visual, and the poet relies on the patron's ability to physically *see* the poem before his eyes to render its primary aesthetic experience. But the unusual and difficult process of reading the *mudabbajāt* upends the poet-patron dynamic in a way that doesn't rely on

[210] Julia Bray, "Picture-Poems for Saladin: ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Jilyānī's *Mudabbajāt*," in *Syria in Crusader Times: Conflict and Coexistence* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 248.

familiarity. Instead, as we'll see below, the poet has the power not only to shape the patron's ways of seeing, but to teach the patron *how* to see.

Al-Jilyānī, an Andalusī poet?

Al-Jilyānī was from al-Andalus, but spent most of his life in Damascus, and composed praise poems for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as early as 1169 A.D. The *mudabbajāt* have several origin stories: one origin al-Jilyānī mentions in his book *Manādiḥ al-mamādiḥ* is that in 1192 A.D., Ṣalaḥ al-Dīn asked him to compose a *mudabbaja*. Although al-Jilyānī seems to credit the idea for these visual compositions to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, he in fact had written ones prior to this.[211] Another origin is that these poems came to him as visions in dreams. He describes their striking quality, writing in the introduction to the *Dīwān al-Tadbīj* that it contains "*ʾaʿājīb min al-mudabbajāt al-muʿjizāt al-naẓm*" ("rarities in visual ornamentation that are miraculous in their composition).[212] His use of the term *muʿjiza*, among other things, alludes to the Quran, which because these visual arrangements came to him in the course of several dreams constitute a third kind of origin: a near-divine revelation, in his words, "God revealed on my tongue."[213] Whether or not this is merely a convention used in introductions—taking the concept of the jinn-inspired poet to a more sacred level—this work, its author claims, is born out of an actual visual experience.[214]

I include al-Jilyānī in this dissertation on al-Andalus, not only because he was born in Jilyāna, near Guadix in southern Spain, but also because al-Jilyānī himself attributes the form to al-Andalus in several verses of his poems (one of which I've included below).[215] In their introduction to the facsimile of the *dīwān*, Kamal Abu Deeb and Dalal Bakhsh insist that al-Jilyānī's *mudabbajāt* are the first of their kind, and attribute this to al-Jilyānī's time spent in al-Andalus.[216] Julia Bray considers their origin and frames it as "what could al-Jilyānī have brought with him from Spain?" While she asserts that a wider survey of the literary, artistic, and intellectual background of the *mudabbajāt* is needed to account for their genesis, which she does by looking at examples from other visual poems that emerged around the same time, Bray

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[211] ʿAbd al-Munʿim ibn ʿUmar al-Jilyānī, *Dīwān al-tadbīj: fitnat al-ibdāʿ wa-dhirwat al-imtāʿ*, ed. Kamal Abu Deeb and Dalāl Bakhsh, al-Ṭabʿa 1, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Sāqī, 2010), 76.

[212] Ibid, 74.

[213] See the *iʿjāz* debate on the Quran's inimitability in Ayman A. El-Desouky, "Discussions of Qur'anic Inimitability: The Theological Nexus," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, by Ayman A. El-Desouky, ed. Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah (Oxford University Press, 2020), 373–87; Geert Jan van Gelder, "The Qur'an and the Arabic Medieval Literary Tradition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, by Geert Jan van Gelder, ed. Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah (Oxford University Press, 2020), 387–400.

[214] Al-Jilyānī's tongue-in-cheek comments come in elsewhere, when he writes, for example, that this work will keep anyone busy enough to the point that they won't look at another work:

سيشغلُ الأممَ بعدنا عن النظرِ في غيرها.

[215] Lara Harb has uncovered other kinds of visual poetic forms that bear mentioning, and which suggest the kind of intermodal experimentation that would come to be emblematic of avant garde art and literature. Lara Harb, "Beyond the Known Limits: Ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣfahānī's Chapter on 'Intermedial' Poetry," in *Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought*, vol. 141, Islamic History and Civilization (United States: Brill, 2017), 122–49.

[216] This is the edition that I use in this chapter. It is a reading of the John Rylands manuscript, held at Manchester and dated 1334 A.D. (early Mamluk), which replicates the color coding, illustrations and its folios.

concludes that the geographical and chronological distribution seems to "argue as much against as for each being an entirely independent invention."[217]

The poems—some of which are not *mudabbajat*—in the *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, all adhere to the rules of Arabic prosody. Accompanying each *mudabbaja* is a transcript, an introduction to the poem's context, and importantly, instructions on how to read it. Al-Jilyānī's instructions point to a beginning, and detail the pathways the reader must follow in order to put together the verses of the poems contained within each *mudabbaja*.[218] The transcript and instructions alleviate some of the difficulty for the reader because the main challenge in reading the poems is figuring out where one poem begins and the other ends. What the reader perceives first is the overall image—taking in the visual arrangement before the text that constitutes it. This is why Bray asserts that these *mudabbajāt* are not esoteric, "they are not secret," she writes, "since al-Jilyānī shows how to read them, nor do they contain restricted knowledge. They are in fact an open book, even though at first glance they look like a closed one."[219] The composition's obfuscation of verses, as we'll see below, while not revealing an esoteric knowledge, nonetheless offers an experience of deciphering that shows these compositions to be far from "an open book," and to contain layers of understanding accessible only through contemplative looking. And in fact, al-Jilyānī often begins the *mudabbajāt* with *nasīb*-like verses, and thus theoretically a practice of contemplative looking can lead the reader to the first lines without need for instruction.

The *mudabbajāt's* difficulty is why, throughout the *dīwān*, al-Jilyānī urges the reader to look contemplatively (*tamʿīn al-naẓar*) in order to discover the text's secrets. Al-Jilyānī gestures to the poem's paradox—its singularity which can be accessed but not replicated:

> وكيفما قرأته وجدت اللفظ منتظما والمعنى منتاسقا، فأجِد فيه النظر ودقِّق له الفكر تقف على أسراره إن شاء الله تعالى...وهو في أسلوب من البلاغة لم يسبق إلى كلمة من مثله سابق، ولا يلحق شأوَه مدى الدهر لاحق.[220]

No matter how you read it, you will find the wording well-ordered and the ideas organized. Pay attention to it and consider it carefully, so as to discover its secrets, God willing…and it is in a style of eloquence that no word like it has ever preceded, and nothing after it will attain its height.

Elsewhere, he describes the formal composition as causing wonder: "*fa innahā kullamā ʾamʿana al-naẓaru fī madhāhibihā istaghraqat taʿajjubuhū fī ʿajāʾibihā*"[221] ("whenever one contemplates its methods his admiration becomes immersed in its [various] wonders"). Contemplation, discovery, and wonder drive the poet's descriptions of his *mudabbajāt*, who uses terms like miraculous (*muʿjiz)* and magical (*sāḥir*). Still, al-Jilyānī is aware of their bewildering and confusing quality. He makes note of this both in the introductions to the *mudabbajāt* as well

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[217] Julia Bray, "From Spain to Syria: What Did al-Jilyānī Bring With Him?," unpublished paper. N.D.

[218] Both Abu Deeb and Bray note that a few *mudabbajāt* do not include transcripts and are thus difficult to decipher. al-Jilyānī and Abu Deeb and Bakhsh, 65.

[219] Bray, "Picture-Poems," 261.

[220] al-Jilyānī, *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, 10.

[221] Ibid, 11.

as in certain verses. For instance, in his introduction to the tree poem, al-Jilyānī describes sight's bewilderment in deciphering the form ("*yuḥāru al-baṣaru fī marʾāha wa-tadhhalu al-fikru fī mabnāhā*" "sight is bewildered when seeing it and thought is stunned by its forms"). But this sense of bewilderment is strategic, and only accentuates the wonder the poet hopes to produce when the reader finally deciphers the poem.

Al-Jilyānī doesn't allude to his process, other than to say that each line is sufficient to stand on its own. Did he work with a singular set of *alfāẓ*? Did he start out with a poem that was versed and then compose it into the form we find it in? Or did he, as he says in the introduction, see the images in a dream and from there work backwards to construct the poem, fitting the shape of the word into the form he presents it in? Though we can ultimately only speculate about his process, what al-Jilyānī offers is a praise poem that requires a new sensibility to be understood. From these few introductory words, we can already see the way visual poems parallel conceptions of how *takhyīl* functioned in verbal poems—both rely on the doubled image, both imply two forms of vision (one literal, the other figurative), and both center the image as a primary visual experience in the poem. In addition, the compositions in the *dīwān* make visible the sonic/aural elements of the poem, as the shapes used—the circle, for instance—often necessitate repetition and this repetition is experienced as chant, anaphora, and even the re-enactment of time and memory.[222] As I'll show below, the constraints of the outer form enhanced certain qualities inherent in the *madīḥ* while producing a new kind of praise poem whose forms are embodied, and in turn generate, an embodied reading of the poem.

Section 1: Figuring the contemplative look

Al-Jilyānī wrote the *mudabbaja* titled "*Rihān al-adhhān fī madā dhikr al-malik al-nāṣir ʿalā marri al-ʾazmān*" ("The wager of the mind in remembering the victorious king across time") in 1193 A.D. Encountering the poem (Figure 1), the reader first sees a star embedded in a circle that flows into a grid that then opens out into a circle whose center contains an oval that gives the impression of an eye. This central circle continues on to another grid, then another star embedded within a circle that mirrors the poem's first shapes. Though it doesn't suggest this on first glance, this *muddabaja*, which is made up of 112 distinct verses (though many of the words that make up these verses are shared), consists of several poems. On the next page, I've arranged the *mudabbaja* into one image in order to show its size and the intricacy of its interconnected forms.[223]

[222] Bray describes repetition in the tree poem as having the effect of a "solemn litany" which links the ruler to God, but also with a ludic effect of a "memory-game" which comes out of the combinatory possibilities of the tree form. Bray, "Picture-Poems," 258.

[223] Bray and other scholars studying the manuscripts concluded these must have originally been inscribed on a continuous surface like a scroll. Ibid, 253.



Figure 1

Rihān al-adhhān fī
madā dhikr al-malik al-nāṣir
ʿalā marri al-ʾazmān

In his introduction to this *mudabbaja*, al-Jilyānī reassures the reader that it follows the rules of Arabic prosody, and that each letter is accounted for:

هي جميعُها تدبيجُ نظمٍ في نظم مشتَبكٍ مداخلٍ من شعرٍ مبسوطٍ ومُضاعَفٍ ومُصدَّرٍ ومُنَهَّرٍ ومختَّمٍ ومشمولٍ منجَّم. وكلُّ صنفٍ منها قائمٌ بنفسه تامُّ الصنائعِ، كاملُ أدواتِ البلاغة، وليس فيها ضَرورةٌ من ضروراتِ الشِّعر التي استجازها الشُّعراءُ في مطلق الأشعارِ، ولا فيها تصحيفُ حرفٍ من الحروف المشمُولة أو غيرها، ولا فيها تاءُ تأنيثٍ تُقرَأُ هاءً ولا هاءُ تقرأ تاءً على كثرةِ اشتراكها واشتباكها. ومن خواصِّها أنَّ الدَّائرةَ المضاعَفَة منها التي هي ثمانية أبيات يُقرأ منها اثنان وثلاثون بيتاً ليس في بيتٍ منها تضمينٌ، بل كلُّ بيتٍ قائِمُ المعنى بنفسه، لقوة الكلام في ضبط التَّقدِير بوجوه التَّصريف للإعراب فسَلِمَتْ من التَّضمين بتوفيق الله وهدايته.[224]

They are all embellished verses intertwined with verses that are spread out, doubled, centered, rivered, sealed, and gathered and starred. Each type exists on its own, complete in its craftsmanship, perfected with the tools of eloquence, and it does not contain any of the licenses of poetry that poets have permitted in all poetry, nor does it contain the distortion of one of the enclosed letters or any other, nor does it contain a feminine *taʾ* that is read as a *haʾ*, nor a *haʾ* that is read as a *taʾ*, although they are frequently confused. Among its characteristics is that the double circle, which is eight verses, from which thirty-two verses are recited, does not contain an enjambment in any of them, but rather the meaning of each verse is complete on its own, due to the discourse 's power to specify how syntactical features are to be understood, so it is spared from equivocation by God's grace and guidance.

The reason al-Jilyānī insists that the verses contained within the *mudabbaja* are clear and unequivocal is not only to magnify his technical accomplishment, but as we'll see very soon, the poem's difficulty rests entirely in its visual decipherability. The poet anticipating this difficulty ensures the reader that any equivocation is due to the reader's shortcomings rather than any error in the poet's composition. Finally, in the last line, al-Jilyānī maintains that his handle on composing language has ensured the poem's syntactical perfection. While for al-Jilyānī the emphasis on syntax suggests he prioritized it over the formal organization of the poem, as I'll show, the formal composition extended certain syntactical structures to their limit.

Turning now to a reading of the *mudabbaja*, as Figure 1 above shows, the poem's layout seems to suggest the poem begins either at the first embedded star circle or the central circle, but al-Jilyānī instead tells the reader to begin in the second grid, with the the first enclosed poem, *al-mudabbaja al-qudsiyya* (a poem he also chronologically wrote first). The grid contains the following verses:

1 حبيبٌ تراءى وهو يأبى لثامه ولاحظه صبٌّ يثور هيامه

2 رآه فلم يُسلم هواه لشِركةٍ وأربَى عليه ما جلاه قَوَامُهُ

3 بقدٍّ رهيفٍ شارك الغُصنَ مُزهِراً أعاليه إذ أجنى وأحيا غَمامُهُ

4 وخَدٍّ نهارٍ في بَهَارٍ[225] وفاترٍ من الطَّرفِ يأسُو ما يسوءُ اجتِرامُهُ

[224] al-Jilyānī, *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, 76.

[225] This word in the manuscript appears as بهمار. I've kept the transcription provided by Abu Deeb and Bakhsh.

5 ووعدٍ يُضيءُ الدّاجِياتِ تكَاءدت مطلاً فوافى عافياً مُستهَامُهُ

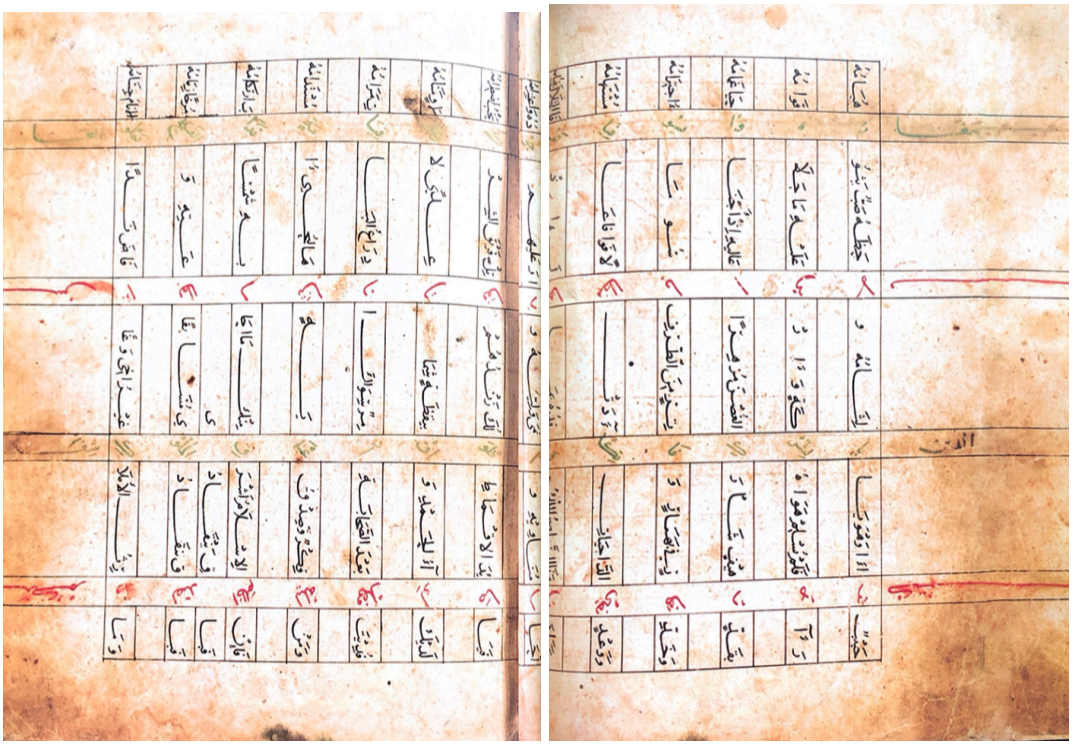

Figure 2: First grid containing the *mudabajja qudsiyya*

1 A beloved refusing his veil appeared
And one with an overflowing passion noticed him

2 He saw him and didn't surrender his love to another
He increased for him what made his stature shine

3 With a slender physique, he resembled the blooming of the branch
in its height lofty [deeds], when it bore fruit and his clouds endowed life

4 And many a day's shining cheek with a languid glance
it remedies the evil of its crime

5 And a promise lighting up the black night and it took upon itself
To put off fulfillment, while his love-mad lover fulfilled the demander

The poem not only begins with a standard *nasīb* trope—the beloved appearing to the poet in the same way that the *ṭayf al-khayāl* appeared to the poets of chapter two—but also with a textual moment of vision. This kind of seeing is not unique to the *mudabbaja* (we've seen instances of this throughout the preceding chapter), but in the context of a poem meant primarily to be received visually, the references to sight and appearances stand out as metatextual moments

that invoke a double seeing—the literal seeing of the poem itself, and the figurative seeing of the beloved's appearance. In these first five verses lie the central argument around poetic seeing in the *mudabbaja*. First, is the two forms of "to see" which develop in the first two verses from appearance to vision (*tarāʾa* to *raʾāhu*), second is the reference to visibility that is tied to *madīḥ* (in verse five with the reference to a promise that "lights up,"), and finally to the healing power of this kind of visibility. The *mudabbaja* formalizes visually the poet-patron relationship by extending and highlighting its mutuality, and showing the poet's capacity to make visible, as we'll see later on in the poem, what the patron's enemies willfully ignore. The poem will take poetic seeing further than the standard *madīḥ*, not in the fact that it points this out, but rather in the way it demonstrates just how far-reaching the work of *seeing* is and calls out those who, apart from the poet and his patron, cannot see.

The *mudabbaja* splits apart letters and fragments them in different directions in order to form distinct words. For instance, the letters *mīm* and *dāl* can make up *madār* or *mudīr* since the letters in the *mudabbaja* are only occasionally given diacritical markers. In this way, the poem seems to mimic the use of the Arabic language's root system, though often the words that come out of the shared fragments do not in fact share similar roots. For its part, the grid shape offers an experience of fragmentation that mirrors the coming together of the poet and patron to which these first verses refer. In each verse, words are sectioned off from one another by four columns alternately colored in red and green ink. The contents of the even columns (often just the fragment of a word) will make up other verses yet to come, and thus the reader begins this reading experience as an intersection with a kind of futurity, or delay of the poetic verse. In addition to breaking the standard *ʿāmūd*'s two-hemistich structure, the fragmentation of the words into letters allows the poet to make up several verses from the same words and emphasizes convergence and repetition as a structure of poetic experience. The middle of the poem, enclosed as it is in a larger poem, describes the patron's pursuit of the enemy and their resulting dispersal across the lands. This part of the poem encapsulates the meandering of the battalions, their crossings over sea, over land, and their defeat by the patron. These are of course themes that will be repeated in another embedded poem. However, the movement of the patron's forces is emphasized here in the form of a grid, a form mainly associated with order and proportionality (*tanāsub*), a quality that *madīḥ* poems generally tend to emphasize in describing the patron's justice.

After the fourteen verses of the grid, the poem leads into the central circle, and following al-Jilyānī's instructions, begins at one of the four starting points within the circle (which are marked in the manuscript). The reader must then follow the circle, moving against the intuitive passage provided by the poem, and jump to the next grid. Like the one previous to it, this grid also has five columns and is broken up by the floating letters that connect the rows but that also make up the words of verses that will come later to intersect the grid vertically. The verses in this part of the poem extol Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's military reputation, turning to his battles in Jerusalem that end with a confrontation with the *mushrikīn* (the crusaders), and close with a reminder to the patron of the truly miraculous nature of the poet's praise (the poet will be less subtle about this in the ending of the next *qaṣīda*):

33 إليك أفاءَ المدحَ نَساجُ حكمتي غلائل دُرٍّ ما عداكم نظامُهُ

34 بمعجِز رقمٍ عند إذن بصنعه ألان شِماسا فيه من ذا كلامُهُ

35 وما قدر قولي عند حبّي إذا انتمى ومنه لقلبي ما سَباهُ لزَامُهُ

36 فؤادٌ سَرى تَيتيمُهُ لائذا بكم لهذا تَعاصى في هواكم فِطامُهُ

33 For you praise is bestowed in the weaving of my wisdom
Gowns of pearls, whose composition didn't turn you away (displease you)

34 With a miraculousness imprinted by permission, with its craft
The one whose speech softened are refractoriness in him

35 My speech's value [compared] to my heart, though it belongs to [and flows from] it
is not [equal to] how much [my heart] is captivated by clinging to him

36 A heart whose orphanhood was to travel by night seeking refuge in you
And for that reason it became difficult to be weaned off your love

The ending of this poem makes clear to the patron that it is his order, permission, and deference that are centered by the poet (this won't be quite the approach al-Jilyani takes in the conclusion of the main poem). I want to alert us to the ending's circularity. Although these verses end in the grid (and thus emphasize the question of *naẓm* that the poet poses to the patron), a portion of this poem was embedded in the main circular form of the *mudabbaja*. If we visualize the path the eye takes to read this part, there is a grid followed by a circle and then another grid. The poem moves in concert with the overall shape of the poem, but also enacts a kind of return exemplified by the circle and the return to the grid-shape with which the poem starts. This return of the same image recalls those of the *ṭayf al-khayāl* in Ibn Khafāja's praise poems. The end words of the *ʿajuz* are *niẓāmuhu* ("his order), *kalāmuhu* ("his words"), *lizāmuhu* ("his necessity"), and *fiṭāmuhu* ("his weaning") all of which emphasize the poet-patron mutuality in the praise poem.

The main poem, which begins at the oval-shape centered in the main circle (Figure 3) tenders its own *nasīb* beginning:

1 قديمٌ هواكم في الفؤاد قراره فكيف به مُذ شَطَّ عنكم مَزارُهُ

2 يرى حسنكم والصَّدُّ أظلمَ ليله فهل لوصالٍ أن يضيءَ نهارُهُ

3 تركتم حَشاه من أسىً وتذبذبٍ جَناحَ قطاً خفقاً فبان اصطِبارُهُ

4 وما لبلى ذا الجِسمِ وَجدِي وإنما يُباح حِمى راجٍ لكم وجواره

5 وحالي على ما سرَّ أو ساء منكم كحالة مخمورٍ زهاهُ خِمارهُ

6 ألذُّ اهتايج الشوقِ بي حسرا إذا تفاقم ما ألقى وثارَ أُواره

1 Your desire is long in the heart, its resting place.
What can be its state when his time/place of visit has become far from you

2 He sees your beauty, while rejection has darkened his night,
So can a union brighten the day?

3 You left his insides, which out of wavering and sorrow,
Fluttering like the wing of a sand grouse and his patience became evident

4 My grief is not because of the consumption of my body
Protection and guardianship of your supplicant should be permitted

5 And my state despite what occurs of good and bad from you
Iis like the state of a drunkard whom the wine enlivened

6 The most pleasurable stirring of desire in me becomes sorrowful
If what his love threw and raged becomes onerous

The first verse begins at the bottom of the "eye" and follows the curve until it loops into the "river" (in the introduction, al-Jilyānī uses the term *anhār* to refer to the curving forms that connect the grid, central circle, and embedded star) following the letter *hā* that ends the first hemistich. The second verse, which is made up of the disconnected words and letters that intersected the grid, presents an interesting moment of fluidity both in spatial and temporal terms. The connection the poet seeks to establish through disconnected letters that make up the term *wiṣāl* ("union") throws doubt on whether a union could indeed "brighten a day," because spatially it cuts through the verses of another poem, and temporally because the reader is aware of having encountered these verses before in a cursory glance despite not knowing (or having rather to delay knowing) their meaning or significance. From here, the reader follows the third verse through the river into the star embedded within the first circle. Verses four, five, and six interweave between the internal star and the outer circle, which results in certain words being split apart. For example, in verse 5 the word *makhmūr's* last letter is split and made a part of the inner triangle that leads to the word *zahāhu*. This word is also fragmented and the teardrop shape (see Figure 4) contains the disjointed letters '*zahā*,' '*ha*,' '*nū*,' and '*ra*' that could conceivably make their own phrase *zahāhu nūr* ("light made him radiant").

Making use of the *nasīb*'s standard associations to describe a love sickness the poet feels as a result of the patron's distance, the third and fourth verses deepen this reference to the body's state, which the fifth and sixth lines expand to a physical effect on the body. The poem contains these verses in the center, in the ocular shape, which suggests a kind of body (later on I'll show this in the poet's use of certain terms to reference the body of the poem). What's noteworthy here is the way al-Jilyānī has taken the canonical loss of the *qaṣīda*'s opening and has made it visible as a hole in the center of the page. But this very shape is also what suggests the ability to see, evoking as it does an eye and signaling vision in verse two: "He sees your beauty, while rejection has darkened the night." As previously mentioned, the reader would have already encountered the words that make up these verses in a reading of another poem.

The verse that takes the reader out of the first embedded star begins with *qāma* and the first word directly outside the circle is the name *Ṣalāḥ*:

13 وقام صلاحُ الدينِ بالشِركِ فاتكاً وأطواقُ أعناقِ المُلوكِ شِفارُهُ

13 Salāḥ al-Dīn attacked idolatry, decimating its ranks
and the collars on the necks of kings are his blades

The poet strategically places the patron's name where it can be easily seen. Despite the poem's overall difficulty, a reader would have no problem seeing, in a cursory first look, picking out the patron's name (see Figure 4). The second half of the verse, which describes the patron making the collars (*aṭwāq*) of other kings into blades, is the point in the *mudabbaja* when the circle unravels into a curve with straightened sides. The eye, then, performs the verse on two levels: first, in the mind as the image is evoked, and second on a physical level, both forms of which, as al-Qarṭājannī assured his reader in the first chapter, move the recipient in similar ways.



Figure 3 Beginning of the *mudabbaja* (central circle)

The poem continues on, moving once again down the second grid, intersecting with the verses of the first poem, before turning out into one of the "rivers" leading to the second embedded star:

17 أعز مكاني إذ أزال ضرورتي وما ذِلةُ الإنسان إلا اضطرَارُهُ

18 ولا عزة إلا ولاءٌ وقربةٌ تحلَّى بها شخصٌ موفَّىً فَخَارُهُ

17 He honored my station when he removed my lack
and man's humiliation is nothing but his need of things

18 There is no honor except loyalty and closeness
by which one whose glory is given its due

These verses are not only distinguished by their prominent place in the poem, but also in the use of a different colored ink, which though perhaps an addition by the scribe, nevertheless suggests a visual interpretation that distinguishes the poet's station.[226] The poem then enters into the second starred circle, with the rest of the verses following the same rules to traverse the embedded star as the first one. The verses here describe the patron's generosity, accumulating and meandering in and out of the three distinct shapes—the star, circle, and teardrop. Even as the reader understands the verses to be about the patron's generosity, there is an excess of words within the embedded star that have not all been accounted for yet, and the reader gleans that there will be a return to this part once again in order to finish out the poem. It is important to emphasize that the reader's eyes take in the entire figure even though the poem delays such an encompassing.

Finally, the reader passes once again through the writing that intersects the columns of the second grid and follows it into the central circle. Instead of returning to the first star, however, the poem loops through the central "eye" and returns back down the second grid and back to the second embedded star. The lines that make up the ocular shape at the center of this main circle are:

28 فقد علموا تحقيق ما جَهِلوه من نكيرٍ قديرٍ لا يُطاق حِذَارُهُ

29 وعزم صلاح الدين إذ جَهلوه قد تسلَّط فيهم صَوتُهُ وانتصارُهُ

28 They came to know the realization of what had been unknown to them
[Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's actions] could not be guarded against

29 And Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's determination, though they were ignorant of it,
his voice and victory prevailed among them.

Verse 28 is read on the way back from the second embedded star towards the main circle, and verse 29 is read on the return to that second embedded star, a movement localized in the ocular shape of an eye. The word *jahl*, which occupies a privileged position right at the lower "eyelid" and is distinguished by being enlarged and bolded in black ink, accrues meaning in the doubling back. The first *jahl*, "what had been unknown," by the second verse becomes a deeper form of "ignorance." This doubling is a common move in Arabic poetry, we saw this, for instance, in Ibn Khafāja and al-Ṭuṭaylī's *jinās* and their use of terms that share the same root. Al-Jilyānī offers a different kind of visual *jīnas* here—one that takes the same word as the locus of three different meanings (it will later refer to a third ignorance at the end of the poem). Moreover, these two verses are at the center of the poem and both conceptually and visually highlight the poet's aim in combating the ignorance of his patron's capabilities.

The next verses of the second star (or "the lower star" as al-Jilyānī calls it) address the tribe of Aṣfar, and the poet plays on this to extrapolate images of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's yellow banners (verses 30-35). The middle verses describe what the patron makes visible in a way I've already discussed in the second chapter—primarily by creating an image of the patron's accomplishments, and so figuring the patron's justice and courage. The difference here is that the reader, experiencing the bewildering but pleasurable reading of the visual composition,

[226] There is compelling evidence that one of the extant manuscripts was written by al-Jilyānī's hand. Bray, "Picture Poems," 250.

encounters a verse like "*tajjalā bi-nūr al-dīnī mā tāha ʿaṣrunā/ bihi nāmiyyan kahla-l-tamāmī waqāruhu*" ("in the light of faith, what has confused our era and its herd has been revealed/reaching the maturity of perfection") having experienced the bewildering quality of the poem that makes this declaration.[227] In other words, what the patron has made visible has caused bewilderment—an impression uniquely captured by the bewildering feelings that reading the *muddabaja* elicits. In its play on the name of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's brother whom he succeeded, al-Jilyānī both credits Nūr al-Dīn and upstages him.

As the reader approaches the end of the main poem, al-Jilyānī's instructions become doubly important. The verses lead to the center of the circle, but this isn't its final ending. There are four additional verses in the transcript of the poem, and al-Jilyānī instructions tell the reader:

فإذا انتهيت إلى «وأمرك زاهٍ حيث أمَّ سِفارُهُ» عدتَ إلى الشعر المشمول المُنَجَّم. ومبدؤُه في وسط المختَّمة العليا فتقرأ:

57 وديباجٍ سحرٍ رَقمِ أندلسٍ سما وجِليانة بين البلاد مَنارهُ

58 فما لشآمٍ أو عراقٍ بفهمه يدٌ فأقطاب العلوم مَدارُهُ

59 وقد جَهلوهُ صورةً وقراءة فماذا عسى إبداعه وابتكاره

60 إذا خُصَّ في الأنامِ بمعجزٍ فليس لثانٍ في مَداه اقتِدارُهُ

وهذه الأبياتُ الأربعة منجمة في مفاصل المُدَبَّجة تُقرأ من اثنين وثمانين مفصلاً، وبها تمام القصيدة الرائية.

If you end up at the line "And your affairs are bright wherever they go" you have returned to the poetry encompassed in the star. And its beginning is at the center of the upper seal and you read:

57 And a wondrous striped Andalusī brocade rose up
And *jilyāna* among the lands was its lighthouse

58 And neither a hand in Syria nor Iraq can understand it
for its orbit is the poles of the sciences

59 They were ignorant of it in picture and in reading
What could this creativity and innovation be

60 If he was distinguish among men, a miracle
Then there is no second to the extent of his power

These four verses are starred within the joints of the *muddabaja* and are read from eighty-two joints and with them you end the *qaṣīda* in *rāʾ*.

A more apt term for "reading" here is "retrieving." The verse's scattered letters require two degrees of composition—the first in putting together the words and then in putting together

[227] al-Jilyānī, *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, 92.

تَجَلى بنور الدين ما تاهَ عصرُنا به نامياً كهلَ التَّمامِ وَقارُهُ

the verses from the retrieved words. Without al-Jilyānī's instructions and transcript, the verses are difficult to retrieve. Verse 56, which describes the patron's affairs being seen "your affairs are bright wherever they go," is juxtaposed against the last four verses that establish the poet's vision and capability.[228] Unlike the patron's "bright" affairs, the composition of the poet's last four verses is reminiscent of esoteric practices like talismans or even numerology.[229] In order to recompose the verses, the eye jumps around the two stars and finds the "joints," ("*mafṣal*") which are not connected to one another and don't appear in order. Al-Jilyānī's reference to these parts of the poem as joints make the *mudabbaja* into a kind of body. Throughout the *mudabbaja*, the poet has alerted the patron to his own visibility—whether through language that embodies the patron or through the things the patron has made visible. In this sense, the "joints" of the poem both index the patron's image and the poet's role in assembling this image—a relationship figured in the language of the body.

The final verses stress the singularity of the *tadbīj* form—it comes from al-Andalus and not from Syria and Iraq. The central word here is *jahl* and it is the same word at the center of verse 28 and 29. In this way, the poet aligns the ignorance of the patron's enemies (the crusaders) with those of competing poets who write praise poems to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. In a poem that centers the ignorance of the enemy and tries to remedy it through *madīḥ*, the poet has found a visual way to both stress the work of the praise poem—which is to distinguish the poet in the patron's eyes and solidify the poet-patron relationship—and upend this dynamic by making sure not only that the poet stands out, but also that the patron is in need of the poet in order to *see* the image he constructs of him.

Finally, to round out this *mudabbaja*, the reader is instructed to return to the central circle and to note the handwriting at the opposite ends of the circle in order to produce two final poems—both made up of eight verses—which share the same words but in different orderings, each pair of verses with a unique *qāfiyya* (see Figure 3). The verses are extracted from the previous poem's verses and thus from these eight verses, a combination of thirty two verses across three poems are made available to the reader. The conclusion of the *mudabbaja* at the central circle, with poems that wrap around and constitute the outer layer highlights another aspect of *madīḥ*—the generative language that exceeds the poem because of the way it indexes the patron. The poet hopes to create the patron's palpable figure, but the poem's excess is the wealth he hopes this work will generate. Putting this generative quality to the test, the *ʿajuz* of the first poem makes up the *ṣadr* of the second:

جلَّى منيرا مقامه سنى لَهَجٍ أز هى مداه ابتدارُه حلىً مدحا

يُسمِي فيُنمي اعتيامه شذى أرجٍ بالمكرمات افتخاره فرى ندحا

The verses here are, in the second poem, ordered in this way:

أز هى مداه ابتداره حلا مدحا يسمى فينمي اعتيامه لمبتهج

بالمكرمات افتخاره فرى ندحا إشراقه وانتسامه لمبتهج

[228] Ibid, 93.

عدوك واهٍ حيث تَمَّ سُفورهُ وأمرُك زاهٍ حيث أمَّ سِفارُهُ

[229] Bray notes the visual resemblance of the *muddabajāt* to Egyptian block-printed scrolls called *ṭarsh* which also date back to the twelfth century. "From Spain to Syria," 8.

The additional order doesn't change the overall meaning, although it extends their reach and seems to suggest, contravening the claim al-Jilyānī makes in the introduction, that the verses do not contain any enjambment (*tadmīn*). His extraction of two extra poems from the larger composition, particularly at the central circle, emphasizes the generative nature of the circular form—generative not necessarily of new meaning, but in rendering visible the accumulation of language. The circle makes visible the poet's inexhaustible ability to produce praise. In the next section, I'll discuss how the circle structures the poem's visual experience and figures poetic prosody.

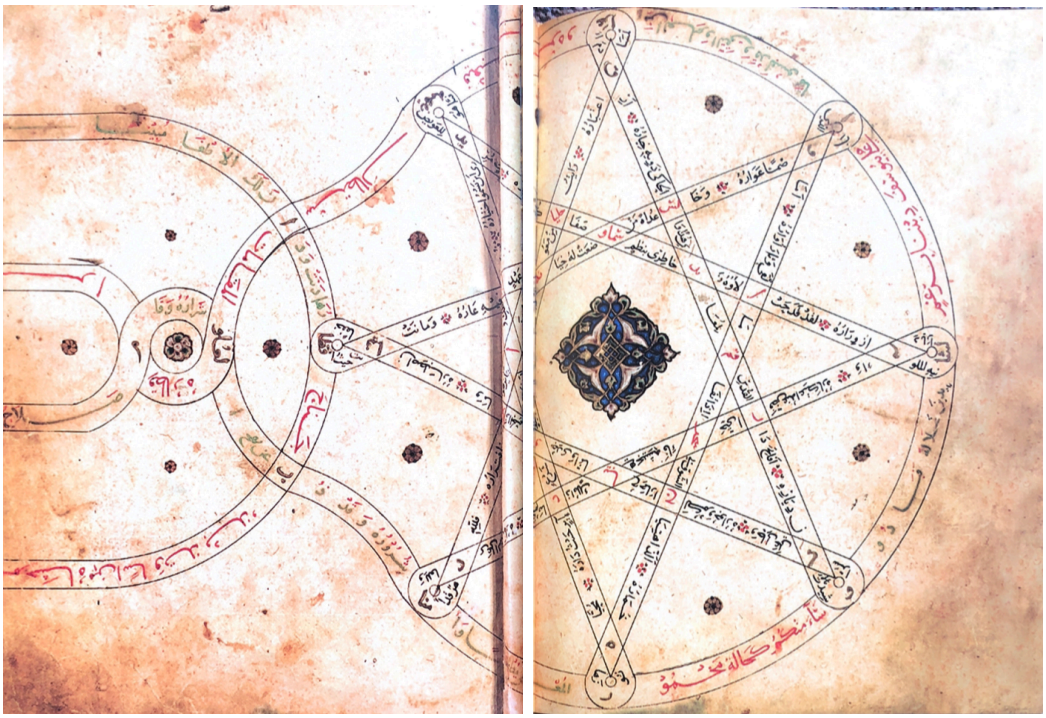

Figure 4: Upper star

Section 2: Circling poetic knowledge

This *muddabbaja* makes us go in circles. Unsurprisingly, the circle itself is an important shape in the premodern period.[230] The Arabic alphabet was understood by calligraphers, mystics,

[230] Martin Stokes, "The Politics of Aesthetics in the Muslim Middle East," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Middle East* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), 89–106. "Circular diagrams—popularized, arguably, in the writings of the Ikhwan al‑Safa', connected understandings of proportion in calligraphy, geometric ornament, music, and poetic meter. A vocabulary of taste (*dhawk*) and amazement (*taʿajjub*), of imagination (*takhyīl*) in relation to moulds or modular forms (*tatabbuʿ*), played across various artistic fields, from poetry, to music, to miniature painting (Necipoğlu 1995: 185; Gonzalez 2001: 22). They did so in the sway of political struggle and theological debate, pushing one or another element of this complex field to the fore, without ever completely negating the others."

and artists to be a circular alphabet—with the exception of the *alif*—all of its letters draw on the circle in some form. The the *naskh* script of the *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, which along with *thuluth*, *tawqīʿ*, *riqaʿ*, *muḥaqqaq*, *and rayḥani* all known as *al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb*, is credited to the ninth/tenth century *wazīr* Ibn Muqla (see Figure 5). His realization of the circular unity of writing comes from a belief that the circle is the form in which the world is fashioned: "The world is a circle, the earth is a dot, the heavens are bows, accidents are arrows, and man is a target; so where is one to flee?"[231] The circle as a shape also has a meditative and embodied quality associated with the circumambulation of the pilgrim around the *kaʿba*.[232] Aside from the grid, the forms in the *dīwān*, including the river, seashell, tree, star, all evoke circularity. Al-Jilyānī also gestures to another important circular form related to the *madīh* poems he's written—the sultan's seal (*khatim*).[233] In another poem, cited by Bray, al-Jilyānī directly references the seal, writing:

مُستنكرا خاتما رقما وديرتا　　وإنما تلك مما عندنا ومُلاحُ

وما عسا رقما مثنا او مضعفتا　　في حقي ذا فكرا ارسانها سرحُ[234]

He denies the seal, the figure, and the circle
but that is part of what we have it is beautiful

What is a figure doubled or multiplied
to one whose thoughts are loosened and unbridled.

The circularity of al-Jilyānī's poem goes beyond the shape and formalizes such cyclical aspects as repetition, anaphora, and the reuse of words for different meanings. Guiding al-Jilyānī's eye and hand, then, the circle as a formal principle dramatizes and duplicates language, suggesting an alternative set of rules which its author must give before the reader can understand where and how to look. The *qaṣīda's* combinatory potential implies something about al-Jilyānī's theory of language—its capacity to be modulated, at times, being accessible only through deliberation and guidance. Still, the recognizable forms that al-Jilyānī gestures to conceptually in the poem are not new to the genre of *madīḥ* and we can read his reappropriation

[231] Jamal J. Elias, *Aisha's Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 239.

[232] "The creation of the human body according to the proportions of the universe, derived from the curved circumference of the circle and its diameter, from which the letters of proportioned calligraphy also originate---this is from the epistles of the brethren of purity" in Gülru NeciPoğlu, "The Scrutinizing Gaze in the Aesthetics of Islamic Visual Cultures: Sight, Insight, and Desire," *Muqarnas* 32 (2015), 32

[233] The verses come from an extemporized "seal" poem which speaks in the first person and alludes to such aspects as knowledge and God-given talents. This kind of first-person, self-referential allusion to the poet which gives the inanimate object that speaks the power of voice has been discussed by Olga Bush in her work on poetic epigraphy in architecture. Olga Bush, "Prosopopeia: Performing the Reciprocal Gaze," *Muqarnas Online* 32, no. 1 (2015): 13–19.

[234] I thank Julia Bray for pointing me towards this verse (and for sending me the Arabic transliteration). She has provided a translation of these verses in her article, but the translation above is my own.

of elements like the distance of the beloved, the indebtedness of the poet to the patron, and the poet's power to make visible the patron's deeds visually in the *mudabbajāt*.

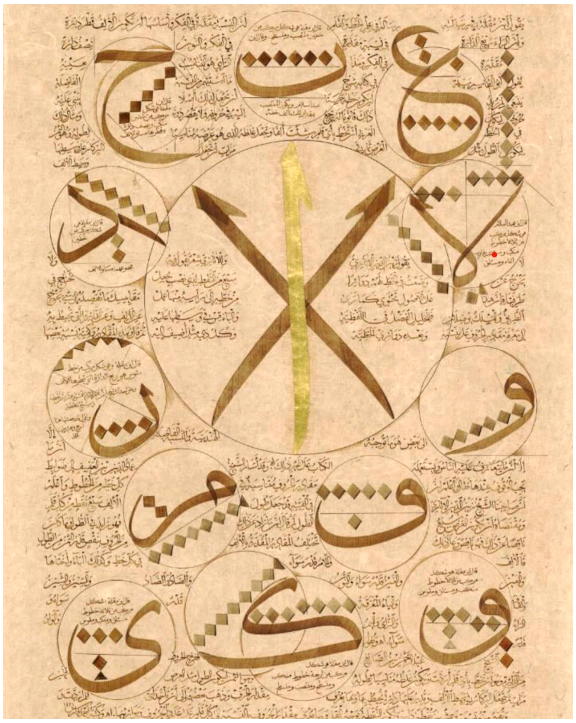

Figure 5: Ibn Muqla's proportions (date unknown)

According to Eyad Abuali, visual diagrams, spurred on by the primacy of discourses on vision and visionary perception, became popular fixtures in twelfth century manuscripts.[235] These diagrams acquired spiritual significance, according to Abuali, "as agents of meditation through vision," which were intended to generate mystical insight through a visual practice. In other words, diagrams enabled a form of ocular contemplation. The twelfth century is also when the geographer Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (d. 1165 A.D.), working in the court of king Roger in Sicily, produced a map of the world with a circular form to represent the earth (Figure 6). As I showed in the reading above, al-Jilyānī's poem is aware of directionality not only as a formal quality—in the way he directs the reader through rivers, grids, and loops the eye back through circular shapes—but also in the way he is concerned with representing the battles of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn against the crusaders (direction here being understood as the trajectory of the patron's conquests). Another source, then, of thinking about the circle is its role in map-making. In the case of

[235] Abuali writes that "the steady emergence of increasingly complex and detailed diagrams then coincides with a time when greater value was placed on the visual and visionary experiences in Sufism." Though, he adds, this was not confined to changes in Sufi manuscript traditions "but was part of a wider trend that emphasized ocular experiences in Sufi practice as well" Eyad Abuali, "Visualizing the Soul: Diagrams and the Subtle Body of Light (*Jism Laṭīf*) in Shams al-Dīn al-Daylamī's *The Mirror of Souls* (*Mirʿāt al-Arwāḥ*)," *Critical Research on Religion* 9, no. 2 (2021): 170.

al-Jilyānī's *mudabbaja*, he uses the form as a way to visualize the battles of his patron.[236] Indeed, situating this work within the context of the twelfth century, and the growing interest in visualizing both inner and outer space, al-Jilyānī's poem registers this tendency toward visualization.

The circle also bears on the poem conceptually. In the last verses of the central poem, al-Jilyānī describes how no one in Syria or Iraq truly grasps his *muaddbajāt*, "for they circle among the sciences of knowledge." He uses the word *madāruhunn*, a term that shares a root with another one he uses to describe the patron—*mudīr*. The poem's emphasis on circular movement and its reference to the patron shows both his role in defeating the enemy and in organizing the poem's very structure. Elsewhere, al-Jilyānī describes the patron again centering the *d-w-r* root in the verse:

47 فيوسفُ بين المُلك والدين واقفٌ سيفٍ وشرعٍ دائرٍ حيثُ دارهُ

48 مُحياه نورُ المُعتفي مُطلِعٌ منى وأمناً، وللعادي على الرُّعب نارُه

49 وكم صادَ ذا ملكٍ يُباهِي بجيشِه فأسحَر حتى ارْفضَّ عنه اعتكارُهُ

50 وأمَّ ديارَ الشائدين ضلالةً بادوا، وشِيدَت بالأمان ديارُه

51 أفاتحَ دار القدس قُم لمعاندي هدىً والَسَ الحاكي ذويه خِيارهُ

47 Yusuf stands between kingship and religion
a sword and a revolving road of security

48 His face is the light of the petitioner appearing/bursting forth from desire and safety
To the one fighting off fear, he is his fire

49 How many times has he trapped a king who brags about his army?
He went forth at dawn until he dispersed his vehemence

50 He headed for the abode of those who exalted error
And they perished and his homes were built for safety

51 O Conqueror of the house of Jerusalem stand up to those who resist right guidance
whose best people distorted [the words of] the one addressing its own [people]

The lines above lead the eye perpendicularly through the first grid toward the upper circle, where the verses criss-cross through the star formation, moving in and out of the teardrop shapes that themselves loop around the circle, connecting the star to it like joints. Altogether several kinds of forms from the root *d-w-r* are ascribed to the patron here. There is the "*sharʿin dāʾirun ḥaythu dāru*" ("a revolving road of security")—the bewilderment of those wandering around in religious ignorance. The poet here praises, in a conventional *madīḥ* trope, the patron as

[236] I would like to thank a student in the audience for a talk I gave at Kenyon College, whose question pointed me in this direction.

the defender of Islam who fends off the polytheists, reinforcing Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's capacity to bewilder both the era and his enemies. Then in the *diyār al-shāʾidīn ḍalālatan* ("the abode of those who exalted error") that further spells out the bewildering effects of the circle (as the eye itself goes into a circle to make up the verse) and finally the *dār*, or abode, of Jerusalem in the last verse excerpted above. Tying together several important strands, then, the circle evokes the bewildering pathways of the enemy under the direction of the patron who is at ease because he is at home (*dār*) in the holy city of Jerusalem. The poet makes visible the nuances in these connections between the enemy, the patron, and the site of their conflict through the circular forms that organize the poem. Additionally, as we saw in the poem above, the visible form emphasized the subtlety of language, which the reader encounters in the way the poet re-affects language—that for instance al-Jilyānī can, by using the same word, remind his patron that ignorance (*jahl*) not only applies to the crusaders but also to his rival poets who don't understand his miraculous forms. This double work of language is emphasized by the circular form.



Figure 6: Al-Idrīsī's map of the world (1154 A.D.)

Finally, in this poem and others that make use of the circle, several kinds of unseen qualities are made visible. Primarily, and this is because the *mudabbajat* are forms that are intended first and foremost to be read and not recited, is the aural and sonic. The incantatory quality comes out in the two additional poems whose *ṣadr* and *ʿajuz* each end in *hu*, dramatizing repetition. Arabic prosody, like the Arabic alphabet, draws on geometric principles that tend to be circular. The Andalusī poet and anthologist Ibn ʿAbd Rabhih wrote about Arabic prosody and included diagrammatic illustrations that showed the geometrical principle upon which prosody was based. There are five prosodic circles according to Ibn ʿAbd Rabhih—he calls them *dāʾirāt*— which show how an auditory poem can be presented visually (Akkach calls this

schema an "aural geometry").[237] The geometric rules of prosody, drawing from the circularity of the Arabic alphabet, are also those of calligraphy, and the circular form of the *mudabbaja* not only visualizes, but also highlights the prosodic structures that organize it.

Calligraphic Play

As discussed above, throughout the *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, the question of contemplative looking as a mode of reading and understanding prefaces the reader's encounter with the *mudabbajāt*. Al-Jilyānī's visual poems register a kind of seeing demanded by two other visual modes—calligraphy and architecture. The intertwinement of the two, particularly in sacred spaces, makes contemplation in this context an act of worship. But before its frequency in architectural spaces, the calligraphic script was considered a vehicle not only for expression, but also for knowledge and feeling, and was understood by caliphs to have political value. Ibn Ḥazm disapproved of elaborate calligraphy on these grounds, that it was often used in the service of power.[238] Abū Ḥayyān Al-Tawḥidī (d. 1023 A.D.), for instance, describes how calligraphy's affective and intellectual content resides in its clear articulation of ideas,[239] a matter that can be disrupted by the scribe who writes it down. Poor calligraphy reflected the scribe's physical state and revealed something about his moral character. This dimension of the written, its ability to disclose some aspect of the bodily as language itself is given a body through script, will become important for twentieth-century poetics, though without a moral veneer. In the twentieth-century poetics of Mohammed Bennis, the bodily quality of writing will be his antidote to the stultified forms of expression in modern Moroccan poetry and a way to recover embodied perception in the present. More on this in the next chapter.[240]

The same impulse in thinking about the visual script's vivacity appears in Abdelkebir Khatibī's writing on calligraphy. The visual aspect of calligraphy is augmented by the fact that it registers something beyond the visible—the bodily movement and feeling of the scribe/calligrapher. He describes calligraphy as a "conscious" art that starts off as part of the linguistic structure and "institutes an alternative set of rules, derived from language but dramatizing and duplicating it by transposing it onto visual terms."[241] Khatibi wants to move away from thinking about calligraphy as decorative, and instead in *La blessure du nom propre*, he emphasizes the way the "calligraphic trace" has its own kind of rhetoric (an art of precision

[237] In "Aural Geometry: Poetry, Music, and Architecture in the Arabic Tradition," in *Poetry, Music, and Architecture in the Arabic Tradition* (University of Texas Press, 2018), 166-195, Samer Akkach provides a diagram of the different prosodic circles and shows the overall circular forms these prosodic forms generate.

[238] Vílchez and Lopez-Morillas, *Aesthetics in Arabic Thought*, 226.

[239] For more on al-Tawḥidī's ten principles of calligraphy see Vílchez and Lopez-Morillas, *Aesthetics in Arabic Thought*, 222. These principles incorporate elements of the body including such things as *al-taḥdīq* ("eyeing") and *al-taḥwīq* ("encircling").

[240] In *Enfoldment and Infinity,* Marks writes about the ways that perceptible artifacts, such as calligraphy, make the perceiver aware to some degree or other of the underlying code that generated them: the sacred word of the Quran. The image is the interface of information and information is the interface of the infinite with the interface being obscured or made apparent. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*, 8.

[241] Abdelkebir Khatibi and Mohammed Sijelmassi, *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, 1st ed (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 14.

"brimming with meaning").[242] Describing Arabic calligraphic writing as a "system of rhetorical figures that doubles and redoubles spoken language by a process of ordered over-signification,"[243] Khatibi theorizes this from the way he understands the Quranic sign, which is split both by the written word being itself productive of meaning and a form of "oblique writing given breath by a voice external to language."[244] In other words, the Quran as a written (and compiled and recited) text splits the sign into what can be known by being read, but that is only understood as producing truth by being impregnated with "an accredited meaning." From this, we can think of how calligraphy (or the visual form of the *mudabbaja*) as a script-sign first to be *seen*, makes the reader aware of a meaning that may or may not be accessed, but which has already been partly apprehended at the visual level.

Al-Jilyānī was not a calligrapher and he in fact broke a lot of calligraphy's rules.[245] Nonetheless, if we think about al-Jilyānī's poem, and his assurance that the visual poem abounds in its own kind of knowledge, we can begin to see the contours of what I'll call poetic knowledge in the next chapter—a specific knowing made possible by the poem because it encapsulates a dynamic poetic experience. There are several discourses intersecting here—calligraphy, praise poetry, numerology, and mysticism—all of which highlight or reaffirm some element of the knowledge production possible in the visual and make claims on the process of making-see. In this sense, we need to consider the whole range of perceptual and conceptual values associated with these disciplines and how they made available, or amplified an experience of poetry. The visual potentiates such aspects as rhythm, lyricism, emotional or intellectual figuration specifically because it allows for an embodiment that takes from calligraphy, the gesture of praise, and the affective and embodied dimensions of religious and poetic experience. In its striking way, the visual poem—as ordered and determined by the poet—relies on a principle of multiplicity (for instance, in the way it recruits meaning-making visual practices from other disciplines) to generate the poem's possible combinations. Al-Jilyānī's poem is not merely representing, but also presenting, relying on the visual and verbal in order to bring something into being through the reader's iteration.

Al-Jilyānī points to the centrality of the circle in his verses (as we saw above), and he refers to certain lines in his work that can be read the same forwards and backwards. as *kalām al-dawrī* (a close translation would be something like "palindromes")

وهذا وحد محيطها الأعظم أبيات مضاعفة لم يأت بمثلها الأولون ولا المحدثون، ثمانية يقرأ منها اثنان وثلاثون، في عروضين مخلتفي الشطور متعاقبين في المفهوم والمسطور، وإن أشكال هذا البحر كلما تصرفت ألفيتَ معانيها ما تباينت ولا تحرفت، تشبُّها بخُلق الملك الناصر العادل القائم...فاقرأه حرفا حرفا من أخره تجده مثل ما قرأت من أولاه

[242] Jane Hiddleston and Khalid Lyamalahy, eds., "Excerpts from Abdelkébir Khatibi, La Blessure du nom propre (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1974)," in *Abdelkébir Khatibi: Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, and Culture in the Maghreb and Beyond* (Liverpool University Press, 2020), 339.

[243] Ibid, 338.
[244] Ibid, 343.

[245] Vílchez and Lopez-Morillas, *Aesthetics in Arabic Thought*, 226-30. For example, Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī writes that pauses or spaces (*fuṣūl*) were to be avoided. Al-Jilyānī followed a kind of principle of fragmentation of the letters that calligraphy follows, which was a way for calligraphy to distinguish between ideas, put them together in a new order, and preserve them. He does not follow the rules of spacing and fragments entire words.

كتناسب الحسن من موصوفه في طرفي مرصوعه ومرصوفه، وقف بباب جيرون حيث العذب يزهى به الناظرون منبعثا مشجر لجين أثيثا، تحسبه جامدا وهو يجري حثيثا.[246]

This is its greatest circumference, with double verses the likes of which neither the ancients nor the moderns have ever produced. From eight of them, thirty-two verses are read, in two meters with differing portions, alternating between the concept and what is actually written. And the shapes of this meter, whenever it is applied, you find that its meanings are not varied or distorted, resembling the character of the King, the victorious, the just and upright... so read it word for word. From its end, you will find it just like what you read from its beginning, like the proportions of beauty from what is described on both sides joined together and decorated. Like standing at the gate of Jiron, where onlookers enjoy the sweetness, emerging, branching an abundant silver. You think it inanimate while it's running quickly.

Al-Jilyānī makes clear that his theory of language is dynamic and living. It multiples and breathes. Proportion becomes visualizable through reading, but it is also embodied by the reader in the act of reading. Like the play of calligraphy, which as Khatibi describes it, "composes letters separately, ties them together, gives voice to them" the visuality of the palindrome, of the *mudabbaja*, tames and sets into play the eye's logical and spatial-temporal rhetoric.[247] In visually recomposing the poem, the reader (and patron) is reminded of the role of the senses (and the poet in guiding the senses), and also registers the second-level perception enabled by the verse's content. In other words, visual compositions draw out a specific kind of relationship between seeing and understanding (the two connotations of *ruʾya* in Arabic as well as of 'perception' in English). The *mudabbajāt* and the palindromes show that sight only offers one access point for understanding (though it's essential in these forms to even apprehend it), and a second obscured layer of understanding while available to sight is not in fact as easily comprehended without a deeper, contemplative form of looking.

In this chapter, I've unpacked through a reading of a twelfth century visual poem, one iteration of poetic visuality, which had become ubiquitous in the twelfth century, and I offered a reading of the poem as a way to set up the turn in the twentieth century to the visual material of language. In their preface to the *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, Abu Deeb and Bakhsh are critical of an imagined interlocutor who approximates al-Jilyānī's *mudabbajāt* to twentieth century French concrete poetry. They insist on the temporal and artistic primacy of al-Jilyānī's work. As I turn to the twentieth century, what interests me is not to argue for the primacy of one tradition over another, but to see the continuities and interventions these forms make possible for Moroccan poets.

Al-Jilyānī's visual poems have shown that this form of poetic visuality not only extends the poet as seer/visionary into the material realm—a poet whose vision is guidance (and here it becomes literal because we need guidance to comprehend the poet's vision—but also encapsulates other forms of knowing that coalesce into something we might call "poetic knowledge." The *mudabbajat*, as illustrated above, are informed by the dynamics of the

[246] al-Jilyānī, *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, 27.
امسا لجامع دمشق ماء وساميات فص أصفت أيما سوامق شُم دهم أجلا سماء .

[247] Hiddleston and Lyamalahy, "Excerpts from Abdelkébir Khatibi," 345.

patron-poet relationship but are not limited to it, in fact extending this dynamic to language itself which can be multiplied, fragmented, and reformed demonstrates the dynamism of poetic language. I discussed in chapter two the *ṭayf al-khayāl*'s movement—registered in the first term *ṭayf* which shares a root with *ṭawāf* the circular movement around the house of God—and the ways poets enacted its movement through a circularity of return, or the closing of a circle (see my discussion of Ibn Khafāja's *qaṣīda*). My reading of the *mudabbaja* has sought to show one way—beyond that of the second chapter—in which the conventional ways of our reading can be challenged by turning to the visuality of the poem and seeing how poets invested in different ways of understanding and apprehending forms contingent on the ability to see, or see otherwise. In the next chapter, the possibility of experiencing the poetic differently will center the dynamic ways poetry indexes lived experience, and will be the fulcrum of poetic knowledge.

Chapter 4: Seeing the Words of Poets

مصير الإنسان مآل ذاكرة العين.
"The fate of humankind is the outcome of the eye's memory."

When I say "the body," or "a stone," I can only do so, write about it, through my body. Or if I say "glass": if I don't see [this glass] or I forget it, then it doesn't exist.

–Mohammed Bennis

The second epigraph comes from a response during an interview for *Banipal Magazine* in which the interviewer Camilo Gomez-Rivas asks the poet whether what's mainly critical about poetry is its individuality. More than its individuality, it is language, Bennis answers and the intersection of the body with history, which changes the meanings of words and the relationship between them. Bennis affirms the role of the body—"a combination of senses"—in the inception of the poetic idea, and points to the (sometimes neglected) ontological relationship between the senses and writing. When Gomez-Rivas prompts Bennis to clarify what makes thinking poetic, Bennis answers:

> [The poet] owns his own kind of knowledge, which is what I call poetic knowledge. It includes that which encompasses or is produced from this poetic knowledge. For me, poetry is not something that is added on. It is not something that we add to knowledge. Although social, historical, and political discourses exist, it's not that poetry just takes what is in these and says the same in a beautiful way. No. Poetry brings forth in its own way a vision of things. Whence [the idea] that poetry is necessary.[248]

Through the term 'poetic knowledge,' Bennis ties poetry's "vision of things" to its social and political relevance (and as we'll see, this confluence leads Bennis's reader to poetry's role in social liberation). Thinking with and through poetry, activates both the poet's body (the "combination of senses") as well as the social body by offering a different vision of the world—one that often surpasses social, historical and political discourses. Poetry's structure of working through sense experience and its production of a particular kind of knowledge don't supplement nor aestheticize other discourses. Having shown in the first and second chapters how

[248] Mohammed Bennis. "Keeping the Language Alive" interviewed by Camilo Gomez-Rivas. *Banipal Magazine of Modern Arab Literature*, no. 29, (2007).

Andalusī poetics of *takhyīl* and the political valences of the premodern *qaṣīda* were invested in the patron's vision within the parameters of the praise poem (*qaṣīdat al-madḥ*), in this chapter, I continue to track how poetry summons its "own vision of things."

Born in Fez in 1948, Bennis's first encounter with poetry was forged during his years of Quranic school, where he first experienced the language and cadence of the premodern *qaṣīda*.[249] After high school and a brief stint in France, Bennis began his studies at the Faculty of Letters at Mohammed V University in Rabat and completed his first doctoral thesis, *Ẓāhirat al-shʿir al-muʿāṣir fī-l maghrib* (*The Phenomenon of Contemporary Moroccan Poetry*) in 1978, under the supervision of Abdelkebir Khatibi (a controversial decision at the time because Khatibi was not part of the Arabic faculty and supervised the dissertation from France). His second thesis, *Mawḍūʿ al-shiʿr al-ʿarabī al-ḥadīth* (*The Subject of Modern Arabic Poetry*), an encyclopedic work summarizing Arabic poetic modernisms from the early nineteenth century to the present, was supervised by Jamel-Eddine Bencheikh and completed in 1988. Bennis begins first with Moroccan poetry before engaging the wider Arabic poetic tradition, an approach that considers the exigencies of literary modernity from a Maghribī particularity before turning to the currents and movements in the Mashriq (the Arab East). In this way, he attempted to offset the center/periphery dynamic between the Mashriq and the Maghrib, as the Mashriq rarely engages the literary and artistic production of the Maghrib—a dynamic that similarly played out, as we saw in the first chapters, between the predmodern Mashriq and al-Andalus.

Bennis's first poetry collection *Mā qabla al-kalām* (*Before Language*) was published in 1969. In 1970, two of his poems were published in the Mashriqī journal *Mawāqif*, whose prestige launched Bennis into the wider Mashriqī poetic scene.[250] Formally experimental and working beyond social and cultural institutions both on the right and left, Bennis is uninterested in the labels "poet" and "critic;" his commitment is to whatever leads to the poem, a point he expressed to me in May 2023, when we sat in his home in al-Mohammedia to talk about poetic knowledge, his theory of writing, and the status of modern Moroccan poetry. His critical writings, translations, and explorations into the poetic, are all, he told me, "in service of the *qaṣīda*." My focus in this chapter is on Bennis's early work, roughly the period between 1979 and 1994. While Bennis's main output comes a few years after the generation of the post-independence period, his writing nonetheless exhibits preoccupations with much of the same questions and concerns as writers and artists post-1956. As we'll see, Bennis tackled these preoccupations by turning to the visual dimension of poetry in order to rethink the role and strategy of the twentieth-century Arabic poem in Morocco.

My claim, in what follows, is that in Morocco, literary arts were as invested as visual mediums like painting and film in reshaping cultural perception. Though I engage primarily with Bennis's poetry and critical writings through this particular lens, I take his treatment of the questions, problems, and exigencies of *ḥadātha* (literary modernism) as emblematic of a Moroccan (and in fact, a larger North African) tendency that leans on the particularities of its

[249] In the introduction to his collected poems, Bennis describes his experimentation with imitating verses from the opening chapters of the Quran as a way to train his ear and broaden his understanding of the Arabic poetic verse (*bayt*). Mohammed Bennis, "*Ḥayātun fī al-qaṣīda*" ("A Life in the Poem"), in *al-ʾAʿmāl al-shiʿriyya*, al-Ṭabʿa 1, (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: Dār Tūbqāl lil-Nashr, 2002), 17.

[250] In the same interview, Bennis says, "When I published my first poems in Mawāqif in 1969, the position of those from the rest of the Arab world toward me was similar to their general position toward Maghrebi culture."

linguistic and visual culture.[251] Part of my argument in this chapter is that twentieth-century Moroccan writers elaborated a poetics within a growing experimental visual culture, which in seeking to free itself from colonial imposition, drew from an Andalusi-Maghribī visual inheritance.[252]

In the first section, I unpack Bennis's critique of modern Moroccan poetry and its existing modes of visuality. In a manifesto dedicated to the question of writing (*kitāba*), Bennis singles out poetry's main visual modes—*shahāda* (witness), *ḥilm* (dream), and *dhākira* (memory)—and positions these against a kind of visual writing that commits to poetry's role in framing social and ethical commitments. As we'll see, the main critique of these visual modes is their one dimensionality, a problem that Bennis's concept of *kitāba* will seek to dislodge. The second section turns to Bennis's visual poems. Like the visual poems of the previous chapter, Bennis's *al-qaṣīda al-baṣariyya*, sometimes also called *qaṣīdat al-ruʾya*, experiments with the use of the Arabic calligraphic script (*khaṭṭ*) to reframe ways of seeing and reading the poem.In bringing attention to the materiality and visuality of the word, *khaṭṭ* also attempts to realign the social life of the poem, which has been co-opted and shaped by nation-state borders and the hegemony of market forces. The work of praise continues into this chapter with Bennis's praise poem to the cities of Marrakech and Fes, "Thus the East Spoke to Me." Finally, in the last section, I show how Bennis engages the premodern *qaṣīda*, and how its images—for instance, the poet standing before the ruins of the beloved's encampment (*al-wuqūf ʿalā-l-aṭlāl*)—offer a paradigm of visuality which he works into a theory of writing he called *kitābat al-maḥw* ("erasure writing") as a way to revise the poet's relationship to the past, such that it remains open and affirms plurality.

Much of the academic scholarship written in English on twentieth-century Arabic poetry focuses on the Mashriq. For this reason, I'll give a brief history of Mashriqī literary modernism (*ḥadātha*), in which I focus on the Arabic poem (*qaṣīda*). This allows me to give the broad strokes of Mashriqī literary currents, while avoiding the rhetoric of poetry's "development" or "progress."[253] Before proceeding, however, a note about the term modernism. Arabic uses *al-ḥadātha* to connote both modernity and modernism. The concept that the term designates is not homogenous with other experiences of modernity around the world and differs between countries, ideologies and movements in the Mashriq. In this chapter, I use *modernism* and occasionally *ḥadātha* in order to designate a cultural-historical moment in poetry and poetry-thinking that contended with the Arabic literary and cultural canon in the context of a larger zeitgeist that was also rethinking its relationship to its cultural past. *Ḥadātha* in both its historical fact and theoretical conceptualization unfolded in a pluralistic way. It designates an

[251] In addition to Bennis's visual poetics which come through as well in his collaborations with calligraphers and painters, Moroccan poets Rashīd al-Mumnī and ʿAbdullah Rājiʿ are among the Moroccan and North African poets experimenting with the visuality of poetry.

[252] An exciting example of this is Moumen Smihi's essay titled "*Le cercle flamboyant*" ("The Blazing Circle") published in a 1974 issue of *Intégral* that traces modern Moroccan cinema back to the optical theories of Ibn al-Haytham. See Peter Limbrick. "Vernacular Modernism, Film Culture, and Moroccan Short Film and Documentary." *Framework* 56, no. 2 (2015): 405.

[253] The discourse of modernity as progressive and linear, erases other moments that carry the same impulse that characterizes "the modern." Huda Fakkhredine has argued for the "modernity" of the ʿAbbāsid period in moments of its revitalizing of the poetic past (see "The Aesthetic Imperative").

orientation to and within the poetic tradition. It shares a root with *muḥdath,* a term used by tenth-century critics to designate those poets distinguished in their use of *badīʿ*.[254] Huda Fakhreddine, who aptly terms this unfolding of *ḥadātha* as " disclosures of modern Arabic poetry" suggests that more than in contrast to the *qaṣīda* or due to western models, the modern Arabic poem grew mainly out of the various responses within the modernist movements of the twentieth-century.[255]

Having remained formally consistent throughout the nineteenth century in the face of changes in Arabic prose, the *qaṣīda*, in the first half of the twentieth century, resembled its premodern panegyric version. Egyptian poets Aḥmad Shawqī (1870-1932) and Ḥāfiẓ Ibrahīm (1872-1932), often referred to as neoclassical or revivalist poets in English (a rendering of the Arabic *nahḍa*) because they were perceived to have "returned to" (a term I put in quotes because of the problematic idea of a world that was abandoned in the first place) a model of the "golden age" of Arabic poetry, reframed the *qaṣīda*'s poet-patron relationship into one of poet-nation by making the *qaṣīda* a platform for anti-colonial struggle.[256] While engagements with traditional verse and prosody continued on even after the height of the *nahḍa*, the drastic changes in the years following the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of nation-states, prompted the rise of a group of poets who advocated a return to the self and the creation of art for art's sake, channeling the English Romantics struggle to articulate the calamity of modern experience.[257] The Arab Romantics, including the Dīwān and Apūllū schools, eager to transform poetic sensibility, turned to the local mythology of the Near East and nudged the poem towards new conceptual forces that would result in the free verse movement of the 1940s, which produced the prose poem (*qaṣīdat al-nathr*) and the free verse poem (*qaṣīdat al-tafʿīla*).[258]

The Free Verse movement (*al-shʿir al-ḥurr*)—key figures here are the Iraqī poets Nazik al-Malāʾika (b. 1923) and Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (b. 1926), and the Syrian poet Alī Aḥmad Saʿīd (b. 1930) known by his pen name Adūnīs—continued to contend with the pre-Islamic and

[254] For more see Huda Fakhreddine, *Metapoesis in the Arabic Tradition: From Modernists to Muḥdathūn*, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures 36 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2015).

[255] Huda Fakhreddine, *The Arabic Prose Poem: Poetic Theory and Practice*, Edinburgh Studies in Modern Arabic Literature (Edinburgh: University Press, 2022), 3.

[256] For more on the *qaṣīda* as an anti-colonial form see Hussein N. Kadhim's *The Poetics of Anti-Colonialism in the Arabic Qaṣīdah*. Brill, 2004.

[257] Huda Fakhreddine. "Form and History in Modern Arabic Poetics." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, 2021. Importantly, Fakhreddine notes that free verse in Arabic does not correspond to the English term "free verse" or the French vers libre. "Arabic free verse, as stipulated by Nāzik al-Malāʾikah, is poetry written on a variation of al-Khalīl's prosodic system, which adopts the foot (*al-tafʿīlah*) instead of the two-hemistich verse (*al-bayt*) as its metric unit" (6).

[258] Fakhreddine, "Form and History in Modern Arabic Poetics," describes how the use of the term *qaṣīda* created a dilemma for the Arabic prose poem as *qaṣīdat al-nathr* "is contradictory and announces an impossible reconciliation of categories traditionally defined against each other in the Arabic tradition. What adds to the complication is that the only term for "poem" in Arabic is *qaṣīda*. It refers to the genre-specific archetypal *qaṣīda*, indicating the formal requirements of meter and rhyme on one hand, and the general poem, indicating any text that claims to be poetry on the other. It was not enough for the practitioners of the prose poem in Arabic to call their work texts or writings. They insisted on the term poem (*qaṣīdah*), thus deliberately, if not forcefully, placing themselves in the tradition of poem making in Arabic. By that, they were intentionally expanding the limits of what a poem (*qaṣīdah*) in Arabic can be."

classical *qaṣīda*, but it was contoured around a post-world war two shift from the consciousness of the collective nation to the marginalized individual.[259] This came into sharp focus in a poetic circle known as the *Tammuzī poets*, who, though loosely affiliated, congealed around the alienated city-dweller afflicted by a sense of subservience to the vagaries of Arab regimes. An exemplary figure here is the Palestinian poet Jabra Ibrahīm Jabra (b. 1919). In the wake of the 1948 Nakba, poetry of resistance popularized by the Tunisian poet Samīḥ al-Qāsim (b. 1939) and the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (b. 1941), brought the concept of *ilitizām* (political commitment or engagement) to poetic discourse. Finally, the free verse movement's restriction of poetry to the metrics of the *tafʿīla* (distilled from al-Khalīl's sixteen poetic meters) would bring about the Arabic prose poem (*qaṣīdat al-nathr*) and the collective of poets affiliated with the journal *Shiʿr* that was founded in 1957 by Adūnīs and Yūsuf al-Khāl (1917–1987).[260]

The Amazīgh revolts against the French and Spanish occupations during the protectorate period (1912-1946) shaped early twentieth-century Moroccan poetry. Resistance to colonial occupation relied on, and simultaneously reinvigorated, attention to Morocco's own cultural and social history. The poetry of this time, localized in the Amazīgh oral tradition, resisted foreign domination through personal testimony. The poems that emerged would come to undermine the Protectorate-era rhetoric, which portrayed the Rif tribes as surrendering willingly to a benevolent conqueror.[261] In 1932, France permitted the publication of journals and newspapers in Morocco, and the journal *al-Maghrib* came onto the scene as a testing ground for the arbitration of literary taste, exposing the public to debates around the novel, poetry, and *adab*. In an era marked by expanding networks between newly created nation-states, Morocco was exporting its own writing to Algerian cultural journals and importing literary texts from Egypt and the Mashriq.[262] A little over a decade later, in 1946 the newspaper *al-ʿAlam,* the organ of the *Istiqlāl* party, was founded upon a program "to stamp public space with a 'modern Moroccanness.'"[263] In the years leading up to independence, the *Istiqlāl* party rallied behind the exiled monarch Muhammad V, forging its anticolonial resistance alongside the institution of the Moroccan sultanate.[264] Leading up to the 1956 independence, the party splintered into factions. Artists and writers found

[259] For more see Muhsin J. al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[260] For more on *Shiʿr* see Robyn Creswell, *City of Beginnings: Poetic Modernism in Beirut*, Translation/Transnation 43 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[261] Michael Pyeron. "Amazīgh Poetry of the Resistance Period (Central Morocco)." *The Journal of North African Studies* 5, no. 1 (2000): 118.

[262] Yūnus, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. *Fī al-adab al-maghribī al-muʿāṣir*, al-Ṭabʿa 1. Maktabat al-dirāsāt al-adabiyya, (al-Qāhira, Dār al-Maʿārif, 1982), 43.

[263] The *Istiqlāl* is the Monarchist, centrist party. Its ideology, according to Susan Gilson Miller, "was already an eclectic mix of ideas taken from democratic constitutionalism, Egyptian reformism, Islamic teachings, nineteenth century progressivism, and Third World anticolonialism, all broadly construed." *A History of Modern Morocco*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 145.

[264] Susan Gilson Miller. *A History of Modern Morocco*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 146.

themselves caught between articulating a unified Moroccan front against a colonial power and the infighting of the institutions that supported them.[265]

During the Years of Lead (roughly the 1960s through the 1980s—a period of repressive restrictions imposed by Hassan II's regime that sought to emphasize Morocco's Arab identity and its relationship to Islam through Arabization policies[266]—institutional support was given to poets who exclusively wrote within a specific nationalist framework. And because Francophone poets posed a threat to the intended aims of Arabization, their work disappeared from state-sponsored publications, and French-language literary journals were shut down.[267] By the 1980s, spaces for poets to sustain and develop critical conversations, cultural and literary journals had been severely reduced in number. Bennis would experience this firsthand in 1984 when *al-Thaqāfa al-jadīda* (*New Culture*), a cultural journal he co-founded alongside a group of writers and intellectuals in al-Mohammedia, was forcibly shut down after the Bread Uprising.[268] In these crackdowns and in banishing Francophone poetry, Hassan II's regime crushed Morocco's plurality, its unique multilingual culture that would lead Abdelkebir Khatibi to call for the Maghrib as a "horizon of thinking" in his book *Maghreb Pluriel* (1983).[269] Moroccan Arabic poetry of the mid-twentieth century was written during a time of mass urbanization, loss of farmhand labor due to agricultural mechanization, and in the midst of convulsive economic and social change.

Section 1: Bennisian *Kitāba* and the body of language

Modes of Vision in Poetry

When Bennis turns to Moroccan poetry written in Arabic, he finds it stagnant, unable to keep up with the urgency of contemporary experience. His attention to the visual dimension of poetry surfaced in 1979 concurrently with an investigation into, and attempt to diagnose, the

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[265] Among visual artists, the sixties were a time of thinking about how to proceed with decolonizing (*taḥrīr*) art. For more see Farīd al-Zāhī's *Min al-ṣūra ilā al-baṣarī: waqāʾiʿ wa-taḥawwulāt*, al-Ṭabʿa 1. (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī lil-Kitāb, 2018).

[266] Paraska Tolan-Szkilnik. *Maghreb Noir: The Militant-Artists of North Africa and the Struggle for a Pan-African, Postcolonial Future*. Worlding the Middle East. (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2023), 36.

[267] The poet ʿAbd al-Latīf al-Laʿbī (Laabi) launched the French-language journal *Souffles* in 1966 and a few years later in 1971 its sister journal, the Arabic-language *Anfas*. When Laabi launched the journal, he affirmed it "signaled a new era in Maghrebi culture: one of exchange and debate in progressive thought between Maghreb and Levant" cited in Itzea Goikolea-Amiano's "Bilingualism and 'Significant Geographies' in Moroccan Colonial Journals: *Al-Motamid* and *Ketama*, Modern Arabic Poetry and Literary History." *Interventions* 24, no. 1 (2022): 50.

[268] The Bread uprising was a series of revolts that occurred in May 1981 against the regime of Hassan II driven by price increases of basic food supplies.

[269] A similar stance also characterized progressive institutions. The Moroccan Writer's Union, for instance, refused to publish any poetry that didn't maintain the party line. Bennis tracks this problem facing writers in Morocco in his essay, "*Rāhin al-shʿir al-Maghribī: dhākirat al-hāwiya wa ikhtiyār al-sarādīb*" (1988) ("The Present of Moroccan Poetry: Memory of the Chasm and the Choice of Cellars"). He faults institutions on both the left and right for turning away from poets who diverged from the party line (Mohammed Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw*, al-Ṭabʿa 1. al-Maʿrifa al-adabiyya, (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: Dār Tūbqāl li'l-Nashr, 1994), 98).

problems of contemporary Moroccan poetry. He published in the twelfth issue of *al-Thaqāfa al-jadīda*, a scripted visual poem under the title "*Hākadhā kallamanī al-sharq*" ("Thus the East Spoke to Me") and a year later in 1980 published his collection of visual poems *Fī ittijāh ṣawtika al-ʿāmūdī* (*Toward Your Vertical Voice*). Bennis then worked out his theory around poetic and literary visuality in a manifesto published in the nineteenth issue of *al-Thaqāfa al-Jadīda*, which was also dedicated to Bennis's concept of writing (*kitāba*). The *Bayān al-kitāba* (*Manifesto of Writing*, 1981) conveys a poet's frustration with a fragmented poetic scene in Morocco—to which Bennis gives the moniker *al-inqiṭāʿ* (discontinuity)—characterized by a lack of sustained poetry-making and an absence of critical engagement by both critics and poets. Bennis called for a critical discourse that will draw Moroccan poets out of this stagnation and discontinuity, and away from European aesthetic impositions as well as from what he called the *mutaʿāliyāt*—superstructures, including such things as poetic technique, the distinction between poetry and prose, and other inherited concepts to which Moroccan poetry remained susceptible.

The manifesto turned to the problems of political and religious discourses, which under the guise of both nationalism and the resistance to it, imposed a singular aim for poetry—to be a form of witness (*shahāda*). Bennis uses the term *shiʿr al-shahāda* as synonymous with politically-engaged poetry and traces its origin to the Rif War of independence (1921-1926), which, he writes, altered the structure of traditional Arabic poetry by exposing it to concepts of liberation, community, and *waṭan* (nationhood). Although *shahāda* had served an important role during Morocco's liberation from French and Spanish colonial rule, it became the only institutionally recognized mode after Morocco's independence in 1956. Bennis's main critique of *shahāda* is that it evacuates the senses from poetry because it relies on formulaic structures in which sense-experience and time exist as calcified and arrested. *Shahāda* had departed from the experiential because it was no longer connected to a lived reality, in other words, to an actual form of witness.[270] The fragmented poetic scene from which Bennis writes describes poets coming up to the limit of *shahāda* as a poetic mode. The formulaic language of anti-colonial struggle has become an impasse. *Shahāda*, Bennis concludes, is the reason that Moroccan poetry written in Arabic was unable to find its footing.

While he doesn't give any examples in the manifesto of this kind of poetry, Bennis's critique of the Moroccan leftist poet Aḥmad al-Mijāṭī whom Bennis considered a party's poet through and through, suggests he finds in some of his work a lack of critical engagement with the urgencies of Moroccan experience.[271] Elsewhere, he criticizes al-Mijāṭī for uncritically breaking up the poem on the page, which he does without changing the essential structure of the verse and thus, in Bennis's opinion, gives no real meaning to his experimentation. To Bennis, al-Mijāṭī's work represents the tribalism and absolutism of institutions on both the left and the right. Thus, an explicitly political poem like al-Mejati's "*Kitāba ʿalā shāṭiʾ Ṭanja*" ("Writing on the Beach of Tangiers") exhibits some of the elements that frustrate Bennis about *shahāda*. The poem calls up easy political associations in the use of God, the wineglass, and the lion, through which it leads the reader to the conclusion of the party's ideology:

جبل الريف على حاضره الفجر

[270] This is Bennis's main critique of Surrealism which accesses the dream world through automated writing practices that are removed from lived experience. Mohammed Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," *al-ʾAʿmāl al-nathriyya* 1, l-Ṭabʿa 1, (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: Dār Tūbqāl lil-Nashr, 2016), 27.

[271] Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw*, 108.

تعثر
هبت الريح من الشرق
زهت في الألفق الغربي
غابات الصنوبر
لا تقل للكأس :
هذا وطن لله
ففي طنجة يبقى هلل في محرابه الخلفي
عطشان
و يستأسد قيصر

The Riff mountains
stumbled
over the haunches of dawn
The wind blew from the east,
pine forests flourished
on the Western horizon

Don't tell the winglass:
This is the land of God
But in Tangier God remains
Thirsty
In his back prayer niche
Making Caesar into a lion.[272]

Bennis's critique is of *shaḥāda*'s stultified sensory experience, which in reproducing earlier models of political poetry remained unable to transform existing socio-political conditions and bring about liberation. Instead of the *qaṣīdat al-shahāda* (testimonial poem), the *qaṣīdat al-dhākira* (memory poem) and *qaṣīdat al-ḥulm* (dream poem)—which are similarly removed from the sensible because they don't engage the dream or memory in a way that fully expresses a lived experience—Bennis suggests *kitāba*, which celebrates "a different vision of the world," (*ruʾya mughāyīra*)[273] as it returns the body back to the poem through the use of the calligraphic script.

Before I turn my attention to Bennis's theory of *kitāba*, I want to linger over his use of the word *ruʾya*—a term that refers to vision in both its literal and metaphorical forms i.e. both to sensory experience and to the conceptualizations that result from ways of seeing the world. The etymology of the term entertains such a slippage: its trilateral root indicates both physical vision and mental conceptualization ("opinion," "view," "idea," "judgment"). In the Mashriq, *ruʾya* found purchase among intellectuals and writers, as a conceptual node by which to think about the role of the writer as visionary. Bennis unpacks this conceptualization of poetry as *ruʾya* in his comprehensive reading of modern Arabic poetry in *Mawḍūʿ al-shiʿr al-ʿarabī al-ḥadīth*. The

[272] Translation by Deborah Kapchan and Driss Marjane. *Poetic Justice: An Anthology of Contemporary Moroccan Poetry*. Modern Middle East Literatures in Translation Series. (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2020), 310-312.

[273] Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," 23.

poet-as-visionary is embroiled in late nineteenth and early twentieth century distinctions between *takhyīl* and *khayāl*. Investigating the continuity between *takhyīl* in pre-modern *balāgha* and *khayāl* as "modern" imagination, Bennis asks: "Is the use of the term "*khayāl*" by Arab Romantics a move to bring back the term "*takhyīl*"? Or is there between these two terms an epistemological rupture with no cracks from which any part of either can seep into the other?"[274] While the *nahḍāwī* writers used the terms *takhyīl* and *khayāl* interchangeably and returned to a premodern understanding of the root of *kh-y-l* to identify the element in poetry that veered away from hewing to *ḥaqīqa* (reality), the Arab Romantics used it interchangeably to designate the modern understanding of the imagination,[275] and they valorized *khayāl* as a site of possibility, prophecy, and the poet's vision.

The main distinction between the premodern understanding of *khayāl* (and thus that of the *nahḍa*) and its use by Arab Romanticism hinges the notion of *istiḥāla* (impossibility), which the premodern critics had cautioned against because impossibility muddled the reader (a point we saw in chapter 2 with al-Qarṭājannī). Yet, both the *nahḍa* and Arabic Romantics notions of the *khayāl* elide an entire history of the concept in the Sufi tradition, where the *khayāl* designates an imaginal domain in which the image is a modality of presence and everything is woven out of images) and both embraced instead a singular model of the imagination (whether European or premodern Arabic). In the introduction, I discussed how in Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology *khayāl* allows for both subjective human experience as well as refers to an objective phenomenon in the cosmos from which the poet draws images, and which Ibn ʿArabī understands as divine disclosures containing knowledge about the world and its creator. For this Sufi poet, the imagination and the perception it allows, are on equal footing with the rational intellect (*ʿaql*).[276]

Misunderstanding the Sufi doctrine of the imagination is also the accusation Bennis makes of Syrian poet-critic Adūnīs's 1959 essay "*Muḥāwala fī taʿrīf al-shiʿr al-ḥadīth*" published in *Shiʿr.* Adūnīs writes:

> إذ أضفنا إلى كلمة «رؤيا» بُعداً فكرياً إنسانياً، بالإضافة إلى بعدها الروحي، يمكننا حينذاك أن نعرّف الشعر الحديث بأنه رؤيا. بطبيعتها، قفزة خارج المفاهيم القائمة. هي، إذن، تغيير في نظام الأشياء وفي نظام النظر إليها. هكذا يبدو الشعر الحديث، أول ما يبدو، تمرداً على الأشكال والمناهج الشعرية القديمة، ورفضاً لمواقفه وأساليبه التي استنفدت أَغراضَها.[277]

If we add to the word vision (*ruʾya*) a conceptual and humanistic dimension, in addition to its spiritual one, we can then define modern poetry as vision (*ruʾya*). Poetic vision, by its nature, is a leap beyond established concepts. It is, then, an alteration in the order of things, and in the way of looking at it. This is how modern poetry seems, on first appearance, a revolt against the forms and methods of the old poetics, and a refusal of its positions and styles that have exhausted their purposes.

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[274] Mohammed Bennis, *al-Shiʿr al-ʿarabī al-ḥadīth: binyātuhu wa-ibdālātuhā volume 2: al-rūmansiyya*, al-Ṭabʿa 1, Maʿrifa al-adabiyya. (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ, al-Maghrib: Dār Ṭūbqāl lil-Nashr, 1989), 126.

[275] Ibid, 127.

[276] William C. Chittick. "The World of Imagination and Poetic Imagery according to Ibn Al-'Arabî." *Temenos* 10 (1989), 99-119.

[277] Mohammed Bennis. *al-Shiʿr al-ʿarabī al-ḥadīth: binyātuhu wa-ibdālātuhā volume 3 al-shi'r al-mu'āṣir*, al-Ṭabʿa 1, Maʿrifa al-adabiyya. (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ, al-Maghrib: Dār Ṭūbqāl lil-Nashr, 1989), 37.

In a kind of acrobatics that takes him to al-Jurjānī's bifurcation of poetic *maʿnā* (content) into *ʿaqlī* (conceptual) or *takhyīlī* (imaginative), to Ibn Sīnā, and then to Sufi poetry, Adūnīs imputes a kind of European surrealist notion of the imagination to his understanding of premodern Arabic poetics. Adūnīs again:

التخييل: وهو يعني شيئا أشمل وأعمق من الخيال. فالتخييل هو رؤية الغيب. ومعنى التخييل نجده عند معظم الصوفيين، ونجده كذلك عند ابن سينا في كلامه على الإشراق.

البديل الشعري للانهاية هو التخييل أو التصوّر، فالتخييل هو الملمح الأساسي الرابع في الحركة الشعرية الجديدة. وأعني بالتخييل القوة الرؤياوية التي تستشفُّ ما وراء الواقع، فيما تحتضن الواقع. أي القوة التي تُطلّ على الغيب وتعانقه فيما تنغرسُ في الحضور. تصبح القصيدة جسراً يربط بين الحاضر والمستقبل، الزمن والأبدية، الواقع وما وراء الواقع، الأرض والسماء.[278]

Al-takhyīl, which means something broader and deeper than the imagination (*al-khayāl*), is seeing the unseen (*ruʾyat al-ghayb*). We find this meaning of *takhyīl* among the majority of the mystics, and we find it also in Ibn Sīnā's writing on illuminationism.

The correleate in poetry to the infinite is *takhyīl* or *taṣawwur* (conceptualization). For *takhyīl* is the fourth feature of the new poetry movement. What I mean by *takhyīl* is the visualizing capacity that perceives beyond what reality encompasses. In other words, the capacity that looks over into absence and embraces what is in presence. The poem becomes a bridge between the present and the future, time and timelessness, reality and what's beyond it, and the earth and the sky.

While Adūnīs does not erase the Sufi tradition of the imagination, he nonetheless mischaracterizes it. Bennis revises Adūnīs's understanding of *takhyīl*, writing that the *mutaṣawwifa* (mystics) refused the philosophical term *takhyīl* and in its place adopted the term *khayāl*.[279] The problem Bennis finds with Adūnīs's misappropriation of the term is that philosophical *takhyīl*, embroiled in the Aristotelian duality of form and content, was in fact rejected by the mystics for its restriction to a rational faculty.[280] At stake in this conceptual difference, for both the mystics and Bennis, is the body's bifurcation in *takhyīl*, while the *khayāl* engages the body in a larger perceptual realm. Instead of tracking the changes in the idea of *khayāl* through its distinction from premodern conceptualizations, which not only proved problematic and overdetermined by the elision of an entire discourse of the imagination but also solidified the idea of an epistemological rupture between the premodern and modern, Bennis suggests the poetic image (*al-ṣūra al-shiʿriyya*) as a conceptual node by which to understand the

[278] Ibid, 45.

[279] Ibid, 46.

[280] In our conversation, Bennis mentioned to me that he understands al-Qarṭājannī's *takhyīl* to be identical to Aristotelian mimesis. I argued in chapter one that *takhyīl*'s trajectory in al-Andalus, while drawing on Aristotle's *Poetics*, beginning with al-Farābī, nonetheless describes poetry's capacity to make visible and move the recipient in ways that differ from Aristotle's notion of mimesis. In al-Qarṭājannī's work specifically, *takhyīl* is centered on his readings of the Arabic poetic tradition, where he concludes that Arabic poetry has always been aware of the psychological states of its recipient (analogized in *takhyīl's* attention to moving the recipient). My choice to consider the visual throughout this dissertation has had the effect of clarifying *takhyīl's* distinction from mimesis.

role of the poet's vision and imagination. Although Bennis's turn to the visual both conceptually and practically, is not a turn to *takhyīl*'s language and framework, his work nonetheless, embodies its critical visuality, especially after his experiment with the explicitly visual falls through (as we'll see in the third section).

Returning to the *Bayān*, *ruʾya* acts as a kind of corrective to *shahāda*, and while Bennis often uses the term to indicate suprasensory perception, he equally intends *ruʾya* in its strict sensory capacity, which is why he'll suggest a change in the visual script as a remedy for the stagnance of Arabic poetry-making in Morocco.[281] Bennis is aware of an existing resistance to theorizing (*ṭanẓīr*), which he notes at the beginning of the manifesto when he writes "there are those who object…who will say, we do not need theory…they also say: prefacing (*taqdīm*) poetry, publishing manifestos, and establishing parameters are beyond our customs."[282] He assures his readers that the term, *kitāba*, is not a foreign calque,[283] rather, *kitāba* exists as a "ghost," on "a subconscious level" and is being suppressed by "the voice of a political discourse." No doubt, his dissenters will have the poststructuralist theories of *écriture* in mind, and while Bennis doesn't deny that European theories inflect his work,[284] the concept of *kitāba* he puts forth in the manifesto and that he'll develop later on, I suggest, emerges from a uniquely Moroccan visual and literary inheritance—including from the tripartite *qaṣīda* as practiced in al-Andalus and its attendant visual practices. As the preceding chapters show, Andalusian poets and critics engaged with the *qaṣīda* in ways that produced a visual discourse, and eventually a visual poem (see chapter 3). I trace, in what follows, a throughline between twelfth- and thirteenth-century Andalusī thinking about the *qaṣīda*'s visuality and Bennis's theory of visually inflected writing—a throughline that follows the practice of understanding the poem through its visualizing capacity.

In declarative manifesto tone, Bennis clearly lays out four parameters/horizons (he uses the Arabic *ʾufuq* here, a term with visual connotations, including "field of vision" and "perspective") for *kitāba*, which correspond to the three central aspects of the manifesto: self, language and world. *Kitāba's* first parameter is that there is no start or end point to writing. Bennis makes this point in an attempt to open it up to description rather than prescription (a quality from which it suffers at the hands of a hegemonic political discourse). This leads to the second parameter/horizon—critical attention is at the foundation of creativity, meaning that in

[281] Elsewhere, he writes, "The eye, too, has its right over the poem, because vision (*ruʾya*) follows sound. Here is delirium digging unknown passages and paving the way for departure (*raḥīl*)." More on this below. Bennis. *Kitābat al-maḥw*, 33.

[282] Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," 18.

[283] Daniel Behar, describes *kitāba* "as a keyword for a mode of triangulation between the Maghribī particular and Mashriqī and French universals" in "The Shape-Shifting Margin: Patterns of Change in Arabic Modernism Past Beirut," *Dibur Literary Journal* no. 9 (2020): 43. Behar also mentions that "in those very years Adūnīs, under the influence of *Tel quel* theories, had transitioned in *Mawāqif* from a discourse of *ḥadātha* to talk of *al-kitāba al-jadīda* (new writing)"

[284] For instance, Bennis establishes a poetic lineage that places his work among such figures as the pre-Islamic poet Imruʾ al-Qays, the tenth-century poets al-Mutanabbi and Abū ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarī, as well as the twelfth century Andalusī poet and mystic Ibn ʿArabī (with whom Bennis also shares a lineage of place). On the other hand, Bennis theorizes his writing through, and because of, his status as a poet from what he terms "the poetic periphery" and from the absence of Moroccan poetry from what he calls the "Arabic poetic center" in the East. See Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw*, 12.

the first step of a creative endeavor, everything must come under the poet's scrutiny, including such things as technique. The third parameter/horizon contends that there is no writing outside of experimentation (*tajriba*) and praxis (*mumārasa*), and the fourth that there is no sense to praxis, experimentation and criticism if not directed towards real liberation beyond the text:

تعني الكتابة انه لا تحرر خارج رؤية مغايرة للأشياء والإنسان، خارج حساسية مغايرة. فمن يأخذ على المبدع الخروج على قالب الرؤية والحساسية يمارس قمعا مُمنهجا لتحرر المبدع ومتعته. مرت علينا فترة العمى. أكثر من نظام اجتماعي سلطوي ادعى تحرير الإنسان اجتماعيا وثقافيا، فيما عارض تحرير حساسيته ومتخيلته.[285]

Kitāba means that there is no liberation outside of a different vision of things and of humans, outside of an alternative sensitivity. Whoever censures the innovator for deviating from the established molds of vision and sensitivity, exercises a methodical suppression of the innovator's liberty and pleasure. A period of blindness has passed over us. More than one authoritarian social system has claimed the liberation of man socially and culturally, while opposing the liberation of his sensibility and imagination.

Tying *kitāba's* societal role to the way it can reframe perception ("an alternative vision of things and of man"), Bennis establishes writing as part of a liberatory praxis without sacrificing aesthetic sensibility. Moreover, a change in perception reveals not only how imbricated regimes of vision are with the political—shaping the conditions of the latter's possibility—but also how changing one's relation to the world relies on offering a new vision of things. In other words, writing (and poetry) in this context is as invested in an ethics and politics of seeing as it is in a poetics of seeing. This will mean that for writing to enact this change in perception, it must change the ways the reader sees and experiences the poem, and the way that Bennis will suggest to do this is through scripting the poem.

And the Maghribī khaṭṭ returns

Kitāba's visual, bodily form manifests in the poem through the Maghribī *khaṭṭ*—a term meaning calligraphic script, handwriting, line (as in, the radial line of Ibn al-Haytham's *Optics*, which ignited the Italian Renaissance's perspective)—which "follows the movement of the body," and liberates "the hand, the eye, the limbs" along with the senses. This bodily encounter with the poet's vision is the condition of possibility for the reader's transformation, which in turn translates to changes in the social body. Bennis was not the only poet to use *khaṭṭ*, others including Rashīd al-Mumnī and ʿAbdullah Rājiʿ also incorporated practices of handwriting and calligraphic scripting into their poems.[286] The Maghribī *khaṭṭ* also became a rallying point for painters like Ahmed Cherkaoui and the Casablanca school headed by Farid Belkahia, Mohamed Chebaa, and Mohamed Melehi, and is thematized in works by writers such as Abdelkebir Khatibi, Rachid Boudjedra, and Abdel Wahab Meddeb, among others. For these artists, calligraphy was a source of decolonial praxis, according to Dina Al-Kassim. Because it was "thought of as an embodied writing that vacillates between sound and sight, the calligraphic conceit works within the diverse network of this literature as an intermediary form, a writing

[285] Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," 28.

[286] Al-Mumnī also produced short poetry films: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g-1kajxCtU.

equipped to negotiate between the discontinuities of a history of foreign manipulation and native dogma."[287] Calligraphy's centrality for both artists and writers is crystalized in debates published in journals like *Souffles-Anfas*, *Intégral*, and *al-Thaqāfa al-Jadīda*. The latter, as mentioned above, dedicated an issue to Bennis's concept of writing, taking on the possibilities (and potential problems) of *khaṭṭ*. This, however, wasn't the journal's first foray into scripted poetry. In an earlier issue, the poetry of Mao Zedong appears in the Maghribī *khaṭṭ* and before that, Bennis's poem "Thus Spoke to Me the East" covered the final pages of the journal's twelfth issue. In the one dedicated to the *Bayān*, the journal handled the question of the visual not only through reproductions of a second scripted poem also titled "Thus Spoke to Me the East" (subtitled *mawāsim al-ḥadra* (the season of presence),[288] but also through a discussion around the proposed visuality of Bennis's *kitāba*, ending with excerpts from Ibn al-ʿArabī's writing on the body of language and the spiritual form of letters.

Khaṭṭ emerges as a marginalized figure, a kind of body conveying the return of the repressed (in this way it is like the *ṭayf al-khayāl* of the second chapter) both with regards to Morocco's neglect of its own culture and the Mashriq's neglect of the Maghrib. Its spatial rhetoric also conveys a return to the particularity of place, "Writing is a call to return to the composition of place and to submit it to an alternative structure" writes Bennis, "this isn't done with *shahāda* alone, but with the white page as well."[289] In Bennis's hands, *khaṭṭ* is both a rhetorical strategy and a language unto itself, revealing its grammar through the interplay of ink and page:

عندما نخضع الخط للوعي النقدي نتبين أنه بعيد عن أن يكون قناعا، بل هو نسق مغاير يخترق اللغة، يعيد تكوينها وتأسيسها. من ثم يتضح لنا كيف أن البحث يستلزم اختراق الكلام، الصوت، بالخط الذي يملك سره الخاص لقلب المفهوم السائد للشعر، وهو فعل يجذر مادية الكتابة وجدليتها.[290]

When we subject calligraphy to critical awareness, we find that it is far from being a mask, but rather a different format that penetrates language, reconfiguring and re-establishing it. As a consequence it becomes clear that the search [for the text's new rhetoricity] requires that speech and voice be breached by *khaṭṭ* that possesses its peculiar secret for overturning the prevailing understanding of poetry, which is an act of rooting *kitāba* in materiality and dialectics.

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[287] Dina Al-Kassim. "The Faded Bond: Calligraphesis and Kinship in Abdelwahab Meddeb's Talismano." *Public Culture* 13, no. 1 (2001): 124. Elsewhere, Brinkley Messick is interested in calligraphy in the context of legal texts and tracks the processes behind the authority to the handwriting and calligraphy that safeguarded modes of witness—memory, speech, event—becoming the "representation of the legitimizing act of the human notary-witness." *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society*. Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies 16, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 215.

[288] The term *māwsim*, refers to the season as part of the passage of time, but also gestures to a religious festival as does the term *ḥadra*, which refers to a Sufi ritual gathering that intones the presence of God.

[289] Bennis, *al-ʾAʿmāl al-nathriyya*, 32.

يبتعد المكان في الكتابة عن مفهومه كحيّز في الفضاءات المتعددة الموجودة خارج الورقة. إنه منحصرٌ في علاقة الخط بالصفحة البيضاء. فاللغة، من حيث هي منطوقٌ زمان، ومن حيث هي خطٌّ مكان. وما كان للعرب اهتمامٌ فائق بالزمان إلا لكون الشعر كان عندهم كلاماً، أما المكان فلم ينتبه الشعراء إلى تركيب قوانينه إلا مع ظهور مجتمع الكتابة.

[290] Ibid 33.

As a visual form, calligraphy contains the trace of the human body on the page, the deep brushstrokes of a heavy hand, or fading ink of a calligrapher, and the discerning eye of the poet who helps arrange it.

Kitāba through *khaṭṭ* fidgets the boundary between writing and calligraphy and stages the return and liberation of the senses through the topographic arrangement that drafts the human body on the page. Echoing the physical effects of the 13th century rhetoric of al-Qarṭājannī's *takhyīl* (chapter 2) and recalling al-Jilyānī's visual poems (chapter 3), *khaṭṭ* makes visible to the reader poetic qualities such as that of rhythm, modulation, and the poetic idea. Abdelkebir Khatibi in *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, frames it in this way: "Calligraphy can be seen as a reading and a writing in the second degree. It obeys a geometry of the spirit that is created in the opening of a space between the statement contained in a phrase and its realization as a work of art."[291] Khatibi calls this "the plastic scenography of a text"—that of a word turned into an image, in other words, the script as sign. In the same way the oral performance of poetry is attended by gesture, *khaṭṭ* in its double repetition becomes itself a kind of gesture (one of the categories in al-Jāhiẓ's *bayān*, or forms of expression).[292] Script turns writing into a sign that is first seen and then read. Through *khaṭṭ* the reader sees language and reads an image.

The return of *khaṭṭ* turns the white page into a meaning-making unit, one in which the reader sees and experiences the poem as a kind of body that can interact with the reader's own body, altering both in the process. This happens both through a sensory experience of the poem and as a result of the critical work that returning to *khaṭṭ* demands:

> نسترد هذا الخط ونسائله، نفكك انغلاقه ومتعالياته، لا تغوينا جماليته وحدها بقدر ما ننصت فيه أيضا الى أثر من آثار جسدنا. لا مجال للحجاج اذن، لقد عرف الخط العربي، ومنه المغربي، كيف يدمر المعنى المستبد، ويبني لنفسه نسقا متمنعا على الخضوع لسلطة المتعاليات. وها هي الكتابة تمارس لعبة النرد بعيدا عن كل صدفة.[293]

We retrieve this *khaṭṭ* and question it, dismantle its impenetrability and its metaphysical superstructures. We are not seduced by its aesthetics alone, as much as we also listen to a trace of our body in it. There is no room for excuses, because Arabic calligraphy, including the Moroccan one, has learned how to destroy tyrannical meaning, and build for itself a system forbidding submission to the authority of the superstructure. And here is *kitāba* throwing the dice beyond any coincidence.

Bennis offers *khaṭṭ* here, in a move that resembles Khatibi's double critique, as a way to dismantle imposed forms of knowing/being. *Khaṭṭ* defies the border of the nation-state and transcends colonial logic, thus dismantling the boundaries of tyrannical meaning (and we'll see later how it does away with the hierarchy of the vertical line). Bennis's use of calligraphy—representative of the "human notary-witness" (Messick)—nuances politically-engaged poetry's ties to forms of witness. Recalling *khaṭṭ*'s history—its trace of the

[291] Khatibi and Sijelmassi. *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, 6.

[292] Al-Jāḥiẓ's theory of *bayān* contains five categories: speech, writing, gestures (including with the hand, head, the eyes, eyebrows, shoulders, with clothing and the sword, etc.), the act of counting (*al-ʿaqd*) with the fingers and their joints, and a category of *al-niṣba* (gesture).

[293] Bennis, *al-ʾAʿmāl al-nathriyya*, 35.

body that is not only the present body, but the historical body—also elevates it as a bodily, material form and reinforces the idea of writing that the *Bayān* offers as remedy to the stultified experience of the poem.

It's important to note that Bennis doesn't simply propose a visual poetry, or a poetry with "a mere visual dimension," as this would simply replace the hegemony of sound with that of vision and would restrict the poem to analytical categories like that of "visual" or even "poem."[294] Instead, Bennis's concept of *kitāba*, like Mallarmé's dice thrown on the page, contains a critical perception aimed at negotiating pre-assumed associations and poetic methods.[295] The self-aware practice of Mallarmé's "espacement de la lecture" opens a range of perceptual values associated with space that are "available as tractable amplifications to the experience of poetry, promising to potentiate in visual terms poetic qualities such as rhythm, lyricism and emotional or intellectual poignancy, previously achievable only within the linear presentation constraints of conventional print culture."[296] Bennis tenders the blank page as a unit of meaning that works dialectically with the ink on the page, even when the poem is not an explicitly visual one.[297]

In offering a way in which to inject the body and sense experience back into a form of writing, the scripted poem counters the problematic identification of the Maghrib with a strictly oral tradition versus a literate Mashriq.[298] Thus, in recruiting the visual dimension of writing, and specifically the Maghribī script that is distinct to Arabic-speaking lands to the west of the Arabian peninsula, Bennis sought first to defamiliarize reading practices by injecting physical sense-experience into one's encounter with poetry, and second to do so through a Maghribī particularity that would carve out a place for the Maghrib in a plural Arab modernism, and not merely as an echo of the Mashriq.

Section 2: Seeing the Words of Poets

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[294] Ibid, 33.

[295] Bennis produced the first bilingual French-Arabic edition of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés j'amais n'abolira le hasard* alongside French publisher Ypsilon.

[296] Alan Prohm, "Visual Poetics: Meaning Space from Mallarme to 'Metalheart,'" Phd diss., (Stanford University, 2004), 16.

[297] In our meeting, Bennis mentioned his work *Waraqat al-bahāʾ* as being entirely invested in the question of *espace*/*farāgh*. This collection, formative in modeling Bennis's erasure poetics, does so in a number of ways including—forsaking any extratextual markers like poem titles, numbers, and punctuation. Instead, the book length poem relies on other visual markers—notably the bold type, indentation, and structural difference all meant to generate added meaning that engages the body through the sense of sight. *Waraqat al-bahāʾ* compiles into one poem an associative network of images that evolve and draw upon one another, in a labyrinthian swoop through the alleyways of the old city in Fez in search of anything for the eye to land on. The associative quality carries the work through unmarked sections, through columns simultaneously presented on the page, and through bolded segments spread across the collection in a move that suggests emphasis but leaves it undetermined. Visuality, beyond merely an attention to the arrangement of the words on the page, is affirmed throughout in returns to repetition, dispersal, and connection as a process of multi-layered figuration and redefinition. Here, the white page itself becomes a unit of analysis.

[298] Behar, "The Shape-Shifting Margin," 45.

Prior to the publication of the *Bayān*, Bennis, working with the Moroccan calligrapher ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Būrī, contributed a scripted poem to an issue of *Al-Thaqāfa al-jadīda* in 1979. The poem titled, "*Hakadhā kallamanī al-sharq*" ("Thus the East Spoke to Me") was subtitled *mawsim al-shahāda* (*the season of witness*). Later that year, Bennis published a full volume of poetry arranged by the same artist and titled, *Fī ittijāh ṣawtika al-ʿāmūdī* (*Toward Your Vertical Voice*). The introduction to his collected poems tells us that Bennis wrote these poems in the post-Naksa period, in the early years of his career as a poet. In 1981, in the same issue in which the manifesto appears, Bennis contributed another poem arranged by al-Būrī with the same title as the 1979 poem, this time with the subtitle *mawsim al-ḥaḍra* (*the season of presence*). The titles of both the poems and the poetry volume suggest the predominance of the aural, the movement of time and the body, which both *mawsim* and *ḥadra* connote.

The two iterations of "Thus Spoke to Me the East" meditate on place, movement, and the body with *khaṭṭ* offering a way to read the entanglement of these elements through an identifiable figure—the city of Marrakech. The first poem (*the season of witness*) begins with a call for Marrakech to colonize the East (the titular speaker of the poem).[299] The poem transcribes Marrakech (in Behar's words, "a marker for the local deformities of modernity"),[300] as a fissure woven through differing borders, with a directive to let the eye wander. Filled with acts of calling out, ululation and singing, the poems make the eye the explicit hinge of the aural, prompting the eye to follow the curves and lines of the script as a way to convey sound. The poem is especially difficult to follow even after it has been deciphered. The speaker enacts the meandering through the city in a kind of rambling that digresses and repeats itself (even if with a difference). For instance in the first pages of the poem the verses transcribed are:

ها هو عرسي يغسل نعشي
ها هو عرشي
ها هو معراجي ينزل حتى يلعق
بالقدمين
ها هو سر الثقلين
ها
هو
ها
وتراءت راحلة تسأل ضوء من نخلته
اتكأت ألوان الشمس على صمتي

The poem here connects the sonic qualities of words together—*ʿrs* and *ʿrsh* echo and recur with difference as do *hā* and *hū.* Keeping this recursive quality in mind, the next poems formalize both the sonic meandering and the bewilderment of reading in the following forms:

[299] Mohammed Bennis, *al-Thaqāfa al-jadīda,* Dār Tubqāl, volume 5, 1979.
قل آن لمُراكش أن تستوطننا.

[300] Behar, "The Shape-Shifting Margin," 46.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



The spiral (Fig. 1) unfolds different possibilities for the eye, including redirecting it back to the beginning of the page.[301] The verse here stages the glance as a product of conjunctive repetition and modulation—the letter *wāw* acts as the hinge that brings the spiral together while it also lends its shape to the form of the poem. Transcribed the poem reads as follows:

كانت تستضيء بنخلة
والنخل يخرج من فروع الماء
كانت تستريح بلحظة
والصحو يسكن جفنها المنشور ينهض من مدى الأشياء

It turned to a palm tree for light
While palm trees emerge from the streams of water
It rested with a look
For serenity resides in its outstretched eyelids, rising from the spread of things

The speaker (the East) refers here to Marrakech. The spiral figures the directionality of the two hypotactic clauses. The palm trees do in fact linguistically emerge "from a stream" and the eye follows a movement that stretches out "the range of things." In my rendering above, I

[301] In official documents, the spiral represents a chain of witnesses with each signature ensuring its authenticity. "This redoubled, spiraling mark of authenticity" according to Kassim, "is not active in scrivening or copying; its proper place is the one opened up by the threat of misrepresentation and forgery possible only within a framework that demands of writing that it be an unbroken chain." See *The Calligraphic State,* 215.

have chosen not to adduce the *wāw* to each verse. As we'll see later in another example, the anaphora here doesn't subvert the hierarchy of the vertical line (which might have been the case had the form not come right beneath a block of text).

A few pages later, we do get an instance of non-hierarchical directionality epitomized in the circle[302] (Fig. 2), which confronts the reader with a multitude of possible beginnings and also accommodates anaphoras that allow for modulated constructions, including the possibility of beginning with the word repeated in each ring of the circle—*nidāʾuhā* referring to Marrakech's call, or ending with it as a rhyme word. Reading the poem with the call as an anaphora reaffirms the circle's boundedness, while reading the call as the end word centers the tonal quality of repetition:

نداؤها الخلخال والدمليج يصعد من نافورة الصهريج له من المياه جنده ومن شقائق النعمان سره وجهره
نداؤها الطريق يسكر في مكامن الحجارة يعلن عن عصر الحريق يرافق الضوء الى مخابئ الإشارة
نداؤها القبيلة له من الزيتون والتلال قبة الهلال خيمته العليلة

Circle 1: Its call is the anklet and the bracelet rises from the fountain of the cistern. Of anemones it has its soldiers, and of the waters its secrets and loudness.

Circle 2: Its call is the road, intoxicated in the stony hideaways, announcing the era of fire, it accompanies the light to the hideouts of gesture.

Circle 3: Its call is the tribe, of the olive trees and the hills, it has the dome of the crescent moon as its gentle tent

Upon first glance the poem seems to fall into the center. However, encountering in the outer circle the word *yaṣʿad* "to rise up," encourages a reading in which beginning with the innermost circle enacts the release of "rising up." In my final reading, the call is the anaphora, and the outer circle's suggestion of release and rising takes the reader out of the never-ending circularity of repetition that rhyme suggests. The images in these verses are of concealment and revelation—as though the city in finding ways to hide, instead clarified itself. We can similarly understand the work of *khaṭṭ* in relation to the title "Thus Spoke to Me the East"—a marginalized Maghrib, often dismissed by the Mashriq as oral, becomes aural/heard through the textual. The negative space formed by the circle stages language as an image. There is a fourth call then—the circular form of the poem miming the open mouth of a call. In this way, the blank page itself becomes just as much part of the domain of reading as the black ink.

Bennis had schematized the relationship between the Maghrib and the Mashriq in the *Bayān* through the textual metaphor of *al-naṣṣ wa-al-hāmish* ("margin and text").[303] Rendered

[302] The circle is an important shape in both the *ḥaḍra* (more on which below) as well as *raqsh* (arabesque). Boullata describes the system of repetition governing *raqsh* as containing three steps: "first, a circle is drawn; next, its circumference is divided into equal parts; finally straight lines are drawn between both opposites and adjacent points of division, creating a regular polygon contained within the circumference of the circle. And although the circle is the foundational visual unit, the repetition appears only through the concealment of the circle's traces (*There Where You Are Not*, 360-1). We saw its importance as well in the third chapter with al-Jilyānī's *mudabbajāt*.

[303] This schematization nods to the commentary practices of the Islamic tradition, not only for religious texts, but also philosophical texts. The commentary tradition represents a chain that passes knowledge from one generation to the next, building upon previous commentary and deepening textual referentiality.

below in Fig. 3, in the commentary style, the main text challenges the reader with its obscurity, even as it takes up most of the page. The margin tries to clarify the main text, but falls itself into a different kind of obscurity, one in which referentiality loses meaning to its own interpretive move. In other words, because the main text remains obscure, the margin is unable to read the text, having relied on the derivative practice of echoing the main text. Alternatively, while the eye sees a relationship between the two, the act of reading thwarts this expectation. The visual *khaṭṭ*, once deciphered, reveals a synesthetic experience (hearing color, seeing sound): "and scattered letters/ of which pink yellow almond/ blue hazel white/ a graying orange/ B, C, I, D, M/ and that A thrown on the threshold of loneliness/ as if it had muttered/ my chest to describe me/It crossed the arc of its palm with the inside [the letter] I/ that has the gasp of prophecy."[304]

Throughout the manifesto, Bennis seemingly disavowed *shahāda* as a poetic mode, yet as evidenced by the subtitle of the above poem, the contours of a different kind of *shahāda* can and do contain within them a liberatory impulse that affects an alternative sensibility and vision. "Writing is not an innocent act," Bennis writes at the end of the manifesto, "it is the witness in a moment that has the suddenness of a solution, the brilliance of a *ḥaḍra*, and in writing, the renewal of language is intertwined with self-pleasure and the liberation of society."[305] In order for the epiphany, or "suddenness of a solution," to transpire, a negation needs to occur (similarly to the Muslim articulation of the formulaic *shahāda* or "bearing witness" which posits no God before asserting one God) as illustrated by the inverted triangle at the end of the poem, which triangulates "this" and "sound" with the final letter of the alphabet (*yā*). I read this line (Fig. 4) as both the negation of an aural *shahāda* and the tendering of a visual one through the image of the tattoo in the eye "*hādhā qabrun maʿlumun fī anḥāʾ al-ṣawt/tarabaaʿa washman wa rasā fī ʿaynika ʿāma al-dakhnī*" ("this is a known grave in the realm of voice/it settled itself, a tattoo, and anchored in your eye in the year of smoke"). The visual dissolution of the colophon shape into the final word *al-shaʿbī* ("of the people") renders the negation as an act of "unshackling" or "unfettering" by breaking off, literally, the *nisba* form (*yā*) that in Arabic connotes belonging syntactically/morphologically.

304

وأشتات حروف
منها اللوزي الأصفر القرنفلي
الأبيض العسلي الأزرق
البرتقالي الأشهب منها
الباء الجيم العين الدال الميم
وذاك الألف المرمي على
عتبة الوحدة لو تمتمت
صدري وشاحا
خطت فوقه قوسا كفها بباطنة عين
لها شهقة النبوءة

305 Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," 43.

Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Marrakesh was the focal point of the first poem. In the second poem (*the season of presence*), it is the city of Fez. The attention to place, for Bennis, has two purposes: first, it serves as a way to go beyond the mold of meter—an act he attributes to the Andalusī poets who reassembled place into the *qaṣīda*, arranging its verses based on floral and arboreal patterns, for instance. Bennis here refers specifically to stylistic rendering of poetic texts such as those of the *Dīwān al-tadbīj*, which modeled its forms after geometric shapes, natural elements, and talismanic symbols and thus went beyond the strict symmetry of the double-hemistich structure that characterized classical Arabic poetry (see chapter 3). While they didn't eschew meter (and neither does Bennis), it was not a primary formal consideration in shaping the poem. Second, as mentioned above, emphasizing place in poetry offers an alternative to the borders of the "nation"—a stricture that the Maghribī *khaṭṭ* surpasses because of its being an orthographic script that exceeds the bounds of the nation-state and encompasses all of North Africa as well as Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Chad (beyond geographically, it also extends as well back in time to al-Andalus).

Another reading of the manifesto suggests that Bennis's foray into *khaṭṭ* and the visuality of the written word is due in part to his experiments with a poetic structure of the *ḥaḍra*—a Sufi ritual that involves the rhythmic chanting of the divine name—and in part to his attention to the reader as spectator. The subtitle of the second "Thus Spoke to Me the East" is *the season of ḥaḍra*, which outlines what the structure of the *ḥaḍra* might look like in a poem. According to Bennis:

تدخل الكتابة حضرتها. أجساد بمجموعها تلتقي، تعيد رؤية الأشياء والإنسان، تغير الحساسية. جسد الكاتب، جسد النص، جسد القارئ. حضرةٌ تستقدم جدلية الكتابة وإقرارها. كل جسد يكتب في حضرة الكتابة جسد الآخر، يجدده،

يحرره. لا الكتابة مبشرةٌ بحقيقة مطلقة، ولا النص حامل محايد للمعنى، ولا القارئ مقموع، مبعد. هذه الكتابة، من حيث هي صناعة، تركيب لنص آخر محتمل، تتم به وفيه إعادة تكوين الأشياء والأسماء والإنسان وفق قوانين مغاير، له الوعي النقدي، له المحو، الحلم، الاشتهاء. لا بداية له ولا نهاية. نفي لكل سلطة. تناولٌ للوجود والموجودات من افق يحث على التحرر المتكامل.[306]

Kitāba enters its presence. Bodies in their entirety meet, reconsider the vision of things and people, and change sensibilities. The writer's body, the text's body, the reader's body. *Ḥaḍras* summon the dialectic of writing and its confirmation. Each body writes in the presence of *kitāba* the body of the other, renewing it, liberating it. Neither does *kitāba* herald an absolute truth, nor is the text a neutral carrier of meaning, nor is the reader oppressed, alienated. This *kitāba*, as it is an industry/craft, is a preparation of another possible text, in which things, names, and people are reconstructed according to different laws, with critical awareness, erasure, dreams, and desires. It has neither beginning nor end. Denial of all authority. An approach to existence and existents from a horizon that urges complete liberation.

The Sufi *ḥaḍra*, as a ritual in which strives to draw the circle of participants into a deep awareness of God and away from their individuation, conveys the bodily limits of repetition. Bennis's idea of a liberatory writing, like the structure of the *ḥaḍra*, describes a process of deferral that constructs the text within and through an other (here embodied by the figure of a repressed *khaṭṭ*). Through *khaṭṭ,* then, *kitāba* becomes a charged act of reading anchored in repetition that asks the reader to retrace the words and lines, to read down and across, in circles and spirals, and to physically manipulate the page. Virginia La Charité describes the act of reading Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* as an "acting out" of the words and lines,[307] which, La Charité asserts, Mallarmé does through manipulating the white space of the page. The way that Bennis enables the reader's "acting out" is by staging the deconstruction of syntax, "the reader, in turn, reconstructs the sequence(s) himself, reconstructs the text while the text reconstructs his body, his view of the world. From here, reading becomes a second creation of the text, and a foundation for a different world and sensitivity, which have a desire for confrontation."[308] Practically, the calligraphic script for each letter changes depending on the cluster of letters in the word—a feature already part of Arabic writing, but which is emphasized in its calligraphic form. Reading becomes defamiliarized, and although the poet's work passes through the hand of another artist before being placed into the reader's, the work remains determined and experienced as a deeply personal bodily movement, both because calligraphy brings the body into writing and requires the eye to move more deliberately as opposed to the printed page.

In his full-length work of visual poems, which Bennis wrote between 1973 and 1975 though the book was not published until the end of 1979, the same calligrapher, ʿAbd al-Wahāb al-Būrī who scripted the two poems above, does so again with the poet's guidance/help. Like the stand-alone poems, *Fī itjijāh ṣawtika al-ʿāmūdī* is also scripted in the Maghribī *khaṭṭ* and with no other titles or headings suggests a singular poem, one which, by nature of the layout also

[306] Ibid, 33.

[307] La Charité, Virginia A. *The Dynamics of Space: Mallarmé's Un Coup de Dés Jamais n'abolira Le Hasard*. French Forum Monographs 67. (Lexington: French Forum, 1987), 34.

[308] Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," 36.

contains self-enclosed forms (much like al-Jilyānī's *mudabbajāt*). As in al-Jilyānī's *dīwān*, circularity is the most prominent and arresting form in Bennis's collection (a reviewer responding to the work even notes this, writing "he throws you into a vortex (truly) as when in a musical moment that extends over a page and half, you feel a desire upon ending to return to the source once again. Some of those with a talent for naming things said: we call it the circular poem").[309] The vertical line—and vertical voice—of the poem is juxtaposed and challenged by this circularity.

Endowing the poem with physical qualities, the collection alerts the reader in one of the title pages with the inscription: this is the pursued poem (*hadhihī al-qaṣīdatu al-muṭārada*). Towards the end of the first section of the book, the speaker describes the poem as having "a face, thin/it seems like mine." Then, in the third section, titled "the days are endlessly lit" (*wa-l-ayyām mushtaʿila abadan*), appearing on facing pages, two shapes resemble eyes, and seen together, the two pages become a face with discernible features like eyes, brows, and a string of words for a nose. The translation and transcription are as follows:

أصبحت هذى الطرقات
ووكالات الأخبار نقالات الموتى صفارات الإنذار جرحى حملاً سجناء طلبة احياء ملغومة
كل الطرقات

أصبحت هذى الطرقات
الفقراء غضباً جوعاً عصيانا بارودا سرطانا طاعونا ومتاريس
كل الطرقات
كتبي ودواتي المشتعلة

These roads have become
Circle 1: And the news agencies are transporters of the dead the alarms wounded burdens prisoners students neighborhoods booby-trapped

Socket 1: All roads

These roads have become
Circle 2: The poor anger, hunger, rebellion, rifle, cancer, plague, and barricades

Socket 2: All roads

My books and my eye sockets are alight.

The poem itself references eyes that are alight. In place of the iris, the phrase "all roads" ("*kull al-ṭuruqāt*") The external 'brow' and the internal 'iris' reflect one another linguistically in their repetition of *ṭuruqāt*. In addition to questions about reading, a more subtle ontological

[309] Bennis, *Fī ittijāh ṣawtika al-ʿāmūdī*, 9.

يقذفك في دوامة (فعلن) مثلا في سياحة موسيقية طولها صفحة ونصف، تحس عند انتهائك منها برغبة في العودة إلى رأس النبع من جديد.
قال بعض هواة جمع التسميات: يسميها القصيدة المدورة.

question arises: What else fits into the eye? What does it see? What does it mean to see language in the form of a body? Tackling the question of reading first, while there is a line before and after the poems, the circle itself does away with a hierarchy of reading because it leaves open the question of beginning. In the second circle, this is reaffirmed in the syntactic equality (parataxis) between the adjectives/nouns that comprise the circular form. Even the definite noun—*al-fuqarāʾ* ("the poor")—is questionable as a possible beginning for this verse. Instead the circular form suggests a kind of equivalence among the encapsulated terms, which the sentence also articulates. The pages here recall another equivalence when the speaker describes the poem as having a face that resembles the speaker's, and so this poem returns to the poem as visualizable both perceptually and conceptually. It tells us to look on to the poem, to see its face, and to recognize that the speaker and poem are *facing* the reader.

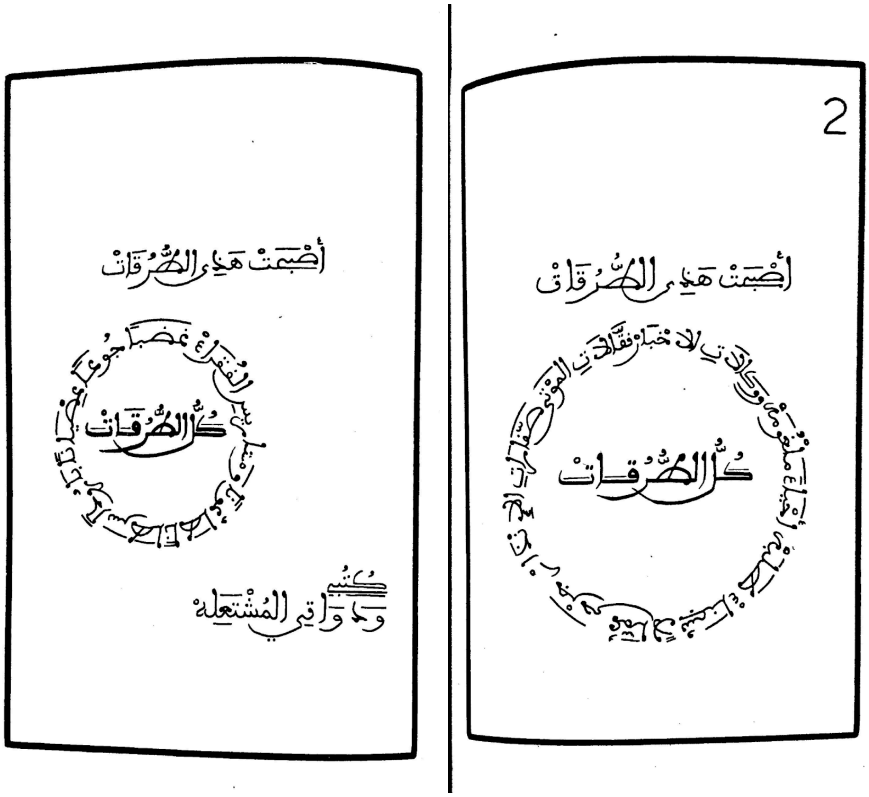

Fig. 5

In another poem, a spiral whose circularity both pinpoints and obfuscates a beginning, the central word *al-dam* (blood) spills out into rivulets with no sense of their order of reading. This gives the reader a choice in terms of how to compose a poem from the distinct/interconnected verses. There are nevertheless echoes of earlier lines in the book, and the syntactic structure, as it did in the earlier poem (see the spiral poem above), organically moves with the shape. The *'wa'* that precedes blood, renders the poem's anaphora into a shape that spirals (as it did in the stand-alone poem). The fluidity of the anaphora (its repetitive, chantlike mode reminiscent of the Sufi *ḥadra*), seems itself to make the spiral necessary. It also suggests a centrifugal movement

which, like the circle, is infinite and is a nod to the arabesques, labyrinths, and forms of *zillīj* famous in the Fez markets.

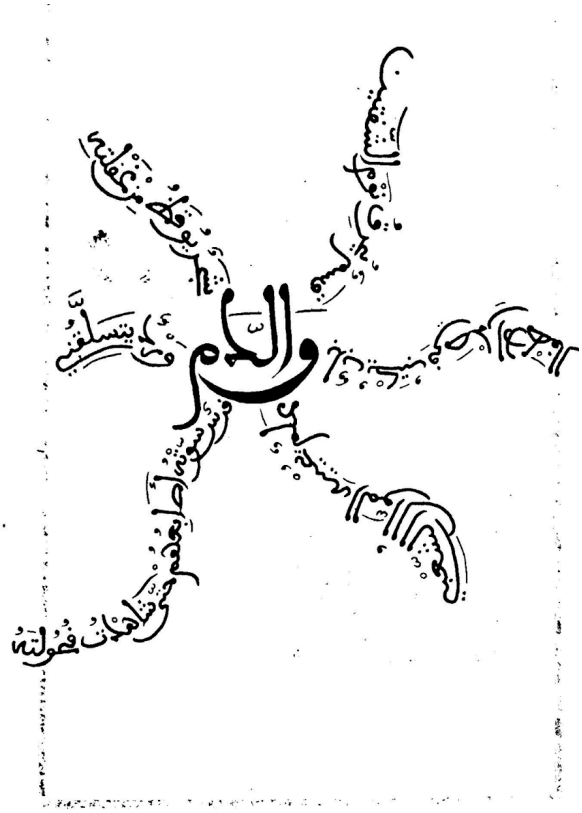

Fig. 6

Transcribed and translated the poem reads as follows:

والدم وردٌ يتسلقني
والدم فرسٌ سوته أصابعهم حتى شاهدتُ فحولته
والدم علَمٌ يحييه الموالُ الشعبي
والدمُ بابٌ يُكتبُ في صدر الاطفال
والدمُ قسمٌ يُحرِقُ نومَ الشفتين
والدمُ شجرٌ يوقظُ من غفلته

Blood is flowers that climb me
Blood is a horse fingers shaped until I saw its bravery
Blood is a flag that is kept alive by popular ballads
Blood is a door written in the chest of children
Blood is an oath that burns the sleep of the lips
Blood is trees woken from their slumber

Similar to the other poems, the lack of beginning destabilizes the possibility of continuity between the verses. So while, for instance, one might read the verse about the popular loyalists

or the children as preceding the verse about the horse shaped by unknown fingers, the poem doesn't necessarily endorse this by its visual ordering. Instead, the verse "*sawwathu ʾaṣābiʿahum*" recalls an earlier instance in the poem that describes fingers in the process of making something. This continuity between the larger parts of the poem over the self-enclosed forms available breaks the neat encompassing of the visual poem before the eye. The connection between perception and conceptualization here is both affirmed and deferred. If the spiral seems to necessitate this kind of reading, it nonetheless destabilizes any clear conceptualization that might be gleaned from the visual information. This move between assertion and deferral is precisely the move that will be articulated much more clearly later on when Bennis further develops his theory of *kitāba.* Ultimately, this kind of rendering encourages the reader's creativity and allows for moments of interrogation where meaning might not be immediately gleaned from the visual form. It also anchors the reader in a visual experience of the poem when sense-making becomes elusive.

When Bennis finally asks, in the last pages of the manifesto, *Mā hiya al-kitāba idhan?* ("What is writing, then?"), he offers an answer that appears both to clarify and obfuscate the matter:

هي النص الذي يبحث باللغة وفي اللغة عن سؤاله لا عن يقينه. وتستعصي الكتابة على الذاكرة، تصدعها، تقلب سياق المعارف، تلعب بها: حادثة، إسما، أغنية، مثلا، رواية، علامة. لعبة يقعدها الوعي واللاوعي، التقرير والتخييل، الواقع والرمز، والنسيان مبدأ بلاغة الكتابة.[310]

It is the text that searches through and in language for its question and not for its certainty. *Kitāba* eludes memory, cracks it, transforms the sequence of [known things], plays with it: an event, a name, a song, for example, a novel, a sign. A game held by consciousness and the subconscious, the established and the imagined, reality and symbol, and forgetting is the beginning of writing's [poetics].

Like *takhyīl*, *kitāba* also requires a deliberate forgetting (al-Jurjānī calls it *tanāsī*) and Bennis will later add onto this a kind of self-imposed aphasia (more on this below). From this particularity, from the body in place, the writing self moves towards a kind of knowledge because it involves experience and praxis and thus prepares the body for its own presence.[311] Thinking of presence over representation offers a way to bypass the problem of Aristotelian duality and the duality of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, which Bennis critiques in the beginning of the *Bayān*. At a time when art around the world was finding ways to incorporate the body (for instance, in 1970s body art), Bennis was thinking of ways to bring the body into the poem. This often took the form of reflections on spatiality in his search for the *qaṣīda*, describing it as a search for a

[310] Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," 37.

[311] Ibid 39.

تسعى الذات الكتابة الى المعرفة لأنها منخرطة في التجربة والممارسة. وهي بذلك ذات مادية ، فاعلة في تحديد جهة التاريخ. ولأنها أرضية لا علوية فهي اجتماعية، تمارس الانشقاق والنقصان.
لا يمكن أن نحرر الفعل في ظل قمع الذات، لا يمكن أن نفتتح حوار مع المستقبل ونحن رهائن للماضي والحاضر، لا يمكن لفاعلية الإبداع أن تتفجر ونحن مطمئنون لحيادية الذات. الكتابة تهيئ للجسد حضرته.

new place to reside.[312] Through the poles of experience and praxis, the body is able to penetrate time, a quality that all modern poetry exhibits, and from which "writing becomes the root of knowledge and its refashioning." [313] *Kitāba* paves the way for liberation because it is itself a working through of genuine experience. Framing practice and experience as a bodily penetration through time (i.e. the writer's ability to experience the body in its historical moment, and the reverberation of that experience with other moments in which the body understands its historicity) is the impulse of "modern poetry." This kind of simultaneity/contemporaneity establishes writing/poetry as an extension of knowledge. Yet, this call for a liberatory writing—a liberation that occurs at the level of knowledge and perception—cannot substitute for actual liberation, insists Bennis. Yet despite his insistence, he believes in the text's ability to transform the reader because it "pushes awareness, effectiveness, practice, and sensitivity to sites of insight and criticism, to the possibility of dismantling and reassembling things in their existence in a way that alters perception, and establishes testimony that counters the reality of society and history and confuses the mechanisms of a docile consciousness."[314] Bennis's visual poems and his investment in the visuality of the poem, in the perceptual change of the reader, and by extension the Maghribī and Arab consciousness, were his way of doing that.

Section 3: *Ruʾyat mā lā yurā*

Bennis's experimentation with *khaṭṭ* ended with the publication of *Fī ittijāh ṣawtika al-ʿāmūdī*. In our meeting, he told me that he stopped visually scripting his poems, and when he didn't say why he stopped "people kept writing, everyone saying whatever he wanted. It wasn't my concern [to say why], but no one noticed that what I wrote later was all visual."[315] He continued:

اذا قرأتي ورقة البهاء كله كتابة بصرية فيه الابيض والاسود والفراغ والفارغة وهذا لم انفصل عنه في حياتي. اذن انا كنت اقل لك العين التي لا ترى من الأشياء التي انتقدتها في الشعر المغربي ثم في البيان نحن لدينا ثقافة سمعية ما عناش ثقافة بصرية. ها هو امامك القصيدة وأنت لا تراها، ولذلك قلت العين لها تاريخها.

[312] Ibid 29. The *qaṣīda* owes this spatiality to its historical-linguistic connection to the desert, in which the tent and its poles migrate into the *bayt* and *watad*. The Arabic *qaṣīda*'s language is that of dwelling and habitation and their loss.

[313] Bennis, "*Bayān al-Kitāba*," 27

ان الكتابة إذ تعمد إلى نقد اللغة والذات والمجتمع، تتأسس من خلال التجربة والممارسة، قبل أي بعد آخر من ابعاد الإبداع. التجربة والممارسة اختراق الجسد للزمن، فعل أول لكل تجاوز. نلحظ بوضوح أن هذه القاعدة يتبعها كل شعر حديث، لدى مختلف الشعوب. من هنا تكون الكتابة تجذيرا للمعرفة وتثويرا لها.

[314] Ibid, 29.

وهو دفع بالوعي والفاعلية والممارسة والحساسية الى مواقع الاستبصار والنقد، الى إمكانية تفكيك وتركيب الموجودات في وجودها بصيغة تبدل الإدراك، وترسخ شهادة مضادة لواقع المجتمع والتاريخ تربك إواليات الوعي المهادن.

[315] Bennis brought this point up during our meeting in May, 2023:

اوقفتها ولم أقل لماذا اوقفتها وضل الناس يكتبون كل واحد يقول ما يشاء ماشي مهمتي ولكن لم ينتبه الى ان ما اكتبه لاحقا كله بصري.

If you read *Waraqat al-Bahāʾ*, it is all visual writing, in which there is black and white, emptiness and empty space. I have never detached from [this kind of writing] in my life. As I was telling you, the eye that does not see is one of the things that I criticized in Moroccan poetry and then in the *Bayān*. We have an aural culture, we don't have a visual culture. The poem is in front of you but you don't see it. That is why I said that the eye has its own history.

Bennis wanted to bring the history of the eye back—to remind the Moroccan reader of a visual culture that's been sidelined in the present. In the manifesto Bennis simply called his concept of writing *kitāba* and focused on the visibly material elements of the poem; in developing his theory further, *kitāba* attained a new qualifier and became *kitābat al-maḥw* ("erasure writing"). Unlike its iteration in the manifesto, *kitābat al-maḥw* offers the visual through subtractive measures. Developing as it did after a project of visibly presenting writing, Bennis turned to the ways one can make present through negation. With *khaṭṭ* no longer a means to do so, in order for Bennis to emphasize writing's bodily (read: visual) dimension, *kitābat al-maḥw* leaned on presencing (or giving form) to absence exemplified by the expression *ruʾyat mā lā yurā* (seeing what cannot be seen). This final section turns to the pre-modern Arabic *qaṣīda*, which I suggest furnishes Bennis with a framework to revise his theory of writing. In addition to the *qaṣīda*, the expression that will be the focus of this last section, comes from the critical ethos of premodern engagements with *takhyīl*. As a result, *kitābat al-maḥw* is both intimately connected to and extends from the kind of poetic visuality that has been the central discussion of this dissertation.

In a collection of essays written between 1988 and 1993 with the eponymous title *Kitābat al-maḥw*, Bennis extrapolates the spatial language of the *qaṣīda*, particularly that of the *nasīb*:

صاحب الجسد مسار الكتابة. ولأن اجتياز المسار يتطلب السفر، فقد انشغل أيضا بمرابط الكتابة (أليست هي مرابط الخيل في ليل صحراء الشاعر الجاهلي؟)... لبداية السفر مكان معلوم يحدد النهاية، وبمجرد ما تحس بأن الخطوات تورطت في السفر، والإيقاعات تملكت الجسد، تضيع النهاية ويمحي الخط المستقيم، تنتهي الكتابة لتبدأ ولا تبدأ لتنتهي. بقليل من الماء ينتعش الجسد، إنه ماء الكتابة.[316]

The body accompanied the path of writing. And because the traversal of a route requires traveling, [the body] was also preoccupied with the [mooring] cables of writing (are they not the horse's reins of the pre-Islamic poet in the desert night ?)…The beginning of travel has a known place that defines the end, as soon as you notice that your steps have become entangled, and the rhythms have taken over your body, the end is lost and the straight line is erased. Writing ends in order to begin and does not begin in order to end. With a little amount of water, the body is revitalized. This is writing's fluidity.

In the first essay of the collection, in which Bennis introduces his concept of *kitābat al-maḥw*, he does so with the movement that comes out of the *raḥīl*, couched in terms of a body that accompanies writing's trajectory (*masār*). These cables of writing, Bennis tells the reader, are dressed "in the companionship of the question" (*marābiṭ al-safar tatalabbas bī-muṣāḥabat*

[316] Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw*, 13

al-suʾāl).[317] The *qaṣīda's raḥīl* is a generative source for Bennis because it comes out of the deferral of a question. Jaroslov Stetkyvch writes that the *su'āl* reflects "the bewilderment of the Arabic poet as that poet stood in contemplation before the bleak repository, those elusive physical, or merely mnemonic, remains of an "encampment.""[318] Yet, while this description of bewilderment belies something a poet wants to be rid of, bewilderment in Bennis's poetics sustains a new kind of seeing that opens up the text to embodied/informed modes of reading. Bewilderment as a mode in which the writer sees what is not seen is one of the main aspects of erasure writing and calls for *al-hadhayān* in "syntax and grammar." Instead, Bennis advocates for a reading experience in which the sentence "does not fit together," and the structure "remains confused." Writing in this way does not merely present "times and its cultural products," instead, bewilderment and fragmentation enact the "dispersal of the tribal" so thoroughly that "it reaches for the edifice of reference and meaning distributed throughout the body of the poem."[319] In other words, just as with the visual poems, Bennis takes the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda's* deferral of the question and enacts this as both a visual and verbal phenomenon on the page.

This approach to the poem registers one of Bennis's early experiences—seeing words.[320] In the beginning of the essay, "Writing and the Glory of Water" Bennis, enacting his own moment of standing at the *aṭlāl* to question, asks "What is the difference between the labyrinth of Fez and the labyrinth of the poem? And this personal blood, how can it reach absence when it is held at the gates of the city, from Bāb al-Futūḥ to Bāb al-Maḥrūq, or of any part of the tranquility in the eyes that saw what I do not see? (*al-ʿayn allatī raʾat mā lā ʾarā*)."[321] The expression, "*al-ʿayn allatī raʾat mā lā ʾarā*" recalls al-Jurjānī's and the *balāghiyyūn's* characterization of *takhyīl* (in which they describe its workings as causing the soul to see what cannot be seen, or *turīha mā lā tarā*) and becomes a way to focalize the poet's visionary role. Writing later on, Bennis adds, "For the sake of this eye, writers, poets, and thinkers flee from the oppression and tyranny of those who cannot bear to 'see what cannot be seen.'"[322] Ushering al-Jurjānī officially

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[317] Ibid.

[318] Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 105.

[319] Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw*, 21.

الجملةُ لا تلتئم، والتركيب يظل مشوَّشاً على الدوام. والهذيانُ يسْري في التاريخ والثقافة أيضاً. فلا تتحقّقُ فيه هُدْنةٌ مع المتخيل الذي تُعرَض به علينا الأزمنةُ ومنتوجاتُها الثقافية. الهذيانُ مكانٌ لتشظي وبعثرةِ القبليّ. في الكتابة وبالكتابة. حتى تبلغَ صرحَ المرجعية والمعنَى مُزَوْبَعَينِ في جسد القصيدة.

[320] Bennis described this striking moment to me in our meeting May, 2023:.
بدأت أرى الكلمة وهذا مشكل الاهتمام بما هو بصري.

[321] Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw*, 18.
ما الفرق بين متاه فاس ومتاه القصيدة؟
وهذا الدم الشخصي كيف له أن يبلغ الغياب منعقدا على أبواب المدينة، من باب الفتوح الى باب المحروق، او على أي انحاء السكينة في العيون التي رأت ما لا أراه؟

[322] Ibid, 40.
لأجل هذه العين يرحل الكتاب والشعراء ، والمفكرون فرارا من بطش وطاغوت من لا يحتمل «رؤية ما لا يرى»
بتعبيير الجرجاني، حيث الرؤية المتفردة تحرق الحجب المقتادة السائدة

into the conversation, Bennis writes that the individualized seeing/vision that this expression describes is the way a poet surpasses prevailing convention. To see what cannot be seen, then, encapsulates the poet's timeliness as well as the poet's transcendence of time. The ability to surpass the usual vision of things—in other words, to offer a new way to envision the world—is poetic knowledge.

Importantly, the thing the poet sees, and which also incidentally the poet makes unseeable by erasing, is the past. In another essay of the collection, "The Multiplicity of Poetic Pasts and the Poem's Orphanhood," Bennis begins from this conviction that the past is neither curtailed to one hegemonic narrative, nor are any relationships to it singular. For Bennis, interpreting and reading history are important for untangling ideological shackles that have trapped modern Arabic poets and critics. Any single reading that curtails the past dooms poetry to *taqlīd* (a pitfall into which, according to Bennis, the *nahḍa* poets fell). Thus, the solution is not a severance from the past (a task clearly impossible, and which even Surrealism, with its disavowal of memory in favor of the unconscious couldn't achieve), but of recalibrating one's relation to it.[323] He offers two modes of relating to the past from the classical Arabic poetic tradition, the first is ʿAntara's questioning of the *aṭlāl* in his *muʿallaqa* and Abū Nuwās's negation of the *aṭlāl* and his self-imposed aphasia (here, Bennis uses the term *al-ḥubsa*, though I want to recall also the *tanāsī*, or forgetting, of *takhyīl*):

«هل غادر الشعراء من متردم»
هكذا ابتدأ الشاعر العربي الجاهلي، عنترة، معلقته الشهيرة. إنها ألم البحث عن سلطة بداية القصيدة. سلطة ينفرد بها دون غيره من الشعراء السابقين عليه. ألم استحالة مغادرة الماضي كاسترسال لكل حاضر ومستقبل. إن الحاضر والمستقبل، المنفصلين عن الماضي، لا يتحققان إلا بمساءلة الماضي، بنفيه وإثباته في آن. رجة هتوكة ينسى بها الماضي أنه ماض ليتذكره من ركن مغاير.[324]

"Did the poets leave any place to patch?" This is how the pre-Islamic Arab poet, Antara, began his famous *muʿallaqa*. It is the pain of searching for the authority of a poem's beginning. An authority to distinguish him from other poets who preceded him. The pain of the impossibility of leaving the past to flow without constraint for every present and future. The present and the future, which are separated from the past, can only be actualized by questioning the past, and confirming it at the same time. A tearing shudder that makes the past forget that it is past in order to remember it from a different place.

The marking off of a place from which to begin, which is conventionally the mode of the poet who stands before the *aṭlal*, sets ʿAntara's poem into crisis—the mark has been made, and the poet is searching for a new beginning with the old in tow, the impossibility sunders the poetic act. ʿAntara's question, "Have the poets left anywhere to patch" indicates outwardly the poet's belatedness, yet gestures to a moment of contemporaneity in the very act of questioning at the site of the *aṭlāl*. Bennis describes Abū Nuwās's verse, "tell the one who cries over the ruins

من النابغة إلى المتنبي الى ابن عربي. هذه القبيلة المهاجرة، كالبدو الرحل، باحثة عن منتجع رمزي فيه تعيش الذات الكاتبة شرائط كتابتها.

[323] In our May 2023 meeting, Bennis clarified that he follows Jacques Lacan's cue in thinking about the unconscious.

[324] Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw,* 73.

standing, it wouldn't hurt him if he were seated"[325] as a relation of negation because the poet refuses the past's established modes (here gestured to by Abū Nuwās's refusal of the *wuqūf* that is part of the *aṭlal*). Abū Nuwās's forced erasure of the poems he memorized (symbolically of his predecessors and an entire tradition) only implicated him further in it by foregrounding his contemporaneity with multiple poetic modes. Bennis offers both ʿAntara and Abū Nuwās not as models of relation, but as illustrative of the multiple relations with the past available to the poet. *Kitābat al-maḥw* is a relation to the past like that of Abū Nuwās, in which the awareness of the past consists not in a return to it, but in its trace remnants that emerge unconsciously in poetry's writing.

What does this look like in the poem? In the absence of the orthographic trace, which as we saw in the earlier sections, was Bennis's preferred method to do this, Bennis turns to another kind of visuality achieved not through metaphor but through *tarkīb*, the composition of the poem on the page. The move away from form/content to *dalāliyya*, from metaphor to *tarkīb* nonetheless registers the aim that the visual poems attempted to achieve—to experience the poetic object differently. In this new iteration, the white page is still in play, and the readerly experience (and construction) of the poem's body remains unfamiliar, bewildered, and convoluted.[326]

Even though the poet is marked by a temporal and spatial specificity, the act of writing, like the trace of the *aṭlāl* and the beloved's trace in the *ṭayf al-khayāl*, works dialectically with other spaces and times. It creates a link between one time and another and one space and another. Seen this way, erasure writing as a poetics opens up a relation to the past that is one of simultaneity because of the past's multiplicity. Bennis illustrates this when he writes that "in a moment of stubborn investigation, the Quran, pre-Islamic poetry and an entire poetic lineage emanated together."[327] Bennis describes his re-encounter with an "Arabic poetic past in Morocco and al-Andalus" at the same time as his return to a "poetic past that is Arabic and human." *Kitāba* in its orthographic iteration and later as a praxis of erasure (as *maḥw*) is the embodiment of the writing subject, who in seeing what cannot be seen, is attuned to unending absence.

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[325] Ibid 75.

قل لمن يبكي على رسم درس واقفا ما ضر لو كان جلس

[326] Ibid, 22. Bennis also mentions this in Mohammed Bennis, *Ẓāhirat al-shiʿr al-muʿāṣir fī al-Maghrib: muqāraba bunyawīya takwīnīya*, al-Ṭabʿa 1 (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-ʿAwda, 1979), 102:

فالصراع بين الأسود والأبيض هو من اجل اختيار ما يصلح لأن يكون نموذجا ويؤكد الزغبة في إعطاء شتات يلمه القارئ في وعيه ليعيد تركيب صورة العالم كما رآها الشاعر

[327] Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw*, 32.

Coda: Poetic Knowledge

In the 1976 book-long poem *Le Lutteur de classe á la manière taoïste* (*Class Warrior: Taoist Style*) by Moroccan poet and critic Abdelkebir Khatibi, the speaker of the poem cautions the reader to "hold on to poetic knowledge without fetishizing it."[328] Then, perhaps to emphasize its importance, the speaker explains: "what is poetic knowledge? in writing you will protect thinking// in the orthographic trace you will reign over volatile motions// in music you will puncture living in time// a dry fig tree absorbs the singing of the stars// throw yourself laughing upon the straw of the wind."[329] More than clarifying *what* kind of knowledge it is, the qualifier "poetic" here shows *how* (the word Khatibi uses is *par*, or by) this knowledge appears—in writing, in the orthographic trace, in music. Poetic knowledge materializes a correlation between reception ("protecting," "reigning," and "absorbing," for instance) and disclosure (music, the

[328] I rely on David Feini's translation of "l'adorer" as 'feitishizing' as it captures some of Khatibi's Marxist vocabulary in "'Hold to Poetic Knowledge Without Creating a Fetish', or How to Resist Disfiguring the Maghreb in Theory," *Boundary 2*, December 11, 2018, https://www.boundary2.org/2018/12/david-fieni-hold-to-poetic-knowledge-without-creating-a-fetish-or-how-to-resist-disfiguring-the-maghreb-in-theory/.

[329] Translation by Matt Reeck in Abdelkebir Khatibi. *Class Warrior: Taoist Style,* translated by Matt Reeck, Middletown, Connecticut: (Wesleyan University Press, 2017). 39. French in Abdelkebir, Khatibi, *Le Lutteur de classe à la manière taoïste*, (Paris: Sindbad, 1976), 34.

adhère sans l'adorer au savoir poétique
qu'entend-on par « savoir poétique »?
par la lettre tu abriteras la pensée
par le graphe tu régneras sur le geste volatil
par la musique tu blesseras l'être du temps
un figuier sec absorbe le chant des étoiles
jette-toi en riant sur la paille de vent

orthographic trace, puncturing time, throwing oneself). In other words, Khatibi conceptually reorients poetic knowledge as a process rather than solely an endpoint.

In this coda, I want to bring poetic knowledge in its Moroccan iteration—with Bennis and Khatibi—together with the work of Martinican and Antillean thinkers Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant to think about poetic knowledge as a method, and about the possibilities of poetics as a generative site for critical thinking. The reason is to continue thinking about the poem and its visuality. The underlying motivation is to show how, following Bennis, poetic knowledge and poetic seeing are perceived to have liberatory potential. The Antillean context, sharing several details with the Moroccan one, questions how it sees itself moving in the world, how it sees the world itself, beyond the imposition of French/European linearity. What interests me in bringing these thinkers together is their turn to poetics as a means of change in the shadow of disillusionment with political processes (or perhaps even a willful pessimism about the possibility of change through political processes). The works of these anticolonial thinkers help us see how poetic vision can be a kind of revolutionary seeing into the future, by way of revolutionarily looking at the past—the return of the *ṭayf al-khayāl* throughout Arabic poetic history, *takhyīl's* reactivation of prior seeing, and the rise of a repressed *khaṭṭ*.

A quick recap: In the first chapter, we encountered in al-Jurjānī's work the idea that the more sedimented the association of a poetic image, the more difficult it becomes to shift its context and so the stronger the *takhyīl*. Al-Qarṭājannī complements this with his addition that the world itself engages in representation. In chapters two and three, the doubled image emerged from two forms of vision (one literal, the other figurative), and where poetic knowledge was a sustained and contemplative kind of looking that returned to the conventional and refigured it anew. And finally in chapter four, a concept of poetic knowledge grew out of and unfolded before our eyes on the page both in the use of *khaṭṭ* as a way to retrain the eye, and more subtly in the resonance between Bennis's ideas about seeing in poetry and the premodern texts I read in the first two chapters. In the last chapter, I concluded that poetic knowledge for Bennis, was about moving the reader to an awareness of things in the poems as materially embedded in language. This is why poetry/*kitāba* is able to transform the self—the visual in writing makes the body present to itself. Bennis understood this to happen by embodying poetry's memory (its histories of seeing) through the calligraphic trace, and through negotiating the white space of the page into a unit of meaning-making. Acknowledging the eyes' right to the poem, was not about privileging an ocularcentric paradigm for thinking the poem, instead I read it as a way to recover sense experience from the strict empiricism of other discourses.

Khatibi, like Bennis, layers the *nasīb's* image into his work, but in a way that obscures its reference. David Fieni, writing about Khatibi's *Class Warrior* says, "Khatibi's turn to Chinese Taoism engineers modalities of poetic knowledge that imagine ways of short-circuiting the master metaphors of Orientalism."[330] In Khatibi's enactment of Taoist balance throughout the work he oscillates between the manifesto-like tactical guide to the revolutionary while leaning on poetics (and poetic knowledge) as the trajectory of action. This seems to support, according to Fieni, Winnifred Woodhull's claim that "a subversive poetics has gradually replaced work for change in the political field."[331] Choosing to read the work through Khatibī's own lens of double

[330] David Fieni, "Review of Abdelkébir Khatibi's 'Class Warrior – Taoist Style,'" *Boundary 2*, September 12, 2018, https://www.boundary2.org/2018/09/david-fieni-review-of-abdelkebir-khatibis-class-warrior-taoist-style/.

[331] Ibid.

critique, Fieni, instead, reads Khatibi's subversive poetics as a commitment to both the critical and the creative. *Class Warrior* is preoccupied with change but also with its dark side (ex. "Can you disfigure the class enemy," the very next lines ask, "without taking on his likeness?). Seizing poetics as a guideline for change, Khatibi's speaker is invested in how one thinks and signifies:

> change your thought categories
> and you will change your actions
> change your actions
> and you will raise up your body
> raise up your body
> and you will talk with the unthinkable
> politics is sensual
> a shapeshifting calligraphy.[332]

Taking the calligraphic form as the blueprint of changes' suppleness, Khatibi, like Bennis, redefines knowledge by the way we read/see. On the last page of *Class Warrior-Taoist Style* the speaker, after becoming a warrior "in the tribe of words" encounters a nomadic hunter who says:

> Unknown traveler you're not allowed to rest
> The signs that lead you astray are pure intoxication
> False mirror the beauty that beguiles you[333]

The images in the closing sequence come from the *nasīb* by way of the Sufi poetic tradition. The traveler being addressed in Khatibi's poem recalls the poet standing at the *aṭlāl*, encountering the phantom of the beloved, being urged on by the apparition. In Khatibi's interaction, seeing what is not seen mimes the suspicion of the image ("the more a person travels the more the sign on the horizon crumbles"). But the speaker isn't dissuaded by this. Like the argument against the image we've seen play out in this dissertation, the poem asserts "I'll steal the title of the orphaned sage." I have suggested that poetic seeing, coming out of the archetypal forms of the *qaṣīda's nasīb* (such things as the *ṭayf al-khayāl*, *takhyīl*, the cloud as the generous patron) activates the literal forms of seeing that had turned these images into poetic/metaphorical seeing, and a liberatory poetics understands that these forms of seeing in turn shape how the reader sees and interacts with the world.

I see this impulse in Aimé Césaire's "Poésie et Connaissance" ("Poetry and Knowledge"), a 1944 paper delivered at a conference in Port au Prince and published a year later in the magazine *Tropiques*. Césiare was an intellectual interlocutor for Francophone and Arabophone thinkers and artists of sixties and seventies Morocco along with other postcolonial thinkers such as Mario de Andrade, and René Depestre. Cesaire makes a remarkable comment about the poetic image: "It is by means of the image, the revolutionary image, the distant image, the image that overthrows all laws of thought that mankind finally breaks down the barrier."[334] He's referring to the barriers of scientific knowledge, the laws of logic. But how does the image

[332] Translation by Matt Reeck *Class Warrior: Taoist Style*, 3.

[333] Ibid, 59.

[334] Aimé Césaire, "Poetry and Knowledge," in *Sulfur* 5, trans. James Arnold (1982): 17–32.

break down logic's barriers? It allows for A to no longer be A, but something else—metaphor, figure. Poetry excavates a knowledge buried where logic remains at the surface. In the image, we can move beyond such laws as that of Aristotle's non-contradiction. There can be simultaneity, of time, of self and world, the objectivity of scientific knowledge is revealed as a fiction because poetic knowledge reaches for what eludes scientific knowledge. Jason Allen-Pisant sees in Césaire's poetic knowledge, a mode of knowing that can overcome the epistemic hegemony of Western philosophy and because Césaire links poetry to philosophy, according to Paisant, "the fate of poetry bears stakes for a way of being in the world."[335] Poetry, in making us believe (and see) encourages intuitive and analogical thinking (Paisant calls it poetry's magical thinking). In other words, poetic knowledge, for Césaire, realigns the relationship to what is known beyond the mastery of facts or the distanced gaze of the Cartesian subject. Thinking of the *khayāl* as making present of the past suggests a conception of poetics like that of Césaire's analogical mode of thinking he presents in "Poésie et Connaissance."

The lecture was written and delivered during Césaire's affiliation with Surrealist thinking, and the possibility that aesthetics can give way to politics. The poetic image, for Césaire, destabilizes our ways of seeing because of this simultaneity that points beyond the static and linear time of scientific understanding to what Gary Wilder has called Césaire's "untimely vision." The image works because it gives a vision of the world not in stasis, not in the sterile look of the empiricist, but in the poet's excavation. Césaire describes a process in which poetry's old ways of "immortalizing" a static past give way to something much more dynamic, a "looking for" in which the past is both revealed and hidden, where the future and the present are animated in the same moment. This is how poetic knowledge, which describes a kind of knowledge that accumulates (the word Césaire uses is 'sedimented') and which the poet "collects and regilds," is able to mobilize "all human and cosmic forces."[336] Poetic knowledge designates the intimate knowing of associations and nature's complicity in them (Césaire, recalling al-Qarṭājannī's idea that the world engages in representation, mentions briefly those associations found or invented by nature), a quality found in every image that has ever existed (he calls these 'hereditary images'), and "the buried knowledge of the ages," which only poetry has the power to "bring to light again for ultimate decoding."[337] With the idea of the sedimented image, we learn that poetic knowledge is not learned, it is retrieved. Césaire's lecture clarifies a kind of poetic expression that is political while still being independent of the political. The poem offers a knowledge that hits the core, and reaches for the personalized and individual, while scientific knowledge remains at the edges. Again, the qualifier poetic doesn't do away with sense-experience's connection to reason, instead Cesaire's poetic knowledge and "poetic truth" designate alternative modalities of knowing.

Like Césaire, Edouard Glissant also acknowledges the limits of Western cultural logic and its outsized emphasis on instrumental reasons. And like Césaire disillusioned with the political processes' capacity to change, Glissant turns to poetics as a means of producing new imaginaries. He begins *Poetics of Relation* with the image of the nomad, and in "Errantry,

[335] Jason Allen-Paisant, "Unthinking Philosophy: Aimé Césaire, Poetry, and the Politics of Western Knowledge," *Atlantic Studies* 18, no. 2 (2021)" 194.

[336] Césaire, "Poetry and Knowledge," 22.

[337] Ibid, 28.

Exile," the nomad analogizes the rhizomatic. Later, in a section titled "Concerning the Poem's Information" Glissant informs us that poetry "imparts form to a knowledge that could never be stricken by obsolescence."[338] He calls this knowledge poetic because it is "no longer inseparable from writing; momentary flashes verge on rhythmic amassings and the monotonies of duration."[339] These illuminations happen in the encounter with a poetics attuned to the meanderer, to the rambler, to errantry. Such a poetics propels movement, although Glissant reminds his reader, "that a poetics cannot guarantee us a concrete means of action. But a poetics, perhaps, does allow us to understand better our action in the world."[340] This is a reminder against taking the heroics of poetry too far— poetic knowledge, and poetics, is a realm of action, but as Bennis already informed us, it facilitates the conditions for action and doesn't substitute for it.

Glissant's concept of poetics, and his ideas on poetic knowledge, show what it means to take seriously the work of other traditions, not as part of some network of works interpolated by market forces (world literature) or read against and alongside European models in order to be made legible (comparative literature). In Glissant's idea of relation, literary traditions can encounter one another in contingent historical circumstances and transform themselves and each other into new entities. Césaire and Glissant encourage us to think differently about the history of colonialism and the global consciousness that we've inherited in modernity, and Bennis and Khatibi call us, similarly, taking the Maghrib as a horizon of thought. In their work, poetic knowledge answers the call and tenders an approach to non-European traditions that avoids "fetishizing" the knowledge accumulated and takes seriously these traditions of the imagination/seeing. In other words, it studies, with the same seriousness, the imagination in "the space of the carpet" as "a page of Aristotle."[341]

Throughout this dissertation poetic seeing has been linked to the kind of knowledge that poetics makes possible, a knowledge that has a history of transformation embedded in it. Unlike Khatibi's speaker, who only obliquely acknowledges the *nasīb's* image ("this text has a title and some allusions"), I have tried, by reading works into the same genealogical line not only to approach a concept of poetic seeing, but also to unpack what it means to connect the premodern and modern—to see in both twelfth and twentieth century work a similar preoccupation with the poem's social role and its connection to knowledge, and the ways image-making and the poetic vision make possible the poem's transformative capacity. I suggested that historical forms of seeing make their way into the poem shaped by a larger perceptual culture and are understood as well to make possible other forms of seeing (including, importantly, the response to "seeing what cannot be seen"). This dissertation has thought of poetic knowledge not only as an end but as a process, a means of working through, uncovering the potential of the poetic image and connecting forms of seeing in the poem to a history of poetics that understands its transformative capacity. In a word, I have generated in this dissertation not only a concept of poetic knowledge, but its method in seeing a throughline in works that make us "see what cannot be seen." I have made this argument not to defend an ocularcentric reading, but rather in response to limitations

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[338] Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing, (The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 81.

[339] Ibid, 84.

[340] Ibid, 199

[341] Fieni, "Hold to Poetic Knowledge."

on the idea of the image in Arabic poetry. I have held to the basic premise that Andalusī and Maghribī poetics are invested in a literal seeing just as much as in a metaphorical one because it is important not only for our reading of twelfth and twentieth-century poetry, but also for the way poetry's role was conceived as part of a larger perceptual culture. Poetic language reaches materially into the world, this is its effect—it can transform something in us on an emotional level, even if only changing the ways we see a poem.

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