

# POETIC HYPERBOLE AS A LEGAL PROBLEM: DEBATES AMONG PREMODERN MUSLIM JURISPRUDENTS

*Zoltán Szombathy*

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

## **Abstract:**

Hyperbolic expression was a subject keenly discussed by premodern Muslim literary critics, and these debates have received considerable attention among contemporary students of mediaeval Arabic literature. Since an exaggeration is technically an untrue statement, the issue was widely perceived as having a marked ethical dimension, on which Muslim jurists also expressed a variety of different opinions. This essay explores such controversies among premodern Muslim jurists in particular, as well as the ways in which these debates relate to those among the *littérateurs*.

**Keywords:** *ḡuluww*, hyperbole, Islamic law, literary criticism, *mubālaḡa*, Shafi‘ite school, truthfulness

To choose a fitting topic for a volume honouring Professor Iványi is an easy task for a former student of his, given the extraordinary breadth of Iványi’s range of expertise within Arabic studies. As someone who had the good luck to study various aspects of both Arabic literature and Islamic law under his guidance, I choose to address here an issue that cuts across these two disciplines: poetic hyperbole as a juridical problem.

A predilection for hyperbolic expression is a notable characteristic of Arabic poetry in the pre-Islamic period (Brown 2003:41–42; Ayoub 2019:7) as well as in the formative period of Islamicate culture, in which von Grunebaum (1967:2) perceives an “obsession with hyperbole” and the ubiquity of “verbal excesses in praise and lampoon”.<sup>1</sup> The unprecedented profusion of rhetorical devices in the ‘modern’ Arabic poetry of the 3rd/9th century could not fail to attract growing critical attention onto this topic, with the technical vocabulary to describe these devices developing gradually in subsequent centuries (Gruendler 2017:137, 141). As could

---

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting too that hyperbole continues to play a central role in many genres of Arabic dialectal poetry; see Ayoub 2019:6.

be expected, then, the issue of hyperbole in Arabic literary criticism has been the subject of ample commentary. The most useful study to date is one by Amidu Sanni (2004), to which I owe my understanding of the main outlines of this debate among the premodern literary critics. In this essay my goal is to supplement the existing scholarship with an overview of juridical assessments of the literary uses of hyperbole. In so doing, I wish to illustrate whether and how jurists' views differed from those of literary critics.

## 1 The Problem of Hyperbole

Hyperbole appears quite early as an item in the constantly expanding list of figures of speech in Arabic theoretical works on literary rhetoric (Badawi 1978:43–44). Indeed we already find *ifrāt fī ṣ-ṣifa* (hyperbolic description) discussed at quite some length in Ibn al-Mu'tazz's (d. 296/908) seminal *Kitāb al-badī'* (Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Badī'* 65–68).<sup>2</sup> One finds quite a variety of Arabic terms – such as *mubālaḡa*, *ifrāt*, *tablīḡ*, *īḡāl*, *itrā'*, *taqaṣṣī*, etc. – used in reference to hyperbole.<sup>3</sup> Beyond this terminology, hyperbole was further subdivided by some Arab literary specialists into yet more categories. Ibn Ḥiǧǧa (d. 837/1434) presents a tripartite system by distinguishing three subcategories: *mubālaḡa*, *īḡrāq* and *ǧuluww*. The distinction appears to be one of degree rather than of kind, since he defines *mubālaḡa* as “an exaggeration in describing something so that it is possible and can plausibly occur”, *īḡrāq* as “an exaggeration in describing something so that it is possible yet cannot plausibly occur”, and *ǧuluww* as “an exaggeration in describing something so that it cannot possibly occur”. He further notes that quite a few authors fail to differentiate between these subcategories, although the difference is, in his words, “as clear as the morning (*miṭl aṣ-ṣubḥ zāhir*)”.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever their terminology, literary critics and jurists alike obviously treated praise-poetry as an ethical issue independent from, even if affected by, the aesthetic considerations.<sup>5</sup> The crux of the problem with panegyrics was the inevitable tendency of the genre to contain exaggerated, and therefore technically untrue, statements. If taken literally, the latter would constitute lying (*kaḏīb*), an intensely

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, even in somewhat earlier works; see Sanni 2004:169.

<sup>3</sup> Halldén 2005:22 mentions *itnāb*, a term that often means “verbosity”, as an Arabic equivalent of “hyperbole”.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Ḥiǧǧa, *Ḥizāna* III, 135, 142. *Pace* Ibn Ḥiǧǧa, the distinction probably appeared far more opaque to many learned men in the premodern Muslim intellectual milieu, at any rate to those in preceding centuries; see Sanni 2004:166–168, 170–174.

<sup>5</sup> This despite some literary critics' explicit rejection of intermixing religious and aesthetic criteria in assessing literary works; see for instance Jacobi 1972:90.

negative quality in Muslim ethics that many scholars would detect in virtually all fictional genres.<sup>6</sup>

## 2 Hyperbole in Literary Criticism

For premodern Muslim literary critics, poetic hyperbole is closely associated with the issue of the facticity or otherwise of a poem, and more particularly with that of ‘lying’ (*kaḍīb*).<sup>7</sup> Given that hyperbole by definition overstates the true facts, this is reasonable enough. Most literary critics, however, point out that poetry (and literature in general) is not supposed to be based on truth or judged according to its facticity.<sup>8</sup> Others disagreed and disapproved of exaggerations and all forms of ‘lying’ in literature.<sup>9</sup> Here is Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī (d. after 400/1010) describing the intrinsic tendency of poetry to contain lies:

Most [poetry] is built upon lies and impossibilities entailing implausible attributes (*al-kaḍīb wa-l-istiḥāla min aṣ-ṣifāt al-mumtani‘a*), as well as extraordinary descriptive terms and mendacious words [...]. It is especially so with pre-Islamic poetry, which is the most powerful and masterful kind of verse, of which only good phrasing and sound meanings are required. This is what made the utilisation of lies [...] acceptable in it (al-‘Askarī, *Ṣinā‘atayn* 136–137).

---

<sup>6</sup> Beaumont 1994:48. Arab critics’ views on ‘truth’ and ‘lying’ in both poetry and prose were in fact far more complex and nuanced, but there is no space here to discuss this issue. See for instance Gruendler 2003:247–248; Toral-Niehoff 2015:60–61; and on the routine association of poetry with lying, see Yosefi 2016:136–137; Sanni 1990:342, 350 (note 16). It is interesting to note in a modern treatise on the television show *Ṣā‘ir al-milyūn*, the popular poetic contest in Arabic dialectal poetry broadcast in the Arab Gulf states, that the sin of “distorting and misrepresenting facts (*tazwīr al-ḥaqā‘iq wa-tahrīfuhā*)” is attributed to dialectal poetry in particular. According to the treatise, calling dialectal verse and its masters ‘poetry’ and ‘poets’ is *ipso facto* mislabelling them. See al-Ġāmidī 1429/2008:25–26.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Ibn Ḥiġġa (*Hiżāna* III, 133) begins his discussion of *mubālaġa* with affirming that most authorities approve of this literary device because of the adage “the best poetry is that which is the most mendacious (*aḥsan aṣ-ṣi‘r akḍabuhu*)”. Cf. also Ibn Rašīq, *‘Umda* 348; Sanni 1990:342. Of course, despite the centrality of truth to discussions of poetry, and poetic hyperbole in particular, a whole range of other considerations were at play in assessing poetical performances. Gruendler points out (2008:340) that the poet’s public role “was far too sophisticated to fit the narrow moral categories of sincerity or mendacity.”

<sup>8</sup> This issue is subtly but definitely different from that of lexical accuracy (*ḥaqīqa*) discussed by al-Ġurġānī and other premodern Arab literary critics, on which see Key 2018:220–228.

<sup>9</sup> For more on these debates, see for instance Ibn Rašīq, *‘Umda* 339–341, 347–348; Ibn Abī l-Iṣḥā‘, *Tahrīr* 148–150; and Bürgel 1974:56–66; Jacobi 1972:92–95; Yosefi 2016:137–139, 145–148.

Four centuries later we find al-Qalqaṣandī (d. 821/1418) arguing along the same lines and pointing out that hyperbole fully qualifies as lying, since whatever it states is by definition untrue.<sup>10</sup> However, he makes a subtle distinction between mild and inordinate hyperbole:

When the hyperbole goes beyond the bounds of plausibility and runs the course of sheer lying (*al-kadib al-mahḍ*), then it is censured (*maḍmūma*) in religious law even though poets will treat such things as permissible and will not strive to avoid committing them. God the Most High reports about them [Q. 26:225]: “hast thou not seen how they wander in every valley and how they say that which they do not...” (al-Qalqaṣandī *Ṣubḥ* II, 210–214).<sup>11</sup>

Al-Qalqaṣandī’s younger contemporary, the Egyptian man of letters Ṣihāb ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ibšīhī (d. 850/1446) observes that God praises certain people in the Quran, and draws a conclusion from this:

On these grounds, praising a man on account of his existing praiseworthy characteristics is licit. As for the Prophet’s saying “when you see those who praise, throw dust in their faces”<sup>12</sup>: according to al-‘Utbī<sup>13</sup> this refers to invalid praise and lying. As for praising a man for traits that are in fact present in him, there is no harm in it. The Prophet was praised by Abū Ṭālib, al-‘Abbās, Ḥassān, Ka‘b and others, and we have not heard that he threw dust in the face of anyone praising [him]... (al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* 303).

Another near-contemporary from the Mamluk domains, Ibn Ḥiḡga al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434), rated the literary device of *mubālaḡa* highly and defended it against its detractors by pointing out its use in the Quran<sup>14</sup> and many hadith texts, an argument hard to refute. He was far less supportive of more extreme types of exaggerations (i.e. those termed *igrāq* and *ḡuluww* in his scheme), but still regarded them as permissible if some qualificatory word (*qad*, ‘perhaps’; *lawlā*, ‘were it not that’;

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the issue of hyperbole constituted the central point of mediaeval Muslim discussions of lying in poetry; see Gruendler 2003:109.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ibn Abī l-Iṣba‘, *Tahrīr* 154.

<sup>12</sup> The Prophet’s words appear both directly and as reported speech in variants of hadith no. 3002 in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* II, 1365; and also see al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā* X, 410. For a brief discussion of this and related hadiths, see Sharlet 2011:9. Another well-known hadith likens explicit praise to cutting a man’s throat (or similar variants); see al-Buḡārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 1517–1518 [hadiths no. 6060 and 6061]; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* II, 1365 [hadiths no. 3000 and 3001]; al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā* X, 410. On the mediaeval Muslim courtly audience’s variegated reactions to, and interaction with, recitals of panegyrics, see Gruendler 2008:328–330.

<sup>13</sup> Probably the Maliki jurist and traditionalist Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-‘Utbī (d. 254/868).

<sup>14</sup> A topic already discussed by Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ar-Rummānī (d. 384/994) in his *an-Nukat fī i‘ḡāz al-Qur‘ān*; see Rippin 1983:39.

*kāda*, ‘almost’) kept them, however tenuously, within the bounds of possibility.<sup>15</sup> He noted that the Quran does not contain examples of *igrāq* and *ġuluww* devoid of such qualifications. Accordingly, he classifies *ġuluww* into two categories, acceptable (*maqbul*) and unacceptable (*ġayr maqbul*), depending on the presence or absence of these modificatory phrases. He even regards some examples of extreme poetic hyperbole (*ġuluww*) in praise poetry as evidence of the unbelief (*kufṛ*) of the poet. However, he makes one single exception to this principle, saying that *ġuluww* is not a hazard – indeed, the very term is an oxymoron – in panegyrics on the Prophet.<sup>16</sup>

### 3 Juridical Views on Hyperbole

Bearing in mind that men of letters and jurists were partially overlapping categories, it is unsurprising that literary critics’ discussions of hyperbole seeped over into Islamic law. One reason for the impact of literary debates upon legal thought is that truthfulness, a major issue in literature, is an obvious concern for jurists as well. No wonder that, in his short précis on the Satan-inspired wrongdoings of the poets, the Hanbalite Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200) mentions among other sins “lying in praise[-poetry] beyond all limits (*al-kaḍib fī l-madhḥ ḥārīḡan ‘an al-ḥadd*)” (Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Talbīs* 180).

Since some of the companions of the Prophet were noted for their poetic skills, and he was the object of considerable praise-poetry by these men, the issue of the ethical aspects of panegyrics inevitably arose in the early Muslim community, providing valuable legal precedents for later juridical thought. The authoritative hadith collections offer some guidance regarding the issue of hyperbole in poetry. Thus, Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* has a short section within the chapter *Kitāb az-zuhd wa-rraqā’iq* titled *Bāb an-nahy ‘an al-madhḥ idā kāna fīhi ifrāt wa-ḥīfa minhu fitna ‘alā l-mamdūḥ* (On the Prohibition of Praise If It is Extravagant and There Is the Risk of Enticement for the Object of Praise). The section contains three hadiths, two of which exist in several variants (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* II, 1365–1366 [hadiths no. 3000 to 3002]). Al-Buḥārī’s collection has a section called *Bāb mā yukrahu min at-tamāduḥ* (On the Objectionable Kinds of Praising One Another) within the chapter *Kitāb al-adab* (al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 1517–1518 [hadiths no. 6060 to 6061]). Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī’s (d. 458/1066) *as-Sunan al-kubrā* includes a subchapter under the title *Bāb aš-šā’ir yamdaḥu n-nās bi-mā laysa fīhim ḥattā yakūna ḍālika kaḥīran zāhīran kaḍiban maḥḍan* (On a Poet Who Praises People by [Attributing to

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ibn Rašīq, *Umda* 350–351; Sanni 2004:168, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Hiġġa, *Ḥizāna* III, 135, 142–143, 149, 153, 155–156. Other scholars might see the latter point as considerably more complicated. Thus, the Ottoman-era scholar Yūsuf b. Ismā’īl an-Nabhānī (d. 1350/1932) argues in his *Ġawāḥir al-biḥār fī faḍā’il an-nabī al-muḥtār* that the veneration of the prophet Muḥammad must be strictly distinguished from the corresponding beliefs and practices of Christians and Shī’a Muslims, since poetic hyperbole must in no way be mixed with positive doctrine. See Pagani 2022:528.

Them] What is Not in Them, If This Becomes Frequent, Conspicuous, Pure Lying) (al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā* X, 410).

Literature is not a separate subject discussed for its own sake by premodern Muslim jurists. Furthermore, the accepted principle, whether explicit or implicit, was that it is only in formal and stylistic features that prose and poetry differ (von Grunebaum 1952:336), and thus different moral standards do not obtain in assessing them. That said, poetry *did* occasion a number of specific moral qualms, duly debated by jurists. It must be borne in mind that in the mediaeval Muslim context “poetry, in particular the elaborate *qaṣīda*, was a living art form with a purpose, and not (only) the venerated artifact and ingredient of the educated canon it was to become to subsequent centuries”, to borrow the apt words of Beatrice Gruendler (2008:329).<sup>17</sup> She further notes that hyperbolic praise was one of the most efficient means of spurring the audience towards the desired responses (Gruendler 2008:349). The typical context in which the use of hyperbole by poets is discussed is that of testimony (*ṣahādāt*) in legal proceedings, i.e. the issue of deciding if a particular person is fit to act as a witness. Some, but not all, juridical works devote a separate section to the issue of *ṣahādāt aš-ṣu‘arā’*, the testimony of poets. The lawfulness of a poet’s testifying may hinge upon a number of poetic practices (such as his habit of composing invective poetry or his use of certain motifs of love poetry), of which hyperbole in praise-poetry is one.

Instead of offering a systematic overview of each legal school’s opinions, in the following paragraphs I will concentrate on the Shafi‘ite juridical tradition because of limits of space, but also because jurists of this school seem to have discussed this issue in most detail.

### 3.1 The Shafi‘ite Tradition

Aš-Šāfi‘ī’s (d. 204/820) *Kitāb al-umm* already contains a short section on the problem of *ṣahādāt aš-ṣu‘arā’*. He sets out the main principles that we find in all subsequent Shafi‘ite *fiqh* works (and often elsewhere too). Regarding hyperbole, the two pertinent principles are that poetry is not objectionable in and of itself but it may be made so by the presence of certain features, and that one of the latter is the poet’s excessive lying in his panegyrics (*bi-an yamdaḥa fa-yukṭira l-kaḍīb*).<sup>18</sup> This can indeed lead to the rejection of his testimony. Aš-Šāfi‘ī then goes on to specify further:

[...] and if [the poet] is content with praising people for traits that are not in them to the extent that it becomes frequent, evident and overt, indeed pure lying (*kaḍiban maḥḍan*), his testimony is to be rejected [...]. If, however, he

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Sharlet 2011:7–8.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. al-Bayhaqī, *Ma‘rifā* XIV, 339; al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-ṣaḡīr* IV, 181; al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā* X, 401; Ibn al-Munḍir, *al-Iṣrāf* X, 283; al-Māwardī, *Ḥāwī* XVII, 202–203; Ibn Qudāma, *Muḡnī* X, 160.

praises someone truthfully and duly respects truth, or exaggerates (*yufriṭu*) in a way that does not really constitute lying, his testimony should not be rejected.<sup>19</sup>

Within the more general issue of testimony, the Shafi‘i jurist Muḥammad b. Dāwud aṣ-Ṣaydalānī (d. 427/1035–1036) gives a balanced consideration to poetic lies and hyperbole (*al-kaḍib fī waṣf aw maḍḥ wa-itrā*). He points out that exaggerations and embellishments are an intrinsic feature of good poetry, even though these are technically lies. He then asserts that lying in poetry is of two possible types, namely exaggeration (*mubālaḡa*) or pure lying (*kaḍib maḥḍ*) that cannot be reduced to exaggeration. The latter type has caused disagreements among jurists, some of whom (to wit, most Hanbalites and Shafi‘ites, and some Malikites) say that this is to be regarded as lying in a legal sense, while others (some Shafi‘ites including aṣ-Ṣaydalānī himself) contend that it does not qualify as lying in a strict sense. The former justify their position by pointing out that poetry is to be treated exactly as any other type of discourse, while the latter point out that, unlike a liar, a poet does not intend his poetry to be taken as literally true, and thus the element of intentional deception is absent (‘Afīf 1438–1439:463–467).

The Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Ġuwaynī (d. 478/1085) gives aṣ-Ṣaydalānī’s opinion serious consideration and stresses the latter’s distinction between intentional lying and unintentionally counterfactual tropes, as well as another important distinction between habitual and occasional exaggerations. Here is the relevant passage, which is worth quoting at some length because of its unusual lucidity in presenting the main dilemmas:

What is ought to be investigated is whether the poet reaches the point of lying in his descriptions, or in his praise and hyperboles (*itrā*). Now, what most of our fellow[-Shafi‘ites] opine is that whoever composes such works is a liar, and that it is tantamount to his lying either occasionally or habitually. However, aṣ-Ṣaydalānī said: “It is not the same as lying, for a liar is one who gives [genuine] information and passes a lie off as the truth, while poetry is just an art (*ṣinā‘a*) and the poet’s purpose is not to be believed in what he says. Therefore, he is not a liar.” Those who hold the former opinion say: “An occasional case of this [i.e. untrue hyperboles and panegyrics] may be tolerated and need not affect the acceptability of the [poet’s] testimony, but lots of it must lead to the rejection thereof.” The corollary (*qiyās*) of what aṣ-Ṣaydalānī said is that no distinction is to be made between a little and a lot [of using such motifs], for it is not [serious] information from an informant needing verification (al-Ġuwaynī, *Nihāya* XIX, 25).

---

<sup>19</sup> aṣ-Ṣāfi‘ī, *Umm* VII, 513; part of which is cited verbatim in al-Bayhaqī, *Ma‘rifā*. XIV, 339 and in slightly modified form in al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā* X, 410.

Al-Ġazālī (d. 505/1111) offers a characteristically nuanced assessment of hyperbole in his various works. In the *Waġīz*, al-Ġazālī does not mention hyperbole – whether in panegyrics or in other contexts – as one of the legal grounds for disqualifying a poet as a witness.<sup>20</sup> In *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm ad-dīn*, he discusses it the context of the section on the potential harms of poetry as well as in the section on lying. In the former context, he states:

In general, the reciting and composition of poetry is not prohibited if there is no objectionable passage (*kalām mustakrah*) in it. The Prophet said: “There is wisdom in poetry.”<sup>21</sup> How nice are praise, reproach and love as themes of poetry, but lying may spoil them. God’s Messenger ordered Ḥassān b. Ṭābit to lampoon the infidels and to make unsparing praise, for even if it is untrue (*kāna kaḍiban*) it does not share the prohibited nature of [genuine] lying. Like this [verse] that a poet said: “If there had been nothing but his own soul in his hand, he would give it away generously, so let anyone asking [favours from] him fear God!” This is just a description of extreme generosity, so if the object of the verse is not generous [the poet] will be a liar, and if he is generous, then exaggeration (*mubālaġa*) is just part of the mastery of poetry and it is not meant to be believed literally (al-Ġazālī, *Ihyā’* 1016).

Then in the section on lying, al-Ġazālī further elaborates on the moral nuances of technically untrue exaggerations. His arguments here are not specifically about poetry, but they are clearly relevant to that context as well:

A kind of lying that does not justify [a verdict of the perpetrator’s] sinfulness (*fisq*) is the common phenomenon of exaggeration (*mubālaġa*), such as saying “I asked you such-and-such a thing [a hundred] times”, or “I told you so a hundred times”. It is not supposed to specify the exact number of times but to convey [a sense of] exaggeration. Thus, if his request took place only once, the man is lying, but if his request took place an unusual number of times, the man committed no sin even if the number was less than a hundred. Between these two [cases] are various gradations in which a man who nonchalantly utters exaggerations risks becoming a liar (al-Ġazālī, *Ihyā’* 1032).

Further on in the same work on Islamic ethics, al-Ġazālī treats praise (*madḥ*) in a separate subsection as one of the “banes of the tongue” (*āfāt al-lisān*), and gives several reasons for this remarkable perspective. The very first of these is that praise always “involves the risk of exaggeration, which leads to lying (*qad yufriṭu fayantahī bihi ilā l-kaḍīb*)” (al-Ġazālī, *Ihyā’* 1053). Apart from this statement, the rest of the subsection is unconcerned with hyperbole. Ever the nuanced thinker, al-Ġazālī concludes it by stating that praise may in fact be commendable rather than

<sup>20</sup> al-Ġazālī, *Waġīz* 2:248, cited in ar-Rāfi‘ī, *Azīz* XIII, 9–10.

<sup>21</sup> See al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 1535 [hadith no. 6145]; and cf. Sanni 1990:345.

objectionable if one carefully avoids the potential moral risks inherent in it (ibid., 1054–1055).<sup>22</sup>

Roughly a century later, ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfi‘ī (d. 623/1226) states that a poet’s panegyrics should be investigated and if it is plausible to regard the contents as mere hyperbole, then it is licit practice (*ḡā’iz*). If, however, it cannot be regarded as merely exaggeration (*mubālaḡa*) but it is sheer lies (*kāna kaḡiban maḡdan*), then most Shafi‘ites (probably including aš-Šāfi‘ī himself) opine that it is like any ordinary tendency to lie, and if it becomes a habit, the poet’s testimony should be rejected “just as if he habitually lied in what is not poetry (*ka-mā idā aḡtara l-kaḡib fī ḡayr aš-ši‘r*)”. The Shafi‘ite authors Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Qaffāl (d. 365/976) and aš-Šaydalānī, however, argue that it is not like ordinary lies, “because a liar passes off his own lies as true and spreads them, whereas a poet’s purpose is not to be taken at face value in his poetry but [to demonstrate] his mastery (*šinā‘a*)” (al-Rāfi‘ī, *Azīz* XIII, 17–18). This argument is taken virtually word by word by two preeminent Shafi‘ite scholars, Muḡyī d-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yaḡyā b. Šaraf an-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) (an-Nawawī, *Rawḡa* XI, 229) and Kamāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mūsā ad-Damīrī (d. 808/1405) (ad-Damīrī *Naḡm* X, 308).

Later Shafi‘ite authors tend to expand upon the views of their predecessors rather than offer entirely new perspectives. One passage that deserves consideration here appears in Ibn Ḥaḡar al-Haytamī’s (d. 975/1567) listing of grave sins (*kaḡā’ir*).<sup>23</sup> The sixtieth item on the list is extravagant praise-poetry about a person whose behaviour does not justify it (*al-iṡrā’ fī š-ši‘r bi-mā lam taḡri l-‘āda bihi*). It is worth quoting the relevant passage:

This [being a grave sin] is further proven by what [Abū l-Qāsim ‘Abd ar-Raḡmān] al-Fawrānī [d. 461/1069] says in the *‘Umda*: “If [the poet] exaggerates in his praise of a man, stating what has never been [observed of the latter’s] behaviour (*mā lam taḡri bihi l-‘āda*), then this is explicit lying (*kaḡib ṡarīḡ*) and impudence (*saḡfaḡ*), and on these grounds the testimony [of the poet] must be rejected. Al-Aḡru‘ī says: Linking it to past behaviour (*taḡyīduhu bi-l-‘āda*) is a good point. The sheikh Abū Muḥammad says: If [this poet] does not utter a lot of genuine lies (*al-kaḡib al-maḡḡ*) his testimony is valid.” Then it is said in the *‘Umda*: “If [the poet] mentions a simile comparing a man to a lion or to the full moon, it does not adversely affect [his fitness to testify]; likewise a prose writer who mentions something that might actually happen, such as saying ‘I keep mentioning you throughout the night

<sup>22</sup> For more on al-Ġazālī’s views on poetry, see Ouyang 1997:33–35.

<sup>23</sup> The concept of *kaḡīra* (grave sin) is a legally important one, even though its definition is controversial. Although the issue is complicated, the general Shafi‘ite principle is that a man who commits a *kaḡīra* is thereby to be considered a *fāsiq* (sinful, immoral) person and should not be allowed to give testimony. For an authoritative discussion of this, see ar-Ramlī, *Nihāya* VIII, 294–295.

and the day’, or ‘I leave no gathering devoid of your mention’, or ‘You are dearer to me than my own soul’. This does not disqualify [his testimony], since he does not intend to lie, all this being mere ornament of speech, so it is just like invalid oaths (*lağw al-yamīn*).” [...] It is probable that one ought to discriminate among the objects of praise (*bayna mamdūh wa-mamdūh*). If [the poet] exaggerates (*bālağa*) in his description of a man who has generosity or knowledge or valour, or any trait that he actually possesses, and praises it excessively (*ağraqa fīhi*)<sup>24</sup>, it does no harm. However, if [the object of praise] is utterly devoid of that trait – such as a sinful or ignorant or niggardly man being presented as the most knowledgeable or just or generous of all men, the mendacity of which is shown by experience – then this [poet] has cast away the shroud of modesty and manly virtues, as has the man who has made panegyrics his trade and spends most of his time cultivating it; unlike a man who only occasionally composes a panegyric about individuals who have done him favours. The latter can be excused for excessive hyperboles (*al-iğrāq fī t-tanā*’), since it serves only to demonstrate [poetic] mastery and fine verse-making. [...] [Al-Aḍru’ī] also says: “If a poet makes his praise excessive (*yamdaḥu wa-yuṭrī*), then if it can be interpreted as a kind of exaggeration (*mubālağa*) it is permissible, otherwise it is sheer lying (*kāna kaḍiban maḥḍan*) according to most of our fellows [i.e. Shafī’ite scholars] (Ibn Ḥağar, *Zawāğir* II, 215).<sup>25</sup>

After this passage Ibn Ḥağar mentions the *littérateurs*’ debates on the merits and demerits of hyperbole vis-à-vis straight descriptions, an issue that we have briefly mentioned above. Inclusion of these debates in Ibn Ḥağar’s text shows the continuing impact of literary critics’ voices upon legal thought.

### 3.2 The Other Schools of Law

There is no space here for a comprehensive summary of the views of the other legal schools. However, a few glimpses into Hanbalite and Malikite opinions will perhaps reveal a number of characteristic patterns.

The most conspicuous feature of Hanbalite discussions of the issue seems to be their brevity and lack of specification. Thus, Nağm ad-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥamdān al-Ḥarrānī (d. 695/1295) simply says that “if a poet engages in a lot of lying in praising, condemning or obscenity, he is immoral; otherwise, he is not (*wa-in aḵtara š-šā’ir al-kaḍib fī maḍḥ aw ḍamm aw fuḥš fasaqa wa-illā fa-lā*)” (Ibn Ḥamdān, *Ri’āya* II,

<sup>24</sup> This edition reads *a’raqa* and *i’rāq*, an obvious error instead of the correct *ağraqa* and *iğrāq*.

<sup>25</sup> For the latter observation cited from al-Aḍru’ī, cf. a very similar phrasing in ar-Ramlī, *Nihāya* VIII, 299, which expands on a laconic statement in an-Nawawī, *Minhāğ* 568 [*wa-yubāḥu qawl šī’r wa-inšāduhu illā an yahğwa aw yufhiša...*].

1271). Many later Hanbalites do not even make stipulate the frequency of employing untrue poetic statements as a criterion of the poet's moral standing. The Damascene Hanbalite jurist Šams ad-Dīn Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Muflīḥ al-Maḡdisī (d. 763/1362) briefly states in the chapter on testimony that "if a poet uses exaggerations in his praise for a gift (*in farrāṭa šā'ir bi-l-midḥa bi-i'ṭā'ihī*)" he is to be regarded as a *fāsiq* – and therefore unfit for testifying in court (Ibn Muflīḥ, *Furū'* III, 638). This general attitude (and the perfunctoriness of discussing the issue) is echoed later on by Hanbalite jurists of the late mediaeval and early modern periods. Thus, Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn an-Naḡḡār al-Futūḥī (d. 972/1564) offers what is practically a rephrasing of Ibn Muflīḥ's words, stating that no testimony should be accepted from a poet who exaggerates in panegyrics in exchange for money (*šā'ir yufriṭu fī l-madḥ bi-i'ṭā'*) (Ibn an-Naḡḡār, *Muntahā* V, 363). Hanbalite jurists of the early modern period seem to do little more than repeat, or briefly comment on, these passages, such as Ibn Abī Taḡlib aš-Šaybānī (d. 1135/1723) and Muṣṭafā b. Sa'd ar-Ruḥaybānī (d. 1243/1827), two Hanbalite jurists of Damascus. Both use Ibn Muflīḥ's original words in slightly modified forms but keep the message intact (Ibn Abī Taḡlib, *Nayl* II, 477; ar-Ruḥaybānī, *Maṭālib* VI, 519): no testimony may be accepted from a poet exaggerating in his panegyrics in hopes of an award (*šā'ir yufriṭu fī madḥ li-i'ṭā'*). The latter also adds that the famous Quranic passage condemning the poets (26:224–226) refers specifically to those who know no bounds and lie (*man asrafa wa-kaḏaba*), an interpretation that had already appeared verbatim in a much earlier Hanbalite work by Ibn Qudāma al-Maḡdisī (d. 620/1223) (Ibn Qudāma, *Muḡnī* X, 158).

Malikite authors seem to lend even less attention to the issue of hyperbole in praise-poetry, even though they are of course quite preoccupied with the problem of lying. One finds the versified popular romances of Dilhimma (Dāt al-Himma) and 'Antar forcefully disapproved in various Mālikite fatwas (e.g. by Abū 'Abdallāh b. 'Arafa and Abū 'Alī b. Qaddāḥ) precisely because they contain "lies" (*kaḏib*), i.e. fictitious events and characters (al-Wanšarīsī *Mi'yār*: XI, 172). Perhaps because of this general suspicion of 'untrue' speech, the Malikites show a slight but palpable dislike of poetry in general that seems to go back to Mālik b. Anas himself and is often expressed in the form of warning against wasting time, or at any rate too much time, on poetry.<sup>26</sup> According to a report, Mālik also declared that a poet who composes panegyrics but does not threaten to make invective if he is not recompensed for his efforts is an acceptable witness, but poets engaging in this dirty type of blackmail are not (al-Barādi'ī, *Tahḏīb* III, 584; Ibn al-Munḏir, *Išrāf* IV, 283).<sup>27</sup> Some Malikite scholars, such as Ibn 'Abd al-Barr an-Namarī (d. 463/1070), say practically nothing on excessive praise and declare praise-poetry unproblematic. He

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Ibn Rušd, *Bayān* XVIII, 29–30.

<sup>27</sup> Also cf. al-Māwardī, *Hāwī* XVII, 210. The same principle is formulated in different words in ar-Rūyānī, *Baḥr* XIV, 325.

states that a poet who composes panegyrics (*man madaha min aš-šu‘arā’*) but refrains from satire and love poetry addressed to specific, named women can be accepted as a witness. He does not say anything else on poets, nor does he make distinctions between different types of panegyric (Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Kāfī* II, 396). On the other hand, the Malikite jurist Ibn Rušd al-Ġadd (d. 520/1126) does make an implicit distinction when interpreting the well-known Quranic condemnation of poets (26:224–226) as a reference to excessive hyperbole (*ġuluww*): “[the poets lie because] in praising (*yamdaḥūna*) and condemning (*yaḏummūna*) and describing the inclinations of their souls they exaggerate (*fa-yuġlūna*)” (Ibn Rušd, *Bayān* XVIII, 29).<sup>28</sup>

Modern Muslim juridical thought shows some continuity with such premodern precedents, especially with regard to the importance of the truthfulness of artistic works. Thus, one finds a modern juridical work on the actors’ profession stating that, even though acting is in principle permitted (*mubāḥ*) entertainment, it is associated with a great number of additional features that make it prohibited (*al-fi lāt al-muḥarrama wa-l-aqwāl al-munkara*). One of these features is the propensity of acting to involve lying and fabrications (*al-kaḏīb wa-l-iḥtilāq*) (Abū Zayd 1411: 45, 47).

#### 4 Conclusions

One can perceive interesting similarities between juridical and literary assessments of hyperbole among premodern Muslim intellectuals. For instance, many jurists’ division of poetical ‘lies’ into mere exaggeration (*mubālaġa*) and ‘sheer lying’ (*kaḏīb maḥḏ*) offers a clear parallel into some critics’ tripartite division of hyperboles into *mubālaġa*, *iġrāq* and *ġuluww*, the two latter subcategories being not just untrue but implausible or inconceivable as well. Be that as it may, both perspectives – i.e. that of the literary critics and that of the jurists – show an evident preoccupation with the truth value of poetry.

In contemporary Western thought, truthfulness is not generally regarded as a proper criterion of the worth of a literary work. Truth does, however, retain some residual importance, especially in potential legal contexts, as evidenced by the appearance of such disclaimers as “Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental”, in the imprint page of a volume of fiction. That said, the premodern Muslim approach now probably appears rather unfamiliar to the average western man. What to make, then, of all those debates about poets ‘lying’ whenever they use a hyperbole?

In his ethnography of speaking, Dell Hymes describes speech events in various ways, including analysis in terms of conflicting expectations and hierarchies of

---

<sup>28</sup> The interpretation that associates these Quranic verses with untrue panegyrics seems to go back to Qatāda; see ar-Rūyānī, *Baḥr* XIV, 324; al-Māwardī, *Hāwī* XVII, 208.

speech function (Hymes 1962:38). This means that participants of a speech event will often have different perceptions as to the proper speech function to attribute to a text. The perception of exaggeration in literary texts as a form of lying can perhaps be understood as an example of this kind of ambiguity and tension. We have seen that some jurists emphasise the referential (informative) function of all texts, including poetic texts, while other jurists recognise the primacy of a poetic (aesthetic) and/or expressive (emotive) function when it comes to assessing poetic texts in particular. As Hymes further points out (1962:30–31), some functions of speech are closely associated with certain genres, literary or otherwise. Predictably enough, the expressive/emotive and poetic/aesthetic functions are particularly prominent in Arabic praise poetry. However, a jurist who consciously refuses to recognise any speech function other than the referential/informative will of course disregard differences in speech functions altogether and insist on assessing all texts in terms of truth and lies. As the debates among the jurists clearly show, the refusal to consider speech function was deliberate rather than naïve. I am afraid one can only speculate as to the reasons.

## REFERENCES

### A. Primary sources

- al-‘Askarī, *Šinā‘atayn* = Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Askarī, *Kitāb al-šinā‘atayn al-kitāba wa-l-ši‘r*. Edited by ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Biḡāwī, Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. Beirut: al-Maktaba l-‘Ašriyya, 1419 [1998].
- al-Barādī‘ī, *Tahḍīb* = Abū Sa‘īd Ḥalaf b. Abī l-Qāsim Muḥammad al-Azdī al-Barādī‘ī, *Kitāb at-Tahḍīb fī ‘ḥtišār al-Mudawwana*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Amīn wuld Muḥammad Sālim b. aš-Šayḥ. 4 vols. Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūṭ li-d-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa-l-ḥyā‘ at-Turāt, 1423/2002.
- al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā* = Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā*. Edited by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā. 11 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1424/2003.
- al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan aš-šaḡīr* = Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-šaḡīr*. Edited by ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī Amīn Qal‘aḡī. 4 vols. Karachi: Ġāmi‘at ad-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 1410/1989.
- al-Bayhaqī, *Ma‘rifat* = Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Ma‘rifat as-sunan wa-l-āṭār*. Edited by ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī Amīn Qal‘aḡī. 15 vols. Damascus, Beirut: Dār Qutayba, 1412/1991.
- al-Buḥārī, *Šaḥīḥ* = Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Buḥārī, *Šaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī*. Damascus, Beirut: Dār Ibn Kaṭīr, 1423/2002.
- ad-Damīrī, *Naḡm* = Abū l-Baqā‘ Kamāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mūsā ad-Damīrī, *an-Naḡm al-wahhāḡ fī šarḥ al-Minhāḡ*. 10 vols. Jiddah: Dār al-Minhāḡ, 1425/2004.

- al-Ġazālī, *Ihyā'* = Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ġazālī, *Ihyā'* 'ulūm al-dīn. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1426/2005.
- al-Ġazālī, *Waġīz* = Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ġazālī, *al-Waġīz fī fiqh al-imām aš-Šāfi'ī*. Edited by 'Alī Mu'awwad, 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mawġūd. 2 vols. Beirut: Šarikat Dār al-Arġam ibn Abī l-Arġam, 1418/1997.
- al-Ġuwaynī, *Nihāya* = Abū l-Ma'ālī 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abdallāh al-Ġuwaynī, *Nihāyat al-maṭlab fī dirāyat al-maḍhab*. Edited by 'Abd al-'Azīm Maḥmūd ad-Dīb. 20 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Minhāġ, 1428/2007.
- Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Kāfi* = Abū 'Umar Yūsuf b. 'Abdallāh Ibn 'Abd al-Barr an-Namarī, *al-Kāfi fī fiqh ahl al-Madīna*. Edited by Muḥammad Muḥammad Uḥayd wuld Mādik al-Mūrītānī. 2 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat ar-Riyād al-Ḥadiṭa, 1400/1980<sup>2</sup>.
- Ibn Abī l-Išba', *Tahrīr* = 'Abd al-'Azīm Ibn Abī l-Išba' al-'Adwānī, *Tahrīr at-tahbīr fī šinā'at aš-ši'r wa-n-naṭr wa-bayān i'ġāz al-Qur'an*. Edited by Hanafī Muḥammad Šaraf. Cairo: al-Maġlis al-'Alī li-š-Šu'un al-Islāmiyya, Laġnat Ihyā' at-Turāt al-Islāmī, n.d.
- Ibn Abī Taġlib, *Nayl* = 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar Ibn Abī Taġlib aš-Šaybānī, *Nayl al-ma'ārib bi-šarḥ Dalīl aṭ-ṭālib*. Edited by Muḥammad Sulaymān 'Abdallāh al-Ašqar. 2 vols. Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falāḥ, 1403/1983.
- Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Talbīs* = Abū l-Faraġ 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*. Edited by Muḥammad aš-Šabbāḥ. Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1409/1989.
- Ibn Ḥaġar, *Zawāġir* = Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥaġar al-Haytamī, *az-Zawāġir 'an iqtirāf al-kabā'ir*. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa li-ṭ-Ṭibā'a wa-Našr, n.d.
- Ibn Ḥamdān, *Ri'āya* = Naġm ad-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān al-Ḥarrānī, *ar-Ri'āya fī l-fiqh 'alā maḍhab al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*. Edited by 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. Ḥamdān aš-Šahrī. 2 vols. Riyadh: no publisher, 1428/[2007].
- Ibn Ḥiġġa, *Ḥizāna* = Abū Bakr b. 'Alī Ibn Ḥiġġa al-Ḥamawī, *Ḥizānat al-adab wa-ġāyat al-arab*. Edited by Kawkab Diyāb. 5 vols. Beirut: Dār Šādir, 1421/2001.
- Ibn Muflīḥ, *Furū'* = Šams ad-Dīn Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Muflīḥ al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-furū' fī fiqh al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*. Edited by 'Abd ar-Razzāq al-Mahdī. 3 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1422/2002.
- Ibn al-Munḍir, *Išrāf* = Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Munḍir an-Naysābūrī, *al-Išrāf 'alā maḍāhib al-'ulamā'*. Edited by Šaġīr Aḥmad al-Anšārī Abū Ḥāmid. 10 vols. Ra's al-Ḥayma: Maktabat Makka aṭ-Ṭaqāfiyya, 1425/2004.
- Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Badī'* = Ibn al-Mu'tazz, 'Abdallāh: *Kitāb al-badī'*. Edited by Ignatius Kratchkovsky, London: Luzac and Co., 1935.
- Ibn an-Naġġār, *Muntahā* = Taqī ad-Dīn Abū l-Baqā' Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn an-Naġġār al-Futūḥī, *Kitāb Muntahā l-irādāt ma'a ḥāšiyat Ibn Qā'id*. Edited by 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin at-Turkī. 5 vols. Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risāla, 1419/1999.

- Ibn Qudāma, *Muğnī* = Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Aḥmad Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī al-Ġamā‘īlī, *al-Muğnī li-’bn Qudāma ‘alā Muḥtaṣar Abī l-Qāsim ‘Umar ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥiraqī*. Edited by Ṭahā az-Zaynī et al. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1388–89/1968–69.
- Ibn Rašīq, *Umda* = Abū ‘Alī l-Ḥasan Ibn Rašīq al-Qayrawānī, *Kitāb al-’umda fī naqd aš-ši’r wa-tamḥīsihi*. Edited by ‘Afīf Nāyif Ḥātūm. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1424/2003.
- Ibn Rušd, *Bayān* = Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Rušd al-Qurṭubī, *al-Bayān wa-t-taḥṣīl wa-š-šarḥ wa-t-tawḡīḥ wa-ta’līl*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥaġġī et al. 20 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1408/1988<sup>2</sup>.
- al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* = Šihāb ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ibšīhī, *al-Mustatraf fī kull fann mustazraf*. Edited by Muṣṭafā Muḥammad aḍ-Ḍahabī. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīṭ, 1421/2000.
- al-Māwardī, *Hāwī* = Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr fī fiqh maḥab al-imām aš-Šāfi’ī, wa-huwa šarḥ Muḥtaṣar al-Muzanī*. Edited by ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwad, ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawġūd. 19 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1419/1999.
- Muslim, *Šaḥīḥ* = Muslim b. al-Ḥaġġāġ al-Quṣayrī an-Naysābūrī, *Šaḥīḥ Muslim*. 2 vols. Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1427/2006.
- an-Nawawī, *Minhāġ* = Muḥyī d-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Šaraf an-Nawawī, *Minhāġ aṭ-ṭālibīn wa-’umdat al-muḥtāṭīn*. Edited by Muḥammad Muḥammad Ṭāhir Ša‘bān. Beirut: Dār al-Minhāġ, 1426/2005.
- an-Nawawī, *Rawḍa* = Muḥyī d-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Šaraf an-Nawawī, *Rawḍat aṭ-ṭālibīn wa-’umdat al-muḥtāṭīn*. Edited by Zuhayr aš-Šawīš. 12 vols. Beirut, Damascus, Amman: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1412/1991<sup>3</sup>.
- al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ* = al-Qalqašandī, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad, *Šubḥ al-a’šā fī šinā’at al-inšā’*. 15 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1407/1987.
- ar-Rāfi‘ī, *Azīz* = Abū l-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad ar-Rāfi‘ī, *al-Azīz: šarḥ al-Waġīz, al-ma’rūf bi-š-Šarḥ al-kabīr*. Edited by ‘Alī Mu‘awwad, ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mawġūd. 13 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1417/1997.
- ar-Ramlī, *Nihāya* = Šams ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ar-Ramlī, *Nihāyat al-muḥtāġ ilā šarḥ al-Minhāġ*. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1424/2003<sup>3</sup>.
- ar-Ruḥaybānī, *Maṭālib* = Muṣṭafā b. Sa’d b. ‘Abduh as-Suyūṭī ar-Ruḥaybānī, *Maṭālib ūlī n-nuhā fī šarḥ Ġāyat al-muntahā*. 6 vols. Beirut, Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1415/1994<sup>2</sup>.
- ar-Rūyānī, *Baḥr* = ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad ar-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-maḥab*. Edited by Ṭāriq Faḥī as-Sayyid. 14 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2009.
- aš-Šāfi‘ī, *Umm* = Muḥammad b. Idrīs aš-Šāfi‘ī, *Kitāb al-umm*. Edited by Rif’at Fawzī ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalīb. 11 vols. Al-Manšūra: Dār al-Wafā’, 1429/2008<sup>5</sup>.
- al-Wanšārīsī, *Mi’yār* = Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Wanšārīsī, *al-Mi’yār al-mu’rib wa-l-ġāmi’ al-muġrib ‘an fatāwī ahl Ifrīqiyya wa-l-Andalus wa-l-Maġrib*.

Edited by Muḥammad Ḥaḡḡī et al. 13 vols. Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-š-Šu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1401/1981.

## B. Secondary sources

- Abū Zayd, Bakr b. 'Abdallāh. 1411 A.H. *Ḥukm at-tamṭīl*. Riyadh: Dār ar-Rāya li-n-Našr wa-t-Tawzī'.
- 'Afif, Ḥālid b. 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm. 1438–1439 A.H. *al-Iḥtiyārāt al-fiqhiyya li-l-imām Muḥammad b. Dāwud aṣ-Ṣaydalānī raḥīma-hu Allāh (t. 427 H), min bidāyat Bāb an-Nikāḥ ilā nihāyat Bāb Ummahāt al-awlād*. PhD thesis. Medina: al-Ġāmi'a al-Islāmiyya bi-l-Madīna al-Munawwara.
- Ayoub, Georgine. 2019. "L'hyperbole dans la poésie amoureuse du *m'annā* (poésie chantée du Liban au 19e siècle et dans les premières décades du 20e siècle)". *Revue Langues, cultures et sociétés* 5.2.5–24.
- Badawi, M.M. 1978. "The Function of Rhetoric in Medieval Arabic Poetry: Abū Tammām's Ode on Amorium". *Journal of Arabic Literature* 9.43–56.
- Beaumont, Daniel. 1994. "Parody and Lying in al-Bukhala'". *Studia Islamica* 79.27–49.
- Brown, Jonathan A.C. 2003. "The Social Context of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Poetic Imagery and Social Reality in the Mu'allaqat". *Arab Studies Quarterly* 25.3. 29–50.
- Bürgel, J. Christoph. 1974. "«Die beste Dichtung is die lügenreichste:» Wesen und Bedeutung eines literarischen Streites des arabischen Mittelalters im Lichte komparatistischer Betrachtung". *Oriens* 23–24.7–102.
- al-Ġāmidī, Ḍiyāb b. Sa'd Āl Ḥamdān. 1429/2008. *Šā'ir al-milyūn: Aḥṭā' šar'iyya wa-muḡālaṭa šī'riyya*. [Dammam]: Maktabat al-Muzaynī.
- Gruendler, Beatrice. 2003. *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn al-Rūmī and the patron's redemption*. London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. "Qaṣīda: Its Reconstruction in Performance". *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms: Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs on His 65th Birthday Presented by His Students and Colleagues* ed. by Beatrice Gruendler & Michael Cooperson, 325–389. Leiden: Brill.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2017. "Modernity in the Ninth Century". *Studia Islamica* 112. 131–148.
- von Grunebaum, G.E. 1952. "The Aesthetic Foundation of Arabic Literature". *Comparative Literature* 4.323–340.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1967. "Literature in the Context of Islamic Civilization". *Oriens* 20.1–14.
- Halldén, Philip. 2005. "What Is Arab Islamic Rhetoric? Rethinking the History of Muslim Oratory Art and Homiletics". *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37.19–38. DOI: 10.1017.S0020743805050038.
- Hymes, Dell. 1962. "The Ethnography of Speaking". *Anthropology and Human Behavior* ed. by Thomas Gladwin, William C. Sturtevant, 13–53. Washington, D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington.

- Jacobi, R. 1972. "Dichtung und Lüge in der arabischen Literaturtheorie". *Der Islam* 49.85–99.
- Key, Alexander. 2018. *Language between God and the Poets: Ma'na in the Eleventh Century*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Ouyang, Wen-chin. 1997. *Literary Criticism in Medieval Arabic Islamic Culture: The Making of a Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Pagani, Samuela. 2022. "The Reality and Image of the Prophet According to the Theologian and Poet 'Abd Al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī". *The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam: Volume 1, The Prophet Between Doctrine, Literature and Arts: Historical Legacies and Their Unfolding* ed. by Denis Gril, Stefan Reichmuth, & Dilek Sarmis, 501–34. Leiden: Brill. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004466739\\_020](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004466739_020).
- Rippin, A. 1983. "The Qur'an as Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects". *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 10. 38–47.
- Sanni, Amidu. 1990. "Perspectives in a Religious System: The Role and Status of Poetry in Islam". *Islamic Studies* 29. 339–352.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. "The Historic Encounter between al-Mutanabbī and al-Ḥātimī: Its Contribution to the Discourse on *Ghuluww* (Hyperbole) in Arabic Literary Theory". *Journal of Arabic Literature* 35.159–174.
- Sharlet, Jocelyn. 2011. *Patronage and Poetry in the Islamic World: Social Mobility and Status in the Medieval Middle East and Central Asia*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Toral-Niehoff, Isabel. 2015. "'Fact and Fiction' in der mittelalterlichen arabischen Literatur. Anmerkungen zu einer Debatte." *Faktuales und fiktionales Erzählen: interdisziplinäre Perspektiven* ed. by Monika Fludernik, Nicole Falkenhayner & Julia Steiner, 59–76. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.
- Yosefi, Maxim. 2016. "The Influence of Religious Ideology on Arab Poets in the First Centuries of Islam: The Problem of Lie". *Arabskiye Marshruty v Aziatskom Kontekste* ed. by P.I. Pogorel'skiy & M.I. Vasilenko, 120–152. Sankt-Peterburg: Muzei Antropologii i Etnografii, Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk.