Edebiyât Vol. 11(2), pp. 169–196
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the Harwood Academic Publishers imprint,
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Printed in Malaysia.

Adab in the Seventeenth Century: Narrative and Parody in al-Shirbīnī's *Hazz al-Quḥūf*

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1. Introduction

Hazz al-quḥūf fī sharḥ qaṣīd Abī Shādūf, written in the 11th/17th century by the obscure Egyptian writer Yūsuf al-Shirbīnī, is the only known text in Arabic literature devoted entirely to peasants. It informs a number of studies on the social conditions of peasants, city-country relations, and the material culture of Egyptian *fallāḥin* during the Ottoman period. The book is not, however, a straightforward description of the Egyptian countryside. It presents itself explicitly as a work of entertainment, the butt of whose jokes are peasants and their poetry. The author's intentions, motivations, and even the information he provides, are mediated through a complex satirical narrative. In this paper I will show how the book engages contemporary literary and popular cultures at the linguistic, stylistic and thematic levels in an oblique and playful manner. I will study the structure of the narrative and explore the genres, languages and styles that make up the book. Special attention is given to the interplay between *Hazz al-Quḥūf* and a strong and fairly continuous tradition in Arabic writing known as *adab*.[1]

2. Contexts of Reading

(a) The Book and Its Writer

The book is divided into two parts.[2] Part I (91 pages) contains the reasons for its composition (the explication of a poem by a certain Abū Shādūf), stories, descriptions, poetry, and occasional analysis of the life and manners of Egyptian peasants (*fallāḥin*), with information on their food, clothing, sexuality, and names, along with mention of government policies and of officials in the countryside. Part II (138 pages) is devoted to an exegesis of Abū Shādūf's ode (*qaṣīd Abī Shādūf*) announced in the title.[3] An explanation follows the poem, verse by verse, providing linguistic and stylistic explication and piling up evidence to support the explanations. Such evidence often takes the form of autonomous stories, poems or expositions. The material is either compiled from acknowledged sources or directly reported by the author as observation or experience.

The *qaṣīd* itself, a 47-verse colloquial poem, is attributed to a *fallāḥ* called Abū Shādūf. It tells of his life, the food he likes, his company and his wishes. A large portion of the book is written in colloquial Arabic. It includes poetry attributed to peasants, some of the writer's verse, and a few poems by other writers. Most of the prose is in literary Arabic of various styles; the most notable exception is Abū ʿAfra's story in Part I, a narrative cast completely in colloquial.

We owe this rich text to a writer about whom we know very little. The comprehensive biographical dictionary devoted to the 11th/17th century, al-Muḥibbī's *Khulāṣat al-athar fī aʿyān al-qarn al-ḥādī ʿashar*, does not include an entry on Shirbīnī. That concerned with the following century (12th/18th), al-Murādī's *Silk al-durar fī aʿyān al-qarn al-thānī ʿashar*, does not mention him either. He is absent from the literary compendia and anthologies of his time. (I refer here to al-Khafājī's *Rayḥānat al-alibbā'* [1967] and its continuation, al-Muḥibbī's *Nafḥat al-rayḥāna* [1967]). Were it not for various autobiographical notes spread thoughout *Hazz al-quḥūf*, Shirbīnī would remain an enigma.[4] Almost all that we know about this author, down to his full name, Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Jawād ibn Khiḍr al-Shirbīnī, we owe to internal evidence from the book. From scattered references we learn bits about his life, including the names

of two of his teachers at al-Azhar university in Cairo, Aḥmad al-Qalyūbī (d. 1074/1663–4) and Aḥmad al-Sandūbī (d. 1097/1686).[5]

From the book we learn as well that Shirbīnī wrote both prose and poetry. His prose includes an epistle, *Riyāḍ al-uns fī mā jarā bayna al-zub wa al-kuss* ("On the Encounter between a Penis and a Cunt"), from which he extracts a long list of terms for penis classified into names, surnames (*laqab*) and nicknames (*kunya*) (1857: 22). He also mentions a speech (*khuṭba*) about food (*ibid.*: 174–75), and a work on peasant weddings (*ibid.*: 11).[6] His poetry includes literary and colloquial verse. The longest piece is the *urjūza* (193 verses) which concludes the book's first part. It is an exposition on the manners, mode of life, speech, poetry and names of peasants (*ibid.*: 84–91). Other verses are scattered throughout the book as illustrations of particular stories. One of the more substantial pieces is a *muwashshaḥ* in praise of life in the city (*ibid.*: 204–05).

The persona which emerges from the book prefers the light side of life, including a weakness for the company of boys (*ibid.*: 83).[7] Shirbīnī seems to have liked Cairo (*madīnat Miṣr*) and its underworld (*ibid.*: 125). He does not appear to have been a man of wealth or high birth who had fallen upon hard times.[8] Yet he denies any ties to peasants through kinship or life-style, saying, "I thank God for relieving us from peasantry and its woes. For neither our parents nor our grandparents were peasants" (*ibid.*: 149).[9] We learn as well that he was a learned and pious man who even went on pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) in 1074/1664 (*ibid.*: 101).[10]

The fact that Shirbīnī did not catch the attention of his contemporaries remains to be explained. Further work may well uncover more about the man and his book, especially in the light of the fact that students of Ottoman Egypt acknowledge that the period is far from well researched (Winter 1992: xiii). What is certain is that *Hazz al-quḥūf* is the product of a complex period in Egyptian culture. A brief outline of the main features of the era will, hopefully, make my reading of the book more intelligible.

(b) The Wider Context

Contemporary sources reveal that the period did not lack in dynamism and creativity. The revival of the genre of literary anthology by

Aḥmad al-Khafājī (d.1069/1695), after an interruption of several centuries, is telling.[11] Al-Khafājī's *Rayḥānat al-adab*, one of many books by this very influential writer, is nothing short of a celebration of contemporary culture. It is an intellectual autobiography which reflects its author's pride in the role he played in a vibrant culture.[12] It records his encounters with the writers and poets of his time, cites their work and evaluates it. The book covers a vast geographical area which includes most of the Arab provinces and Anatolia. Al-Khafājī's followers tried to complete the picture by adding names he misses or areas he does not treat with sufficient attention in sequels. Al-Muḥibbī's works—both the addendum to al-Khafājī's *Rayḥānat al-adab* and his own biographical dictionary—have considerable literary merit in their own right.[13]

The frequent movement of intellectuals between the Maghrib, Ḥijāz, Egypt, Damascus, and Istanbul recorded in these sources signals the dynamism of Islamic culture at its global level. As far as Egypt is concerned, the degradation of the country into a province within a large empire and the shift of political and cultural power away from Cairo affected it as a center of Islamic culture in the Arab lands. Yet outside influences and vigor were added to the province. Al-Khafājī gives evidence that scholars from North Africa, Anatolia, and al-Shām (Syria) often settled in Egypt or visited the province frequently. Despite the turbulent and often bloody political situation in Egypt, *'ulamā'* as a whole, and al-Azhar university in particular, seem to have enjoyed a period of continuous support and protection (Winter 1992: 110). The status and mobility made possible by education seem to have encouraged more students of peasant background to seek a career in Cairo. As a result, according to Winter, most *'ulamā'* in Egypt were from *fallāḥ* origin (*ibid.*: 115). These factors are of particular relevance to Shirbīnī's book, as they shed light on the writer's possible motives, and explain his thorough knowledge of *fallāḥ*s.

The Arabic language continued to be the language of "high" culture, but it was by no means the only medium of oral communication or writing. Turkish was the language of the court and its massive supporting bodies. This trend affected Arabic culture in at least two ways. It created the ground for further development of popular culture, and allowed a more assertive presence of colloquial literature.

Peter Heath's study of Arabic popular epic shows how, during this period, "popular Arabic literature witnessed a great burst of creativity" (1996: 52). Popular genres gained stability and a certain level of autonomy (*ibid.*: 62). Colloquial language, the main vehicle of popular literature, had by this time become more prominent in written sources.[14]

In the religious sphere, Sufism had regained prominence and impact at the levels of popular practice as well as theory. The period is dominated by the proliferation of shrines and orders, and marked by the towering Sufi figures ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565) and ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731). The interaction between Sufi orders and *ʿulamāʾ* intensified. Al-Azhar became the central institution of learning and religious clout. In the populous city of Cairo, Jews, Christians and Muslims of various denominations and origins interacted daily and at all levels. People from various racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds continued to live there.[15]

(c) *Readings*

The multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character of the period permeates *Hazz al-Quḥūf*. Multi-generic, multi-lingual, and quite uninhibited in its treatment of most subjects, the book provides a rich portrayal of Egyptian society and culture in the 11th/17th century.[16] Small wonder then that the book has been widely used as a source of information by scholars of the period in various fields of knowledge. Historians, in particular, find it a unique source of valuable information on Egyptian peasantry under Ottoman rule.[17] In linguistics, it has constituted the basis for important work culminating in Davies' study of colloquial Egyptian in the 17th century (1981). Students of popular culture see it as further evidence of the antagonism between elite and popular arts, leading some to dismiss it in inappropriately strong terms.[18] Literary scholars, however, have paid much less interest to this key text. A noteworthy exception is Peled's essay (1986), which drew attention to the book's uniqueness among works of *adab*.

Peled's argument is too long to restate here. Briefly, he suggests that Parts I and II belong to two different genres. Part I is viewed as a "traditional *adab* genre", whereas Part II constitutes a "unique

narrative structure" (1986: 60, 63). The first follows the conventional *adab* practice of editing *majālis* stories "in such a way as to leave no trace of the actual flow of the discussion" (*ibid.*: 62). Part II, however, works differently. Peled writes: "Since the poem of Abū Shādūf is a coherent story, recounting the tale of his life, the commentary which is following it verse by verse gains what may be called an organic unity in the sense that every story, anecdote, or piece of poetry falls in line with the main theme of the poem" (*ibid.*: 63).[19] I do not intend to discuss Peled's conception of *adab* here, but I will touch upon two major issues in the study of *adab* in general, namely the notions of writing and of fiction.

Adab is the work of individual writers. It appropriates other genres by writing them from the author's particular point of view. This strategy of writing is not a passive inclusion or editing, but a complex re-working of texts through adaptation, parody, creative imitation, satire, and so on. This is why *adab* includes the text and its parodied version at the same time. Parodies of *adab* are also works of *adab*. To take the emphasis from editing and put it on writing allows a more dynamic view of this very dynamic body of the Arabic literary tradition. Focus on the act of writing allows us to shift attention from a writer's sources (where do the constituent parts come from?) to the manner of incorporation. Viewing *adab* as writing leaves open the possibility that writers create their own stories. *Adab*, to my mind, is the creative writing of the Arabs, not the compiled edition of their *majlis* discussions. This perspective informs my argument that Shirbīnī's *Hazz al-Quḥūf* (as a whole, and not only Part II) is a work of *adab*, not because it "edits" *majlis* discussions the way *adab* is believed to do, but because it re-writes existing stories from the author's own standpoint and creates others. A close look at the narrative construction of the book will clarify my point.

Narrative Construction

(a) Awaiting the Hero

The narrator tells of a poem he came across and the reasons behind his commentary on it from the very beginning. He deems it necessary,

however, to lay down the groundwork for the poem beforehand. This constitutes Part I, where we learn about the place, the people, and the time. By the time Abū Shādūf, the presumed author of the *qaṣīd*, reappears at the beginning of Part II, the reader will have become familiar with details of country life, including the manners and speech of peasants. After an extensive layout of rural context—food, clothing, sexuality, names, the technical terminology of government policies in the countryside (*māl al-sulṭān, al-wajba, al-ʿawna, al-dīwān*) and government officials (*kashshāf, dīwānī, multazim*), the audience is ready for the *qaṣīd* and the poet. The vivid and often realistic descriptions and stories in the first section keep the reader interested and entertained throughout. Peasant poetry, quoted abundantly in the first section, prepares the reader for the *qaṣīd* at the linguistic as well as the thematic level. The stage is set for what we are led to believe is the main actor and the centerpiece of the book.

Abū Shādūf turns out to be disappointing, however. Even compared with other peasants in the book, such as Abū ʿAfra, about whom I will say more shortly, he can hardly be considered heroic. The poet's name, descent, and the roots of his plight are introduced in a preface (*tawṭiʾa*), either through the poet's own verse or by relying on secondary sources. The poet's complaint and lamentation is left to the ode itself. The first ten lines invoke the poet's present miserable condition and his mistreatment by the rulers, their subordinates and the poet's own relatives. This is followed by a long section (28 lines) devoted exclusively to the kinds of dishes he longs to eat, including ample details of how these look, how they taste, and the way he would eat them if he were granted his wishes. The remainder of the poem (9 lines) is an account of what he plans to do to get food and clothing, how he would pay for these, and the "glorious" return to the village he would enjoy.

There is the semblance of a story in the poem, with a crisis and a happy dénouement of events. But while the crisis may be real, its resolution is explicitly stated as mere wishful thinking. Abū Shādūf, as it were, solves his problems in the realm of the unreal. In fact, there is sufficient evidence to support the suggestion that the entire poem is a fictional creation.[20] What is striking, however, is that no one draws any meaningful conclusions from this important proposition. In fact, the first question that comes to mind, once the fictionality of

Abū Shādūf is raised, is what are the mechanics of composition? How is Part II organized? There is ample evidence to suggest that, contrary to the current consensus, it is not the commentary that follows the poem's structure, but the other way around. The list of dishes in the *qaṣīd* is simply too comprehensive to figure in one person's wish list, and less so in one poem, unless the list *is* the poem. In fact, the reader gets the feeling that Shirbīnī had the list first, composed a line for each dish and then commented on it.[21] Similarly, government officials and types of taxation are included for the specific purpose of the commentary. Since the poem's progression is determined by the commentary, thematic considerations become more important than any presumed life story or time line. In fact what we are told in the poem does not constitute a life story, as I mentioned earlier.

The fictionality of Abū Shādūf, the style of the poem and the type of hero described in the ode, help shed new light on the stylistic ties *Hazz al-Quḥūf* entertains with other genres of *adab* as well as with popular literature. At the level of structure, the narrative may be compared to a tale with a happy ending. The difference is that the resolution of the crisis does not happen. Abū Shādūf's tale is not narrated in the past definite but in the conditional future. The formulaic time frame that opens the narrative sequence of events in a tale, and its predictable happy closure, give way to "If I live... I will" in Abū Shādūf's *qaṣīd* (1857: 203). The sense of consummation in the former genre is replaced by a postponed desire; closure is not achieved, order is not restored. Before attempting to dwell on the significance of all this, I wish to analyze the kinds of relationships the poem, as narrative, entertains with other narratives in the book.

(b) Abū ʿAfra and Abū Shādūf

In Part I we find, in the midst of a series of anecdotes on sexuality among peasants and the parallels between aristocratic lovemaking and its comic imitation by a *fallāḥ* couple, a story of poverty, poetry and simple happiness. At a gathering of fellow peasants, Abū ʿAfra announces that good times are gone forever. His audience begs him to expound and illustrate by recounting tales from the happier days he had experienced (*ibid.*: 17). He tells of a trip he had taken with

two friends to buy necessary complements for the feast (*ʿīd*). On the way to the market they run into a man slaughtering a young goat. Abū ʿAfra pretends to be a notable (*shaykh kafr*) who is hosting important guests, and threatens the man with a ban on slaughtering animals forever if he refuses his demands. The man agrees to give them a good price and choice meat. They opt for the guts, share the meat and set off towards home. The journey is described in detail, showing Abū ʿAfra's adventure as he protects the precious bounty from dogs and manages to get it home safely. On arrival, he receives a hero's welcome from his wife, Umm Zaʿbal, and they have sex. Umm Zaʿbal then begs him to recite his poetry or sing for her. He recites a *zajal* in which he describes gifts and actions the poet would do to satisfy his beloved. Overcome with joy, the wife dances with her son. The neighbors soon join in, beg the poet to repeat his *zajal* several times, and everyone shares in the bounty procured by the hero's wisdom and courage. Abū ʿAfra concludes his tale saying: "It was a memorable day of no equal!" His audience agrees: "Your days are gone. Real men are dead and we have been subdued by oppressors" (*ibid.*: 20).[22]

There is a stylistic and thematic dialogue between the *qaṣīd* and the story. Abū ʿAfra's successes, simple as they may be, contrast with Abū Shādūf's failure to satisfy even his most basic needs. The wit and courage with which the former procures meat contrast with theft and cowardly reliance on others in the *qaṣīd*. Abū Shadūf may be considered the comic version of Abū ʿAfra, who is in turn meant to be comical. There are three further instances where the story relates to the poem. First, while Abū ʿAfra's anecdote records the limited rise of its narrator, the *qaṣīd* depicts the downfall of Abū Shādūf. The second distinction has to do with the style of both narratives. Abū ʿAfra's adventures are told in the past definite, whereas Abū Shādūf's are relegated to an uncertain future. The first is an event narrated by its hero, while the second is the expression of the hero's wishes and desires. On the level of form (third distinction), Abū ʿAfra's poetry, the long *zajal* towards the end of the story, is a love poem that celebrates happiness and a merry life. It is inserted as part of the narrative and serves the role of a happy comment on a happy ending. Abū Shādūf's story, on the contrary, is cast in verse in its entirety. It is a lament of bad times and government oppression, along with a long list of the poet's favorite dishes.[23]

Thematically speaking, the *qaṣīd* begins where the story ends. In fact, the *qaṣīd* reverses Abū ʿAfra's *zajal* by providing ample illustration of the *fallāḥin*'s current plight. Abū ʿAfra's story has a frame and a preface. He begins by saying: "O elders of the village, the time of merriment is gone forever. No good remains in this world. Our time and what used to happen during our festivals and celebrations will not come back again" (*ibid.*: 16). The frame serves as an opportunity to recall the better past, i.e., to tell a story.[24] In the *qaṣīd* the same complaint sets the stage for Abū Shādūf's wishes. It allows a more articulated blame directed against specific government agencies and policies as well as the poet's own relatives. The hero's involvement and personal achievements celebrated by Abū ʿAfra in his *zajal* are completely absent from the *qaṣīd*. Looking at both characters and their narratives from the perspective of the overall narrative points up the deep ways in which Abū ʿAfra's story subverts the *qaṣīd* and foreshadows Abū Shādūf's anti-heroic appearance without any audience in Part II. The two narratives foster the organic relationship between the book's two sections.

The foregoing discussion shows how writing shapes the book. The text is built around a fictional figure. There is one theme and a continuous narrative thread. The stories taken from other sources are either adapted to the theme or made to serve the narrative. Digression is, after all, part and parcel of the *adīb*'s narrative tools. Since Shirbīnī is a writer, an *adīb*, and not the passive editor of an anthology of court anecdotes about peasants, it remains to determine what kind of *adīb* he is.

Transgession and Parody

(a) Adab and Adīb

From al-Masʿūdi's *Murūj al-dhahab* ("Meadows of Gold") Shirbīnī selects the story of ʿAlī ibn al-Junayd al-Iskāfī, the caliph al-Muʿtamid and his courtier Muḥammad ibn Ḥamad (*ibid.*: 134). Al-Iskāfī rejects the prerequisite of court entertainment set forth by the *adīb* Ibn Ḥamad, namely, not to spit, clear one's throat, or blow one's nose in the caliph's presence, effectively turning down the caliph's request. He tells the monarch: "If you want my company you should accept

that I break wind and fart in your presence, and that you will do the same in due time. Otherwise, you and I have no business being together" (*ibid.*: 134). The caliph agrees and the two conspire to tease the dignified and respectable *adīb* Ibn Ḥamad, which they do, provoking the *adīb*'s deep embarrassment and loud objections. Throughout the text the word *adīb* is linked to Ibn Ḥamad, whereas al-Iskāfī is referred to by name only. But while the first is satirized and made the subject of the humor in the story, the second is rewarded with both the caliph's companionship and his gifts (*ibid.*: 135). The moral of the story is that polished company is not always rewarding. We should remember, however, that Ibn Ḥamad tries to impose restrictions on al-Iskāfī and to instruct him in the rules of courtiership (*adab al-mulāzama*), erecting between him and the caliph a wall of *adab*, or politeness, so to speak. Ibn Ḥamad sets the rules. As it turned out, however, the caliph had a different *adab* in mind, namely transgression. The story, which is incorporated to illustrate a particular category of farting in Shirbīnī's typology, demonstrates the author's identification with al-Iskāfī and highlights the line of *adab* he draws on.

The long section on farting is perhaps the perfect illustration of the kind of *adab* that appeals to Shirbīnī. In an impeccable style of scientific rigor he devotes ten pages to a thorough exposition on farting. He begins by elucidating the differences between types of farting, adding digressions, anecdotes and poetry on the subject. He then compares the attitudes of higher classes and rulers towards farting with the ways of the peasants. His conclusion is devoted to the medical benefits of releasing wind. Before returning to Abū Shādūf's poem, Shirbīnī cites his own poetry on farting and on his boy lover, and various stories on the music of farting (*ibid.*: 139–40). He takes pride in what he calls an "unprecedented" examination of farting, saying: "I did not come across anyone who expressed these ideas, divided farting into categories and described it in these definitions before me" (*ibid.*: 140).

In *Hazz al-Quḥūf* there is an obvious subversion of the mission of the *adīb* as moral preceptor. There is no call for a didactic purpose or apology for the message. On the contrary, the poetry as well as the stories quoted in the prelude to the *sharḥ* vary from the hypocritical and the unethical to the utterly blasphemous. Shirbīnī finds

justification in the environment of political and economic hardship prevalent at the time. He says: "Hearts [*nufūs*] are now longing for something to divert them from hardship and rid them of their recurring worries." The *adīb*'s role is, therefore, meant "to entertain people and divert their attention from increasing pressures" (*ibid.*: 4).
Shirbīnī promotes his book with the following poem (*ibid.*: 3):

> A book that contains worthless art, a book that resembles a mat,
> A book of paper and ink, a truly wasted speech.
> In that speech, O brother, if you try it, is the taste of offal.
> In it there are words which resemble piss, as elegant as the blear-eyed.
> In it there are famous silly issues; on it there is a veil like a blanket.
> Its composition is like bricks; and in it there are problems without poetry.
> If you read it truthfully, you will quickly become deaf.[25]

Conventionally, authors create spaces for their books by emphasizing the low standards of learning or morality they intend to redress with their ethical writing. Contrary to this convention, Shirbīnī asserts (*ibid.*: 4):

> Only those endowed with cynicism, foolishness, and sarcasm, those daring and funny can survive our times. This is why the poet said:
>
> "Those who lived off eloquence died of hunger,
> but pimps and jesters are rewarded."
>
> Ibn al-Rawandī said:
>
> "O Giver of fortunes, I have no share!
> Since you're not to blame, tell me whom to blame!
> You give the Jews tons and tons of silver (*lujayn*),
> while I walk barefoot.
> You gave me a right (verdict) but no paper (proof).
> Tell me what good is a right without a paper."

What ensues is a counter-ethics that does not even pay lip service to the moral mission of the writer. Shirbīnī endorses this motto: "Satisfy them as long as you are in their house, and pay them respect as long as you are in their quarters. Court some of them, they will help you against the whole of them" (*ibid.*). He calls for a chameleon attitude to human relations (*ibid.*):

> Now you see me a teacher and a scholar, now a heretic philosopher,
> Now a flute player, now a master and a leader.
> If you master the appearance of happiness, you will see moons and suns coming on to you.

Shirbīnī oscillates between the need to be part of a tradition and the pride of pioneering new paths in *adab*. While established lineage sanctions his digression, innovation testifies to his individual merit. The history of *adab* bears evidence that Shirbīnī is not writing in a vacuum. He relies on a tradition which extends beyond his acknowledged inspiration, Ibn Sūdūn (d. 868/1464). The poet Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 391/1000) may have preceded Shirbīnī in the classification of farting (cf. al-Thaʿālibī 1957, 3: 37–39); he may also have beat him to the idea of a dialogue between a penis and a vagina (*ibid.*, 3: 73). Shirbīnī's self-mocking description of his poetry again recalls Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, who describes his poetry as excrement, farting, and everything foul (see *ibid.*, 3: 31–104). In addition, there are resemblances between *Hazz al-Quḥūf* and *al-Bukhalāʾ* by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–9), the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008), the shadow plays of Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 710/1310), and erotic works such as *al-Rawḍ al-ʿāṭir* ("The Perfumed Garden") by al-Nafzāwī (d. 825/1422).[26] In the tradition of "*adab* of transgression" al-Jāḥiẓ occupies a foundational role. His introduction to *al-Bukhalāʾ* sets the tone for *adab*. His definition becomes the authority against which every *adīb* is to be judged. Al-Jāḥiẓ's interest in sub-groups and the underworld (misers, thieves, singing girls, etc.) was to have a profound and lasting effect on his successors. Ibn Dāniyāl's interest in street entertainers adds new groups to the list. Shirbīnī's short list of names for penis has a precedent in al-Nafzāwī's catalogue of dozens of terms (1990: 93–97). Shirbīnī even follows the rules of rhetoric set by his predecessors. In an attempt to match discourse and subject matter, he claims that he is trying to keep his language close to that of the poem in conformity with the convention of commentaries. He says: "All this is done in order to match the poem's idiom and to explain its meanings, which are like palm leaves [*quḥūf al-jarīd*], since the commentator should not stray from the words of the poet, following the tradition of experts in this art" (1857: 3).

Shirbīnī's work is nevertheless unique even within this tradition. His extensive engagement with popular sources and his exclusive focus on peasants are unprecedented. As such, his contribution to what we may call "the *adab* of transgression" (*adab al-tajāwuz*) is considerable.[27] While Shirbīnī explicitly presents his book as a transgression of normative and moral *adab*, he does not reject this form of *adab* outright. Instead, he couches his transgression in a masterful displacement of conventional genres. His most effective tool is parody. Before addressing the particular instances of parody in the book, it is necessary to clarify the concept of parody which guides my subsequent reading of *Hazz al-Quḥūf*.

(*b*) *Parody*

In his essay "From the Pre-history of Novelistic Discourse", M. Bakhtin writes: "One of the most ancient and widespread forms for representing the direct word of another is parody." He defines parody as the rewriting of a form of literary discourse in such a way that the parodied version is recognizable and yet different (1981: 51). The end result of a parody of a sonnet "could not be classified generically as a sonnet" because in a parody, the sonnet form becomes the "object of representation," an "image of a sonnet" (*ibid.*). Since the form of the parodied discourse becomes an image of a form, attention is turned to the way reality is represented in a given genre. In a parody of the Trojan War, Bakhtin asserts, "it was not, after all, the heroes who were parodied, not the Trojan War and its participants; what was parodied was only its epic heroization; not Hercules and his exploits but their tragic heroization" (*ibid.*: 55). Parody demystifies a particular representation of the Trojan War. In so doing, the parodies "liberated the object from the power of language in which it had become entangled as if in a net" (*ibid.*: 60).

Put differently, formal parody dissociates the reality in the parodied discourse from the language that represents it, opening it, in the process, to other ways of representation. The key to this process is humor, or what Bakhtin calls "the corrective of laughter". He explains: "Parodic-travestying literature introduces the permanent corrective of laughter, of a critique on the one-sided seriousness of the lofty direct word, the corrective of reality that is always richer, more

fundamental and most importantly too contradictory and heteroglot to be fit into a high and straightforward genre" (*ibid.*: 55). With this in mind, a second look at *Hazz al-Quḥūf* reveals that beyond the expressed desire to satirize peasant language and art, Shirbīnī's book is a formal parody of a large spectrum of literary discourses and genres.[28] In addition—and this is perhaps the most significant aspect of the book—the parody extends to popular literature.

(c) *Parodies of Literary Culture*

Throughout the first part of the book we witness a character buildup through formal parody of serious genres and discourses. The use of the formula, "If someone says... I say," i.e., an anticipated question or challenge followed by a response, allows the author to expound on particular issues of no special note, but in a polemical style or through the parody of a recognizable convention or discourse.[29] As a result, parodies of Koranic exegesis and polemical writing abound. There are other instances of formal parody; for example, Shirbīnī plays on the ambiguity that mystics introduce into their discourses on love, which can refer to both worldly and spiritual love. He inserts several stories in which fake Sufis use their linguistic skill to reach sexual ends (1857: 79–84).[30] I detect parodic treatment of the *maqāma* (Abū 'Afra's story), the *khuṭba* (the speech on food), Sufi sayings, *tarājim* (biographies of Abū Shādūf), chronicles (the history of *dīwān*), *sharḥ* (the overall structure of Part II), and scientific epistles or treatises (the section on farting).[31] To discuss this wide range of parodies is not possible here. I will limit myself to one instance of formal parody which has significant bearing on a key issue of my argument, namely, the effect of parody on the fictional element in the book.

Shirbīnī introduces Abū Shādūf as follows: name and family, place of origin, and rise and fall. Students of Arabic literature would immediately realize that the author uses the format and style of the standard Arabic biographical dictionary; they would also quickly note that neither the life nor the deeds of Abū Shādūf would justify his inclusion in a biography of notables. The sequence is undercut by at least two narrative techniques. The first is the obviously fictional names with ridiculous etymologies; in the second, the serious

tone in which the writer proposes to examine the poet's background is undercut when he adds, "And his beard? Was it long or short?" (*ibid.*: 91).

To verify Abū Shādūf's historical existence, external sources are brought in to authenticate accounts of his life and fame. Two poems are quoted. The first is attributed to an anonymous peasant who mentions a different place of origin for Abū Shādūf. Shirbīnī responds to this new information by arguing for the compatibility of the two sources, since, says he, "The poet may have been born in one village but grew up in another" (*ibid.*: 91). Three other short poems by Abū Shādūf himself attest to his line of descent from an elder of the village (*shaykh kafr*) and support the son's legitimate claim to the same status. Next we are told of the government's challenge to this claim, which signals the poet's downfall and serves as the direct cause of his "celebrated" *qaṣīd*. The style of the biography is, again, typical, especially when Abū Shādūf's attitude towards poetry and poets is described. Shirbīnī writes: "He used to reward and give generously, which made poets and men of literature (*udabā'*) from several villages come to him [the phrase used is *qiblatan lil-udabā'*, "the direction writers seek"]. He licensed (*ajāza*) one of them for 50 eggs and a bag of barley, and rewarded another with 100 pieces of cow dung" (*ibid.*: 95). Save for the nature of the rewards, this story could be taken directly from anecdotes illustrating the lives of famous *'ulamā'* or celebrated patrons. What the *tarjama* formula builds up is reversed by parody. The first gives the impression of a historical figure, whereas the second points to the fictionality of Abū Shādūf.

(d) Parodies of Popular Culture

The poetry that introduces Abū Shādūf resembles the verse of the epic *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*.[32] The effect of using this form is to make Abū Shādūf appear like a folk hero presented in the way the *sīra* hero is portrayed in popular epic. At the heart of the book's comic effect is the tension between the familiar delay of the hero's appearance on the stage of action and the improbability of finding such a heroic figure among the "wretched" peasants. Abū Shādūf's first line announces a dramatic story of personal anguish and suffering. He says (*ibid.*: 100):

> Abū Shādūf speaks of the extent of his lament.
> From deprivation, his body is forever thin.

The reader soon discovers, however, that there is no tragic story. On the contrary: Abū Shādūf is going to be, if anything, anti-heroic, and not particularly distinguishable from other *fallāḥin*. Why then the build-up? Comparison between the *qaṣīd* and transcripts of the oral epic *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* shows that the latter, which dates from centuries before the poem, almost invariably begins each speech with a similar line (cf. *Sīrat al-ʿArab al-Ḥijāziyya*, n.d.: 2, 4, and 27 for examples). In fact, the lines cited constitute a formulaic opening to which only the name Abū Shādūf is added.

The most striking parallel between the two is not, however, the opening line, but the contrast between the hero in the *sīra* and Shirbīnī's hero. The legendary knightly courage and nobility of Abū Zayd, the *sīra* hero, are replaced by Abū Shādūf's cowardice and low status. Let us consider one passage from each. Here is, first, Abū Zayd (Ayyūb 1989: 7):

> The news that came to me shook my bones,
> split my soul and broke my heart.
> I prayed to the Merciful and read verses
> from "The Table," "The Exordium," and "The Cattle."
> Then I went to *al-Ḥamra*, belted her,
> and put a saddle on the blanket.
> When I was done, I strapped my sword around my waist
> and appeared like a lion.
> I circled their horses and freed our women
> in the speed of a dove's wing.
> Then I ordered them: "Let the women free and surrender!
> The brave Hilālī Arabs have come!"[33]

Faced with danger, here is Abū Shādūf's reaction:

> The day the *diwān* came, my bones shook,
> I shat in my pants from fear.
> I hid among women and wrapped myself in a sheet.
> My fart was resounding like a drum. (1857: 129)[34]

Abū Shādūf's poem, although it offers the occasion for commentary on social injustice, is a comic version of an epic "heroization". The parodic relationship between the poem and *sīra* has been noted before,

most notably by Davies (1981: 17–18). Passing references to parody are made by Connelly (1986) and Cachia (1989). Yet in all cases parody is invariably seen in the light of oral-written dichotomy or rural-urban antagonism. According to Cachia, Shirbīnī's handling of Hilālī poetry epitomizes the "most arrogant *adab*" (1989: 15). Connelly suggests that Shirbīnī "viciously lampoons the Hilālī poet" (1986: 167).[35] In fact, there is no evidence that Shirbīnī denigrates *sīra* or colloquial poetry as such. He refers to *sīra* by name only once (1857: 207). In the course of explaining Abū Shādūf's reference to the nephew of a *fallāḥ* called 'Arīf, he says that one possible origin of the name may have to do with the *fallāḥ*'s "knowledge of Banī Hilāl's Westward journey [*taghrībat Banī Hilāl*] and what happened in it" (1857: 207–08). The *sīra* is mentioned casually, without any decorum or commentary, which indicates that it was common knowledge among his audience.

Shirbīnī's parody, over and beyond its exhibition of the writer's stylistic prowess, is instructive on the status of the genre it parodies. To my knowledge this is the first instance where *sīra* appears in parodied form. The popular epic must have been canonical enough to lend itself to a parodic treatment. Just as in its parodies of canonical literary forms, *Hazz al-Quḥūf* affirms the *sīra* and recognizes it as a viable genre. The parody is an indication that oral epic had become an integral part of the *adīb*'s repertoire by the 17th century.[36]

Epic as genre and colloquial as medium play yet one further role in the book: they allow transgression of literary genres and language. Colloquial dominates the book by its unexpected usage in *adab*, the prominent space it occupies, and its role in the structure of the narrative. One does not have to wait until action involves a *fallāḥ* to see colloquial.[37] In addition to the concocted poems attributed to peasants, Shirbīnī writes in colloquial and claims his writing. He even takes pride in his colloquial *muwashshaḥ* and his *ghazal* (1857: 204–05, 134). As far as genres are concerned, colloquial poetry is not limited to the *sīra* model. In fact, only Abū Shādūf's ode clearly bears the mark of *sīra*. Most other poems are identified as *mawāliya*, and are either attributed to peasants or to other sources such as Ibn 'Arūs (*ibid.*: 207). Abū 'Afra's poem, mentioned above, is introduced as a song and a *qaṣīd*. Likewise, bad poetry is not always linked with peasants (*ibid.*: 75 ff.).

The task of determining the whole range of representation of colloquial poetry and *sīra* in the book is a very complex undertaking. At the linguistic level, for instance, I see a tight link between language and social status in the *Hazz al-Quḥūf*. Social hierarchy seems to be, from the standpoint of the *fallāḥ* as represented in the text, determined in part by language. Stories and anecdotes show that the Turkish language is perceived as a passport to social success (*ibid.*: 21–25). In one story, two *fallāḥ*s pretend to be Turkish soldiers in order to avoid paying the cost of their bath. In another, a *fallāḥ* is led to believe that he can get free clothes from the market if he speaks Turkish. City speech is associated with sophisticated taste; it serves as a model that the *fallāḥ* hopelessly aspires to emulate. In one story, a *fallāḥ* observes the sexual behavior of a city couple and then attempts to imitate them. Learned discourse carries the authority that *fallāḥin* blindly follow and obey, as exemplified by Shirbīnī's own encounter with a peasant during his experiences on the pilgrimage journey (*ibid.*: 101). The list can only be indicative here.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion makes clear that *Hazz al-Quḥūf* is too complex to be treated thoroughly in one study. While a number of areas are merely suggested as directions for further work—including the stratification of genres and languages in the book and the treatment of *maqāma*—this paper limits itself to the key issues of narrative construction, parody, and popular culture.

The relationship between the two parts of the book, as exemplified in the ties between Abū ʿAfra's story and Abū Shādūf's poem as narratives, shows that *Hazz al-Quḥūf* is tightly knit together in terms of theme and overall narrative thread. One of the peculiar features of the book is its attempt at a comprehensive overview of peasant life, arts and material culture, through one central device (Abū Shādūf's *qaṣīd*) and an array of stories, poems, personal accounts, and "ethnographic" observations. In fact, the book operates through what one might call a "tentacular" structure that spreads around and draws inwards a variety of styles, genres and languages. My argument that the ode was written for the sake of the narrative as a whole and not

the other way around shows the fictional element in the book. One is tempted to speak of the book as an encyclopaedia of information, whether factual or fictional, pertaining to peasants. The "encyclopaedia" metaphor, however, does not describe the book accurately, as it fails to capture a fundamental feature in *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, namely the playful spirit that animates the narrative and shapes its literary style.

Bakhtin's conception of parody as a "distancing device" which stands between authorial discourse and the discourse parodied allows us to see *Hazz al-Quḥūf* in a different light. Parody, and the humor often associated with it, complicate a facile judgement of the author's intentions. Parody is a representation of the parodied discourse. In fact, it would be too simplistic to regard the book as a vicious attack on peasants, or on popular or literary culture, on the premise that it parodies peasants, popular epic or literary genres. To determine the tone and depth of this representation requires the study of how the author's voice, which is necessarily mediated through the voices he parodies, is orchestrated. Parody further complicates the task of interpretation through yet one additional feature: its affirmation of the parodied discourse. Formal parodies of *tarjama, sharḥ* and *sīra* acknowledge these genres and indicate that the writer is in command of their conventions. Further instances of parody are pervasive, and give the impression that Shirbīnī is unusually well versed in both spheres of culture, the literary and the popular. Yet in reality he is far from being a pioneer.

Representations of the discourse of another constitute a well-established tradition in the long history of Arabic poetry available to Shirbīnī. They range from creative or straightforward imitation (*muʿāraḍa*) and allusion or quotation (*taḍmīn*) to outright theft (*sariqa*) and raids (*ighāra*) on the poetry of others. As far as *adab* is concerned, parody is neither new nor alien. In fact, parody is an integral part of *adab*. Through it, the *adīb* is able to transgress the norm of "polite" *adab* while keeping his art within the loose boundaries of the genre. The long tradition of transgression within *adab* guarantees the vitality of the tradition by keeping *adab* open to its ever-changing field of reference.

One particularly fitting instance of this is the manner in which colloquial dialects and the thriving popular poetry of the writer's time interact with *adab*. The pressures of a multi-lingual reality impact

the book in ways that go beyond the author's declared purpose. Whether intended or not, the "voices" of the peasant and the colloquial language and poetry in *Hazz al-Quḥūf* come through as laudable and imposing amidst the "noise" of a host of other languages (Turkish, literary Arabic), genres (*tarjama, maqāma*, chronicle) and social discourses (the discourses of city slickers, *'ulamā'*, prostitutes, refined writers, traders, etc.). From the point of view of literary history, the representation of colloquial poetry in general and the *sīra* in particular in an *adab* work stretches the boundaries of *adab* in the 17th century in directions of potentially wide-ranging effect on the course of Arabic literature as a whole. It foreshadows the closer contact between the two spheres of culture that will dominate the 19th and 20th centuries in Egypt and throughout the Arab-speaking world.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Peter Heath, Rasheed El-Enany and Michael Beard for commenting on earlier drafts of this paper, which is dedicated to Lotfi Mellek, for perfecting the art of the punch-line, and in friendship.
2. Like most literature considered objectionable, the book has been severely bowdlerized in modern editions. In Muḥammad al-Buqlī's edition (al-Shirbīnī 1963) words and phrases are often changed and full sections left out. A particularly striking instance is the deletion of the introduction, in which the writer presents himself and his book. The edition cannot be considered more than an extensive summary tailored to fit the ideological and moral concerns of its editor. In this paper all references are to the Būlāq edition of 1274/1857–8. According to Davies, who studied early versions of the book, this is the clearest edition and one of the closest to the extant complete manuscripts (1981: 39).
3. The title, *Hazz al-quḥūf fī sharḥ qaṣīd Abī Shādūf*, follows the conventional practice of using rhyming prose in titles. It has been rendered in a number of ways. The first of its two parts, *Hazz al-quḥūf*, has been translated as "The Stirring of Yokels" (Cachia 1989), "The Tossing of Heads" (*EI*^{2}), "The Shaking of Peasant Caps" (Davies 1981), etc. "The Shaking of Palm Leaves" seems to me more accurate, as the author compares Abū Shādūf's poetry to palm leaves (*quḥūf al-jarīd*; 1857: 2). The title is a parody of the *adab* convention of comparing books to flowers, fruits, gardens or jewelry; the second unit means the interpretation or explication of Abū Shādūf's ode. Henceforth, I will refer to the book as *Hazz al-quḥūf*.
4. Complete reliance on a book for information on its author is a valid undertaking. Lacking other sources, we are fortunate to be able to construct at least the main

elements of the author's life. Yet a basic methodological problem should not go unnoticed. The author's references to his life should not ignore the fact that Shirbīnī's book is mainly a work of fiction, where information may be invented or altered for the purposes of composition and verisimilitude. To mention just one example, consider the only date given in the book, 1074/1663–4. While we have no reason to doubt Shirbīnī's claim that his pilgrimage took place in that year, his debate with a peasant (*fallāḥ*) during the same journey, in which the author is portrayed as a learned man (*ʿālim*), may well be made up, as it fits too neatly into the book's general purpose and tone. In actuality, research corroborates only one fact, namely the teachers claimed by Shirbīnī as his. The text is the only piece of hard evidence available to us; and it is on the text *qua* text that I will focus most of this paper.

5. These two teachers appear among the notables of the century in al-Muḥibbī (1967). Al-Sandūbī was known as teacher, exegete and poet (1967, 1: 156). Al-Qalyūbī was a more prominent figure; among his many writings, he is known for a well-read book of stories, *Ḥikāyāt gharība wa-ʿajība* ("Strange and Marvelous Stories"; see the complete French translation [al-Qalyūbī 1977]). Shirbīnī claims that he wrote his book at the behest of al-Sandūbī (1857: 228).
6. Two other books are attributed to him, one on piety, the other an exegesis of a poem. According to Kaḥḥāla, the exegesis was completed in 1098/1687 (1961, 12: 329).
7. Shirbīnī is explicit about his inclination to transgress norms: "One learns from this that the poet prefers females over males, which is the opposite of our principle, we, men of sin [*maʿshar al-fussāq*]" (1857: 125). Part II includes an account of his infatuation with a boy and a *ghazal* on the subject (*ibid.*: 137).
8. Following a series of anecdotes triggered by Abū Shādūf's loss of wealth and social prestige, Shirbīnī evokes his own hardship, the dispersal of his friends, and his loneliness (1857: 97, 100).
9. All translations from Shirbīnī are mine unless otherwise indicated. Baer argues that Shirbīnī was a "a merchant and money-lender doing business with peasants" (1982: 6). ʿAbd al-Raheim claims that he was paid to ridicule a rebellious peasant (1975: 251–52). Neither these observations, nor speculations about the dates of Shirbīnī's death or of the writing of his book, can be substantiated. Davies, who investigated Shirbīnī perhaps more thoroughly than any other scholar, argues convincingly that the work was composed sometime after 1098/1687 (1981: 4).
10. The entry "al-Shirbīnī" in *EI*[2] mentions 1075/1665 instead of 1074/1654. Shirbīnī also tells us that his father was a poet, or at least wrote poetry in literary Arabic (1857: 83–84).
11. Prominent examples of the genre are al-Thaʿālibī's (d. 429/1038) *Yatīmat al-dahr* and al-Bākharzī's (d. 467/1075) *Dumyat al-qaṣr*. The latest work in the

genre before its revival in the 11th/17th century is *'Uqūd al-jumān*, produced three centuries earlier (al-Bākharzī n.d., 1: 3–4).

12. Although al-Khafājī deplores the decline of knowledge in his time, he goes on to prove the opposite. The litany, common even at the height of Arabic literature, is likely to be a convention rather than a reliable assessment of the time, and should not be taken at face value.
13. Al-Muḥibbī explains the variations in the styles of his biographies and the inclusion of his own poetry in *Khulāṣat al-athar* by the desire to entertain the reader. He justifies digressions as follows: "This discourse took place in between (subjects), and I meant to bring it up in order to please the listener. Moving from one style to an other is appreciated by people of sound judgement" (1967, 2: 4).
14. On popular culture in this period see Heath 1996; on the state of Arabic at the time see the article "'Arabiyya" in *EI*², especially the sections on "Middle Arabic" (H. Wehr) and "The Vernaculars" (Ph. Marçais). P. M. Holt's *Ottoman Egypt* (1973) refers to several sources in colloquial.
15. An informative overview of social life in Egypt during the Ottoman period is provided by Winter (1992). Boaz Shoshan's study (1993), although it deals with the Mamlūk period, provides a useful framework for understanding the interaction between subcultures in the city.
16. There is no doubt that *Hazz al-quḥūf* reflects the political and social life of its time. Shirbīnī describes the types of taxes and the ways in which the country was subordinated to the city (1857: 116–32). There are two strong condemnations of the policies imposed on *fallāḥin* in the author's time. *Wajba*—compulsory feeding of government officials when they went to villages to collect taxes—is clearly declared invalid (*bāṭila*) on the basis of a Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*; *ibid.*: 117). There is also a strong disapproval of appointing Christians and Jews to oppress Muslims (*ibid.*: 117–18). During these passages the style is solemn and dignified; there is no sense of humor either in content or through the triggers the writer uses elsewhere (e.g., "silly question" or "nonsensical response"). Shirbīnī even inserts a brief history of the financial institution called *dīwān* to back the historicity of his claims (*ibid.*: 128–29).
17. Judging by monographs, reprints and manuscripts, the book appears to have reached the height of its circulation in the 19th century (Davies 1981: 36–39). A burst of interest occurred in Egypt after the 1952 revolution. Baer's extensive treatment of Shirbīnī includes a useful review and critique of Egyptian sources on the book (1982: 24–28). The interest in Shirbīnī's book in Egypt after 1952 included the view that Abū Shādūf was a "heroic folk poet" (Abd al-Raheim 1975: 251). A link between such interpretation and land reform in Egypt at the time is not unlikely.
18. Pierre Cachia writes: "As for the attitude of the elite to the masses and their potential for artistic self-expression, it is exemplified at its most arrogant in

Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Shirbīnī's (d. 1687) well-known *Hazz al-Quḥūf*' (1989: 15). Connelly writes: "His [Shirbīnī's] attack on the Nile valley dirt farmer, whose dusty roots he shared and whose dung-encrusted clothes he disdained, was directed at a literate, urban audience" (1986: 167–68).

19. Peled states, "Shirbīnī broke away from editorial convention and structured his commentary, in the second part of the book, as a sort of transcript of the actual discussion in the *majlis*, where the comments are brought *à propos* the verses quoted and not rearranged, as done in fact, in the first part" (1986: 63).
20. Baer writes: "Neither Abū Shādūf nor the villages he mentions exist anywhere." They are "ridiculous names intended to amuse" (1982: 34). Abū Shādūf's home town is called Shammar Ṭāṭā, a combination of two verbs in the command mood, *shammar* (pull up your sleeves or your robe) and *ṭa'ṭa'* (bend down). The allusion is evident. Peled agrees with Davies that the poem is probably "a concoction written by Shirbīnī himself" (*ibid.*: 59). 'Abd al-Raheim claims that Shirbīnī was commissioned to denigrate Abū Shādūf and his poem (see n. 9 above).
21. There are 29 dishes in 28 lines. Shirbīnī makes use of the conventional practice of composing poems for the purpose of conveying specific information or knowledge. Grammatical rules are the subject of long poems such as Ibn Mālik's (d. 672/1274) *Alfiyya*; Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1027) wrote a poem (*urjūza*) of 1300 lines to convey medical teaching. Poetry has the pedagogical advantage of facilitating learning through memorization.
22. Peled devotes a good part of his important article to analysing narrative techniques in this story. He makes a perceptive analysis of what he calls "realism" in the anecdote (1986: 67). Yet he fails to see the stylistic as well as thematic dialogue between this story and Abū Shādūf's poem. His suggestion that Part I and Part II of the book belong to two different genres may be the reason why he saw no connection between the two.
23. At the artistic level a comparison between the two poems promises to yield interesting results. I do not intend to elaborate on this here, except to point out the parallels at the levels of length, quality and composition. The poems are approximately the same length (46 and 47 verses each). Abū 'Afra's, however, is a love poem with quite elaborate images and a rigorous rhyme scheme. The reason may lie in the composition. Abū 'Afra's piece may well be a genuine *zajal*, or patterned after one written by Shirbīnī or a recognized colloquial poet. On the composition of Abū Shādūf's ode, more will be said in what follows.
24. Colloquial fits the general setting of the story in a peasant environment, and there is no direct authorial interference in narration. Shirbīnī's aim may well be to poke fun at the peasants' poor taste and coarse manners. Nevertheless, he does not end the story with an acerbic comment, as he does, for example, in the story immediately following it, in which he draws attention to the moral in a didactic tone: "Consider this miserable ill-fated man. Think about his simple-

mindedness and how his play with his wife has resulted in disaster and riots in the land [*al-hamm wa-al-nakad wa-qiyām al-ghārāt fī al-balad*]!" (1857: 21). The phrase about riots is most likely inserted for the sake of the rhyme created by *nakad* and *balad*.

25. This translation is indebted to the invaluable glossary for *Hazz al-quḥūf* provided by Davies in his extensive lexicon (1981: 331–492). []
26. On the attitude of mistrust of others, al-Jabartī mentions Shirbīnī's contemporary Ḥasan al-Azharī, who wrote the satirical work *Ijmāʿ al-uyyās min al-wuthūq bil-nās* (al-Jabartī n.d., 1: 131). See van Gelder 1992 for more on the subject of humor in *adab*. Van Gelder's book on *hijāʾ* (1988) refers to a number of poets from the 18th century. Prominent among them is ʿĀmir al-Anbūṭī (d. 1171/1758), who, van Gelder says, "has a precursor in Ibn Sūdūn" in that both wrote "parodies of serious poems, by turning them into verse about food" (1988: 134).
27. The term *adab al-tajāwuz* is coined here as a working concept and remains in need of further elaboration. It is patterned after *adab al-mulāzama* ("literature or rules of courtly conduct"), *adab al-kātib* ("rules and style of the scribe"), etc. In Arabic the expression *tajāwuz* combines the meanings of "transgression" and "going beyond". I use it here to refer to literature that goes beyond the normal conventions and codes by representing them in a parodic manner. The term is partly indebted to Bakhtin's conception of parody referred to below.
28. The *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* makes a distinction between satire and parody. While "satire has as a purpose to make the object of the attack abhorrent or ridiculous," parody (the exaggerated imitation of a work of art) "usually makes its point by employing a serious style to express an incongruous subject thus disturbing the balance between form and matter" (1975: 600).
29. Note, however, the less oblique style that introduces humorous discussions, where Shirbīnī uses the terms *masʾala fashrawiyya* or *habāliyya*, a superfluous or foolish issue, and *jawāb fasharawī*, a silly response (see e.g., 1857: 62–63). Both formulas ("question and answer" and "foolish issue, silly response") have a precedent in Ibn Sūdūn (see Vrolijk 1998: 147 ff.); however, Shirbīnī's predecessor claims that people have written to him with their questions.
30. In one of these, a *shaykh* who seduced a boy by faking piety tells a group of peasants, "We mounted a magnificent marble dome and poured in it a pillar of light" (1857: 81). While the naïve peasants thought the *shaykh* had reached the famous *qubbat al-falak*, the dome of the universe, with the light of his knowledge, the hypocrite was actually using the symbols in a clear sexual allusion. In al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* one use of rhetorical skill is to gain mundane, practical ends. This displacement of reward into the sphere of sex, rather than money or food, is an unusual twist in yet another of Shirbīnī's parodies of the genre.

31. Abū ʿAfra's story bears a strong resemblance to the *maqāma*, with elements of audience, narrator, and picaresque adventure. It is, however, an interesting variation. I do not intend to dwell on this line of comparison here, except to point out two differences: first, that the adventure is set completely within a peasant environment, as opposed to the usual implied polished audience and eloquent hero in the *maqāma*; and second, with regard to language the story is told almost entirely in colloquial, the direct opposite of the erudite language of (for example) al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt*.
32. See Ibn Khaldūn for an early extensive reference to colloquial poetry, including one of the earliest references to *sīra* (1991: 335–52). On the composition of *sīra* and its relationship to peasants see Connelly 1986. A good discussion of various sources, versions and the state of scholarship on *sīra* is to be found in Ayyūb 1989.
33. The passage is part of Abū Zayd's description of his encounter with al-Haṣhīṣ, the brother of Khalīfa Zanātī, ruler of Tunis. *Al-Ḥamrā* is the name of Abū Zayd's horse.
34. Abd al-Raheim provides an extensive but far from flawless translation of the poem (1975: 260).
35. Cachia and Connelly basically agree on Shirbīnī's presumed aims. Cachia writes: "As for the attitude of the elite to the masses and their potential artistic self-expression, it is exemplified at its most arrogant in Yūsuf Ibn Muḥammad al-Shirbīnī's . . . well-known *Hazz al-Quhuf*" (1989: 15). Connelly says that Shirbīnī's "hyperbolic mockery of the language and locutions of Sirat Bani Hilal in *Hazz al-Quhuf* (the Shaking of the Skullcaps) stands as a testament to the enduring quality of the 'cultural war' surrounding the Shaʿir's discourse" (1986: 167).
36. Other popular narratives are also mentioned in *Hazz al-quḥūf*. They include elements from the *sīra* of ʿAntar, although the *sīra* itself is not explicitly named, and of Aḥmad al-Danaf, from the "Story of Zīr Sālim" (1857: 53, 87 for ʿAntar; 161 for al-Danaf). A long story from what Shirbīnī calls "the book of 1001 nights" is also included (*ibid.*: 214–21).
37. By Shirbīnī's time colloquial no longer carried the stigma it had once had. It was widely used in chronicles, colloquial poetry was widely quoted in literate books, and high-profile writers often tried their hand at the canonized art of colloquial poetry. At least two manuals on colloquial poetry had by then been known for centuries: *Dār al-ṭirāz fī ʿamal al-muwashshaḥāt* by Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk (d. 607/1211) and *al-ʿĀṭil al-ḥālī wa-al-markhaṣ al-ghālī* by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 750/1349). See also Ibn Iyās (1984) and al-Jabartī (n.d.) for particular uses of colloquial in chronicles and histories at the time. Ibn Dāniyāl makes a marriage broker speak colloquial (1992: 40). Ibn al-Ḥajjāj is reported to have gathered his language from people in the marketplace (al-Thaʿālibī 1957: 3: 30).

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