Chapter - III

Literary Activities in Arabs

Arabic literature, literary works written in the Arabic language. The great body of Arabic literature includes works by Arabic speaking Turks, Persians, Syrians, Egyptians, Indians, Jews, and other Africans and Asians, as well as the Arabs themselves.

The first significant Arabic literature was produced during the medieval golden age of lyric poetry, from the 4th to the 7th cent. The poems are strongly personal *qasida*, or odes, often very short, with some longer than 100 lines. They treat the life of the tribe and themes of love, fighting, courage, and the chase. The poet speaks directly, not romantically, of nature and the power of God. The *qasida* survive only through collections, chiefly the Muallaqat, Hamasa, Mufaddaliyat, and Kitab al-Aghani. The most esteemed of these poets are Amru al-Kais, Antara, and Zuhair.

With the advent of Islam, the Qur'an became the central work of study and recitation. Extra-Qur'anic poetry underwent a decline from which it recovered in a far different form. The Qur'an supplanted poetry by becoming the chief object of study of the Muslim world. Poetry regained some prestige under the Umayyads, when al-Akhtal (c.640-c.710) and al-Farazdaq (c.640-732) wrote their lyric works.\footnote{Arberry, A.J.; *Modern Arabic Poetry*, (London, 1950, repr. 1967), P-12}

Under the Abbasids (750-1258), Hellenic, Syrian, Pahlavi, and Sanskrit works became available in translation, and the Arabic language further developed as a vehicle of science and philosophy. Among the pioneers of Arabic prose were Ibn al-Muqaffa, the translator of the Indian fables of *Kalila wa Dimna*, and al-Jahiz (d. 868), an influential figure in the establishment of the belles-lettres compendia (*adab*) as a dominant literary theme.

The next great period of Arabic literature was a result of the rise of the new Arabic-Persian culture of Baghdad, the new capital of the Abbasids, in the 8th and 9th cent. Philosophy,
mathematics, law, Qur'anic interpretation and criticism, history, and science were cultivated, and the collections of early Arabic poetry were compiled during this period.

At the end of the 8th century in Baghdad a group of young poets arose who established a new court poetry. A prominent court poet was Abu Nuwas. Asceticism, not yet developed into Sufism, evolved into a poetic genre with Abu al-Atahiya. Among the most popular of Arabic poets, Mutanabbi (915-65) wrote some of the most complex, and most eloquent, Arabic poems. The poet Hariri sought to combine "refinement with dignity of style, and brilliancies with jewels of eloquence." Abu al-Ala al-Maarri was an outstanding Syrian poet of great originality. The greatest mystic poet of the age was Omar Ibn al-Faridh (1181-1235).

The influence of India and Persia is seen in Arabic prose romance, which became the principal literary form. The greatest collection is the Thousand and One Nights. The major writers of historical and geographical works in Arabic include Bukhari, Tabari, Masudi, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn al-Athir (d. 1234), and Ibn Batuta. The foremost Arab theologian was al-Ghazali; Avicenna, the great physician, wrote on medicine. The central Asian scholar al-Faralsi, wrote fundamental works on philosophical and musical theory. In the field of belles-lettres, essays and epistles of great wit and erudition, known as risalas, were composed on subjects as diverse as science, mysticism, and politics. Chief practitioners of the genre include Ibn al-Muqaffa (d.757), the unsurpassed al-Jahiz, and Ibn Qutayba (d.889).

The Western center of Arab culture was Spain, especially Córdoba under the Umayyads. The Spanish Arabs produced fine poets and scholars, but they are less important than the great Spanish philosophers-Avempace, Averroës, and Ibn Tufayl. Their works became known in Europe chiefly through the Latin translations of Jewish scholars. Since 1200 in Spain and 1300 in the East, there has been little Arabic literature of wide interest.58

During the 19th cent., printing in Arabic began in earnest, centered in Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus. Newspapers, encyclopedias, and books were published in which Arab writers tried to express, in Arabic, their sense of themselves and their place in the modern world. Simultaneously with a reaction against Western models in Arabic literature, the novel and the

drama, forms never before used, developed. The first modern Arabic novel is generally
recognized to be Zaynab (1912) by the Egyptian Muhammad Husayn Haykal. Arabic fiction was
virtually unknown in the West, with fewer than five novels translated into English by the 1950s.
Interest in modern Arabic literature increased after 1988 when the Egyptian novelist Naguib
Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Other notable 20th- and 21st-century writers in
Arabic include the novelists Abdelrahman Munif, Sonallah Ibrahim, Yahya Hakki, Ghassan
Kanafani, Alaa Al Aswany, Elias Khoury, and Mahmoud Saeed and the short-story writers
Mahmud Tymur and Yusuf Idris. Interest in Arabic fiction has been further stimulated by the
establishment (2007) of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, an award aimed at securing
recognition, readership, translation, and publication of outstanding contemporary Arabic fiction.
Funded the the Emirates Foundation of Abu Dhabi, it is modeled after the Man Booker Prize.
Notable playwrights in Arabic include Ahmad Shawqi and Tawfiq al-Hakim; notable poets,
Hafiz Ibrahim, Badr Shakir as-Sayyab, Nazik al-Malaika, Abdul Wahab al-Bayati, Nizar
Qabbani, Mahmoud Darwish, and Adonis.

Arabic Literature:

Arabic literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries diverged substantially from
inherited practices.

Arabic literature has its roots in pre-Islamic odes, enshrining prosodic and thematic
conventions that remained unchallenged centuries after the ethos of desert life had ceased to be
widely applicable. The emergence of historic Islam in the seventh century C.E., together with the
dogma that the Qur'an is the actual word of God and that its superhuman eloquence is the
miracle that proves the genuineness of the Prophet's mission, gave the language of that period an
all but hallowed character that was perpetuated in formal writing but displaced by local
uninflected vernaculars in everyday Arabic speech.

The literary tradition was therefore tinged with a conservative and juristic quality that
gave it uncommon homogeneity and continuity. Its conservativeness also insulated it from daily
concerns, so that the uneducated majority turned instead to regional folk literatures that were
ignored or even despised by the establishment. Nevertheless, changes did occur. One was a
growing taste for verbal ornaments, such as the pun and the double entendre. What modern
Arabs inherited from the immediate past, therefore, was the literature of a conservative elite in which correctness, convention, and linguistic virtuosity were prized above content or originality.\footnote{Badawi, Mustafa, ed. Modern Arabic Literature. (Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.13}

By the 1800s, the encroachments of Europe brought new perceptions to Arab intellectuals, who came to admire the very power that the colonialists used against them and sought the knowledge that made it possible. By the 1870s, especially in Egypt and the Levant, a new westward-looking elite had emerged. From it came the producers and consumers of the new literature.

**New Direction:**

The conscious adaptation of literary standards to changed conditions was gradual. The earliest Arab intellectuals with extensive opportunity to get to know Europe, such as the perceptive Rifa\=a Rafi\=a al-Tahtawi (1801 - 1871) and the more mercurial Faris (later, Ahmad Faris) al-Shidyaq (1804 - 1887), were aware that Europeans had different concepts of literature than Arabs did, but they deemed them inferior. And yet a new form of writing was coming into being, which was evident wherever there was a need to convey information (as in the books of Shidyaq and Tahtawi). It was fostered in translations, even nonliterary ones, where Arabic had to accommodate notions never before expressed; and it was important to a new Middle Eastern profession born of an imported technology: journalism.

The new direction was strikingly illustrated in the career of Abdullah al-Nadim (1845 - 1896), the fiery orator of the Urabi rebellion. He was well established as a master of finely bejeweled rhymed prose, but when he took to journalism, he faced up to the need to reach a wide public. He experimented, briefly, with writing an occasional piece entirely in the vernacular, but the choice he deliberately made was to use a vocabulary as close as possible to that of everyday speech without deviating from the rules of classical Arabic grammar. Others have since wrestled with the strains and anomalies of writing in the Arabic idiom that no one speaks and, indeed, the colloquial has gained a large measure of acceptance in the theater and a more grudging one in the dialogue of novels and short stories. But al-Nadim's practice has prevailed among prose writers
for at least eighty years, with only a few in the last generation allowing themselves liberties with the syntax as well.

The transformation was not merely stylistic; by the 1870s, admiration of Europe's successes in science and technology was extended, by a loose association, to political, social, and philosophic endeavors as well. The adoption of European aesthetic norms could not lag far behind. By the turn of the twentieth century, direct and unadorned prose was widely recognized as not only functional but also literarily desirable. Because the learned were few, the principal medium of dissemination was the periodical press, so some major literary works were serialized before appearing in book form.

With little to encourage specialization in any one genre, the recognized stylists found their main vehicle in short prose pieces, such as the moralistic essays and tearful narratives of Mustafa Lutfi al Manfaluti (1876 - 1924). Indeed, the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by immensely prolific and versatile writers, among whom were Taha Husayn (1889 - 1973) and Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad (1889 - 1964). They were virtually all secularist and liberal socio politically, and romantic in their literary inclinations. Although few set out their aesthetic principles systematically, they accustomed their generation to seek neither formalism nor virtuosity in literature but sincerity and emotion. Experience and maturity, the events of World War II, the subsequent decline of Britain and France, and above all, the challenges of independence in tandem with the turmoil of the Palestinians caused the next generation to turn away from romanticism. The keynote of postwar Arabic writing has been political commitment and realism, strongly tinged with socialism.

Prose:

The prose style of the West fostered genres previously unknown in Arabic literature. In particular, narratives were discredited as no more than folk art, and the only form to have gained the critics' acceptance as serious literature was the *maqama*, pioneered by Badi al-Zaman al-Hamadhani (968 - 1008). It was a short piece that usually recounted, in highly ornate prose, some petty fraud perpetrated by an amiable rogue. By the end of the nineteenth century there was growing public demand for short stories and novels of the European type. The demand was readily met by translations, adaptations, or imitations. The short story proved particularly
suitable to the needs of journals and an excellent medium for the piecemeal propagation of new ideas and perceptions. In its Arabic garb, it was brought to a high level of sophistication as early as the 1920s by such authors as Mahmud Taymur (1894 - 1973).

The novel was a more difficult form, especially in the absence of an Arabic tradition. Translations and adaptations aside, a pioneering attempt at a long narrative was made by Muhammad al-Muwaylihi (1858 - 1930) in Hadith Isa ibn Hisham (The Discourse of Isa ibn Hisham), in which a resurrected pasha had a series of adventures that offered opportunities to comment on social changes. The fact that it borrowed the name of the narrator and, in places, the style of (al-Hamadhani), caused it to be labeled an extended maqama, but the purpose it served was different, and its link to the novel form was tenuous.

Jurji Zaydan (1861 - 1914), the indefatigable owner and editor of the journal al-Hilal, published more than a score of romances, each twined around some episode of Islamic history - but invention in them is minimal. The first novel of recognized merit rooted in contemporary Arab life was Zaynab, the story of a village girl married against her will; it was written by Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888 - 1956) in 1910/11 and first published anonymously. No others of consequence were published until the 1930s, when several writers with already established reputations, such as Taha Husayn, Mahmud Taymur, and Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini (1890 - 1949), turned to the novel. Greater progress was made under the banner of realism, notably by Najib Mahfuz (b. 1911), the first Arab to devote most of his energies to one genre. His abundant, varied, and highly competent production earned him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988.

Theatre:

Even more than the novel, dramatic literature was hindered by the absence of any regional precedent, except as folk art, and by resistance to the use of the Arabic colloquial - even between unlearned characters and before mixed audiences. Yet drama made a comparatively early start; the first performance was The Miser, a play which, although not a translation of Molière's play, owed a great deal to the great French comedic playwright (1622 - 1673). It was produced in Beirut (Lebanon) in 1847 by Marun al-Naqqash (1818 - 1855). His company, and several others that branched out of it or imitated it, found acceptance in Egypt, but their activities
were looked upon as mere entertainment. In fact, although some writers established in other genres also tried to write plays, no Arab acquired a reputation as a playwright until the 1930s, when Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898 - 1987), who had had experience as a hack writer for a theatrical company, returned from a period of study in Paris determined to give drama a recognized place among literary arts. His long career, marked by productivity and versatility even into old age, brought him fame and inspired an impressive group of new playwrights.

Poetry:

In contrast to the newly imported genres, Arabic poetry has a long and rich tradition. In the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, poets perpetuated the highly ornate style of their immediate predecessors. When the times called for a less ornamental and more purposeful poetry, the practice of the most talented turned not to European models but to the example of early poets from an equally dynamic age. By the turn of the century, a school now known as the neoclassical quickly attained a high level of accomplishment, emulating the grandiloquent odes of Abbasid poets but addressing the public issues of the day. Its leading exponents were Ahmad Shawqi (1868 - 1932) and Muhammad Hafiz Ibrahim (c. 1872 - 1932).

Resonant as they were, their voices were not the only ones to be heard. Others favored more radical initiatives and the expression of more personal emotions. From outside the Arab heartlands, Syrian Christian émigrés to the Americas headed by Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) echoed a type of poetry long accepted in the West. Not least influential were the leading critics al-Aqqad and Taha Husayn, who harried the neo-classicists for not equaling the subtleties of the British poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) or the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine (1790 - 1869). The leanings of these various groups were unmistakable, and after the death of Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim, the romanticism already evident in prose became evident in poetry as well.  

Another new note was sounded in 1949 when two Iraqis, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1926 - 1964) and Nazik al-Malaikha (b. 1923), almost simultaneously published their first experiments with free verse. The adoption of lines of uneven length with muted rhymes irregularly arranged,

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or with no rhymes at all, was the most radical departure ever from classical Arabic poetry. No less significant is that the movement grew - and has continued to grow - out of perceptions shared with Western poets of international stature, especially T. S. Eliot (1888 - 1965). Most revolutionary of all has been its purpose; for it has given rise to a host of committed poets often able to give voice to their predicaments as individuals and, at the same time, as Arabs and as humanists.

All Genres:

All along, Arab writers have given expression to the fervor and then to the disappointments and antagonisms generated by the succession of Western ideologies embraced by the elite. This expression has to some extent been tinged by the prestige of the world power most closely associated with each ism. In the second half of the twentieth century, following growing disappointment in the way the liberalism and secularism associated with Western Europe had worked out, the dominant doctrine has been socialism, but the collapse of the Soviet Union undermined confidence in its forthcoming triumph. Very few carry their disillusion to the extent implied in a short story by Mahmud al-Rimawi (b. 1948) titled "The Train" and included in his Liqa lam yatimm (2002). In it, a train running to an unknown destination and stopping only at deserted stations is packed with people who have been on it long enough for a baby girl to be born to one of them, and the name she is given is Palestine. More confidently, contributors to all literary genres view themselves as individuals sharing a distinctive experience but informed by a universal consciousness, and dealing with issues that have a humanistic as well as an Arab dimension.

A large proportion of Arabic literature before the 20th century is in the form of poetry, and even prose from this period is either filled with snippets of poetry or is in the form of saj or rhymed prose. The themes of the poetry range from high-flown hymns of praise to bitter personal attacks and from religious and mystical ideas to poems on sex and wine. An important feature of the poetry which would be applied to all of the literature was the idea that it must be pleasing to the ear. The poetry and much of the prose was written with the design that it would be spoken aloud and great care was taken to make all writing as mellifluous as possible.
Non-fiction literature

Compilations and manuals:

In the late 9th century Ibn al-Nadim, a Baghdadi bookseller, compiled a crucial work in the study of Arabic literature. *Kitab al-Fihrist* is a catalogue of all books available for sale in Baghdad and it gives a fascinating overview of the state of the literature at that time.

One of the most common forms of literature during the Abbasid period was the compilation. These were collections of facts, ideas, instructive stories and poems on a single topic and covers subjects as diverse as house and garden, women, gate-crashers, blind people, envy, animals and misers. These last three compilations were written by al-Jahiz the acknowledged master of the form. These collections were important for any *nadim*, a companion to a ruler or noble whose role was often involved regaling the ruler with stories and information to entertain or advise.

A type of work closely allied to the collection was the manual in which writers like ibn Qutaybah offered instruction in subjects like etiquette, how to rule, how to be a bureaucrat and even how to write. Ibn Qutaybah also wrote one of the earliest histories of the Arabs, drawing together biblical stories, Arabic folk tales and more historical events.

The subject of sex was frequently investigated in Arabic literature. The ghazal or love poem had a long history being at times tender and chaste and at other times rather explicit. In the Sufi tradition the love poem would take on a wider, mystical and religious importance. Sex manuals were also written such as *The Perfumed Garden*, *Qawq al-amāmah* or *The Dove's Neckring* by ibn Hazm and *Nuzhat al-albab fi-ma la yujad fi kitab* or *Delight of Hearts Concerning What will Never Be Found in a Book* by Ahmad al-Tifashi. Countering such works are one like *Rawdat al-muhibbin wa-nuzhat al-mushtaqin* or *Meadow of Lovers and Diversion of the Infatuated* by ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah who advises on how to separate love and lust and avoid sin.

Biography, history, and geography:

Aside from the early biographies of Muhammad, the first major biographer to weigh character rather than just producing a hymn of praise was the Persian scholar al-Baladhuri with...
his *Kitab ansab al-ashraf* or *Book of the Genealogies of the Noble*, a collection of biographies. Another important biographical dictionary was begun by ibn Khallikan and expanded by al-Safadi and one of the first significant autobiographies was *Kitab al-I’tibar* which told of Usamah ibn Munqidh and his experiences in fighting in the Crusades. This time period saw the emergence of the genre of *tabaqat* (biographical dictionaries or biographical compendia).\(^2\)

Ibn Khurdadhbih, apparently an official in the postal service wrote one of the first travel books and the form remained a popular one in Arabic literature with books by ibn Hawqal, ibn Fadlan, al-Istakhri, al-Muqaddasi, al-Idrisi and most famously the travels of ibn Battutah. These give a fascinating view of the many cultures of the wider Islamic world and also offer Muslim perspectives on the non-Muslim peoples on the edges of the empire. They also indicated just how great a trading power the Muslim peoples had become. These were often sprawling accounts that included details of both geography and history.

Some writers concentrated solely on history like al-Ya’qubi and al-Tabari, whilst others focused on a small portion of history such as ibn al-Azraq, with a history of Mecca, and ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur, writing a history of Baghdad. The historian regarded as the greatest of all Arabic historians though is ibn Khaldun whose history *Muqaddimah* focuses on society and is a founding text in sociology and economics.

**Diaries:**

In the medieval Near East, Arabic diaries were first being written from before the 10th century, though the medieval diary which most resembles the modern diary was that of Ibn Banna in the 11th century. His diary was the earliest to be arranged in order of date (*ta’rikh* in Arabic), very much like modern diaries.\(^61\)

**Literary theory and criticism:**

Literary criticism in Arabic literature often focused on religious texts, and the several long religious traditions of hermeneutics and textual exegesis have had a profound influence on

the study of secular texts. This was particularly the case for the literary traditions of Islamic literature.

Literary criticism was also employed in other forms of medieval Arabic poetry and literature from the 9th century, notably by Al-Jahiz in his *al-Bayan wa-l-tabyin* and *al-Hayawan*, and by Abdullah ibn al-Mu'tazz in his *Kitab al-Badi*.[4]

**Fiction literature:**

In the Arab world, there was a great distinction between *al-fusha* (quality language) and *al-ammiyyah* (language of the common people). Not many writers would write works in this *al-ammiyyah* or common language and it was felt that literature had to be improving, educational and with purpose rather than just entertainment. This did not stop the common role of the *hakawati* or story-teller who would retell the entertaining parts of more educational works or one of the many Arabic fables or folk-tales, which were often not written down in many cases. Nevertheless, some of the earliest novels, including the first philosophical novels, were written by Arabic authors.

**Epic literature:**

The most famous example of Arabic fiction is the *One Thousand and One Nights* (Arabian Nights), easily the best known of all Arabic literature and which still affects many of the ideas non-Arabs have about Arabic culture. A good example of the lack of popular Arabic prose fiction is that the stories of Aladdin and Ali Baba, usually regarded as part of the *Tales from One Thousand and One Nights*, were not actually part of the *Tales*. They were first included in French translation of the *Tales* by Antoine Galland who heard them being told by a traditional storyteller and only existed in incomplete Arabic manuscripts before that. The other great character from Arabic literature Sinbad is from the *Tales*.

The *One Thousand and One Nights* is usually placed in the genre of Arabic epic literature along with several other works. They are usually, like the *Tales*, collections of short stories or episodes strung together into a long tale. The extant versions were mostly written down relatively late on, after the 14th century, although many were undoubtedly collected earlier and many of the original stories are probably pre-Islamic. Types of stories in these collections...
include animal fables, proverbs, stories of *jihad* or propagation of the faith, humorous tales, moral tales, tales about the wily con-man Ali Zaybaq and tales about the prankster Juha.

**Maqama:**

Maqama not only straddles the divide between prose and poetry, being instead a form of rhymed prose, it is also part way between fiction and non-fiction. Over a series of short narratives, which are fictionalised versions of real life situations, different ideas are contemplated. A good example of this is a maqama on musk, which purports to compare the feature of different perfumes but is in fact a work of political satire comparing several competing rulers. Maqama also makes use of the doctrine of *badi* or deliberately adding complexity to display the writer's dexterity with language. Al-Hamadhani is regarded as the originator of the maqama and his work was taken up by Abu Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri with one of al-Hariri's maqama a study of al-Hamadhani own work. Maqama was an incredibly popular form of Arabic literature, being one of the few forms which continued to be written during the decline of Arabic in the 17th and 18th centuries.

**Romantic literature:**

A famous example of romantic Arabic poetry is *Layla and Majmun*, dating back to the Umayyad era in the 7th century. It is a tragic story of undying love much like the later *Romeo and Juliet*, which was itself said to have been inspired by a Latin version of *Layla and Majmun* to an extent.62 *Layla and Majmun* is considered part of the platonic Love (Arabic: حب عرفي) genre, so-called because the couple never marry or consummate their relationship, that is prominent in Arabic literature, though the literary motif is found throughout the world. Other famous Virgin Love stories include *Qays and Lubna, Kuthair and Azza, Marwa and al-Majmun al-Faransi* and *Antara and Abla*.

The 10th century *Encyclopedia of the Brethren of Purity* features a fictional anecdote of a "prince who strays from his palace during his wedding feast and, drunk, spends the night in a

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cemetery, confusing a corpse with his bride. The story is used as a gnostic parable of the soul's pre-existence and return from its terrestrial sojourn.

Another medieval Arabic love story was *Hadith Bayad wa Riyad (The Story of Bayad and Riyad)*, a 13th-century Arabic love story. The main characters of the tale are Bayad, a merchant's son and a foreigner from Damascus, and Riyad, a well educated girl in the court of an unnamed Hajib (vizier or minister) of Iraq which is referred to as the lady. The *Hadith Bayad wa Riyad* manuscript is believed to be the only illustrated manuscript known to have survived from more than eight centuries of Muslim and Arab presence in Spain.

Many of the tales in the *One Thousand and One Nights* are also love stories or involve romantic love as a central theme. This includes the frame story of Scheherazade herself, and many of the stories she narrates, including "Aladdin", "The Ebony Horse", "The Three Apples", "Tale of Tāj al-Mulûk and the Princess Dunyâ: The Lover and the Loved", "Adi bin Zayd and the Princess Hind", "Di'ibil al-Khuza'i With the Lady and Muslim bin al-Walid", "The Three Unfortunate Lovers", and others.

There were several elements of courtly love which were developed in Arabic literature, namely the notions of "love for love's sake" and "exaltation of the beloved lady" which have been traced back to Arabic literature of the 9th and 10th centuries. The notion of the "ennobling power" of love was developed in the early 11th century by the Persian psychologist and philosopher, Ibn Sina (known as "Avicenna" in Europe), in his Arabic treatise *Risala fil-Ishq* (*Treatise on Love*). The final element of courtly love, the concept of "love as desire never to be fulfilled", was also at times implicit in Arabic poetry.

**Murder mystery:**

The earliest known example of a whodunit murder mystery was "The Three Apples", one of the tales narrated by Scheherazade in the *One Thousand and One Nights* (*Arabian Nights*). In this tale, a fisherman discovers a heavy locked chest along the Tigris river and he sells it to the Abbasid Caliph, Harun al-Rashid, who then has the chest broken open only to find inside it the dead body of a young woman who was cut into pieces. Harun orders his vizier, Ja'far ibn Yahya, to solve the crime and find the murderer within three days, or be executed if he fails
his assignment. Suspense is generated through multiple plot twists that occur as the story progresses. This may thus be considered an archetype for detective fiction.

**Satire and comedy:**

In Arabic poetry, the genre of satirical poetry was known as hija. Satire was introduced into prose literature by the Afro-Arab author al-Jahiz in the 9th century. While dealing with serious topics in what are now known as anthropology, sociology and psychology, he introduced a satirical approach, "based on the premise that, however serious the subject under review, it could be made more interesting and thus achieve greater effect, if only one leavened the lump of solemnity by the insertion of a few amusing anecdotes or by the throwing out of some witty or paradoxical observations. He was well aware that, in treating of new themes in his prose works, he would have to employ a vocabulary of a nature more familiar in hija, satirical poetry." For example, in one of his zoological works, he satirized the preference for longer human penis size, writing: "If the length of the penis were a sign of honor, then the mule would belong to the (honorable tribe of) Quraysh". Another satirical story based on this preference was an Arabian Nights tale called "Ali with the Large Member".

In the 10th century, the writer Tha'alibi recorded satirical poetry written by the poets As-Salami and Abu Dulaf, with As-Salami praising Abu Dulaf's wide breadth of knowledge and then mocking his ability in all these subjects, and with Abu Dulaf responding back and satirizing As-Salami in return. An example of Arabic political satire included another 10th century poet Jarir satirizing Farazdaq as "a transgressor of the Sharia" and later Arabic poets in turn using the term "Farazdaq-like" as a form of political satire.

The terms "comedy" and "satire" became synonymous after Aristotle's Poetics was translated into Arabic in the medieval Islamic world, where it was elaborated upon by Arabic writers and Islamic philosophers, such as Abu Birsch, his pupil al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes. Due to cultural differences, they disassociated comedy from Greek dramatic representation and instead identified it with Arabic poetic themes and forms, such as hija (satirical poetry). They viewed comedy as simply the "art of reprehension", and made no reference to light and cheerful events, or troublous beginnings and happy endings, associated
with classical Greek comedy. After the Latin translations of the 12th century, the term "comedy" thus gained a new semantic meaning in Medieval literature.\[15\]

**Theatre:**

While puppet theatre and passion plays were popular in the medieval Islamic world,\[16\] live theatre and drama has only been a visible part of Arabic literature in the modern era. There may have been a much longer theatrical tradition but it was probably not regarded as legitimate literature and mostly went unrecorded. There is an ancient tradition of public performance amongst Shi'i Muslims of a play depicting the life and death of al-Husayn at the battle of Karbala in 680 CE. There are also several plays composed by Shams al-din Muhammad ibn Daniyal in the 13th century when he mentions that older plays are getting stale and offers his new works as fresh material.

The most popular forms of theater in the medieval Islamic world were puppet theatre (which included hand puppets, shadow plays and marionette productions) and live passion plays known as *ta'ziya*, where actors re-enact episodes from Muslim history. In particular, Shia Islamic plays revolved around the *shaheed* (martyrdom) of Ali's sons Hasan ibn Ali and Husayn ibn Ali. Live secular plays were known as *akhraja*, recorded in medieval *adab* literature, though they were less common than puppetry and *ta'ziya* theater.

The Moors had a noticeable influence on the works of George Peele and William Shakespeare. Some of their works featured Moorish characters, such as Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello*, which featured a Moorish Othello as its title character. These works are said to have been inspired by several Moorish delegations from Morocco to Elizabethan England at the beginning of the 17th century.

**Philosophical novels:**

The Arab Islamic philosophers, Ibn Tufail (Abubacer)\[18\] and Ibn al-Nafis,\[19\] were pioneers of the philosophical novel as they wrote the earliest novels dealing with philosophical fiction. Ibn Tufail wrote the first Arabic novel *Philosophus Autodidactus* as a response to al-Ghazali's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. This was followed by Ibn al-Nafis who wrote a
fictional narrative *Theologus Autodidactus* as a response to Ibn Tufail's *Philosophus Autodidactus*. Both of these narratives had protagonists (Hayy in *Philosophus Autodidactus* and Kamil in *Theologus Autodidactus*) who were autodidactic individuals spontaneously generated in a cave and living in seclusion on a desert island, both being the earliest examples of a desert island story. However, while Hayy lives alone on the desert island for most of the story in *Philosophus Autodidactus* (until he meets a castaway named Absal), the story of Kamil extends beyond the desert island setting in *Theologus Autodidactus* (when castaways take him back to civilization with them), developing into the earliest known coming of age plot and eventually becoming the first example of a science fiction novel.\[20][21]

Ibn al-Nafis described his book *Theologus Autodidactus* as a defense of "the system of Islam and the Muslims' doctrines on the missions of Prophets, the religious laws, the resurrection of the body, and the transitoriness of the world." He presents rational arguments for bodily resurrection and the immortality of the human soul, using both demonstrative reasoning and material from the hadith corpus to prove his case. Later Islamic scholars viewed this work as a response to the metaphysical claim of Avicenna and Ibn Tufail that bodily resurrection cannot be proven through reason, a view that was earlier criticized by al-Ghazali.\[22] Ibn al-Nafis' work was later translated into Latin and English as *Theologus Autodidactus* in the early 20th century.

A Latin translation of Ibn Tufail's work, entitled *Philosophus Autodidactus*, first appeared in 1671, prepared by Edward Pococke the Younger. The first English translation by Simon Ockley was published in 1708, and German and Dutch translations were also published at the time. These translations later inspired Daniel Defoe to write *Robinson Crusoe*, which also featured a desert island narrative and was regarded as the first novel in English. *Philosophus Autodidactus* also inspired Robert Boyle, an acquaintance of Pococke, to write his own philosophical novel set on an island, *The Aspiring Naturalist*, in the late 17th century. The story also anticipated Rousseau's *Émile* in some ways, and is also similar to the later story of Mowgli in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* as well the character of Tarzan, in that a baby is abandoned in a deserted tropical island where he is taken care of and fed by a mother wolf. Other European writers influenced by *Philosophus Autodidactus* include John Locke, Gottfried Leibniz, Melchisédech Thévenot, John Wallis, Christiaan Huygens, George Keith, Robert Barclay, the Quakers, and Samuel Hartlib.
Science fiction:

*Al-Risalah al-Kamiliyyah fil Siera al-Nabawiyyah* (The Treatise of Kamil on the Prophet's Biography), known in English as *Theologus Autodidactus* (which is a phonetic transliteration of the Greek name “Θεολόγος Αυτοδιδάκτος” meaning self-taught theologian), written by the Arabian polymath Ibn al-Nafis (1213–1288), is the earliest known science fiction novel. While also being an early desert island story and coming of age story, the novel deals with various science fiction elements such as spontaneous generation, futurology, apocalyptic themes, the end of the world and doomsday, resurrection and the afterlife. Rather than giving supernatural or mythological explanations for these events, Ibn al-Nafis attempted to explain these plot elements using his own extensive scientific knowledge in anatomy, biology, physiology, astronomy, cosmology and geology. His main purpose behind this science fiction work was to explain Islamic religious teachings in terms of science and philosophy. For example, it was through this novel that Ibn al-Nafis introduces his scientific theory of metabolism, and he makes references to his own scientific discovery of the pulmonary circulation in order to explain bodily resurrection. The novel was later translated into English as *Theologus Autodidactus* in the early 20th century.

A number of stories within the *One Thousand and One Nights* (Arabian Nights) also feature science fiction elements. One example is "The Adventures of Bulukiya", where the protagonist Bulukiya's quest for the herb of immortality leads him to explore the seas, journey to the Garden of Eden and to Jahannam, and travel across the cosmos to different worlds much larger than his own world, anticipating elements of galactic science fiction; along the way, he encounters societies of jinns, mermaids, talking serpents, talking trees, and other forms of life.[33] In another *Arabian Nights* tale, the protagonist Abdullah the Fisherman gains the ability to breathe underwater and discovers an underwater submarine society that is portrayed as an inverted reflection of society on land, in that the underwater society follows a form of primitive communism where concepts like money and clothing do not exist. Other *Arabian Nights* tales deal with lost ancient technologies, advanced ancient civilizations that went astray, and catastrophes which overwhelmed them. "The City of Brass" features a group of travelers on an archaeological expedition across the Sahara to find an ancient lost city and attempt to recover a brass vessel that Solomon once used to trap a jinn, and, along the way, encounter a mummified
queen, petrified inhabitants, lifelike humanoid robots and automata, seductive marionettes dancing without strings, and a brass horseman robot who directs the party towards the ancient city. "The Ebony Horse" features a robot in the form of a flying mechanical horse controlled using keys that could fly into outer space and towards the Sun, while the "Third Qalandar's Tale" also features a robot in the form of an uncanny boatman. "The City of Brass" and "The Ebony Horse" can be considered early examples of proto-science fiction.⁶³

Other examples of early Arabic proto-science fiction include al-Farabi's *Opinions of the residents of a splendid city* about a utopian society, al-Qazwini's futuristic tale of *Awaj bin Anfaq* about a man who travelled to Earth from a distant planet, and elements such as the flying carpet.

**The decline of Arabic literature:**

The expansion of the Arab people in the 7th and 8th century brought them into contact with a variety of different peoples who would affect their culture. Most significant for literature was the ancient civilization of Persia. Shu'ubiyya is the name of the conflict between the Arabs and Non-Arabs. Although producing heated debate amongst scholars and varying styles of literature, this was not a damaging conflict and had more to do with forging a single Islamic cultural identity. Rashshar ibn Burd, of Persian heritage, summed up his own stance in a few lines of poetry:

Never did he sing camel songs behind a scabby beast,
nor pierce the bitter colocynth out of sheer hunger
nor dig a lizard out of the ground and eat it...!

The cultural heritage of the desert dwelling Arabs continued to show its influence even though many scholars and writers were living in the large Arab cities. When Khalil ibn Ahmad enumerated the parts of poetry he called the line of verse a *bayt* or tent and *sabah* or tent-rope for a foot. Even during the 20th century this nostalgia for the simple desert life would appear or at least be consciously revived.

A slow resurgence of the Persian language and a re-location of the government and main seat of learning to Baghdad, reduced the production of Arabic literature. Many Arabic themes and styles were taken up in Persian with Omar Khayyam, Attar and Rumi all clearly influenced by the earlier work. The Arabic language still initially retained its importance in politics and administration, although the rise of the Ottoman Empire confined it solely to religion. Alongside Persian, the many variants of the Turkic languages would dominate the literature of the Arab region until the 20th century. Nevertheless, some Arabic influences remained visible.

Modern literature:

During the 19th century, a revival took place in Arabic literature, along with much of Arabic culture, and is referred to in Arabic as "al-Nahda", which means "the Renaissance". This resurgence of writing in Arabic was confined mainly to Egypt and Lebanon until the 20th century when it spread to other countries in the region. This Renaissance was not only felt within the Arab world but also beyond, with a great interest in the translating of Arabic works into European languages. Although the use of the Arabic language was revived, particularly in poetry, many of the tropes of the previous literature which served to make it so ornate and complicated were dropped.

Just as in the 8th century, when a movement to translate ancient Greek and other literature had helped vitalise Arabic literature, another translation movement would offer new ideas and material for Arabic. An early popular success was *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which spurred a host of historical novels on Arabic subjects. Two important translators were Rifa'a al-Tahtawi and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra.

Throughout the 20th century, Arabic writers in both poetry and prose have reflected the changing political and social climate of the Arab world in their work. Anti-colonial themes were prominent early in the 20th century, with writers continuing to explore the region's relationship with the West until the present day. Internal political upheaval has also been a challenge, with some writers suffering censorship. There are many contemporary Arabic writers, such as Mahmoud saeed (Iraq) who wrote *Bin Barka Ally*, and *I Am The One Who Saw (Saddam City)*. Other contemporary writers include Sonallah Ibrahim and Abdul Rahman Munif, who were
imprisoned by the state for their anti-government work. At the same time, others who had written works supporting or praising governments were promoted to positions of authority within cultural bodies. Non-fiction writers and academics have also produced political polemics and criticisms aiming to re-shape Arabic politics. Some of the best known are Taha Hussein's *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, which was an important work of Egyptian nationalism, and the works of Nawal el-Saadawi who campaigns for women's rights.

**Poetry:**

Mention no longer the driver on his night journey and the wide striding camels, and give up talk of morning dew and ruins. I no longer have any taste for love songs on dwellings which already went down in seas of [too many] odes. So, too, the *ghada*, whose fire, fanned by the sighs of those enamored of it, cries out to the poets: "Alas for my burning!" If a steamer leaves with my friends on sea or land, why should I direct my complaints to the camels?

—Excerpt from Francis Marrash's *Mashhad al-ahwal* (1870), translated by Shmuel Moreh.\[44]\n
Beginning in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as part of what is now called the renaissance or al-Nahda, poets like Francis Marrash, Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim began to explore the possibility of developing the classical poetic forms.\[45]\[46] These earliest neoclassical poets were acquainted with Western literature, but mostly continued to write in classical forms. However, many poets denounced blind imitation of classical poetry and its recurring themes.\[44]\n
The next generation of poets, the so-called romantic poets, had begun to a far greater extent to absorb the impact of developments in Western poetry, and felt constrained by neoclassical traditions which the previous generation had tried to uphold. The Mahjari poets were emigrants who mostly wrote in the Americas, but were similarly beginning to experiment further with the possibilities of Arabic poetry. This experimentation continued in the Middle East throughout the first half of the 20th century.\[47]\n
By the later part of the 20th century, Arab poets had begun to experiment with more modernist styles and themes. Perhaps one of the most well known, seen as being the originator of
"free verse" in Arabic, is the Iraqi poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab. More recently, poets such as Adunis have pushed the boundaries of stylistic experimentation even further.

Poetry retains a very important status in the Arab world. Mahmoud Darwish was regarded as the Palestinian national poet, and his funeral was attended by thousands of mourners. Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani addressed less political themes, but was regarded as a cultural icon, and his poems provide the lyrics for many popular songs.

Novels:

Two distinct trends can be found in the nahda period of revival. The first was a neoclassical movement which sought to rediscover the literary traditions of the past, and was influenced by traditional literary genres—such as the maqama—and works like One Thousand and One Nights. In contrast, a modernist movement began by translating Western modernist works—primarily novels—into Arabic.

In the 19th century, individual authors in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt created original works by imitating classical narrative genres: Ahmad Faris Shidyaq with Leg upon Leg (1855), Khalil Khoury with Yes... so I am not a Frank (1859), Francis Marrash with The Forest of Truth (1865), Salim al-Bustani with At a Loss in the Levantine Gardens (1870), and Muhammad al-Muwaylihi with Isa ibn Hisham's Tale (1907). This trend was furthered by Jurji Zaydan (author of many historical novels), Khalil Gibran, Mikha'il Na'ima and Muhammad Husayn Haykal (author of Zaynab). According to the authors of the Encyclopedia of the Novel:

Almost each of the above [works] have been claimed as the first Arabic novel, which goes to suggest that the Arabic novel emerged from several rehearsals and multiple beginnings rather than from one single origin. Given that the very Arabic word "riwaya", which is now used exclusively in reference to the "novel", has traditionally conjured up a tangle of narrative genres [...], it might not be unfair to contend that the Arabic novel owes its early formation not only to the appropriation of the novel genre from Europe [...] but also, and more importantly, to the revival and transformation of traditional narrative genres in the wake of Napoleon's 1798 expedition into Egypt and the Arab world's firsthand encounter with industrialized imperial Europe.
A common theme in the modern Arabic novel is the study of family life with obvious resonances of the wider family of the Arabic world. Many of the novels have been unable to avoid the politics and conflicts of the region with war often acting as background to intimate family dramas. The works of Naguib Mahfuz depict life in Cairo, and his Cairo Trilogy, describing the struggles of a modern Cairene family across three generations, won him a Nobel prize for literature in 1988. He was the first Arabic writer to win the prize.

Plays:

The musical plays of Maroun Naccache from the mid-1800s are considered the birth of not only theatre in Lebanon, but also modern Arab theatre. Modern Arabic drama began to be written in the 19th century chiefly in Egypt and mainly influenced and in imitation of French works. It was not until the 20th century that it began to develop a distinctly Arab flavour and be seen elsewhere. The most important Arab playwright was Tawfiq al-Hakim whose first play was a re-telling of the Qur'anic story of the Seven sleepers and the second an epilogue for the *Thousand and One Nights*. Other important dramatists of the region include Yusuf al-Ani from Iraq and Saadallah Wannous from Syria.

Women in Arabic literature:

Whilst not playing a major part in Arabic literature, women have had a continuing role. The earliest poetesses were al-Khansa and Layla al-Akhyaliyyah of the 7th century. Their concentration on the *ritba'* or elegy suggests that this was a form deemed acceptable for women to work with. A later poetess Walladah, Umawi princess of al-Andulus, wrote Sufi poetry and was the lover of fellow poet ibn Zaydun. These and other women writers suggest a hidden world of female literature. Despite their lack of prominence among the literary elite, women still played an important part as characters in Arabic literature. *Sirat al-amirah Dhat al-Himmah*, for example, is an Arabic epic with a female warrior as protagonist, and Scheherazade cunningly telling stories in the *Thousand and One Nights* to save her life.

Modern Arabic literature has seen a greater number of female writers' works published: May Ziaade, Fadwa Touqan, Suhayr al-Qalamawi, Ulfat Idlibi, Layla Ba'albakki, Zuhrabi Mattummal, Hoda Barakat and Alifa Rifaat are just some of the novelists and prose writers. There has also been a number of significant female academics, such as Zaynab al-Ghazali,
Nawal el-Saadawi and Fatema Mernissi who, amongst other subjects, wrote of the place of women in Muslim society. Women writers in the Arabic world have unavoidably courted controversy. Layla Ba'albakki, for instance, was charged with insulting public decency with her collection of short stories entitled *A Spaceship of Tenderness to the Moon*.

**Literary criticism:**

Early on in the Arabic literary world, there has been a culture of academic criticism. The poetry festivals of the pre-Islamic period often pitched two poets against each other in a war of verse in which one would be deemed winner by the audience. Literary criticism also grew into theology, and thus gained a more official status with Islamic study of the Qur'an. Although nothing which might be termed 'literary criticism', in the modern sense, was applied to a work held to be *i'jaz* or inimitable and divinely inspired, analysis was permitted. This study allowed for better understanding of the message and facilitated interpretation for practical use, all of which help the development of a critical method important for later work on other literature. A clear distinction regularly drawn between works in literary language and popular works has meant that only part of the literature in Arabic was usually considered worthy of study and criticism.

Some of the first studies of the poetry are *Qawa'id al-shi'r* or *The Rules of Poetry* by Tha'lab and *Naqd al-shi'r Poetic Criticism* by Qudamah ibn Ja'far. Other works tended to continue the tradition of contrasting two poets in order to determine which one best follows the rule of classical poetic structure. Plagiarism also became a significant idea exercising the critics' concerns. The works of al-Mutanabbi were particularly studied with this concern. He was considered by many the greatest of all Arab poets but his own arrogant self-regard for his abilities did not endear him to other writers and they looked for a source for his verse. Just as there were collections of facts written about many different subjects, numerous collections detailing every possible rhetorical figure used in literature emerged as well as how to write guides.

Modern criticism at first compared the new works unfavourably with the classical ideals of the past but these standards were soon rejected as too artificial. The adoption of the forms of European romantic poetry dictated the introduction of corresponding critical standards. Taha
Hussayn, himself keen on European thought, would even dare to challenge the Qur'an with modern critical analysis in which he pointed out the ideas and stories borrowed from pre-Islamic poetry.

**Outside views of Arabic literature:**

Literature in Arabic has been largely influential outside the Islamic world. One of the first important translations of Arabic literature was Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'an in the 12th century but it would not be until the early 18th century that much of Arabic's diverse literature would be recognised, largely due to Arabists such as Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot and his books such as *Arabic Authors: A Manual of Arabian History and Literature*.

Antoine Galland's translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* was the first major work in Arabic which found great success outside the Muslim world. Other significant translators were Friedrich Rückert and Richard Burton, along with many working at Fort William, India. The Arabic works and many more in other eastern languages fuelled a fascination in Orientalism within Europe. Works of dubious 'foreign' morals were particularly popular but even these were censored for content, such as homosexual references, which were not permitted in Victorian society. Most of the works chosen for translation helped confirm the stereotypes of the audiences with many more still untranslated. Few modern Arabic works have been translated into other languages.

However, towards the end of the twentieth century, there was an increase of translations of Arabic books into other languages, and Arabic authors began to receive acclaim. Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz has most if not all of his works translated after he won the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature. Several other writers, including Abdul Rahman Munif and Tayeb Salih have been taken quite seriously by Western scholars, and both Alaa Al Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* and Rajaa al-Sanea's *Girls of Riyadh* attracted significant Western media attention in the first decade of the 21st century.

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The history of Arabic literature is about two thousand years old. Naturally, it had, like other languages, to pass through various stages of decay and fall. It made considerable progress during the Umayyad period, and it was during the Abbasid period, which is called its golden age, that it reached its zenith. During this very period it was also influenced by Persian literature and culture, which left freshness and artistic temperament to it. Besides, the translations of Greek philosophy a works into Arabic provided it with vastness and philosophical depth. Baghdad - the
capital of the Abbasid caliphate was regarded as the highest seat of learning and knowledge. Aleppo was another seat of learning where it flourished. It reached Africa by way of Cairo. It was welcomed in Spain, too. Not only this, but it was adopted by non-Arabic speaking peoples as well. Even the Persians who feel boast of their race and culture, took to learning Arabic and produced several unforgettable works in different fields of its literature. With the downfall of Baghdad in 1258, there began a period of decay in the Arabic literature. In 1206 the Tatars suffered defeat at the hands of Mamluks who were Turks by race. Despite this, they patronized Arabic by learning it and encouraging its writers.64

With the Ottoman Turks coming to power and getting full control over the occupied Arab lands, Arabic received a severe blow. The earlier rulers who manifested a keen interest in promoting Arabic were tolerant to a great extent. And to some of them such as Sultan Ahmad I (1603 – 1617), an ode is ascribed. But after Mahmud II (1808 – 1839), the situation changed and the policy of tolerance almost ended. Turkish was decreed official language instead of Arabic.65

It was due to the liberal efforts of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769 – 1849) who became Viceroy and Pasha of Egypt in 1805 that Arabic underwent a revival. And it was particularly with the occupation by Ibrahim Pasha (1789- 1848) of Syria in 1833 that it regained its lost glory and progressed by leaps and bounds. Taking the full advantage of the rule of tolerance proclaimed by Ibrahim Pasha the foreign missionaries returned to Syria and established schools and colleges of which some were later turned into universities. The missionaries brought with them modern sciences such as medicine, engineering, technology and European literature which had some fresh matters like short stories, novels and dramas.

The text of the Koran was certainly not brought together during the Prophet's lifetime. Only four of his disciples, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Muadh ibn Jabal, Zaid ibn Thabit, and Abu Zaid Ansari, had gathered more or less complete collections of its words. The struggle with Musailima, the false prophet, had cost the lives of many of the chosen depositaries of the original text, when Abu Bekr, impelled by 'Umar, who had seen the end of many of these precious witnesses, ordered that every written text to be discovered should be collected, and confided this

64 Ahmad, Maqsood.; The Beginnings & Development of drama in Arabic, (New Delhi-25, 1981), P-51
65 Ahmad, Habib, Afaq-i-Jadidah, (Allahabad, 1976), P-20
task to Zaid, who had acted as Mahomet's secretary. 'Umar, who supervised this edition, would only accept written passages supported by the declaration of two witnesses. Thus many fragments of the revelation, for which this twofold testimony could not be adduced, were not incorporated, though they may well have been authentic. This gave the Shi'ites ground for affirming, in later days, that the Sunnite text was incomplete, and that everything relating to the providential mission of Ali and his family had been expunged therefrom.66

The edition bore no official character—a proof of this lies in the fact that, when 'Umar died, it became the property of his daughter, Hafsa. 'During the wars in Armenia and Adharbaijan, the soldiers from Traq wrangled with those from Syria over the way in which the Koran should be read. Hudhaifa, their leader, laid the question before Caliph 'Uthman 68 who commanded Zaid ibn Thabit and some other Quraishites to draw up an authoritative text. They collected all the existing copies, but acknowledged that of Abu Bekr, preserved by Hafsa, as their true basis, and when the work was finished, 'Uthman had all the others done away with, except Abu Bekr's, which itself was shortly afterwards destroyed by Marwan, Governor of Medina. All the copies of the Koran now scattered over the Moslem world, therefore, without exception, are reproductions of 'Uthman's edition.

Mahomet, who had no love for heathen poets, and was always afraid his followers might forsake him and go back to the rhythmic chants to which their cradles had been rocked, sought out bards to sing his own praises. One of the poems of Labid is included in the Muallaqat. He belonged to a prominent family of the Beni-Mar. His father, Rabia, had earned by his generosity the sobriquet of "Rabfa of the needy." Born about 560, he lived to a great age, till the beginning of the Caliphate of Muawiya, towards 661. Legend asserts him to have been a hundred and forty-five years old when he died. He heard the Mecca sermons, and was not a whit impressed by them. When Mahomet had retired to Medina, Labid's uncle, 'Amir, whose prowess had earned him the surname of "Champion of the lance," fell sick, and sent his nephew to consult the Prophet as to his case. Labid then heard the Koran recited, and these recitals,

66 Al-Nadim, Kitab al Fihrist by Ibn Khaldoun, (Beirut, 1958), Vols-2, P-47
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
delivered with all the gravity and earnestness of conviction, made the deepest impression upon his mind. The passage which worked his final acceptance of the new faith is actually quoted: "These are they who have bought error with the coin of truth, but their bargain has brought them no profit, they have not continued in the right way. They are like unto a man who has kindled a fire. When the fire has cast its light on all that is about it, and God has suddenly quenched it, leaving men in darkness, they can see nothing at all. Deaf, dumb, blind, they are not able to retrace their steps. They are like unto those who, when a great cloud heavy with darkness and thunder and lightning comes down from heaven, are rilled with the fear of death, and stop their ears with their fingers to shut out the noise of the thunder, while the Lord hems in the infidels on every side. The thunderbolt well nigh blinds them.  When the lightning flashes they walk by its light. When it leaves them in darkness, they stop short. If God so willed it, He would take sight and hearing from them, for He is all-powerful. O men! worship your Lord, who has created you and those who came before you. Mayhap you will fear Him." After his uncle's death Labid went with a deputation of his tribe to Medina, and was there publicly converted. Once a Moslem, he cared no more for his poems, and never mentioned them of his own will. What he specially valued in the new order of things was the social organisation which he saw taking the place of the penury, the frays, and life of general rapine, which had hitherto been the lot of the nomad Arabs. He thought it an admirable thing that there should be "a public force established to protect men from each other, institutions out of which a servant bearing wallets brings support to those who need it, and a public treasury which pays each man the salary which is his due." This gives a vivid idea of the state of the Peninsula before the Prophet's time. Labid had a brother, Arbad, who was killed by lightning while on his way back from Medina, whither he had journeyed, it is said, in the hope of taking the Prophet by surprise and killing him. His sudden death was attributed to the vengeance of heaven. The poet mourned long for his brother. He composed sad elegies about him, in which he sang of the emptiness of life.

"Man is but a little flame. A little while after it has risen into the air, it turns to ashes." Before he died, he desired his two daughters to mourn him for one year. "Do not tear your faces nor shave off your hair. Say rather: 'Our father was a man who never forsook a comrade, nor

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
betrayed the trust of a friend.' Repeat these words till one year has gone by, and then go in peace. For he who has mourned a whole year through, has fulfilled his duty, and deserves no reproach."

But for Hassan ibn Thabit was reserved the glory of acting as the Prophet's panegyrist, and singing his glories. He was born at Medina, visited Hira and Damascus in his younger days, and finally attached himself to Mahomet as his court-poet, whose duty it was to reply to the bards accompanying the deputations sent by the different tribes to make their submission. Beside the great heathen models, Hassan strikes us as colourless, and his style as very bald. But the subject of his work has ensured him undying renown amongst the Moslems. Ka'b ibn Zuhair, son of the poet of the Muallaqa, had begun by scoffing at the new Prophet. 71

The conversion of the Muzaina tribe, of which he was a member, and even that of his brother Bujair, only increased the bitterness of his jests. This was displeasing to the Prophet, and threatened to be an ultimate source of danger to him, on account of the hold exercised by poets over the Bedouin mind. He decreed this poet's death. It was not easy to escape the execution of the terrible fiat. But Kab succeeded in doing so in very skilful fashion. The encomiums he showered on the victorious leader were so agreeable to him that he presented their author with his own cloak (burda), a gift that established the verse-maker's reputation, and for which he expressed his gratitude in a poem, known by its two opening words u Bdnat Sudd . . . " which has been read and admired all over the Moslem East. Celebrity has been won by the elegies, full of deep feeling, in which Mutammim ibn Nuwaira mourned the tragic fate of his brother Malik. Malik was chief of the Yarbu, a branch of the Tamim tribe. He had embraced the Moslem faith, and had been appointed a tax collector. After the Prophet's death, when the Arabs ceased to feel the heavy hand which had kept them silent, he, with others, rebelled against Caliph Abu Bekr, the Prophet's successor, and endeavoured to cast off an authority they thought oppressive. My readers are aware that this movement was speedily put down by the Caliph's generals; Malik was defeated, surrendered to Khalid, and, Moslem though he was, paid for his rebellion with his life. Abu Mihjan waited till the Thaqif tribe, to which he belonged, had been convinced by armed force of the truth of the Prophet's mission before he himself became a Moslem. But one of his heathen errors he always retained—an immoderate love of wine. This earned him some term of imprisonment at the hands of the leaders of the new religion, who allowed no trifling oil the

71 ibid
point. Finding him incorrigible, Caliph 'Umar 59 sent him away, at last, to the Abyssinian frontier, where he shortly died. He was a brave warrior, as he proved in the Persian war, at the battle of Qadisiyya. We only possess some fragments of his Bacchic verse. Jarwal ibh Aus had been surnamed the Dwarf, Aithe Hutai'a. He was one of the masters of satire. A wandering troubadour, going from tribe to tribe, dwelling sometimes with the Beni-Abs, sometimes with other communities, he lived on the gifts bestowed on him by the rich and powerful, either to reward his panegyrics, or because they dreaded his bitter attacks.72

His talent in this direction stirred up such hot anger wherever he was that he was considered a dangerous man, whom Caliph 'Umar was obliged to put in prison in the interest of public safety and the general peace. Other poets, like Abi-Dhu'aib of the Hudhaiite tribe, had taken service in the conquering army. He accompanied 'Abdallah ibn Sa'd into Northern Africa, and was deputed by that general to announce the taking of Carthage to the Caliph 'Uthman. He suffered the misfortune of seeing his five sons swept away by the plague in Egypt, and devoted an elegy to this sad memory. With Abi<Aswad al-Du'ali! we forsake the desert, for he was a town-dweller, a well-known citizen of Bassora, remarkable for the political part he played in connection with the Caliph 'Ali, whose partisan he was; he fought at his side through that long battle of Siffin, which was the prelude to the misfortunes of the 'Alids. To him is ascribed the invention of the Arabic grammar, and this has brought him a certain renown, which casts a reflected gleam on his poetry, itself some what mediocre in quality. Critics regard the origin of the poems ascribed to Abu Talib, Mahomet's uncle, as doubtful, and are still more convinced of this as regards those bearing the name of the Caliph 'Ali. The Shi'ite tendencies of these last quickly convinced students that they were composed, at some uncertain time, to serve the interests o

THE OMEYYAD DYNASTY

The successful revolt of Muawiya and the final disappearance of the Medina Caliphate, whereby the capital of the new Empire was removed from the Arabian deserts to Damascus, a locality naturally inheriting an ancient Greco-Syrian civilisation, robbed the nomad tribes of their predominant position, and conferred it on the dwellers in towns. In literary matters, we find the

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72 Kitab al Aghani by F. Wustenfeld, (Beirut, 1955), Pp 95-98
poets of this second period still sacrificing, in clumsy imitation, on the altar of the Qasida, the ancient Bedouin ode. But we find, at the same time, an ample harvest of occasional poems, inspired by all the unexpected incidents of the political life of the new Empire. 'Umar ibn Abi Rabî'a was of the tribe of Quraish, to which Mahomet belonged, but which had not hitherto produced any poet. His father was a merchant, who had been sent by the Prophet to rule one of the southern provinces of the Peninsula, a duty which he performed till the death of 'Umar, and it may be even under Caliph Uthman.73

He finally returned to his native country, and there the youthful poet grew to manhood. He never left the town till his death, except when he was taken, as a prisoner, to Damascus, and did not play any part in the wars waged by the Moslems on the frontiers of their growing Empire. A rich man and an idle, He found opportunities of extolling the charms of many fair ladies, two princesses of the reigning house amongst them. His love affairs brought him into bad odor with the Caliph of Damascus/ Umar II., who had him bound with chains and brought into his presence, together with his friend Al-Ahwas. Al-Ahwas was banished to the Isle of Dahlak, in the Red Sea, and 'Umar ibn Abi Rabî'a was forced to take an oath to forswear his art, an oath he probably found it easy enough to keep, seeing he had already reached his seventieth year. He died, indeed, soon after, about the year 719, possibly by shipwreck, but this fact is not well established. His poems, set to music, and popularized by professional singers, made their way all over the Arab world.74 In his turn, Abdallah ibn Qais al-Ruqayyat distinguished himself by the share he took in the attempts of 'Abdallah ibn Zubair to obtain the Caliphate. He accompanied 'Abdallah's brother, Musah, to Iraq, of which country he had just been appointed governor, bore him company in the disastrous battle in which Musab lost his life (690), hid himself for a year after it, and then returned to Medina. Caliph Abdal-Malik pardoned him, but did not give him back the pension he had formerly enjoyed. Amongst other poets belonging to Medina at this period, we may mention Qais ibn Dharih, foster-brother to Husain, 'All's unhappy son, martyred at Kerbela, who loved a certain Lubna, and made her name so famous by his verse that in later days every poem in which the name of Lubna figured was ascribed to him. The same thing happened in the case of the celebrated Majnun, the madman of the tribe of Beni- Amir, whose

73 Khulasat al Athar, by Muhammad al Muhibbi (Cairo-1868) P-106
74 ibid
real name was Qais ibn Mulawwah. His passion for the lovely Laila had crazed his brain, and his adventures served the Persian poets as subjects with which to embroider the canvas of their mystic poems. Jamil ibn 'Abdallah loved Buthaina, even as Kuthayyir loved Azza the Bedouin. The last-named poet belonged to the Shfite sect of the Kaisaniyya, in spite of which he was well received at Damascus by 'Abdal-Malik. Within the walls of the city also dwelt at that time a singer, of Persian origin, named Jonas (Yunus), and surnamed Katib (the secretary), who had learnt music from Suraij ibn Muhriz and Al-Gharid. Caliph Walid, the son of Yazid, brought him from Syria when he ascended the throne in 742. This singer was an author too, and wrote a Book of Songs which was the original model of the famous Kitdb al-aghani of Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani.

In the person of Al-Akhtal, the Omeyyads found the special bard of their brave deeds. He was a Christian, of the tribe of Taghlib, which had originally belonged to Najd, but was then settled in Mesopotamia. His name was Ghiyath. Akhtal means, "one whose ears are flabby and hang down." Was the poet really afflicted with a blemish of this kind? If so, his enemies would not have failed to mock at it, and they never did so. Other authorities aver that the word should be taken to mean "chatterer," a signification it does also possess. While quite young,75 Al-Akhtal attacked the reputation of Ka'b ibn Juail, a member of his own tribe, and the recognised poet of the nation, and the two waged a war of epigrams. He lost his mother, Laila, at an early age, and had to endure persecution from a cruel step-mother, who set him laborious tasks, and sent him out to herd the goats: He avenged himself by tricking her out of a jar of milk and some dried fruit. Al-Akhtal's religion was one of purely formal and external observances. He wore a cross on his breast, and kept it there even within the Omeyyad Palace at Damascus, when the favour of the princes of that family called him thither. He occasionally endured somewhat severe penances, as when the priest of his tribe took him by the beard and trounced him. Caliph 'Abdal-Malik, though he cared little for religion, tried to convert him to the Moslem faith. "consent," quoth the poet, "if I am allowed to drink wine and exempted from fasting in Ramadan! " and he wrote the lines: "Never will I go braying like an ass, 'Come to prayers,' but I will go on drinking the kindly liquor, and prostrating myself when the sun rises." The last line is interesting, because it shows that the ancient primitive Christian habit of gathering themselves together and turning towards the rising sun was still in force amongst the Arabs of the Taghlib tribe, in the

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75 Ibid.
eighth century. Kab ibn Juail bore Al-Akhtal no malice on account of his epigrams, for he it was who recommended him to Yazid, son of Muawiya, when he was seeking a poet to compose diatribes, which were to be diffused about the deserts, and carried by the singers through all the towns of the Peninsula, thus serving the political ends of the Omeyyads, and withdrawing the affections of the populace from the Ansars, men of Medina who had been the Prophet's first defenders. Yazid's protection saved him from the spites stirred by his violent language. A subject of frequent argument at the Omeyyad Court was the relative merits of the three poets, Akhtal, Ferazdaq, and Jarir. The princes would amuse themselves by making their courtiers pronounce an opinion, and the courtiers, who dreaded the vengeance of the two poets who must be passed over if the palm was awarded to the third, would get out of the difficulty by taking refuge in generalities. "Jarir draws water from a well," said one; Ferazdaq hews out of the rock; as for Akhtal, he excels in eulogy and in heroic verse." In later days, under the 'Abbasids, when passions had cooled, grammarians ended by preferring Akhtal, because his verses were more finished and correct, and because he had been able to produce the largest number of poems of a certain length which are irreproachable, from beginning to end, both in subject and in form. The qualities most valued in his work are fulness of afflatus and purity of expression. We are told nothing as to the loftiness of his inspiration. But one famous line, which Harun al-Rashid loved to recall, proves the nobility of the moral sentiments he enunciated. It occurs in his ode addressed to the Caliph 'Abdal-Malik, in which, speaking of the Omeyyads, he says: "Terrible in their rage if they are withstanded, they are the most clement of men when victory is won." While Akhtal's fame was spreading over Mesopotamia and Syria, the renown of the two other poets, Jarir and Ferazdaq, was growing in Iraq. Ferazdaq was a pious and fervent Moslem, entirely devoted to the Prophet's family, and with it all a cynic, a libertine, whose sport it was to attack women's honour, who made vile use of the terror his ribald verse inspired, while he himself was a mean coward, more timorous than a sparrow, spiteful and vindictive. Such was the shabby nature of this great poet. His name was Hammam, and he belonged to the tribe of Tamim. He was born at Bassora towards 641. Caliph 'Alt advised him to learn the Koran instead of running after poetry, and the young man is said to have fastened chains to his own feet until he got the

76 Ibid. Pp-122-25
sacred lines by heart. But his father’s death soon brought back all his poetic instincts. The hatred of the Beni-Nahshal drove him into exile.  

He betook himself to Kufa and Medina, where he was kindly treated by Said ibn al-As. His imprudent boast, in one of his poems, that he had entered the precincts of a harem by means of a rope-ladder, stirred the rage of the worthy pharisees of Medina. He was banished by Marwan, and would have settled at Mecca if the death of his enemy Ziyad, Governor of 'Iraq, had not made it possible for him to rejoin his tribe. His adventures with his cousin Nawar (whom he married, who sought to divorce him, and who could find no one to bear witness for her before the judge, so great was the dread of the poet's satires, who took refuge with 'Abdallah ibn Zubair, the Medina pretender, and at last obtained her husband's consent to a separation) have, like his strife with his adversary Jarir, been the subject of many poems.

He died of a skin disease, contracted during a desert journey, towards the year 728. He was a determined supporter of the rights of the 'Alids, and the verses in which he acclaimed Zain al-'Abidin, 'Alt's grandson, brought him to a dungeon. Ferazdaq was then a man of seventy. But satire is his special field, and it must be acknowledged that in it he knew no limit, whether of decency or honour; and further, that he was constantly and immoderately guilty of a sin with which Arab writers are frequently charged—that of shamelessly stealing lines from his neighbours' compositions. He was a plagiarist, forcing his competitors to leave him in possession of lines that took his fancy, and below which he wrote his own name. Born in the Hijaz, Kuthayyir was famous for his eccentricities. He was a partisan of the 'Alids, and professed the most extreme religious views. His absurd affectations had won him the surname of "Antichrist." He was very short, too, which gave food for the scoffers' jeers. There was a joke—it was Akhtal who first retailed it—that, when he moved from the Hijaz into Syria, he had been starved and numbed by the relative chilliness of the last-named country. But Jarîr, of Yamama, in the south of Najd, was the popular favourite. He, too, was of the tribe of Tamim. He dwelt in Traq, and had opportunities of extolling Al-Hajjaj, the terrible governor of that province, at whose severity all men trembled. But the favour of the Omeyyad princes was not bestowed on him; Akhtal had

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77 Ibid.
prejudiced 'Abdal-Malik against him. He had to wait till Umar II. ascended the throne before seeing himself preferred before his rivals. He was a mighty fighter, and his life was spent in poetic tournaments. The most famous of these was that with Ferazdaq, who was backed by Akhtal. 'Ubaid, who was called "the camel-herd," because he had written five lines describing these creatures, the nomad's inseparable comrades, had sided with Ferazdaq. Jarir could not forgive him, and poured sarcasms upon him till he drove him out of Bassora, and turned the anger of his own tribe against him. Jarir and Ferazdaq died in the same year, 728. The first-named poet had returned to his own tribe, the Yamama, towards the end of his life. At the same period, Ghailan ibn 'Uqba, surnamed DhC'tl-Rumma, was carrying on, though with lowered vitality, the tradition of the desert poets. Ferazdaq complained that he was too fond, like the ancient authors, of descriptions of forsaken encampments, of camels, and the bird called qata. He himself, indeed, admitted that his comparisons might go on for ever. Nevertheless, his poems were long held in high admiration by the philologists, more especially, perhaps, on account of the uncommon words occurring in them. Beside these poets who carried on the classic tradition of the long rhythmic recitations, we find the simplest of prosodic metres, the rajaz, suddenly springing into considerable importance, and rising as high as its fellows in the popular estimation. The rajaz, despised by the heathens, looked on as a sort of cadenced prose, only fit, at its best, for improvisations, had been softened and transformed by Al-Aghlab ibn 'Umar ibn Ubaida, who fell fighting gallantly at the Battle of Nehawend in 641, and reached its full development in the work of Abu Najm al-Fadl ibn Qudama al-Ijli, the friend of the Caliph Hisham, Al-Ajjaj, and his son Ru'ba. The funeral elegies written by a woman, Laila al-Akhyaaliyya, are famous, more especially those devoted to the memory of Tauba ibn al-Humayyir, who loved her, and suffered the anguish of seeing her married by her father to a stranger, a mean and jealous fellow, who beat her. The story goes that one night, sick of ill treatment, she called an unknown guest who had joined the tribe at nightfall; that he came, under cover of the darkness, struck the husband three or four hearty blows across the shoulders with a stick, and departed, the poetess having prevented his further interference in the domestic broil. He went away unrecognised, and was never seen again. Laila saved her friend from many ambushes prepared for him by jealous rivals. He was true to her till his death, which took place

78 Ibid.

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in an intertribal quarrel in 704. The celebrity won by these touching compositions encouraged their authoress to persevere. She paid visits to princely courts, waited on Caliph 'Abdal-Malik, and on the Governor of 'Iraq, Al-Hajjaj, to whom she offered eulogies. She died in 707, while on her way to visit her cousin, Qutaiba ibn Muslim, the Moslem general then governing the province of Khurasan. Al-Khansa is the only Arab poetess who can be considered her superior. She was a tall woman with great black eyes. Laila waged a war of epigrams with Nabigha al-Ja'di, who hotly answered her, concerning the attacks of a certain Sawar ibn Aufa, called Ibn al-Haya, after his mother, who had spoken evil in his verses of the tribe of Azd. Nabigha had replied, and all this happened at Isfahan. The verses circulated through the desert, and the censured tribes threatened an appeal to the Governor of Medina, or even to the Caliph. Amongst the desert poets who were Christians must be mentioned 'Abdallah ibn al-Mukhariq, called the Nabigha of the Beni-Shaiban, who swore by the Gospels, the monks, and all the usual Christian oaths. He was fond of leaving his Syrian steppes to recite his well-paid eulogies in the presence of the Caliphs at Damascus. 'Abdal-Malik and Walid were his patrons.

Hisham, on the contrary, could not endure him, and kept him at a distance. The poem beginning "Mine eyes have shed tears ... at the sight of the traces left at Hafir ... dying away in solitude ... sorrowful like the verses of the Psalms," long maintained its popularity. Umair ibn Shuyaim, of the tribe of Taghlib, and nephew to Al-Akhtal, was another Christian, but he eventually turned Moslem. He was called Al-Qutami, the Sparrow-hawk, on account of a simile which he had rendered famous, and also Saril al-Ghawani—the victim of the fair—an expression of his own invention, and on which Muslim in later days conferred celebrity. He died in 728. Beside these poets we must also place A'sha Hamdan, a Koran-reader and lawyer, belonging to Kufa, who forsook his legal studies to declaim poetry, and fought against the heathens of Dailam, among the mountains south-west of the Caspian Sea. He fell into their hands as a prisoner of war, was saved by the love of a young girl of that country, and took up the cause of 'Abdal-Rahman ibn al-Asfrath, who had ventured to proclaim the deposition of 'Abdal-Malik,

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79 Silk al Durar, by Abdul Fadl Muhammad Khalil Efendi al Muradi, 2 vols (Bulaq, 1874) p-87
80 Ibid.
...and whom some held to be the Qahtanid expected by the Moslems as a precursor of the Last Judgment, but who was vanquished by Al-Hajjaj in 702. The poet shared his leader's sad fate. Herded with a crowd of other prisoners, he was put to death by the terrible Governor of Iraq, who could not forgive the imprudent attacks he had made on him in his poems. Ahmad al-Nasibi, with whom he had entered into bonds of brotherhood, after the fashion of the desert Arabs, was a musician, who sang the lines written by his friend. Al-Hajjaj had a sister, Zainab, who was beloved by Numairi of Ta'if, a writer of erotic stanzas. But the governor thought the poet's praise compromised the reputation of his family, and Numairi had to seek refuge with the Caliph of Damascus. Zainab, who had been sent to the same city at the time of Al-Ash'ath's revolt, died there of an accident—a fall from her mule. Numairi found consolation in singing elegies over her tomb.

The Moslem Conquest had given a huge ascendency to the Arab tongue, and literary efforts by men whose native language was not Arabic were already beginning to appear. It would be impossible, were it only on account of his surname, Al-Al jam, not to recognize the Persian origin of Ziyad ibn Sulaiman, who was "client of an Arab tribe (by client must be understood either a freed slave or a man who voluntarily lived under the aegis of a patronage which raised him above the singular humiliations which were the lot, at that period, of a vanquished foe."

Even of one who had embraced the Moslem faith) dwelling at Persepolis, was born, according to some, at Ispahan, and died in Khurasan in 689. His funeral eulogium of Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra won universal praise. "Tell the caravans that valour and generosity have been buried at Merv, in the clearest fashion." His poetic talent rose above an inconvenient impediment in his speech. He was accused of pronouncing like a peasant. He could not articulate the letter Ain—the peculiar onomatopoeia of the Arab tongue, which reproduces the grunt of the camel as it is being loaded—pronounced the sad or emphatic wrong, and could not produce the guttural h at all. Another Persian who became an Arab poet was Ismail ibn Yasar, a client of an Arab tribe, and a partisan of the Zubairids. He accompanied 'Urwa, the son of Zubair, on his journey to the court of the Caliph Walid, and wrote an elegy on the death of his patron's son, who fell off a roof among a drove of horses, and was kicked to death by them. Later he paid a second visit to Walid, when the Caliph was at the Syrian Rusafa, built to the west of Raqqa by Hisham. There, and

81 Ibid. Pp-142-44
during that prince's time, he began chanting the praises of the Persians instead of extolling his host. The Caliph fell into a violent rage and had him thrown into a pond, out of which he was dragged half dead, and banished to the Hijaz.\textsuperscript{82}

He had two brothers, Muhammad and Ibrahim, both of them poets, and descended from slaves taken in the province of Fars. Ismail is the earliest instance of these Shuubiyya, fanatic adherents of their own race, who, notwithstanding their Arab education, openly declared themselves to be of a different origin from that of their barbarous conquerors. Amongst other poets of foreign birth whom the ascendency of the conquering race and of the desert bards converted to the language of the Koran, we must not omit to mention Abu eAta Aflah ibn Yasar. His father was an Indian from the banks of the Indus. The chances of life so fell out that the child was born at Kufa, but he never spoke Arabic well, a remark we have already made as to the Persians who had adopted the dominant tongue. He was the chartered panegyrist of the Omeyyads, and was obliged to direct the shafts of his satire against the 'Abbasids. He lived long enough to see these last—victors, thanks to the help of the Persian Shiites—found the city of Bagdad on the banks of the Tigris, for his death only occurred when Mansur was Caliph in 774. So faulty was his pronunciation that he was obliged to have his stanzas recited by a Barbary slave who had a fine voice. The eulogies he offered to Mansur were not well received by that Caliph, who could not forget that he had written verses mourning the death of Nasr ibn Sayyar, the adversary of Abu Muslim. The poet, thus repulsed by the 'Abbasid prince, took vengeance on him in his satires, jeering at the decree whereby the populace was commanded to dress in black, the chosen colour of the 'Abbasids. The Caliph Walid was a poet, a musical composer, and a singer. A born artist, he early plunged into the greatest excesses, and drank wine during his pilgrimage to Mecca. He lost the affection of the people, and was killed by the Yemenites in 742, just a year\textsuperscript{83} after the death of his uncle Hisham. He modelled his drinking songs on the works of 'Adi ibn Zaid, and his successor in this line was the great poet, Abu Nuwas. This Caliph, brilliant though he was, and full of showy qualities, necessarily displeased the Moslems by his shameless debauchery, and they accused him of having entered into a compact with Persian teachers, and of being a secret believer in their faith. He composed numerous airs, could play the lute, mark the

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. P150

\textsuperscript{83} Khulasat al Athar, by Muhammad al Muhibbi (Cairo-1868) P-63
rhythm on cymbals, and walk in cadenced step to the sound of the tambour—he denied this, it is true, and forbade his comrades to speak of it. At Mecca his chief care was to send for the best singer of the locality, Yahya, surnamed the Elephant and take lessons from him. Yahya, transported with admiration, besought the Caliph to receive him amongst his followers, so that he might profit by the teaching of a renowned artist, whom he acknowledged his superior. Al-Kumait was acquainted with the different Arabic dialects, and knew the history of the various Arab wars. He was a fierce partisan of the Mudar tribes, celebrated their exploits, and scoffed at the southern tribes. He had attached himself to the family of Hashing descended from the Prophet, and to it his finest panegyrics are addressed. His become a proverb, and was all the more phenomenal because the views of the two friends were diametrically opposed—Kumait was a Shi‘ite, and championed the men of Kufa, while Tirimmah was a Kharijite, and supported the men of Damascus, his native city.84 "How can you agree," it was asked, "seeing you differ in every respect?" "We have one thing in common," replied Kumait, "our hatred of the vulgar." Odi profanum vulgus et arceo: every poet is an aristocrat. His attacks on the reigning dynasty earned him arrest and imprisonment at the hands of Hisham, who would have cut out his tongue and cut off his hand; but he was saved by the devotion of his wife, who lent him her own garments to enable him to escape from durance. Maslama, the Caliph's son, afterwards obtained the poet's pardon as a reward for a funeral eulogy of his grandfather, Muawiya—which is asserted to have been really improvised. He died a violent death in 743—killed during a riot by the soldiery. At this period, also, flourished a very remarkable man, Hammad ibn Sabur, surnamed Al-Rawiya, or the Quoter—because his extraordinary memory held thousands of ancient Arab stanzas and complete poems. To him the preservation of great part of the pre-Islamic poetry is due, and to him we owe the collection into one volume of the Muallaqat. He was an Iranian. His father, Sabur (Sapor), who was taken prisoner in war, belonged to that redoubtable race of the Dailamites, which braved the Arabs and maintained its independence in the inaccessible mountains of Gilan, and which was later, under the name of Buwaihids, to seize Bagdad, and reduce the Caliph's power to a purely spiritual sovereignty. This early commentator and scholar, whose linguistic blunders bewrayed his foreign origin, was also born at Kufa.85 The favour

84 The Arabic press of Egypt, by Martin Hartmann (London-1899)
85 Silk al Durar, by Abdul Fadl Muhammad Khalil Efendi al Muradi, 2 vols. (Bulaq-1874) p-24

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shown him by Yazid had displeased Hisham. When he succeeded, Hammad was fain to hide himself a whole year in his own house, never leaving it, save to pay secret visits to trusted friends. But the new Caliph soon summoned him to Damascus.

He is said to have died either in 771 or 774. His learning extended over the legendary history of the pre-Islamic Arabs, their poetry, their genealogies, and their dialects. He could distinguish the ancient from the modern style; he boasted that he could recite long odes, belonging to the heathen times, rhyming on every letter of the alphabet. He was a living encyclopaedia. He had begun by being a thief and a rogue. Some verses which he found on the person of a man he had robbed in the middle of the night stirred his vocation in him. He wrote poetry himself. Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi accused him of interpolating his own lines amongst those of the ancient poets, so that it was impossible to detect the difference, and it is even said that, when pressed by Caliph Al-Mahdi, Hammad confessed his fraud. History first makes an appearance under the sway of the Omeyyads. We are told that Ziyad, brother to Muawiya, and his lieutenant, wrote a book on the pretensions of the Arab families, which was intended to serve as a weapon in the hands of his own descendants, in case their origin should be attacked (he was the son of Abu Sufyan, Muawiya's father, by a slave); but this is by no means a certainty, though the assertion is supported by the authority of the Fihrist. 'Abid ibn Sharya was an Arab from the South; he was summoned to Damascus from Sana, by Muawiya, to whom he used to recite the stones of the kings of Yemen, and biblical legends, as also did Wahb ibn Munabbih (638-728), a Jew by origin, and either a Moslem convert, or, possibly, a Sabian, or Christian follower of St. John Baptist. His surname, Abnawi, indicated his descent from the Persian colony left in Southern Arabia by the troops sent by Chosroes I. Anushirwan against the Abyssinians. He played an important part in the elaboration of Moslem jurisprudence and theology, which are based, after the Koran, on the hadith, or traditions of the Prophet. Wahb was one of the most ancient and popular of the 71traditionists. He was born at Dhimar, near San'a. Abu Mikhnaft Lut ibn Yahya wrote three-and-thirty treatises on different persons and events. They deal more especially with the history of the conquest of 'Iraq, a subject on which he was, in the earliest days, the uncontested authority. He died in 774. Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhri, who was

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86 Khulasat al Athar, by Muhammad al Muhibbi (Cairo-1868) P-64
called Ibn-Shihab, after one of his ancestors, was one of the learned men who devoted themselves to the study of the traditions of Mahomet.

He belonged to Medina, but was not a member of the irreconcilable party which regarded the Omeyyads of Damascus as usurpers. He went to Syria, was chosen by the Caliph Hisham to be his children's tutor, and became a magistrate under Yazid II. His connection with the Omeyyad dynasty stirs some mistrust as to the tendency, unconscious no doubt, of his theological studies. Caliph 'Umar II. sent letters into the various provinces of the Empire, recommending that al-Zuhri should be consulted in any legal difficulties, "for no man," he says, "is better acquainted with the customs of the past days." When at home, he was so absorbed in the study of his books that he forgot everything else, and his wife one day exclaimed: These books are more trying to me than the three other wives the law permits him, though he has but one! He died, aged seventy-three, on his farm at Adama, in Arabia, between Syria and the Hijaz. The conquest of Syria, and the selection of Damascus as the seat of the capital, had brought Moslems and Christians into close contact. St. John of Damascus, whose father was received at the court of 'Abdal-Malik, wrote a defence of the Christian religion against the doctrine of Islam. In Iraq, the great theologian Hasan Basri, who died in 728, held uncontested sway as a doctrinal instructor.87

The elegance and purity of his Arabic are famous even now. He had been singularly handsome, but he fell when riding, broke his nose, and was disfigured for life. His father, who lived in Maisan, was made a prisoner and carried into slavery when Khalid conquered that province in 633. His disciple, Wasil ibn e Ata, left him, and founded the Mu tazilite school, who. professed a kind of rationalism. He had a burr in his speech, and as he never could correct this defect, he obliged himself to avoid all words with the letter r in them. He had a long neck, and was somewhat gibed at on this account. He died in 748. But the theological works of those days have not come down to us. The collection of the Arab proverbs now began to attract some attention. Prince Khalid, the son of Yazid, practised alchemy, a science taught him by a monk of the name of Marianus. He wrote three treatises, the first of which deals with his teacher and the instruction he bestowed on him. The battle of the great Zab was the Persians' revenge on the

87 Silk al Durar, by Abdul Fadl Muhammad Khalil Efendi al Muradi, 2 vols (Bulaq-1874) P-75
Arabs—a very incomplete revenge, for it did not come till a whole century had rolled by, and by that time Persia bore indelible marks of the Arab domination, both in religion and in language.88

The religious code of the Sasanian dynasty, the Avesta, a revival of the old worship of Ahura-Mazda, had disappeared, and was only preserved round the very few fire-altars the victors' tolerance still permitted to exist. The Persian language was nothing but a spoken tongue; all the literary character had departed from it. All Persians now wrote in Arabic, and so strong was the impression made by the Semitic tongue that it has maintained itself to this day. But Persia possessed another and an intangible force, the Aryan genius, the powerful, imaginative, and creative mind of the great Indo-European family, the artistic, philosophic, and intellectual brain which, from this period onward, so mightily affects Arab literature, enabling it to develop in every quarter of the Caliphs' realms, and to produce that enormous aggregate of works, of which many, no doubt, were lost in the destruction attending the Mongol conquest. But the chief specimens have been preserved, and their effect on the Europe of the Middle Ages has been far greater than many have imagined. When the 'Abbasids founded the city of Bagdad, on the right bank of the Tigris, they seem to have sought for a site which would be a compromise between the Arab creators of the Caliphs' Empire and the Persian authors of the revolution which had placed the sons of 'Abbas on the throne. To the right of the Tigris lies Mesopotamia, a Semitic country from times immemorial, and overrun, since the fall of the ancient empires, by the nomad Arabs. To the left, Iranian territory begins at once. The very name of the city is Persian, and signifies given by God. The Bagdad of the Caliphs now lies in ruins—only a very small number of the buildings remain; modern Bagdad, which stands, as my readers are aware, on the left bank of the Tigris, being still inhabited by many Persians. From the very outset of the eighth century, Persian influence was so strong in political matters that Mansur did not hesitate to rid himself, by the assassin's hand, of Abu Muslim.89

The leader who had overthrown the Omeyyad dynasty, just as Harun al-Rashid, at a later date, rid himself of the Persian Barmakides, who had supplied him with two powerful ministers. In literature, this Persian influence is immense. It pervades everything—poetry,

88 Ibid.
89 The Arabic press of Egypt, by Martin Hartmann, (London-1899) P-98
theology, jurisprudence: the Arabs had ceased to write; all posts, administrative, and legal, were held by men who were not Arabs, and the same applies to all the literature of the time. From this period onward, Arabic became the language, and the sole language, of the huge Empire of the Caliphs. But it was Arabic spoken and written by men who were Arabs by education, not by blood. All races, Persians, Syrians, Berbers from Maghrib, were melted and amalgamated in this mighty crucible. The most intellectual parts of this medley were finally to recover their identity; the Persian tongue, which was never to drop the cloak cast upon it by the Semite domination, was once more to become a literary language, and to have the glory of giving birth to other literatures, such as the Ottoman-Turkish and the Hindu; but in the west, Arabic was only to be driven out of Spain together with the Moors, and the Maghrib was to keep the language of its conquerors, now become its native idiom, for ever. Poetry now began to alter. The lengthy qasidas of the desert, held up as models for students by the theorists, found no more original exponents. This form was doomed to servile imitation, and hence to platitude. But a new kind of poetry appeared on the banks of the Tigris, whither the imperial splendour was attracting the most brilliant talents. A family from Palestine produced Mujf ibn Ayas. His father had been with Al-Hajjaj when that general went into the province of Mecca to reduce the pretender 'Abdallah ibn Zubair to submission, and also when he defeated another pretender, Ibn al-Ash'ath, who came out of the distant land of Arachosia and very nearly succeeded in overthrowing the Caliphate. Mutf ibn Ayas himself took service, first of all, with Caliph Walid ibn Yazid, but after the fall of the Omeyyads he appealed to Jafar, son of Caliph Mansur, who took him into his service, and kept him till he died, thereby greatly displeasing the Caliph, his father. His poems are marked by elegant expression and deep feeling. His description of the two palm-trees at Hulwan would in itself suffice to make him famous. Under an apparent indifference in religious matters, he seems to have concealed heretical leanings. He was accused of not being really a true Moslem. He denied the imputation of being a Zindiq (Manichean), but he was caught in the act of reciting suspicious verses. Men fought shy of his company, for he was a debauchee. His verses were very loose. One day he told a woman she was just as fit as the Caliph Al-Mahdi to mount the preacher's pulpit, which caused the sovereign to laugh most heartily. As a maker of jokes and court jester, we must glance at Abu Dulama Zand ibn al-Jaun,

90 Silk al Durar, by Abdul Fadl Muhammad Khalil Efendi al Muradi, 2 vols (Bulaq-1874) P-65

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an Abyssinian negro, who had fought against the Omeyyads, and was permitted to entertain the Caliphs Mansur and Mahdi.91

He was the favourite of Mansur, to whom he certainly rendered good service by praising him, in a panegyric, for having put Abu Muslim to death. For the populace found it hard to understand why the 'Abbasids rewarded the great general who had set them on the throne in such ungrateful fashion. He mocked at the Caliph's order that his subjects should wear black, the 'Abbasids' colour, and a witty sally earned him leave, alone of all the population, to disregard the edict. When Musa. ibn Da'ud made his pilgrimage to Mecca, he promised the jester 10,000 drachmas if he would travel with him. Abu Dulama pocketed the cash and disappeared into the villages, whither he went to drink wine. Musa, fearing to miss the pilgrimage season, started on his journey, came across the toper, had him bound and thrown into a palanquin. But so impudent were the fellow's repartees that he was fain to get rid of him, and leave him to spend the rest of the money he had given him. Abu Dulama died in 778. He suggested to a physician to whom he owed money for curing his son, that, to secure payment of the debt, he should bring a suit against a certain rich Jew, he himself offering to bear false witness to prove the claim. The judge well knew the real value of the demand, but such was his dread of the negro's wicked tongue that he preferred to pay the sum claimed out of his own pocket.92

Thus Abu Dulama got his doctoring for nothing. One day, when he had alluded in verse to a supposed relationship between himself and the Caliph, Al-Mahdi, greatly enraged, inquired to whom he traced this kinship. "To Adam and Eve," replied the jester, and the Caliph laughed. It was said of him that he would make the very devil laugh. Al-Mahdi once ordered him, on pain of death, to satirise every member of the numerous company present. Abu Dulama's presence of mind saved him in this hour of peril. He attacked himself, called himself "monkey-face, with a turban upon it," "forerunner of the Last Judgment," with other amenities, which vastly amused the gathering. On another occasion, out hunting, the Caliph killed a gazelle with an arrow, whilst his companion, 'All ibn Sulaiman, only hit one of the hounds, which died. Abu Dulama summed

91 ibid.
92 ibid.

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up the incident in comical fashion. "The Caliph kills a gazelle and 'Ali kills a dog! Bravo! Each shall feed on the provisions he has provided for himself." Whereupon Al-Mahdi laughed till he nearly fell out of his saddle. Bashshar ibn Burd (693-783) was of Persian, and possibly even of royal race, as he himself asserted. He was born in the neighbourhood of Bassora, whither his father had been carried into slavery; his grandfather had been made a prisoner of war in Tukharistan, far away in Khurasan. He was a skilful worker in clay, although he was born blind. Later in life he obtained his freedom from the Arab woman whose property he was, and lived partly at Bassora, his birthplace, and partly at Bagdad. He made the acquaintance of the theologian Wasil ibn 'Ata, the founder of the school of the Mu tazilites, who ascribed the demoralisation of Bassora to his poems, and remained a free-thinker. He had broken through the rule of saying his prayers five times a day; he was really a Zindiq that is to say a secret believer in the Avesta, while preserving the outward appearance of Islamism. He was always a suspected man. His panegyric of Caliph Mahdi saved him once. The Caliph contented himself with forbidding him to make any mention of women in future poems. But he imprudently wrote against the minister Ya'qub ibn Da'ud, who revenged himself by the infliction of seventy lashes, and of these the poet died at the age of ninety.94

He was ugly, for besides his congenital infirmity, which had left him with two pieces of red flesh instead of eyes, he was deeply pitted with smallpox. Bashshar held the element of Fire to be superior to that of Earth, and justified Satan, who was created out of Fire, for having refused to bow down before Adam, who was made of clay, as the Koran relates. He even wrote a stanza which strongly betokens his Zoroastrian views. "The Earth is dark, and Fire is brilliant. Ever since it has existed men have worshipped it." He was a misanthrope, who thanked God for having made him blind, "so that I need not see that which I hate." When he was about to recite a poem he would clap his hands, cough, and spit right and left. But when once he opened his mouth he won the admiration of his hearers. He had begun to compose verses before he was ten years old, and boasted that he had known Jarir, and had even satirised him, but the great desert poet had thought him too young to deserve his notice. "If he had answered me," Bashshar would

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93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.
say, "I should have been the greatest man of my time." What the grammarian Asma't thought most admirable in his work was that his lines were the evident production of a natural genius, which would not submit to any lengthy process of polishing before publication; they were, so to speak, almost improvised. When the poet was questioned as to the source of his purity of expression he ascribed all the credit to the old men and the women of the Bedouin tribe of the 'Uqail, with which he was connected as a freed slave. Yet he was accused of carrying his use of expletives to the greatest excess and of introducing into his lines names of men and places which had never existed. He had dubbed several chambers in his house with poetic surnames, a source of gentle astonishment to the uninitiated persons to whom he would recount their beauties. Marwan ibn Abi Hafsa (721-797) was the son of a Khurasan Jew who was taken by Marwan ibn al-Hakam, then Governor of Medina, to Yamama in Arabia, as tax-collector, and there married an Arab woman of free blood. He was strangled in private vengeance for some political verses directed against the claim of the 'Alids. 

The criminal's confession— he himself was never discovered—is still in existence. Marwan was an imitator of the ancient desert poets. According to Ibn Khallikan, he was great-grandson to Abu Hafsa, Marwan's freedman, whose liberty had been granted as a reward for service rendered during the siege of Caliph 'Uthman's house at Medina—he had saved his life. Some say he was a Jewish physician who turned Moslem. But at Medina he was believed to have been the freedman of Samaual the famous Syrian nobleman and poet. We are also told that Abu Hafsa was made prisoner when Persepolis was taken under 'Uthman. As for Marwan, who was born in Yamama, he made his way to Bagdad, composed panegyrics in honour of Al-Mahdi and Harun al-Rashid, and wrote satires directed against the descendants of 'Ali. His most celebrated work is a qasida, rhymed in /, in praise of Ma'n, son of Za'ida, Governor of Yemen, in which he lauds his inexhaustible generosity. "When a favour is asked of him, Man will not speak the word No, for this seems a forbidden word to him." The poet was very stingy, and came to the Caliph's court dressed in a sheepskin and the coarsest cotton garments.

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95 ibid
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
So thrifty was he that he never bought any meat except sheep's heads, and on these he lived, winter and summer alike. It was of him that the line was written: "Marwan has no zeal for pleasure; the only jealousy he feels concerns the cooking-pots." Beside the work, not unattended by risk, of the poets who dedicated their powers to politics, we find the far more kindly productions of the love poet, Abu'l-Fadl al-Abbas Ibn al-Ahnaf, a descendant of Arab settlers in Khurasan, allied with Iranian families. He was a comrade of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, followed him in his campaigns, and died at Bagdad (807 or 813). The grace and elegance of his diction made him the delight of men of taste. He was a man of fine manners, with nothing of the debauchee about him. Polished though he was, he never went beyond writing love poems. He was no artist either in satire or in panegyric. His only known enemy was the great Mutazilite theologian, Hudhail al-Allaf, who accused him of having written a stanza affirming the doctrine of predestination. But the most famous of this group, beyond all contradiction, is Abu Nuwas, the lyric and Bacchic poet par excellence, whose works have been studied by Noldeke and Alfred von Kremer. He was born at Al-Ahwaz in the heart of Susiana (about 756), where his mother, of Persian origin, laboured as a woman in a fuller's yard. But it was at Bassora that he received the teachings of his master, the poet Waliba, who made him known to the Barmakides, and had cause, later, to regret his kindness, by reason of his pupil's ingratitude. He spent a year wandering about the desert, to study the pure Bedouin tongue. At Bagdad, in spite of his loose life, he was valued by the Caliphs Harun and Amin. When he grew old, he relinquished his bad habits, and gave himself up to religious observances. His jests about a member of the Beni-Naubakht clan earned him rough treatment, of which he died, about 810. Abu Nuwas practised every form of Arabic poetry. Not only did he sing the praises of the grape, after the manner of 'Adi ibn Zaid and Walid ibn Yazid. Like his forerunners, he composed elegies, amatory poems, satires, panegyrics, humorous verses, and hunting scenes, in which last he reproduced the style of the ancient and intrepid hunters of the desert, and he also wrote the devout poems which mark the last stage of his career. His memory was extraordinary, and, what is no less remarkable, he possessed no library. Nothing was found after his death save a book cover, within which lay a manuscript containing notes on grammar. The Caliph cast him into prison, and the poet wrote: "If you kill Abu Nuwas, where will you find another?" The only

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98 Ibid.
woman he ever really loved was a slave, Janan. She was well taught and witty, learned both in history and poetry. She started on pilgrimage to Mecca, and the poet followed her. There it was that he spoke the lines: "Do you not see that I spend my life in pursuing her—a difficult enterprise? We made the pilgrimage together. This journey alone it was which could unite us." Janan did not care for him at first, but the lover's persistence broke down the severity of the cruel fair at last. He was the first poet who employed bold metaphor to describe the different parts of the beloved one's person. Amongst others, he has this line: "She taps the rose with jujubes"—that is, "her cheek with her finger-tips." Scenes in which deep drinkers, ever athirst, turn deaf ears to the muezzin's call to prayer, refusing to forsake their serious business, praise of good wine, purchased with gold from Jew or Christian merchant, and grown mellow in its cobwebbed jar, the heat of which cheers and warms the darkness of the night—such are the themes of Abu Nuwas' most famous poems. Here and there we catch a note of sadness, a sudden memory of past days and comrades now no more, dark thoughts, swiftly washed away by a fresh draught of the divine juice. Muslim ibn el-Walid, known by the surname of Sari al-Gkawdni, "the victim of the fair," which had been bestowed on him by Harun al-Rashid, was client of a family of Ansars or auxiliaries—otherwise those dwellers in Medina who had attained noble rank by their support of the Prophet against his enemies. He was born at Kufa, somewhere between 747 and 757. His father was a weaver, and Ibn Qanbar later cast cruel reproach on the poet concerning his parent's handiwork: "Where could I find a being more degraded than thy father? Nay, I was mistaken! One yet lower there is—thyself!"

For many a day he wove his cloaks as ill as thou now weavest thy verse!" No one knows who Muslim's teachers were. He may proceed directly from the great poets of the heroic period, whose works he studied. He was a careless wanderer, a spendthrift, who gave no thought to the morrow, and often, lacking any other shelter, slept under the starry sky, wrapped in his only cloak. His patrons, the valiant General Yazid ibn Mazyad, Muhammad, son of Caliph Mansur, and Fadl ibn Sahl, the minister, lifted him out of this parlous state. The latter, indeed, went so far as to give him a post about the Court of Justice of the Province of Jurjan, and then promoted him to the delicate functions of director of the horse-post in the same place. But he

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99 Ibid.
appointed a steward to receive the income from the farms he had given the poet near Ispahan, to put aside the sum necessary for his daily expenses, and invest the rest in the purchase of more land. Muslim was a great admirer of the produce of the vines grown by the Zoroastrians at Tizanabad, and has sung the praise of wine. "The daughter of the Magians turned Moslem by her union with the guests. We have asked her in marriage, and the negotiator who leads her to us walks with grave and solemn step." The whole of this poem is worth reading, in the charming translation given us by M. Barbier de Meynard. His enemies scoffed at his passion; 'Abbas Ibn al-Ahnaf derisively called him "the victim of the sorceresses," and others "the victim of the brimming cup." But his intoxication was elegant, and his style was classic, like that of the ancient authors whom he closely followed, even when he gave new metaphors to the world. His amorous poetry is less sincere, and he himself acknowledged that he sang of the object of his thoughts because fashion demanded it, but that his personal taste was for less exalted ladies. As a satirist, he seems to have been inferior to his opponents. His dispute with the poet Ibn Qanbar was violent, but the advantage, as Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani and Al-Mubarrad have established, remained with his adversary. He died in 803, while still holding his appointment, a stranger in Jurjan, like the palm-tree he sang in the last stanza he composed. When at the point of death, he caused the rough copy of all his poems to be cast into the river, as a proof of penitence on account of his Bacchanalian compositions. Abu'l-Atahiya Ismail ibn Qasim (748-828) belonged to the tribe of 'Anaza. He was born in the Hijaz, lived at Kufa, took his way to Bagdad, when his poetry had already made him a name, and there fell in love with one of Mahdi's slaves, named 'Utba.

The prominent characteristic of his style is his use of simple expressions which every one can understand, because his poems are sermons in verse on the instability of the things of this world. On this account he is the ancestor of that long series of hortatory works which flourish more especially in Persian literature. He avoided all studied forms of expression, so that he might be understood by the populace. He was surnamed Al-Jarrar, "the jar-seller," because he had originally plied that trade. Then used to go and listen to his verses, and wrote them, at his dictation, on the fragments of broken pottery they picked up on the ground. Abu'l-Atahiya boasted that he could put everything he said into verse, and when he was asked if he understood

107 Khulasat al Athar, by Muhammad al Muhibbi (Cairo-1868) P-86

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prosody, he would reply: "I am above all prosody." As a matter of fact he did use certain metres of his own invention, which do not follow the classic rules. 'Umar ibn al-'Ala, Governor of Tabaristan, rewarded him richly for some verses written in his honour, and the jealousy of the other poets ran high.  

The governor called them together, and made them the following speech: "It is strange that you poets should be so jealous of each other. When one of you comes to us with a qasida written in our honour, fifty lines are devoted to the celebration of his mistress' charms, and not till all his praise of her is exhausted does he enter on the real subject of his poem. Now Abul-Atahiya on the contrary, devotes only a few lines to his beloved, and at once begins his panegyric. Why are you envious of him?" When he was at the point of death, he sent for Mukhariq, the great singer, that he might hear him sing the lines he had himself written: "When my life closes, the sorrows of the women who weep me will be short. My mistress will cease to think of me. She will forget my love, and will soon find another lover." His last desire was that the following words should be inscribed on his tomb: "A life which ends in death is a life rilled with bitterness."  

Abu Nuwas found fault with his extreme facility, which permitted Abul-Atahiya to produce one or two hundred lines a day. He, too, gave up writing poetry, in his old age, probably from pious motives, but this step led to his being thrown into prison among malefactors, and then haled before Al-Mahdi, who gave him his choice between carrying on his art or suffering death. "I would rather write poetry," quoth the bard, and forthwith regained his freedom. He was said to have adopted the views of the Greek philosophers, because in his lines he spoke of death, and made no mention of the Resurrection. He was also taxed with avarice, which was all the more incomprehensible because he had amassed great wealth. The surname by which he is known, which probably signifies "the Intriguer," was given him by Caliph Al-Mahdi. He made some enemies, such as'Abdallah, the son of Ma'n, who caught him in a trap, and gave him a hundred lashes, but very light ones, seeing he dreaded the poet's vengeance. Nevertheless Abul-Atahiya took advantage of this forbearance to abuse his foe yet more roundly, and likened him to a
woman with eunuchs all about her." She struck me with her hand, the daughter of Ma'n. She hurt her hand, and I felt nothing at all! He declared that most men spoke in verse without being conscious of it, and that all would be poets if they only knew how to compose their speech correctly. The grammarian Al-Asma'i said of Abu'l-Atahiyah: "His lines are like the public square in front of the King's palace, whereon fall pearls, and gold, and dust, and potsherds, and fruitkernels." Abu'l-Atahiyah himself regarded the line in which he said, "Men lie in apathy, while the mill of Fate grinds on," as his masterpiece. Harun al-Rashid also cast him into prison when he would have plunged into asceticism, so as to force him to compose erotic poems. 'Ali ibn Jabala, who was surnamed Al-Akawwak (the crop-eared) (776-828), was born in the class of freedslaves. His family had originally belonged to Khurasan. He was either born blind, or became blind when he was seven years old, from an attack of smallpox. His skin was blackish and stained with leprous patches.

Caliph Ma'mun was very wroth with him because of a set of verses composed in honour of Humaid al-Tusi, in which the sovereign detected excessive eulogies such as should only be offered to Divinity, and also because he had asserted that all the Arabs on the earth borrowed their finest qualities from Abu Dulaf, without making any exception in favour of the Caliph himself. The poet, who was in the mountains of 'Iraq 'Ajami, was forced to flee. He was taken in Syria and carried to Bagdad, where his tongue was torn out, and he died of hemorrhage. Abu Dulaf, whom Al-Akawwak had extolled, was passing, one day, through a town in Iraq, when he heard one woman say to another: "That is Abu Dulaf, of whom the poet said: 'Abu Dulaf is the whole world, nomad or of the cities. If he turns out of his road, all the world follows him.'" And the great man wept, repenting that he had not rewarded Al-Akawwak according to his deserts. Two men of Persian origin, Ibrahim al-Mausili and his son Ishaq, won celebrity as poets, and were incomparably superior to all their competitors as singers and musical composers.

The father was not born at Mosul, as his surname would seem to imply, but ran away to that place, to study music. He first saw the light at Kufa, and was the son of a high-born Persian,
Mahan (whose Iranian name was corrupted to Maimun), who had emigrated from the province of Fars, in 742. Caliph Al-Mahdi was the first to appreciate his music, and he rose in favour under each of his successors. When Harun al-Rashid fell out with his slave Marida, and the Barmakide, whose post of Grand Vizier has been made so famous by the Thousand and One Nights, desired to bring about a reconciliation between the sovereign and his favourite, he caused the impassioned stanzas which brought the lovers together again to be written by the poet 'Abbas Ibn al-Ahnaf, and set to music by Ibrahim. Ibrahim was succeeded by his son Ishaq, who was born in 767. Of him the Caliph Mutasim used to say: "When Ishaq sings, the borders of my Empire seem to me enlarged." He was as proficient in the traditions of the Prophet, in jurisprudence and scholastic theology, as in music. 106

Al-Ma'mun said of him: "If Ishaq were not such a famous singer I should have made him a judge. He deserves it better than our present qddiSj and his conduct, his piety, and his uprightness surpass theirs. But his talent for music outshines all the rest." - He was the second author to produce a Book of Songs (Kitab al-Aghani), in which the various pieces he sang were collected together. Al-Mahdi had forbidden Ibrahim to go and see his sons, Musa (al-Hadi) and Harun (al-Rashid); he disobeyed, was punished by the infliction of three hundred lashes and cast into prison. In later years Al-Hadi was so lavish in his gifts to Ibrahim that Ishaq was able to say that if the Caliph had lived they might have rebuilt the walls of their house with silver and gold. Amongst the Bagdad poets of Arab, or at all events of Semitic extraction, we must also mention Di'bil ibn 'Ali al-Khuza*! (765-860), who was born either at Kufa or at Karkisiya (Circesium). For some time he discharged administrative functions as governor of a small town in Tukharistan, in North-Western Persia. 107

He died in Babylonia. He was a satirist, who employed himself in collecting a volume of biographies of the poets. He had a spiteful tongue which spared no one, not even the Caliphs. He was consequently in a constant condition of flight and concealment. So great was the terror he inspired that, when he came one day on an epileptic writhing in convulsions on the ground, he only had to shout his own name into the sufferer's ear to effect a cure. He had yet other sins

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
upon his conscience. One night he fell upon a money-changer just going to his home, and whom
he believed to be carrying his purse as usual. But all the poor man had in his sleeve that day was
a rag wrapped round three pomegranates. The victim lay stone dead, and justice pursued the
assassin, who, after long hiding, was fain to quit Kufa altogether. He wrote his satires
beforehand, and when he had a vengeance to wreak, would insert his enemy's name in a ready-
made set of verses. 108

Al-Buhturi preferred Di'bil to Muslim, because, according to Arab taste, his language
and the character of his work were superior. In his old age he would say:" For more than fifty
years I have borne my cross on my shoulder, but nobody has been able to nail me to it yet." He
was a friend of Muslim, who had given him useful counsel. Yet, when Muslim was appointed
governor of a Persian town, he refused to acknowledge him, an affront avenged by Di'bil in a
biting satire. He was an earnest Shfite, and supported the claim of 'Ali to the Caliphate. He it was
who wrote that verse, which stings like a whip, on Caliph Mu'tasim: "The 'Abbasids number
seven, according to the books, which do not tell us of an eighth. Unless, indeed, like the Seven
Sleepers in their cave, they are seven brave fellows, with an eighth who was a dog!" It is true he
denied having written this, in later days.

The habitual guest and companion of Caliph Al-Mutawakkil, 'Ali ibn al-Jahm,
surnamed Al-Sami, because he was descended from a branch of the Quraishites which bore that
name, was born in Khurasan, whence Al-Ma'mun summoned him to Bagdad. He opposed the
Shfites; he wrote many lines against the claim of the 'Alids; he also heaped insults on the
Christians, amongst others on the famous* physician Bokhtyishu, and on the Mu tazilites. For a
satire which displeased his patron, already greatly irritated by his perpetual accusations against
his comrades, he was imprisoned and exiled. He went back to his own country, then governed by
Tahir, and, by order of the Caliph, was fastened naked to a cross for a whole day, as he has
himself related. " It was no unknown man, nor person of inferior merit, who was crucified at
Shadhiyakh on Monday evening. By this execution they satisfied their vengeance. But, thanks be
to God! their victim was a man of honour, and worthy of respect!" He proceeded into Syria, and
while travelling towards 'Iraq from Aleppo, fell in a fight with a Bedouin Ghazw (in 863). When

108 Ibid.
help reached him, he was found to be dying, but still whispering verses. "Has the darkness of night been deepened? or has the torrent swept away the morn? I think of the folks in the street of Dujail in Bagdad—but how far am I from there!" The Orientals admire the following delicate thought: "The enmity of a man without honour or religion is an affliction."

That has no equal, for he leaves you his own reputation, while he assails yours, which you have guarded with such care." He has himself related that his poetic vocation first manifested itself when his father had him detained in the school he was attending. He wrote to his mother, complaining of his father's inhumanity: "All the pupils have left school, and I stay here in prison, without having committed any fault." Whereupon his mother obtained his enlargement, But such was his reputation for lying that many people asserted the stanzas were written when he was sixty, and could not, consequently, have been composed while he was at school. Under the rule of Mutawakkil, an artist prince, who loved games and buffoonery, and was the first to introduce them into the Palace of the Caliphs, music and the dance reached a development far beyond that of the old days. Among the court poets of this period we find Fadl, a woman of Central Arabian blood, who led a somewhat loose life at Bagdad. 110

Her liaison with Sa'id ibn Humaid, a poet of Persian birth, and exceedingly orthodox opinions, who was head of the despatch office under Caliph Musta'in, whereas his mistress was a Shife, fills up the whole story of her life. She used to be summoned to the Caliph's harem, to delight his fair favourites. She was a quick-witted woman, ready in repartee, and skilled in penmanship. Her lover, Said, perceived, at last, that he was dropping into unconscious imitation of her style. She went to see him when she chose. One day, as she entered, Said rose eagerly, greeted her, and begged her to remain with him. She replied: "A messenger from the Palace has just been at my house, so I cannot stay. But I came up, because I could not bear to pass thy door without coming in to see thee" and Said replied: "Thou art like the sun that lights the world; its rays seem close to us, but who can reach it?" Said devotion did not prevent the inconstant Fadl

109 ibid.
110 ibid.
from accepting the suit of Bunan, a young singer. But at all events she was swayed by a genuine and sincere feeling.111

How different from the female slave-musicians, who, as the poetess herself tells us (and other testimony proves her truth), "receive a poor man as if he were a dog, and never ask for less than a gold-mine!" When at the point of death, Fadl desired to see her lover once more, and found strength to write to him. "My patience is worn out, and my sufferings increase. My house is near thee, it is true, but thou art still a long way off!" This happened under the Caliphate of Mutamid, in 873. In Mutawakkil's own harem, a singing-woman named Mahbuba, born at Bassora, but of foreign blood, was greatly admired. She composed stanzas which she sang, accompanying herself on the lute. But her verses were thought better than her singing, which was mediocre. When Mutawakkil was murdered, Mahbuba put on mourning and forswore all pleasure till she died. This persistent fidelity displeased the new owner into whose hands she passed when the Caliph's harem was dispersed: but an officer of Turkish birth asked for her as a gift, set her free, and bade her quit Samarra and settle wherever she chose.112

She died at Bagdad, in the deepest seclusion. Ibn al-Rumi, "son of the Greek," a surname he owed to his grandfather, Juraij, or George, was born at Bagdad in 836, and was poisoned by Abu'l-Husain Qasim ibn 'Ubaidallah, Caliph Mutadid's vizier, who dreaded his satires. The minister suborned a servant, who served the poet with a poisoned biscuit. When Ibn al-Rumi had eaten it, he perceived he had been poisoned, and rose to depart. "Where are you going?" said the minister. "Whither you have sent me." "Very good," replied the vizier. "Present my duty to my father." "I am not on my road to hell!" answered the poet, who forthwith retired to his own house, sent for a physician, who is said to have used the wrong drugs, so that the patient died within a few days. His lines are admirable, both for beauty of expression and originality of conception. The novelty of his ideas was especially praised. He derided the Eastern mania for dyeing the beard. When a man's hair remains black, although his youth has gone by, it must of necessity be artificially dyed. How can any old man believe that jetty colour will be thought natural, and he himself considered young?

111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
"A poet of the tribe of Tai, Al-Buhtur! (Walid ibn 'Uba'id), was born at or near Manbij in 820. He was first of all the comrade of his fellow-tribesman Abu Tammam, and finally travelled to Bagdad, where he long lived, as the panegyrist of Mutawakkil and his courtiers, and of the heads of his civil administration. He died in 897, either at his native town or at Aleppo. Like Abu Tammam, whose chief claim to glory lies in his collection of the Hamdsa, Al-Buhturi made a book of the same description. And his poetry, too, is written in imitation of the ancient style. He often mentions Aleppo and the surrounding plain, for that country had grown dear to him.

It was Abu Tammam who, hearing him recite a poem of his own composition, at Hims, divined his poetic gift, and, as he knew him to be poor, wrote a letter recommending him to the inhabitants of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man. As a result of this letter, he was given a pension of four thousand dirhems, the -first money he ever earned. Abu'l-'Ala al-Ma'arri considered Abu Tammam and Mutanabbi moralists, while he took Al-Buhturi to be a genuine poet. Al-Buhturi was very avaricious, wore dirty garments, and starved the brother and the servant who lived with him. He left very few satires behind him. His son related that his father charged him on his deathbed to bum everything he had written in

Anger, or with a desire, for revenge, so as to save his descendants from any inconvenience caused by other men's resentment. But Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani! Has proved Al-Buhturi's inferiority in this department, by means of fragments of satires admitted to be his. Even the sons of kings dabbled in poetry.\footnote{Ibid.}

'Abdallah Ibn AL-Mutazz, the son of Caliph Al-Mutazz (861-908), led the unfettered existence of a poet and man of learning under the reign of Al-Mutadid. After the death of that Caliph, he was mixed up in court intrigues. The party which was discontented with the policy of Muqtadir, who was ruled by women and eunuchs, chose Abdallah to be Caliph, under the title of Al-Murtadi (December 17, 908). But the reigning Caliph's guard overcame 'Abdallah's partisans. His sovereignty lasted one day only. He fled to the house of a jeweller, but was soon discovered and strangled (29th December) by the Caliph's chamberlain and treasurer, Mu'nis, a eunuch. His poetry, which resembled that of Abu Nuwas, contained no imitation of the ancient styles. He wrote charming little occasional poems, full of aristocratic grace. Besides this, he took an interest
in literature, and was the author of the first great Arabic work on rhetoric (Kitāb al-bādf), now preserved at the Escorial. His verses are marked by lucidity and ease of style. He formulated the rule for healthy rhetoric in the following dictum: "Eloquence is the accurate expression of ideas, in few words." 114 Some poets wept his tragic end, among them the refined and subtle Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Bassam, and his friend Ibn al-Allaf Hasan ibn -e- Ali, the blind poet of Nahrawan, who, to avoid persecution, wrote a celebrated elegy on a cat, his pet, which was in the habit of climbing into his neighbours' pigeon roosts and devouring their denizens, whose owners ruthlessly destroyed it. "Thou hast left us, puss (hirr), and thou wilt return no more! Thou wast as my own child to me. How could we cease to love thee, thou who wast so sure a protection to us!" Ibn al-Mutazz was fond of drinking wine of a morning in the meadows of Matira, near Samarra, not far from the Christian Convent of 'Abdun. "How often have I been wakened at dawn by the voices of the monks at their prayers! Robed in black, they chanted matins, girt with their rope-girdles, and with a crown of hair about their shaven heads." The 'Abbasid administration may also claim the honour of numbering Ibn AL-Hajjaj, a Muhtasib, or commissioner in charge of the markets, weights and measures, and popular morals of Bagdad, among its servants.115

He was ultimately deprived of his office, and died in the year 1000. His light poetry earned him considerable fame and applause. Its ease and gaiety were highly praised. He has been likened to Imru'ul-Qais, inasmuch as that, like him, he created a new style, in which he never was surpassed. He was a fervent Shi'ite, and ordered in his last will that his body should be laid at the feet of that of the Imam Musa, whose tomb is not far from Bagdad. With him we must also mention Sharif Muhammad al-Rida, a descendant of the Prophet. His father, Tahir, had performed the functions of inspector of the descent of 1 Ali, or judge of that final Court of Appeal known as al-Mazalim, and leader of the Pilgrim Caravan. He began to write verses very early in life, and went on producing them in considerable numbers till he died. He also took an interest in Koranic exegesis, and wrote works dealing with the rhetoric of the Sacred Book. He died at Bagdad in 1015. One of his pupils, Mihyar IBN MarzOya, was converted to Islam by his means. He had been a Zoroastrian, born in Dailam, the mountainous region south of Gilan, on

114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
the Caspian coast. He died at Bagdad in 1037. He acted as Persian secretary, and studied poetry with Sharif Al-Rida. His Shfite opinions were abhorred by the Sunnites, one of whom said to him, at last: "Mihyar, when you were converted, all you did was to shift from one corner of hell into another!" The delicacy of thought and remarkable sweetness of expression characterizing his verses were greatly admired. The Provinces All the poetic genius of the country was not attracted to the capital. From one end of the Empire to the other, we find poetical works produced. Their authors, for political or religious, or other more personal reasons, remained far from the central point, and were content with the patronage of the provincial governors. Isma'il, the Himyarite Sayyid, born at Bassora about 729, was driven by his Shi'ite opinions to leave that town for Kufa. He acknowledged Abu'l-Abbas Saffah when that city fell, but he held apart from him and his successors on perceiving that they persecuted the'Alids, and died at Wasit in 789. His poetry, like that of Abu'l-Atahiya and Bashshar ibn Burd, is remarkable for its simplicity of diction.116

This poet, who came of Kharijite parents, belonging to the 'Ibadite sect, spent forty years in celebrating the glories of the house of e Ali in numberless poems, and with a talent which compelled the admiration even of his enemies. He himself has related that it was a dream which converted him to the tenets of the Kaisanites, the partisans of Muhammad, son of the Hanafite woman. His bronzed complexion bore witness to the many crossings of races which had taken place in Southern Arabia. He was tall and well proportioned, with fine teeth and luxuriant hair. His fecundity of language and boldness of conception were remarkable. The Bedouins themselves highly esteemed his style. His drunken habits led to his being arrested one night, in a state of intoxication, in the streets of Al-Ahwaz, in Susiana. In his satires, which are full of the most violent hatred of the companions of the Prophet, he goes so far as to compare 'A'isha to "the serpent which seeks to devour its young."117

Abul-Shis Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah attached himself as panegyrist to the service of the Amir of Raqqa, 'Uqba ibn Ja'far ibn al-Asliath al Khuzai, wrote Bacchic poetry and elegies on the loss of his own eyesight, which overtook him in old age, and died in 811. He was cousin to Di'bil al Khuzai, and his reputation was overshadowed by those of Muslim ibn al-Walid, Ashja e,

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.
and Abu Nuwas. The Amir of Raqqa was both rich and generous, and his largess kept the poet near him. He was a quick thinker, and composed with great rapidity. No more poets are to be discovered in the Arabian Peninsula. It is scarcely worth while to mention Ibn Harma Ibrahim ibn 'All (685-767), who dwelt at Medina, was a hot partisan of the 'Alids, and a great lover of wine. Syria, however, continues to shine with brilliant splendour. Abu Tammam Habib ibn Aus, who was born near the Lake of Tiberias in 807; the son of a Christian named Tadus (Thaddeus) the druggist, was a great traveller.

In his youth he was at Hims, where, when the poet Al-Buhturi met him, he already enjoyed considerable reputation as a poet. But some authorities aver that, as a child, he carried water in the mosques of Cairo. Certain it is that Egypt was the country in which his literary efforts first found favour. He went to Damascus, and failing to find a patron there, seized the opportunity offered by a journey into Syria, undertaken by Al-Ma'mun, to wait on him, but could not obtain an audience. Having reached Mosul, he travelled into Armenia, where rich gifts from the governor, Khalid ibn Yazid, awaited him. The death of Caliph Al-Ma'mun recalled him to Bagdad, where he was received into favour by Al-Mutasim, and to this prince or to his courtiers many of his poems are dedicated. The increasing renown of 'Abdallah ibn Tahir, then well nigh independent in his government of Khurasan, attracted the poet thither. On his return, being delayed at Hamadhan by a snowstorm which had choked the Zagros passes, he made the acquaintance of the learned Abu'l-Wafa ibn Salama, who made him free of his library, inspired him with a taste for searching out and collecting the old Arab poets, and thus enabled him to compose, among other works, his Hamdsā— which has preserved the knowledge of a great number of poets and poetical works of the early Arab times to us. His own verses might, perhaps, have been swiftly forgotten; but his celebrity as the compiler of the Hamasa has endured, and his commentator, Tabrizi, has been able to declare that "Abu Tammam, when he collected this anthology, proved himself a better poet than in his own verse." Yet he is also said to have surpassed his contemporaries in purity of style, in the intrinsic merit of his work, and the excellence of the way in which he could handle a subject. Ibn Khallikan has ascertained that Abu Tammam spent the close of his life at Mosul, whither Hasan ibn Wahb, secretary to the chief of the Chancery, had sent him as director of the horse post.

118 Ibid.
This, under the Arab Empire, was a most confidential position, for, apart from his public functions, the director had to keep the central authority informed of all that was happening in the provinces. He died in this town, about the year 846. In Dīk al-Jinn ("the Cock of the Genii," thus surnamed because he had green eyes and was very ugly) 'Abdal-Salam ibn Raghban, we have an instance of that interesting intellectual movement which stirred all the vanquished races just beginning to raise their heads, and find rhetoricians to defend their (purely imaginary) rights against the Arabian Arabs' pretensions to superiority and nobility of race. These rhetoricians were known as shuubiyya. One thing they forgot—that they could only express their patriotism in the Arabic tongue, and that the use of that tongue was the indelible symbol of their vanquished state. The Cock of the Genii was a famous Shuubi. He was born at Hims in Syria, a country he never left, and he asserted the superiority of the Syrian race. He was also a Shīite, and wrote elegies on the sad death of Husain, son of 'Ali, at the battle of Kerbela.\textsuperscript{119}

He died in 849, when over seventy years of age. He had squandered his whole patrimony in pleasure and dissipation. He had a slave of the name of Dunya, of whom he was passionately enamoured and to whom he wrote many poems. But in a fit of wicked passion and jealousy he put her to death, suspecting her of loose conduct with a slave called Wasif. He lived to repent his crime most bitterly. To his outpourings of sorrow we owe verses in which he vents his lamentation. "O cluster of dates, destruction has fallen upon thee! I have watered the earth with thy blood..." Her form used to appear to him at night. "After she was buried she came to my couch, and I said to her: 'Joy of my eyes, art thou restored to me? But how? Can it be possible?' and she replied: 'My corpse lies yonder, but this, my soul, is come to visit thee.'" My readers will note the expression of regret. There is no expression of remorse. The poet's conscience was easy.\textsuperscript{120}

In committing the murder, he had done no more than use the right conferred on him by law. [The rule of the Hamdanids at Aleppo engendered a most important literary movement in that city, and it soon spread to every Arabic-speaking country. Saif al-daula, who established himself at Aleppo when the sovereignty of Bagdad was being disputed by military leaders of

\textsuperscript{119} Silk al Durar, by Abdul Fadl Muhammad Khalil Efendi al Muradi, 2 vols (Bulaq-1874) P-86

\textsuperscript{120} ibid.
Turkish or Persian origin, was forced to defend the state he had set up against many external foes, and especially against the Roman troops of Byzantium. Notwithstanding this, he saw several poets flourish about him, the most famous being Mutanabbi and Abu Firas al-Hamdani. The son of a water-carrier, Mutanabbi was born at Kufa in 905; he spent his boyhood in Syria and amongst the desert Arabs. As a young man, he fancied himself a prophet, founded a new religion in the plains round the little town of Samawa on the Euphrates, received revelations after the manner of the Koran, and collected a few followers about him. But in a very short space of time he was overthrown by Lu'lu', the Ikhshidite general in command at Hims, and was cast into prison.

Thence his surname of Mutanabbi, "he who counts himself a prophet." His prison, which did not open its doors till he had acknowledged the true Faith, revealed his poetic gift to him. In 948 he reached Saif al-daula's court, and composed such beautiful poems in his honour that the names of poet and patron are thereby indissolubly united. This good understanding only lasted for nine years. After a dispute with the Persian philologist, Khalawaih, of Susiana, who so far lost his self-control as to strike his adversary in the face with a key, the poet quitted Aleppo and offered his services to foes of the Hamdanid dynasty, Kaffir, a negro eunuch, and Anujur, both of them ministers of the Ikhshidite princes, who had made themselves independent in Egypt. But this attempt ended in disappointment, and Mutanabbi, in a rage, fled to Bagdad, where the real ruler was the Vizier Al-Muhallabi, who would fain have been the object of the illustrious poet's praise. But this honour the poet would not grant him, and so departed to Shiraz in Persia, to 'Adud al-daula, the Buwaihid, who heaped generous rewards upon him. On his way back from Persia, Mutanabbi fell amongst a marauding band of Bedouins, and was killed, not far from Bagdad (965). utanabbi's poems have been inordinately praised and criticised, both in the Arab and the European world.

Qadi Abu'l-Hasan boasted that he kept the golden mean between the poet's admirers, who preferred him to every other of his time, and set him above all his rivals, and his detractors, who declared his dissertations to be empty chatter and his expressions mere barbarisms.

121 ibid.
122 Ibid.
Tha'alibi, the author of the Yatimat al-Dahr, justly held this division of opinion to be an evident proof of the poet's merit and superiority. He also praised his skill. "Rhythm is subject to his will, and thoughts are his slaves." (A close examination of Oriental criticism shows us that the qualities it most values in Mutanabbi's work are his refinement of expression, his neglect of the antique simplicity in favour of affected mannerisms, and his accumulation of fantastic imagery.\textsuperscript{123}

Thus he was the first to compose lines in the style of the following: "He marched at the head of an army which raised a cloud of dust that darkened the sight. It was as though the soldiers saw with their ears." And this because the darkness was so great that nobody could see with his eyes! These regrettable inventions of the pseudo-prophet and his contemporaries won so much success that they reigned supreme over Oriental poety, which we shall now see drop deeper and deeper into bombast and false imagery. In proof of Mutanabbi's popularity, Ibn Khallikan quotes the fact that more than forty commentaries have been written to explain his works. This is because the uncommon and far-fetched expressions he used so much too freely needed explanation before they could be understood. Avarice was the only vice with which he could be taxed. His moral conduct stood out in remarkable contrast to the looseness and debauchery of the life at Saif al-daula's court. One stern Moslem actually remarked that though he did not fast, nor recite the canonical prayers five times a day, nor read the Koran, he never told a lie.\textsuperscript{124}

Abu Firas al-Hamdani, who was of the princely family, and cousin to Saif al-daula, who appointed him governor of the town of Manbij, and had him with him all through his wars with the Domesticus general in chief of the Roman troops in Asia, was a man of a different temper. He was made prisoner in 959, when the fortress he commanded fell, was conveyed to Constantinople, and there remained till he was set at liberty in 965. During this captivity he wrote many elegies addressed to various members of his family. One, which is celebrated, to his mother, at Manbij, has been translated into German by Ahlwardt. When Saif al-daula died, in 967, Abu Firas claimed the sovereignty of Hims, but perished fighting with the troops sent

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
against him by Saif al-daula's son. He was a valiant soldier, and his poems, quite devoid of any pedantic affectation, breathe brave and straightforward feeling, expressed in noble and elevated language. They form a diary of his eventful life. With these two masters of the Arabic tongue, we may mention a member of Saif al-daula's circle known as Al-Sari Al-Raffa, because in his youth he had been a patcher or darter of stuffs at Mosul. After Saif al-daula's death, he went to Bagdad, to the Vizier Al-Muhallabi; Thaaliibi accuses him of many plagiarisms. He had chosen Kushajim, then famous in the East, to be his model, and to increase the volume of the copies he made from that author's works, he contracted the habit of inserting lines of his own composition.

Al - Nam! (Abu'l- Abbas Ahmad), who succeeded Mutanabbi as court poet, died at Aleppo between 980 and 1008. He was called Al-Missisif, because his family came from Mopsuesta in Cilicia. We possess witty lines from his pen, addressed to the solitary black hair remaining on his bald pate. "I say to my white hairs, which are terrified by this stranger's presence: 'Respect her, I entreat you. A black African spouse will not tarry long in a house where the second wife has a white skin!'" Abu'l Faraj, surnamed Al-Babbagha (the parrot) because of a defect in his speech, belonged to Nasibin. After his patron's death he betook himself to Mosul, and thence to Bagdad, where he died in 1007.

Al-Zahif Ali ibn Ishaq was only a temporary visitor at Aleppo. He usually lived at Bagdad, where he was born, and where he kept a shop for cotton stuffs. In Bagdad he wrote poems in honour of the 'Abbasids and of Al-Muhallabi; he died in 963. He was famed for his descriptions. His lines on the violet: "azure blossom, whose stalk seems too weak to hold up the flower," on wine: "so transparent in the goblet that it seems luminous," and the fair: "whose eyes seem to brandish swords and unsheathe daggers, whose faces, veiled, recall the crescent, and unveiled, the moon at the full," are frequently quoted. Egypt was slipping more and more out of the sphere of influence of the Bagdad Caliphate. The Tulunids and the Ikhshidites had established their independence, and the African Fatimids was soon to establish a Shifite Caliphate on the Nile. With a glance at the katib (secretary), Rashid ibn Ishaq, who flourished about 850, and has left a diwdn filled with obscenities behind him (now in the Berlin Library), we may

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
notice Sharif Abu'l-Qasim Ibn Tabataba, who performed the duties of inspector of the descendants of 'All.\textsuperscript{127}

He died in 956. His poems are mostly of the ascetic and mystic type. Yet his description of a long night is often quoted: "To-night the Pleiades seem to have travelled all day long, and to have been weary when they reached their evening station. They have set up their tents, so that their caravan may rest. Not a planet moves in its orbit, not a star hurries over its nocturnal course (so dark is the night)." Abu'l Qasim Muhammad ibn Hani' al-Andalusi was born at Seville, but his father came from a village near Mahdiyya, in Tunis. He was driven out of his native town at the age of seven-and-twenty, because the dissipation into which he had plunged had earned him the reputation of being tainted with the opinions of the Greek philosophers. This roused popular hatred against him, and forced his patron, who dreaded being accused of sharing his views, to beg him to depart for a season; he attached himself to Jauhar, a general who served Al-Mansur, the Fatimid, and later to the general's son, Al-Mu'izz, who replaced his father in 953, and was with him when he went forth to conquer Egypt in 969.

After some time he returned to the Maghrib to seek his family and conduct it into Egypt. In the course of his journey he was murdered at Barqa in the ancient Cyrenaica, in 973. He was still a young man, not over forty-two. Al-Mu'izz heard of his protege's death when he reached Egypt, and was deeply affected by it. "We had hoped," he said, "to see this man compete with the Oriental poets, but this pleasure has been denied to us." Abu'll Ala al-Ma'arri, who did not like Ibn Hani's poetry, compared it to wheat grains crushed in the mill, because of its harsh phraseology. Tamim, the second son of the Fatimid Caliph, Al-Mu'izz (948-985), composed dithyrambs in praise of his brother, Caliph Al-Aziz, and died in Egypt. Al-Aziz, who succeeded Al-Mu'izz, having been designated heir-presumptive in his lifetime, was also a poet. Tamim wrote amorous poetry, and imitated the desert poets in his descriptions of thirst-stricken gazelles. With him we may refer to Ibn Wakf, who was born at Tinnis, near Damietta, and died in the same town, in 1003. His originality of thought was much admired.

He was a remarkable compiler, and devoted a whole volume to the plagiarisms ascribed to Mutanabbi. A defect in his pronunciation had procured him the surname of Al-Atis 'he who

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
sneezes). He has sung the delights of a love which has cooled down. "My heart, once so fond, is now rid of thy love, and feels neither inclination nor desire for thee. Thy cruelty has reconciled me to thine absence. A Paren may cease to mourn the death of a forward child." His ambition was a modest one. "An obscure position fulfils my desires, which shrink from exalted rank. Not that they do not know how sweet greatness is, but they prefer health." AbO'l-Raqa'maq was a man of Antioch. He settled in Egypt, sang the praises of the Fatimid rulers and the great men of that country, and died there in 1008. Al-Tihami (Abu'l-Hasan 'All ibn Muhammad) only produced a small volume of poems, but the greater part are exquisite, after the Oriental pattern, that is to say, full of exaggerated and unexpected comparisons. In his eulogy of an open-handed vizier, he exclaims "Compared with his magnificence, the heavy rain-cloud is but a vapour, and the seas mere brooks!" But he wrote a very beautiful elegy on the death of his own child, a youth, and it was asserted that in reward for having written such fine verses his sins had been forgiven him. His political action proved his ruin. He came secretly to Egypt, bearing letters from Hassan ibn Mufarrij, chief of the tribe of Tai, to the Beni-Qurra; a tribe dwelling in the province of Barqa, the ancient Cyrenaica, which had just risen against the Fatimids, in support of a descendant of the Omeyyad line. He was arrested, cast into prison at Cairo, and executed secretly, in 1025. Abu Isma'il al-Hasan Tughra'i was of Persian origin, and was born at Ispahan. He was at once a poet, a man of learning, and a statesman. His surname signifies "he who traces the tughrd" a kind of design formed of interlaced letters, which figures at the head of diplomas and official documents, and stamps them as authentic. The caligrapher who traces this sign is in reality the State Chancellor. Tughrai composed, at Bagdad, the Ldmiyyat al-Ajam (Ode in / of the Non-Arabs), in opposition to Shanfara's celebrated Ldmiyyat al-Arab. It is an elegy on the misfortunes of the times. At a later date, the Seljuqid Sultan Mas'ud appointed him his minister, in his capital, Mosul. When Mas'ud was defeated in the Battle of Hamadhan (1121) by his brother Mahmud, the poet was taken prisoner, and put to death, on the advice of the vizier, Sumairami, who accused him of atheism. His diwdn contains numerous panegyrics of Sultan Sa'id, the son of Malikshah, and of the great minister, Nizam al-Mulk. The Oriental scholars Pococke and Golius have exercised their skill in a Latin translation of

128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
Tughra'i's Ldmiyya. A copyist and bookseller of Bagdad, Abu'l-Ma'ali Sa'd al-Hazir! (died 1172); surnamed Dallal al-Kutub (the book-broker), collected his poems, in alphabetical order, into a book called Lumah al-mulahy and also made a collection of enigmas, now preserved at Cairo. His Zinat al-dahr^ an anthology of the poets of his own day and those before it, enriched with biographies, and his numerous compilations, have all disappeared. Graceful thoughts, very elegantly expressed, abound in his compositions.130

Muin al-Din Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Razzaq AL-TANTARAN wrote his Echo Ode (tarj?)—which Silvestre de Sacy has made known, and translated for his Chrestomathies Ai'abe —in honour of the great vizier of the Seljuqid dynasty, Nizam al-Mulk. At this period Syria saw the birth of a philosopher who was the last of the great poets of the Arabic tongue, and whose pessimism, finely expressed in verse, stirred the admiration of many generations. Abu 'l- Ala al- Ma'akr!, who was born at Maarrat al-Nu'man, in Northern Syria, in 973, came of a family descended from the Yemenite tribe of Tanukh. When four years old, he had an attack of smallpox, and lost one of his eyes. At a later date his healthy eye, too, was destroyed, and he became stone blind. In spite of this he received a careful education, under the superintendence of his own father, whose memory he has immortalized in an elegy. After continuing his studies at Aleppo, he made a first journey to Bagdad, but this visit did not prove a success, for he felt himself a stranger in the place, and longed for his native town. Nevertheless he returned the following year, to make the acquaintance of 'Abdal-salam of Bassora, who was at the head of one of the great libraries of the city. Every Friday 'Abdal-salam gathered about him a circle of freethinkers, of which Abu'l- Ala soon became a member. Some of these men were rationalists, like the Mutazilites; others were downright materialists. Their society exercised a powerful influence on the poet's opinions. When, however, he was recalled to Ma'arra, at the end of a year and seven months, by the news of his mother's illness, and arrived too late to see her draw her last breath, he mourned her departure in verses full of the deepest feeling, and never left his native town again. His youthful poetry has been collected under the title of Siqt al-zand (Sparks from the Tinder), and his later poems under that of Luziim ma lam yalzam (Obligation which is not Indispensable), an allusion to his conquest of the difficulty of a double or triple rhyme, which is not indispensable in prosody. He left a collection of letters, and a treatise on asceticism and preaching, in rhymed

130 ibid.
prose and verse He was said to have written a Koran, an imitation of the Prophet's, and possibly the mere banter of a freethinker. When somebody complained to him that, though his work was well written, it did not produce the same impression as the true Koran, he replied: "Let it be read from the pulpits of the mosques for the next four hundred years, and then you will be delighted with it!" Ibn Kushajim Mahmud also left a diwán or collection of poems arranged in alphabetical order.  

He was grandson of an Indian from the banks of the Indus, and lived at Ramla. He died about 961. Abu'l-Faraj Muhammad al-Wa'wa of Damascus, was a dainty and euphuistic poet, who over-indulged in description and metaphor. He wrote the famous stanza, "She made the narcissus rain down its pearls, watered the rose, and bit the jujubes with her hailstones," a description which might be taken for that of a cloud, but this would be quite wrong. It is applied to a woman—the pearls her tears, the rose her cheek, the hailstones her teeth, and the jujubes no other than her rosy lips. These jests seemed charming, no doubt, when they were first invented, but in later days, repeated ad nauseam by thousands of poetasters, in Persian, Hindustani, and Turkish, they constitute the most wearisome repetition of empty formulas that can well be imagined. Al-Wa'wa* died at the end of the tenth century. Abu 'Abdallah al-Ablah was born, and lived, and died, at Bagdad. This last event took place towards 1183. His poems, some of which are preserved at the British Museum, unite tenderness of feeling with artificiality of style.  

There were not many of them, but they were widely read. Musicians took possession of them, and sang them to old airs. They pressed about him and begged him to write more. His lines were recited to the author of the Kharida, Katib 'Imad al-Din, in 1160. The surname Al-Ablah signifies "the fool," but it is questionable whether it was not bestowed on him in irony; as the Arabs will call a Negro "Kafur" (Camphor), and we ourselves will dub him "Boule de Neige" (Snowball). Ibn al-Ta'awidhi (Abu'l Fath Muhammad) was the son of 'Ubaidallah, a freed Turkish slave, whose real name was Nushtakin. He was grandson, on the maternal side, of the celebrated ascetic Ibn al-Ta'awidhi, and hence his surname. He was born at Bagdad in 1125, was

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131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
brought up by his maternal grandfather, and became a secretary in the Office for the Administration of Fiefs. In 1183 he lost his eyesight; many of his poems lament this deprivation, and regret the days of his active youth. Before the calamity befell him, he had collected his verses into a downy which he afterwards completed.\footnote{Ibid.}