

Making the Great Book of Songs

Compilation and the Author's Craft in Abû I-Faraj al-Işbahânî's
Kitâb al-aghânî

Hilary Kilpatrick

MAKING THE GREAT BOOK OF SONGS

This is the first systematic literary study of one of the masterpieces of classical Arabic literature, the tenth century *Kitāb al-aḡhānī* (The Book of Songs) by Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī. Until now, the 24 volume *Book of Songs* has been regarded as a rather chaotic but priceless mine of information about classical Arabic music, literature and culture. This book approaches it as a work of literature in its own right, with its own internal logic and coherence. The study also consistently integrates the musical component into the analysis and proposes a reading of the work in which individual anecdotes and poems are related to the wider context, enhancing their meaning.

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PREFACE

Around 1990 Syrian State Television screened a series entitled “*Al-mughannūn*” (The Singers). The scripts were based on the accounts of Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid singers in Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī’s* *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Book of Songs), a fourth/tenth century monument of Arabic literature. The script writers did not have to decipher manuscripts or ferret in archives; the *Kitāb al-aghānī* is available today in at least five different printed editions, not to speak of nine or more abridgements. It has not suddenly come into vogue in this century, as the manuscript tradition and the frequent abridgements in the pre-modern period show. From the time of its composition until now, the *Aghānī* has been both popular and generally recognised as one of the masterpieces of Arabic literature.

The paucity of studies of the *Aghānī* as a literary work (rather than as a source for social history, musical life, poetic criticism, diglossia and a number of other topics) is all the more surprising. I believe there are three main reasons for this. First, it is a large book, running to some two dozen volumes in modern editions. Its size is off-putting. Second, it disconcerts the modern reader in a number of ways. It mixes prose and poetry. It includes a great variety of genres, such as bald statements of information, anecdotes of all kinds, jokes, heroic tales, excerpts from histories, and controversies on poetic and musical matters. (This mixture of genres is a characteristic of mediaeval Arabic compilations of *belles-lettres*.) And with all this it consistently employs the scholarly techniques of the time. Third, the *Aghānī*’s *raison d’être*, the songs, have fallen silent; the absence of notation in the period when the book was written and subsequent changes in Arabic music mean that the melodies cannot be reconstructed.

Serious research into older Arabic literature cannot merely ignore books as important as the *Aghānī*. It presents a challenge which scholars have to take up. And a better understanding of this book is bound to increase insight into the corpus of *adab* (*belles-lettres*) texts, one of the main branches of mediaeval Arabic literature. The present study is intended as a contribution to research on the *Aghānī* and more generally on mediaeval Arabic *belles-lettres*.

* Both “al-Iṣbahānī” and “al-Iṣfahānī” are found. The oldest biographical sources and *Aghānī* MSS have the former, and I have followed their usage, except when quoting.

The study begins with a survey of the research carried out up till now on the *Aghānī* in the Arab world, Europe and North America, as far as it has been accessible to me. There follows a concise presentation of Abū l-Faraj's life, times and works, focussed on aspects relevant for the understanding of the *Aghānī*. From the study of the other extant works, it becomes clear that the *Aghānī*'s title has to be taken seriously; Abū l-Faraj was not given to choosing fancy names for his books, and the designations he gives correspond to the contents. Like it or not, the modern researcher is dealing with a Book of Songs Fallen Silent, but a Book of Songs all the same.

One way to approach a book far removed from modern aesthetic expectations is to examine what the author himself says about it. The student of the *Aghānī* is well provided for in this respect; there are hundreds of observations by Abū l-Faraj, covering all kinds of topics, scattered through the book. In the first of the two main parts of this study I have collected his asides and discussed them under the headings of remarks bearing on songs and singers, remarks about poetry and poets, and remarks about prose and the selection and arrangement of material. (I have worked his rare allusions to his own times and contemporaries into the section on his life.) The discussion of the asides throws much light on questions such as how the compiler worked, what attitude he had to his material, and to what extent he conceived of the book as a whole.

Any book as large as the *Aghānī* will be organised on various levels. Between the Book of Songs as a whole and the individual *akhbār* (reports or anecdotes) there are two intermediate levels. There is a division into three parts according to which songs are used to introduce the material – song collections, songs by royal musicians, or Abū l-Faraj's own choice. But much more prominent is the organisation of material into sections, or "articles", as I shall term them, devoted usually to a poet or a singer, but sometimes to a historical event, a relationship between two people, or a song and its history. It is possible to read the *Aghānī* simply as an enormous collection of discrete anecdotes and quotations of poetry. But Abū l-Faraj's consistent division of the material into articles shows that he attached great importance to this intermediate level of organisation. The second major aim of this study is to examine the ways in which articles are organised, taking account of the kind of material available (and the quantity of it, as far as can be judged), and the main topics treated. First the articles with a narrow thematic focus, those on songs, relationships and events, are discussed. The insights thus gained into Abū l-Faraj's approach to compilation are drawn on in the subsequent investigation of the much larger and more diverse category of articles on poets and singers.

A further chapter focusses on elements frequently encountered throughout the book. They include songs and poems which are often quoted, major figures of Arabic culture and early Islamic history who reappear as principal or secondary characters, recurrent motifs, issues such as the permissibility of listening to music, and themes, for instance the inevitability of death and the immortality of poetry and music. These elements, drawn from a common fund of material about pre- and early Islamic culture, create connections between the different articles and

contribute a certain unity to the book. In the final chapter the framework of songs and the ordering of the articles are examined. First the three main parts of the book are indicated, based on the song collections, the list of royal musicians and the compiler's own choice of songs. Then smaller groups of articles, devoted, for instance, to different members of a family or a literary circle, are distinguished, as is the phenomenon of articles close to each other both treating the same subject or linked through some other unusual feature. And lastly some reasons are advanced for the fact that what starts as a book of songs should turn out to cover so many different aspects of early Arabic culture. The epilogue points to areas for further research.

When I embarked on this research, it was not only with a sense of duty and of responding to a challenge, but also with the knowledge that the *Aghānī* is a fantastic read. It is said that when Pope Paul VI asked Louis Armstrong and his wife, who were attending a Vatican reception, if they had any children, the musician replied, "No, but we had a lot of fun trying." I do not know how this study will be judged, but I have certainly had a lot of fun doing the research for it. And I hope at least to have suggested to the reader some ways of approaching mediaeval Arabic compilations and to have conveyed a little of the riches and the fascination of this treasure of Arabic and world literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I first read passages from the *Kitāb al-aghānī* in St Andrews in 1973, I was fascinated by it. It took me many years, however, to develop an approach to studying it, and more years to get to know it well enough to write about it. In the course of the nearly three decades leading up to completing this book I have incurred many debts of gratitude, of which only the most important can be mentioned here.

The Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung gave me a research grant to spend the year 1975–1976 at the University of Munich, where I learned the basic principles of classical Arabic philology under the careful and friendly guidance of Professor Anton Spitaler. From 1989 to 1993 the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research supported my research project on the *Aghānī* with two grants, and it was then that I got to know the text thoroughly. These two periods were crucial for the preparation of this study.

I read parts of the *Aghānī* with students of Arabic literature at the Institute for Languages and Cultures of the Middle East in the University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands, where I taught from 1977–1987. Their comments and questions were very useful and their generally enthusiastic attitude encouraging. Several of the chapters of this book are based on papers I gave at conferences, mostly of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, and I benefitted greatly from the response, both positive and negative, of the participants.

I was fortunate enough to consult a variety of libraries during my research: at the universities of Leiden and Nijmegen, the American University of Beirut, the University of Texas at Austin and Harvard University; at the Institut für die Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften and the Orientalisches Seminar of the University of Frankfurt, the Oriental Institute in Oxford, the Institut Français d'Etudes Arabes in Damascus, the Islamwissenschaftliches Institut of the University of Bern, and the Institut du monde arabe in Paris; and also the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the Maktabat al-Asad in Damascus. The rare, perhaps unique, catalogue of articles in Arabic periodicals at the Institut de Belles Lettres Arabes in Tunis deserves a special mention, for it was there that I discovered many of the studies in Arabic which I have referred to. I do not remember having experienced from the staff of these institutions anything but willingness to help and courteous patience with my enquiries, and I express my heartfelt thanks to them.

I am also grateful to the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale for supplying me with microfilms.

Over the years many friends and colleagues have encouraged me in what sometimes seemed an impossible task. I can only name some of those who played a special part: Gregor Schoeler, who gave significant support at an early stage; Julia Ashtiany Bray, James Montgomery, Roger Allen and Shawkat Toorawa, who commented on drafts of parts of the text; Mondher Kilani, Renate Jacobi, Claude Gilliot and Christine Pirinoli who contributed in different ways in the final stages of preparation of this book; and Geert Jan van Gelder, who advised me on some thorny problems of interpretation of Arabic poetry and painstakingly read through the whole manuscript, picking out many slips. I also recall fruitful discussions with As'ad Khairallah, Stefan Leder, George Sawa, and A. B. Khalidov, who generously shared with me their knowledge of different aspects of the *Aghāni* and the literary and musical traditions in which it stands. I owe a particular debt to Eckhard Neubauer of the Institut für die Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften in Frankfurt and one of the very few specialists in mediaeval Arabic music. As a non-musicologist I was ill-equipped to work on a text in which singing plays such an important part, and without his advice and support I would not have been able to carry out this project.

My consultation of several of the libraries I have used would have been impossible if I had not been able to rely on the hospitality of friends. Rianne Tamis and Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi in Cairo, Stefan and Faiza Leder in Damascus and Tarek and Eliane Mitri in Beirut all provided me with temporary lodgings and the good company of attentive hosts.

As luck would have it, my husband was a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin while I was preparing this manuscript for publication. The Wissenschaftskolleg's policy is to put its services at the disposal of fellows' partners when they are engaged in research, and its team of keen young IT pros solved some knotty computer problems for me, while the library staff cheerfully scoured the different institutions in and around Berlin for more or less obscure titles. I am grateful to them all, and I hope that the Wissenschaftskolleg's enlightened example will be followed in other academic institutions.

I would also like to thank James Montgomery and Roger Allen for including this book in the "Curzon Studies in Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures", and the staff of RoutledgeCurzon Publishers (London) and Newgen Imaging Systems (Chennai), especially my project manager, Vincent Antony, for helping it to see the light of day.

My husband, Jacques Waardenburg, has accompanied this project from the beginning. He has consistently believed in it and encouraged me to complete it. And since my grant from the Swiss National Fund came to an end he has provided the material conditions for me to continue my research. In appreciation of this and much else I am happy to dedicate this book to him.

MODERN RESEARCH ON THE *KITĀB AL-AGHĀNĪ*

Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī's *Kitāb al-aghānī* has attracted the interest of scholars for close on two hundred years now. This interest arose after what is now the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris acquired some *Aghānī* manuscripts which had been brought to France by a member of Napoleon's expeditionary force to Egypt.¹

It first took the form of **translations**, and attention focussed on the *Aghānī*'s pre-Islamic material. In 1816 Silvestre de Sacy published a French version of the *Aghānī* article on Labid.² Three years later Kosegarten brought out a Latin translation of the article on 'Amr ibn Kulthūm, accompanied by an edition of the text based on the Paris manuscripts of the *Aghānī*.³ In the 1830s Quatremère planned to make an abridged translation of the entire work, but only the Preface, the account of the Hundred and then the Three Songs, and the articles on Abū Qaṭīfā, 'Adī ibn Zayd and the two poets named al-Muraqqish saw the light.⁴ De Slane accompanied his edition of Imru' al-Qays's *Dīwān* with the *Aghānī* article on the poet.⁵ As the second part of his article on the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs in the Hijaz and Yemen, Perron published the section on Uḥayḥa,⁶ and another French scholar, Fresnel, included the account of Muḍāḍ ibn 'Amr in his survey of pre-Islamic Arabic history.⁷

A new focus of interest appears in some subsequent translations in the nineteenth century. The first students of the history of Arabic music realised that the *Aghānī* was a unique source for their subject, and they proceeded to make sections on singers accessible to the wider scholarly public.⁸

At the same time researchers into early Arabic literature continued to translate articles devoted to major poets, such as 'Antara.⁹ It would be hard to draw up a complete list of the translations that have been made of different parts of the *Aghānī* for scholarly ends up till now,¹⁰ although probably the sections on poets have consistently attracted the most attention. But interests other than poetic are also reflected in the choice of translated articles; for instance the English version of Abū l-Faraj's presentation of the Medinan singer and entertainer Ash'ab forms the basis for Rosenthal's *Humour in Early Islam*.¹¹ On the whole these translations of articles aim to make information about a given individual or subject accessible; in other words, they consider the *Aghānī* as an important source for the history of poetry, culture or music. One cannot help wondering, however, whether the frequency

with which foreign scholars resort to translating excerpts from the *Aghānī* is not also partly due to qualities which they seldom mention, the variety and liveliness of its information and its readability – the very qualities which have inspired many mediaeval and modern men of letters to undertake abridgements of the texts.

To return to the nineteenth century, the *Aghānī* soon attracted the notice not only of translators but also of editors.¹² The first to embark on the task was Kosegarten, who in 1840 published the first volume of a projected **edition** and Latin translation, based on the Paris MSS, with additional information on the theory of Arabic music, drawn in large part from al-Fārābī.¹³ He did not succeed in bringing out any more of the text before his death ten years later. The first printing of the (reasonably) complete text occurred at the Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriya in Būlāq in 1285/1868. This Būlāq edition in 20 volumes is still reprinted and widely used and quoted, although, as is well known, it has no critical apparatus and lacks several articles.¹⁴ The Cairo MSS on which the Būlāq text was based were incomplete, and in 1888 Rudolf Brünnow brought out a further volume, containing articles he had found in MSS in Munich.¹⁵

After the Būlāq edition became unobtainable, al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Effendi al-Sāsī took upon himself to reprint the *Aghānī*. This edition, often known by al-Sāsī's name, came out in 1323/1905 at the Maṭbaʿat al-taqaddum. It contains the Būlāq text with revisions by Aḥmad al-Shinqīṭī and also Brünnow's 21st volume; it represents an advance on the original Būlāq text. It was further improved when Muḥammad al-Shinqīṭī's corrections to the Būlāq edition, based on his knowledge of Arabic language and literature, were published under the title *Taṣḥīḥ kitāb al-aghānī*.¹⁶ But it is only with the Dār al-kutub *Aghānī*, of which the first volume appeared in 1927, that something approaching a scholarly edition of the text became available. The Dār al-kutub edition is based on the various Cairo MSS, to which manuscripts from Munich and Tübingen were added in the course of the work.¹⁷ The editors were originally sceptical about whether the articles from Brünnow's 21st volume belonged to the *Aghānī*,¹⁸ but one, on Ḥāritha b. Badr, was published later by Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī as a supplement to volume VIII.¹⁹ The Dār al-kutub edition does not provide a detailed critical apparatus, but it gives some variants and has useful notes on people and places and explanations of some obscure words. It also makes sensible comments based on internal comparisons in the text. It has indices to poets, singers, transmitters of *akḥbār* and melodies, other named individuals, tribes, places, poetry, *ayyām*, proverbs, titles mentioned in the text and sources referred to in the notes. In the margin it gives the pagination of the Būlāq edition.

The Dār al-kutub edition proceeded apace to begin with, and by 1938 eleven volumes had appeared. But the Second World War and its aftermath interrupted this rhythm, parts 12 and 13 coming out only in 1950. The reorganisation of the National Library under the republican government brought about another pause, and parts 14 and 15 were published only at the end of the 1950s. Part 16, the last for many years, appeared in 1961. In the meantime scholars impatient with the slow pace of publishing the Cairo edition took the initiative to bring out the complete

text in Beirut. The *Dār al-thaqāfa* text is essentially a reprint of the first 14 volumes of *Dār al-kutub*, followed by ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj’s edition of the rest of the *Aghānī*.²⁰ At the end he has appended the *Akhbār Abi Nuwās* of Ibn Wāṣil, as a substitute for the “missing” article on the ‘Abbāsīd poet in the *Aghānī* itself.²¹ The Beirut edition, in 25 volumes, includes the Top Hundred songs in its cumulative indices, which take up the last two parts. In other respects, however, it is less satisfactory than the *Dār al-kutub* edition. There are more printing errors, the notes are less extensive, and the indications of subjects given in the margins of the *Dār al-kutub* edition have been placed in the body of the text, thus giving the impression that they belong to the original *Aghānī*.²²

Back in Egypt the decision was taken to complete the *Dār al-kutub* edition, and in 1964, as a first step, the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance had the existing 16 volumes reprinted by offset, although they took the inexplicable step of tacitly omitting the indices. But when volume XVII appeared some years later, it was presented as part of a new project, namely to bring out a new edition of the whole work under the auspices of a supervisory committee (or *Lajna*). This new edition was to consist both in the publication of the remaining text with indices according to the original *Dār al-kutub* system, and in the revision of the first 16 volumes, so that at last the *Aghānī* would be available in a scholarly edition.²³

Between 1970 and 1974 volumes XVIII–XXIV were brought out according to the plan set out in volume XVII.²⁴ They incorporated the articles from Brünnow’s volume according to their place in the original text, as this can be determined from the extant manuscripts. At the same time the committee embarked on the revision of the *Dār al-kutub* edition. Volume I of this edition, which is presented as revised, lists MSS from Russia, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Patna and the Bibliotheca Ambrosiana in Milan, microfilms of which the editors consulted in the Arab League’s Institute of Manuscripts in Cairo.²⁵ Volume II appeared in the same year. Both these volumes have the same range of indices as the original *Dār al-kutub* edition and the *Lajna*’s volumes XVII–XXIV. But although one or two more volumes came out around the same time, the *Lajna* has fallen far short of its intention to bring out the whole of the *Aghānī* in a thoroughly scholarly edition.

Nor is the *Lajna*’s failure simply a matter of not having published the complete text. Much more serious is that its work in no sense represents an advance on that of the *Dār al-kutub* editors. Anyone who uses the *Dār al-kutub*’s volumes I–XVI and the *Lajna*’s XVII–XXIV cannot fail to notice the decline in quality of the notes, comments and cross-references and the decrease in variants given after volume XVI. In view of this, it comes as no surprise that the so-called “revised” edition started in 1970 shows no significant advance on what *Dār al-kutub* published in 1927. The text is the same, the footnotes are almost identical, and there has been no attempt to incorporate the microfilms of the MSS supposedly consulted in the Arab League’s Institute into the lists of variants.²⁶ All that can be said is that the *Lajna*’s volumes are fully indexed. The *Lajna*’s failure to complete its project has meant that in practice scholars who rely on the Cairo edition are in fact using a combination of *Dār al-kutub*’s²⁷ and the *Lajna*’s work.²⁸

A further edition of the complete *Aghānī* was undertaken by Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī,²⁹ and published by Dār al-sha'b.³⁰ It runs to 33 volumes and has continuous pagination. For volumes I–XIV it follows the Dār al-kutub division, but afterwards the parts become smaller. The article on al-Mutalammis, which concludes the work and is incomplete in the Dār edition, has been supplemented from an unnamed source, and the *Akhbār Abi Nuwās* added. Curiously, the articles from Brünnow's 21st volume have all been placed at the end of the text, even that on Ḥāritha ibn Badr, which, as al-Abyārī admits, belongs after Jamila's biography in volume VIII.³¹ The indices at the end list the contents of the articles, the subjects in alphabetical order, poets, transmitters, singers and transmitters of songs. Although it was produced cheaply for a wide public, the notes are more scholarly than those of the Lajna; they give more variants, frequently include parallels to individual passages (though without stating the editions used) and indicate other sources for the subjects of articles. They are also less inclined to explain the meaning of words; the Dār al-sha'b's readership is assumed to have a better grasp of Arabic than the Lajna's. In fact the Dār al-sha'b approach represents the continuation of the Dār al-kutub tradition.³²

The size of the *Aghānī* has prompted various attempts to compile **indices** to it. The best known of these is that undertaken by the Italian scholar Ignazio Guidi, who together with eight colleagues from various countries drew up the *Tables alphabétiques du Kitāb al-aghānī*, comprising indices of poets, rhymes, personalities, tribes and events and place-names. Although there is no subject index, the entries on personalities usually indicate the contexts in which they play an important part. Guidi and his team based themselves on the Būlāq edition, Brünnow's 21st volume and the fragment published by Wellhausen in the *ZDMG*.³³

Later on frustration with the omission of the indices in the Dār al-kutub reprint led the Syrian scholar 'Abd al-Mu'īn al-Mallūḥī to draw up his own indices to the articles in the complete Dār/Lajna edition; they list the titles of the articles volume by volume, and then the subjects of articles alphabetically.³⁴ The fairly obvious step to bring together the indices from the old Dār al-kutub and the Lajna volumes was taken by a Beirut publishing house, Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, in 1985.³⁵ Unfortunately, however, these *Fahāris* fall short of their model, for not only do they not indicate the line on a page where the item is found, which is understandable, but they do not reproduce all the page numbers in the original indices. A complete index to the Dār/Lajna edition has therefore yet to appear.

A specialised index to the words glossed by Abū l-Faraj in the *Aghānī* was compiled by Ḥasan Muḥsin.³⁶ These glosses concern obscure items in poetry, and foreign, especially Persian, words among other things.

Another kind of access to the *Aghānī*'s contents is to be found in *Shakhṣiyāt Kitāb al-aghānī*.³⁷ This book is somewhere between an index and an abridgement. It consists in a presentation of the personalities who are the subject of articles, arranged according to period (pre-Islamic, *mukhaḍram* (straddling the pre-Islamic and earliest Islamic periods), Umayyad, *mukhaḍram al-dawlatayn* (straddling the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd periods) and 'Abbāsīd) and alphabetically within each group. Poets

precede singers, the latter also being divided up according to sex. Each entry consists simply in a quotation of the basic information on the person which the *Aghānī* gives; there is no summary of the articles' contents. The book concludes with a short index of cultural themes (*fihris ḥaḍārī*). It is a useful guide as far as it goes, in particular because it facilitates an assessment of the relative importance Abū l-Faraj accords to different periods of Arabic poetry in the *Aghānī*. A similar work on a much smaller scale is Muḥammad Qindil's *Shakhṣiyyāt ḥayya min al-Aghānī*, which contains sections on 29 personalities or events in chronological order.³⁸

Abridgements proper of the *Aghānī* have existed since the Middle Ages.³⁹ The first printed one was made by Father Anṭūn Ṣālḥānī; it bears the title *Rannāt al-mathālith wa-l-mathānī fī riwāyāt Kitāb al-aghānī*.⁴⁰ It is divided into two parts, one containing accounts of poets and singers, the other accounts of historical events. As is clear from his preface, Ṣālḥānī is sensitive not only to the *Aghānī*'s value as a source of information, but also to its aesthetic qualities, and in particular its style. Indeed, his aim in publishing the *Rannāt* (and the choice of title reflects well his approach to the book) is to acquaint his contemporaries with the resources of the Arabic language and in particular its capacity to express emotional states and mental processes in different communicative situations. Books like the *Aghānī*, he points out, prove that contemporary writers' complaints about the poverty of Arabic are quite unfounded. Moreover, Abū l-Faraj's style⁴¹ is exemplary in its concision, concentration and unaffectedness. It is not easy to imitate, contrary to what one may think, but the assiduous reader of the *Aghānī* will indeed find that he becomes capable of expressing himself in a similarly effective fashion. In accordance with his concentration on the *Aghānī*'s linguistic and stylistic qualities, Ṣālḥānī omits *isnāds* and alternative versions of the same event; he seeks, as he puts it, to extract the pearls of the *Aghānī* from their oyster-shells.⁴²

A later abridgement was that of Muḥammad al-Khuḍārī, who dropped the *isnāds* and the obscene or objectionable passages. He quoted poems as they had been composed, not as the singers modified or shortened them. He divided the material into two parts, one on poets and the other on singers, classifying the poets chronologically as pre-Islamic, Islamic or Modern and according to their tribal allegiance. The poets take up six volumes, the singers one, and the eighth and final volume includes indices and notes.⁴³

Arab scholars continued to seek to present the *Aghānī* in a manageable form for modern readers. Karam al-Bustānī's *Quṭūf al-aghānī*⁴⁴ and Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn Āl Kāshif al-ghīṭā's *Mukhtār min shu 'arā' al-aghānī*⁴⁵ are two such attempts. Another is Aḥmad Kamāl Zakī's *Mukhtārāt min Kitāb al-aghānī*. Zakī observes how difficult it is for the modern reader to follow the old texts, with their *isnāds* (chains of transmitters of information) and their reports which contradict each other, do not keep to the point and are not arranged chronologically; in short, they resemble a trackless waste in which the reader soon loses his way. He has therefore omitted the *isnāds* and organised his selection in a chronological order: the Hundred Songs, caliphal compositions, and then 33 poets according to historical period, pre-Islamic, *mukhaḍram*, Umayyad, *mukhaḍram al-dawlatayn*, 'Abbāsīd.⁴⁶

Khalil al-Hindāwī's *Al-muntakhab min al-aghānī* illustrates another approach to abridging this work. He has selected fine stories, wise sayings, unusual biographies, critical statements in good taste and accessible poetry, with young people and students in mind. The *Muntakhab* roughly follows the order of the material in the *Aghānī*, but since it only includes individual *akhbār* and poems, it does not give any sense of the book's organisation into articles.⁴⁷

Another abridgement is *Aghānī al-aghānī*, compiled by Father Yūsuf 'Awn.⁴⁸ Its three volumes contain around half the *Aghānī* articles, but as the introduction states, they exclude *isnāds*, trivial stories, uninspired poetry, uninteresting subjects and obscenities. The articles follow the *Aghānī* order, but where reports about a personality are found in more than one place in the original, the compiler has brought them all together in the main article, sometimes rearranging them into chronological order. Like Ṣāliḥānī, 'Awn is intensely aware of the *Aghānī*'s value as a model of style; in addition, like other abridgers, he argues that because of the speed of modern life young people cannot find the time to read al-Iṣbahānī's work.⁴⁹

A further selection from the *Aghānī* was made by 'Umar al-Nuṣṣ.⁵⁰ According to the list given here, which is probably not complete, the *Aghānī* has been abridged eight times in 100 years. It is eloquent proof of continuing interest in the work, but also of the problems of aesthetics with which a mediaeval text of this kind confronts the modern reader.

The *Aghānī* has also provided texts for a reader designed for Persian colleges and secondary schools. Here the *isnāds* have been omitted, and notes in Persian provided on the persons named.⁵¹ In Arabic a selection for a youthful public was published in the Maktabat al-usra series in connection with the Festival of Reading for All in 1996; it contains excerpts from the articles on Jarīr, al-Akḥṭal, al-Farazdaq and al-Rā'ī.⁵²

The urge to make the *Aghānī* accessible to a wider public has also led some foreign scholars to undertake **translations** from it. There appears to have been a project to render the entire work, or at least large parts of it, into Persian, but only one volume appeared.⁵³ European scholars have worked on a smaller canvas. Their aims naturally differ somewhat from those of Arab abridgers; they seek to convey an impression both of the book itself and of the pre- and early Islamic culture about which it is so informative. Inevitably they are less concerned with the quality of the work's language and style which their Arab colleagues attach so much importance to, and they face enormous problems in translating the poetry.

The first such abridgement-cum-translation appeared in German in 1977. *Und der Kalif beschenkte ihn reichlich* contains 13 articles on representative figures from pre-Islamic to 'Abbāsid times, arranged chronologically. The *isnāds* have been abbreviated but not eliminated, since the translator regards them as characteristic of the form of both the work and classical Arabic literature in general. The introduction presents al-Iṣbahānī's life and times, the *Aghānī*, and the principles followed for the choice and translation of the material. It also justifies the omission of the musical indications following so many quotations of poetry. The choice of title

imposes a certain interpretation on the material, as do the characterisations which accompany the headings of the individual sections, for instance “Antara, Halbblut und Heros” or “Al-Ardschī, Nachfolger des Omar” (sc. ibn Abī Rabi’a).⁵⁴

The Russian translation of 1980 leaves the reader more freedom of interpretation. Simply entitled *Kniga pesen* (The Book of Songs), it precedes the 20 articles it contains with al-Iṣbahānī’s preface and the account of the Top Hundred songs. The translator’s introduction⁵⁵ not only gives a thoughtful account of Abū l-Faraj’s life, the fate of his book and the literary world of his time, it also points out the *Aghānī*’s originality in showing the connection between music and poetry in classical Arabic culture and remarks that Abū l-Faraj’s role sometimes went beyond that of a mere compiler. In making their abridgement, the Russian translators were influenced by the practice of their mediaeval predecessors; like them, they have omitted the musical indications and the *isnāds*, except for the original narrator of a report.⁵⁶ Like *Und der Kalif beschenkte ihn reichlich*, the *Kniga pesen* also arranges its articles chronologically; interestingly, both selections include ‘Adī ibn Zayd, ‘Antara, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī and Abū l-‘Atāhiya.

In 1996 Jacques Berque’s translation of pages from the *Aghānī* was published posthumously, under the evocative title *Musiques sur le fleuve*.⁵⁷ Berque’s translation moves away from the arrangement of the material in articles, which is one of the salient characteristics of the *Aghānī*, and which other translations retain. He arranges his material according to six main subjects: pre-Islamic life and customs; rulers and princes; the art of music and singers; poetry and poets; adventures in love; norms and deviations. Each subject is then sub-divided into various sections. While such a thematic reading of the book is a valid approach, it is practised here in isolation from the biographical orientation which is such a marked feature of the *Aghānī*. One may also question whether the six subject headings Berque has selected are necessarily the most appropriate ones. In other words, the translator has gone further in imposing his own interpretation here than in the German and Russian versions. In his introduction to *Musiques sur le fleuve*, Berque provides a survey of research on the *Aghānī*, with useful bibliographical references.

The compiler of such an intriguing work as the *Aghānī* has naturally attracted scholarly attention. Four **biographies** of him in book form have been published in Arabic. That by al-Aṣma’ī is a careful, though at times repetitive, compilation of what the mediaeval sources have to say about Abū l-Faraj, his teachers, pupils, milieu, morals, writings, and the opinions of mediaeval and modern scholars about him. The final chapter is devoted to the *Aghānī*’s portrayal of aspects of society and literary and musical life in the pre- and early Islamic periods.⁵⁸ Al-Aṣma’ī does not face the problems connected with the biography; by contrast, he draws one or two interesting parallels between Abū l-Faraj and modern *literati*.⁵⁹ A briefer, similarly uncritical biography is that of Shafiq Jabrī.⁶⁰

The first critical contribution to the understanding of Abū l-Faraj’s life is to be found in Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalafallāh’s *Ṣāḥib al-Aghānī Abū l-Faraj al-rāwiya*.⁶¹ Khalafallāh identifies the points on which the sources do not agree and proposes

solutions to the problems they raise. Thanks to his wide reading he provides information about subjects which the mediaeval biographical entries ignore.

But Khalafallāh's book is not without its problems. He does not hide the fact that he finds Abū l-Faraj's personal traits, and in particular his bohemian way of life and sexual preferences, distasteful. Some of his theses are far-fetched. Above all, he sees his subject as a transmitter par excellence, hence the epithet he uses for him in the title, *al-rāwīya*; Abū l-Faraj's achievements as a poet and writer do not enter his field of vision. Against the evidence of the mediaeval sources, he maintains that the *Aghānī* only acquired its place as a major work of Arabic literature after many other books had been lost. Nevertheless, his book is a landmark, and it is a great pity that it has remained virtually unknown outside the Arab world.⁶²

A more objective account of Abū l-Faraj's life and times, based on a careful and intelligent reading of the sources, is to be found in Moustafa Mandour's *Abū l-Farağ al-Isfahānī. Sa vie et son "Livre des Chansons" (Kitāb al-ağānī)*. Among other things, Mandour establishes the chronological order in which information about Abū l-Faraj's life appears in the biographical sources. Unfortunately, however, it seems that this study, presented as a doctoral thesis in Paris, was never published either as a book or in the form of articles and has been completely ignored.⁶³ The most recent addition to biographies of Abū l-Faraj, by Ḥusayn 'Āṣī, cannot be said to be an advance on the previous ones.⁶⁴

The Moroccan scholar Muḥammad Khayr al-Shaykh Mūsā, in an article, has criticised and corrected some of Khalafallāh's conclusions.⁶⁵ He has also tried to restore Abū l-Faraj's reputation by arguing that the reports of his disagreeable personal habits were calumnies put about by someone with whom he had quarrelled. And he takes issue with Abū l-Faraj being described as a Shī'ī; he appears not to appreciate that in the fourth/tenth century there was a wide variety of Shī'ī opinion, and that the Zaydiyya, to which Abū l-Faraj belonged, was at the opposite end of the spectrum from the *ghulāt* ("extremists"). He ignores the evidence of al-Ṭūsī's *Fihrist kutub al-shī'a*, a relatively early source (fifth/eleventh century), appearing to believe that the earliest reference to Abū l-Faraj's convictions, that in the *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, is an aberration which was picked up by later writers.

The most recent presentation in Arabic of both Abū l-Faraj and his works, Ṭāniyūs Fransīs's popularising *Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī, 283–362/897–972. Adīb shahharahu kitāb*, does not add anything to previous accounts of the life. It is unusual, however, in including in the anthology of the writer's oeuvre passages from the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyin*, the *Adab al-ghurabā'*, the *Imā' al-shawā'ir* and even the *Qiyān*, as well as the *Aghānī*. It thus draws attention for the first time to a wide spectrum of Abū l-Faraj's literary activity.⁶⁶

Accounts of Abū l-Faraj's life in standard reference works in European languages reflect the later mediaeval sources. The articles in both editions of the *EI* (by Brockelmann and Maria Nallino) report essentially the information given there, and even though Sezgin mentions Khalafallāh's study in the bibliography on Abū l-Faraj, he does not appear to have integrated its findings into his presentation of the writer.

Al-Shaykh Mūsā, whose study of Abū l-Faraj's life has been mentioned, has also drawn up the first attempt in print at a critical **bibliography** of Abū l-Faraj's writings.⁶⁷ Useful as it is, it is already in need of revision, for it came out in the same year as the publication of a fourth text by the *Aghānī*'s author, the *Imā' al-shawā'ir*, which had been thought lost, and two collections of fragments of other works of his have appeared subsequently. And although it takes note of Brockelmann's entry on Abū l-Faraj in *GAL*, it does not refer to Farmer's bibliography of Arabic writings on music, an important source in this context. Most seriously, while the introduction mentions the confusion over the designation of some works by alternative titles in different sources, the list itself hardly reflects the critical approach which might have cleared up some of the difficulties. A far more scholarly bibliographical study, but limited to the *Aghānī*, is the article by Aḥmad Ṭālib already referred to.⁶⁸

Both Arab and foreign scholars are conscious of the difficulty modern readers have in approaching the *Aghānī*. This is a point made in the introductions to many of the abridgements as one of the motives for abbreviating the work. As for foreigners, their discomfort was summed up by Quatremère in the 1830s as follows: "la manière dont l'ouvrage est rédigé est bien peu en harmonie avec le goût des Européens et avec les qualités que nous nous croyons en droit d'exiger d'un historien".⁶⁹

The first to respond to this difficulty was Shafiq Jabrī. In his *Dirāsāt al-Aghānī*⁷⁰ he suggests that the work should be read as a portrayal of a period of Arab culture very different from the present, and most of his book illustrates this idea.⁷¹ Initially, however, he points out that it is important to study Abū l-Faraj's **method of working** from the observations he makes in the course of the book, and he gives some examples of how this could be done. He also considers Abū l-Faraj as having a distinct style, though in practice he does not always distinguish between the compiler's statements and those of his sources.

The idea of studying Abū l-Faraj's own remarks is taken further by Dāwūd Sallūm in *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī wa-manhaj mu'allifih*.⁷² Sallūm regards the *Aghānī* as a book of criticism,⁷³ and its author as a critic with his own principles, derived from al-Jāḥiẓ and others. He argues from the preface that Abū l-Faraj had an evident methodological consciousness, and goes on to collect and analyse his remarks about the nature and quality of his sources, whether and how he has combined them, and where he has placed material in the *Aghānī*. He concludes, among other things, that Abū l-Faraj's own remarks, which are spread throughout the *Aghānī*, reflect his control of the enormous mass of material he was using and his continual awareness of how it should be arranged, and also that he compiled different parts of the work at different times and then put them together. His book is probably the single most important contribution to the study of the *Aghānī* as literature,⁷⁴ and it forms the starting-point for the examination of Abū l-Faraj's interventions in this study.

Another scholar who has shown interest in Abū l-Faraj's manner of working is Muṣṭafā al-Shak'a. He includes the *Aghānī* in his study of methods of composition

in *adab* works, *Manāhij al-ta'lif* 'inda l- 'ulamā' al- 'arab. *Qism al-adab*, and recognises the importance of the songs as a structuring element in the work as a whole. He does not, however, go beyond that to examine the internal organisation of the individual articles.⁷⁵

Sallūm also devotes a chapter to the **textual problems** connected with the *Aghānī*, the MSS of which diverge considerably from each other. *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī wa-manhaj mu'allifih* is probably the single most stimulating contribution to *Aghānī* studies, at least from the non-musicologist's point of view. The issue of textual corruption which Sallūm mentions is also discussed in an article by al-Shaykh Mūsā, who concentrates on the passages where Abū l-Faraj announces that he will include, or has included, material which cannot be found in the present editions of the *Aghānī*.⁷⁶

Foreign scholars, apart from musicologists, have generally seen the *Aghānī* as a historical work,⁷⁷ and more precisely as an invaluable source for pre- and early Islamic poetry, culture and social history. Expecting from it the order which they are accustomed to in histories, they have generally found it a frustrating book,⁷⁸ all the more so because the information it includes is so rich. Blachère is sensitive to the aesthetic quality of the poetry and anecdotes Abū l-Faraj includes,⁷⁹ but he does not regard him as anything more than a compiler, whose own contribution is limited to links between the articles and headings to them. He denies him an individual style, a point convincingly refuted by Jabri in a later article; the Syrian scholar adduces the *Aghānī*'s preface, the compiler's lengthy discussions of some controversial poets and singers, and the many cases where he has combined several reports into one, told in his own words.⁸⁰

Scholars who classify the *Aghānī* as history, however unsatisfactory, approach it rather like a site for archaeological excavations; they search it for information about the pre- and early Islamic past and earlier stages of Arabic literature. Blachère raised the issue of identifying its **sources**, an obvious question since Abū l-Faraj goes to such lengths to mention the *isnāds* of his reports, and indicated some of the authorities he relies on most often.⁸¹ Zolondek took this idea further, arguing that the concept of "source" needed to be defined more precisely, the important point being to discover not the individuals who served as direct links to Abū l-Faraj, but those who first showed an interest in collecting the reports about a given poet or singer, the "collector sources", as he terms them.⁸² By correlating these collector sources, who can be dated, with themes in the *akhbār*, he shows that it is possible to trace how the portrayal of subjects of *Aghānī* articles developed. Zolondek's method enables the elaboration of the "life story" of many actors in early Arabic culture to be followed.⁸³

Another approach to the sources of the *Aghānī* was put forward by Fleischhammer, who was concerned to gain insight into its author's manner of working as well as identifying what oral and written material he used.⁸⁴ He lists Abū l-Faraj's direct informants, authorities who are frequently named in the *isnāds*, and sources explicitly described as being in writing, all historically situated as far as possible. He also gives schematic analyses of the sources of some articles. His painstaking sifting of the *isnāds* shows that the compiler drew most of his material

from a limited number of informers and establishes who they were; likewise it indicates which were the main written works he quoted from. This and the index of names of transmitters make the *Quellenuntersuchungen* an invaluable tool for anyone researching into the *Aghānī*.⁸⁵ Sezgin also addressed the question of the sources of the *Aghānī* in the context of his investigation into the history of early Arabic literature, his main interest being to discover new authors. While agreeing substantially with Fleischhammer about the number of authorities Abū l-Faraj had direct access to, he argues that it was almost always written texts he was using.⁸⁶

The investigations into the *Aghānī*'s sources and Abū l-Faraj's treatment of his material are necessary background information for scholars interested in the work's **poetics**. A very early essay in the direction of a study of the poetics of the *Aghānī* anecdotes is a study by Frank Dyer Chester of two *akhbār* about Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, of which variants also exist in *Alf layla wa-layla* and al-Ṭabari's *Tā'rikh*.⁸⁷ Later this approach was taken up again; a pioneering example is Hartmut Fāhndrich's comparative study of Abū Dulāma anecdotes in the *Aghānī*, the *Tā'rikh Baghdād* and the *Wafayāt al-a'yān*.⁸⁸ When treating the subject of narrative poetics critics naturally have to take account of the transmission of the material they analyse; some subtle and penetrating observations on this question can be found in Waḍḍāḥ Sharāra's commentary on the *Aghānī* article about al-Majnūn.⁸⁹ What happens when scholars ignore it is illustrated in a recent article on the aesthetics of the narrative form in the *Aghānī* stories.⁹⁰ The author seeks to prove that Abū l-Faraj was a story-teller of genius, and maintains that he was dealing entirely with oral material, which he shaped and moulded as he thought fit. While some of the observations on individual *akhbār* and narrative in the *Aghānī* deserve to be taken seriously, the author's ignorance of the true nature of the literary conventions of classical Arabic prose compilations, and indeed of the literary culture of the time, combined with his enthusiasm for modern theories, leads him to some wild conclusions.

Another aspect of *Aghānī* poetics which has attracted attention is Abū l-Faraj's method of compilation. This subject, referred to by Sallūm, was first investigated by Khairallah in his study of the development of the Majnūn figure.⁹¹ Whereas in the issue of narration it may not be possible to distinguish Abū l-Faraj's contribution from that of his source, compilation is a matter where his individual approach can be more easily discerned because he indicates where he changes from informant to informant. But it is essential not to impose expectations of chronological organisation on the material and to accept that a coherent whole may be constructed from scattered fragments.⁹²

As a book of songs, the *Aghānī* has consistently attracted the attention of musicologists, both as a source of information about musical life in the early Islamic period, and for the enigmatic song captions it includes. Its importance for the **history of Arabic music** has been universally recognised. Farmer's judgement of Abū l-Faraj's achievement is worth quoting: "... the vast erudition displayed, to say nothing of the enormous industry and patience which it engendered, leaves one abashed at the productions which pass as 'musical literature' today". Neubauer's

concise description of the *Aghānī* runs “great in every respect”.⁹³ More recently, Abū l-Faraj has been called a “true prophet of modern ethnomusicology”.⁹⁴

The fundamental **musicological** problem for modern readers of the *Aghānī*, as it was for later mediaeval ones,⁹⁵ has been to understand the performance indications which follow the song texts. Farmer’s article on the subject,⁹⁶ which was translated into Arabic,⁹⁷ has been followed by other studies.⁹⁸ In this respect Sawa’s study, which uses insights derived from the analysis of al-Fārābī’s theoretical writings to interpret the terms used by Abū l-Faraj, represents an important step forward.⁹⁹

This survey of research on the *Kitāb al-aghānī* and its author does not pretend to be complete. In particular I have not discussed the myriad studies, by Arab and foreign scholars, which draw to a greater or lesser extent on the information the book provides for discussions of social history, individual poets, music, the phonology and morphology of women’s names and diglossia, to name but a few subjects. Nor have I mentioned discussions of methodological issues relevant for the study of ‘Abbāsid prose and *adab* compilations in general. My intention has simply been to present the editions, translations and major contributions to the study of the *Aghānī*, as a prelude to the subsequent chapters in this book.

Research on the *Aghānī*: a balance-sheet

Before proceeding, however, I would like to offer a comment on the picture of research on the *Aghānī* sketched in this chapter. The above survey shows that in most domains of *Aghānī* studies the major part of the work has been carried out by Arab scholars. This holds good for text editions, biographies of the author, and investigations of his method of working. Foreign scholars have contributed most to the identification of the *Aghānī*’s sources and of methods of transmission of the material. As far as I can judge, it is specifically in the field of musicology that Arabs and foreigners have concerned themselves with the same problems.

While knowledge of all aspects of this text has advanced greatly since the Second World War, three obstacles have prevented it progressing even further. The first is the gulf which appears to separate research carried out in the Arab world and that carried out elsewhere. Khalafallāh’s and Sallūm’s books are hardly ever quoted in foreign studies, while Zolondek’s approach to sources is unknown in the Arab world. (Since Fleischhammer’s work is unpublished, it has been virtually ignored everywhere.) There are some practical reasons for this. Arab scholars publish in periodicals in the Arab world which few foreign libraries acquire, while foreign scholars publish in periodicals in Europe and North America which are often inaccessible in the Arab world because of their cost. Moreover, foreigners hardly ever publish in Arabic, so that Arab scholars have to learn a number of European languages to keep abreast with research abroad. The situation is made worse by the fact that even within the Arab world, circulation of scholarly periodicals between countries is by no means the rule.

A second obstacle concerns the work done by Arab scholars. Although their studies of the *Aghānī* and of Abū l-Faraj’s life are extremely useful, both Sallūm and

al-Shaykh Mūsā betray striking misconceptions of the social and intellectual history of the period in which the *Aghānī* was written. Sallūm speaks of the “fanatical (*muta‘aṣṣib*) Muslim milieu” in which Abū l-Faraj lived,¹⁰⁰ while al-Shaykh Mūsā’s ignorance of the complexities of Shī‘ī movements in the fourth/tenth century has already been noted. Al-Simṭī’s study of Abū l-Faraj’s narrative techniques betrays an even greater lack of knowledge of the literary culture which produced the *Aghānī*. The detailed research on different aspects of mediaeval Islamic civilisation which has been going on abroad for the last fifty years or so appears scarcely to have penetrated some Arab academic milieus, at least where the study of literature is concerned.

The third obstacle concerns the approach of foreign scholars. It is striking that, apart from the musicologists, they have generally insisted on regarding the *Aghānī* as a historical work (despite Abū l-Faraj’s disclaimer in the preface) and Abū l-Faraj as a historian, at least in the first place. And since the *Aghānī* is such an unsatisfactory history, the *only* way to approach it is to discover its sources. While the question of sources cannot be ignored, it can scarcely be regarded as the only, or even the most important, issue, when one is dealing with a book a thousand years old which has always remained close to the heart of its culture, as the manuscript tradition and the fact that it has been abridged eight times in the past hundred years prove. But most scholars from outside the culture have insisted on imposing their own vision on the *Aghānī*, and have thus been unable to understand it. Stendhal’s judgement of their nineteenth century predecessors, that “ils ont le cœur desséché par l’étude et les habitudes académiques” may help to explain this persistent misunderstanding.¹⁰¹ In any case it may now be disappearing, as scholars abroad acquire more insight into the indigenous aesthetic canons of mediaeval Arabic literature.

It is no accident that the musicologists have not suffered from the same misconception. After all, the *Aghānī* is a book of songs, in the first place, and that is what they study it for; in other words, they accept it for what it is. There is no more eloquent illustration of the difference it makes whether a work is understood in its own terms or has a scheme of interpretation imposed on it than to compare Farmer’s glowing praise of the *Aghānī* with the judgements of scholars such as Brockelmann or Sezgin. But although the overwhelming importance of the *Aghānī* for our understanding of mediaeval Arabic music may be enough to explain why the musicologists are so much kinder to it, there may be another reason too, as far as non-Arab specialists are concerned. Anyone who studies a musical tradition foreign to him has to distance himself from the aesthetic expectations he has grown up with in his own tradition and acquire new ones. So foreigners studying Arabic music have already lost the habit of imposing their own aesthetic system on the material they work on. Once they have taken this step with respect to music, it will probably not be so difficult for them to accept that a literary work, too, may be the product of an aesthetic system quite different from the ones they knew at home. By contrast, foreign scholars of Arabic literature, at least in the past, have had much less occasion to prepare themselves for developing new expectations of what a literary work may be.

ABŪ L-FARAJ'S LIFE, TIMES AND WORKS

The *Kitāb al-aghānī* is the product of a particular cultural milieu, the court of fourth/tenth century Baghdad, with which Abū l-Faraj was closely associated, and of the contemporary scholarly tradition in which he had his education. It is also marked by its author's general approach to writing and compilation, which emerges from other works of his too. The following sketch of Abū l-Faraj's life,¹ times and oeuvre presents the context in which the *Aghānī* took shape, the information being confined to what is relevant for the subsequent discussion of it.

Abū l-Faraj's life and times

Abū l-Faraj 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Haytham al-Umawī al-Iṣbahānī was born in 284/897,² probably in Baghdad.³ He was a direct descendant of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān ibn Muḥammad. After the collapse of Umayyad rule, some descendants of Marwān managed to escape and fled to Isfahan, and it is from there that Abū l-Faraj's branch of the family moved to Iraq, to take up positions in the administration. Abū l-Faraj's great-uncle, 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Aḥmad, was a leading official in Samarra under al-Mutawakkil, and his uncle al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad, who also rose to prominence as a *kātib* in Samarra, was born during that caliph's rule.⁴ Al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad is one of the most important sources in both the *Kitāb al-aghānī*⁵ and the *Imā' al-shawā'ir*.⁶ In the former book Abū l-Faraj also refers to or quotes other members of his family, his father al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad, his great-uncle 'Abd al-'Aziz, who has already been mentioned, his grandfather Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, and his cousin Abū 'Abdallāh Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan.⁷

The biographical dictionaries usually do not mention the maternal relatives of their subjects, and it is only because Abū l-Faraj is so thorough in indicating his sources in the *Aghānī* that the name of his maternal grandfather is known. He was Abū 'Alī Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Thawāba, and he left a book from which his grandson quoted anecdotes about late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid poets.⁸ Although there is no direct proof, it is extremely likely that Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Thawāba was a brother of two more prominent *kātib*s, Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Thawāba and Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Thawāba. All three lived

in the second half of the third/ninth century.⁹ The Banū Thawāba were a family of humble Christian origin¹⁰ who rose to influential positions in the administration, and several of them had literary leanings.¹¹

Abū l-Faraj evidently admired Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad, as is shown by an incident he recounts from his own experience. The head of the department of finances of the eastern part of the empire, al-Bāqīṭānī, reproached by a newly-appointed governor with having started his career as a mere secretary to Abū l-'Abbās, gives an illustration of the latter's competence and integrity in dealings with the vizier Sulaymān ibn Wāḥb and the caliph al-Muhtadī.¹² This report is unusual in two respects. It shows Abū l-Faraj as an eye-witness to a scene, whereas he is normally a transmitter and sometimes verifier of information. And it gives the only glimpse of him in his professional capacity as a *kātib*, instead of in his usual quality of student, researcher or scholar. Even more than what the incident reports about Abū l-'Abbās's qualities, it is Abū l-Faraj's abandonment of his habitual role which suggests his profound attachment to one of the leading representatives of the Banū Thawāba.¹³

The Banū Thawāba were Shi'is,¹⁴ and if Abū l-Faraj's mother was indeed a member of this family, his own Shi'i convictions¹⁵ are easy to explain. Later sources comment on the combination of Umayyad descent and Shi'i beliefs as something unusual.¹⁶ But such comments ignore the fact that in the century and a half between the 'Abbāsīd revolution and Abū l-Faraj's birth relations between 'Alids and descendants of the Umayyads had improved.¹⁷ Furthermore, Shi'ism in its various branches was widespread in the fourth/tenth century, and interaction between Sunnis and Shi'is was by no means always hostile, as the example of the coexistence between Būyids and 'Abbāsīd caliphs shows. As a Zaydī, Abū l-Faraj belonged to the Shi'i tendency closest to the Sunnis.

The indication of Abū l-Faraj's religious confession, while important, illustrates the limitations of the biographical information contained in the mediaeval sources. For one may wonder whether, throughout his long life, the writer retained the same convictions or held them with the same fervour. While his early *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyin* is clearly the work of a Zaydī Shi'i author addressing a like-minded readership, his other extant works including the *Aghānī* have no obvious confessional bias. They are designed to appeal to the cultivated public, whatever its beliefs.¹⁸ The difference between the *Maqātil* and the other books could simply spring from Abū l-Faraj's consciousness that he was writing for two distinct audiences. But it could also reflect an evolution of some kind in his own politico-religious attitude. Such subtleties do not interest the sources, however, and so this is a question which cannot be answered.¹⁹

Abū l-Faraj studied in two intellectual centres, Kufa and Baghdad. It is almost certain that he had his first schooling in Kufa and its surroundings, since he mentions his tutor (*mu'addib*), Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Kindī, as being the preacher at the Qādisiyya mosque.²⁰ And his first book, the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyin*, bears the mark of Kufan Shi'i scholarship. But it was not only the city's Shi'i tradition which influenced him. Kufa had become the centre for the study of

Arabian antiquity, thanks to the genealogists Muḥammad al-Kalbī and his son Hishām and the collector of poetry Ḥammād al-Rāwīya.²¹ It had its own grammatical school. And the indigenous Iraqi musical tradition formerly associated with al-Ḥīra lived on there.²² Abū l-Faraj did not only spend his time gathering serious reports from Kufan scholars,²³ he got to know of local singers whose reputation never extended beyond their home town.²⁴ And if his books betray little interest in philosophical speculation, rationalist theology and the scientific legacy of Antiquity,²⁵ that too can be ascribed at least partly to his Kufan education.

When Abū l-Faraj settled in Baghdad is unknown. The only indication that it may have been later than 300/912 is provided by a reference to the poet Abū l-Fayyāḍ Sawwār ibn Abī Shurā'a's coming to the capital after that year and Abū l-Faraj missing seeing him on that occasion.²⁶

Two major sources list the scholars from whom Abū l-Faraj acquired information. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, whose concern is with *ḥadīth* transmission, names the authorities from which he acquired *ḥadīths* and also those to whom he handed them on, while Yāqūt gives the literary scholars whom he quoted. What is striking about these two lists is that not more of the names on them occur prominently in the *isnāds* of the *Aghānī* or the *Maqātil al-Tālibīyīn*. Of the seven authorities in the *Tārīkh Baghdād*'s entry on Abū l-Faraj,²⁷ only one, Muḥammad ibn al-ʿAbbās al-Yazīdī, is quoted in both the *Aghānī* and the *Maqātil*, while two others, ʿAlī ibn al-ʿAbbās al-Maḳānīʿī and ʿAlī ibn Ishāq ibn Zātiyā al-Mukharrimī, are sources for the *Maqātil* only.²⁸ Yāqūt's list of five names²⁹ includes four sources of the *Aghānī*, Ibn Durayd, al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥubāb al-Jumāhī, Ibn al-Anbārī and ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān al-Akhfash, of whom the last also occurs in the *Maqātil*. Among all these scholars, however, the only one who is a major source for the *Aghānī* is al-Yazīdī.³⁰

As can be seen, the entries on Abū l-Faraj in the biographical dictionaries do not indicate the formative influences on him.³¹ These latter can, however, be inferred from his own comments and indirectly from the intensity with which he quotes from some sources.³² For instance, of al-Yazīdī he says: "The last surviving scholar of this family [sc. the Yazīdis] was Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-ʿAbbās. He was outstanding, learned and a reliable transmitter, unique in his truthfulness and extremely prudent in what he related. We and many other students and transmitters learned an enormous amount from him".³³ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947) is another scholar to whom the *Aghānī* owes much,³⁴ and at one point Abū l-Faraj hints at his attachment to the older scholar, now dead: "Al-Ṣūlī, may God have mercy on him, recited to me ...".³⁵ Aḥmad ibn Jaʿfar Jaḥḥa al-Barmakī (d. 324/936), a virtuoso on the long-necked lute (*tumbūr*), compiler of a book on lute-players, and transmitter of one version of the list of a Hundred Songs, was a recourse in matters concerning settings,³⁶ and Abū l-Faraj also mentions studying with him.³⁷ Moreover, he collected information about him in a lost *Akhbār Jaḥḥa al-Barmakī*.³⁸

Among authorities of the past who influenced Abū l-Faraj, the first place belongs to Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 235/850).³⁹ The decision to follow Ishāq's terminology in the naming of rhythmic and tonal modes⁴⁰ and the

partisan portrayal of the controversy between Iṣḥāq and his rival Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī,⁴¹ not to speak of the idea of using Iṣḥāq's list of the Top Hundred songs as the starting point for the *Aghānī*, all indicate Abū l-Faraj's admiration for this leading third/ninth century musician. He also has a high regard for Ibn al-Mu'tazz⁴² (d. 296/309), both because of his knowledge of musical theory and practice, and for his poetic style, which he defends eloquently.⁴³ He champions Abū Tammām⁴⁴ (d. 231/845) against those who criticise him and exaggerate his shortcomings in order to improve their own standing.⁴⁵ The singer 'Arib (d. 277/891)⁴⁶ is a leading figure of earlier musical life whom he admires, as his attack on her detractors shows.⁴⁷ Finally, although not strictly speaking a figure of the past, for Abū l-Faraj could have seen him in his youth, 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir⁴⁸ (d. 300/913) is portrayed as representing the ideal of the courtier and administrator possessing an all-round culture which included both the Arabian and the Greek sciences, poetic gifts and knowledge of musical theory and practice.⁴⁹

Apart from these personalities who earned his admiration, Abū l-Faraj had a wide circle of teachers and acquaintances in Kufa and above all Baghdad from whom he acquired information. They were mostly specialists in historical and literary reports (*akhbār*), poetry or philology. Some were obscure, like his most frequently named informer in the *Aghānī*, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Khaffāf,⁵⁰ others celebrities, like the great historian and Quran commentator Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.⁵¹ He probably turned to anyone whom he thought might be able to help him on a given point, like the "senior official" (*ba'ḍ mashāyikh al-kuttāb*) he mentions once,⁵² or the singers he hoped could tell him about 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir's settings.⁵³ Friends of his, like 'Abdallāh ibn al-Rabī' al-Rabī'i,⁵⁴ also contributed information for the *Aghānī*, as did his family's circle of acquaintances. Among them was Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn al-Marzubān, and in Abū l-Faraj's recollection of him at the end of the *Aghānī* one catches a glimpse of the atmosphere in which he grew up: "I heard Abū 'Alī Muḥammad ibn al-Marzubān tell this to my father, may God have mercy on him, as part of an exchange of information. There was a long-standing friendship between us and the al-Marzubān family and we were related by marriage".⁵⁵

In the course of his life Abū l-Faraj acquired a quantity of knowledge which even his contemporaries found remarkable. The testimony of al-Tanūkhī⁵⁶ is eloquent: "Among the Shī'i transmitters of information we have seen is Abū l-Faraj 'Alī ibn al-Husayn al-Iṣbahānī. He had committed to memory a quantity of poetry, songs, anecdotes, historical reports, authenticated *ḥadīths* and genealogies such as I have never known anyone else to master. Besides that he was knowledgeable in lexicography, grammar, fantastic stories, life histories and accounts of conquests, and he was widely versed in the subjects courtiers are required to be conversant with, such as birds and animals of the hunt, veterinary science, medicine, astrology and drinks".⁵⁷ A possessor of such encyclopaedic knowledge was bound to have his detractors, and the biographical works have preserved some attacks by disapproving contemporaries on his method of work⁵⁸ and by later strait-laced scholars on

his morals.⁵⁹ But the opinion of most mediaeval writers who mention him is at the very least positive.

About Abū l-Faraj's career in the administration nothing is known. In *isnāds* he refers to Antioch, Ahwaz and Raqqa⁶⁰ as places where he acquired certain reports, and he may have visited them as part of his official duties. Other places he mentions having gone to are Mattūth, Daskarat al-Malik, Basra, Ḥiṣn Maḥdī, Kūthā and Nahr al-Ubulla,⁶¹ and there too professional reasons may sometimes have been involved. Dealing with an administrative question was presumably the motive for his trip to Bājistrā, a small town between Baghdad and Ḥulwān, where he was forced to spend longer than he expected because of an attack by the Banū Shaybān.⁶² That, and the glimpse of him in al-Bāqitānī's office mentioned above, are the only likely traces of his professional activity as a *kātib*.

There is thus no indication of when or how he met the man who became his long-standing patron, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Muhallabī.⁶³ Al-Muhallabī belonged to a family which had started to play a part in Islamic history almost as early as Abū l-Faraj's had.⁶⁴ But he himself came from an impoverished background, his fortunes only improving as he approached the centre of power.⁶⁵ He is first mentioned in 323/935 as Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā ibn Sa'id al-Sūsī's steward in the region of Ahwaz.⁶⁶ In 334/945 he negotiated on Mu'izz al-Dawla's behalf for the removal of the Caliph al-Mustakfi, and in 339/950 he was appointed Mu'izz al-Dawla's secretary, acquiring the title of vizier six years later.⁶⁷ He continued to enjoy his master's favour almost uninterruptedly until his death.

In the more than twenty years during which he was influential, al-Muhallabī, a man of refined manners and wide culture, was able to build up a famous intellectual circle. It was attended by *kātib*s like al-Muhallabī's two sons-in-law, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Anbārī and the later vizier Abū l-Faḍl al-'Abbās ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Shirāzī, his deputy Abū l-'Alā' Šā'id ibn Tābit and the eminent historian and prose stylist Abū Ishāq al-Šābi'; by judges such as the Mu'tazilī Ibn Ma'rūf, Abū l-Qāsim al-Tanūkhī and Ibn Quray'a; by legal scholars such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Marwarrūdhī; by theologians like the Mu'tazilī Abū l-Ḥasan al-Anṣārī and Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī; by grammarians and lexicographers such as Abū Sa'id al-Sirāfi, Ibn Durustawayh and 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-Rummānī; by philologists and literary critics such as Abū 'Alī al-Ḥātimī and Hibatallāh ibn al-Munajjim; by poets like Ibn al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn al-Baqqāl; and by specialists of musical theory such as 'Alī ibn Hārūn ibn al-Munajjim or Abū l-Faraj himself.⁶⁸ Al-Muhallabī sought to establish and preserve his reputation by generosity and intelligent patronage. He was the first of the remarkable viziers whose encouragement of culture made the Būyid period so important for Arabic intellectual history; to one contemporary the gatherings of his salon recalled the golden age of the Barmakids.⁶⁹

Despite his neglected appearance and personal uncleanness, Abū l-Faraj fitted into this circle well, and al-Muhallabī, although he was famous for his fastidiousness, bore with his uncouth manners. Qualities such as wit, a sharp tongue and skill in satire, and gifts as a *raconteur* combined with vast culture and multifarious learning evidently made up for Abū l-Faraj's eccentricities. The familiar exchanges

between al-Muhallabī and his *nadīm* (boon companion) were preserved in a series of anecdotes which became part of popular tradition.⁷⁰ In a more serious context it was Abū l-Faraj who, as a representative of the Iraqī cultural tradition, confronted al-Mutanabbī on a philological question in al-Muhallabī's presence during the great poet's first visit to Baghdad.⁷¹ Some of the poems which Abū l-Faraj dedicated to his patron have been recorded in the biographical literature. Of his extant works, *Al-imā' al-shawā'ir* was certainly commissioned by al-Muhallabī.⁷² There is every reason to believe that the *Aghānī* was too, although Abū l-Faraj's reference to his patron in the preface is veiled: "The reason why I embarked on writing it [sc. the *Aghānī*] was that one of our chief officers of state (*ra'is min ru'asā'inā*) asked me to compile it for him..."⁷³ While little information is extant about musical life in Būyid Baghdad,⁷⁴ al-Muhallabī was appreciative of singing and singing girls,⁷⁵ and music was an indispensable part of the informal gatherings at which he and his closest companions indulged in witty conversation, poetry and fine wines, abandoning their usual decorum.⁷⁶

Al-Muhallabī was saved from disgrace by dying on campaign near Basra in 352/963, but Mu'izz al-Dawla had all his property seized and his family arrested. Even the humblest of those associated with his household were subject to measures of confiscation.⁷⁷ The sources are silent about what happened to Abū l-Faraj at this critical time, but there is no reason to suppose that he was treated any differently from the rest of al-Muhallabī's entourage. Well into his sixties by then, he must have abandoned any hope of finding a new patron.

He could still, however, earn a living by teaching. As usual, the biographical accounts give no indication of which period of a subject's life a given piece of information is relevant to, but from the time when Abū l-Faraj completed his first book, the *Maqātil al-Ṭalibīyin*,⁷⁸ and built up a reputation for an amazing knowledge of historical, literary, and musical reports and poetry, he must have attracted students. He is recorded as transmitting *ḥadīth*, and the names of some of those who read the *Aghānī* with him have been preserved.⁷⁹ He also dictated from his vast store of historical reports and anecdotes.⁸⁰ And he seems to have furnished the Umayyads of Spain with books, although the biographical sources merely report the fact without going into detail. For this was the time when the scholars and men of letters of Córdoba were engaged in assimilating the learning of the Mashriq.^{80a}

There remain two problems in Abū l-Faraj's biography, his putative connection with Sayf al-Dawla and the date of his death. As far as the first issue is concerned, the earliest mention of Abū l-Faraj having any contact with the Hamdanid ruler is the report in Yāqūt's biographical notice of him that he gave the Hamdanid a copy of the *Aghānī*, for which he received a reward of a thousand dinars.⁸¹ The same information is given independently by Ibn Khallikān,⁸² and it has been blown up by later mediaeval and modern scholars into the claim that Abū l-Faraj spent time in Aleppo. But there are good reasons for rejecting the latter claim out of hand and treating the former one with much reserve. First, Abū l-Faraj's name does not occur in any mediaeval account of Sayf al-Dawla's literary circle.⁸³ And there is no other indication of him showing any interest in the Hamdanids. Second, it is

inconceivable that he would have risked angering his patron al-Muhallabī by offering his *magnum opus* to anyone else, and in particular to a ruler with whom the Būyids often had tense relations. The incident could only have taken place in the four years which separated al-Muhallabī's death from Sayf al-Dawla's, but by then the Hamdanid was a sick man and his days of glory were over. Third, unlike al-Muhallabī, Sayf al-Dawla had the reputation of being too occupied with campaigning and affairs of state to spend much time on musical entertainment.⁸⁴ It is not certain that he would have found the idea which is the starting point of the *Aghānī* very congenial. Fourth, the report implies, wrongly, that Abū l-Faraj had completed the *Aghānī*.⁸⁵ But whatever the explanation for Yāqūt's statement,⁸⁶ it is a measure of Sayf al-Dawla's reputation among later generations that the story, once put into circulation, has hardly ever been questioned.

The date of Abū l-Faraj's death is a more complicated matter. The oldest source, Ibn al-Nadīm, who knew Abū l-Faraj,⁸⁷ is vague, mentioning "the early 360s".⁸⁸ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, who saw Abū l-Faraj in Baghdad but failed to attend any of his lectures, gives 357 as the date of his death.⁸⁹ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādī repeats Abū Nu'aym's date but offers 356 as an alternative, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Fawāris.⁹⁰ Later sources have usually followed this third version.

It is, however, contradicted by a passage in the *Adab al-ghurabā'*, as Yāqūt points out.⁹¹ This mentions one of Abū l-Faraj's friends reading a graffito dated 362 on the wall of Mu'izz al-Dawla's abandoned palace at al-Shammāsiya.⁹² It supports Ibn al-Nadīm's date, which must therefore be accepted as correct. The discrepancy between the dates can be explained, if it is accepted that after al-Muhallabī's death Abū l-Faraj fell on increasingly hard times and gradually disappeared from circulation; moreover he is said to have had a stroke, and to have suffered from mental confusion in his last years.⁹³ He would not be the only renowned scholar to have died in obscurity.^{93a}

Although Abū l-Faraj spent most of his life among officials, men of letters and eminent scholars, and although his position as companion to al-Muhallabī afforded him a comfortable and agreeable existence, the age in which he lived had its darker side. Especially in the period before the Būyids established their authority in Iraq political life was turbulent and government instable. And as an official of the administration, he must have been well aware of this. An occasional remark in the *Aghānī* betrays his attitude to contemporary events.

When defending Ibn al-Mu'tazz's standing as a poet, he refers to the prince's violent end as a "most horrible murder";⁹⁴ he himself was eleven when it happened. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, who was strangled, was not the only member of the 'Abbāsīd family to suffer violence in this period; the caliph al-Muqtadir fell in battle against his former general Mu'nis, and al-Qāhir, al-Muttaqī and al-Mustakfi were deposed and blinded. Lesser men fared no better. Viziers and important officials changed frequently as a result of court intrigues and conspiracies. The custom of fining dismissed officials had become established in the previous century,⁹⁵ but the use of torture to extract promises of reimbursement of ill-gotten gains became

much more common in this period. In the case of those who died in office, it was their relatives and most trusted assistants who were subjected to such treatment.⁹⁶ Apart from al-Muhallabī, Abū l-Faraj must have known a number of those whom this fate befell. As the remark quoted above shows, he was not indifferent to human suffering, and it is hard to imagine that the humiliation, torture and even death of educated and cultured acquaintances always left him unmoved, even when they belonged to an opposing faction.

Another glimpse of how he viewed his own times comes at the end of an anecdote in which 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr recites a line by Labīd:

Those in whose shadow life was good are gone, and I
am left behind among their sons
mange-ridden camels all.

'Ā'isha comments: "May God have mercy on Labīd! What would he have said if he had lived to see our contemporaries?" And each subsequent transmitter repeats this, replacing Labīd's name with that of the person from whom he heard the anecdote. When it comes to Abū l-Faraj's turn, however, he does not imitate his sources but says: "I can only ask God for help. For the situation is too terrible to describe."⁹⁷

Historical facts support such an outburst. The first half of the fourth/tenth century was characterised by fighting among army commanders and their troops drawn from different ethnic groups, intrigues round the caliph, financial crises, price rises, riots and a breakdown in urban security leading to attacks on the houses of the wealthy and the less wealthy. More ominous for the future of Iraq, the irrigation system declined steadily from lack of maintenance and suffered serious damage in conflicts between army factions.⁹⁸ So profoundly was Baghdad affected by these developments that its built-up area in 345/956 was reduced to a tenth of what it had been under al-Muqtadir (295/908–320/932), according to a judge quoted by al-Tanūkhī;⁹⁹ even if this remark is not wholly accurate, it reflects a certain perception which must have been widespread among the elite.

It would also be possible to discern a decline in the humaneness, decorum and intellectual level of court life in the same period. Abū l-Faraj's contemporary al-Mas'ūdī, who includes in the *Murūj al-dhahab* accounts of learned or entertaining discussions in front of the caliphs of the time, also refers to the frivolity of al-Mu'tamid, the cruelty of al-Mu'taḍid, the vizier al-Qāsim ibn 'Ubaydallāh's killing of the caliph al-Muktafi's uncle despite al-Muktafi's belief that he represented no danger, the same vizier's elimination of the great poet Ibn al-Rūmī, and the violence of al-Qāhir.¹⁰⁰ In the *Murūj al-dhahab*, however, these events are inserted into a panorama of the political and cultural developments of each reign. The *Aghānī*, by contrast, in the section covering the period from al-Mu'taṣim on, focusses almost exclusively on poets, musicians and their connections with colleagues and patrons, and the last caliph to whom it allots much space is al-Mutawakkil; it ignores the political, social and intellectual affairs of the time. The portrait the *Aghānī* paints of al-Mutawakkil is not that of the forceful and effective ruler,

but that of the lover of coarse humour and buffoonery, often combined with humiliation of members of his circle.¹⁰¹ A rare glimpse of later court life shows the favourite Yūnus ibn Bughā continuing his revelries with al-Muwaffaq, apparently unaffected by either the death of his mother or the killing of his father.¹⁰² There is more than a hint of decadence in these reports; whether it corresponds to historical fact or not, it conveys a certain view of the period. And the same vision is reflected in al-Bāqīṭānī's account, mentioned above, of by-gone officials possessing a competence and integrity which contemporaries cannot match.

Although nostalgia for a more glorious past is a conventional attitude among authors of the period,¹⁰³ there is a particular reason why Abū l-Faraj may have been more heartfelt in his regret at the passage of time than some other writers. The *Aghānī* chronicles how music and singing under the Umayyads and early 'Abbāsids became a highly developed art. From al-Mahdī on, the 'Abbasid caliphs had patronised and encouraged music, thus contributing to its age of glory in the third/ninth century. But al-Mu'taḍid (d. 289/902) was the last competent musician among the caliphs,¹⁰⁴ and al-Rāḍī (d. 329/940) the last caliph to leave a *diwān*; poetry of his was set to music too.¹⁰⁵ His successor changed life at court radically, abolishing the position of *nadīm*.¹⁰⁶

Thereafter patronage continued to be exercised by viziers and army commanders. While some viziers, like al-Muhallabī, were men of great culture, army commanders did not always understand Arabic¹⁰⁷ – a serious handicap for the appreciation of music which was essentially vocal. It is also possible that the idiom of 'Abbāsīd court music was alien to them. At all events, the decline and disappearance of the caliphal court in this period deprived musicians of their most prestigious source of professional stimulus and financial encouragement.

The position of urban musicians and singers deteriorated for another reason too. In the early fourth/tenth century the Ḥanbalīs were gaining ground in Baghdad, not least among the victims of the political and economic crises, and with their hostility to music and singing they included attacks on the quarters where musicians lived and worked and the destruction of musical instruments in some of their riots.¹⁰⁸ The Ḥanbalī leader al-Barbahānī¹⁰⁹ is reported in the *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara* to have ordered his followers to kill a professional mourner famous for her performances of dirges over al-Ḥusayn, even though, according to al-Tanūkhī, she remained within the bounds of Sunnī taste, refraining from attacks on the Companions.¹¹⁰ In 321/933 the caliph al-Qāhir, seeking to conciliate the Ḥanbalīs, prohibited music, wine and other alcoholic drinks, sent many singers into exile and had singing-girls sold; houses were even broken into and searched for women musicians.¹¹¹ When Abū l-Faraj, commenting on Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī's innovations in performance practice and their influence on later singers, emits his gloomy judgement on the current state of music: "[At all events] both the correct style of performance [i.e. Ishāq al-Mawṣilī's] and the altered one [i.e. Ibrāhīm's] have died out in our time",¹¹² he may be exaggerating, but developments such as those just mentioned make it very likely that a decline in the art of singing took place.

The establishment of Būyid rule in Baghdad, the return of stability and increased prosperity, and the encouragement by a cultured patron, al-Muhallabī, of a brilliant and varied intellectual circle, must have represented to men such as Abū l-Faraj who had witnessed the preceding decades a halt to decline and the promise of a return to the glorious era of the early 'Abbāsīd caliphate. The grandiose conception of the *Kitāb al-aghānī* as a panorama of Arabic music and culture from the pre-Islamic period to the end of the third/ninth century should be seen against this background.

Abū l-Faraj's works

Some thirty titles are ascribed to Abū l-Faraj in the mediaeval sources. Most of them are lost, quotations from a few have survived in later works, and four are extant.¹¹³ The lost works which the sources name are:

- 1 *Kitāb mā nazala min al-Qur'ān fī amīr al-mu'minīn wa ahl baytih 'alayhim al-salām* (FṬ)
- 2 *Kitāb fih kalām Fāṭima 'alayhā l-salām fī Fadak* (FṬ)
- 3 *Nasab Banī 'Abd Shams* (FN, -TB, IA, -WA)
- 4 *Jamharat al-nasab* (-TB, -IA, -WA)
- 5 *Nasab Banī Shaybān* (-TB, IA, -WA)
- 6 *Nasab al-Mahāliba* (-TB, IA, -WA)
- 7 *Nasab Banī Taghlib* (-TB, IA, -WA)
- 8 *Nasab Banī Kilāb* (-TB, -WA)
- 9 *Ayyām al-'arab* (-TB, -WA)
- 10 *Tafḍīl dhī l-ḥijja* (FN, IA)
- 11 *Da'wat al-Najjār* (YD, IA) *al-aṭibbā'* (WA)
- 12 *Majmū' al-āthār wa-l-akhbār* (FN, IA (reversing the two terms))
- 13 *Al-akhbār wa-l-nawādir* (FN, IA)
- 14 *Manājīb al-khiṣyān* (IA)
- 15 *Ṣifāt Hārūn* (FN)
- 16 *Al-farq wa-l-mi'yar bayn al-awghād wa-l-aḥrār* (FN, IA)
- 17 *Kitāb al-khammārīn wa-l-khammārāt* (FN, IA; TB and WA have *Al-ḥānāt*)
- 18 *Akhhbār al-tufayliyyīn* (FN, IA)
- 19 *Akhhbār Jaḥṣa al-Barmakī* (YD, IA)
- 20 *Al-mamālik al-shu'arā'* (IA; corresponds to part of FN's *Ash'ār al-mamālik wa-l-imā'*)
- 21 *Kitāb al-ghilmān al-mughannīn* (-TB, IA)
- 22 *Adab al-samā'* (FN, TB, IA)

Titles 1 and 2 reflect the same kind of politico-religious interests as the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*.

The works on genealogy (titles 3 to 8) belong to a group which Abū l-Faraj is said to have sent to the Umayyad rulers of Spain. It is possible that the *Jamharat al-nasab* (Compendium of genealogy) included sections, and these have been interpreted by the sources as separate books. Of the *Jamharat al-nasab* Abū l-Faraj

says: "I have collected in it [the Arabs'] genealogies and historical reports, and I have entitled it *The book of validation and equity* (*Kitāb al-ta'dīl wa-l-intiṣāf*)".¹¹⁴ TB's mention of *Kitāb al-ta'dīl wa-l-intiṣāf fī ma'āthir al-'arab wa-mathālibihā* besides *Kitāb jamharat al-nasab* would therefore seem to be the result of a confusion. IA, too, lists *Kitāb al-ta'dīl wa-l-intiṣāf fī akhbār al-qabā'il wa-ansābihā* separately from the *Jamhara* on the strength of Abū l-Faraj's reference to it in the *Aghānī*, without realising that the two titles most likely designate the selfsame book.

It has been suggested that the *Compendium of Historical Reports and Narratives* (12) is the "*kitāb al-kabīr*" which Abū l-Faraj mentions in the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*.¹¹⁵ One may also wonder whether there was any relationship between the *Majmū'* and the *Battle-days of the Arabs* (9).

There is no conclusive evidence that *The Description of Hārūn* (15) and *The Touchstone for Distinguishing Menials from Those of Noble Birth* (16) are related texts, as has been proposed.¹¹⁶ It may be correct that the Hārūn of the first title is Abū 'Abdallāh Hārūn ibn 'Alī ibn al-Munajjim, the son of Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Hārūn ibn al-Munajjim. According to FN, the second work was a treatise on Hārūn ibn 'Alī, but the same source mentions 'Alī ibn Hārūn as replying to Abū l-Faraj with his own text, *Al-lafẓ al-muḥīṭ bi-naqd mā lafaẓa bih al-laqīṭ* (The complete refutation of the foundling's declaration).¹¹⁷ Moreover, the beginning of the controversy may well go back to another treatise of 'Alī's, the *Risāla fī l-farq bayn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī wa-Ishāq al-Mawṣilī fī l-ghinā'* (Treatise on the distinction between Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī and Ishāq al-Mawṣilī in the matter of singing); the presence of "*farq*" in Abū l-Faraj's title suggests an echo of this sober designation. And given Abū l-Faraj's support for Ishāq al-Mawṣilī in musical controversies, his engaging in a polemic on this subject is thoroughly in character. The exchange between Abū l-Faraj and Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī could be independent of the *Ṣifāt Hārūn* and perhaps predate it.

A recent edition of the *Fihrist* proposes *Kitāb al-Ḥammādīn* instead of *Kitāb al-khammārīn wa-l-khammārāt* (17).^{117a} In that case the subject of the book would have been Ḥammād al-Rāwīya, Ḥammād 'Ajrad and Ḥammād al-Zibriqān, three Kufan poets and libertines whose lives straddled the end of the Umayyad and beginning of the 'Abbāsīd era, and who were suspected of *zandaqa* (heresy, more specifically Manichaeism).

The preference for IA's *Al-mamālik al-shu'arā'* (20) over FN's *Ash'ār al-imā' wa-l-mamālik* arises from the fact that *Al-imā' al-shawā'ir*, which has recently been discovered and published, is an independent book, and so, presumably, was *Al-mamālik al-shu'arā'*.

Apart from these titles listed in the biographical sources, Abū l-Faraj refers to a treatise of his on the basic rules of the tones:

23 *Risāla fī 'ilal al-nagham*¹¹⁸

Fragments from three of Abū l-Faraj's books mentioned in the sources have survived, namely:

24 *Al-qiyyān* (FN, YD, -TB, IA (as *Akhbār al-qiyyān*))

- 25 *Al-diyārāt* (FN, YD, TB, IA)
 26 *Mujarrad al-aghānī* (FN, YD, -TB, IA)

Recently, texts assumed to belong to *The Singing Girls* (24) and *The Monasteries* (25) have been published. The printed *Al-qiyān* contains sections on thirty-nine singing girls, but in only eight instances does the source from which the material is taken specify that it is quoting from Abū l-Faraj's *Qiyān*.¹¹⁹ In the printed *Al-diyārāt* the proportion of material expressly drawn from Abū l-Faraj's book is even lower; there is only one reference to it, although a number of passages may reasonably be assumed to be derived from it.¹²⁰

The value of these attempts at reconstruction is, first, that they draw attention to later works which quote from Abū l-Faraj, and thus provide information about the reception of his texts. And, second, from the fragments attributed to these books a few common characteristics emerge. In *Al-qiyān* Abū l-Faraj several times mentions from whom a singing girl learned her art, and this information may have been a standard feature of the presentation of the subjects.¹²¹ Some sections on monasteries in *Al-diyārāt* have a brief indication of the monastery's location, its surroundings or its history, and this, too, may have been a characteristic of the book.¹²² But the published *Al-qiyān* and *Al-diyārāt* cannot take the place of the authentic texts, for the sources from which they have been put together only picked and chose what interested them in Abū l-Faraj's works.¹²³ Moreover, it is almost certain that the later sources omitted performance indications, which could be expected to occur frequently in the *Qiyān* and were not absent from the *Diyārāt*.¹²⁴

A fragment of the *Book of the Songs Only* (26) is designated as such in Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*'. It consists of a four-line poem by al-Ma'mūn with the following comment: "*qāla Abū l-Faraj: wa-l-shi'ru li-l-Ma'mūni fī Jibrā'ila bni Bakhṭishū'a l-mutaṭabbibi wa-l-ghinā'u li-Mutayyamin khafīfu ramāl*" (Abū l-Faraj says that the poetry was composed by al-Ma'mūn about Jibrā'il ibn Bakhṭishū' the physician, and the setting was by Mutayyam in the light *ramāl* rhythm).¹²⁵ It may be assumed that the whole book consisted of similar combinations of texts with performance indications.

- 27 *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyin* (FT, FN, TB, IA, WA)
 28 *Al-imā' al-shawā'ir* (FN (as *Ash'ār al-imā' wa-l-mamālik*), YD, TB, IA, WA)
 29 *Adab al-ghurabā'* (FN (as *Adab al-ghurabā' min ahl al-faḍl wa-l-adab*), TB (as *Ādāb al-ghurabā'*), IA (as *Udabā' al-ghurabā'*), WA (as *Ādāb al-ghurabā'*))
 30 *Kitāb al-aghānī* (FT, FN, YD, TB, IA, WA)

These books by Abū l-Faraj are extant and have been published.

The first of them, the *Unnatural Deaths of the Ṭālibids*,¹²⁶ may be classified as a Shī'i martyrology, although one distinguished by a scholarly approach and a generally dispassionate tone. It relates information about those of the descendants of the Prophet's uncle Abū Ṭālib who met an unnatural death in the period starting with the Prophet's lifetime and ending at the time of writing, Jumādā I, 313 (Aug–Sept 925).

It includes not only those who, having risen up against the government, were killed in battle, executed or poisoned, but also those who were kept in prison until they died and those who went underground or fled to distant lands for fear of the authorities and were never able to return to legality. The last few pages of the book list Ṭālibids who met a violent death at the hands of relatives, bedouin, Carmathians or other non-governmental agencies. Altogether over 200 individuals are treated, though in greatly differing detail.¹²⁷

The book is organised chronologically, the entries on each Ṭālibid having a standard format: name, genealogy (including the mother's name, where known), (sometimes) a profile sketch, the events leading up to the death and the death itself. In the case of Ṭālibids who transmitted *ḥadīths*, those from whom and to whom they transmitted are mentioned. Sometimes an elegy rounds off an entry. Where one of the great Shi'i uprisings is discussed, Abū l-Faraj mentions the personal information about the various Ṭālibid participants one after the other before he embarks on an account of the uprising itself. In such cases names of supporters of the Ṭālibids who also fought may be tacked on haphazardly at the end. Only in the last part of the work is Abū l-Faraj forced by the meagre information at his disposal to abandon this scheme.

The *Maqātil* is constructed round a core of information which is already given, the list of Ṭālibids who met an unnatural death. It is biographically orientated in two ways. In principle, each individual is allotted a separate entry (even if the major uprisings are treated as collective experiences). And in the greater part of the book, which deals with the 'Abbāsid period, the biographical entries are grouped in sections according to the reigns of the caliphs under whom the Ṭālibids came to grief. These sections often begin with a summary of the policy adopted by the caliph concerned towards the family of Abū Ṭālib. As far as techniques of scholarship are concerned, the chain of transmitters (*isnād*) is generally used to introduce material, with reports being combined where appropriate.¹²⁸ But genealogies, profile sketches, some historical background information and most of the lists of names of recent Ṭālibid fatalities are given without sources. Abū l-Faraj sometimes comments on the accuracy of information, tells the reader when he has made a selection from material, or justifies the inclusion of a given report or even of a personality who does not possess the moral stature announced in the introduction as a criterion for treatment in the book.¹²⁹ Thus, although the *Maqātil* is put together from material Abū l-Faraj collected from older scholars, the reader is regularly reminded that he is the compiler.

The second extant text, *Al-imā' al-shawā'ir* (*The Slave Poetesses*), was long thought to be lost, but has recently been edited from a single MS. in Tunis.¹³⁰ It consists of a collection of reports about slave poetesses of the 'Abbāsid period which Abū l-Faraj put together in a few days for al-Muhallabī.¹³¹ A preface explaining the occasion for the book is followed by 31 section devoted to thirty-three women poets, with the *akhbār* in two cases relating to two women together. Many sections begin with Abū l-Faraj's profile of the subject. Most of them are very short, but three, devoted to al-Nāṭifi's slave-girl 'Inān, Faḍl and 'Arib, include numerous anecdotes

and quotations of poetry. Abū l-Faraj has fulfilled his promise to order the sections chronologically and according to the poetesses' gifts by using each of these leading figures to introduce a group of sections of lesser artists of the same period.¹³² Taken together, the short sections build up a general picture of the slave poetess, while the longer ones provide an in-depth treatment of three important aspects of her activity, competition with fellow-poets, *ghazal* and panegyric.

Despite the great difference in subject matter and tone between the *Imā'* and the *Maqātil*, the two books reflect a similiar approach to compilation. They are organised around people chronologically, as far as possible, and they both illustrate a capacity to concentrate on a single theme. Although the material is chiefly drawn from sources named in *isnāds*, Abū l-Faraj often introduces a section with his own thumble-nail sketch of the subject.

The third text, the *Adab al-ghurabā'* (*On Being a Stranger, Illustrated in Prose and Poetry*) was also rediscovered recently.¹³³ In the preface Abū l-Faraj speaks of the difficulty of enduring a reversal of fortune from prosperity to want and a decline in social standing, and outlines the psychological effects of such trials on those who suffer them. Indirectly, he is describing his own situation, and to distract his thoughts he turns to the contemplation of the deeds and words of men of past times, seeking consolation in them.¹³⁴ The book itself consists of over 70 treatments in prose or poetry of *ghurba*, absence from the homeland and loved ones, or an idea called forth by association with it. The attitudes to this predicament vary, so that while a mood of melancholy predominates, there are more light-hearted moments, and the final anecdote strikes an optimistic note, suggesting that Abū l-Faraj's venture into auto-therapy may have succeeded.^{134a}

The *Adab al-ghurabā'* was neither commissioned, like *Al-imā' al-shawā'ir* and the *Aghānī*, nor is it a logical outcome of Abū l-Faraj's studies, like the *Maqātil*. It has a personal and informal character which they all lack.¹³⁵ It does not draw on the same sources as Abū l-Faraj's other books; indeed much of its material is given with no source at all.¹³⁶ It is not organised chronologically or biographically (given that the characters are often nameless strangers, this would be impossible), nor does it start from a core of given information, Ṭālibids who came to a sticky end, slave poetesses of some repute, or songs. But it may well resemble other books by Abū l-Faraj which have not survived, such as *Historical Reports and Entertaining Tales* (13), or even *On Listening to Music* (22), whose title also includes the term "*adab*". And like some *Aghānī* articles it exhibits a method of compilation in which the subject is given an all-round treatment, without the material being organised into clearly defined sections.¹³⁷

The mediaeval scholar Yāqūt pointed out that there are two discrepancies between the *Ghurabā'*s text and the most commonly accepted facts about Abū l-Faraj's life. The first is the reference to the graffito on Mu'izz al-Dawla's palace dated 362, and the second to the author's passion for the son of an army officer in his youth, in the year that Mu'izz al-Dawla died (356/967).¹³⁸ But if the date of death which Ibn al-Nadīm gives for Abū l-Faraj, "a few years after 360", is accepted, the difficulty with the mention of 362 is resolved. Abū l-Faraj speaking

of himself as being in his youth in 356 poses a greater problem. If the text is taken as it stands, however, one biographical source offers an explanation, namely that he suffered from mental confusion in his last years.¹³⁹

Over against this difficulty must be set the two passages where the *Ghurabā'* gives performance indications.¹⁴⁰ These are not the elaborate presentations of settings frequent in the *Aghānī*, but simply indications of the rhythmic mode, such as are also encountered in *Al-imā' al-shawā'ir*.¹⁴¹ Apart from Abū l-Faraj's books, hardly any mediaeval Arabic texts mention song settings; I know of only the *Mukhtār min kitāb al-lahw wa-l-malāhi* of Ibn Khurdhādhbih, and the *Ash'ār awlād al-khulafā' wa-akhbārūhum* of al-Šūlī, both older contemporaries of Abū Faraj, the *Kitāb al-diyyārāt* of al-Shābushtī, who probably lived at about the same time, and the *Kitāb al-muḥdath fi al-aghānī* of the fifth/eleventh century Ibn Nāqiyā, passages from which are preserved in the *Masālik al-abṣār* of Ibn Fadlallāh al-'Umari.¹⁴² To include two performance indications in a book not devoted principally to songs or to poems set to music must be regarded as Abū l-Faraj's stamp on the work.

As has been mentioned, Abū l-Faraj undertook the *Book of Songs* (30) in response to a request from an unnamed high official who had heard that the *Kitāb al-aghānī* attributed to Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī was not genuine – a view with which Abū l-Faraj concurred.¹⁴³

The *Aghānī*, which is chiefly constructed round songs, falls into three parts. In the first (vols I–IX, 249) the core of given information is provided by the Three Choicest Songs and then the other songs making up the Top Hundred which Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī chose for al-Wāthiq, followed by other groups of songs: those that combined ten or eight tones, the three songs in the *ramal* rhythmic mode, Ma'bad's five songs with nicknames, his Seven Cities, and Ibn Surayj's corresponding Seven Songs. In the second part (IX, 250–X, 286) caliphs and their descendants who composed songs form the core, and they are treated in chronological order, the caliphs from 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz to al-Mu'taḍid being followed by princes (and one princess) from Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī to 'Abdallāh ibn al-Mu'tazz. The third part (X, 286–XXIV, 261) is constructed round a core of songs chosen by Abū l-Faraj himself.^{143a} Although the *Aghānī* starts out with articles on poets and composers regularly alternating, the fact that there were fewer composers and their lives were less well documented than those of poets means that in the later volumes treatments of musicians are fairly uncommon.

The decision to use lists of songs as the core of the book led to an unusual way of arranging the material. Abū l-Faraj points out in the preface, somewhat defensively, that some readers might have expected him to order the songs according to rhythmic modes (*tarā'iq*),¹⁴⁴ the period and rank of the singers or the poets responsible for the lyrics.¹⁴⁵ He counters these suggestions with the following arguments. Since the Hundred Songs chosen for al-Wāthiq were not arranged according to the rank or period of their authors (Abū Qaṭīfa, the composer of the lyrics of the Top Song, is an altogether insignificant poet), classification along these lines was out of the question. As the same poems have been set to different rhythmic modes, ordering poems according to setting would have led to repetitions. And working

through all the settings of verses of a given poet before treating the *akhbār* connected with them would have been monotonous. The aim of the book is to cover both songs and the reports about them, including the information which the reader expects to find, while avoiding redundancy and longwindedness and observing the *adab* principle of regular variations in subject and tone.¹⁴⁶

Although Abū l-Faraj's detailed justification of his organisation of material in the *Aghānī* suggests that such an arrangement was unfamiliar, he may well have acquired the idea for it from earlier works. Older books of songs (and it is to this genre that the *Aghānī*, through its title, relates itself) have not survived, but so far as can be judged, they consisted simply of the texts of songs with their melodic and rhythmic modes.¹⁴⁷ Ishāq al-Mawṣilī's *Kitāb al-aghānī* might be thought to have provided a model for Abū l-Faraj's book of the same name, but the references to it in the *Aghānī* and the *Fihrist* indicate that it was organised on different lines. Ibn al-Nadīm describes it as being in ten parts and lists the initial line of poetry in each one; this list bears no relation to the ordering of material in Abū l-Faraj's book. He also quotes the verdict reported by Abū l-Faraj and going back to Ḥammād ibn Ishāq al-Mawṣilī that the only genuine part of the *Aghānī* circulating under Ishāq's name is the first one, on the legitimacy of listening to music (*al-rukḥṣa*).¹⁴⁸ There is no such section in Abū l-Faraj's book, nor is there any place for it in the scheme he devised, although *akhbār* on the subject are scattered through various articles.¹⁴⁹

Another book which Ishāq at least worked on comes somewhat closer to Abū l-Faraj's *Aghānī*, as far as the contents are concerned. It is the one he describes in a letter to 'Alī ibn Hishām:

And furthermore I am engaged in writing an entertaining, original book which includes the names, genealogies and countries of residence of eminent singers [*al-qawm*], their economic situation and the period in which they lived, the differences between them in their manner of singing and composing, some of the reports about them, and also the accounts of the well-known and memorable singing girls of the Hijaz, Kufa and Basra, the poems which were composed about them, their owners, who bought them, and who their fans were. [I also mention] which legal experts and noble members of the community considered listening to music legitimate.¹⁵⁰

Between this projected book and Abū l-Faraj's *Aghānī* there is considerable common ground with regard to the subjects treated, but there are also fundamental differences. Ishāq is concerned exclusively with musicians and music, he does not mention ordering the material in any particular way (though he may have done so), and because he was working about a century before Abū l-Faraj he had less material to draw on and fewer examples of types of compilation before him. This letter may very well have suggested the general idea of a Book of Songs to Abū l-Faraj, but he then evolved a much more sophisticated scheme for it which integrated not only singers and music but also poetry, poets and important historical events into the general frame.

The *Aghānī* ran to some five thousand folios, as Ibn al-Nadīm notes. Its length may not impress the modern reader familiar with encyclopaedic compilations of the later Middle Ages such as the *Nihāyat al-‘arab* or the *Ta’rikh Dimashq*, but to contemporaries it must have seemed immense. It is referred to almost always as “*Kitāb al-aghānī al-kabīr*”, the Great Book of Songs.¹⁵¹

Because of its size many of those who speak about it seem not to realise that it is unfinished. The Dār al-kutub edition is, however, unequivocal; it ends with “Here al-Iṣbahānī’s account breaks off”.¹⁵² Moreover, at the end of the book some articles are no more than fragments. For instance, the final article, *Akhhbār al-Mutalammis*, treats only the poet’s name and his tribal forebears, subjects which normally constitute the introductory section of an article, while the *Akhhbār ‘Abdallāh ibn Muṣ‘ab wa-nasabuh*, after sketching the profile of a man of the early ‘Abbāsīd period who possessed some political weight as well as poetic gifts, gives some interesting reports and then suddenly stops. It is hard not to feel that there was more to be said about ‘Abdallāh, but that Abū l-Faraj did not get round to it.¹⁵³ It was perhaps inevitable that he should not finish the *Aghānī*, once he had embarked on the treatment of all the songs he considered worthwhile. For, by departing from finite groups of songs like the Top Hundred and the Songs of the Caliphs and Princes, he found himself confronted with a boundless quantity of material. The conception of the third part of the work implies a book almost without end.

Textual problems in the Aghānī

The unfinished state of the *Aghānī* has to be borne in mind in any discussion of lacunas in the text or other textual problems. Before examining these, I would like to point out two other features of the *Aghānī* text relevant in this connexion. First, surviving *Aghānī* MSS are always in parts, but the number of parts (or volumes) in a MS varies from two to about sixty.¹⁵⁴ A copyist combining parts from two different MSS carelessly could well upset the order of articles, with the risk of portions of text being lost or misplaced. Second, from the biographical sources it is clear that Abū l-Faraj read the *Aghānī* with students. Assuming that he taught it more than once, he would have been working through it several times, so that in the early sections he might well refer to passages coming later as material which had already been mentioned, because he knew that he had included it.

Of the textual problems it is the lacunas which have attracted most attention, and in particular the absence of articles on Abū Nuwās and on Abū l-‘Atāhiya and ‘Utba after Abū l-Faraj had announced them.¹⁵⁵ Although one cannot exclude the hypothesis that these articles are lost, as scholars have generally assumed, it is quite as likely that Abū l-Faraj never assembled them, even if he had collected material for them. In particular it is improbable that an *Aghānī* article on Abū Nuwās should have been lost, and lost immediately, while so many articles on obscure poets survived.¹⁵⁶

On the other hand, some passages of the *Aghānī* manifestly have not survived. There are lacunas in poetry, such as the verses by al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī which lack

two half-lines.¹⁵⁷ Some *akhbār* are incomplete; Mutayyam's article ends with her being asked by al-Ma'mūn to cap two lines of poetry, but the reader is left to guess how she does it. The text continues with the introductory song to Jarir's article.¹⁵⁸ In the article on Ka'b al-Ashqari a *khavar* in which 'Abd al-Malik wishes poets would do him as proud as Ka'b did al-Muhallab with one of his panegyrics is followed by some lines of *hijā'*; the *khavar* must originally have been rounded off by one or two lines of the panegyric, which is quoted extensively earlier on, and the *hijā'*, part of another *khavar*, introduced by an explanatory text of some kind.¹⁵⁹ One of the *akhbār* about Ash'ab runs the chain of transmitters into the beginning of the story, the first phrases of which are lost.¹⁶⁰ The last two anecdotes about the singer 'Amr ibn Abī l-Kannāt both turn on the exceptional carrying power of his voice; they form a pair with a shared motif. In the first, a eye-witness recounts how at a drinking session 'Amr asks those present whom they would like to invite, they mention a name, and wait until the proposed guest (evidently a man of habit) is accustomed to go down to the market, when he starts to sing. Soon the guest appears, explaining that it was 'Amr's voice which led him to them, a distance of three miles. In the second *khavar*, the narrator is someone who hears 'Amr's voice from afar and follows it until he finds him singing. The text of what 'Amr sings in this second anecdote is the song introducing the next article, whereas he must have sung the same song as in the previous *khavar* or one very like it.¹⁶¹

Sometimes it is not easy to decide whether part of the text has been lost, or whether it was never there to begin with. The article on al-Aḍbaṭ ibn Quray' begins with a *khavar* explaining how he got his nickname, but the genealogy which customarily introduces articles on early Arab poets is missing. Has it been lost, or was it never there? Conversely, the article on 'Amr ibn Sa'id ibn Zayd gives only his genealogy and an explanation of who his father was, before launching into a *khavar* which quotes the introductory song for which he composed the lyrics. Did the *akhbār* about the poet himself ever exist?¹⁶²

Portions of text may be misplaced, as is the case in the section on al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka's death. According to one version, while he was under the protection of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muwaylik al-Khath'amī he raped a Khath'amī girl and was killed by a fellow-tribesman. The *Aghānī* gives some other lines of the poem in which the killer refuses to pay 'Abd al-Malik blood money before the *khavar* where the crucial line referring to al-Sulayk is quoted. Here the version in Ibn Manẓūr's *Mukhtār al-aghānī* is helpful, for it re-establishes the original order of the *akhbār*.¹⁶³

Another problem is posed by four songs labelled as belonging to the Hundred Songs in volume XII, long after the song collections have been exhausted. This question will be treated in connection with the framework of songs in the *Aghānī*.¹⁶⁴

Abū l-Faraj's use of past and future tenses in his references to material found elsewhere in the *Aghānī* have been observed not always to correspond to the reality of the text; in other words, sometimes he uses a past tense while the *khavar* or poem is to be found later on, or more rarely, he uses a future to indicate material which has already been treated. It is tempting to conclude from this that the order of the text has been disturbed in many places.¹⁶⁵ But, as pointed out above,

Abū l-Faraj's working and reworking of the text could explain these apparently inaccurate expressions.

Finally, the text of the *Aghānī* is not free of standard scribal errors, such as confusion of names in *isnāds* and slips of the pen.¹⁶⁶

It has not been my intention to discuss the philological problems of the *Aghānī* exhaustively; that would need a book in itself. I considered it important, however, to indicate the existence of these problems. It will not have escaped the reader that the assumption underlying the discussion of them so far is that all resources have been exhausted for producing a better *Aghānī* text. Two objections may be raised to that. Many *Aghānī* MSS were not consulted in the preparation of the printed text.^{166a} And, as the preceding remarks will have made clear, the mediaeval abridgements can sometimes be helpful. Yet the editors only took account of two of them.

As far as the *Aghānī* MSS are concerned, judging by the editors' prefaces to the printed editions, a number of the oldest ones, such as the fifth/eleventh century one in the Alexandria Baladiya collection (no. 1229 b) or the sixth/twelfth century British Museum ones (Or. 2075, 2076, 2077 and 2078), have not been exploited. Yet even if it is not practicable to undertake an edition of the *Aghānī* based on all the available manuscripts, at least some of these older ones could be compared with the printed editions and, depending on the results, an improved edition could be produced. The difficulties with the order of some articles might be cleared up. And the beginning of Abū l-Faraj's preface might even come to light; this would be an important discovery.

To see what such an exercise might achieve, I compared part of the printed text of the *Aghānī* with the equivalent passages in Or. 2076 and 2078. These two volumes are part of a copy made for the Fāṭimid caliph al-Zāfir (reg. 544/1149–549/1154) in 60 parts bound in 30 volumes.¹⁶⁷ The passages I examined, 200 pages of Dār al-kutub's volume IV and 225 pages of volumes XXI–XXII, produced a number of variants, but scarcely any which would alter the text significantly.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps the most interesting finding was that the MS was generally more accurate in marking the presence of performance indications with the word *ṣawṭ*, or in not writing *ṣawṭ* when these indications were absent, and that on one occasion it had more musical information than the printed text, thus clearing up an apparent inconsistency.¹⁶⁹ This greater proficiency in dealing with the musical side of the *Aghānī* is quite understandable, if one bears in mind that Fāṭimid practice was still not far removed from the musical world of Baghdad.

My main aim in undertaking this partial comparison of the printed edition with one old MS was to discover if the asides which occur in the text are the author's or have been added by copyists. For the analysis of the asides forms a large part of this study, and it is essential to establish from whom they originate. Here the edition and the MS agree with each other entirely. In other words, the asides go back to the Fāṭimid period at least. And since similar observations on matters such as the combining of reports or the accuracy of information are found in the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyin* too, it seems reasonable to assume that asides are characteristic of Abū

l-Faraj's manner of working, even if they might have been added by another hand in exceptional cases.

As the discussion of textual difficulties has shown, the pre-modern abridgements of the *Aghānī* can also solve some problems. The editors of the printed editions, however, confined their attention to the printed abridgements, the *Tajrīd al-aghānī* of Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī (604/1208–697/1298) and the *Mukhtār al-aghānī* of Ibn Manẓūr (630/1233–711/1312). These selections were made on different principles, so that they each contribute to knowledge of the *Aghānī* text.¹⁷⁰ And other abridgements are extant too. The following list includes all those which I have seen referred to, whether extant or not:¹⁷¹

- Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Maghribī (d. 418/1027): *Mukhtaṣar al-aghānī* (Paris BN Arabe 2766 and 2769)
- 'Izz al-Mulk Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Ḥarrānī al-Musabbihī (d. 420/1030): *Mukhtār al-aghānī wa-ma'ānīhā*
- Abū l-Qāsim 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Nāqiyā (d. 485/1092): *Mukhtaṣar al-aghānī*¹⁷²
- Al-Qaḍī al-Rashīd Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Zubayr al-Aswānī (d. 563/1168): *Mukhtaṣar al-aghānī*¹⁷³
- Tāj al-dīn Abū l-Faṭḥ 'Uthmān ibn 'Isā al-Balaṭī (d. 599/1202): *Mukhtaṣar al-aghānī*
- Mu'ayyid al-dīn Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ḥārithī (d. 599/1202): *Ikhtīṣār kitāb al-aghānī al-kabīr*¹⁷⁴
- Abū l-Rabī' Sulaymān ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abd al-Mu'min (d. 604/1207): *Mukhtaṣar al-aghānī* (Rabat, Awqāf 154)¹⁷⁵
- Muḥaddhab al-dīn 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn 'Alī al-Dakhwār (d. 628/1230): *Ikhtīṣār kitāb al-aghānī al-kabīr*¹⁷⁶
- Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī (d. 697/1298): *Tajrīd al-aghānī min al-mathālīth wa-l-mathānī*¹⁷⁷
- Ibn Manẓūr al-Miṣrī (d. 711/1312): *Mukhtār al-aghānī fī al-akḥbār wa-l-tahānī*¹⁷⁸
- 'Abd al-Qādir ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Salawī al-Fāsi (12th/18th century): *Idrāk al-amānī min Kitāb al-aghānī* (Rabat, al-Khizāna al-Malakiya no. 2706)

This summary examination of the problems connected with the text of the *Aghānī* leads to two conclusions. First, a better text can certainly be produced, if it is based on all the important extant manuscripts, and if proper account is taken of the information in the abridgements. Second, while the present text is not the best we could have, it both reads coherently as a rule and displays consistency throughout its volumes.¹⁷⁹ I believe it offers an adequate basis for a study of the *Aghānī*, even if any conclusions which researchers come to now may have to be modified in the light of a better edition. It is in the knowledge that any results I put forward are provisional that I have undertaken the following investigations into Abū l-Faraj's *Great Book of Songs*.

ABŪ L-FARAJ ON SONGS AND SINGERS

This chapter and the two subsequent ones present and discuss the remarks which Abū l-Faraj makes on his manner of working and his material in the course of the *Aghānī*. They aim to cast light on how he responded to his material and what considerations guided him in bringing it together. Given the difficulty which modern readers have in understanding the book as an entity, this insight is an important first step in the study of it. It naturally does not mean that no interpretations of the *Aghānī* which diverge from its author's understanding of it are possible, but simply that serious discussion of the book needs to take account of his intentions.

Since the *Kitāb al-aghānī* is originally a book of songs, the logical first step in examining Abū l-Faraj's interventions is to investigate how he treats musical information and what comments he makes on it. A large part of this information concerns performance indications,¹ and the question arises how they are integrated into the text as a whole.

To begin with, these musical settings should be described. They take the following form (items in brackets are optional):

(Ṣawt)

lines of poetry

(name of the poet) (metre of the poem) (philological notes on the lines)

(name of the composer) (rhythmic mode) (melodic mode)

(source of musical setting)

Any one of the items apart from the poetry itself may be absent and, as will be seen, Abū l-Faraj sometimes comments on these lacunae. But one or other of the specifically musical items is necessary to show that the lines were sung and not merely a quotation from a poem.

The word *ṣawt* (a song) is sometimes omitted, even though the musical indications are given; this may reflect a copyist's oversight. Conversely, *ṣawt* may introduce lines of poetry devoid of musical indications. This, too, may be due to a copyist's negligence,² but it could also reflect Abū l-Faraj's intention to insert the information at a later date. As will be seen, some of his asides show that such was his practice at times. The poet's name may be left out, particularly when the song occurs in

a *khbar* and it is clear from the context who composed the lines. Philological notes are rare and encountered chiefly in connection with pre- and early Islamic poetry; equally uncommon is the mention of the metre. The rhythmic and melodic modes³ are sometimes incomplete or entirely absent. The composer is not always named either, but there are also cases of alternative attributions to different composers. When the source of the musical indications is given, it is almost invariably one of the great collectors of songs of the third/ninth century; sometimes the information comes from one of their books but in other cases the term *riwāya* is employed. But nowhere are the stages of transmission from the original source to Abū l-Faraj indicated, as they are in the *isnāds* introducing *akhbār*.⁴

It is important to realise that the indications of rhythmic and melodic mode were not enough to enable a singer to perform a song. They are more informative than an expression such as “Minuet in G”, which simply gives the rhythm and tonality of a piece of music, since they prescribe certain patterns of tone, accent and measure. But they cannot convey how the song sounds. In the absence of a widely used system of notation,⁵ a song could only be transmitted through performance.⁶ This means that when Abū l-Faraj mentions rhythmic and melodic information derived from a third/ninth century source, particularly a written one, that does not prove that he himself heard the song, or that it was still part of the repertoire. For when the melody was forgotten, the musical indications could still be preserved in writing or, perhaps with less probability, orally. It is tempting to conclude, *a contrario*, that when he gives musical indications without naming a source, Abū l-Faraj derives them from a performance he himself heard. But while this is certainly true in some cases, it cannot be assumed that Abū l-Faraj consistently mentions the third/ninth century authorities each time they are his sources for the rhythmic and melodic modes. And the standard information about song settings does not give any hint as to whether the transmission of the modes was accompanied by performance.

All that can be said is that among the songs contained in the *Aghānī* three groups can be distinguished: those whose indications were in the major sources and which were still in the repertoire; those of which the melody had been lost while the musical indications were still preserved in the sources; and those in the repertoire whose indications were not mentioned by the sources. This picture is supported by some of Abū l-Faraj's own remarks.

The integration of the song settings into the text: tacit intervention

In the article on Muslim ibn al-Walid,⁷ one of the first *akhbār* runs as follows:

‘Ali ibn Sulaymān told me that he heard Muḥammad ibn Yazīd say: “The reason for Muslim’s line

She claims to feel longing when she is afar,
yet when she is near she acts unjustly

was that he had fallen in love with a girl from a famous and noble family. Her house stood downwind from his when the north wind blew, and he alludes to that in another poem:

Song

I love the wind when it blows north
I envy it when it blows south.
I'm too awed by you to reveal my true emotions,
If I ask you anything I fear you'll disappoint me.
I stay away from my beloved
out of a desire to put myself in the wrong,
while it's she who acts unjustly
And when I avert my gaze from anyone else, it's as if I fear
you've set a watcher over my eyes.”⁸

‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘ī composed a setting in the *hazaj* rhythm with the ring finger as tonic [using the ring finger fret],⁹ according to al-Hishāmī.

[Muḥammad ibn Yazid] continued: “[Muslim] had a slave-girl he used to send to the young noblewoman, telling her his inmost thoughts, and she would bring back news and messages from her. This lasted a long time, until the young noblewoman whom Muslim loved fell for his slave-girl and succumbed to her charms; both of them were paragons of beauty and accomplishment ... [and he goes on to explain the occasion for the first line of poetry quoted].

(*Agh.* XIX, 32–3)

In this passage from an account of an early ‘Abbāsīd version of the Eternal Triangle two items are intrusive, the word “Song” and the sentence “‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās ... al-Hishāmī”. The rest of the *khavar* can stand without them, and they bring in an authority, al-Hishāmī, who is not mentioned in the initial *isnād*. Do they belong to the original narrative or have they been interpolated?

Abū l-Faraj’s immediate source for the *khavar* is ‘Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Akhfash, the Baghdad litterateur, philologist and grammarian. Here, as often in the *Aghānī*, he is transmitting from his teacher Abū l-Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad, one of the greatest philologists of the ‘Abbāsīd age, who is not, however, known to have shown any scholarly interest in singing.¹⁰

The singer ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘ī started his career under Hārūn al-Rashīd and died in 247/861.¹¹ Theoretically, al-Mubarrad could have known of his setting and included it in his *khavar*, but then the question arises why he indicates al-Hishāmī, the source for the musical information, while he names no authority for the rest of the anecdote. Al-Hishāmī is a shadowy figure, one of the half dozen or so collectors of songs from whom Abū l-Faraj derived most of his

information about setting, but otherwise very rarely mentioned in the *Aghānī*.¹² Could al-Mubarrad have been in contact with him?

Two al-Hishāmīs with musical interests are to be met with in Abū l-Faraj's works. One, Abū l-'Abbās, known as Musk, was a contemporary of Abū l-Faraj.¹³ The other, Abū 'Abdallāh, who was evidently a music critic of standing, appears in an anecdote where al-Mu'tazz addresses him as "Ibn Hishām", while in the introduction to it he is referred to as "al-Hishāmī" (*Agh.* XXI, 57–8).¹⁴ He is almost certainly the collector of songs who is quoted so often in the *Aghānī*.¹⁵ He was a contemporary of al-Mubarrad, and since he sang before al-Mutawakkil, he could well have crossed the grammarian's path in Samarra. If he, and not his younger relative, is the source of the song caption, it might indeed stem from al-Mubarrad and indicate a hitherto unsuspected liking on the philologist's part for singing and a connection between him and Abū 'Abdallāh. But it could be an interpolation. If the later al-Hishāmī is the source, then the song caption is independent of the *khabar* about Muslim and has been added by Abū l-Faraj.

Further on in the same volume is an account of a meeting between the poet Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb and Abū Dulaf al-'Ijli. Its *isnād* runs: 'Alī ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn al-Haytham al-Anbārī *al-kātib* > Abū Hiffān > Abū Hiffān's maternal uncle. 'Alī ibn Ṣāliḥ is obscure, appearing in the *Aghānī* generally as a transmitter from Abū Hiffān.¹⁶ This Basran poet later moved to Baghdad and died there in about 255/869, having made a name for himself as a transmitter of poetry and *akhbār*.¹⁷ His maternal uncle is apparently unknown, but would have been of an age to witness the scene he describes. His account runs:

I was with Abū Dulaf al-Qāsim ibn 'Isā when Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb the poet came to visit him. Abū Dulaf treated the poet with great respect, and after he had left, Abū Dulaf's brother Ma'qil said to him, "Brother, you have treated this man in a way he does not deserve. He does not belong to a noble family, nor is he extremely cultivated, nor does he occupy an important position." "Oh, yes, brother, he certainly deserves such treatment. How could it be otherwise when he is the author of these lines:

Song

Asked to give evidence, my tears speak
and testify that I am in love.
And my mistress whom I serve
recognises that I adore her.
If I aspire to meet her,
some hurdle blocks my path,
and fate, with its vicissitudes, engages me in conflict
over her, as if fate itself were her lover."

There is a setting for these lines with a *ramal* rhythm for the pandore, which I think Jaḥḥa composed (*Agh.* XIX, 77).

Jaḥza, the putative composer, is one of Abū l-Faraj's principal sources for settings, information about singers and poets, and traditions of life at the 'Abbāsid court. As has been mentioned, he was in personal contact with Abū l-Faraj. The "I" who advances the attribution can be none other than the compiler himself. The interpolation here is unmistakable.

That Abū l-Faraj considered such interpolations as normal and necessary is clear from a remark in the article on Muṭī' ibn Iyās: "In Muṭī's *akhbār* which have already been mentioned, there are songs whose composers and settings I was distracted from indicating until I reached this point. Now here are the indications" (XIII, 309). Then he gives two songs.

From these examples it follows that indications of composers and setting can have been added by Abū l-Faraj not only when the songs introduce the articles, but when they are embedded in a narrative. When copying down a *khavar* from dictation, notes, a book or memory, he apparently paused when he came to lines he knew had been set to music. When the setting was not given – and in most cases it was not – he turned to the collections of songs or drew on his familiarity with the repertoire and his musician acquaintances' knowledge of the oral tradition to furnish the names of composers and the indications for performance, which he either inserted in the middle of the *khavar* directly after the lines of poetry, or appended after one or more *akhbār*. When the *khavar* and the musical information come from different sources, these tacit interventions by Abū l-Faraj represent a unique feat of combining material.

In a minority of instances, however, Abū l-Faraj's source for the *khavar* most likely furnished the melodic and rhythmic modes too. A case in point is the article on the pandore-player Abū Ḥashīsha (*Agh.* XXIII, 75–83), which is compiled from information contained in Jaḥza's book on pandore-players, *Kitāb al-ṭunbūriyin*, and Abū Ḥashīsha's own account of his life and times and the caliphs he served. In the latter's version, transmitted by Jaḥza, of an occasion when he was summoned to Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muṣ'ab, the chief of the Baghdad police, the following passage occurs:

[Ishāq] ordered: "Sing your setting of

Come to love with a glass of chilled wine
and obey the behests of the generous host"¹⁸

[The setting is] light *ramal* with the open *mathnā* string as tonic.

I did so several times ...

(XXIII, 77)

Here the musical indications could have been given by Abū Ḥashīsha himself, as he told the story, or added by Jaḥza when he included it in his book.

But even here Abū l-Faraj's intervention cannot always be excluded. When, at the beginning of the article, Jaḥza praises Abū Ḥashīsha as the author of "compositions better than those of all pandore players without exception, such as:

I seem to bear the cares of people
throughout the world. My heart is one with theirs.

Two witnesses without reproach I have,
 sleeplessness and tears.
 How many who claim to love
 cannot call one witness in their favour?

which is in light *ramal* with the open *mathnā* string as tonic" (XXIII, 75), it is an open question whether Jaḥḥa or Abū l-Faraj has provided the last phrase. The same doubt exists about the musical indications in the next short piece of information quoted from Jaḥḥa (XXIII, 75–6).

For information about settings Abū l-Faraj draws on six main sources: Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, Ḥabash, 'Amr ibn Bāna, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī, al-Hishāmī and Yūnus al-Kātib. Apart from Ḥabash¹⁹ and al-Hishāmī, they are known as compilers of books about singers and otherwise appear with more or less frequency in *isnāds*.²⁰ Other important authorities for song captions are Jaḥḥa and Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim,²¹ both authors of lists of the Hundred Songs, and the poet Ibn al-Mu'tazz, a fine musician who compiled a book on the singer 'Arīb and entertained a correspondence with 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir and the Banū Ḥamdūn on musical subjects.²² When any of these connoisseurs of music appears in an *isnād* introducing a *khabar* which includes a song, he may be the source of the musical indications too, unless they are ascribed to another authority. The passage just quoted where Jaḥḥa praises Abū Ḥashisha for his admirable compositions illustrates this. It is thus impossible to determine how much Abū l-Faraj has intervened, in cases where his informants are known to have had an interest in music.

Some lines of poetry are followed, not by one setting, but by several. For example, Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allāqa* was a favourite poem of musicians. Not only did two lines from it form the text of one of the three chosen *ramal* melodies (*Agh.* IX, 62), but Abū l-Faraj then quotes fifteen more lines which were set to music in various combinations, followed by twenty-two settings and their composers. For seven of these settings he mentions sources: Abū l-'Ubays ibn Ḥamdūn,²³ al-Hishāmī, Ḥabash and Aḥmad al-Makkī (IX, 75–6). The chosen *ramal* setting goes back to Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, its composer (IX, 69). The list of settings is evidently Abū l-Faraj's compilation.

A similar list of settings can be found after the seven lines of a poem depicting the sandgrouse (*qaṭā*), ascribed to five different poets of the Umayyad period (VIII, 258–9). Abū l-Faraj has assembled the eight melodies he mentions partly from named sources (Ishāq, 'Amr ibn Bāna, al-Hishāmī) and partly from his own knowledge of the repertoire.²⁴ Likewise, he has drawn up the list of settings of 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a's poem "*A-min āli Nu'min anta ghādin fa-mubkirū*" (Is it Nu'm's folk near whom you come and go, before the sun is up?) (I, 79–80), on the authority of Aḥmad al-Makkī, Ḥabash, 'Amr ibn Bāna and Yūnus, supplemented by a setting for which he gives no source.²⁵

When drawing up these lists, Abū l-Faraj sometimes uses impersonal expressions, such as *jumi'at* (there have been collected; I, 80) or *wujida* (there has been

found; IX, 76). Elsewhere, however, he conveys his own involvement, as for instance in the following: “It has a light *ramal* setting with the index finger of the *mathnā* as tonic using the middle finger fret, which Ishāq did not attribute to anyone, but which I found attributed to Ḥunayn in some traditions which I consider unreliable” (XXI, 197–8). Such a statement betrays Abū l-Faraj’s own activity in collecting and checking attributions.

If I have gone into detail in discussing the indications of song settings and Abū l-Faraj’s method of assembling them, it is because, apart from musicologists, modern readers of the *Aghānī*, like their later mediaeval counterparts,²⁶ have ignored the performance indications entirely. This is a natural reaction to a component of the text which is apparently meaningless. But to Abū l-Faraj and his contemporaries the song captions conveyed essential information, and any attempt to gain insight into Abū l-Faraj’s intention in writing the *Aghānī* has to take account of that fact. It is easier to appreciate the compiler’s achievement in assembling the 2000 odd settings in the book if one understands something of the significance of the terms conventionally used in them and knows the identities of the transmitters.

Abū l-Faraj’s comments: the transmission and sources of songs

As the quotation above about the setting attributed to Ḥunayn shows, Abū l-Faraj comments on the information he includes about songs; in this case he refers to his own activity in tracking down musical information and also expresses a value judgement about some of his sources.

From his remarks it is clear that he relied both on written sources and on oral tradition to establish song settings. Among the *mu’allifū l-aghānī* (compilers of song collections, *Agh.* XV, 155) whose names occur in the *Aghānī*, some are also listed by Ibn al-Nadīm in the *Fihrist*.²⁷ Of Ishāq al-Mawṣilī’s writings, Abū l-Faraj had recourse to *al-kitāb al-kabīr* (XV, 314),²⁸ a book in his own hand (IV, 290), his collection of Shajā’s songs (V, 362) and the selection he made for al-Wāthiq (*al-Ikhtiyār al-Wāthiqī*; III, 51). He also used a collection of Ishāq’s own songs (XXIV, 218). Of ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim Abū l-Faraj quotes from a book (XV, 155) and a text in his own hand (II, 223). Yūnus al-Kātib’s “book” furnished him with many song texts (I, 186; II, 217; XII, 164; XIII, 336; XIV, 342). ‘Amr ibn Bāna’s collection of songs evidently existed in two versions, for although Abū l-Faraj refers to his *kitāb* (III, 322), he also mentions the first version (*nuskha*; I, 93), and the second (I, 93; I, 177). Ḥabash’s book was known to him (II, 33; III, 133; IX, 294; XV, 155) as were Abū Ḥashishā’s (XXIII, 78) and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī’s (I, 177; XVII, 66; XIX, 216; XXIV, 87).

Abū l-Faraj also drew on books which Ibn al-Nadīm did not record. In some cases he mentions the authors, as with the collection of songs of the Ṭāhirids compiled by ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh (XXI, 8), and the books of Aḥmad al-Makkī (VIII, 361; XIII, 121) and al-Hishāmī (III, 322; XIII, 336; XV, 155).

Otherwise he speaks simply of the *diwān* or *jāmiʿ* of the songs of Maʿbad (XVI, 199), Ḥakam al-Wādī (X, 111), Sulaym ibn Sallām (II, 33; XXIII, 178), Bunān (IX, 322) and Mukhāriq (XI, 280).²⁹ Either these collections were anonymous or their authors were too insignificant to be named. Or it may have been difficult to assign an independent author to them; ʿArib’s songs (XIX, 313; XXI, 36) were collected by Ibn al-Muʿtazz and Abū l-ʿUbayy independently of each other and then combined by Muḥammad ibn Qurayṣ³⁰ with the compositions of hers which he heard from her slave-girl Bidʿa (XXI, 55). Abū l-Faraj had this information directly from Muḥammad ibn Qurayṣ, but in other cases, where he had no contact with an authority, he may have hesitated to ascribe a song-book to a given collector.

Melodies of songs were preserved not only in books but by way of oral transmission (*riwāya*).³¹ Unlike texts, songs did not acquire a chain of authorities; the name of one authority was sufficient. So expressions such as “*min riwāyatay Ḥabashin wa-l-Hishāmī*” (on the authority of Habash and al-Hishāmī; XXIII, 354), “*min riwāyati Ibnī l-Muʿtazz*” (XXII, 174), “*min riwāyati ʿAlī bnī Yahyā*” (XXII, 285) are commonplace. But as with other information, songs were also handed down through a combination of oral and written transmission, as can be seen from indications of sources such as “*an al-Hishāmī wa-min nuskhati ʿAmrin al-thāniya*” (on al-Hishāmī’s authority and from ʿAmr’s second version; I, 177) or “*al-ghināʾu li-Yūnus ... min kitābihi wa-riwāyati l-Hishāmī*” (from Yūnus’s book and on al-Hishāmī’s authority; XIII, 336). Very occasionally an embryonic *isnād* may be encountered too, as with a setting which ʿAmr, in the second version of his book, ascribed to Ibn Zurr al-Ṭāʾifi, information also “transmitted by Danānir on Fulayḥ’s authority” (*Danānir ʿan Fulayḥ*; I, 184).

Abū l-Faraj enumerates what a song book should contain in an explanatory remark à propos of Ishāq al-Mawṣilī’s collection of Shajā’s songs: “he compiled the book of her songs, omitting all *akhbār* (*mujarrad*), mentioning the rhythmic and melodic mode of each song (*jannasahu*) and ascribing it (*nasabahu*) to its poet and composer” (V, 362).³² By no means all the sources were as thorough in providing information. Yūnus did not always mention the modes (I, 186; XII, 164; XIV, 342),³³ nor did Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī (I, 177; XIX, 216; XXIV, 87). In such places, when Abū l-Faraj records his source as mentioning a song but not its modes, and does not supplement his information from elsewhere, it is quite possible that the song was no longer in the repertoire, at least in the case of older songs transmitted in books. For a musician who heard the song would be able to determine in which modes it was composed.

Recent songs, by contrast, would have been familiar to music lovers. So when the pandore player Abū Ḥashisha, in his memoirs, simply gives the texts of some of his successes with the names of their poets and composers (XXIII, 79, 80), it may be assumed that Abū l-Faraj heard the pieces from Jaḥḥa, his source, who had witnessed some of Abū Ḥashisha’s performances (XXIII, 75). The absence of performance indications in the *Aghānī* here reflects both the state of a source which does not systematically mention modes of songs and the fact that the songs were well-known.

As some of Abū l-Faraj's comment prove, he was aware that older songs could disappear from the repertoire. "As for the second piece of poetry which I mentioned Ibn 'Ā'isha singing in the last *khavar*, I did not find any attribution³⁴ for it in his book, nor did I hear any setting of it. Perhaps it is something which escaped me, or it did not become famous and people forgot it" (II, 234). There are similar problems with settings associated with other singers of the Umayyad period: Ibn Surayj (II, 85); Ma'bad (IX, 35); Ṭuways (III, 39); Ibn Miṣjaḥ (IV, 322). Of one popular poem by Kuthayyir Abū l-Faraj lists the details of four settings and then adds: "It is said that Ibn Surayj, Ibn Muḥriz and Ibn Jāmi' composed melodies for it" (XII, 179).

But oblivion could come about for other reasons that the passage of time. 'Allūya composed his own *ramal* settings for the words of the three best *ramal* songs, "but he achieved nothing and his settings were dropped. Hardly anyone knows them" (IX, 62). In the case of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, "only a fragment of whose oeuvre is transmitted" (X, 149), Abū l-Faraj regards this as the just reward of a man who was so manifestly inferior to his rival Ishāq al-Mawṣilī. The most intriguing case of settings being lost concerns 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir's two songs with highly elaborate rhythmic cycles and tonal sequences, which Abū l-Faraj never heard performed, although he showed the descriptions of them to some prominent musicians and palace singing-girls (IX, 61). Presumably they were too difficult.

There is also a glimpse of a melody on its way to being lost – an obscure song in the *ramal* rhythm, ascribed by Ḥabash to 'Allūya, of which Abū l-Faraj could not find the melodic mode (XXII, 312).

In several places performance indications are promised and not given; "the setting for these lines will be mentioned" is a fairly common phrase, which sometimes turns out to be misleading (II, 302; VI, 12, 216; VII, 305; XI, 203). Some of these unkept promises may be interpreted as evidence of settings being lost by copyists. But the use of the form *yunsabu* or *yudhkaru* can be understood as reflecting Abū l-Faraj's intention to track down the information and give it after the *khavar* in which the song is referred to. In very many instances he subsequently notes the setting under a heading such as "The attribution of the songs in this *khavar*" (e.g. I, 264; II, 207). When he does not, it may simply be because he forgot that he had left something to be filled in, or because he found it more difficult than he anticipated to verify the information and put it off till later. Since the *Aghānī* is an unfinished text, he may have intended right up to the very end to go back and complete these passages.

What seems to have caused more disagreement than the indications of settings was their attribution to one or other composer. This is not surprising, if one bears in mind that so long as a song was in the repertoire its rhythmic and melodic modes could easily be determined in performance. Abū l-Faraj notes very many examples of alternative attributions. Sometimes he leaves the matter open, for instance with the song in a light-heavy rhythm, with the open *mathnā* string as a tonic using the ring finger fret, which Ishāq ascribed to Mālik and 'Amr ibn Bāna to Ibn Muḥriz (I, 184), or another song with the same rhythmic and melodic

modes ascribed by Aḥmad al-Makki to Ḥunayn al-Ḥirī, and by al-Hishāmī to Ibn Sarjis, who was nicknamed Carats (*Qarārī*; XVI, 77), or a much later song with a light-heavy rhythm by either Abū l-ʿUbays or al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr (XVI, 359).

He often expresses a simple preference for an attribution, as with a song said by al-Hishāmī to have been composed by Ibn Muḥriz and by ʿAmr ibn Bāna to be the work of al-Abjar, “and this is the correct attribution” (VII, 56). He dismisses al-Qāsim ibn Zanqūṭa as composer of a setting for lines by al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Aḥnaf, judging that it is properly attributed to Badhl (XVII, 66). The setting for Ḥassān ibn Thābit’s two lines on the grave of al-Ayham ibn Jabala ibn al-Ayham al-Ghassānī definitely belongs to ʿAzza al-Maylā’s oeuvre (*mimmā lā shakka fihi min ghināʾihā*), although some people mistakenly ascribe it to Ibn ʿĀʾisha (XVII, 161).

On occasion he motivates his choices. Style is one reason for preferring an attribution, although it does not always resolve the problem entirely. Thus a *ramal* setting of a poem by al-Walid ibn Yazid is ascribed to Ibn Surayj, but also to ʿUmar al-Wādī, and “it comes closer to his work” (*wa-huwa an yakūna lahu ashbah*; VII, 43). Abū l-Faraj is uncertain to whom to ascribe *ramal* settings of lines by ʿInān, al-Nāṭifi’s slave-girl, and al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb, but thinks they are “by Jaḥḥa or one of his fellows” (*li-Jaḥḥata aw ghayrihi min ṭabaqatih*; XXIII, 87, 108), a conclusion presumably connected with their style. The first-light-heavy setting of a poem by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt is attributed to both Ibn Miṣjaḥ and Ibn Muḥriz, and “resembles both their styles” (*wa-huwa mimmā yushbihu ghināʾahumā jamīʿan*), but despite this Abū l-Faraj plumps for Ibn Miṣjaḥ (XII, 182).³⁵ Affirmations such as the one quoted above about ʿAzza al-Maylā’s definitely being the author of the music for Ḥassān’s verses may also spring from an awareness of different musicians’ specific styles.³⁶

Likewise, incompatibility between a composition and a musician’s habitual manner can be grounds for refusing an attribution. Thus, Abū l-Faraj rejects al-Hishāmī’s statement that a setting of lines by Suḥaym the slave of the Banī l-Ḥaṣḥās was by Ishāq, for “it does not resemble his work” (*laysa yushbihu ṣanʿatah*; XXII, 310). Of several authorities’ ascription to Maʿbad of performance indications for lines by al-Aḥwaṣ, he observes: “These are indeed the indications for the performance of this song, but connoisseurs of music will not confirm that it is Maʿbad’s composition” (*wa-hiya ṭarīqatu hādhā l-ṣawti wa-ahlu l-ʿilmi bi-l-ghināʾi lā yuṣaḥḥihūnahā li-Maʿbad*; XXI, 110).

Another reason for accepting, or more often rejecting, an attribution is connected with a source’s accuracy. ʿAmr ibn Bāna wrongly declared Mālik to be the author of a setting in the first-light-heavy rhythm, whereas Mālik’s melody was first-heavy, according to al-Hishāmī, Danānir and others, and the first-light-heavy one was by Maʿbad, on Ishāq’s authority (XV, 312). Elsewhere ʿAmr was under the mistaken impression that Ibn Surayj had composed the setting for a couplet which in fact the Kufan *kātib* Muḥammad ibn al-Ashʿath had set to music (XV, 57). Al-Hishāmī’s statement that Ishāq set two lines by ʿUlayya bint al-Mahdī to music and performed them at Raqqa is equally false (X, 184), while his affirmation that two lines by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Yazīdī had a melody composed by Ishāq

does not tally either with Ishāq's style or with the information in the collection of his songs (XX, 257). Ḥabash is a source Abū l-Faraj is particularly wary of, attaching the phrase "he is one of those who purvey unverified information" (*wa-huwa mimman lā yuḥaṣṣalu qawluḥ*; e.g. X, 197; XVI, 199; XVII, 270) to a number of the attributions he put forward.

But Abū l-Faraj reserves his harshest criticisms for Ibn Khurdādhbih, whom he condemns, among other failings, not only for occasional mistakes but for a wrong-headed perception of the relationship between the caliphs and singing. As Abū l-Faraj puts it, not without humour: "he began with 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, [mentioning a setting he composed] and continued with a succession of caliphs, one after the other, so much so that he seemed to regard [composing songs] as part of the heritage of the caliphate and one of the mainstays of the office of leader of the Community, an inescapable [distinction], not to be renounced" (IX, 250). Ibn Khurdādhbih was not the only person to ascribe undistinguished compositions to the caliphs (IX, 250), but he seems to have carried his desire to illustrate the connection between the caliphs and singing to the greatest lengths, even attributing a setting by the famous singer Ma'bad to Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik in support of his view (XV, 137). Moreover his information was inaccurate, for "he relied neither on transmission from authorities nor on knowledge in what he said" (*lā ya'tamidu fihī 'alā riwāyatīn wa-lā dirāya*; VI, 173).

A particularly difficult problem was posed by the information derived from Yaḥyā al-Makkī. A brilliant composer and performer, Yaḥyā also compiled a book of songs, giving their attributions and *akhbār* about them. But despite its scope and fame, it was more or less rejected by transmitters (*ka-l-muṭṭaraḥi 'inda l-ruwāt*) because of the widespread confusion in what it reported. The book in which Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī had corrected many of his father's mistakes and verified the attribution of songs to their composers was to be preferred to it (VI, 175).³⁷ Nevertheless, the expression "one of Yaḥyā's false attributions" (*min manḥūli Yaḥyā*) still occurs fairly regularly in connection with song captions (e.g. I, 156; XVIII, 138; XXII, 8, 126, 226); perhaps Yaḥyā should be seen as the Ḥammād al-Rāwīya of Arabic music.

In determining the correct indications and authorship of songs, Abū l-Faraj was not only dependent on earlier sources. He could also draw on his experience as a listener and his connections with contemporary performers. Enumerating the settings of a poem by 'Alī ibn Jabala, he says: "There is a first-heavy setting, an excellent composition, which is attributed both to ['Arib] and to 'Allūya, but it resembles her style more closely" (XX, 13). Since no source is mentioned, this confident assertion must be based on Abū l-Faraj's direct knowledge. Of the setting of two lines from a famous poem by Majnūn, he says: "There is a *ramal* melody for these two lines, composed by 'Umayr al-Bādhaghisi's senior *cantatrice* ['ajūz], adapting Ishāq's tune. . . . This melody is still sung today, for it enjoys wider circulation [than Ishāq's]" (II, 69). For a poetical dialogue between Muḥammad ibn 'Isā al-Ja'fari and the singing-girl Baṣṣaṣ he mentions a setting which combined the first-heavy and light-heavy modes, but although he heard it sung by Muḥammad

ibn Ibrāhīm Qurayṣ, Dhukā' Wajh al-Ruzza and other skilled performers, he did not learn who composed it (V, 35). Al-Wāthiq's *ramal* setting of a couplet about a secret visit to the beloved was the well-known one, but Abū l-Faraj also heard Muḥammad Qurayṣ and Dhukā' sing it to a first-heavy tune whose composer they did not know, but which they had learned from Aḥmad ibn Abī l-'Alā' (IX, 290, 293). He tried to find out from Muḥammad Qurayṣ who was the author of a light-heavy melody for three lines by Abū Nuwās, but the singer could not help him (XX, 60); he was more successful with Jaḥḥa, when he asked him about the origin of a setting he sang of a poem by Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb, and Jaḥḥa could hazard a guess that Masdūd had composed it, although he had not verified this (XIX, 76).

As these examples show, close acquaintance with performers and extensive musical knowledge were not enough to enable Abū l-Faraj to solve all the problems connected with attributions, despite his commitment to accuracy and his energy in searching out information. The scholarly techniques developed for the study of *ḥadīth* and history were incapable of elucidating the difficulties involved in tracing a tradition which remained not only oral but also impossible to record thoroughly in writing.³⁸

The accounts of the origin of the 100 songs confronted Abū l-Faraj with a special problem. One version has Ishāq al-Mawṣilī recalling that his father Ibrāhīm was among the many singers invited by al-Rashīd to designate the three best songs in the whole repertoire. When this incident was mentioned in al-Wāthiq's presence, he ordered Ishāq to make a selection of the best songs. Ishāq complied, drawing not only on the old songs but also on those of more modern composers who followed in the footsteps of their predecessors (I, 7; the immediate authority is Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī al-Munajjim). Another version has al-Rashīd order the singers first to choose a hundred songs, then ten, and then three; only one of these three is identical with a song in the first version (I, 7–8; the immediate authority is Jaḥḥa al-Barmakī).

Abū l-Faraj prefers the first version, arguing from the quality of composition of the songs mentioned in it, the fine construction of both their instrumental preludes and postludes, and the ornamentation in them. He then makes a psychological point. If, he says, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, Ibn Jāmi' and Fulayḥ ibn al-'Awra' were the three musicians charged with making the selection (as Jaḥḥa's version apparently stated), it is inconceivable that the latter two would have agreed to Ibrāhīm including one of his own settings in the list of three, as Jaḥḥa gives it, for that would have been tantamount to admitting Ibrāhīm's superiority to them (I, 9). After quoting an anecdote in which Ibrāhīm rewards his son Ishāq for admitting that he judges Ibn Jāmi' to be a better singer, Abū l-Faraj concludes that if Ibrāhīm accorded Ibn Jāmi' such a high position despite the competition which raged between them, he would never have mentioned one of his own songs in the Top Three (I, 9–11).

Abū l-Faraj sidesteps the question of the authenticity of the lists of songs by treating both versions. This means, in practice, that he first deals with the five songs

which Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī and Jaḥḥa mention as having been chosen for al-Rashīd and then works through the two authorities’ lists of the hundred songs chosen by Ishāq for al-Wāthiq, *al-Ikhtiyār al-Wāthiqī*, as it is sometimes referred to.³⁹ It is noteworthy that there is no mention of al-Rashīd’s request for a selection of songs in the articles on any of the three singers mentioned by Jaḥḥa as having undertaken this task.

The compiler’s comments: appreciation of songs

From those who knew the songs it transmitted, this oral tradition could elicit an enthusiastic response. Ma‘bad’s setting of a five line poem by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi‘a in the first-light-heavy rhythm, with the open *mathnā* string as the tonic using the middle finger fret, was “one of the choicest (*mukhtār*) and most unusual (*nādir*) of his songs, a fine example of his style (*min ṣudūri ṣan‘atih*), superior to many of his compositions” (I, 282); since no source is given for the performance indications, it may be assumed that they and the subsequent comment are Abū l-Faraj’s. A setting by Abū ‘Ubays ibn Ḥamdūn in the second-heavy rhythm, with the open *mathnā* strong as tonic using the ring finger fret, is described in very similar terms: “it is one of the finest and choicest of his settings (*min ṣudūri aghānīhi wa-mukhtārihā*), in which he may be compared with the old masters. If anyone said it was the best song he ever composed they would not be wrong” (XIII, 310). Here, too, Abū l-Faraj mentions no source. Al-Zubayr ibn Ḍahmān’s melody for a poem whose author Abū l-Faraj did not know (*lam yaqa‘ ilaynā li-man hādḥā l-shi‘r*) was “an excellent example of his style and one of his finest songs” (*min jayyidi ṣan‘atīhi wa-ṣudūri aghānīh*; XIV, 215). “*Jayyid*”, “*mukhtār*” and similar expressions qualify many settings: a *ramal* melody by Mutayyam (VII, 280), and tunes by ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir (VIII, 267–8), Sā‘ib Khāthir (VIII, 279), Abū ‘Īsā ibn al-Rashīd (X, 193), ‘Allūya (XI, 337), ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabi‘i (XIX, 216), Kunayz (XXIV, 52) and ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī al-‘Alā’ (XXIV, 1). In this last case, Abū l-Faraj comments: “His compositions are few but excellent” (*lahu ṣan‘atun yasīratun jayyida*).

Abū l-Faraj permits himself unenthusiastic or even disparaging remarks very rarely.⁴⁰ Abū ‘Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil was an uneven composer, some of his setting being excellent, but others mediocre; Abū l-Faraj had heard many of them (X, 200). He regards the setting by Riyāḍ which Ishāq included in the Hundred Songs as unworthy of this distinction, explaining Ishāq’s apparent lack of discrimination by his desire to repay her master, Abū Ḥammād, for his generosity (VIII, 267). It is not the only case where Ishāq allowed personal considerations to influence his choice of songs.

The fact that Abū l-Faraj expresses appreciation so much more often than criticism may be explained in two ways. First, he was demanding in the songs he put into his book. He announces in the introduction to the section on composer-caliphs: “I shall mention only well-made compositions, up to the standard of excellent music and resembling the settings of the early masters, but not what is trivial and fault-ridden” (IX, 250). Unfortunately, there is no mention of criteria for the

choice of songs in the fragment of Abū l-Faraj's preface which has survived, nor is there any introduction to the third part of the book, after the composer-caliph's section, but if this remark reflects his approach throughout the book, then it is not surprising that he finds little to object to in the songs he quotes.⁴¹ Second, he disapproved of superfluous hostile comments, as the following reproach he addresses to Jaḥḥa shows: "The method Jaḥḥa (may God forgive him and us) followed in [his book on pandore players] was to slander all the members of his profession in the vilest way possible. He ought to have done the opposite, for anyone who, having joined a profession, mentions his predecessors in it, will be wise to transmit good reports, entertaining stories and pleasant things he has learned about them, rather than heaping founded and unfounded accusations on them" (VI, 63). As a rule, Abū l-Faraj heeded this advice himself, not only when speaking of past authorities on music, but also when portraying singers and poets.

The compiler's comments: contemporary singers and musical life

As is clear from some of the foregoing quotations, Abū l-Faraj acquired information not only from recognised authorities and transmitters, but from people who were performers in the first place. Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Qurayṣ al-Jarrāḥī⁴² and Dhukā' Wajh al-Ruzza⁴³ have already been mentioned in connection with enquiries about composers. Dhukā' was also a very gifted composer, Abū l-Faraj reckoning his setting of a three-line poem by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a as an excellent melody in a magnificent style, unequalled in any of his contemporaries' work (I, 168). Another prominent singer Abū l-Faraj heard was Ibrāhīm ibn al-Qāsim ibn Zurr (X, 43),⁴⁴ who performed before the caliph al-Muqtadir. Of Sulaymān ibn al-Qaṣṣār the acid-tongued Jaḥḥa told many anecdotes to illustrate his pauper's mentality, but Abū l-Faraj refuses to repeat them, "in particular because we met him and got to know him well, may God forgive him and us" (XIV, 113). But even Jaḥḥa admitted that he was a good composer (XIV, 112). Mentioning an excellent first-heavy setting by al-Dayzanī, nicknamed Nubayka, Abū l-Faraj adds; "This Nubayka was a highly skilled, outstanding singer, who had performed for al-Mu'tamid before he went to Egypt and sang for Khumārawayh ibn Aḥmad [ibn Ṭūlūn]. Later he came to Baghdad, during al-Muqtadir's reign, and we saw and heard him. He possessed a considerable fortune, thanks to the Ṭūlūnid's generosity, and so he was financially independent for the rest of his life" (II, 233).

Women singers were also knowledgeable about the musical tradition. The "singing-girls of the palaces" (*mughanniyāt al-quṣūr*) were the other group Abū l-Faraj approached, beside "prominent singers" (*al-mutaqaddimūn*), to try to discover how 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir's virtuoso compositions sounded (IX, 61). As transmitters of tradition, older women were particularly valuable, and Abū l-Faraj knew a number of them, including some who had learned songs from Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī (VI, 175). One he mentions by name is Qumriya al-'Amriya, 'Amr ibn Bāna's concubine; since 'Amr died six years

before Abū l-Faraj was born, she must have been elderly when he consulted her (VI, 175). Another Qumriya, al-Baktamūriya, furnished him with an anecdote about Ibn al-Qaṣṣār (XIV, 114).⁴⁵

These singers, and others not even alluded to in the *Aghānī*, must have provided some hidden links in the chain of transmission of melodies from the mid- and late-third/ninth century collections to Abū l-Faraj and his generation of music-lovers. Their ability to perform the songs meant that they played a part complementary to that of the authorities on singing and the information they transmitted, a part Abū l-Faraj recognises when he says, à propos of the songs with the most ambitious combination of melodic modes: “These ... are the melodies known to transmitters, found in reports from authorities, and familiar to singers” (*al-ma’rūfatu ‘inda l-ruwāṭi wa-ḥi rīwāyātī l-ruwāṭi wa-‘inda l-mughannīn*; IX, 59).

It is impossible to calculate how many hours Abū l-Faraj spent with musicians, listening to performances, checking indications of rhythmic and melodic modes and attributions to composers – and at the same time enjoying himself. But there is no doubt that he was permeated with the musical culture of his age. His references to the settings which “are famous” reflect his awareness of contemporary taste. For instance, Kunayz’s setting for Abū Najda’s couplet alluding to the battle of Dhū Qār “is a fine tune, famous in our time” (*mashhūrūn fī ‘aṣrinā hādhā*; XXIV, 52). Of the two settings of a poem by Muḥammad ibn Bashīr al-Khārījī, it is ‘Arib’s which “is sung today and passed on by people from one to another”.⁴⁶

He also indicates contemporary musical practice, contrasting it with that of the past, as for instance when he notes that in his day singers performed a setting of lines by al-A’shā, the meaning of which had been changed radically, “and I think that they were altered in this way in the Ṭāhirids’ palaces” (IX, 123). More generally, speaking of the state of singing in his time, he distinguishes two schools, going back to the rivals Ishāq al-Mawṣili and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, with their opposing attitudes to performance practice. The disciples of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī were in effect singing their own compositions, according to Abū l-Faraj, because they had learned the settings from a series of performers who had each altered them as they saw fit; among this group were the Banū Ḥamdūn, Ziriyāb al-Wāthiqīya and the pupils of Shāriya and Rayyiq. The second school, including ‘Arib’s and Badhl’s pupils and the singing-girls of the Barmakids and the Āl al-Rabī’, followed Ishāq al-Mawṣili in performing songs as they had learned them, and they had most likely preserved something of the old repertoire.⁴⁷ Abū l-Faraj’s general conclusion, most likely coloured by the deterioration in the standing of singing, as I have suggested,⁴⁸ is pessimistic: “Nonetheless, the whole tradition, including the authentic songs and those that have been changed, is now at an end” (X, 70).

Over against this gloomy evaluation of performance practice should be set the information Abū l-Faraj gives about a continuing development in composition, at least until the end of the third/ninth century. ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir outdid Ishāq by including in one composition all the ten melodic modes (*anghām*) (IX, 48); he also worked out a longer rhythmic setting for a song than anyone before

him had done (IX, 60). The caliph al-Mu‘taḍid made new settings for famous songs, measuring himself against the great composers of the past and not falling short of them; indeed Abū l-Faraj judged his melody for the poem describing the sand-grouse one of the best he had heard, even by comparison with Ibn Surayj’s and Ishāq’s (X, 41–2).

Profiles of singers

Abū l-Faraj introduces a number of the articles devoted to singers with short profiles giving basic information about the subject. Although this information may well be derived from the *akhbār*, it is expressed in Abū l-Faraj’s own words, and he mentions no source for it. From the fact that certain types of information often reappear in the profiles, it can be inferred that they belong to the essential data about a singer, in Abū l-Faraj’s eyes. At the same time, when they are considered together, these profile sketches help to build a composite picture of the singer in the first centuries of Arab civilisation. Although the data about singers which Abū l-Faraj includes is less rich and varied than the information he gives about poets in their profiles,⁴⁹ when read together these sketches can be regarded as the compiler’s oblique contribution to the history of Arabic music.⁵⁰

Some hundred singer-composers, a fifth of them women, have a profile sketch in the *Aghānī*. They vary greatly in length and elaboration,⁵¹ but the following traits can be discerned. As with other personalities, social origin is the first important topic. Among male singers the great majority of those whose origins are mentioned were *mawālī*, whose tribal affiliation is specified; another important group were members of the Umayyad, ‘Abbāsīd and other noble families, but Abū l-Faraj does not comment on their background as a rule. He points out, however, who the mothers of some ‘Abbāsīd princes were.⁵² Except in the earliest period,⁵³ female singers were slaves, although they sometimes received their freedom. Male singers often had nicknames which Abū l-Faraj explains, while giving the *ism* if the subject was usually known by his *laqab*.⁵⁴ Among the singers’ home towns, where they are mentioned, Mecca and Medina predominate, with Kufa,⁵⁵ al-Ḥīra and Baghdad also occurring for men and Basra for slave-girls. Where appropriate, a singer’s moving from the Hijaz to Iraq, not uncommon in the early ‘Abbāsīd period, is also noted.⁵⁶

Singers’ original occupations are seldom mentioned; when they are, they may be connected with selling, and thus crying certain wares.⁵⁷ Given the traditional identification of one of the oldest forms of Arabic music with the camel drivers’ songs (*ḥudā’*),⁵⁸ it is noteworthy that two of the early singers, Ḥunayn al-Ḥīrī and Ḥakam al-Wāḍī, hired out camels for transport (II, 341; VI, 280). From the later Umayyad period on members of the class of secretaries start to make their name as musicians; Yūnus al-Kātib (IV, 348) was the pioneer, to be followed by several sons of *kātib*s.⁵⁹

Since singing and musicianship depended on study for their development, information about teachers could be expected to occur regularly in the profiles. In fact it is only sporadically given for men, except those of slave origin. For the

latter, as for singing slave-girls, teachers are almost always named, together with the successive owners who supervised and sometimes took part in their training. A trained singer could in turn himself become a teacher, and Abū l-Faraj identifies a handful of those who transmitted the musical tradition to later generations.⁶⁰ The rivalry between the partisans of Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī and those of Ibrāhīm al-Mahdi, referred to above, partly reflects the loyalties of pupils to their teachers.

Apart from relationships to teachers or pupils, indications of a singer's contemporaries served to situate him in the history of music. The Meccan singer 'Abādīl belonged to the same generation (*ṭabaqa*) as Yūnus al-Kātib, Siyāt and Daḥmān (VI, 96); 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān was a contemporary of Ibn Jāmi' (XX, 357). The term *ṭabaqa* in the sense of a generation of singers is also employed in indications of who a singer studied with; 'Abdallāh ibn Abī al-'Alā' from Samarra learned the art of music from Iṣḥāq and his *ṭabaqa* (XXIV, 1).⁶¹

The main focus of attention in singers' profiles is, not surprisingly, their achievement as musicians. The description of Abū Ṣadaqa as "a pleasant musician with a good voice and a wide repertoire, the author of sound compositions" (*maṭīḥu l-ghinā'i ṭayyibu l-ṣawti kathīru l-riwāyati ṣāliḥu l-ṣan'a*; XIX, 286) refers to all the main areas of a singer's skill except playing an instrument. But all-round musicianship is not often mentioned; a rare case is that of 'Allūya, described as *mughannī ḥādhiq* (XI, 333).⁶² Most often it is the individual traits which Abū l-Faraj notes.

Certain singers were known for their good voice; Yazid Ḥawrā', whose voice was beautiful (*ḥasan*; III, 251), Muḥammad al-Zaff, who produced a pleasing sound (*ṭayyib al-masmū'*; XIV, 187) and 'Umar al-Wādī, whose voice moved his hearers (*shajī muṭrib*; VII, 85) belong to this category. Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza ibn Nuṣayr was also renowned for his voice, except when he performed pieces with fast rhythms where he went out of tune (XV, 356). By contrast, Ma'bad al-Yaḥṭinī had a disagreeable voice, "as it is said" (*fīmā dhukira*; XIV, 116); perhaps Abū l-Faraj, with this qualification, is expressing his doubts about whether any singer with a poor voice could gain entry to court circles, as Ma'bad did, and thus about the accuracy of this information.

Most singers accompanied themselves on an instrument, generally the lute. Siyāt was an excellent player, as were 'Allūya and Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makki (VI, 152; XI, 333; XVI, 311). Among those who preferred the pandore (*tunbūr*) were Aḥmad ibn Usāma al-Hamdānī, known as al-Naṣbī, and the excellent Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa (VI, 63; XXII, 212). Al-Walid ibn Yazid was a many-sided instrumentalist, playing not only the lute but also the drum (*ṭabl*), or walking about accompanying himself on the tambourine as he sang, in the Hijazi fashion (*wa-yamshī bi-l-duffī 'alā madhhabī ahlī l-Hijāz*; IX, 274). Not playing an instrument, in particular the lute, could detract from a musician's skill in composition, as is clear from Abū l-Faraj's comment about 'Amr ibn Bāna: "What held him back from attaining the standard of outstanding composers was that he did not accompany himself when he sang (*kāna murtajīlan*)".⁶³ Abū l-Faraj does explain a singer's aversion to accompanying himself in one case, but it has no general validity; Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith

ibn Buskhunnar abandoned the *mi'zāfa* (perhaps zither)⁶⁴ he was wont to play when some bystanders mistook it for a rat-trap, and from then on he sang unaccompanied (XII, 48).

Composition was an important part of the musician's activity. Here both quantity and quality counted. A limited oeuvre (*ṣan'a yasīra* or *qalīla*) could mean one or two compositions (of the very obscure 'Azzūr al-Kūfī or of Ibn Ṣāhib al-Wuḍū'; III, 50; III, 133) or around twenty (of Qalam al-Ṣālihiya; XIII, 348). But to have few compositions to one's name did not necessarily mean one was not gifted; 'Abdallāh ibn Abī l-'Alā's oeuvre is qualified as "limited but excellent" (*yasīra jayyida*; XXIV, 1). Prolific composers included Yazid Ḥawrā' (III, 251), Abū 'Isā ibn al-Mutawakkil (X, 201) and 'Arib (XXI, 56). Almost inevitably a vast oeuvre, such as that of Abū 'Isā (300 songs) or 'Arib (1000 songs), was uneven, and Abū l-Faraj defends 'Arib from her critics by pointing out that nearly all the great composers made mediocre settings as well as rare and excellent ones (XXI, 56–7). A number of terms are used to designate aspects of the composer's skill; 'Allūya was versatile (*mutafannin*; XI, 333), Aḥmad al-Makkī made firm (*muḥkam*; XVI, 311) settings, and Ibn 'Abbād, 'Umar al-Wādi, 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir and al-Mu'taḍid all affected a precise (*mutqan*) style of composition (VI, 171; VII, 85; IX, 40; IX, 344). Such achievements were sometimes connected with extensive theoretical and practical knowledge (*al-ma'rifa bi-l-naḡham wa-l-awṭār/al-watar*),⁶⁵ for instance, in the case of 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir and 'Arib, and also of Ibn al-Mu'tazz (X, 40; XXI, 54; X, 274).

Knowledge of the repertoire was a significant asset. Siyāṭ was a leading transmitter (VI, 152), 'Amr ibn Bāna was outstanding (XV, 267), and Riyāḍ, Badhl and Danānir had learned many songs (VIII, 276; XVII, 75; XVIII, 65). Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith and Muḥammad al-Zaff were both famed for their speed in picking up songs they heard and their accuracy in performing them (XII, 48; XIV, 187). Not suprisingly, connoisseurs of the repertoire compiled books; among them Abū l-Faraj mentions Badhl, whose collection included 12,000 songs attributed to their composers but without performance indications (*mansūb al-aṣwāt ḡayr mujannas*; XVII, 75), her pupil Danānir, 'Amr ibn Bāna (XV, 267) and Aḥmad al-Makkī, whose collection was second only to that of Ishāq (XVI, 311).

Apart from noting their individual qualities, Abū l-Faraj points out the contribution certain singers made to the development of Arabic music. Thus, he credits Ṭuways with the introduction of the "light" *hazaj* and *ramal* rhythms (IV, 219), 'Azza al-Maylā' with being the first women to perform songs using the rhythmic modes (XVII, 162), Aḥmad al-Naṣbī with being the initiator of the type of song known as *naṣb* (hence his name),⁶⁶ and Ibn Miṣjaḥ with integrating into Arabic music elements of the Greek and Persian traditions.⁶⁷ He also indicates Yūnus al-Kātib's importance as the first to have collected and recorded songs (IV, 398), his book still being an indispensable reference in Abū l-Faraj's time. Even if these musicians were not alone in the innovations ascribed to them, their names symbolise stages in the evolution of Arabic music as Abū l-Faraj understood it, and in this perspective the information about them is valuable.⁶⁸

Unlike their artistic achievements, Abū l-Faraj only sporadically mentions musicians' other traits. The good looks of male singers are occasionally referred to, tending to be linked to their general appearance as "well turned-out" (*naẓīf al-thiyāb*: VI, 96; VIII, 268). Indications of female singers' beauty are frequent for the 'Abbāsīd period. For both men and women, the possession of refinement (*ẓarf*) and other qualities prized in polite society, such as the ability to tell entertaining stories (*nawādir*) and to compose poetry, may be noted. Abū l-Faraj is particularly sensitive to the intellectual achievements of the outstanding representatives of 'Abbāsīd court culture. For example, he writes of 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir: "He occupies a position in cultural life which can hardly be described and has been much spoken of. For he possessed all kinds of accomplishments, being well-versed in poetry, which he also composed, an expert on the Arabic language and early Arab history (*ayyām al-nās*), and familiar with the writings of the old Greek philosophers (*al-awā'il min al-falāsifa*) on music theory, geometry and other subjects" (IX, 40).⁶⁹

The musician's relations with his public are treated from different points of view. Sometimes it is his attachment to a patron which is mentioned or conversely the absence of any such connection. In the latter case the result was often obscurity, as with Muḥammad Na'ja al-Kūfī, "a singer of no great renown, who did not serve the caliphs and about whom nothing is known" (VII, 228).⁷⁰ A singer could also lose his patron's favour, as happened with Baḥr ibn al-'Alā', whom al-Rashīd summoned from the Hijaz and then took a dislike to (XXI, 252).⁷¹

The profiles also quote poetry composed on singers, though whether the lines always reflect a general attitude to them or merely the poet's personal response cannot be judged. Usually the singer is praised for his musicianship and other attractive qualities,⁷² but sometimes a critical note creeps in, as when a poet hurt by 'Amr ibn Bāna's haughty greeting alludes to his skin disorder (XV, 269).

There is one indication that success before the caliph was not necessarily the peak of a singer's career. Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa was summoned from Syria by al-Mutawakkil to perform before him, for which he was generously rewarded. He then became much sought after in polite society and earned far more than he had received from the caliph (XXII, 212).

That professional musicians might have had other roles in society⁷³ is only mentioned for the Umayyad and earliest 'Abbāsīd period. Abū Sa'īd the *mawla* of Fā'id was accepted as a witness in court (*mu'addal*) and had a reputation for asceticism and virtuous living, in addition to being a singer (IV, 330). Al-Burdān, too, testified in court, as well as having charge of the market in Medina (VIII, 277).⁷⁴ Budayḥ transmitted *ḥadīth* from 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far, whose *mawla* he was (XV, 174). These sparse indications strongly suggest that in the first century and a half of Islam singing was not yet regarded as incompatible with pious behaviour.⁷⁵

Exceptionally the profiles contain a cautionary tale, thus fulfilling the didactic function of *adab*. The fates of Sulaym ibn Sallām and 'Allūya have a general significance which justifies their being quoted here. Sulaym, who was famed for his meanness, left a large fortune, only for it to be confiscated by the state (VI, 164).

‘Allūya’s doctor prescribed him a laxative and ointment for his scabies, but he anointed the affected parts with the laxative and swallowed the ointment, a treatment which proved fatal (XI, 333).

When read together, the profiles convey some important features of the evolution of music in the early Islamic period. They indicate the role of the *mawālī* and of singing-girls, the growing participation of *kuttāb* and their offspring, and the involvement of princes⁷⁶ and aristocrats. They chronicle innovations in music and the establishment of a tradition of recording songs and their performance indications in writing. They reflect the controversy between Ishāq al-Mawṣili and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī over performance and its echoes among later generations of singers. And the qualities of the accomplished musician can be determined thanks to them. Lest it be thought that this composite picture is the result of chance, rather than expressing Abū l-Faraj’s understanding of the history and practice of music in his society, I conclude this section with a translation of his profile of ‘Arib, the greatest *diva* of the ‘Abbāsīd period. The passage also illustrates his capacity to organise an argument, using *akhbār* to support his points.

‘Arib was a fine musician and a good poet. She had a pleasing hand and literary style. In addition she was extremely beautiful, accomplished and refined, and endowed with an attractive figure. She was an excellent lutenist, a very skilled composer, and an expert on tunes and melodic modes. She also had a vast knowledge of poetry and the different branches of culture. None of her fellow musicians came close to her, and no woman like her was ever seen, except for the Hijazi singers of old, Jamila, ‘Azza al-Maylā’, Sallāma al-Zarqā’ and others of their kind – and there were few enough of them. But they lacked some of the qualities of hers which we have described, such as are proper to the caliphs’ slave girls and those who have grown up in the royal palaces, nurtured in refined surroundings worlds apart from the Hijaz where the early singers were reared among the common people, uncouth Arabs and oafs. Her gifts have been acknowledged by authorities whose testimony is enough.

(XXI, 54)

[There follow two *akhbār* illustrating ‘Arib’s talents and three more on the vast number of songs she composed. In the last anecdote Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Hishāmī⁷⁷ deprecates her achievement, saying that her songs all sound alike. Abū l-Faraj takes up her defence.]

This attack springs from an inadmissible prejudice. It is quite true that her oeuvre contains poor and feeble compositions, but that is not enough to condemn her. Hardly anyone among the singers of any period has failed to produce both exceptional and undistinguished settings, except for a handful of masters, such as Ibn Muḥriz and Ma‘bad among the Ancients and Ishāq alone among the Moderns.

Ibn Surayj, despite the position he enjoyed, was the target of a similar attack. He heard that other singers were saying of him: ‘Ibn Surayj just sings songs in *ramal* and other light rhythms, suitable for weddings and festive meals.’ Thereupon he composed his setting of:

For Nu‘m’s sake we’ve come to love the country
between al-Watā’ir and al-Naq‘,
for it lies on the way to her.⁷⁸

Yet later, when he died, his songs were still being treated as flawed.

Another example is Ishāq, who said of his father – and this despite Ibrāhīm’s tremendous achievements in the art of composition and Ishāq’s extolling his reputation and preferring him to Ibn Jāmi‘ and others: ‘My father composed six hundred melodies. He imitated the Old Masters in two hundred of them and produced superlative works. Another two hundred were average, like other people’s settings. And the last two hundred were bad; I wish he had not performed them in public and admitted he was the composer, so that I could ignore them for the sake of his reputation.’⁷⁹

If this is what Ishāq said about his father, then who else needs to apologise for making both good and bad settings? No-one who engages in any craft is exempt from some failing which prevents him completely achieving his goal. God alone is without fault, and imperfection belongs to the nature man was given at his creation. If shortcomings are to be found in some of ‘Arib’s songs, that is not a reason to condemn them all and label them flawed and feeble. Her defenders need only quote Ishāq’s declaration that she was excellent, bearing in mind that he very seldom commended anyone or spared him his disparagement and criticism, even when the person in question was outstanding and his merits generally recognised, because he himself was a jealous guardian of the art of music and despised its practitioners. Enough has been said in the accounts of his contacts with ‘Allūya, Mukhāriq, ‘Amr ibn Bāna, Sulaym ibn Sallām, Ḥusayn ibn Muḥriz, their predecessors and those who surpassed them, such as Ibn Jāmi‘ and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi, his castigation of them all and his drawing their attention⁸⁰ to their faults in composition and performance, to render repetition here unnecessary. If Ishāq’s behaviour towards them is taken into consideration together with his attributing such merits to ‘Arib, that is the most conclusive proof of her critic’s bias and the best refutation of what he has said about her. The person who expressed this opinion, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Hishāmī, had a good reason for feeling hostile towards her,⁸¹ which led him to say what he did. We shall mention that later, God willing.

Another indication that this accusation is baseless is that al-Ma‘mūn, when he wanted to test Ishāq’s knowledge of music, both ancient and modern, used one of her songs. And it came close to tricking him, except that he reflected a long time, turned the question over in his mind and finally determined who the composer was, thanks to his knowledge of the different styles of composition and his mastery in matters of melodic modes and their variations and rhythmic modes and their cycles (XXI, 56–7).

ABŪ L-FARAJ ON POETRY AND POETS

Poetry is met with in the *Kitāb al-aghānī* in three contexts. First, it forms the lyrics of the Top Hundred and the other songs round which the book is constructed. Second, it is embedded in narratives. And third, it is quoted independently. It may thus have passed through the hands of composers and transmitters (*ruwāt*) before making its way into the *Aghānī*. Abū l-Faraj's comments take account both of the different contexts in which poetry occurs and of the role of those who ensured that it appears as it does in his book.

Poetry for songs: composers' raw material

Musicians regarded poetry as a quarry from which to extract lyrics, and they were prepared to change words, rearrange lines and combine the verses of different poets to create the text they wanted for their setting. Abū l-Faraj indicates a number of examples of this unusual and often disrespectful reception of Arabic poetry. His concern for it is an expression of his philological interests, of which more evidence will be given below.

Among possible changes of wording, a rhyme might be modified. Four lines of a poem by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a rhyming in *-rā* were given a rhyme in *-rak* when they were sung:

La-qad arsaltu jāriyati wa-qultu lahā khudhī ḥadharā/ḥadharak

(I'd sent my slave-girl and told her 'Be on your guard'; *Agh.* I, 92).¹ Lines of this poem were set to music by different composers, and Abū l-Faraj does not specify who made the change, ascribing it merely to "the singers" (*al-mughannin*).² Nor does he give a reason for it, although since the meaning is virtually identical, they may have been aiming at euphony.

A word might be altered, as in the lines by A'shā Banī Taghlib,

*Rab'un li-qāniṣati l-gharāniqi mā bilhi
ghayru l-wuḥūshi khalat lahu wa-khalā lahā*

(a spring encampment where once the huntress of a tender youth lived, now given over to wild creatures whose only abode it is) which in a setting by 'Abdallāh ibn

al-‘Abbās became: “*dārun li-qātilati l-gharāniqi mā bihā...*” (an encampment where once the slayer of a tender youth ...). Here again Abū l-Faraj does not give a motive for the change, but he points out that “*rab’un*” is the correct version, because it agrees grammatically with “*khalā*” at the end of the line (XI, 280).³

The altered word might be a name, as in the following poem by ‘Umar ibn Abi Rabi’a:

*Qālat Su‘aydatu wa-l-dumū‘u dhawārifun
minhā ‘alā l-khaddayni wa-l-jilbābi*

(Su‘ayda said, as the tears poured down on her cheeks and her shift ...), where Abū l-Faraj notes that the singers renamed Su‘ayda Sukayna (XVII, 159).⁴ Su‘ayda is Sa’dā bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, about whom ‘Umar ibn Abi Rabi’a is said to have composed this poem when she rebuked him for his unseemly behaviour at the Ka’ba. The Sukayna *par excellence* is understood to be the daughter of al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Ali. This change is thus less innocent than the ones previously discussed, as an (possibly apocryphal) anecdote involving Ishāq and Hārūn al-Rashīd which is quoted immediately afterwards shows. Ishāq one day thoughtlessly sang the song before the caliph, who fell into a rage and cursed both poet and composer for speaking lightly of a woman who was the Prophet’s granddaughter and his own relative (XVII, 159–60).

The singer might make the change with an eye to a reward. When al-Mu‘tazz acceded to the caliphate at the age of seventeen, at the end of the ceremony of allegiance he is said to have recited the following line:

*Tawahḥhadanī l-Raḥmānu bi-l-‘izzī wa-l-‘ulā
fa-aṣḥaḥtu fawqa l-‘ālīmīna amīrā*

(Merciful God has bestowed on me sole power and rank, giving me command over the universe). This line found its way into the collection of Bunān’s songs with a different rhyming vowel and a change of persons:

*Tawahḥhadaka l-Raḥmānu bi-l-‘izzī wa-l-‘ulā
fa-anta ‘alā kulli l-anāmi amīrū*

(Merciful God has bestowed on you sole power and rank, giving you command over all mankind), and Abū l-Faraj believes that Bunān altered the text and added another line (IX, 322). By implication, he could have expected a reward from the caliph for so apposite a couplet.⁵

A singer might also make a change for the sake of his own publicity. Thus, al-Gharīḍ took ‘Umar ibn Abi Rabi’a’s line

*Hāja l-qarīḍa l-dhikarū lammā ghadau fa-nshamarū*⁶

(Memories moved me to make poetry when [the tribe] set off in the morning, ready to travel) and replaced “*al-qarīḍa*” with his own name, giving the resulting

sense “Memories moved al-Gharīḍ when...”. Here again, it is Abū l-Faraj who points out the modification of the text (II, 394–5).

The most interesting example of musicians manipulating wording to which Abū l-Faraj draws the reader’s attention comes in Ibn ‘Ā’isha’s article, when he sings a song drawn from a poem by Umayya ibn Abī ‘Ā’idh al-Hudhālī. In the original poem, a *qaṣīda* of 84 lines,⁷ one extended passage describes a herd of wild asses, the mares of which are killed by a hunter while the stallion escapes. Earlier on, at the beginning of the *raḥīl*, the poet devotes a few verses to his camel. Ibn ‘Ā’isha combines lines from these two sections, but in order to give them a certain coherence, he has to alter one of the verbs from masculine (referring to the wild ass stallion) to feminine (the camel). The resulting lyrics run:

tamurru ka-jandalati l-manjani
-qi yurmā bihā l-sūru yawma l-qitālī
fā-mādhā tukhaṭṭifu min qullatin
wa min hadabin wa-ikāmin ṭuwālī
wa-min sayrihā l-‘anaqu l-musbatir
-ru wa-l-‘ajrafīyatu ba‘da l-kalālī

(It flies along like a rock aimed by a mangonel at a wall in the fray.

What peaks, rising ground and hills it gallops over!

Sometimes its gait is a long swift stride, at other times the clumsy trot
 which a thorough-bred camel keeps up even when tired).

(II, 219)

Ibn ‘Ā’isha’s song corresponds to Umayya ibn Abī ‘Ā’idh’s lines 67, 68 and 21. As Abū l-Faraj observes, the original text has “*yamurru*”, because the poet is speaking of the wild ass at this point. He adds that the only description of a camel is the line “*wa-min sayrihā...*”, but the musicians combined it with something of the wild ass’s attributes (II, 220). He then quotes sections of the *qaṣīda* which depict the camel (lines 17–22) and the ass stallion (lines 33,⁸ 65–8). It may be questioned whether the comparison with a rock shot from a mangonel is as appropriate to a camel as it is to a greyish-yellow wild ass fleeing from the hunter who has just shot the mares it was leading. But in a song, where the melody drew inspiration from the lyrics but then developed independently,⁹ such considerations evidently did not weigh heavily.

As this example shows, musicians did not only alter wording. For settings they used a very small number of lines, four being usually the maximum, and so they were bound to make a selection from all but the shortest poems. In the case of one poem by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi’a,¹⁰ Abū l-Faraj gives a song consisting of lines 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 with its setting, and then another made up of lines 16, 17 and 18, after which he points out that the lines of both songs belong together (I, 176–7). This tendency to split up poems could occur in different stages. A propos of the song by Nuṣayb¹¹ which belongs in the Top Three, Abū l-Faraj quotes the lines and their setting and then gives two more lines from the same poem with performance indications, adding: “I think that ... both settings made up one melody [originally],

but it was divided up because the tune was so difficult and there was so much ornamentation in it" (I, 323).

Composers also reshuffled the lines of poems or took one or two lines from different sections of them. Abū l-Faraj comments on this once or twice. 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a's poem¹² beginning

*A-min āli Nu'min anta ghādin fa-mubkirū
ghadāta ghādin aw rā'ihun fa-muhajjirū,*
(Is it near Nu'm's folk that you come and go before the sun is up,
or in the noonday heat?)

provided eight lines of lyrics for composers and Abū l-Faraj gives them, adding "These lines have been given together although they are not in consecutive order, because only the lines set to music have been mentioned" (I, 80). They correspond to lines 1, 2, 10, 12, 14, 15, 19 and 44 of the poem. As the performance indications show, the settings were of two lines at a time, first and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth.

Another example of the same approach by musicians concerns the poem describing a sand-grouse,

*ammā l-qaṭātu fa-innī sawfa an'atuhā
na'tan yuwāfiqu ba'da mā fihā*
(The sandgrouse is what I'll now describe,
my picture somewhat tallying with its features.)

attributed among others to Aws ibn Ghalfā' al-Hujaymī, Muzāḥim al-'Uqaylī, and 'Amr ibn 'Uqayl al-Hujaymī.¹³ The poem proved very attractive to composers, but they set the verses in different sequences, as Abū l-Faraj notes. He gives seven lines, followed by the performance indications and first words of the lines they apply to.¹⁴ Thus, Nashīṭ was the author of a setting of lines 1, 2 and 5; Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī and Ibn Jāmi' both made settings of lines 3 and 1, 'Umar al-Wādī sang line 1 by itself, Siyāṭ used lines 1, 2 and 4 for a song and 'Allūya set lines 1 and 2 (VIII, 258–9).¹⁵

Abū l-Faraj draws attention to this common practice of musicians surprisingly seldom. Generally he allows the reader to infer it by giving the more or less complete text of poems of which he has already mentioned the few lines set to music. Often these lines are not consecutive, and they may even be far apart, as in Umayya ibn Abī 'Ā'idh's poem discussed above.

With their attitude to poetry as essentially raw material for songs, musicians did not stop at the rearrangement of lines of poems in their lyrics. They also combined lines from different poems, often by different poets. Concerned as he is to attribute his material correctly, Abū l-Faraj pays most attention to this last case of lyrics made up from more than one poet's work.¹⁶ 'Arib added an extra line to a couplet by 'Adī ibn Zayd (II, 153),¹⁷ three lines to a couplet by Yazīd ibn

al-Ṭathrīya (VIII, 184)¹⁸ and an anonymous line to one by Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhālī (XXIV, 124)¹⁹ when she set them to music. A line of panegyric by Ṭurayḥ was juxtaposed with another by Ibn Harma in a happy combination; here Abū l-Faraj identifies both poems and recounts the occasions on which they were recited, but he leaves open whether the combination was the work of a singer or of one of the two poets stealing a line from the other (VI, 100–2).²⁰ Maʿbad not only made a setting for three lines of a poem by Qays ibn Dhariḥ, he also composed a melody for a text which added two lines possibly by Jarīr to the third line of the poem by Qays (IX, 178–9).²¹

In principle, the poems providing the lines of a composite song should be consistent with each other, be in the same style and have the same rhyme, but this ideal was not always achieved. One of the songs Ibn ʿĀʾisha performed was made up of a line by the pre-Islamic Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā and a line, very different in tone, by an anonymous *muhḍath* poet which the singers tacked on to it (II, 209).²² But as the narrative preceding the song shows, this did not disturb Ibn ʿĀʾisha's audience, who were spell-bound by it.

Abū l-Faraj calls into question a setting of two lines by the Umayyad poet al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd, observing that only the first line is by al-Ḥārith and the second has been added to it. He thus supports the opinion of al-Hishāmī, one of his sources here, that the original song consisted only of the first line, al-Ḥārith's, and that the second line was added by ʿUlayya bint al-Mahdī when she composed another melody for it. The poem from which the first line comes expresses the dignified response of a Meccan aristocrat refused audience with the caliph,²³ whereas the second line speaks of a lover's entreaties and is, moreover, "feeble (*daʿīf*), resembling her poetry" (III, 319).²⁴ Abū l-Faraj also points to an inconsistency in one of the Top Hundred, where Bābuwayh al-Kūfī sandwiched an anonymous line between two of ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa's, but without paying proper attention to the sense. Line two runs: "If anyone has ever been close to a beloved and love, I am far distant from them", to be followed by "We were fated to love each other, so we met, and both of us were longing for that meeting". As the compiler says, the situation line two describes does not fit the one in line three (*wa-laysa huwa ayḍan mushākīlan li-ḥikāyati mā fī l-bayti l-thālith*) (IV, 213).²⁵

Perhaps most surprisingly, singers occasionally failed to keep a consistent rhyme and metre in songs whose lyrics were combined from different poems. A poet of the time of the Prophet, al-Ḥārith ibn al-Ṭufayl al-Dawsī, composed a *qaṣīda* on a conflict between his tribe and the Banū l-Ḥārith, which begins: "*Yā dāru min Māwiya bi-l-sahbi buniyat ʿalā khaṭbin mina l-khaṭbi*" (Abode of Māwiya at Sahb, set up despite a calamity worse than any other ...). The setting which Ibn Surayj made of lines from it ends:

Jānika man yajni ʿalayka wa-qad tuʿdi l-siḥāḥa mabāriku l-jarabi
(He who deserves punishment at your hands is the man who brings
injury upon you. But sound camels may become infected when they lie
in resting places tainted with mange).

Abū l-Faraj observes: “This line belongs to the song with Ibn Surayj’s melody, but it is not part of this poem, nor is it mentioned in [Abū ‘Amr’s] account. But we have attached it to this *qaṣīda* because it is part of the song, as singers add lines of poetry to each other even when they are not by the same person and the rhyming letter and vowels are different” (XIII, 225).²⁶

Transmitters’ attributions of poetry

The arbitrary treatment which musicians meted out to poetry represents an exceptional kind of reception. Where transmitters (*ruwāt*) of narratives or collections of poetry are concerned, Abū l-Faraj does not draw the reader’s attention to altered wording, rearranged lines, or pieces put together from different poems. But correct attribution, an important philological issue, remained a problem on which he comments quite often.

Occasionally the same lines are ascribed to two different poets and Abū l-Faraj simply records the fact. One short piece on a lover’s torments was said by al-Šūlī to be by al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf, whereas according to Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Jarrāḥ it was by Bakr ibn Khārīja. Abū l-Faraj quotes the five-line poem with the two possible attributions in Bakr’s article (XXIII, 192). The poem also occurs in al-‘Abbās’s article as the lyrics for a setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, but without any mention of Bakr as a possible author (VIII, 362–3).²⁷ Another case concerns an anecdote in which Khālīd al-Kātib, having been entertained by Abū l-Faraj’s uncle, recites him poetry, first by Abū Tammām and then by himself. “And these lines too are attributed to Abū Tammām” (XX, 285).²⁸

As a rule, though, Abū l-Faraj has his own opinion about whom a poem should be ascribed to. He raps al-Šūlī over the knuckles for attributing to Yaḥyā ibn Marwān²⁹ a short poem addressed by Marwān al-Aṣghar ibn Abī l-Janūb to al-Muntaṣir: “*Hādḥā ghalatun qabīḥ*” (This is a horrible blunder) (XII, 79). Some of the common herd (*min al-nās*) ascribed to ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī’a lines from the *nasīb* of Yazīd ibn al-Ḥakam’s *qaṣīda* addressed to Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, and that, too, is a mistake (XII, 288). Indeed opinions held by *al-nās* often turn out to be wrong. Some of them thought that a couplet composed by a love-sick anonymous bedouin asking God to take vengeance on his beloved were by Kuthayyir, and they even claimed to know which poem of his it came from (V, 359 = IX, 280).³⁰ They ascribed to ‘Urwa ibn Hīzām another couplet expressing a lover’s hesitation about breaking with his beloved, whereas in fact it was by the obscure ‘Alī ibn ‘Amr al-Anṣārī, a poet belonging to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī’s circle (XIV, 214).

This last instance is unusual because it involves two poets who worked in different periods; ‘Urwa is dated to the first/seventh century, while ‘Alī ibn ‘Amr must have lived in the early third/ninth century.³¹ Most of the time the ignorant general public confused poets of the same period. And, as the preceding examples show, they tended to ascribe lines by less prominent poets to their more famous fellows. ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī’a, for instance, was commonly designated as the author

of three lines of a *nasīb* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān ibn Thābit (I, 275)³² and three lines of *ghazal* by Khālīd al-Qasrī (XXI, 404). In this second instance Abū l-Faraj quotes a report supporting the attribution to Khālīd. A short love poem by Ja‘far ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām was attributed to ‘Umar too, though others among *al-nās* thought it was by al-‘Arjī or al-Aḥwaṣ (XV, 9).³³ A poem by the mid-second/eighth century Hijazi poet Ṣakhr ibn al-Ja‘d lamenting separation from his beloved was ascribed to the somewhat earlier Jamīl by some (XXII, 30). And the general public thought that a line in which al-Namir ibn Tawlab, a contemporary of the Prophet, proclaimed his passion for Da‘d must be by Nuṣayb, who was two generations younger (XXII, 278).³⁴

Sometimes the common herd were misguided enough to assume that the composer of the melody of a song was also the author of the lyrics. ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdī made a melody for part of a poem by Ibn Ruhayma, using it covertly to express her feelings for one of her servants, and the ignorant imagined that she was the author of the lines too (IV, 402–3).

Although in these examples involving both named scholars and *al-nās* Abū l-Faraj does not give any reason for preferring one attribution, in others he sets out his justification. He refers to two criteria, sources and style. As far as sources are concerned, it is most often collections of poetry or other written texts on which he relies in such cases. Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Jarrāḥ ascribed a poem praising a certain Ja‘far to Salama ibn ‘Ayyāsh, but Abū l-Faraj found it in the *diwān* of Ibn al-Mawlā, another poet of the same period, and thought that the latter was the author (XX, 295). In a complicated case, a composer had drawn on poems by two poets, al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr and Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya, for the lyrics of a song. Moreover al-Nu‘mān’s lines were attributed by unreliable authorities to Nawfal ibn Asad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā. Abū l-Faraj affirms al-Nu‘mān’s authorship of these lines, giving as authorities for his view one of Abū ‘Amr al-Shaybānī’s books and Khālīd ibn Kulthūm’s opinion which al-Sukkārī quoted in his collection of al-Nu‘mān’s poems (XVI, 27).³⁵

Where a poem was not to be found in a *diwān*, this might be a reason to doubt its authenticity. Ishāq al-Mawṣilī composed a melody for a short piece, and the lyrics were said to be by him too, but “I did not find it in his collected poems” (X, 111).³⁶ In the version of the Top Hundred transmitted by ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim, the lyrics of one song were attributed to al-Muraqqish. “We looked for [this piece] in the collected poems of both the Muraqqishes but we did not find it, so we thought it was a deviant version, only attested to by one authority, until we came across it in Dāwūd ibn Salm’s poetry” (VI, 9). Another dubious attribution in the Top Hundred concerned a fragment said to be by ‘Antara. Here again Abū l-Faraj drew a blank in ‘Antara’s *diwāns*, but he allowed for the possibility that it might come from a lost source, even though other authorities ascribed all but one of the lines to ‘Abd Qays ibn Khufāf al-Burjūmī (VIII, 235).³⁷

The importance of the written collections of poetry becomes clear from his comment on a tradition he was told of that an elegy generally recognised to be by Ziyād al-A‘jam was in fact by a contemporary of his, al-Ṣalatān al-‘Abdī. “This is

a deviant opinion”, he says, “for the truth is that it is by Ziyād al-A‘jam and has been recorded in writing by transmitters (*qad dawwanahā al-ruwāh*), and this attribution is irrefutable” (XV, 381).³⁸ Abū l-Faraj’s efforts to check the attribution of the lyrics of one of the Top Hundred also reflect the importance of these *diwāns*. According to Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī al-Munajjim, whose source was Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili, they were by al-A‘shā, but Abū l-Faraj could not find them in the collected poems of any of the A‘shās,³⁹ and he finally ran them to ground in Ibn al-Mawlā’s poetry. Because Abū l-Faraj is correcting such august authorities, he also quotes the poem in full (III, 285).

When using the argument of style, Abū l-Faraj may simply indicate that he considers a piece has been made up and is a manifest interpolation (*maṣnū‘*, *bayyin al-tawlid*). This is the case, for instance, with a poem attributed to the pre-Islamic Qays ibn al-Ḥudādiya at the end of a report purporting to recount the failure of Qays ‘Aylān to occupy Mecca (XIV, 150). It is left to the reader to compare this banal poem and its feeble diction with authentic lines by Qays and to draw his own conclusions. Of a poem which Imru’ al-Qays was supposed to have composed in anticipation of his meeting with al-Samaw’al, whose protection he was about to ask, Abū l-Faraj gives merely the first line, and then he says: “It is a long poem, and I think it is wrongly ascribed to Imru’ al-Qays. For it does not resemble his style and it has obviously been made up.” After adding that it is not to be found in Imru’ al-Qays’s collected poems, he suggests that it may be the work of one of al-Samaw’al’s descendants, Dārim (IX, 97).⁴⁰ Here the reader must judge from the first line only.

Elsewhere Abū l-Faraj’s comments are more informative. The second/eighth century poet al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī belonged to the Kaysāniya branch of Shī‘ism, which regarded Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīya as the Mahdī. Some Twelver Shī‘i authorities claimed that he later converted to their doctrine, referring to verses supposed to be by him in support of their view. Abū l-Faraj quotes a line of one of these poems and then rejects their authenticity both because they are not transmitted by any reliable authority and because they are quite unlike al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī’s style, feeble and obviously made up. By contrast, the poetry of his pieces affirming his Kaysāni convictions “is pithy and substantial, and it has a brilliance and ideas not found in his other work” (*shī‘ruhu fī qaṣā’dihi l-kaysāniyati mubāyinun li-ḥādḥā jazālatan wa-matānatan wa-lahu rawnaqun wa-ma‘nan laysā li-mā yudhkaru ‘anhu fī ghayrihi*) (VII, 235–6).⁴¹

Two verses were variously ascribed to al-Ḥazīn ibn Sulaymān al-Dīlī on ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, to al-Farazdaq on ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, to Dāwūd ibn Salm on Qutham ibn al-‘Abbās or ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn and to Khālīd ibn Yazīd on ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (XV, 325, 327, 328). Abū l-Faraj prefers the attribution to al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī for two reasons. First, the couplet is not appropriate to ‘Alī, a man of unique and generally recognised virtues (325). A comparison of it with the passage of al-Farazdaq’s panegyric describing ‘Alī (327) makes this clear. And second, the verses of al-Ḥazīn’s poem (of which Abū l-Faraj proceeds to quote eleven lines including the controversial couplet) “hold together, the ideas and motifs in them

form a progression and they resemble each other" (*abyātu l-Ḥazīni mu'talifatun muntaẓimatu l-ma'ānī mutashābiḥa*, 328).

Although the main question in matters of attribution was authorship, the occasion on which a poem was recited or the identity of the person to whom it was addressed could also pose problems, as this last example shows. According to a report transmitted by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī from Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb, the occasion when al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd al-Makhzūmī composed his poem:

Za'ana l-amīru bi-aḥsani l-khalqī

wa-ghadaw bi-lubbika maṭli'a l-sharqī

(The prince has set in a camel litter the loveliest of God's creatures,
and the caravan has left early in the morning,
taking your heart to the east.)

was when Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik bought Ḥabāba and took her from the Hijāz to Syria. Abū l-Faraj corrects this, saying that al-Ḥārith composed the poem when 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalhā married Muṣ'ab ibn al-Zubayr and moved to Iraq with him, as is explained in the article on 'Ā'isha (XV, 126). And he quotes a further line of the poem in support of his view.⁴²

In another case, a certain Mālik, mentioned in a panegyric by Bakr ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ, was understood by the transmitter Abū Hiffān to be Mālik ibn Ṭawq, the governor of Ahwāz, and he recounted a story of how Bakr, disappointed by Mālik's meagre reward for an earlier eulogy, composed a short poem attacking him. Mālik, aware of the harm a disgruntled Bakr could do him, quickly sent after him and placated him, explaining that he had mistaken a small sum to cover expenses for the real reward Mālik wanted to offer him. Thereupon Bakr composed this panegyric. Abū l-Faraj finds this information unconvincing, remarking: "I think Abū Hiffān made a mistake, for most of Bakr ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ's panegyrics were dedicated to Mālik ibn 'Alī al-Khuṣṣā'i, who was in charge of [security on] the road to Khurasan. Bakr turned to him after the death of [his previous patron] Abū Dulaf and composed a panegyric on him, and Mālik welcomed him, enrolled him in his troops and put him on the yearly payroll" (XIX, 113).⁴³

Quotations of poetry: the anthologising impulse

Correct attribution and situation in a historical context is one of Abū l-Faraj's concerns when he approaches poetry. Another is to decide how much of a poem to quote, for he often does not follow his authorities slavishly in including as many, or as few, lines as they do in narratives. It should be borne in mind that poems often ran to dozens of lines, and systematically including complete pieces would have increased the length of the *Aghānī* beyond what even the compiler was prepared to contemplate. On the other hand, the lyrics of memorable songs had to be mentioned, even if shorn of their setting they were not outstanding. Moreover, as a connoisseur with his own sense of what was good poetry, Abū l-Faraj did not want to deprive his readers of choice lines of poems quoted in *akhbār*, even if these

lines had been omitted from the original narrative. One expression “*hiya ṭawīla*” (litt: it is a long [poem]) frequently occurs in connection with the quotation of poetry, but the intention behind the words varies, as will be seen.

Some poems Abū l-Faraj simply does not consider worth quoting, as in the case of the long piece mentioned above which was wrongly attributed to Imru’ al-Qays (IX, 97). Here the first line is merely used for the purpose of identification. The bad poetry which al-Sarī ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Anṣārī composed in response to al-Aḥwaṣ’s attack on him is omitted on the grounds of quality, except for the first line, needed to round off the *khavar* on the subject; it bears out Abū l-Faraj’s verdict (XXI, 106).

In another instance, after giving part of a poem by al-‘Abbās ibn Mirdās, the compiler quotes one line of a reply by ‘Amr ibn Ma’dikarib, apparently to signify its existence, for “there is no point in mentioning [this long poem] together with the reports about al-‘Abbās” (XIV, 316);⁴⁴ he does not return to it in ‘Amr’s article. Another poetic exchange he decided not to reproduce for reasons of length was the one between Ṣakhr al-Ghayy al-Hudhālī and Abū l-Muthallam (XXII, 345). When ‘Afrā’ was married off against her will while ‘Urwa was away earning money for her dowry, she composed a poem lamenting her clan’s breaking its oath, but Abū l-Faraj quotes only one line “of many” (*fi abyātīn ṭawīla*: XXIV, 150). If Abū l-Faraj includes poetry by relatives of the subject of an article, he may give only samples to show that a gift for poetry runs in the family; this is the case with Asad ibn Kurṣ, Khālīd al-Qasrī’s grandfather (XXII, 4) and with al-Nu’mān ibn Bashīr’s brother, son and grandson (XVI, 51–2).

The reluctance to quote arises at times out of Abū l-Faraj’s belief that a poem can be found elsewhere or is very well-known. Of the piece with which Ḥājjiz ibn ‘Awf al-Azdī replied to Ta’abbāṭa Sharran after the latter’s unsuccessful raid on the Azd, Abū l-Faraj quotes the first half line and then refers the reader to the collection of Azd poetry for the whole text (*wa-hiya fi ash’ari l-Azd*; XXI, 155).⁴⁵ When introducing the battles of al-Fijār⁴⁶ Abū l-Faraj mentions the verbal skirmishes at ‘Ukāz which preceded the fighting, quoting two couplets of *fakhr* and then adding: “[The tribal confederation of] Qays has much poetry in this vein which there is no point in mentioning” (XXII, 55).⁴⁷ The poem in which Imru’ al-Qays praises the Banū Sa’d for protecting the dependants of Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Ḥārith after his death is described as long and famous (XII, 213–4). By implication, there is no need to quote more than the two lines given in the article.⁴⁸ After including an anecdote giving the context of al-Taymī’s elegy of his young son and four lines from it with their musical setting, Abū l-Faraj adds the first line and then remarks “It is a famous poem of his” (XX, 45).

Among the justifications for quoting lines of a poem, one may be that they have a musical setting. In the case of one of ‘Umar’s long poems already referred to, Abū l-Faraj not only points out to the reader that the composers altered the order of the lines when they set it to music, he also notes that he has mentioned only those lines for which there is a setting (*dhakartu minhu mā fihi ṣan’a*; I, 177).⁴⁹ In connection with al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd’s poetry ostensibly addressed to a slave-girl

Busra, but in fact meant for her mistress, ‘Ā’isha bint Ṭalḥa, Abū l-Faraj quotes four lines and then remarks that there are more lines to the poem, but “I have based myself [only] on what has a setting” (*i’tamadtu ‘alā mā ghunniya fih*; III, 336).⁵⁰ Two particularly striking examples of lines being quoted because they were sung are to be found in the articles on al-Walid ibn Yazīd and Dhāt al-Khāl. In the first, there is a section entitled “The mention of the poems which al-Walid composed about Salmā and the musicians set to music” (*Dhikru ash‘āri l-Walīdi llatī qālahā fī Salmā wa-ghannā l-mughannūna fihā*; VII, 32).⁵¹ In the second, Abū l-Faraj lists verses by various poets on Dhāt al-Khāl for which Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī composed settings (*mimmā qālahu Ibrāhīmu wa-ghayruhu fī Dhāti l-Khālī wa-ghannā fih*; XVI, 347).⁵²

Two expressions are used to indicate when poetry has a musical setting. If an entire piece or fragment is sung, “*ghannā fih*” ([one or more composers] made a setting for it) is appropriate. By contrast, the phrase “*fih ghinā*” means that a setting exists, but it leaves open whether this is for all or part of the poem. In practice it seems generally to apply to those parts of longer poems which were sung. And it is frequently found in passages where Abū l-Faraj is making selections from poems or quoting them with more than one aim in mind.⁵³

For as well as mentioning lines of poetry set to music, the compiler also feels the need to give his readers more idea of the poetry itself than what is mentioned in *akhbār*. In the course of the article on Abū l-‘Atāhiya he quotes an incident where the poet’s *urjūza* of versified proverbs was discussed in al-Jāhiz’s presence, and al-Jāhiz praised highly the expression “*rawā’ihū l-jannati fī l-shabābi*” (youth has the fragrance of paradise; IV, 36). Abū l-‘Atāhiya was said to have worked four thousand proverbs into it, and Abū l-Faraj judges it one of his “fine innovations”. He cannot prevent himself quoting twenty-three lines, before saying: “It is a very long poem, but I mentioned so much of it to accord with the description which had already been given of it” (IV, 37).⁵⁴ To give an idea of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Asadī’s reply to Ibn Mayyāda’s lampoon of the Banū Asad he quotes “some lines”, nineteen in fact, from what is a long poem (II, 334). Of the *qaṣīda* in which Suwayd ibn Kurā’ praised Baghid ibn ‘Āmir for his protection and hospitality, he gives the *nasīb* and *raḥīl* sections, fourteen lines in all, before saying “It is a long poem which I have shortened” (XII, 346), and then quoting ten lines from the *madīḥ*.⁵⁵ In a book with the collected poems of the early ‘Abbāsīd poet Nāhid ibn Thūma Abū l-Faraj found a *qaṣīda* of his welcoming the reconciliation of the Banū Ka’b and Banū Kilāb after a conflict. He quotes the *nasīb* and then notes “It is a long poem in which [Nāhid] says ...”, proceeding with fourteen lines of the celebration of the restored unity between the clans (XIII, 183).

There are many occasions in the *Aghānī* where more than one motive guides Abū l-Faraj in his quoting of sections of poems.⁵⁶ The article on the Umayyad poet Abū Wajaj al-Sulamī contains a section on his relations with ‘Abd al-Malik ibn [Muḥammad ibn] ‘Aṭiya al-Sa’dī and quotes two panegyrics of his. One of them is the poem the *nasīb* of which provides the lyrics of the introductory song, and Abū l-Faraj comes back to it, pointing this fact out and then giving something more of the *nasīb* and four lines of the *madīḥ*. He rounds off the presentation with the

following remark: “It is a long poem in which he praises all the Banī ‘Aṭīya and describes their attack on Abū Ḥamza the Khārijite. But there is no point in mentioning it at length” (XII, 252).⁵⁷ The lyrics of the song which introduce the article on another Umayyad poet, ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar al-‘Abī, are taken from an extended lament on the dissensions among the Umayyads. Abū l-Faraj returns to it at the end of the article, explaining the context and then giving twenty-one more lines which end in an affirmation of the Umayyads’ qualifications to rule. He then says: “It is a long poem, but I have restricted myself to what I have mentioned of it” (XI, 309).⁵⁸

A narrative is just as likely to provide the immediate occasion for quoting a poem as a song. But there too a variety of motives may guide Abū l-Faraj in his selection of lines. One of Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī’s poems attacks allies of his tribe who failed to support it during a conflict and mourns those who fell during the battle. It follows on naturally from the account of the events which goes back to Abū ‘Amr al-Shaybānī. Abū l-Faraj quotes seven lines, the last of them set to music, explaining that he included that part of the long poem because of the setting, and then he gives another particularly fine fragment of the elegy (*min mukhtārī marthiyatihi*) (XV, 354–5).⁵⁹ The account Abū l-Faraj uses of the occasion when Ka’b al-Ashqarī recited to al-Ḥajjāj his poem on al-Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufra’s victory over the Khārijites may well have given the piece in full, but Abū l-Faraj abbreviates it,⁶⁰ including the *nasīb*, the very brief *raḥīl*, praise of al-Muhallab, and then passages about two crucial episodes, the uprising and the ensuing battle (XIV, 285).⁶¹

Picking out lines from different parts of a poem, as in the last example, occurs elsewhere too. The flytings exchanged between Ḥakam ibn Ma‘mar al-Khudrī and Ibn Mayyāda were many and various, and Abū l-Faraj left out most of them for reasons of space, but he included some samples of the best pieces (II, 298). Among them was a *qaṣīda* of Ḥakam’s from which he quotes two lines of the *nasīb*, three lines of *fakhr* and eight lines of *hijā’*. Interestingly, only part of the *hijā’* section is given from Ibn Mayyāda’s response (II, 298–300).⁶² Another example concerns the poem of Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar from which the song introducing his article is drawn, a panegyric dedicated to Hārūn al-Rashīd. The lyrics of the song itself are from the beginning of the *nasīb* (XXII, 359), and Abū l-Faraj goes on to quote more of the *nasīb*, the *raḥīl*, and praise of al-Rashīd – altogether nineteen lines. He concludes, “It is a long poem, and this is a selection from the whole of it” (*hiya qaṣīdatun ṭawīlatun hādha mukhtārūn min jamī’ihā*; XXIII, 1–2), which suggests that he has taken lines from different parts of it, and has not simply reproduced the first part, as one might think. Unfortunately, Nuṣayb’s *Diwān*, which would have contained the complete text, has not survived, and so it is impossible to tell exactly how Abū l-Faraj has gone to work here.⁶³

The evaluation of poetry

As is clear from the preceding examples, in many instances it is Abū l-Faraj’s appreciation of lines which is one of the reasons, or even the main reason, why he quotes

poetry. The question naturally arises why he chose certain passages or even entire poems, in other words what his own taste in poetry was. Before going into that further, however, it is worth examining how he conveys his appreciation of verses.

The two most common expressions which he uses are *jayyid* (excellent) and *mukhtār* (choice). They are found in various contexts. For instance, a passage may be among the choicest lines of a particular poem, as in Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī's *marthiya* and Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar's *madīḥ*, referred to above. More often, though, a quotation includes a good example of a poet's work in general: "among the choice samples of (*min mukhtār*) al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr's poetry" (XVI, 48); or of his production in a particular genre: Labīd's elegies on his brother (XVII, 63); Tuwayt's poems about Sa'dā (XXIII, 171); 'Abdallāh ibn al-'Ajlān's poetry on his wife Hind (XXII, 242). Comparable phrases are found with *jayyid*; "one of the fine passages in which Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ [eulogised] Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir" (*min jayyidi mā qālahu fih*; XVI, 367); an example of Yazīd ibn al-Ṭathriya's excellent poetry (VIII, 169); of Kuthayyir's fine and choice love poetry (*min jayyidi ghazalihi wa-mukhtārihi*; VII, 87); of Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk's excellent passages in his laments for al-Amin (VII, 151). Occasionally, another term is encountered. When giving the beginning of a poem by Ibn Harma referred to in an anecdote, Abū l-Faraj comments, "This *qaṣida* is one of Ibn Harma's magnificent (*fākhir*) pieces" (VI, 111). Bakr ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ's elegies for his patron Mālik ibn 'Alī al-Khuzā'i are among the "pearls and the fine flower of his poetry" (*min gharari shi'rihi wa-'uyūnihi*; XIX, 113). In all these cases the compiler's appreciation is relative; the passages concerned are particularly good specimens of the poet's production in general or in a given genre.

He commits himself further in the following passage: "Abū Ṣakhr's poem which has the above-mentioned setting is a choice example of Hudhali poetry" (*min mukhtāri shi'ri Hudhayl*; XXIV, 122). Here the term of comparison is a corpus of tribal poetry; the verdict is based on a larger sample. Likewise, Ziyād al-A'jam's elegy of al-Mughīra ibn al-Muhallab is "judged one of the leading examples of the genre in his period" (*ma'dūdātun min marāthi l-shu'arā'i fi 'aṣri Ziyād*; XV, 381).

Unqualified approval is also to be found, about either individual poems, genres or even complete oeuvres. Abū l-Faraj informs the reader à propos of a couplet set to music: "These lines are from a long and fine poem of [Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman's] about Rawda" (VI, 232). When quoting reports about Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk's attachment to al-Amin and hostility to al-Ma'mūn, he remarks, "Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk has many fine elegies for al-Amin" (*li-Ḥusayni bni l-Ḍaḥḥāki fi Muḥammadin il-Amīni marāthīn kathīratun jayyida*; VII, 150), and he goes on to quote two outstanding examples of them (VII, 151). Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir composed many beautiful and choice poems (*ash'arun kathīratun ḥisānun mukhtāra*; XXII, 159) during his imprisonment. Among al-Wāthiq's songs was one with lyrics by Ḥassān ibn Thābit, and Abū l-Faraj identifies the piece from which they are taken as his "famous poem in praise of the Banū Jafna ... a magnificent example of panegyric" (IX, 288).⁶⁴

When Abū l-Faraj admires poetry, he tends to depart from his usual couple of adjectives or else to accumulate epithets to describe it. The early Umayyad jurist

‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Utba composed little poetry, but it was “outstanding and excellent” (*faḥlun jayyid*; IX, 146). The ‘Abbāsīd governor and many-sided representative of court culture, ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Tāhir, was not only prolific but his poems were “excellent, with much in them that was rare and choice” (*kathīratu l-nādīri wa-l-mukhtār*; IX, 41). The *qaṣīda* by the *mukhaḍḍam* Rabi‘a ibn Maqrūm which supplies the lyrics for his article’s introductory song is later quoted as an example of “magnificent, fine and beautiful poetry”, of whose “choice and rare” lines Abū l-Faraj gives an extensive sample (XXII, 102).⁶⁵ The early ‘Abbāsīd poet Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb composed “noble and rare” (*sharīfatun nādīra*) panegyrics on al-Ma’mūn, of which Abū l-Faraj quotes one of the quintessential examples (*min ‘uyūniḥā*; XIX, 88).

Seldom does one find more specific indications of what Abū l-Faraj finds remarkable in the poems he praises. One instance concerns Ziyād al-A‘jamī’s elegy on al-Mughīra ibn al-Muhallab, already referred to, of which he quotes several lines and then comments: “This is an example of rare diction, carefully selected concepts and choice poetry” (*min nādīri l-kalāmi wa-naqīyi l-ma‘āni wa-mukhtārī l-qaṣīd*; XV, 381). When discussing al-Buḥtūrī’s *hijā’*, which he generally regards as poor, Abū l-Faraj mentions two exceptions, one of which, addressed to Ya‘qūb ibn al-Faraj al-Naṣrānī, is “mocking in tone with malicious ideas couched in pleasing expressions” (*tajrī majrā l-tahakkumi bi-l-lafẓi l-ṭayyibi l-khabīthi l-ma‘āni*; XXI, 39). Sometimes Abū l-Faraj’s verdict is borne out by the practice of other poets. He regards ‘Alī ibn Jabala’s elegy for Ḥumayd al-Ṭūsī as “rare and innovative poetry” (*min nādīri l-shi‘ri wa-badī‘ih*), and quotes it in full “because of its excellent quality and many unusual expressions”,⁶⁶ adding: “Al-Buḥtūrī took over most of its motifs and poetic concepts, incorporating them into his two elegies of Abū Sa‘īd al-Thughrī . . . [Abū Tammām] al-Ṭā‘ī also took over some of its concepts, and if I was not afraid of being longwinded I would point out the passages concerned. But any perceptive critic who reflects on the question will recognise [that is what he did]” (XX, 27, 29). He is full of praise of al-Walīd ibn Yazīd’s wine poetry, quoting one piece in which the caliph “stood out and excelled, so that everyone followed him and adopted his approach”⁶⁷ and then adding that later poets “took his poetry and incorporated it into their own work, borrowing his ideas. Abū Nuwās was especially prone to this But for fear of going on too long I would mention [these borrowed motifs] here. But they speak for themselves” (VII, 18, 20).⁶⁸

These observations add up to an implicit statement of a critical position.⁶⁹ First and foremost, Abū l-Faraj judges poetry relative to its cultural context and its author’s oeuvre. Whatever his personal preferences, they do not blind him to the merits of very different kinds of work. Poems in any genre from the pre-Islamic period on may earn his appreciation, and he seeks to arrive at a balanced judgement of them.⁷⁰ This open-mindedness also means that he is willing to admit that a poet whose work he praises highly, al-Walīd ibn Yazīd, can be the author of trivial (*sakhīf*) verse too.⁷¹ From the few passages where he goes into a little detail, it appears that what he admires are unusual images and concepts, well-chosen words

and an appropriate tone. This conclusion is supported by the quotations he gives to illustrate his views.⁷²

In the second place, he takes account of the reception of poetry; if it has set a trend or its ideas have been recycled by other poets, this is a point in its favour, for it has contributed to the development of the tradition. He shares with many mediæval critics an interest in *ma'ānī*, not just as a general phenomenon as some of the quotations above show but in specific instances. Thus, for instance, he points out that a comparison of the drowsy beloved's saliva with melting honey in a poem by al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr was taken over by Jamīl and developed to liken the scent of her mouth to wine mixed with musk and amber (XVI, 49–50). Another example illustrates how long a history an image or idea may have. A line originating with the very early al-Muhalhil, "They took up their twanging bows, and we flourished our swords [against them], as stallions threaten each other", gave Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā the starting point for a more elaborated image (*huwa ashraḥu minā l-awwal*): "He thrusts at them [with his lance] as long as they shoot at him. Then, when they thrust at him he strikes them with his sword, and as they take up their swords he engages them in hand-to-hand combat". In Abū l-Faraj's view Zuhayr exhausted the motif's possibilities with this line, but the 'Abbāsīd poet Ibn Harma still tried to improve on it: "He thrusts with his lance and strikes them with his sword, then he moves in on them, fighting them hand-to-hand" (VI, 103). When quoting Abū l-ʿAtāhiya's elegies for his ascetic friend ʿAlī ibn Thābit, Abū l-Faraj informs the reader that they incorporate sayings attributed to the philosophers who saw Alexander on his bier (IV, 44).⁷³ These and other indications of literary borrowings⁷⁴ reinforce the impression already created by Abū l-Faraj's judgements of poetry that his remarks about the different aspects of the Arabic poetic tradition are based on an immense knowledge of it.

One of his comments on textual variants also betrays his sensitivity to diction. A couplet which al-Akḥṭal composed when an uninvited guest ruined a quiet drinking session he was having with a friend ran:

Wa-laysa l-qadhā bi-l-ʿūdī yasqutu fī l-inā
wa-lā bi-dhubābin khaṭbuhū aysaru l-amrī
wa-lākinna shakhṣan lā nusarru bi-qurbihī
ramatnā bihi l-ghīṭānu min ḥaythu lā nadrī
 (It's not a twig falling into the vessel
 or a fly – that most trivial of things – that sullies wine,
 but someone whose nearness we deplore,
 whom the fields have thrown up at us from nowhere).

In this form it was set to music. But a variant for the beginning of the second line ran: *wa-lākin qadhāhā zāʿirun lā nuḥibbuhū* (but it is sullied by a visitor we dislike),⁷⁵ "and this is the fine (*jayyid*) version" (VIII, 313).⁷⁶ Another similar preference is expressed about a variant on a line by Suwayd ibn Kurāʿ (XII, 343), but since the source which provides the quotation is not extant, it is not certain whether Abū l-Faraj is expressing his own opinion or that of his authority.

Philological commentary

The discussion of textual variants for whatever reason has a philological aspect. A more narrowly philological concern which appears from time to time in the *Aghānī* is the provision of commentaries on quotations of poetry which Abū l-Faraj foresaw might cause his readers difficulty.⁷⁷ This is a particularly delicate matter to treat, since many mediaeval commentaries on pre- and early Islamic poetry have not survived. It is therefore by no means easy to decide whether the commentary is the compiler's own contribution, or whether he is quoting an authority whom he does not name. But a closer look at extant commentaries can clear up this difficulty in some cases. Moreover, the comments share a number of common characteristics which indicate that even if Abū l-Faraj is not being original, he is at least systematic in the kind of information he quotes.

One instance where there seems no doubt that the information stems from Abū l-Faraj concerns the song which introduces an article on al-Mukhabbal al-Qaysī, a poet so obscure that he is not mentioned in the *Fihrist* or other standard reference works.⁷⁸

*A-ḥi kulli yawmin anta min ghubbari l-hawā
ilā l-shummi min a'lāmi Maylā'a nāẓirū
bi-'amshā'a min ṭūli l-bukā'i ka'annamā
bi-hā khazarun aw ṭarḥuhā mutakhāẓirū
'Arāḍuhu min al-ṭawīli wa-l-ghubbaru al-baqiyatu mina l-shay'i yuqālu fulānun
fi ghubbarin min 'illatihi wa-aktharu mā yusta'malu fi hādḥā wa-naḥwihi
wa-l-shummu l-ṭiwālu wa-l-a'lāmu jam'u 'alamin wa-huwa l-jabal (...) wa-l-
khazaru ḍiqu l-'ayni wa-ṣughruhā wa-minhu summiya l-khazaru bi-dhālaka
li-ḍiqi a'yunihim (...)'*⁷⁹

(XX, 263)

This is an example of the full description of a song setting, as already described.⁸⁰ The couplet is followed by the mention of its metre and then glosses of three terms, two of which are supported by parallels drawn from al-Khansā' and a *najaz* poet, respectively. No authorities are mentioned. After this philological commentary Abū l-Faraj gives the poet's name and nickname, the composer's name, the performance indications, and remarks that some people attribute the lines to other poets, including Dhū l-Rumma. None of the subsequent verses by al-Mukhabbal, two more lines from this poem and two longer quotations, receive the same treatment from Abū l-Faraj.⁸¹

Abū Qaṭīfa, a member of a collateral branch of the Umayyad family, is not as obscure as al-Mukhabbal al-Qaysī, but still a thoroughly insignificant poet.⁸² His nostalgic recollection of familiar landmarks in Medina after he and his relatives were expelled from the Hijaz by Ibn al-Zubayr forms the lyrics of the first of the Top Three Songs, no doubt largely thanks to the melody Ma'bad made for the lines. They run:

*Al-qaṣru fa-l-nakhlu fa-l-jammā'u baynahumā
ashḥā ilā l-qalbi min abwābi Jayrūnī*

*Ilā l-balāṭi fa-mā ḥāzat qarā'inuhū
 dūrun nazaḥna 'ani l-faḥshā'i wa-l-hūnī
 Qad yaktumu l-nāsu asrāran fa-a'lamuhā
 wa-lā yanālūna ḥattā l-mawti asrārī
 'Arūduhu min awwalī l-basīṭ. Al-qaṣru lladhī 'anāhu hāhunā qaṣru Sa'īdin bni
 l-Āṣi bi-l-'Arṣati wa-l-nakhlū lladhī 'anāhu nakhlun kāna li-Sa'īdin hunāka
 bayna qaṣrihi wa-bayna l-jammā'i wa-hiya arḍun kānat lahu. Fa-sāra jamī'u
 dhālika li-Mu'āwiyata bni Abī Sufyāna ba'da waḥātī Sa'īdin ibtā'ahu minī bnīhi
 'Amrin bi-ḥtimālī daynihi 'anhu wa-li-dhālika khabarun yudhkaru ba'du. Wa-
 abwābu Jayrūna bi-Dimashq. Wa-yurwā 'ḥādhat qarā'inuhu' min al-muḥādḥātī
 wa-l-qarā'īnu dūrun kānat li-Banī Sa'īdin bni-l-Āṣi mutalāṣiqatun summiyat
 bi-dhālika li-qtirānīhā wa-nazaḥna ba'udna wa-l-nāziḥu l-ba'īdu yuqālu
 nazaḥa nuzūḥan. Wa-l-hūnu al-hawānu (...) wa-l-maknūnu l-mastūru l-khaṭīyu
 wa-huwa ma'khūdhun minā l-kinn.⁸³*

(I, 11)

This full presentation of the song and its setting includes a variant reading and glosses on both the place-names mentioned and a few words, again with an appeal to a *raja* poet. The poem itself does not reappear in the reports of Ibn al-Zubayr's expulsion of the Umayyads from the Hijaz, nor is Abū Qaṭīfa's oeuvre known to have been collected in a *diwān* where it might have been commented on. Here, too, it seems that Abū l-Faraj has provided the explanations.

Two other songs with comments are by the Hudhālī poets Umayya ibn Abī 'Ā'idh (II, 220–1)⁸⁴ and Ṣakhr al-Ghayy (XXII, 344). Here it is possible to compare Abū l-Faraj's glosses with those of al-Sukkārī, and although they concur in some respects, they differ in others. Moreover al-Sukkārī mentions as sources for certain meanings of words in Umayya's lines Ibn Ḥabīb or Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī,⁸⁵ while Abū l-Faraj gives variants from al-Aṣma'ī.

An instance where Abū l-Faraj's glosses correspond more closely to an extant commentary is the introductory song to Dhū l-Rumma's article (XVII, 398–9).⁸⁶ Since there is a reference here to al-Aṣma'ī as an authority and to Abū Naṣr as his transmitter, it may be assumed that Abū l-Faraj knew al-Aṣma'ī's commentary which Tha'lab, himself the compiler of a *Diwān* of Dhū l-Rumma, transmitted on Abū Naṣr Aḥmad ibn Ḥātim al-Bāhili's authority.⁸⁷ Even here, however, the *Diwān* and the *Aghānī* do not give exactly the same information; the *Aghānī* glosses more single items, while the *Diwān* is more generous with paraphrases of expressions.

The correspondences between the *Aghānī*'s commentaries and those of the *Diwāns* may be explained in two ways. First, Abū l-Faraj was drawing on a stock of linguistic knowledge built up over several generations, which was the common property of educated men. Neither he nor al-Sukkārī or Tha'lab feel obliged to give sources for most of the information they mention. In his case the contribution of his teacher Ibn Durayd, the lexicographer, may have been significant. Second, some of Abū l-Faraj's teachers had, like al-Ṣūlī and Niṭawayh, assembled collections of poets' works. Others had themselves studied with noted commentators and

editors; Muḥammad ibn al-‘Abbās al-Yazīdī, for instance, was a pupil of Tha‘lab. That Abū l-Faraj should have reproduced some of the information which is also found in *Diwān* commentaries thus is hardly surprising.

The most interesting aspect of the philological commentaries in the *Aghānī* is not their origin or their content, but where they occur. In the great majority of cases they form part of the information connected with song settings. The article on the pre-Islamic poet ‘Adī ibn Zayd offers a good example of this practice. The first fifty pages are devoted to *akhbār* about the poet’s life and times, and they include some extensive quotations of poetry (II, 96–146). But it is only in the final part of the article (147–54), which groups the songs with lyrics by ‘Adī, that any philological explanations are encountered. Even if the reports Abū l-Faraj drew on for the article did not gloss the poetry, he could have added explanations. But he evidently did not feel they were necessary. It might be tempting to conclude that the lyrics happen to contain the philologically most difficult expressions. But an examination of some other instances reveals the same phenomenon. When Abū l-Faraj points out the singers’ manipulation of Umayya ibn Abi ‘Ā’idh’s descriptions of the camel and the wild ass, he quotes the sections of the *qaṣīda* from which the lines are drawn. While he glosses some words in the song itself (II, 220–1), he leaves the reader to fend for himself elsewhere (221–3).⁸⁸ After the introductory song Dhū l-Rumma’s article has only two glosses on lines of poetry (XVIII, 17, 29) until the final section on the songs Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili composed in the *mākhūrī* rhythmic mode on lyrics by him. There the commentaries are exploited again (48–50).⁸⁹

Among songs those introducing an article are more likely to be provided with philological explanations. The Umayyad poet ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zabīr composed the lyrics for two songs, but only the one introducing his article has glosses (XIV, 216). Of the two songs drawn from Labīd ibn Rabi’a’s elegies for his brother, the one introducing the section on them has some commentary (XVII, 55). Al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥillīza’s introductory song has glosses too (XI, 41), while the other one in his article does not.

Abū l-Faraj’s explanatory notes on poetry do not only differ from those of the *diwān* commentaries in some of what they say and in their being generally confined to the lyrics of songs.⁹⁰ They are also concentrated at the ends of songs, whereas in *diwāns* explanations are provided line by line. The accumulation of information, philological, musical and so on, at the end of a song both marks it off from the surrounding text and emphasises the distinctive character of lyrics apart from the poem from which they are taken.

Where Abū l-Faraj, as distinct from his sources, gives philological explanations about lines which are not set to music, he is erratic. For instance, when reproducing the poem on al-Mutajarrida, from which the lyrics of the song introducing al-Munakhkhal’s article are drawn, he finds one word worthy of a gloss (XXI, 5–7).⁹¹ But because such comments are isolated it cannot be excluded that they are the work of a copyist. By contrast, the careful and detailed commentary on so many songs surely reflects the intention of the compiler.

Profiles of poets

Like the articles on singers, the articles on poets are often prefaced by a profile sketch in Abū l-Faraj's own words,⁹² listing essential data about the subject. As will become clear, poets' profile sketches are more numerous than singers' (there are 259 of them altogether), are drawn from a greater variety of periods and are less narrowly focussed on artistic achievement. Four main categories of information may schematically be distinguished in the profiles. The first concerns the poet's place in society as a member of a tribal or family group, and sometimes his profession or place of residence and his political or politico-religious activities. The second category concerns the poet's individual character traits, which may influence his literary career or be reflected in his poetry. In the third place, the poet's position in the literary community and his interaction with fellow poets, musicians and patrons are indicated. And the final group of observations concern his poetry's salient characteristics and its relation to the poetic tradition.

From the pre- and early Islamic period come descriptions of the poet as a prominent personality in his tribe, endowed with bravery, qualities of leadership and eloquence. The *mukhaḍḍam* al-ʿAbbās ibn Mirdās was "a champion and poet, voluble and eloquent, a chief among his people (*qawm*) and descended from chiefs on both sides" (XIV, 302). Other noteworthy traits of early poets are success in warfare (Zuhayr ibn Janāb: XIX, 5) and skill in mediation (Quss ibn Sā'ida: XV, 246). As far as the outlaw poets (*ṣaʿālīk*)⁹³ are concerned, it is the quality enabling them to keep at a distance from their tribe which is indicated; al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka was "one of the brigands among the Arabs and a runner so fast that horses could not outstrip him" (XX, 375).

With the passage of time, the group in relation to which the poet is defined tends to become smaller. A tribal confederation (Muḍar, Rabīʿa) or more often a tribe, named (Quraysh, Kalb, Tamīm) or anonymous (*qawm*), is replaced by a family or clan (*ahl*). The latest instance of a poet's standing in his *qawm* being described is in the profile of Jaʿfar ibn ʿUlba, whose life straddles the late Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsīd periods (XIII, 45). By contrast, al-Walid ibn Yazīd is introduced as "one of the men of valour and refinement among the Umayyads, a poet, generous and strong" (VII, 2), and the ʿAbbāsīd prince ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā as "one of his family's (*ahl*) prominent men, brave, enterprising, judicious, valiant and endowed with qualities of leadership" (XVI, 241).

But only in a small minority of cases does the poet's status in his tribe or clan merit a remark; most poets are unremarkable tribesmen or Arab non-Arab clients or freedmen (*mawālī*). Religious affiliations are referred to even less often. There are a handful of Christians and as many converts to Islam during the Prophet's lifetime – exceptions worth mentioning to the norm, obvious to Abū l-Faraj and his contemporaries, that poets are polytheists or Muslims, depending on the period in which they live.

Among the Muslims, sectarian orientations may be specified. Abū l-Faraj distinguishes nearly a dozen Shīʿī's, from moderate to extreme,⁹⁴ and the occasional Khārījī and *zindīq*. He also notes politico-religious leanings, towards the Umayyads,

the Hāshimites or Ibn al-Zubayr, and a couple of examples of poets championing the Northern or Southern Arabs.

Of more consequence than tribal status or religious or politico-religious affiliations in Abū l-Faraj's view, to judge by the frequency with which he mentions them, are indications of where a poet grew up or lived. While bedouins are not entirely forgotten, the great majority of the seventy-odd poets he situates in this way come from towns or cities. Some names, such as Raqqa, Homs and Manbij, occur only once, in connection with a famous poet (Rabī'a al-Raqqī, Dik al-Jinn and Abū Tammām, respectively) who emerged from a town or region not otherwise known for a rich cultural life. Mecca, Medina and Damascus are mentioned surprisingly seldom; Basra, Baghdad and above all Kufa are far ahead of them as nurseries of talent and abodes of poets. The prominence of Kufa, which is named twenty-one times to Basra's eleven, may partly be explained by Abū l-Faraj's personal connection with the city where he studied as a young man,⁹⁵ but it should also be seen in relation to the specific nature of Kufan culture. Kufa was a centre for the collection and study of the Arabian bedouin heritage,⁹⁶ it had succeeded al-Ḥira as musical capital of Iraq, though it was later supplanted by Baghdad, and it was the home of a wine-loving bohemian society.⁹⁷ It was thus well-equipped to produce the kind of poets likely to be included in the *Aghānī*. Where Baghdad is concerned, a hint of an increasingly urban outlook may be deduced from the fact that a quarter is occasionally named, or a person's residence otherwise specified.⁹⁸

A poet's immediate family may be referred to if its activities have a bearing on his literary activity or general cultural background. As already mentioned, other poets in the family of an article's subject may be named and selections from their verses quoted.⁹⁹ If relatives expressed their rivalry in lampoons, Abū l-Faraj may indicate the fact.¹⁰⁰ The religious standing of family members is also a trait worth mentioning, whether it concerns the first member of a tribe to convert to Islam, a prominent ascetic, or a leading *muḥaddith* or *faqih*.¹⁰¹ Other domains in which relatives may distinguish themselves are knowledge of the Arabs' history and cultural and linguistic traditions.¹⁰² There are a few instances of conflict between fathers and sons and other psychological dramas. One concerns the future vizier, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn al-Zayyāt, who defied his father, a rich merchant, to become a secretary instead of going into the family business (XXIII, 46), another the obstreperous Abū Nukhayla, who fled to Syria after his father disowned him (XX, 390). In an earlier period al-Mukhabbal al-Sa'dī's son's emigration to Kufa left the poet inconsolable, until the caliph 'Umar took pity on him and ordered his son back to the Hijaz (XIII, 139).

Apart from al-Mukhabbal, all the poets whose relations with their immediate family Abū l-Faraj mentions are from the Umayyad or 'Abbāsīd periods. This suggests that, apart from a hereditary gift for poetry, which the profiles indicate for the pre-Islamic period too, other ways in which a poet's relatives might influence him only attracted attention from the time when urban culture was beginning to predominate and when the poet was seen increasingly as an individual rather than a spokesman for a group.

Apart from the designation *al-kātib* or *al-warrāq*, indicating membership of professions directly relevant to a literary career, gainful occupations are almost never included in poets' profiles. This is one of a few instances where singers' profiles are slightly more informative.

Another subject which Abū l-Faraj considers less important for poets than for singers is physical appearance. He remarks on a few distinctive traits, such as skin colour,¹⁰³ partial or complete blindness,¹⁰⁴ and the attractive appearance of the poetesses Faḍl and 'Inān.¹⁰⁵ For poets the physical characteristic most directly relevant to their career is blindness, which in Rabi'a al-Raqqi's case seems to have limited his mobility and thus his participation in court life (XVI, 254).

The profiles contain far more references to character traits, habits and activities. The virtues already noted as being ascribed to tribal chiefs, generosity, courage and enterprise in war, and eloquence, reappear,¹⁰⁶ as do the *ṣu'lūk's* daring and fleet-footedness.¹⁰⁷ Some poets, however, exhibit the opposite qualities of meanness and cowardice,¹⁰⁸ or other faults such as lack of judgement and stupidity (*saḡah*),¹⁰⁹ dishonesty, cruelty and spitefulness.¹¹⁰

From the Umayyad period on the qualities of *ẓarf* (denoting intelligence, sensitivity, wit, elegance and social graces)¹¹¹ and skill as a raconteur¹¹² appear, sometimes combined with hedonism (*lahw*);¹¹³ this quality in turn may be linked to a penchant for drinking wine¹¹⁴ or a generally licentious or impudent attitude (*muḡān*).¹¹⁵ Many poets of the 'Abbāsid age are noted for their culture and literary achievements (*adab*),¹¹⁶ particularly important in court circles and among the *kuttāb*; by contrast, few poets are described as transmitters of *ḥadīth*¹¹⁷ or otherwise involved in scholarship, either by collecting information or, in the case of bedouin, by providing it.¹¹⁸

A few personalities stand out for their careers and success in public life. The closest Abū l-Faraj comes to a *curriculum vitae* is in presenting al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba's activities. He was

one of those among the Arabs who embodied shrewdness, resoluteness, judgement and the capacity to deploy effective ruses (...) He was a Companion of the Prophet (...) and was present at the conquest of Yamāma and the conquests in Syria (...) He lost one eye at the battle of the Yarmūk (...) He was with Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ at al-Qādisiya (...) and Sa'd chose him as his ambassador to Rustum because of his shrewdness (...) 'Umar appointed him governor several times, and when he was governor of Basra he conquered Maysān, Dast-i Maysān and Abraqubādh (...) He attacked the Persians who were in Sūq al-Ahwāz, fought and vanquished them and took the town (...) He marched east with al-Nu'mān ibn al-Muqarrin (...) and when Nihāwand was conquered, he marched on Hamadan and captured it. Then 'Umar appointed him governor of Kufa, and he was in that post when the caliph was killed. Mu'āwiya reappointed him, and he remained governor of Kufa until his death. He was the first to set up the record of those

entitled to stipends in Basra, fixing the rates at which people should be paid.

(XVI, 79–80)

This account is unique in its detail,¹¹⁹ perhaps because the rest of the article takes up the more light-hearted themes of al-Mughira's cunning, opportunism and fondness for women, including his famous trial for adultery. Other indications of poets occupying influential positions are more succinct and come from the 'Abbāsid period. Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf was al-Ma'mūn's private secretary (XXIII, 118); Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās al-Šūlī occupied important administrative functions, being head of the department of caliphal estates (*dīwān al-dīyā'*) when he died (X, 44); Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir, "one of the leading secretaries in Iraq", "enjoyed much prestige, occupying high office. Al-Mutawakkil gave him preferment and accorded him a privileged position" (XXII, 157).

Over against such success stories, there are those who acquired notoriety through deviant behaviour. Sometimes they were compulsive drinkers,¹²⁰ sometimes mentally disturbed.¹²¹ Those lovers who were killed by their passion¹²² or otherwise behaved in an excessive fashion, like Dīk al-Jinn, who murdered his slave-girl out of jealousy and then devoted his poetry to mourning her (XIV, 51) are in a similar category, as is Khālīd ibn Yazīd, who allowed his obsession with alchemy to ruin his life (XVII, 341).

Abū l-Faraj seems not to have considered character and behaviour as fixed in all circumstances, for the profiles include examples of poets who underwent a profound psychological change. Ādam ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz was one of those whose life al-Saffāḥ spared when he was trying to exterminate the Umayyads. To begin with Ādam "was dissolute, impudent and a heavy drinker, but upon entering old age he became devout, and his conduct was exemplary when he died" (XV, 286). Sa'id ibn Wahb likewise repented, after he had been besotted with boys and wine, dying "in penitence and abstinence, admired for his way of life" (XX, 336). The change could occur in the opposite direction too. Ibn Munādhīr "was pious in his youth, but then he gave up religious observance to lampoon people. He became a public scandal, was rejected and took to attacking the reputations of the inhabitants of Basra, until finally he was banished to the Hijaz, where he died" (XVIII, 169).

Abū l-Faraj also notes a case where a poet's standing in his clan of origin is sharply at variance with his individual reputation. Al-Walīd ibn Yazīd's prominence among the Umayyads for his valour, refinement, generosity, poetic gifts and strength has already been mentioned. But he was also "a sinner, dissolute, suspected of not fulfilling his religious duties and accused of heresy" (VII, 1).

From these examples it seems that the later the period in which a poet lived, the greater the interest in his character and its complexities. In the case of al-Walīd, who lived in the later Umayyad period, his characteristics as an individual are defined as distinct from, and opposed to, those he is recognised as possessing in relation to his clan. A contradiction exists between al-Walīd, judged on his own merits, and al-Walīd, considered as an Umayyad. Ādam ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Sa'id ibn

Wahb and Ibn Munādhir, who lived part or all of their lives under the ‘Abbāsids, undergo radical changes of heart; they express two contradictory sides of their character in successive phases. And whereas pre-Islamic poets are known for the set of conventional virtues looked for in a chief or, like al-Samaw’al, are proverbial for one quality, even the obscure ‘Abbāsīd poet Yaḥyā ibn Ṭālib is sketched in some detail as “eloquent, a composer of love poetry and a brave warrior. He fell into debt in his homeland and fled to Rayy, joining an expedition which was going there” (XXIV, 136). Moreover there is a greater sophistication, both conceptually and rhetorically, in the presentation of poets from the ‘Abbāsīd period, as the portrait of the governor and statesman ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir illustrates: “His high rank, prestige and closeness to the caliphs make praise and presentation of him superfluous. His situation in those respects is known to all and sundry. Moreover, he has a recognised status as a man of culture, and his magnanimity and courage have rarely been equaled” (XII, 101).

Relations between poets, as they are depicted in the *Aghānī*, are of several kinds. First, there is that between the older, recognised artist and the younger apprentice. In the pre-Islamic period the latter serves as the *rāwī* of an older master, his memory, the transmitter and reciter of his works – traditionally the way for a young hopeful to perfect his knowledge of the craft.¹²³ Abū l-Faraj indicates cases of poets who were also transmitters, as in the chain stretching back from Jamīl (d. c. 82/701) through Hudba ibn Khashram, al-Ḥuṭay’a and Ka’b ibn Zuhayr to Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā (d. 609) (VIII, 91). But the link between poet and *rāwī* is gradually supplanted in the early ‘Abbāsīd period by that between teacher (*ustādh*) and pupil (*tilmīdh*). Abū l-Faraj reflects the transitional situation in his profiles of al-‘Attābī and Maṣṣūr al-Namarī, in both of which Maṣṣūr is described as al-‘Attābī’s “pupil and transmitter” (XIII, 109 and 140). Wāliba ibn al-Ḥubāb, however, is described simply as Abū Nuwās’s *ustādh* (XVIII, 100). A further evolution in the presentation of the teacher–pupil relationship appears in the profile of al-Buḥturī, who “considered Abū Tammām as a master and model (*ṣāḥibān wa-imāman*) and held him to be better than himself” (XXI, 39); here Abū l-Faraj is not simply judging as an outside observer but also making use of al-Buḥturī’s own assessment of his relationship to Abū Tammām.

As is clear from the profile of al-Buḥturī, admiration for a poet and the existence of a teacher–pupil relationship could lead to the disciple imitating his master. But even where no personal contact is recorded, lesser poets adopted the style and manner of more gifted predecessors; thus ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi’a served as a model for al-‘Arjī (I, 385) and al-Ḥārith ibn Khālid (III, 312), and Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣa for his grandson Marwān al-Aṣghar (XXI, 206) and ‘Alī ibn al-Jahm (X, 205).¹²⁴

Just as some individuals underwent profound psychological changes, so the relationship between master and pupil could alter radically, as the example of al-‘Attābī and al-Namarī shows. Al-‘Attābī was responsible for introducing his pupil Al-Namarī to al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā al-Barmakī, who in his turn presented the young man to al-Rashīd. “After that al-Namarī and al-‘Attābī grew apart, broke off their

friendship and took to exchanging lampoons, with each of them seeking to bring about the other's fall" (XIII, 140).

When there are indications in a profile that poets are each others' contemporaries, these may serve several ends. They may simply establish roughly when someone lived; for instance, several poets are dated to the period of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq.¹²⁵ Who a poet's contemporaries were might also determine his success and reputation to some extent. Murra ibn Maḥkān was condemned to obscurity because of the brilliance of his companions, Jarīr and al-Farazdaq (XXII, 321). Abū l-Shiṣ was "an average member of his generation of poets, of no great reputation because his contemporaries included Muslim ibn al-Walid, Ashja' and Abū Nuwās. As a result he went unnoticed" (XVI, 400). But he was canny enough to attach himself to a provincial notable, the governor of Raqqa, who met all his needs. Abū l-'Ibar, finding himself surrounded by brilliant contemporaries, chose a less dignified solution; "a good poet, naturally gifted, he composed earnest poetry to begin with, from al-Amin's reign when he was a boy until al-Mutawakkil became caliph. Then he abandoned seriousness and resorted to buffoonery, for which he became notorious. For he was already past fifty, and he realised that there would be no demand for his poetry as long as Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī, Abū l-Ṣimt ibn Abī Ḥafṣa and their like were composing at the same time" (XXIII, 197).

Contemporary poets engaged in contests to lampoon each other, with varying results. Sometimes the participants were on a level, or there was no clear winner.¹²⁶ But taking on a rival was a risky affair, for if one of the contestants was utterly vanquished, his career could come to an end.¹²⁷ He also exposed himself to possible humiliation if a well-known poet ignored his challenge.¹²⁸ Sometimes, however, contests were nipped in the bud; 'Adī ibn al-Riqā' attacked Jarīr in a poem in al-Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik's presence, but Jarīr did not dare to reply openly because al-Walid had sworn to punish him if he lampooned his rival (IX, 307). Whatever the outcome of these competitions, they played an important part in establishing a pecking order among a given generation of poets and influenced posterity's judgement of them. From the instances Abū l-Faraj mentions in the profiles, the contests loomed largest in the Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid period; the latest one is that involving Dī'bil and Abū Sa'd al-Makhzūmī (XX, 120).

Lampoon competitions are the aspect of relations between poets to which Abū l-Faraj refers most often. But he does not ignore the existence of more amicable contacts. Sometimes an older, recognised poet would give a favourable verdict on the verses of a younger man.¹²⁹ Or the friendship between two poets might find its ultimate expression in the elegy one of them composed on the other.¹³⁰ Circles of poets are recorded, such as that formed by Abū Nuwās, Abū l-'Atāhiya, Muslim ibn al-Walid and other Kufans who met at Ismā'il al-Qarāṭisi's house and were plied by him with wine, boys and singing girls (XXIII, 194). Belonging to such a circle implied sharing similar beliefs; like his friends Muṭī' Ibn Iyās and Ḥammād al-Rāwiya, from whom he was inseparable, 'Ammār Dhū Kināz was suspected of irreligion (*zandaqa*) (XXIV, 200).

Abū al-Faraj mentions several cases of friendship between poets and singers. These have a particular significance not only in relation to musical culture, but also for the influence a singer could exert on the career of a less than brilliant poet.¹³¹ Abū l-Faraj has no illusions about the quality of Ibn Sayāba's verses, and puts his success down to his friendship with Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī and his son Iṣḥāq, who set his poetry to music, brought him to the caliph's attention and kept him in the public eye by performing songs with lyrics by him (XII, 88).

There are also, of course, instances of friendships between poets and singers which played no part in the formers' advancement,¹³² and even a case of a kind of partnership formed by a poet and a singer from the same tribe and town.¹³³

Among the relationships within the artistic community, it is those between poets and patrons to which Abū l-Faraj devotes by far the most attention. Some poets are simply mentioned as having eulogised caliphs, Umayyads, 'Abbāsids or both,¹³⁴ or as having been closely attached to prominent governors or ministers.¹³⁵ In some cases the material gains a poet derived from his connection with a patron are indicated,¹³⁶ or he is described as acquiring some other practical advantage from it.¹³⁷

Abū l-Faraj suggests various reasons for a poet appealing to a notable. Verses expressing support for individuals or groups,¹³⁸ coupled sometimes with hostility to their opponents,¹³⁹ might attract a potential patron's attention. An appreciation of the poet's style or tone could also dispose the notable favourably towards him.¹⁴⁰

Engaging themselves to support a prominent personality or a dynasty, poets to some extent linked their fate to that of their patron and faced an uncertain future if he lost power or was defeated. Abū l-Faraj provides contrasting examples of how their careers evolved in such circumstances. After Ibn al-Zubayr was defeated, one of his supporters, 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥajjāj, went to 'Abd al-Malik in disguise and by the use of much cunning secured an amnesty for himself (XIII, 158). When al-Mutawakkil died, Marwān al-Aṣghar, who had ingratiated himself with him by lampooning the Ṭālibids, was dismissed by his successor, al-Muntaṣir, and forbidden to appear in his presence ever again (XXIII, 206). But the fact that some poets are mentioned as having praised members of both the Umayyad and the 'Abbāsid dynasty without further comment shows that the 'Abbāsid revolution did not mean the end of their career, or even perhaps present a serious obstacle to their pursuing it.

This may have been connected with the degree of their commitment to their patrons, which could vary widely. Abū Nukhayla, after his father disowned him, fled to Syria where he became Maslama ibn 'Abd al-Malik's protégé and eulogised several caliphs. Despite being rewarded by them he "showed them little loyalty later on, attaching himself to the Hāshimites and calling himself the Hāshimites' poet. He composed panegyrics of the 'Abbāsids and many attacks on the Umayyads. His ambition prompted him to compose a poem in the *rajaz* metre dedicated to al-Manṣūr in which he enticed the caliph to depose 'Īsā ibn Mūsā as his successor and have his own son Muḥammad al-Mahdī recognised instead. Al-Manṣūr rewarded him with two thousand dirhams and ordered him to recite it in 'Īsā ibn Mūsā's presence, which he did. 'Īsā sought to revenge himself on him, but the poet

fled. Then ‘Īsā sent a freedman after him, who caught up with him on the road to Khurasan, slaughtered and flayed him” (XX, 390).

But a change of allegiance could be prompted by honourable motives, as the career of ‘Abdallah ibn al-Zabīr shows. A fanatical supporter of the Umayyads, he was taken prisoner when Muṣ‘ab ibn al-Zubayr captured Kufa. “But Muṣ‘ab pardoned him, showing him favour and rewarding him. So he dedicated many panegyrics to his benefactor and became his faithful companion, staying with him until he was killed. ‘Abdallāh went blind later” (XIV, 217).

Another example of a poet’s devotion to his patron, unique because the patron was a woman, is provided by Abū Ḥafṣ al-Shiṭranjī, who grew up in al-Mahdī’s palace with the children of his freedmen and after his death attached himself to ‘Ulayya. “He left the palace with her when she married, and when she returned to the palace, so did he. He used to compose poems for her on the subjects she desired, connected with her dealings with her brothers and nephews, the caliphs, and she would adopt some of them as her own and leave the others” (XXII, 44).

Most poets’ attitudes to their patrons seem largely to have been determined by a combination of the ambition, opportunism, gratitude and sincere commitment mentioned in the sketches of Abū Nukhayla’s and ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zabīr’s careers above. Not to be guided in part by self-interest had its dangers, as can be seen from the fate of ‘Alī ibn Jabala. His praise of the highly cultured and gifted ‘Abbāsīd general Abū Dulaf al-‘Ijlī, and by extension the tribal confederation, Rabī‘a, to which he belonged, was so effective that Muḍar, the grouping of which Quraysh, the Prophet’s and caliphs’ tribe, formed part, felt itself cast into the shade. Abū l-Faraj rejects one report that the caliph al-Ma’mūn had ‘Alī’s tongue cut out as a punishment for this outrage, in favour of another that the poet had to go into hiding until al-Ma’mūn died (XX, 14).

Exceptionally, Abū l-Faraj mentions a patron’s high regard for a poet leading him to tolerate deviant opinions or behaviour. Although the Marwānīd caliphs knew of Kuthayyir’s Kaysānī leanings and belief in reincarnation, their attitude to him was not affected (IX, 4). The early ‘Abbāsīd caliphs appreciated Abū Dulāma’s company and skill as a raconteur so much that they ignored his blatantly ungodly and immoral behaviour. But in his case what may have tipped the balance was that his first success at the ‘Abbāsīd court came with a poem celebrating al-Manṣūr’s elimination of Abū Muslim (X, 235).

Abū l-Faraj’s entries on relations of patronage suggest that the institution evolved over time. Whereas, for the Umayyad period, he mentions nine instances of poets attached to caliphs and only two attached to governors, for the ‘Abbāsīd period governors and ministers act as patrons just as frequently as caliphs do. And when he enumerates a succession of patrons thanks to whom a poet advanced in his career, in five out of six cases they belong to the ‘Abbāsīd era. The impression thus created is that the system of patronage became more elaborate and the role of governors and administrators in it more important under the ‘Abbāsīds.¹⁴¹

But not every poet sought patronage, a fact which does not escape Abū l-Faraj. Sometimes he simply notes that a poet did not serve the caliphs,¹⁴² an omission

not always connected with mediocre talent.¹⁴³ Failure to appear at court, however, prevented some poets acquiring the recognition which they could have been expected to enjoy,¹⁴⁴ and once or twice this stay-at-home character is explained by lack of ambition¹⁴⁵ or a parochial outlook.¹⁴⁶ But poor eye-sight provided a respectable excuse for ‘Ammār Dhū Kināz, who in any case enjoyed wide popularity in his native town, Kufa, still an important cultural centre at that time (XXIV, 220).

While Abū l-Faraj pays much attention to relations between poets and patrons, he is equally concerned to characterise poets’ oeuvres. Among the external criteria he mentions, the one which recurs most often is *muqill*, “author of a scanty oeuvre”.¹⁴⁷ But he realises that the size of a poet’s extant *diwān* may not reflect its original extent, because parts of it may have disappeared with the passage of time.¹⁴⁸ The case of al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, of whose work very little survived, although he was counted, along with his contemporaries Bashshār and Abū l-‘Atāhiya, as one of the most prolific poets in the history of Arabic literature, merits a special discussion. According to Abū l-Faraj, al-Sayyid’s frequent and violent attacks on the Companions and the Prophet’s wives led the public to shun all his poetry, whatever its theme, even though his style and manner of composition were almost unmatched (VII, 229–30).¹⁴⁹ Other external aspects of a poet’s oeuvre which the profiles mention are its also comprising prose works, generally letters, and poems in *rajaz* or unconventional metres.¹⁵⁰

Subjects which a poet specialised in describing are also indicated, and they reflect an evolution in preoccupations from the pre- and early Islamic period to the ‘Abbāsīd age, with horses and wild asses yielding to wine and boys.¹⁵¹ Some poets had favourite themes; Zayd al-Khayl celebrated his own prowess in raids and entertaining guests (XVII, 245), al-Qāsim ibn Yūsuf composed panegyrics and elegies of animals (XXIII, 118), Dik al-Jinn devoted himself to mourning the beloved slave-girl he had killed (XIV, 51–2), and Abū l-‘Atāhiya was so identified with his ascetic and gnomic poetry that he was suspected of being one of those who denied the resurrection at the Day of Judgement (IV, 2). More than other themes, love offered poets a subject they could develop in any number of ways, and several of them are described as specialising in *ghazal*, sometimes with the name of a beloved being given.¹⁵² The master of love poetry in the ‘Abbāsīd period, al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf, is characterised as follows: “His aim was to compose love poetry in the modern and traditional styles. He was delicate, attractive, tender and full of ideas, with a wide vocabulary and great versatility, but only in *ghazal*” (VIII, 353). Such an exclusive preoccupation was exceptional; poets usually treated a wide range of subjects, and it is seldom that Abū l-Faraj troubles to mention their many-sidedness.¹⁵³

To express his opinion of a poet’s literary standing Abū l-Faraj uses a number of general terms.¹⁵⁴ His scale of excellence includes the following degrees: “potent” or “a master” (*fahl*),¹⁵⁵ “first-rate” (*mutaqaddim*),¹⁵⁶ “considered outstanding” (*muqaddam*),¹⁵⁷ “excellent” (*mujīd*),¹⁵⁸ “memorable” (*ma’dūd*)¹⁵⁹ and “average” or “unmemorable” (*mutawassit* and its equivalents).¹⁶⁰ There appears to be no great precision in the application of these epithets, and one may wonder what distinguishes *muqaddam* from *mutaqaddim*, for instance, or what is meant by *mujīd*.

Often, however, these vague assessments are accompanied by more specific indications of literary pre-eminence. It is noteworthy that Abū l-Faraj employs a wider array of critical terms in these general characterisations of a poet's oeuvre than in his comments on quotations from poems.¹⁶¹ The most frequent attribute he mentions is "eloquent and correct in his use of language" (*faṣīḥ*);¹⁶² other terms used are "eloquent" (*balīgh*),¹⁶³ "sound" (*ṣāliḥ*),¹⁶⁴ "pure in [his] diction" (*naqī al-kalām*),¹⁶⁵ "with a rich, condensed style" (*jaẓīl*),¹⁶⁶ "delicate" (*raqīq*)¹⁶⁷ or "smooth" (*layyīn*)¹⁶⁸ in style. Some of these qualities may be associated with certain socio-economic groups. The Basran Abū Shurā'a is portrayed as the author of "excellent, rich poetry, neither delicate in inspiration nor fluid in its diction, resembling bedouin poetry in style" (XXIII, 22). By contrast, the 'Abbāsīd prince Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Rashīd composed "smooth poems, good coming from someone like him" (X, 187), and 'Abdallāh ibn al-'Abbās, the grandson of the vizir al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabī', "had a natural gift (...) producing graceful, refined poetry, neither excellent and dense, nor despicable, but unaffected and elegant, in the pleasing style to be expected from those who live in the lap of luxury" (XIX, 219).

Other qualities relate to tone or general approach. Poets are frequently described as "naturally gifted" (*maṭbū'*),¹⁶⁹ though interestingly Abū l-Faraj only uses the opposite, "forced, artificial" (*mutakallif*) with a negative or near-negative.¹⁷⁰ "Elegant, refined" (*ẓarīf*) may apply to the poet's general approach and attitude as well as to his diction.¹⁷¹ Those poets specialising in lampoons are almost always referred to as "having a vicious tongue" (*khabīth al-lisān*),¹⁷² and here as well as with the epithets "licentious" (*mājin*)¹⁷³ and "dissolute" (*khalī'*)¹⁷⁴ there is a suggestion that not only the poet's oeuvre but also his character are being judged.

Indeed the difficulty of distinguishing between a poet's personality and his works is suggested in two places. On the one hand al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf "was manifestly wealthy, regal in his demeanour and enjoyed a sumptuous style of life, and that is clearly reflected in his poetry" (VIII, 353). On the other hand al-Aḥwaṣ "is considered by the Hijazis in general and most transmitters of poetry as a better poet, with a nobler natural gift, more fluent diction and images than [Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt, Nuṣayb and Jamīl], were it not for the way he demeaned himself with base deeds and qualities. His poetry has a clarity and lustre, a delicacy and sweetness of diction which theirs all lacks. He was ignoble, irreligious, a great lampoonist and, it is said, a passive homosexual" (IV, 233). Whereas al-'Abbās's lifestyle and poems are consistent with each other, this is evidently far from the case with al-Aḥwaṣ, and judgements of his character are inclined to influence attitudes to his poetry. Abū l-Faraj argues here for an evaluation of the oeuvre on its own merits independently of its author's behaviour, which apparently affected the critics' reception of it.¹⁷⁵

Although Abū l-Faraj usually characterises a poet's work in a few words, he occasionally sets his achievement in its historical context. He may indicate an innovator, such as Muslim ibn al-Walīd, "the first to compose poetry in the new style known as *al-badī'* and to give it that name..." (XIX, 31), or Abū l-Hindī, "the first poet in the Islamic period to describe wine and make its portrayal his chief aim"

(XX, 329). Or he may trace the influence of some leading poets on their contemporaries and successors; in this connection the role of ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi’a, Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣa, al-‘Attābi and Abū Tammām has already been referred to. Sometimes he notes similarities and parallels between the work of different poets. For instance, Dik al-Jinn’s poetry is described as being “in the same manner as that of Abū Tammām and the Syrians” (XIV, 51);¹⁷⁶ the poetess Maḥbūba is judged almost as good as her contemporary Faḍl (XXII, 200); the secretaries Ibrāhīm ibn al-‘Abbās al-Ṣūlī and Muḥammad ibn al-Zayyāt are contrasted, and although Abū l-Faraj regards them as equally gifted, he prefers Ibn al-Zayyāt because he composed excellent poems both long and short, whereas al-Ṣūlī worked only on a small scale (XXIII, 47).¹⁷⁷ And he gives an example of how poets saw themselves as working within a historical tradition, when he mentions Di‘bil’s composing a famous poem in praise of the Yemeni tribes to refute al-Kumayt ibn Zayd’s attack on them (XX, 120), an attack which dated from a century before, as can be inferred from the article on al-Kumayt (XVII, 1–40).

While Abū l-Faraj generally confines his presentations of poets and their works to a few phrases, he occasionally embarks on a longer discussion when a particular issue calls for it. A poet’s originality, his place in the history of Arabic poetry and critical reception of his oeuvre are the subjects he treats at greatest length. Al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf’s artistry and his concentration on one genre, and the disappearance of much of the enormous oeuvre of al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, are two cases already mentioned where Abū l-Faraj exceeds his usual terse summary. Others in which he combines a general presentation with emphasis on a particular aspect of a poet’s work concern al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk, an original and gifted poet to whom Abū Nuwās was heavily indebted (VII, 1246), and al-Buḥturī, whose shortcomings in *hijā’* and veneration for his master Abū Tammām both receive comment (XXI, 37–9). Abū l-Faraj goes to greatest lengths when introducing controversial poets about whom critical opinion is divided. One such is Abū Tammām, whom he refrains from discussing thoroughly because so much argument has raged about him already (XVI, 384); he warns, however, against the tendency of some of his contemporaries to indulge in destructive criticism in order to improve their own standing and condemns their preoccupation with Abū Tammām’s artistic shortcomings, which leads them to form an unbalanced judgement of him (XVI, 383).

The most detailed discussion of all concerns Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, and I will conclude this section with a partial translation of it. The passage, like the quotation from the defence of ‘Arib at the end of [Chapter 3](#), illustrates Abū l-Faraj’s marshalling arguments and documentary evidence. It also reflects his sense of the evolution of Arabic poetry and his consciousness of the extra-literary reasons determining critics’ attitudes.

Having lived shortly before our time, Ibn al-Mu‘tazz enjoys far-reaching fame for his merits and cultural achievements, which are largely recognised by all classes of society. As for his poetry, if it at times betrays princely subtlety, a refined approach to love and the limpid style of the Moderns,

it also contains much in the manner of the best poets which in no way falls short of earlier achievements. He is also the author of elegant poems such as princes compose about their preoccupations, in which it would be inappropriate for him to imitate the style of the pre-Islamic masters. When someone sets out to describe a morning drinking party in elegant, flirtatious company, with like-minded companions and singing-girls, among beds of violets, narcissus and other carefully arranged flowers in bloom, surrounded by the refined service, sumptuous furnishings and other choice accoutrements I have already mentioned as pertaining to such gatherings, he cannot abandon the fine, fluent diction which any city-dweller can understand for a crude, uncouth vocabulary and descriptions of deserts, trackless wastes, gazelles, ostriches, camel mares and stallions, tribal lands, arid plains and empty, abandoned encampments. And if he does not adopt the pre-Islamic mode he should not be censured. If he makes many fine poems, some mediocre and a few bad ones, his achievements should not be thoroughly disavowed and all his work judged as inferior because its faults have been broadcast and its virtues concealed. For any critic who wanted to treat the older poets in this way would be able to do so ... [There follow quotations of a phrase and a line by al-A'shā, one of the greatest pre-Islamic poets, which are open to criticism.] ... and there are many other examples like it. But one should only retain the best of something and disregard what one cannot approve of, for it is not a basis for forming an opinion.

Some people, however, have sought to raise their status, enhance their poor reputation and improve their base lot by attacking and slandering men of merit. But they have only debased themselves further while the objects of their attack have had their standing enhanced. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, for instance, was killed in the most horrible fashion and left no descendants to defend his name and hold it high. Yet because of his writings and poetry, his general excellence, the good reports about his life and his familiarity with every branch of learning, his reputation only improves. Consider¹⁷⁸ how his opponents launch ever fiercer attacks on him, while boasting of their own achievements and those of their predecessors who denigrated him as they do, yet they only appear more ineffectual and insignificant. And the more they vaunt their own verses and general culture, the more boring and loathsome they become.

When a capable critic sets upon them, they turn from condemning Ibn al-Mu'tazz's literary record to spreading evil reports about his religious practice and his lampooning the descendants of Abū Ṭālib, although they were themselves the first to launch attacks on the Ṭālibids in al-Muktafi's presence, until he ordered them to desist. And so they have accused Ibn al-Mu'tazz of this very offence instead of themselves, and committed even worse misdeeds, as I shall mention in some detail after the information about Ibn al-Mu'tazz, God willing.¹⁷⁹

‘Abdallāh ibn al-Mu‘tazz had a good knowledge of music and the theory of melodic modes and their variations (*‘ilal*). He is the author of well-known writings on that and other subjects of a literary nature, as well as of correspondence with ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir, the Banū Ḥamdūn and others, which all indicate his pre-eminence and his great learning and wide culture.

Abū l-Faraj concludes this presentation of Ibn al-Mu‘tazz with a quotation from a letter which ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir wrote to thank him for a treatise of his addressed to Ibn Ḥamdūn about the acceptability of altering older songs to suit a performer’s range and taste. ‘Ubaydallāh is full of praise both for the eloquent style in which this treatise is couched and the ideas it sets out. And Abū l-Faraj comments: “These are the words of an intelligent, outstanding man about a kindred spirit, not those of a plodding ignoramus” (X, 274–7).

Profiles of poets and singers: similarities and contrasts

In the profiles Abū l-Faraj presents the essence of the poets and singers he treats, which he has distilled from material in the articles and sometimes from reports he does not mention. A process of analysis, evaluation and assignment to a social and literary or musical context lies behind these introductions. They are evidently the work of someone with his own conception both of the history of Arabic poetry and music and of the function of these arts in their social milieu. Occasionally, in the longer profiles, Abū l-Faraj demonstrates his capacities as a historian and sociologist of poetry and music overtly; in the main, however, he relies on the reader to carry out the task of transforming an implicit history and sociology into an explicit one.

The main common theme of the profiles is the subject’s artistic achievement. In the case of poets, the evaluation takes account of general standing, the extent of the oeuvre, innovations, diction and style, tone and approach, and specialisation in particular genres or themes. For singers, general standing, quality and number of compositions, voice production, skill on an instrument, teaching and transmitting the repertoire and, in rare cases, contributions to music theory and its application are the decisive factors. Both singers and poets are situated in the context of their contemporaries, and those from whom they learned their art may be named; in the case of singers this information is characteristically given for male slaves and women.

Other themes common to poets’ and singers’ profiles are origin, character and relations with the public. Here, however, the poets’ profiles are more detailed and, at least from the Umayyad period on, sometimes come closer to representing three-dimensional characters. Only the sketches of aristocratic musicians such as ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir or the masters Ibrāhīm and Ishāq al-Mawṣili depart from a conventional singer’s image.

Among the obvious differences which the two categories of profile reveal, one is the greater variety among poets. Where they are concerned, anyone who has

verses set to music qualifies for inclusion in the *Aghānī*. Whatever his background, social standing, moral qualities or the kind of poetry he composed, once a poet is the authors of lyrics he has earned himself an article, assuming that some *akhbār* about him exist. Many, if not most, sections of Arabic-speaking society of the Arabian peninsula and the Fertile Crescent over a period of four centuries provided poets for the *Aghānī*. As a result the book offers a unique panorama of the diversity of Arabic poetry. It is probable that Abū l-Faraj's perception of poetry as a social expression also encouraged him to look outside the main trends and beyond the acknowledged masters to include obscure but honourable artists or those who in manner or theme were non-conformists. And his own critical position is consistent with this, when he argues for Modern poetry to be judged on its own merits and for the Moderns not to be condemned for referring in their verses to the reality which they knew.

The choice of singers is much more limited, for Abū l-Faraj is only interested in the music of the court and its antecedents.¹⁸⁰ The singers he treats were drawn from a limited section of society. They were town-dwellers, and either wealthy, even aristocratic, or else of humble and often slave origin. He thus excludes a large number of musical practitioners. So if, for instance, an elegy by a Bedouin poet is made into a song by a court composer, the poet qualifies for a place in the *Aghānī*, as does the composer. But if a professional mourner, a *nā'iḥa*, ever sang the same poem, Abū l-Faraj would not tell his readers about the musical side of the performance. And even within the court musical tradition, Abū l-Faraj takes up a normative position as an unconditional supporter of Ishāq al-Mawṣilī in his controversy with Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi.

Another difference is in the degree of specialisation. Singers went through a long process of training, acquiring skills not only in composition but also in performance, playing an instrument and learning the repertoire. Having once assimilated the tradition, they would very likely contribute to handing it on to the next generation, and in this respect they resemble learned groups in mediaeval Islamic society such as *muḥaddithūn*. Leading singers formed schools and transmitted their style to later generations; as a result, conflicts about matters of performance lived on for many years.

Poets did not have the same formalised and long-drawn-out training even in the 'Abbāsid period, and for many of them, especially earlier, not even the apprenticeship of serving as an established poet's *rāwī* is recorded. Except for the early transmitters and the scholar-poets, they did not contribute systematically to the preservation of the poetic repertoire. Although they discussed their art and held opinions about it, practitioners of poetry did not usually form schools comparable to those of singers (perhaps the partisans of Abū Tammām and al-Buḥtūrī form the closest analogy), nor did they make up a group of specialists. And while many of them, especially in the 'Abbāsid period, lived from their art, even then they might have other sources of income – as *kuttāb*, scholars or booksellers.

The theme of relations with other members of the artistic community and with patrons occurs in the profiles of both singers and poets; both groups became

increasingly dependent on the court from the early 'Abbāsid period on. From singers patrons demanded skill in their art and possession of the conventional social graces, but little more is to be learned about the relationship from the profiles. Significantly, they do not mention the conflicts which could arise between patrons and musicians, although subsequent reports in the articles show that they existed and were occasioned by clashes of character, intrigues by rivals and gaffes the singers committed.

By contrast, the poets' profiles devote much space to discussing a variety of social relations. Abū l-Faraj offers a wealth of information on the subject which reflects an interest in all kinds of human experience and interaction and a sense of a connection between a poet's environment, his personality and the poetry he composes. The variety of examples which he gives of poets' behaviour in relation to their works, or in contrast to them, precludes any facile conclusion about what this connection may be, and tends to show that it is not the same in every case.

This sense of a connection between the world in which the poet lives and the poetry he composes is further developed in the observations about the relations within the artistic community. Like other mediaeval Arabic authors who treat poets biographically, in the loose sense of the term, Abū l-Faraj pays attention to contacts between poets, as colleagues and rivals, or in a teacher-pupil relationship. Unlike them, he extends his interest to include relations between poets and musicians.¹⁸¹ But it is the link between poets and patrons which fascinates him, to judge by the space he devotes to discussing it. If this fascination can be explained in part by the prominent role patronage played in the evolution of Arabic poetry from the later Umayyad period on, there is also, I believe, a more personal reason for it. The relationship between poet and patron reflects the interplay of ideological commitment, self-interest, preferences for certain styles and themes, the poet's capacity to impose himself in his audience and yet other factors; in other words, it offers an endless variety of examples of human interaction in a literary context. From Abū l-Faraj's choice of *akhbār* in the *Aghānī*, this interaction would seem to be a major interest of his.

The difference between singers' and poets' profiles is to some extent given with the quantity and nature of the material to hand. First, Abū l-Faraj had less information to draw on for the world of music than for poetry. Since he did not invent reports, he was limited in the last analysis to drawing conclusions from what he had before him. Second, poetry may treat themes related to the poet's life and human experience or expressing his attitude to his society. A poet's verses will then awake an interest in his life and his involvement in political or other issues. Musicians composed and performed their songs so as to move their audience emotionally, but such settings do not direct the listener's attention back to the composer's life in the same way as the lyrics may do to the poet's.

While for both singers and poets the profiles document historical changes in matters such as origin, the process of apprenticeship or the institution of patronage, as far as poets are concerned the profiles reflect the history of Arabic literature in another way too. The later the period in which a poet lived, the more likely it is

that they will touch on the complexities of his character. This is not only because Abū l-Faraj had more material to hand for ‘Abbāsīd than for pre-Islamic poets, but more importantly because the portrayal of pre-Islamic poets in the *akhbār* is one-dimensional, while that of later poets betrays an increasing awareness of the different and contradictory aspects of character and allows glimpses of the individual’s inner life through extensive use of dialogue.

Finally, while the attention which Abū l-Faraj pays to poetry in the profiles remains constant throughout the 24 volumes of the *Aghānī*, his remarks about poets’ characters and especially their relations to their patrons become increasingly more detailed towards the end of the book.¹⁸² The conclusion is inescapable that he became progressively more interested in the social factors influencing the composition of poetry as he was writing. In other words, the profiles of poets show Abū l-Faraj becoming more and more drawn to the sociology of literature.

ABŪ L-FARAJ ON PROSE, AKHBĀR AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL

As the last two chapters have shown, Abū l-Faraj addresses a number of the same issues in his interventions about songs and poetry. In both cases he focusses on questions of attribution and aesthetic evaluation and on profiles of creative artists. In addition, where songs are concerned he pays particular attention to transmission, while in connection with poetry he confronts the problem of making a selection from enormous quantities of material.

Unlike poetry narrative prose, the stuff of *akhbār*, did not interest early mediaeval Arab critics as a type of artistic expression.¹ Moreover, the *Kitāb al-aghānī* focusses on poems and their settings, whereas the historical reports it contains merely serve to sketch the background and context in which the poems and settings were composed and performed. For these two reasons it will come as no surprise that Abū l-Faraj says almost nothing about prose and *akhbār* as literature. Where his observations about them parallel those for settings and lyrics is in questions of transmission and selection. Because these two topics lead on to the second part of this study, on the organisation of articles, I will examine them after looking at the rare remarks the compiler makes about prose as a literary expression.

Rhymed prose

Rhymed prose and narrative motifs (*maʿānī*) are the two aspects of prose as a literary expression which are fleetingly mentioned by Abū l-Faraj. His observations about rhymed prose, *saʿī*, are contained in the section in Ibn Mayyāda's article where the poet's rivalry with Ḥakam al-Khudrī, a celebrated composer of *saʿī*, is described. Abū l-Faraj, who is quoting a report of al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār,² breaks off to remark: "... And al-Zubayr quoted at length from rhymed prose of his which is poor and worthless, because it is neither well-ordered (i.e. metric; *manzūm*) *rajaz*, nor eloquent as far as diction is concerned, nor ending in rhymes which concord with each other like those of poetry". But to give an idea of it, he includes what he regards as one of the least objectionable passages: "*Wā-llāhi la-in sāja ʿanī sijā ʿā la-tajidannī shujā ʿā li-l-jāri mannā ʿā wa-l-ajidannaka hayyā ʿā li-l-ḥasabi miḍyā ʿā wa-la-in bāṭashtuka biṭāshā la-udhishannaka idhāshā wa-la-aduqqanna minka mushāshā ḥattā yajī ʿa bawluḥa rashāshā*" (II, 291).³ As with other comparable judgements of Abū

l-Faraj's, one senses behind the confident verdict a highly developed critical sense, but to the modern reader's frustration the principles on which it is based are taken for granted.⁴

Ma'ānī in prose

The second aspect of prose which Abū l-Faraj refers to is *ma'ānī*. He generally uses the term in the plural, where it may be rendered "narrative content" or "narrative motifs", as the instances where it occurs illustrate.

One such instance is found in the article on Abū Sa'id the *mawlā* of Fā'id, which starts with Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, or in an alternative version the caliph al-Mahdī, in the Maṣjid al-Ḥarām at Mecca requesting from the singer-poet a performance of his "Seven times I went around the Ka'ba".⁵ Abū Sa'id sings a song which he claims is better, and then explains that he will not perform "Seven times" because of a dream in which the Prophet reproached him for the effect it had had on the Muslim community and his subsequent promise never to sing it again. Abū l-Faraj rejects the alternative version of this event in which al-Mahdī is a protagonist and gives his reasons, before mentioning that in yet another account it was Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī who requested the song. In his view both Ibrāhīm and Ishāq could have had similar encounters with Abū Sa'id. He adds: "As for the report in which Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī figures in particular, it has a different narrative content from this (*lahu ma'ānin ḡhayru hādhihi*), and the song he asked [Abū Sa'id] for is another one ..." (IV, 330–2). Later on this report is quoted; it tells how Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī's attention is attracted by an elderly man in the Maṣjid al-Ḥarām. On learning that it is Abū Sa'id, he summons him and asks who is the composer of: "Those slain at Kudā and the unburied bodies at Kuthwa have caused my eyes to overflow with tears."⁶ Abū Sa'id not only admits to being the author but also sings it more than once, until Ibrāhīm has learned the melody (IV, 337).

Even from the above summary it is clear that the two accounts are relating different incidents. There are also variations in individual motifs. While Ishāq, who is on the pilgrimage, enters Mecca in advance of his companions and searches for Abū Sa'id until he finds him in the mosque, Ibrāhīm, who is already in the mosque, simply seizes the opportunity of Abū Sa'id happening to be there too to learn a song from him. The second incident has no equivalent of the Prophet's appearance in a dream. "*Ma'ānin*" must refer to some or all of these differences.

Another instance of the term *ma'ānin* occurs in a comment following the account of the meeting of Kuthayyir and his *rāwī* some way outside Medina with a mysterious woman who admires Kuthayyir's poetry, four pieces of which she has the *rāwī* recite to her. But she teases him for describing himself as handsome in two poems, when the reverse is true. This infuriates him, and he insults her. She identifies herself as Ghāḍira, Bishr ibn Marwān's concubine, and before she continues on her way she puts aside her veil to reveal a face of exquisite beauty, and then offers the two men a generous gift. Kuthayyir alludes to the woman and the encounter in one of his poems, which begins: *Shajā az'ānu Ghāḍirata l-ḡhawādī/bi-ḡhayri*

mashūratin ‘*araḍan fu’ādī* (Ghāḍira’s litters, leaving early in the morning without taking counsel with me, have unwittingly caused my heart grief).⁷

Abū l-Faraj adds: “Al-Zubayr had yet another⁸ version of the incident with this woman where he mentioned divergent narrative elements” (*Wa-qad rawā l-Zubayru fī khabari hādhihi l-mar’ati ghayra hādihā wa-khālafa l-ma’ānī*) (XII, 183–6). The second version has a young man of Quraysh relate how a beautiful woman came to Kuthayyir at Qudayd outside Mecca after the pilgrim caravan had already passed and started to compare the boasts he made in three of his poems about his good looks with the sad reality of his appearance. Kuthayyir claimed that he had recognised her and would heap lampoons on her and her tribe, but her servant refused to reveal her identity either to him or to the narrator.

The two reports have some common elements: a first-person narrator who is close to Kuthayyir (in the earlier one it is the *rāwī*); the meeting with a mysterious woman; her comparing the poet’s claims about his appearance with reality; and her referring to two of the same poems in this connection. The differences are considerable, however, for while the first woman finally reveals who she is and rewards Kuthayyir and his *rāwī*, the second preserves her incognito and leaves the poet amazed and painfully embarrassed. Some or all of these divergent points are covered by the term *ma’ānī*.

Besides these explicit references to narrative *ma’ānī*,⁹ Abū l-Faraj may sometimes employ a cryptic formula to indicate the same line of thought. It runs “*Yudhkaru l-shay’u bi-mithlih*” (Like is mentioned with like) and occurs in connection with similarities between anecdotes. The article on Yazid ibn al-Ṭathriya includes an account of how the poet’s brother was ordered to punish him for mentioning a certain woman in his poetry. The punishment consisted in the shaving off of his love-lock, upon which he composed a short poem given in the *khabar*. Abū l-Faraj takes the opportunity to introduce a digression, the accounts of those who composed elegies on their love-locks when they were shaved off (*Akhbāru man ḥulīqat jummatuhu fa-rathāhā*), justifying it by the argument that although “they do not belong in this section (sc. on Yazid), like is mentioned with like”. There follow two accounts of head-shaving as a punishment, each with its poetic fragment. One concerns Tukhaym al-Asadi, who was caught drinking, the other an anonymous Kilābī who was discovered with a girl (VIII, 179).

In these examples the narrative element is minimal, and one might argue that there is no essential difference between the passage and others in the *Aghānī* where poetic concepts and motifs are brought together. But, as his designation of the section indicates, Abū l-Faraj considers the narrative setting an integral part of the accounts.¹⁰

Another instance where “like is mentioned with like” comes in the article on al-Shammākh. A line of his panegyric of ‘Arāba (in the lyrics of the introductory song) refers to his slaughtering his camel when he has reached the object of his eulogy.¹¹ A chain of *akhbār* relates developments of the theme and comments on it.

- (i) Abū Nuwās compares al-Shammākh’s line favourably with one by al-Farazdaq simply promising his camel a rest when it gets to the

patron's residence, and his interlocutor then quotes part of a panegyric of Dāwūd ibn Salm on Qutham ibn al-'Abbās where al-Farazdaq's idea is better worked out, rest for the camel being linked to the patron's munificence.

- (ii) 'Abd al-Malik, on hearing al-Shammākh's line, exclaims that he is rewarding the camel badly by slaughtering it.
- (iii) A man meets al-Muhallab and slaughters his camel before him. Al-Muhallab takes this as a bad omen and asks him what is behind his action. The man replies with a line of poetry to the effect that he had vowed to slaughter the animal if he met al-Muhallab in good health. Al-Muhallab asks for some of the camel's liver and offers the man a gift.
- (iv) On his way back from a campaign al-Muhallab is met by a woman who tells him that she had vowed to kiss his hand and fast for a day if she met him in good health. The same vow obliged him to give her a Soghdian maid and some money. Al-Muhallab laughs, fulfils her request and tells her not to try the same trick again, because not everyone would be so sympathetic.
- (v) Abū Dulāma meets al-Mahdī entering Baghdad and recites two lines of poetry to him expressing a vow he made. If the caliph was in good health, the vow engaged him to recite blessings on the Prophet and fill Abū Dulāma's lap with coins. Al-Mahdī immediately recites the required blessing but refuses to pay out the money, until Abū Dulāma remarks that he is too noble to fulfil the easier part of the vow and ignore the rest. Laughing, al-Mahdī orders the money to be given to him. Abū l-Faraj concludes: "This is not part of the section, but like is mentioned with like".

(IX, 168–70)

Anecdotes (ii), (iii) and (iv) go back to al-Madā'inī with the same *isnād*, while (i) and (v) come from other sources. Abū l-Faraj's remark refers to the appending of anecdote (v) to (iv), with which it shares the motifs both of someone making a vow which engages a person in authority to reward him or her and of the fulfillment of that vow. That the remark concerns only (iv) and (v) is shown by the fact that when anecdote (v) is given again, in Abū Dulāma's article, Abū l-Faraj interrupts his source, a written text of Ibn al-Naṭṭāh, to insert (iv), introducing it: "*Wā-mithlu hādhā wa-in lam yakun minhu mā ḥaddathanī bihi al-Ḥasanu bnu 'Alīyīn 'an Aḥmada bni l-Ḥārithi 'anī l-Madā'inī ...*" (X, 253). Afterwards he returns to Ibn al-Naṭṭāh.¹²

"*Mithlu hādhā*" as an indication of related narrative elements also occurs elsewhere. An anecdote in the article on 'Allūya tells how, when the singer performed a setting of 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a's famous "Would that Hind fulfilled her promise to us ..." ¹³ for al-Amin, al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabi', who was ill-intentioned towards him, told the caliph that 'Allūya was making insinuations and indirectly expressing

regret that al-Ma'mūn was advancing so slowly against him. Al-Amin flew into a rage, had 'Allūya beaten, and kept him at a distance for some time. When al-Ma'mūn took up residence in Baghdad the singer tried to ingratiate himself with him by referring to the incident, but al-Ma'mūn was unimpressed, simply observing that rulers are like lions or fires, so it is better not to run the risk of angering them and suffering irreparable harm (XI, 340–1).

Abū l-Faraj then cites a “similar example of al-Amin’s behaviour” (*mithlu hādha min fi'li l-Amin*), drawn from another source. Ishāq al-Mawṣili once entered al-Amin’s presence and was struck by his angry expression. When he enquired the cause, the caliph explained that he was furious with his father and would have given him five hundred lashes if he had still been alive. What rankled with him was that Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili had once mentioned al-Ma'mūn’s name before his in a poem praising Hārūn al-Rashid. Upon Ishāq’s observing that the order had nothing to do with political preference but was simply dictated by requirements of metre, al-Amin said it would have been better for Ibrāhīm to abandon the poem in that case. But he allowed himself to be calmed down gradually. When Ishāq later related the incident to al-Ma'mūn he was surprised and amused at it. The focus of the article then moves back to 'Allūya (XI, 341). These two anecdotes resemble each other in illustrating al-Amin’s pathological jealousy of his brother and ill-treatment of those he suspected of supporting him.

The article on Ḥammād 'Ajrād has a section on his satirical exchanges with Bashshār, which recounts among other things how the blind poet succeeded in dislodging Ḥammād from his position as tutor to the son of al-Rabī' ibn Yūnus (or al-'Abbās ibn Muḥammad al-Hāshimī, in another version), by accusing him in verse of being a pedophile. Ḥammād responded to the attack with a poem of his own, but the damage was done. Abū l-Faraj then observes that Ḥammād played exactly the same trick on Quṭrub (*wa-qad fa'ala mithla hādha bi 'aynihi Ḥammād ...*). The subsequent anecdote tells how when Quṭrub became tutor to one of al-Mahdi’s sons, Ḥammād, whose bad reputation prevented him from being given a similar position, composed a short poem warning the caliph against Quṭrub’s immorality out of jealousy. Quṭrub was instantly dismissed and left Baghdad for good (XIV, 331–2).

In two of these three examples where a resemblance between *akhbār* is pointed out, the poetry offers no grounds for the anecdotes to be regarded as similar. The anecdote where al-Muhallab fulfils the woman’s vow has no poetry in it. The verses quoted in the illustrations of al-Amin’s jealousy have nothing in common; it is only the caliph’s crazy interpretation which establishes any connection between them. In the last example it is possible to speak of a recurring poetic motif, the danger the wolf represents for the sheep, although Bashshār’s attack is cruder in tone than Ḥammād’s. But Abū l-Faraj does not point that out; it is Ḥammād’s action, as set out in the narrative, to which he directs the reader’s attention. In all three cases, then, the compiler has discerned a similarity between structures of action set out in the anecdote. His approach here is consistent with the one discussed above in the passages about *ma'ānī*. There appears to be a difference in his terminology, for

while he naturally uses *mithl* when establishing similarities, he prefers *ma'ānī* when speaking of contrasts. But the number of instances involved is too limited to allow any firm conclusions to be drawn about this question.

***Akhbār*: indications of sources**

Abū l-Faraj's concern to mention the sources of performance indications for songs which he includes has already been discussed. A similar concern can be seen in his giving the authorities for the prose reports he mentions. But in the case of *akhbār* he is working within a well-established scholarly tradition, evolved originally to authenticate *ḥadīth* but then also applied to other branches of learning such as history.¹⁴ In its basic form it consists in an *isnād*, establishing the transmission of the original information, the *matn*, to the author of the book in which it is recorded. When examining the indication of sources for *akhbār* in the *Aghānī* one must, however, bear in mind what kind of information is involved. Very seldom does Abū l-Faraj quote reports relating to the Prophet's life and the formation of norms of Islamic behaviour, the subject of *ḥadīth*. Rather, the *Aghānī akhbār* belong in the main to the realm of secular history, comprising both major and trivial events of the pre- and early Islamic epochs and of course the portrayal of musical, literary and cultural milieus. It may therefore be expected that the methods employed for indicating the material's origin and transmission will be those of the historian, and to a lesser extent the philologist, rather than the *muḥaddith*.

Early Islamic historiography did not stand still. Under the influence of the secretaries and the court culture they elaborated there evolved approaches to the writing of history quite different from those of the early Muslim scholars.¹⁵ Already in the third/ninth century, al-Dīnawarī had ceased to authenticate his material with techniques borrowed from *ḥadīth* scholarship, preferring to compile longer reports in his appropriately named *Al-akhbār al-tiwāl*. The *Murāj al-dhahab* by Abū l-Faraj's contemporary al-Mas'ūdī is a brilliant example of the same approach. But other scholars were more conservative. Al-Ṣūlī uses *isnāds* to introduce short reports frequently, if not consistently, in his literary historical *Akhbār Abī Tammām* and *Ash'ār awlād al-khulafā' wa-akhbāruhum*. His influence, as well as that of the great historian al-Ṭabarī, another of Abū l-Faraj's teachers, may partly explain why the *Aghānī* is still so well supplied with the apparatus characteristic of early Muslim religious and historical scholarship. It should also be borne in mind that Abū l-Faraj's first venture into writing, the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyīn*, was a book on a historico-religious theme, where the *isnād* was still the essential means for authenticating information; by the time he embarked on the *Aghānī* he was thoroughly familiar with this scholarly tool.¹⁶

The commonest terms¹⁷ which Abū l-Faraj employs in introducing *isnāds* are *akhbaranī* (*akhbaranā*) and, less often, *ḥaddathanī* (*ḥaddathanā*). In the course of a report he may pick up the original *isnād* with a simple *qāla* or *dhakara*, sometimes followed by the name of one of the individuals he has already mentioned, whom he identifies as a prominent authority. From a few scholars he mentions having

received the authorisation, *ijāza*, to transmit information.¹⁸ *Qara'tu 'alā* is found very rarely, for instance when Abū l-Faraj refers to studying a written collection of Abū Jilda's poems and reports about him with al-Yazīdī (XI, 310) or a book by Abū Ḥaṣhīsha with Jaḥḥa (XVII, 75), or when he mentions presenting Jaḥḥa with a fuller version of one of the latter's reports which he had heard from Ja'far ibn Qudāma (XXII, 208). *Sami'tu* is an equally unusual term, occurring in a handful of instances (e.g. XVI, 4; XX, 195), some of them in the negative denoting where Abū l-Faraj had only a written text to go on (IX, 79; XIX, 187).

The picture so far concords with the general usage in transmission terminology, even if it is somewhat simplified; there are no unambiguous indications of *munāwala* or *waṣīya* (delivery or bequest of information). Furthermore, *akhbaranī* and *ḥaddathanī* seem at times to be used interchangeably and in any order to designate acquisition of material. For instance, in al-Buḥturi's article, the principal informants are 'Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Akhfash, al-Ṣūlī and Jaḥḥa, who are introduced with both *akhbaranī* (XXI, 37, 44, 45, 47; 38, 48, 52; and 44, 45, respectively) and *ḥaddathanī* (41, 42, 48; 39, 40, 49; and 40, 43, 49, 53, respectively). Abū l-Faraj's two main informants for Muḥammad ibn Bashīr al-Khārījī's article are al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Khaḥfāf and 'Isā ibn al-Ḥasan al-Warrāq. While al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī's name is always preceded by *akhbaranī*, except for one *ḥaddathanī* (XVI, 127), 'Isā ibn al-Ḥasan merits three *ḥaddathanīs* (XVI, 102, 107, 111) besides eleven *akhbaranīs* (106, 111, 113, 119, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126, 130, 131). A similar picture emerges in the article on Ismā'il ibn Yasār, where Abū l-Faraj's uncle is an important source; he is introduced with both *ḥaddathanī* (IV, 408, 412, 420, 421) and *akhbaranī* (410, 422, 424, 425). In such cases there appears to be no difference between the two terms, reflecting the usage of historians rather than *muḥaddithūn*.

If the material is directly connected with the Prophet or the religion of Islam, however, Abū l-Faraj take account of the conventions of transmitting *ḥadīth*. A propos of the account of Quss ibn Sā'ida he says, "I heard the information about him from different quarters, but this was the only report which came to my mind when I was writing. Even though it does not have the strongest *isnād*, according to the criteria of the transmitters of *ḥadīth*, it is one of the fullest accounts" (XV, 246).

As he makes clear, Abū l-Faraj often resorts to written material too. *Nasakhtu* is the most common term here. It is noteworthy that more often than not the compiler describes the text from which he has copied either as being in the handwriting (*bi-khatti*) of a given authority, or as coming from a written document (*min kitāb*) by a given scholar.¹⁹ These explanations serve to identify the source and, when the handwriting is indicated, to authenticate it.²⁰ *Wajadtu* is less common but still quite frequent, and it too may be combined with a reference to the handwriting of an authority. On several occasions it is mentioned explicitly in connection with collections of poetry (e.g. *wajadtu fi shi'ri Abī Mihjan*; XI, 274) or song settings (e.g. *wajadtuhu [ay laḥna Sulaymin] fi jami'i [kadhā] aghānīh*; XXIII, 178) – contexts where it was not customary to indicate transmission through an *isnād*. *Ra'aytu*, a rare term, is used in the same way as *wajadtu*; on one occasion Abū l-Faraj notes comparing a report he saw in one of Ibn Abī Sa'd's written texts with the version

he had heard from two authorities and finding the two in agreement (XVI, 241).²¹ *Qara'tu* in the sense of “to read a text” is even less common. One of a handful of instances follows a story of how a woman and her husband put a stop to the poet Abū l-‘Abbās al-A‘mā’s advances to her. Abū l-Faraj remarks: “*qara'tu hādhihi l-ḥikāyata marwīyatan ‘ani l-Aṣma‘iyi ḡhayra madhikūrīn rāwihā ‘anhu*” (XVI, 301) and goes on to summarise the alternative version in which Abū l-‘Abbās is replaced by Bashshār.

Several methods for integrating different *akhbār* on the same subject into a compilation had been established by earlier scholars, and Abū l-Faraj follows them in the *Aghānī*, as he had already done in the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*.²² Foremost among them is the collective *isnād*, in which the chains of transmission for different reports on a topic are named separately and then the reports themselves are combined into one long account. One example involving three different channels of transmission may suffice: “*Akhbaranī l-Ṭūsiyu wa-Ḥaramiyyun ‘ani l-Zubayri ‘an ‘ammihī wa-akhbaranī al-Ḥusaynu bnu Yaḥyā ‘an Ḥammādin ‘ani l-Zubayriyi wa-l-Madā’iniyi wa-nasakhtu ba‘da hādhihi l-akhbāra min kitābi Aḥmada bni l-Ḥārithi ‘ani l-Madā’iniyi wa-jama’tu dhālika. Qālū jami‘an...*” (XI, 180). Occasionally, Abū l-Faraj characterises the accounts so introduced as “merging into one another” (*dakhala ḥadithu ba‘ḍihim fī ḥadithi ba‘ḍin*; XIV, 307).²³

Very often the reports were not identical, and here several courses were open to the compiler. The account of the meeting between the Prophet and the bishops of Najrān is introduced by six different *isnāds*, some of which in turn split up into different chains of transmission. Abū l-Faraj follows the first authority he names, because his version is the fullest (*ḥadithuhu atammu l-aḥādith*), whereas the wording of the others fluctuates, sometimes going into greater detail and sometimes omitting things (*bi- [...] alḥāzin tazīdu wa-tanquṣ*; XII, 4). About the killing of Tawba ibn al-Ḥumayyir Abū l-Faraj mentions two versions, one by Abū ‘Ubayda which has reached him through two different channels and one by Ibn al-A‘rābi; he follows Abū ‘Ubayda’s account because it is fuller (XI, 210).²⁴ Two accounts of a conversation Ishāq al-Mawṣili had with al-Ma’mūn existed, both going back to the musician himself, and Abū l-Faraj follows the one he heard from al-Ṣūlī, because his other authority only related part of the *khbar* (V, 347).

It was also possible to follow one version while noting the divergences given in others, and Abū l-Faraj sometimes announces that this is what he has done. He precedes his account of Ibn al-Zubayr’s banishment of the Umayyads from Medina with a list of three sources, a report going back to al-Madā’ini, one partial report transmitted from Abū Naḍr Jarir ibn Ḥāzim al-Jahḍamī’s *Kitāb al-azāriqa* and another copied from a written text attributed to al-Haytham ibn ‘Adi. He explains that he will follow al-Madā’ini, but where the other accounts diverge from that report or supplement it he will indicate the fact (I, 21). Thus, for instance, the introductory narrative of the events leading up to Ibn al-Zubayr’s revolt is drawn from al-Haytham’s text.

A similar approach, used on a larger scale, can be seen in ‘Arib’s article. Here the main source is a book of her *akhbār* compiled by Ibn al-Mu‘tazz which the singer

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Qurayṣ passed to Abū l-Faraj. The latter selected from it the material he considered appropriate and added other reports, separated or connected, some of which he had heard from transmitters, and some of which he had read, noting the transmitter in each case (XXI, 59).

When Abū l-Faraj is dealing with a number of reports on a subject and sets out to note their divergences, he more often does not follow one main version but combines the common elements. The account of Imru' al-Qays's grandfather's contacts with the Sassanian monarchs begins with four *isnāds*. The compiler notes that he has added to them a number of divergent versions which he has not heard but which go back to authorities he names, and that he will ascribe variants in the narrative to the individuals responsible for them. And he starts off: "*Qālū ...*" (IX, 78–9). The question arises whether the compiler is retelling the story in his own words; this is certainly what he does in the account of 'Abdallāh ibn Mu'āwiya's uprising, where he uses two sources, one of them itself drawing on many accounts, and then says: "I have combined the narrative content (*ma'ānī*) of what they said about this, not wishing to be wordy" (XII, 228). Another technique is to combine the reports which agree with each other, while mentioning the divergent ones separately, as for instance in the account of what happened between Yazid ibn Mufarrigh and 'Abbād ibn Ziyād, which Abū l-Faraj heard from a number of his teachers (XVIII, 255).

But the compiler may fail to combine accounts, even when the introductory *isnāds* are given together. In the article on 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdī he includes a story that Hārūn al-Rashīd, on a surprise visit to Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, heard singing girls perform songs which turned out to be by his sister. He has copied it from two sources which diverge and announces that he will indicate at the appropriate point where the differences exist (*wa-fihimā khilāfun yudhkaru fī mawḍi'ih*: X, 175). In practice this leads to a sandwiching of the versions, for he starts with one and follows it to the point where al-Rashīd discovers his sister's musical gifts, then he introduces the other, pointing out where it differs in the story so far and telling it to the end. Finally, he resumes the first account where it was broken off and completes it. The two accounts share the surprise visit and the revelation to the caliph by one of 'Ulayya's slavegirls that his sister composes, but they also differ significantly in some respects: the description of al-Rashīd's going to Ibrāhīm's house; the presence of Masrūr, who takes over the narration, in one version while he is absent from the other; Ibrāhīm's welcome of the caliph; the caliph's reaction to his discovery, which is an outburst of anger, quickly surmounted, in one case and a visit to 'Ulayya to hear her sing in the other (175–8). This example illustrates clearly that the process of combining different versions of a report may involve much more than simply altering a phrase or a name here and there. It may be a way of drawing attention to variations in poetics in a given anecdote.²⁵

Even if Abū l-Faraj has not announced at the beginning that he will mention them, divergences may also be given in the course of the *khābar*. The story of how al-Manṣūr's guide in Medina finally managed to get the reward the tight-fisted caliph had promised him exists in two independent traditions. The compiler

gives the two *isnāds* at the beginning and announces that he has combined the accounts, but later on he distinguishes points where they diverge and gives the alternative versions (XXI, 106–7). Although the story of Durayd ibn al-Šimma's proposal to al-Khansā' reached Abū l-Faraj by way of seven separate authorities with differing wording, he produces a composite account (*jama'tu akhbārahum 'alā khtilāfi alfāẓihim ...*: X, 22) but in the course of the narrative he notes variants from one or other source. The earlier scholars Ibn Sallām and Abū 'Ubayda both gave a characterisation of al-Ḥuṭay'a's poetry, and Abū l-Faraj brings the two descriptions together (*fa-jama'tu mutafarriqa mā waṣāfahu bihi fi hādhā l-khabar*: II, 165), while noting at one point a slightly different expression that Abū 'Ubayda uses.

The differences are not always noted, however; the compiler may simply create a composite account from his sources. Abū l-Faraj heard two versions of al-Buḥturī's story of his first meeting with Abū Tammām, and he simply put them together; they were close in any case (*wa-qad jama'tu l-ḥikāyatayni wa-humā qarībatān*: XXI, 41). One of the many narratives about Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili's contacts with al-Wāthiq came to Abū l-Faraj from four different quarters, and he collected the versions together, making sure to include each one's distinguishing elements, to make the account complete (*Wa-qad jama'tu riwāyatahum fi hādhā l-khabari wa-zidtu fihi mā naqaṣahu kullu wāḥidin minhum ḥattā kamulat alfāẓuh*: IX, 283).

This may also be what he did in the case of the life history of the pandore player 'Ubayda, which he heard from Jaḥḥa al-Barmakī and Ja'far ibn Qudāma, both of whom had it from Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Sarakhsī. He observes: "Ja'far's version is fuller. I read it out to Jaḥḥa and he recognised it and admitted to me that he had heard it. They both said..." (... *wa-khabaru Ja'farin atammu illā annī qara'tuhu 'alā Jaḥḥata fa-'arafahu wa-dhakara li annahu sami'ahu qālā jami'an*: XXII, 208). There is no subsequent indication of differences in the two accounts.

The preceding examples illustrate various ways in which Abū l-Faraj works a number of *akhbār* into a continuous narrative on a given subject, while sometimes showing the divergences between them. In many other places he does not try to integrate them into a single account, but he comments on their relationship to each other. For example, he quotes a story transmitted by 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Munajjim and his father from Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili in which the musician tells of succeeding in silencing Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī in one of their many skirmishes before the caliph, in this case al-Mu'taṣim. The compiler then remarks that he heard the same report from another quarter, still narrated by Iṣḥāq but with an addition which he proceeds to give (V, 284). This is a longer ending involving the governor of Baghdad, Iṣḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Muṣ'abī, overreacting to a frivolous remark of al-Mawṣili's which he thinks has angered the caliph.²⁶

The later version may provide not merely further details but also important new information. The first anecdote relating to Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili's quarrel with Aḥmad ibn Hishām and his brother 'Alī goes back to Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī, who describes how he recited to Aḥmad a poem of Iṣḥāq's making fun of his speech handicap, and how Aḥmad cursed the musician. But a version of the same incident

transmitted from another quarter adds that Aḥmad swore to do Iṣḥāq as much harm as possible and have him assassinated (XVII, 114).

But elsewhere Abū l-Faraj simply remarks after a *khabar* that other authorities have conveyed essentially the same information to him. He uses expression such as “*dhakara mithlahu*” (VII, 148 and 155; VII, 292) or “*dhakara naḥwan minhu*” (VII, 148; XXI, 295), and he may indicate that the wording differs; “*dhakara qarīban minhu yazīdu wa-yanquṣu wa-lā yuḥīlu ma‘nan*” (XIII, 31) or “*fa-dhakara [Iṣḥāqu] ma‘nā l-khabari qarīban mim mā dhakarahu l-Aṣma‘īyu wa-l-alfāzu takhtalif*” (V, 323). As this last quotation shows, the distinction between the meaning, *ma‘nā*, of a report and its wording, *lafẓ*, is sometimes encountered in the indications of virtually identical reports.

There are other degrees of variation in Abū l-Faraj’s comparisons of *akhbār*. In one case, having quoted a report of ‘Umar ibn Shabba about the Damascus public’s preference for Jarīr over al-Farazdaq, he observes that he also heard Ibn Sallām’s version of the anecdote, which was essentially the same but less detailed (*dhakara naḥwan min ḥikāyati Abi Zaydin illā annahā atammu min ḥikāyati Bni Sallām*: VIII, 65). Elsewhere the compiler points out that the report is the same but the *isnād* is less detailed, as for instance in the anecdote about ‘Utayba ibn Mirdās’s experiences with ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Abbās, al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī and ‘Abdallāh ibn Ja‘far, which he gives with an *isnād* going back by way of Ja‘far ibn Qudāma, Aḥmad ibn al-Hārith and al-Madā‘inī to three informants. Then he remarks that he heard “*mithla mā maḍā aw qarīban minhu*” with another *isnād* going back only as far as al-Madā‘inī (XXII, 228–31).

The remarks quoted above do not pretend to give an exhaustive picture of Abū l-Faraj’s method of introducing *akhbār* in the *Aghānī* but only to list the most characteristic expressions he uses. Those familiar with the works of historians such as al-Ṭabarī, who adopted the techniques of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, will recognise that the terms with which the compiler brings in the *isnāds* and the ways in which he combines and compares them belong to a tradition. In a few respects, however, Abū l-Faraj seems to have taken an independent course, as I will now show.

Unusual characteristics of Abū l-Faraj’s indications of sources

First of all, Abū l-Faraj does not adhere to the conventional early Islamic tradition of learning²⁷ in preferring reports heard from scholars or discussed with them to ones which have only been read. He readily combines the two kinds of account, and gives no sign that he considers those he found in books less reliable than those he acquired from teachers. For instance, he derives his account of the Prophet letting Ḥātim al-Ṭā‘ī’s daughter go free after she had been captured with other members of Ṭayyī’ from a version he heard from Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Ammār and another he found in a written text circulating among the Kufan scholars (*fi ba‘ḍi nusakhi l-Kūfiyīn*), both of them with an *isnād* going back to ‘Alī. The Kufan version was fuller (*atamm*), so he copied it and combined the two

(XVII, 363). Abū Nuwās's confession that he is the "soulmate" (*shaqīq al-naḥs*) referred to in a verse by Wālība ibn al-Ḥubāb reached Abū l-Faraj from Ibn Qutayba both through an *isnād* and in a written version, the latter being more detailed, so he put the two together (XVIII, 101). He reports a verbal clash between al-Faḍl al-Lahabī and al-Aḥwaṣ which he copied from a text of Ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ's going back to al-Haytham ibn 'Adī and heard from al-Yazīdī, in his lectures from the *Kitāb al-jawābāt*, with an *isnād* going back to al-Madā'ini.²⁸ He follows Ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ's version (*al-lafẓu lahu*), because it is fuller (XVI, 176). Musāwir al-Warrāq's outburst complaining of the noise Abū Ḥanifa's disciples made and his subsequent verses to mollify the scholar were both transmitted from Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna with an *isnād* and noted down on paper, and again the written version was fuller (XVIII, 151). An incident when Ismā'il ibn al-Hādī visited al-Ma'mūn and heard 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdī teaching her brother Ibrāhīm one of her songs reached Abū l-Faraj by way of Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Šūlī and a text of Ibn Durayd. They both quote the same *isnād*, but Abū l-Faraj follows the wording of the written source (*al-lafẓu lahu*) (X, 185).²⁹

In these and a number of other cases it is obvious that what concerns Abū l-Faraj is not how the versions reached him but which of them provides more information. Even when the provenance of the written version is vague, simply "a written text of a Kufan scholar" or "a written account transmitted from Ibn Qutayba" he is still prepared to give it the same status as a report he has heard. Two reasons may be suggested for this departure from the conventions of *ḥadīth* scholarship and the historiography related to it. First, Abū l-Faraj was not familiar merely with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*'s methods of authenticating information. As has been explained earlier, the performance indications for songs were transmitted according to a different method, while his quotations of poetry reflect a situation in which it was often not necessary to refer to sources.³⁰ Thus, he was likely to develop a somewhat more relativistic approach to *isnāds* than scholars who only worked with that convention. Second, and perhaps more important, as a professional *kātib*, Abū l-Faraj was dealing with documents every day – documents which would normally be considered reliable, unless there was good reason to doubt their authenticity. It may well be that this coloured his approach to include written information in the *Aghānī* and according it as much value as what he heard from scholars.

This hypothesis is supported by two passages in the *Aghānī* where the compiler directly or indirectly conveys his awareness of the limitations of the *isnād* as a method of validating information. One passage is in the article on Ash'ab, which begins with Abū l-Faraj's summary of biographical information about him (XIX, 135), but is then followed by the singer-entertainer's own contradictory remarks, including his fantastic claims to have witnessed an event which happened some thirty years before his birth; all of them are introduced with *isnāds*. This unusual initial section, which leaves the reader in uncertainty, ends with the compiler's resigned "*wa-llāhu a'lam*" (135–40).³¹ In such a case, a document like a birth certificate (had it existed at the time) would obviously have been very helpful. The

second passage is the introductory section of the article on Majnūn, which consists mainly of a series of *akhbār*, each with its *isnād*, expressing differing views on whether the poet existed and what his name was (II, 1–10). The transition to the next section is formed by the compiler distancing himself from his sources and refusing to take any responsibility for what they say (11).³² Here, too, the difficulty could have been cleared up with documentary evidence, for instance an entry in a army pay-roll if Majnūn had had a different kind of career. As it is, the limits of the *isnād* as a scholarly tool are clearly suggested.

A second form that Abū l-Faraj's independent approach to the *isnād* takes is that he uses it to literary effect. In a number of places he gives an *isnād*, launches into the narrative it introduces, breaks off to mention some more sources and then resumes the narrative. For example:

Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jawharī and Ismā'il ibn Yūnus informed me that they had heard 'Umar ibn Shabba transmit the following report from Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm: "I have heard that one night Ma'bad, Ibn Surayj and al-Gharīḍ gathered in Mecca and said: 'Come, let us mourn the people of Mecca'.

And I found this report, without a chain of authorities, transmitted from Yūnus al-Kātib: "One of the governors of Mecca had ordered the singers to be expelled from the Ḥaram. When the night before the day he had fixed for them to be exiled came, they gathered on Abū Qubays. Ma'bad had come to visit them, and he started the performance, singing (this is in the version going back to Yūnus, but not what the others narrated)

Song

My companions, noblest of Ma'add, may you be guided aright.
Weep yet again, for with the morning we will depart ...

(II, 363)³³

This *khābar* combines two rather different accounts of the same event, the singers' foiling an attempt to expel them from the sacred area of Mecca; as emerges later on, there are divergences about which singers performed on the evening in question. It would have been possible for Abū l-Faraj to mention the two sources at the beginning and announce that he was going to note the variants as he went along. Instead, he chooses to interrupt the narrative after the mysterious and rather ominous "*Halumma nabki ahla Makkata*". Readers who are not familiar with the story will naturally wonder why the Meccans should be mourned; what catastrophe had befallen them? Thanks to his manipulation of the *isnāds*, the compiler thus increases the suspense felt by his readers.³⁴

Another instance of a *khābar* being begun and then interrupted occurs in the article on al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī. It runs:

I was informed by al-Ḥaramī, who had it from 'Āmir ibn Ṣāliḥ on the authority of al-Zubayr and Ṣāliḥ: "Al-Ḥazīn composed a panegyric on 'Amr ibn 'Amr ibn Zubayr, but he did not give him any reward."

My uncle gave me a complete version of this report, and the wording of it is his. Al-Zubayr [by contrast] only mentioned a little of it. My uncle's authority was al-Kurānī, whose source [at two removes] was 'Āṣim ibn al-Ḥadathān. He said: "Al-Ḥazīn came to visit 'Amr ibn 'Amr ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām in his house, recited a panegyric to him and presented him with a request . . ."

(XV, 336)

Here the bald initial statement that a notable refused to give a poet any reward for his panegyric in disregard of the conventions announces to the reader that a potentially explosive situation has been created. He naturally reads on to find out more about it.

The article introduced by al-Mu'tamid's setting of a line by al-Farazdaq is confined to the presentation of the poet's marital problems, to which the poetry alludes. Abū l-Faraj had the information from several quarters. He starts off:

Among those who informed me about [this subject] were Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Jawharī, whose source was 'Umar ibn Shabba; Abū Khalifa, whose source was Muḥammad ibn Sallām; and Muḥammad ibn al-'Abbās al-Yazīdī, with a chain of transmission going back via al-Sukkārī and Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb to Abū 'Ubayda and Ibn al-A'rābī. Moreover 'Umar ibn Shabba related as a particular part of his account what he heard via Muḥammad ibn Yaḥya from [the latter's] father: "'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr had married Tumāḍir bint Manzūr ibn Zabbān, whose mother was Mulayka bint Khārīja ibn Sinān ibn Abī Ḥāritha. So al-Farazdaq appealed to Ibn al-Zubayr in his dispute with his wife al-Nawār".

That is what Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā said, without him giving the reason for the dispute. 'Umar ibn Shabba mentioned it, without relating it on anyone's authority, Ibn Ḥabīb mentioned it on his sources' authority, and Abū Ghassān Damādh transmitted it from Abū 'Ubayda, as follows: "A member of the Umayyad clan proposed to al-Nawār bint A'yan al-Mujāshi'ya . . ."

(IX, 324)

Marital conflicts are part of the stock-in-trade of world literature. In the above passage Abū l-Faraj heightens his reader's sense of expectation at encountering this familiar theme by mentioning that a conflict existed and immediately breaking off the narrative to list the sources which portrayed it in detail.

In the three examples just quoted the terse announcement of the subject at the beginning of the *khbar* is reminiscent of a newspaper headline ("Singer Invites Friends to Mourn Meccans"; "Notable Refuses Poet Reward"; "Famous Poet Appeals to Politician to Save Marriage"). The function of the announcements is precisely the same as a headline, to give the reader a foretaste of the report's theme while stimulating his curiosity and creating suspense. Abū l-Faraj makes no

comment on his breaking off of narratives he has just begun in order to list more sources, so the suggestion that he is intentionally using the *isnād* in this way to literary effect cannot be supported by firm evidence, but the effect itself is there.³⁵

A more elaborate example of this feature is found in the account of the *diva* Jamila's pilgrimage to Mecca. Here, after the first *isnād* the account starts: "*Ḥajjat Jamila*", and then two more *isnāds* are given. After all the sources have been listed, the report starts again: "*Inna Jamīlata ḥajjat*", to be interrupted by Abū l-Faraj's note that he has combined the different versions and thinks they are all made up (VIII, 208–9). Only then does he pursue the narrative.

Finally, the *isnād*, the hallmark of serious scholarship, may be combined with frivolous material, and this incongruous juxtaposition gives a tinge of irony to a passage. The discrepancy between the techniques of erudition and the absurd or vulgar material they introduce can be sensed in the introductory passage in Ash'ab's article referred to above, where noted authorities such as al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār, Ibn Abi Khaythama, Muṣ'ab ibn 'Abdallāh al-Zubayrī and al-Madā'inī are pressed into service to transmit the amuser's wild claims about his age and unedifying reports about his mother. An even more striking example can be found in the article on the poet al-Uqayshir. One of the *akhbār* is introduced as follows: "Abū l-Ḥasan al-Asādī related to me with a chain of transmission going back via al-'Anazī, Ibn al-Kalbī and Salama ibn 'Abd Suwā' to Salama's father" (XI, 260) and it then relates al-Uqayshir's habit of hiring a mule to go to al-Ḥira, have a drink and something to eat and then return home, the expedition costing five dirhams altogether. The story continues:

One day [al-Uqayshir] came to the shop of the wine-merchant whose customer he was, did not find him at home and settled down to wait. An 'Ibādī woman came in and he asked her: "Where is so-and-so?" "He had to go off on business. I'm his wife. What would you like?" "Wine." "How much?" "Two dirhams' worth." "Give me your dirhams and wait here." "No. [I'd rather come with you]." "All right." She set off with him following, and entered a house which had two doors. Then she went out of one of them, leaving him alone. When he had been sitting there for some time, some of the people living in the house came out and asked him what he was doing. He explained the reason and they said, "That is a trickster called Umm Ḥunayn, one of the 'Ibādī women." He realised he had been duped, so he went off to his wine-merchant, told him the story and asked: "Give me some credit today and pour me some wine." The man complied, whereupon al-Uqayshir recited [the following lines] on his experience [...]

'Abdallāh ibn Khalaf also told this story, on Abū 'Amr al-Shaybānī's authority, with the following addition: The wine-merchant was called Ḥunayn, and the trickster said that she was the mother of Ḥunayn the wine-merchant who regularly served al-Uqayshir. She took the money and gave the poet the slip. He recited the three lines which have

previously been quoted, adding [several more, vividly describing Umm Ḥunayn's receiving her virile lover during her husband's absence and the latter's untimely return and discovery of his wife's infidelity].

Ḥunayn the wine-merchant came back and said, "You there, what do you mean by making me and my mother a laughing-stock?" "She took my two dirhams and didn't give me any wine." "By God, my mother doesn't know you and she has never taken anything from you. Look at her, if she is the one who tricked you I will pay you back the two dirhams." "All I know is that she is called Umm Ḥunayn, that is all she told me, and I am just lampooning her and her son. If she is your mother, then she is the one I have in mind. But if she is another Umm Ḥunayn, then it is that one I mean." "But people won't make any distinction between them." "What has that got to do with me? Don't you realise my two dirhams have disappeared?" "Very well, come along and I will refund them to you and give you what you want, curse you."

(XI, 261–3)

When *isnāds* naming reputed scholars introduce such stories, entertaining but trivial and often, as here, celebrating morally questionable activities, and when other scholars are quoted with even more outspoken additions and modifications, the reader may wonder whether a quiet joke is not being played at the expense of the learned community.

Selection of *akhbār*: the anthologising impulse again

In the chapter on poetry and poets the subject of selecting material has already been broached.³⁶ There Abū l-Faraj sometimes refrains from quoting a poem because it is well-known or easily accessible. Or he only includes verses which have been set to music. But he may also mention supplementary samples representative of a poet's style or lines which he regards as particularly fine.

The problem of selection also faced the compiler where *akhbār* were concerned, and in an even more serious form. Not only were there a vast quantity of *akhbār* in circulation, but unlike poems, they could not normally be quoted in part, much less the first sentence be given with reasonable certainty that readers would recognise and complete for themselves the whole anecdote. A *khavar* had to be recounted in full, except if it was correcting or modifying some information previously mentioned. Abū l-Faraj was constantly aware of the issue of what to include, and he regularly explains or justifies his practice in selecting prose narratives.

The problem is already faced in the Preface, where Abū l-Faraj writes:

If we had not proceeded as we did, but instead had treated the musicians one by one, including their *akhbār* and what Ishāq [al-Mawṣilī] had said about them, we would have run two risks. Either we would have violated the condition we set ourselves³⁷ of avoiding redundancy and

longwindedness (*hashw*),³⁸ by including all that had been recorded in writing or transmitted orally of their works and the information about them, despite its frequent discursiveness and verbosity and its meager informative value. Or else we would have included only a part of the material available, and the book would have been found wanting in scope, compared with others.

(I, 4)

There is a tension between the two aims set out here, on the one hand to provide as much information as other books on the same subject, and on the other to eliminate superfluity of any kind. As his comments show, Abū l-Faraj was concerned to resolve this tension; throughout the *Aghānī* he walks the tightrope between leaving out what his reader could find in other books and would expect to see in his, and allowing himself to wander from the subject or to include unreliable material out of a desire for comprehensiveness. His remarks justifying his inclusion or omission of texts provide a running commentary on his efforts to solve this dilemma, and also indicate the criticisms which could be levelled at his decisions in individual cases.

Paucity of material sometimes led him to include texts which he himself regarded as inferior. Thus he gives a selection of Abū l-ʿIyāl al-Hudhālī's *naqāʾid* with a fellow tribesman, Badr ibn ʿĀmir, because he could find so little information about him. The poetry, he observes, is only notable for its linguistic purity (*faṣāḥa*) (XXIV, 203).

Usually, however, there was enough material to hand. Then Abū l-Faraj can be seen weighing up whether to mention certain information or not. If, for instance, it had been transmitted by recognised authorities or was common knowledge, he included it, whatever his doubts about it. But his asides often reveal what caused him to hesitate in a given case.

One frequent problem was the inaccuracy of the information. Abū l-Faraj includes al-Muntaṣir and al-Muʿtazz in the section on royal composers against his better judgement, despite the lack of satisfactory sources for their musical activity, because he does not want his book to "lack anything which people have recorded and put into circulation" (IX, 300, 305).³⁹ When discussing the reason why the great musician Ibrāhīm acquired his *nisba* "al-Mawṣilī", Abū l-Faraj quotes two traditions going back to the Mawṣilī family, to the effect that Ibrāhīm either went to Mosul as the first stage on a study trip to important musical centres or else sought refuge there from his uncles who disapproved of his interest in singing and the circles he moved in (V, 156). He then mentions the explanation given by Ibn Khurdādhbih, "who seldom checks what he says and includes in his books" (*wa-huwa qalīlu l-taḥṣīli li-mā yaqūluhu wa-yuḍammīnuhu kutubah*); according to this Ibrāhīm, when intoxicated, was wont to sing

I've come from the streets of Mosul,
with wine both red and white.
He who raises a glass with a king
will soon be high as a kite.

Abū l-Faraj only includes this report, for which Ibn Khurdādhbih is the sole source, “despite its manifest corruption, because it is so widespread and people seem to think it is the true reason why Ibrāhīm is called ‘al-Mawṣilī’. So I have quoted it, indicating its unsoundness” (V, 156–7).

Another example of material Abū l-Faraj considers worthless but nonetheless includes concerns the contest which Yazīd ibn ‘Abd Madān and ‘Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl waged in boasts and poetry to gain the hand of the beautiful daughter of Umayya ibn al-Askar. “This report”, he concludes, “is one of Ibn al-Kalbī’s fictions, obviously made up (*Hādha l-khabaru maṣnū’un min maṣnū’āti Bni al-Kalbīyi wa-l-tawliḍu fihi bayyin*). The poetry in it is feeble and corrupt, nothing like that of the old Arab poets. And I have only mentioned it so that the book should lack nothing which has been transmitted” (XXI, 20).

Even when he does not refer to the need for comprehensiveness, Abū l-Faraj is probably guided by it in part when he includes information which he criticises or corrects. One passage where this is almost certain is a long story about al-Aḥwaṣ and the singing-girl Sallāma, which follows a quotation of the poet’s verses naming Sallāma.⁴⁰ The story runs that al-Aḥwaṣ and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān both frequented Sallāma in Medina, but she encouraged al-Aḥwaṣ and rebuffed ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. On a visit to Damascus to recite panegyrics to Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān saw a way to revenge himself and advised the caliph to buy her. Sallāma was parted from her lover and despatched to the capital, where she established herself in the caliph’s affections. After a while the grief-stricken al-Aḥwaṣ went to Damascus to recite his poetry at court, and Sallāma agreed to meet him secretly at night. Having been informed of this plan by her servant, Yazīd allowed it to proceed, but he arranged to observe the lovers secretly. They behaved irreproachably in the true ‘Udhri tradition, merely talking, weeping and reciting poetry, and the next morning Yazīd, deeply impressed by their devotion, gave Sallāma to al-Aḥwaṣ and allowed the couple to return to the Hijaz (IX, 134–6). Abū l-Faraj introduces the *khabar* as follows: “I have no doubt that [this account] is an invention. For the poetry attributed to al-Aḥwaṣ [in it] is inferior and trivial, quite unlike his manner. It is obviously fabricated and of Modern origin. And the story is worthless and has no basis in fact.⁴¹ But I have mentioned it in the appropriate place despite its unreliability” (IX, 133–4).⁴²

Comprehensiveness could also entail offering a representative sample of the reports circulating on the subject, as is shown in a passage in the main article on al-Aḥwaṣ. Abū l-Faraj there justifies his quoting accounts of the poet’s provocative behaviour, his attacks on prominent personalities in his verses and his banishment to the island of Dahlak with the argument that this selection from the available material is intended to illustrate al-Aḥwaṣ’s virtues and vices, but not to detract from his literary achievement. In any case, al-Aḥwaṣ’s poetry needs no defence; its excellence is there for all to see (IV, 256). In other words, a comprehensive approach to this personality requires an all-round presentation of a man whose baseness in everyday life contrasted sharply with his artistic gifts.⁴³

Al-Aḥwaṣ may have been a scandalous figure, but his name was not linked to politico-religious controversies still alive in Abū l-Faraj's day. This was the case with al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, the author of the lyrics of one of the Top Hundred, in Jaḥẓa's version of the list, and therefore a poet impossible to disregard. The need to include him led Abū l-Faraj, when introducing his article, to adopt a defensive tone which is unique in the entire book. His characterisation of the poet's oeuvre, combining a marked, and to many objectionable, Shī'i tendency with a style of extraordinary beauty, has already been noted.⁴⁴ And he comments: "Were it not for the fact that all the reports on him are of [the same political] nature, we should not have mentioned anything of them. But since we have made it a condition to include the *akhbār* of the poets we name, we have been obliged to quote the soundest material we could find about him and the furthest from reflecting his pernicious [politico-religious] choice, little though there is of it" (VII, 230).⁴⁵ Since the subsequent treatment of al-Sayyid runs to some forty pages, Abū l-Faraj may have found him a less distasteful subject than he implies here. But he leaves the impression that this famous poet, representative of an extremist Shī'i tendency, only just gained admission to the *Aghānī*, a book intended for a wide music-loving public. He was too prominent to be overlooked, despite his controversial oeuvre.

The example of al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī well illustrates the association in Abū l-Faraj's mind between comprehensiveness and selection which the quotation from his preface has already established. Constantly having to make choices about what to include and reject, he was guided by a variety of motives. One, the wish to avoid ideologically unacceptable material, has just been mentioned. The same consideration probably influenced him in the section of the article on 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan which treats this 'Alid's imprisonment. Noting that 'Umar ibn Shabba had assembled an almost exhaustive collection of material on the subject, Abū l-Faraj confines himself to an appropriate selection (*min akhbārihi mā yaḥsunu dhikruhu hāhunā*; XXI, 119).⁴⁶ The decision not to go into any detail about 'Abdallāh's son Mūsā's tribulations at al-Manṣūr's hands (XVI, 360) could also have been made for the same reason, though it must be remembered that Mūsā was only the great-grandfather of the article's subject, Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ, and Abū l-Faraj may simply have wanted to get to the point.

An instance of material being excluded for reasons as much religious as political is Abū l-Faraj's refusal to mention the *marāthī* composed on Nubayh ibn al-Ḥajjāj and his brother, notables of Quraysh killed "fighting God and his Prophet" at the battle of Badr. Such poetry the compiler regards as inadmissible (*lam astajiz dhikrahā*; XVII, 281).⁴⁷ Such instances of objections of principle to available material are very rare; another comes in an article on Marwān al-Aṣghar ibn Abi Ḥafṣa when Abū l-Faraj refuses to quote Marwān's lampoon of 'Alī ibn Yahyā al-Munajjim "in order to spare 'Alī" (*ṣiyānatan li-'Alī*; XII, 85). But they serve to illustrate one of the motives guiding Abū l-Faraj's choice of *akhbār* and poetry – a motive which might not be immediately apparent, given the *Aghānī*'s catholic range of contents.

A more predictable criterion for determining the incorporation or exclusion of material is what may loosely be termed "literary merit". The article on Waḍḍaḥ

al-Yaman mentions the poet's love for Rawḍa as its first romantic episode. The *akhbār* Abū l-Faraj quotes about that give only the barest information, for as he says: "We have only found short fragments transmitted by scholars and some allusions to [that love affair] in his poetry. The sole continuous account which I discovered was in a spurious book with corrupt narratives and poetry, unworthy of mention" (VI, 213). The same distaste for popular love stories would appear to explain the brevity of the article on the obscure Kufan poet 'Alī ibn Udaym, whose love for Munhala was the subject of a "celebrated book which the Kufans compiled about them, mentioning the episodes of their affair one after the other with the poetry he recited about her. Their story is well-known among the common people (*al-ʿamma*) and is not suited to lengthy treatment" (XV, 266). Abū l-Faraj has allotted them two-and-a-half pages.

Ishāq al-Mawṣilī was a figure around whom many anecdotes collected, and just before the end of the very long article devoted to him – at nearly 170 pages surpassed only by the one on 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a – Abū l-Faraj observes: "There are many reports about Ishāq which contain little information and are very long-winded, so I have omitted them" (V, 430). Here the compiler's dislike of redundancy, already attested in his preface, reappears in the form of a preference for concise, pregnant anecdotes.

Abū l-Faraj's verdict on Ibn Mayyāda's rhymed prose has already been given at the beginning of this chapter. The sample he chooses is distinguished by being somewhat better than the poet's average production in this form, for he then comments: "This is poor, corrupt rhymed prose, which I have only mentioned in order to give an idea of the even worse stuff which I have declined to quote" (II, 291).⁴⁸

Quite often, however, length alone appears to have decided the compiler to exclude material.⁴⁹ In the course of the article on Abū Miḥjan there is a reference to the fighting on the Day of the Rafts (*Yawm armāth*) during the battle of al-Qādisiyya (15/636 or 16/637), after which Abū l-Faraj observes: "The famous Days of [this battle] were the Day of Help (*Yawm agwāth*), the Day of the Rafts and the Day of Squadrons (*Yawm al-katā'ib*);⁵⁰ the accounts of them are very long. Abū Miḥjan did not play a part in all of them, and since we are on the subject of him now, we shall only mention the events which are linked with his name" (XIX, 4).⁵¹ Lines from one of the poems by al-Mukhabbal al-Qaysī were quoted by al-Wāthiq, when he was planning the downfall of two prominent secretaries, and this leads Abū l-Faraj to report briefly other intrigues at court during this caliph's reign, including those waged by Ibn al-Zayyāt and Aḥmad ibn Abū Du'ād against each other. He concludes with the remark that there are many more reports of a similar kind, but this is not the place for them (XX, 272).

Considerations of length also dictated Abū l-Faraj's practice in not repeating parts of *akhbār* or lines of poetry which he had already included in other accounts. He gives one version of the grisly incident in which Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik invited the notables and poets, including Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, who had accompanied him on the Pilgrimage to kill some Byzantine prisoners in Medina, and al-Farazdaq, who had been given a blunt sword, failed to behead his prisoner despite

repeated attempts, thus making himself a laughing-stock. The compiler then brings in a second version as follows: "As for Sulaymān ibn Abī Shaykh, he mentioned in his account that when Sulaymān [ibn 'Abd al-Malik] assigned the prisoner to al-Farazdaq...". That is, he starts to quote it at the point where it differs from the earlier version. This second version has the *qaṣīda* which Jarīr composed on the incident: "Then Jarīr composed his *qaṣīda* mocking [al-Farazdaq], from which the aforementioned [introductory] song is taken (*wa-minhā l-ṣawtu l-madhkūr*)..." (XV, 341–2).⁵²

A more cheerful example concerns a meeting between 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a and Laylā bint al-Ḥārith al-Bakriya (I, 156–7).⁵³ The first version recounts how 'Umar met Laylā while she riding along on a mule and persuaded her to stop and hear the poem he had composed on her, after which she ordered him to fear God and give up his present way of life. In the second version the setting has changed to the Maṣjid al-Ḥarām, Laylā takes the initiative in reproaching 'Umar, upon which he invites her to hear what he has composed. "He recited to her the aforementioned verses, and she replied with the words with which she has already been described as answering him" (*fa-anshadahā l-abyāta l-madhkūrata fa-qālat lahu l-qawla lladhī taqaddama annahā ajābathu bih*; I, 157). In cases such as these Abū l-Faraj uses *dhakara*, "to mention", or *taqaddama*, "to precede", and their derivatives to abbreviate accounts, summarise their contents and refer back to poetry which has already been quoted. Many other instances can be found in the *Aghānī*,⁵⁴ although sometimes, when the same scholars have transmitted the different accounts, there may be uncertainty about whether they are responsible for the abbreviations, rather than Abū l-Faraj. After all, this method of reducing repetitions is found among earlier historians too.

It is, however, more often the inclusion of material than the omission of it that Abū l-Faraj justifies. Some examples of his arguments have already been given in connection with the general aim of comprehensiveness. But he also defends his practice in specific cases. Sometimes he wants to illustrate a point. After the report of a conversation in which Ishāq al-Mawṣilī asked 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Munajjim to lend him any translations of Greek texts on music which might come into his hands, a request which remained unfulfilled because Ishāq died soon after, Abū l-Faraj explains that he has mentioned this because it was one of Ishāq's most extraordinary achievements to have arrived, by his own reasoning and without knowledge of the Greeks' writing, at the same results as theirs (V, 271),⁵⁵ the *khavar* is tacit evidence of the musician's not having seen these works.⁵⁶

Another motive for including material is the intention to provide a sample. This lies behind Abū l-Faraj's quoting a *ḥadīth* related by Abū Nafīs Ya'lā ibn Munya al-Thaqafī, for Abū Nafīs handed down many reports about the Prophet. Abū l-Faraj aims simply to establish that fact, and to extend to Abū Nafīs the same treatment as he has accorded to other transmitters (*iqtaṣartu minhu [ay al-ḥadīth] 'alā hādihā li-tu'rafa riwāyatuhu 'anhu; adhkurū minhu ṭarfan kamā dhakartu li-ghayrihi*; XII, 336). As this comment shows, in Abū l-Faraj's view mentioning the activities of subjects

of articles as *ḥadīth* transmitters forms part of the standard presentation of them, which requires no particular justification.

It is as a sample, too, that he reports the case in which Shurayḥ ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kindī, the famous early Islamic judge, found for a Jew against ‘Alī in a dispute over the ownership of a coat of mail; among the many judgements by Shurayḥ this was one of those which it was essential to mention (XVII, 218).⁵⁷

A particularly interesting example of Abū l-Faraj justifying the inclusion of material comes in the article on ‘Adī ibn Zayd, in the account of al-Nu‘mān ibn al-Mundhir’s conversion to Christianity. This *khavar* reached Abū l-Faraj through two chains of transmission; one was al-Ṣūlī > Ibrāhīm ibn Fahd > Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt > Hishām ibn Muḥammad > Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb al-Bajalī > Abū Zur‘a ibn ‘Amr al-Bajalī > Jarīr ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Bajalī, and the other Abū l-Faraj’s uncle al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad > Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubaydallāh > Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Ziyād al-Kalbī > Ma‘rūf ibn Khurrahūd > Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb and his two Bajalī authorities (II, 133–4).⁵⁸ As he often does in such cases, Abū l-Faraj combines the two versions, adopting the wording of Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubaydallāh because it is fuller (II, 134), but noting the variants in al-Ṣūlī’s account as they occur. These variants concern not only the lines ‘Adī recited to al-Nu‘mān on the transitoriness of all things, which evidently encouraged the king to convert, but also the identity of al-Nu‘mān himself; whereas al-Ṣūlī represents him correctly as the last king of al-Ḥīra, Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubaydallāh and his authorities confuse him with earlier rulers of the same name.⁵⁹ Abū l-Faraj explains in conclusion: “I have only quoted al-Ziyādī’s [i.e. Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Ziyād’s] account, muddled though it is, because when I recount an incident, I mention all the different versions on the subject” (*idhā ataytu bi-l-qisṣati dhakartu kulla mā yurwā fi ma’nāhā*; II, 135). He then points out the weaknesses in the account for which he holds al-Ziyādī (rather than Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubaydallāh) responsible (II, 135–6).

Abū l-Faraj’s defence here is somewhat disingenuous, given the awareness which he shows elsewhere of the need to select material, and one wonders if he was influenced by some consideration he does not mention. His uncle, one of his main sources, was his direct informant for the muddled version, which may have predisposed him to include it; at the same time the discrepancies between the two versions are obvious when they are combined as they are here. Was he seizing the opportunity to correct a widespread error about ‘Adī’s connections with the rulers of al-Ḥīra by drawing on the two accounts and comparing them? Did he feel that his inclusion of the “Ziyādī” account called for a special justification, after its weaknesses have been shown up so clearly when it was juxtaposed with al-Ṣūlī’s version? There is no sure answer.

Finally, an aside introducing a *khavar* in Jarīr’s article gives an idea of some qualities Abū l-Faraj appreciated in his material. The *khavar* relates Jarīr’s meeting with al-Ḥajjāj and the poet’s enumeration of all those with whom he engaged in flytings. “This report”, Abū l-Faraj says, “although it is long, includes all the information about those who entered into poetic contests with Jarīr or intervened in the duels between him and al-Farazdaq or others. I mention it here because it

succeeds in conveying the essential elements of the subject concisely" (*dhakartuhu hunā li-shtimālihi 'alā dhālika fī balāghin wa-khtiṣār*, VIII, 14). The *khavar* is long indeed. It can be summarised as follows: on the strength of a report from his deputy al-Ḥakam ibn Ayyūb ibn Yaḥyā, to whom Jarīr has addressed a panegyric, al-Ḥajjāj summons the poet. He reprimands him for stirring up such ill-feeling with his *hijā'*, but Jarīr defends himself with the argument that each time he was responding to an attack by the other party. He then names the poets with whom he clashed, al-Ḥajjāj enquires about the occasion for each conflict and Jarīr replies with a quotation from his rival and his own response. In this way he runs through nineteen flyings, and dawn breaks as al-Ḥajjāj withdraws (VIII, 14–28). There is a high concentration of information in the *khavar*, although its artificial and monotonous structure reduces its aesthetic value. Abū l-Faraj has placed it in the early part of Jarīr's article, where it functions as a "summarising" *khavar*, providing much material elaborated on in later reports, as will emerge from the analysis of this poet's article. The compiler's satisfaction with *akhbār* of this type is understandable, in the light of the condition he has set himself of avoiding redundancy while providing necessary information.

Accuracy and the criticism of *akhbār*

As some of the passages quoted above illustrate, Abū l-Faraj was concerned to provide information which he regarded as accurate and, on occasion, to correct false reports. Having studied with leading scholars, he could be expected to be concerned about the quality of the information he quoted. But there is a further reason why he took such care to check and correct what he said in the *Aghānī*. He had been asked to compile a reliable *Book of Songs*, unlike the one ascribed to Ishāq al-Mawṣili but generally believed to have been put together by a bookseller in his employ and regarded as worthless. This was what led Abū l-Faraj to undertake the task in the first place (I, 5–6). Accuracy may thus be assumed to have been a constant preoccupation of his throughout the time he was working on the book. His meticulousness about trying to determine the correct attribution of song settings, lyrics and other poems has already been noted.⁶⁰ In one of the problematic ascriptions of poetry, where Abū l-Faraj went to considerable lengths to discover who was the real author, he adds a general statement of his position about accuracy:

We merely mention the information which has reached us on the authority of its transmitters, and if we discover that something is wrong, or if we can provide the correct information, we put the record straight and declare that what we may have said in ignorance is unfounded. In cases where this does not happen, the reader should not blame us for mistakes we have not made either intentionally or unwittingly, but have simply reported on the authority of their transmitters, while doing our best to arrive at the truth. If he knows an accurate account which contradicts our

version, and makes the appropriate correction, that will do him no disservice, indeed he will earn merit by it and a good name.

(VI, 9)⁶¹

The preoccupation with accuracy of material, whether *akhbār* or songs, which this passage betrays returns elsewhere, sometimes in contexts where it might not be expected. For instance, Abū l-Faraj sets store on the songs which introduce articles having trustworthy attributions. Thus, he does not attach the main article on al-Farazdaq to a song the words of which he composed, but the melody of which was attributed variously to the caliph al-Mu'tamid or, with greater probability in Abū l-Faraj's view, to 'Arib (IX, 323, 324).⁶² This article introduced by a song with an uncertain composer (IX, 324–43) is devoted to the poet's stormy relationship with his cousin Nawār, and his standing in comparison with other poets is only a minor theme; his full-length, all-round portrayal comes much later on, introduced by a song for which Ibn Surayj had composed the setting, with alternative melodies by Mālik ibn Abī l-Samḥ and 'Allūya (XXI, 275–403). A similar instinct leads Abū l-Faraj to introduce the article on Ju'ayfirān with two songs, for although several authorities ascribe the words of the first one to him, and Abū l-Faraj considers that he is most likely the author, he quotes the second song too, just for good measure and because there is no uncertainty about its attribution (XX, 187).

The same critical approach which Abū l-Faraj exhibits towards his sources for poetry and settings and his habit of evaluating his authorities' accuracy is also to be found in his comments about the transmitters of *akhbār*. For some authorities he has a high regard. His admiration for his teacher Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-'Abbās al-Yazīdī has been mentioned above. Another scholar whose information he valued is Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Jarrāḥ, as a passage in the article on al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb makes clear. Just after a long *khbar*, taken from "some book or other, without an *isnād*" (XXIII, 109), which describes the poet's temporary estrangement from a friend of his who was monopolising the attention of Banāt,⁶³ his beloved, Abū l-Faraj includes a fragmentary report that al-Ḥasan appealed to Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās al-Ṣūlī for help against al-Ḥasan ibn Makhḥad, who had alienated Banāt's affections from him. He adds: "Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd [ibn al-Jarrāḥ] mentioned nothing more about the couple, and I have only quoted this account, although it contains so little information (*'alā qillati l-fā'idati fihā*) to make clear what al-Ḥasan's relations with Banāt were. For the reports about them⁶⁴ which have already been given were not transmitted to me from Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd" (XXIII, 113). Most of the *akhbār* about al-Ḥasan and Banāt reached Abū l-Faraj via his uncle or al-Ṣūlī from a variety of sources, but this is the only instance when he quotes Ibn al-Jarrāḥ on the subject. The values he attaches to him as a reference is shown all the more clearly because the *khbar* itself is so sketchy.⁶⁵

By contrast, some names automatically arouse Abū l-Faraj's suspicion. Foremost among them are Ibn Khurdādhbih and Ibn al-Kalbī. What Abū l-Faraj regards as Ibn Khurdādhbih's shortcomings in the field of song transmissions have already

been discussed,⁶⁶ but he also considers him generally untrustworthy as a source. It would seem to be because of this that Abū l-Faraj rejects his information that the singer ‘Allūya’s forefathers came from Yathrib and that he was a *mawlā* of the Umayyads, in favour of the version that his grandfather was one of the Soghdians taken prisoner by al-Walid ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (XI, 333). As for Ibn al-Kalbī, Abū l-Faraj judges him to be an accomplished inventor of *akhbār*, as expressions such as “*min akādhīb Ibn al-Kalbī*” (XII, 34) or “*maṣnū‘ min maṣnū‘āt Ibn al-Kalbī*” (XXI, 20) indicate. Even where these highly unreliable authorities are concerned, however, Abū l-Faraj is prepared to judge the information they transmit on its merits, and at times he may prefer it to other versions derived from more reputable scholars.⁶⁷

Likewise, he may criticise authorities for whom he generally has a high regard when he thinks fit. He respects ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir as a musician and embodiment of ‘Abbāsīd court culture, but ‘Ubaydallāh’s claim to have included all ten melodic modes (*nagham*) in a composition (a claim repeated in Yahyā ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Munajjim’s *Kitāb al-nagham*), elicits this comment from him: “Having given ‘Ubaydallāh’s version and claim about the modal structure of this song, it is not right for me simply to report his opinion unquestioningly, without mentioning the truth about it. His description of one composition including all the ten melodic modes successively is impossible and has no basis in fact” (VIII, 374). Abū l-Faraj then gives a concise explanation of his view, referring the reader to his own treatise on melodic modes for more details. As has been pointed out, he occasionally corrects the attribution of a poem in the list of the Top Hundred transmitted by Yahyā ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Munajjim from Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, but he does not do so lightly. After establishing that lyrics of one of the Top Hundred attributed to al-A’shā are in fact by Ibn al-Mawlā⁶⁸ he feels obliged to quote the whole poem, “to demonstrate the truth of our assertion. For when a mistake comes from a quarter such as this, the arguments refuting it and establishing the correct version have to be set out clearly” (III, 285). In other words, if Ibn Khurdādhbih, for instance, had made this mistake, Abū l-Faraj would not have felt obliged to go to such lengths to show why it was wrong.

Abū l-Faraj also regards some of his sources as biased about particular subjects. He condemns Jaḥẓa’s book about pandore players because of its defamatory tendency, exemplified in its groundlessly accusing Aḥmad al-Naṣbī of meanness and usury (VI, 63–4). He refutes al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār’s incorporation of ‘Alī ibn al-Jahm’s forebears into Quraysh, which he ascribes to al-Zubayr’s own hostility to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and consequent sympathy for other opponents of the Alids (X, 205).⁶⁹

Despite his critical sense, the compiler still finds himself obliged sometimes to include reports about which he is far from happy. The most striking expression of his unease, but also a warning of the fate awaiting unconscientious transmitters, concerns an incident where the Prophet was said to have prayed to God to give Islam victory thanks to ‘Abdallāh ibn Asad al-Qasrī and his son Khālīd, Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik’s governor of Iraq and Abū l-Faraj’s *bête noire*.⁷⁰ Abū l-Faraj is in

a quandary about this report, for if the Prophet really had uttered this prayer, ‘Abdallāh would not have fought beside Mu‘āwiya against ‘Alī at Siffin and Khālīd would not have cursed ‘Alī from the pulpit and done all the other unmentionable things he did. “But I recount the matter as it has been transmitted, and if anyone imputes to the Messenger of God (God bless him and give him peace) what he has not said, he will dwell in Hell, as [the Prophet] (peace be upon him) promised” (XXII, 4–5).⁷¹

Without pronouncing judgement on his sources, Abū l-Faraj often criticises or corrects his reports on the basis of his own knowledge, probably assuming that the facts were generally recognised. For example, he judges the *khbar* in which al-Walīd ibn Yazīd quotes poetry by Salm al-Khāsir to be worthless, because it is anachronistic; Salm lived later than al-Walīd (VII, 61).⁷² He rejects the genealogy of al-Samaw‘al given by ‘Abdallāh ibn Sa‘d, which counts only three generations between the poet’s father (or grandfather) ‘Ādiyā and ‘Amr ibn ‘Āmir Muzayqiyā, on the grounds that al-A‘shā Maymūn’s dates overlapped with those of al-Samaw‘al’s son Shurayḥ, whereas ‘Amr belonged to ancient times (XXII, 117).⁷³ He corrects the account of Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm’s meeting the Prophet and obeying his request to keep his distance from his wife, who had become a Muslim; the poet died before the Hijra, and Abū l-Faraj believes the Qays referred to here is Ibn Shammās (III, 10).⁷⁴ The story that when Abū l-Ḥārith Jummayn, walking through the market in Medina, suddenly found himself face to face with a man carrying three fishes who had come out of Ibn Wāqif Alley, and quoted a line by Hudba ibn Khashram appropriate to the situation, is made up, in Abū l-Faraj’s opinion, because “there is no alley in Medina called after Ibn Wāqif, nor is there any fish there, but I have recounted what has been transmitted” (XXI, 268). This rectification would probably come as no surprise to anyone who had made the Pilgrimage and was familiar with the geography of Medina.

Sometimes, however, Abū l-Faraj’s corrections are supported by other information he includes in the article. He dismisses a report that Ma‘n ibn Zā‘ida bought the singing girl Sallāma al-Zarqā’, affirming that the purchaser was Ja‘far ibn Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī (XV, 63). A little later, a *khbar* describes Ja‘far’s hiding Sallāma, whom he has just bought, from his father, al-Manṣūr’s governor of Basra, and then receiving a paternal reprimand for frivolous behaviour at a time of great political tension (XV, 63–649).⁷⁵

In the article on ‘Ā’isha bint Ṭalḥa, two accounts of her wedding to ‘Umar ibn ‘Ubaydallāh ibn Ma‘mar, her last husband, are given. The first describes the wedding night as a phenomenal success, the second as a disappointment to the bride. Abū l-Faraj rejects the latter account for two reasons. On the one hand the source, Muṣ‘ab ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Zubayrī, belonged to the same family as ‘Ā’isha’s previous husband, Muṣ‘ab ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām, and were therefore biased against ‘Umar. On the other, when ‘Umar died, ‘Ā’isha mourned him not sitting, as she had done with her previous husbands, but standing; if a widow stood up to lament, this was a sign that she did not want to remarry, an anthropological observation for which Abū l-Faraj gives an *isnād* (XI, 185).

The *khbar* which contains the correction may not be quoted, but simply alluded to. Ḥammād al-Rāwīya's article includes an elaborate account of how Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik summoned this expert on old poetry from Iraq to solve a problem about the authorship of a single verse. Ḥammād, of course, knew not only the poet but the rest of the poem. Highly appreciative, the caliph rewarded him with a large sum of money and the two slave-girls who had been in attendance during the audience. The *khbar* comes in two versions, and Abū l-Faraj quotes the one originating with Ḥammād and transmitted via al-Haytham ibn 'Adī, Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, his son Ḥammād and al-Ḥusayn ibn Yaḥyā al-Mirdāsī,⁷⁶ because "it is fuller" (VI, 74). At the end, however, he criticises this version, which portrays Hishām's slave-girls serving Ḥammād so much wine that he passes out, because "Hishām did not drink, and no-one was served intoxicating drinks in his presence. He disapproved of [drinking wine], condemned it and had [people who drank] punished". The other version, with the *isnād* Muḥammad ibn Anas < Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qurashī < Ḥumayd ibn Muḥammad al-Kūfī < Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Abdī < Aḥmad ibn 'Ubayd Abū 'Aṣida < al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī [al-Khaffāf], reflects this (VI, 77), but Abū l-Faraj withholds it from his readers. This is a case where comprehensiveness, one of his guiding principles, as has been shown, is held in balance with another of them, accuracy – at least in theory. The fact that he transmits the text of the less accurate version gives it an edge over its rival, however, in practice.

Another example of a less reliable version being related and then corrected is the account of Ibn Abī 'Atīq's riding off and reciting to one of 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a's loves the couplet he has just heard from the poet. The question of accuracy is complicated here by the fact that two couplets exist with the same metre and rhyme, one addressed to Su'dā bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf and the other to Laylā bint al-Ḥārith ibn 'Awf al-Murri. Abū l-Faraj relates a *khbar* with the *isnād* al-Ḥaramī > al-Zubayr [ibn Bakkār] > 'Abdallāh ibn Muslim [ibn Qutayba] in which Ibn Abī 'Atīq tracks Su'dā down close to the grazing grounds of Fazāra and declaims the couplet in which her name is mentioned (XVII, 157). Subsequently, Abū l-Faraj summarises another version of the incident, related by Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mundhir from Muḥammad ibn Ma'n; here Laylā bint al-Ḥārith is the listener and she is named in the line Ibn Abī 'Atīq quotes. "And this is correct, because it is much more likely that [Laylā] would have been encamped near the Fazāra's grazing grounds than that Su'dā bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf would have been."⁷⁷ The compiler considers al-Zubayr to have been mistaken, putting his error down to his being confused by the similarity between the two poems (XVII, 158).

It is not only alternative *akhbār* to which Abū l-Faraj has recourse in correcting information. He also uses poetry, either by itself or supported by other information.⁷⁸ The account, going back to Ibn al-A'rābi, of Ḥātīm al-Ṭā'i's extravagant gesture in slaughtering and giving away the camels he is herding to some passing poets concludes with Ḥātīm's father abandoning him in fury and the young man's defiant poem in reply, one of the lines of which runs: "What harm does it do me if Sa'd has travelled on with his people, leaving me alone in the grazing grounds

with no relatives to keep me company?” Abū l-Faraj comments: “This poem proves that his grandfather, and not his father, was involved with him in this episode” (*ṣāhibu hādhihi l-qisṣati ma‘ahu*; XVII, 368); the poet’s genealogy given at the beginning of the article runs: Ḥātim ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Sa’d ibn al-Ḥashraj ibn Imri’ al-Qays (XVII, 363). The passage continues with a reference to Ibn al-Sikkī’s version of the same incident, in which the grandfather plays a part, and which also mentions that Ḥātim’s father died when he was a child (XVII, 368).

A similar type of argument is used to reject a report that ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Ajlān collapsed and died after reciting a couplet in which he lamented that his beloved Hind was forbidden to him because she had become his relative by marriage. Abū l-Faraj points out that ‘Abdallāh, a Nahdī, was not a cousin of Hind’s husband, who belonged to Numayr; the poetry thus does not corroborate the *khavar*. It is correctly assigned to another report, in which the poet is Musāfir ibn Abī ‘Amr ibn Umayya and his successful rival Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb; they are indeed cousins (XXII, 242).

The recourse to poetry to correct information may not involve any quotation of verses. Abū l-Faraj comments on ‘Umar ibn Shabba’s statements that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Sirīn, Jarīr and al-Farazdaq all died in 110 AH: “There Abū Zayd ‘Umar ibn Shabba is mistaken, because al-Farazdaq died after the episode of Kāzima⁷⁹ which was in 112 AH. He composed poetry on it, and mentioned it in various *qaṣīdas*. This is confirmed by a report we had from Waki’ ...” (XXI, 387) where Waki’ dates the poet’s death to 114 AH.

Examining information to see if it concurred with the facts about pre-Islamic and Islamic history, culture and poetry, as the educated fourth/tenth century reader conceived them, was one way of evaluating its accuracy. Another was to consider the internal evidence in the *akhbār*. Abū l-Faraj dismisses some reports as *maṣnū‘*, made up, on the basis of their content (*wa-dhālika bayyinun fih* is the type of expression he uses), though he leaves it to his reader to infer exactly what leads him to that conclusion. One such case is the account of Jamila’s pilgrimage, introduced with a “headline” which has already been referred to. During her stay in Mecca she organised a concert lasting three days at which everyone of any standing in the musical world of the Hijaz performed; the event seems to have ended with all the musicians singing together (VIII, 208–20). Although this *khavar* reached Abū l-Faraj by three different chains of transmission,⁸⁰ he rejects it. It is indeed highly unlikely that these singers would have gathered in one place, assuming that they were all contemporaries (which they were not), and the final touch, that they all joined in a closing sing-song (*thumma qālat li-l-jamā‘ati fa-ghannaw wa-nqaḍā l-majlis*), is particularly incongruous. The *khavar* is in fact an idealised portrayal of the state of singing during the Umayyad period.

Another suspect report concerns ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī’a and his relations with al-Thurayyā. According to it,⁸¹ the poet’s persistence annoyed the girl’s family, and they took advantage of his absence on business in Yemen to marry her off to Suhayl ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, who took her off with him to Egypt. ‘Umar thereupon composed his famous poem playing on the meaning of the couple’s names: “O you

who have wedded the Pleiades to Canopus! God preserve you, how are they to meet?"⁸² Then he sent her a poem from Medina and when she read it she wept and replied with verses of her own (I, 235–6). Abū l-Faraj criticises both the *khbar* and the poetic correspondence, which he understandably rates as feeble, as a fabrication. Indeed the materials used in the letter-writing, perfumed ink, very fine cloth for paper, a ribbon with a ruby clasp, belong to the world of 'Abbāsīd elegant society, as does the emotional tone of the protagonists' behaviour. The detail of the family arranging Thurayyā's wedding while 'Umar was absent is reminiscent of the parallel situation in 'Urwa ibn Ḥizām's biography, where 'Afrā' is married off to a rich man while he is in Yemen earning enough to pay the bride price (XXIV, 149–50),⁸³ in 'Umar's world, as it emerges from the general run of *akhbār* about him, employing such ruses seems unnecessary.

There is no difficulty in understanding Abū l-Faraj's dismissal of 'Abid ibn al-Abrā's encounter with a snake as a fabrication. The story goes that the poet, travelling through the desert with a group of Banū Asad, took pity on a snake which was tormented with thirst and gave it his last drops of water to drink. During the night the camels bolted and disappeared. As each man searched for his beast, 'Abid, close to despair, heard a voice offering him a camel to ride and advising him, when he found his own mount, to keep it on a leading-rein until day-break, when he was to let the strange camel go. It was of course the grateful snake speaking. 'Abid reached his clan at dawn, the mysterious camel disappeared, and those of the poet's companions who survived turned up three days later (XXII, 85–6). This story, which goes back to Ibn al-Kalbī, is a "manifest fabrication" (*maṣnū'un yatabayyanu l-tawliḍu fih*; XXII, 85).

A similar unease with *akhbār* in which members of the spirit world appear can be seen in Abū l-Faraj's reaction to the story Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī is reported to have told about a mysterious visit from an imposing old man. Ibrāhīm had been hoping for a quiet time at home on his day off from court, and he had given orders for no-one to be admitted, but the old man inexplicably appeared and ordered him somewhat condescendingly to sing. Despite his fury the musician complied, the stranger becoming more deferential with each of his three songs. Then the stranger offered to sing, and performed three exquisite pieces, explaining to Ibrāhīm that they were in the *mākhūrī* rhythmic mode. He then vanished, leaving the songs firmly imprinted in Ibrāhīm's memory, as the musician discovered when he told Hārūn al-Rashīd of his encounter (V, 231–5). The compiler adds: "This is how Ibn Abī l-Azhar transmitted this report to me. I don't know what to say about it. Perhaps Ibrāhīm invented it to make himself more sought-after, or someone else fabricated it and narrated it as if it had come from him" (*ṣunī 'at wa-ḥukīyat 'anhu*; V, 236).

Here, however, Abū l-Faraj suggests what the basis in fact may have been for such a fantastic tale. A report, going back to the musician himself again,⁸⁴ tells how Ibrāhīm, at a loss for poetry to set to a melody he had just composed, had a dream in which someone proposed he use a couplet by Dhū l-Rumma. On awaking he set the lines to the music, and finding the combination successful he went on to put much of Dhū l-Rumma's poetry to melodies in the *mākhūrī* mode (V, 236–7).

A further criterion Abū l-Faraj sometimes uses for evaluating *akhbār* is what may be called “artistic truth”. A good illustration of this occurs in connection with the two versions of the poetess Laylā al-Akhyaliya’s death. In one of them, which goes back to al-Aṣma’ī, she asked al-Ḥajjāj to let her travel by the official post service to Khurasan to visit her kinsman, Qutayba ibn Muslim, who was governor there. She died on her way back to Arabia at Rayy, where she was buried. Abū l-Faraj dismisses this as a mistake. The true version, in his view, is the one which goes back to al-Madā’inī and Ibn al-Khaṣīb al-Kātib. In that Laylā was travelling in a howdah, accompanying her husband, when they passed Tawba ibn al-Ḥumayyir’s grave. She insisted on stopping to greet him. Startled by the camel, an owl flew up from beside the grave and the animal bolted, throwing Laylā, who was killed outright. They buried her beside Tawba, “and this is the true account of her death” (XI, 244).⁸⁵

A similar feeling for artistic truth may lie behind the compiler’s rejection of forty days as the length of time Qays ibn Dhariḥ stood up to his father, who had sworn an oath that no roof would shelter him until Qays divorced Lubnā. The old man would go and stand in the heat of the sun, and Qays would shelter him with his cloak, burning in the sun’s rays himself, until the shadows lengthened and he could leave him and return to Lubnā. The majority of Abū l-Faraj’s sources⁸⁶ state that Qays stood up to this parental blackmail for “a year”, and he evidently judges that length of time more appropriate than the mere forty days Khālīd ibn Kulthūm mentions (IX, 183–4).

But for all his critical spirit and efforts to arrive as close as possible to the truth, Abū l-Faraj betrays an amazing credulity at times, at least to a modern reader’s mind. In discussing al-Nābigha al-Ja’dī’s age, he quotes Ibn Qutayba’s opinion that the poet lived for 220 years,⁸⁷ adding: “This is not to be rejected, for [al-Nābigha] told ‘Umar that he had seen three generations (*qurūn*) come and go, each one being sixty years, which adds up to 180”; and seeing that al-Nābigha later composed panegyrics on ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, it is not difficult to arrive at the total mentioned by Ibn Qutayba. “Indeed, I do not doubt that he reached this age, and engaged in satires with Aws ibn Maghrā’” (V, 7–8).⁸⁸

A modern reconstruction of al-Nābigha’s life, based on his reported involvement in datable events, establishes that he lived to a great age. For as one of the members of the Banū Ja’dā’s delegation to Medina in 9/630, he can hardly have been born after 610, and may well have been older. The date of his death is uncertain, but seems to have been around 64/683.⁸⁹ The question remains why Abū l-Faraj defines *qarn*, which is an elastic term,⁹⁰ so precisely as 60 years. An indirect answer may be found in some previous reports he quotes to the effect that al-Nābigha al-Ja’dī was older than his namesake al-Dhubayānī, because he was a contemporary of an earlier member of the Lakhmid ruling family than the other Nābigha, at least if an allusion in his poetry is interpreted literally. On this evidence, then, al-Ja’dī lived as long in pre-Islamic as in Islamic times (V, 5–6). The limits of Abū l-Faraj’s critical method, in which statements in poetry may be interpreted as literal facts, are shown up clearly here. The prestige both of al-Nābigha al-Ja’dī and of Ibn Qutayba

may help to explain why the compiler is so much more credulous in this case than when dealing with, for instance, Ash‘ab’s fantastic claims about his longevity.

Apart from suffering fleeting attacks of gullibility, Abū l-Faraj also makes mistakes like anyone else. In discussing the attribution of a poem composed at Dhū Qār to Mirdās ibn Abī ‘Āmir al-Sulamī, Abū l-Faraj claims that that battle took place after the Hijra, between Badr and Uḥud (2–3/624–5), while Mirdās died together with Abū Sufyān’s father Ḥarb some time before the Prophet began his preaching;⁹¹ the poem, he thinks, is by Mirdās’s son, al-‘Abbās (XXIV, 65–6).⁹² Various dates have been put forward for the battle of Dhū Qār,⁹³ but the latest is 611 AD, just before Muḥammad started reciting the Revelation.⁹⁴

As already noted, Abū l-Faraj’s dating al-Farazdaq’s narrow escape from pursuit in Kāẓima to 112 AH appears to be another slip. Al-Ṭabarī mentions the episode under the year 50 AH, when the poet was fleeing from Ziyād ibn Abih’s anger at his satires of him. But al-Farazdaq’s problems with governors did not end then; years later he became involved in the disputes between Qays and Yaman, and he was imprisoned for a time by Khālīd al-Qasrī after 105/723.⁹⁵ Abū l-Faraj may have been confusing different episodes in his turbulent relations with the authorities.

Faced with contradictory opinions about whether Mu‘āwiya or Yazīd was the caliph who returned Yazīd ibn Mufarrigh to ‘Abbād ibn Ziyād and his brother ‘Ubaydallāh, he affirms that it was Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya, for “‘Abbād ibn Ziyād only became governor of Sijistan under Yazīd. Some scholars say (*qāla ba‘duhum*), however, that it was Mu‘āwiya who appointed [‘Abbād]” (XVIII, 261). He does not mention which of his sources gives Mu‘āwiya and which Yazīd, either there or on the following page, where ‘Ubaydallāh’s letter to the caliph complaining of the poet’s slanders is mentioned. Al-Ṭabarī, however, details Yazīd ibn Mufarrigh’s problems with ‘Abbad under 59 AH, and also states that ‘Abbād was governor of Sijistan under Mu‘āwiya. Yazīd appointed ‘Abbād’s brother Salm governor of Sijistan and Khurasan in 61 AH;⁹⁶ Abū l-Faraj seems to have been confusing the brothers, unless he has some arguments for his view which he does not set out.

A few of the references to Ibn Sallām’s classification of poets in his *Ṭabaqāt* are similarly muddled, notably the statement that Ibn Mayyāda (whom Ibn Sallām does not treat) is in the seventh class of Islamic poets along with three others, none of whom are in that class.⁹⁷ Given the fact that most of Abū l-Faraj’s quotations from the *Ṭabaqāt* correspond with the extant text, these radical divergences are more likely to be slips on his part than evidence of an alternative version of the *Ṭabaqāt* itself.⁹⁸

Arrangement of material: cross-references

Abū l-Faraj’s defence in the *Aghānī*’s preface of his decision to order his material according to songs, their poets and composers, has already been referred to in the general presentation of the work.⁹⁹ His remarks there show that he had given much thought to the organisation of the book as a whole – an organisation which

he realised was unique. His interest in questions of arranging material was not confined to the principles on which he based the plan of the book as a whole, however, as can be seen from the many indications he gives of where he has dealt with different subjects in the book.

The majority of these indications take the form of cross-references. For instance, in the discussion of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī's genealogy at the beginning of his article, Abū l-Faraj mentions as evidence for the poet's name being Ḥibbān ibn Qays that he had a brother called Waḥwaḥ ibn Qays. Waḥwaḥ was killed by the Banū Asad, "and what happened to him will be mentioned after this (*khabaruhu yudhkaru ba'da hādha*) to confirm al-Nābigha's genealogy" (V, 4). The reference is picked up several pages later: "as for the information about Waḥwaḥ, who was mentioned previously in connection with the genealogy of his brother al-Nābigha..." (*wa-ammā khabaru Waḥwaḥa akhī l-Nābighati lladhī taqaddama dhikruhu ma'a nasabi akhihi l-Nābigha...*; V, 25).

In this example only twenty-one pages separate the announcement of the information from the information itself, but often the distance between the two is far greater. One of the Top Hundred is ascribed variously to "Gharīḍ the Jew, who is al-Samaw'al ibn 'Ādiyā, to his son Sa'ya ibn Gharīḍ" and to four other obscure poets. Abū l-Faraj proceeds to sketch briefly how the Jews settled in Yathrib, and then says "I have set out in detail the information about them (*wa-qad sharaḥtu akhbārahum*) and the poetry of theirs which has been set to music in another part of this book" (III, 116); that is the end of his information about al-Samaw'al. In the brief treatments he accords to the other possible authors of the lines, he devotes two pages to Sa'ya, again referring to the article on al-Samaw'al "elsewhere" (*fī mawḍi'īn ghayri hādha*; III, 129).¹⁰⁰ Al-Samaw'al is treated first in a series of short articles on Jewish poets towards the end of the book (XXII, 117–21).

A propos of the text of a song (II, 214) Abū l-Faraj remarks that the transmitters all ascribe it to 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a except for al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār, who ascribes it to Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām, "*wa-qad dhukira khabaruhu fī hādha ma'a akhbārihi l-madhkūrati fī ākhiri l-kitāb*". In Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr's article he returns to the problem of Ja'far's poetry being mistakenly attributed to 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a, noting that the song introducing his article was also thought by some to be by 'Umar or by one of his contemporaries al-'Arjī or al-Aḥwaṣ. Abū l-Faraj lists those of his authorities who attributed the verses in question to Ja'far, some of them adducing as their authority Ja'far's daughter Umm 'Urwa (XV, 9).

The cross-references do not only anticipate material, they also refer back to what has already been treated. An introductory song towards the end of the *Aghānī* has a setting by Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa and lyrics which Jaḥẓa ascribed to Khālīd al-Kātib but which Abū l-Faraj found in Muḥammad ibn Umayya's collected poetry. He goes on: "The reports about Khālīd al-Kātib and Muḥammad ibn Umayya have already been given; here we shall mention the reports about Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa" (XXII, 211). The articles on Khālīd and Muḥammad are to be found in vols. XX, 274–87 and XI, 145–58, respectively.

An anecdote in the article on al-Abjar recounts how when this singer was circumnambulating the Ka'ba, he saw 'Aṭā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ and insisted on singing him a song which he had learned the night before from al-Gharīḍ. At the end Abū l-Faraj comments: "The performance indications of the song and the reports about it have already been given in the articles on al-'Arjī and al-Gharīḍ" (*Wa-qad marrat nisbatu hādhā l-sawti wa-khabaruhu fī akhbāri l-'Arjīyi wa-l-Gharīḍ*; III, 347). Anecdotes connected with the poem occur in the articles on al-'Arjī (I, 406–8) and al-Gharīḍ (II, 361–2; 365–9), while the performance indications are to be found in the latter article (II, 366).

At the end of the article on 'Azza al-Maylā' an anecdote relates how two Medinan notables and music-lovers, 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far and Ibn Abī 'Atīq, were able to foil the governor's attempt to silence the singer, and they then asked her to sing for them. She performed a setting of a line by al-Quṭāmī which delighted them. Abū l-Faraj rounds off the anecdote and the whole article as follows: "The performance indications of the songs mentioned in these reports have been given elsewhere" (*Wa-qad maḍat nisbatu mā fī hādhilhi l-akhbāri min al-aghāni fī mawāḍi'a ukhrā*; XVII, 177). All but two of the songs in the article are accompanied by their performance indications, but the setting of al-Quṭāmī's line is to be found in the article on him (XXIV, 20), and the details of 'Azza's setting of a line by 'Amr ibn al-Iṭnāba which is quoted in an earlier anecdote (XVII, 164) are in the article on 'Amr (XI, 123).

As can be seen from these examples, Abū l-Faraj's choice of tenses for verbs in cross-references is not necessarily the one which a modern reader might expect. Expressions such as *qad sharaḥtu*, *qad dhukira* and *qad maḍat* unambiguously indicate the past, but they are by no means confined to contexts where Abū l-Faraj refers back to material mentioned in previous volumes of the *Aghānī*. In fact the majority of cross-references, whether they anticipate or refer back to the material as it is found in the present text, employ the past tense. This usage, at first sight disconcerting, can in most cases be explained by the fact that the author worked over the text more than once with students, so that on a second or later reading he already knew at the beginning of the book what he had included at the end. In a few cases which will be discussed below, it evidently indicates the compiler's intention to treat material, an intention which was not in the end fulfilled. The possibility also exists that he had already prepared some sections which were to come towards the end before he had reached the place where he meant to fit them into the book; on this hypothesis the past tense might in some cases refer to completed passages not yet integrated into the book as a whole.

The examples quoted also show that what the cross-references relate to varies. They may concern an entire article, or a section dealing, for instance, with a relative of the subject of the article or with a particular poem, or the setting of a song, or a specific subject, like the attribution of one poet's work to another. "*Khabar*", the "report" concerning a given subject, which often occurs in the cross-references, can signify the whole corpus of information about a given person, several anecdotes on a subject, as in the case of al-'Arjī's poem, or a brief affirmation, for

instance of the tendency of transmitters to ascribe Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr's poetry to more famous contemporaries, together with a further illustrative anecdote.

In order to give an idea of the density of cross-references in the *Aghānī*, I list here those in two volumes chosen at random from the beginning and the end of the work. I have not included instances where the material referred to appears at a distance of less than twenty pages from the reference itself.

Vol. II

- 80 (a line of poetry attributed to Ibn Harma) refers to IV, 366
- 81 (the reports about the two singers called al-Hudhālī) to V, 65 ff.
- 153 (Ḥunayn's persuading Khālīd al-Qasrī to rescind his ban on singing) to II, 348–9
- 214 (the attribution of Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr's poetry to others) to XV, 9
- 218 (the occasion of Ibn al-Mawlā's composing a poem) to III, 291–2
- 321 (a dialogue between 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz and 'Uqayl ibn 'Ullafa) to XII, 259
- 359 (information about Thurayyā and her sisters) to I, 209–12 (where Thurayyā and her forebears, but not her sisters, are mentioned)
- 372 (information about a poem by Jamīl) to VIII, 139–44

Vol. XXII

- 44 and 46 (lines by Abū Ḥaṣṣ al-Shiṭranjī set to music by 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdī) refer to X, 173 and 176
- 132 (flytings between Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf and Ḥassān ibn Thabit and other poets) to –
- 157 (reports about Ibn al-Mudabbir and 'Arib) to XXI, 79–80
- 211 (reports about Khālīd al-Kātib and Muḥammad ibn Umayya) to XX, 274–87 and XII, 145–58
- 212 (reports about the singer Ṣadaqa ibn Abi Ṣadaqa) to XIX, 289–99 (in fact it is Abū Ṣadaqa who is meant)
- 217 (the controversy about Quḍā'a's genealogy) to VIII, 90
- 220 (the revenge killing of 'Abd Yagūth ibn Waqqāṣ) to XVI, 328–41
- 302 (Mukhāriq's attempt to pass a setting by Ishāq off as his own) to V, 366–8 (where the plot and poetry are the same but the singer-trickster is Lamīs)
- 319 (the later history of Dhū Nuwās) to XVII, 303–4 (which treats his attack on Najran and the Ethiopian invasion)

This list not only gives an impression of the frequency of cross-references, it also shows that the references are not always accurate. Of the eighteen instances listed, the ones to Thurayyā and her sisters, to Ṣadaqa and to Mukhāriq turn out not to correspond exactly with the material in the text. It is not Thurayyā and her sisters al-Ruḍayyā, Qurayba and Umm 'Uthmān who have been mentioned earlier, as the reference states (*qad maḍat akhbāruhunna*), but Thurayyā and her forebears, a branch

of the Umayyad clan known as al-‘Abalāt. The passage in vol. II also mentions the ‘Abalāt, and it is possible that *akhbāruhunna* is an error for *akhbāruhum*. If not, Abū l-Faraj’s memory seems to have betrayed him. As for the reference to a section on Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa’s father, it adds that this singer was a Hijazi who performed before al-Rashīd. The beginning of the article on Abū Ṣadaqa states that he was from Medina and that his son Ṣadaqa, Aḥmad’s father, to whom Abū l-Faraj does not devote an article, was an indifferent performer. It also depicts him performing before al-Rashīd. Abū l-Faraj has confused the generations in stating: “*kāna abūhu [ay abū Aḥmada] hijāziyan mughanniyan qadima ‘alā l-Rashīd*”. And whereas in vol. XXII it is Mukhāriq who adapts a setting by Ishāq to new lyrics, claims the song for himself and puts it into circulation until it reaches al-Rashīd and the truth comes out, in vol. V ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir encourages his singing-girl Lamīs to use Ishāq’s melody as a way of punishing the musician for having visited him too little; the caliph concerned is al-Ma’mūn. The confusion in this last example concerns some of the people but not the plot or the song; it is a nice illustration of the relative importance of poetry, narrative motifs and characters in the compiler’s approach to *akhbār*.

While the references to Thurayyā’s sisters and the singers Ṣadaqa and Mukhāriq are inexact, the indication of flytings between Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf and Ḥassān ibn Thābit and other poets on the subject of the wars between the Aws and the Khazraj corresponds to nothing in the *Aghānī*. The article on Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf is very short, consisting of his genealogy, a profile and a detailed account (curiously, without any indication of a source) of his death at the Prophet’s orders (XXII, 132–3).¹⁰¹ It does not discuss the poem from which the song introducing his article is taken, nor does it develop the other themes mentioned in the profile of him, such as his gifts as a poet, which Abū l-Faraj esteemed. If compared with other *Aghānī* articles, the section on Ka’b appears unfinished.¹⁰² The announcement of the treatment of his exchanges with other poets which Abū l-Faraj hoped to include (*tudhkaru fī mawāḍi‘ihā in shā’a llāh*), may thus be read as a statement of an intention which the compiler was unable to carry out.¹⁰³

The unkept promise about Ka’b’s flytings belongs to a group of Abū l-Faraj’s asides which has attracted considerable attention from scholars. The best known of them are the references to the non-existent articles on Abū Nuwās (XX, 61) and on Abū l-‘Atāhiya and ‘Utba (IV, 1 and 112).¹⁰⁴ As I have already suggested, some of the unkept promises can be explained by the unfinished state of the *Aghānī*; Abū l-Faraj did not manage to put into his book all the material he had in mind for it. In several cases there is textual evidence for this in expressions such as: “*tudhkaru fī mawāḍi‘in ākhara in shā’a llāh*”,¹⁰⁵ “*adhkuru akhbāra (...) ba’da dhālika*”,¹⁰⁶ or “*adhkuru dhālika bi-‘aqibi akhbāri (...) in shā’a llāh*”.¹⁰⁷ But whether the absence of information in these cases should be put down to lack of opportunity or, in some instances, to forgetfulness, it is important to realise that the references which lead nowhere represent a small proportion of the total of cross-references. From the lists given for vols. II and XXII, it emerges that 14 of the 18 references (78% of this tiny sample) indicate material found elsewhere in the *Aghānī* quite precisely and another three

references (17%) correspond partially to material elsewhere.¹⁰⁸ In other words, throughout the work of compilation Abū l-Faraj had a clear idea of what he was putting into his book.

Putting *akhbār* in the right place

From time to time Abū l-Faraj explains that he has not dealt with a certain subject at that point in the *Aghānī* but has put it in an appropriate place elsewhere. The question naturally arises what kind of subjects are involved, and what the compiler considers an appropriate place. The article on Bashshār provides a good example of such a passage:

There are many reports about Bashshār which have been mentioned in different places, for instance the story of his relationship with ‘Abda (*akhbāruhu ma’a ‘Abda*), which has been mentioned separately (*ufrīdat*) with some of his poetry about her for which the singers made settings, the accounts of his exchange of lampoons with Ḥammād ‘Ajrad, which have also been mentioned separately, and likewise the reports about him and Abū Hāshim al-Bāhilī [sic],¹⁰⁹ which we have not brought all together here. For each category can stand on its own (*idh kāna kullu ṣinfin minhā mustagniyan bi-naḥsih*), [and we have given them their own places] according to the condition laid down in the preface.

(III, 250)

The article on Bashshār and ‘Abda (VI, 242–53) is introduced by one of the Top Hundred, a song with lyrics from a poem of Bashshār’s on ‘Abda. After a few *akhbār* about their relationship, most of which are also found in the main article on the poet,¹¹⁰ the section lists some twenty songs taken from his poems on her. The main article on Bashshār (III, 135–250) is one of the longest in the book, and Abū l-Faraj evidently preferred not to lengthen it even more but to ensure that Bashshār made appearances elsewhere in the *Aghānī*. Moreover, the article on him and ‘Abda has a markedly musical character, in contrast to the main article, which has only a handful of songs.¹¹¹ It follows almost immediately on the article on Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman, which also has a high concentration of songs;¹¹² when the *Aghānī* was compiled, its readers could no doubt compare the musical arrangements of the two poets’ work. And the subsequent short article on al-Aḥwaṣ and Umm Ja’far (VI, 254–9) provides another example of the special treatment of poetry devoted to a beloved, while the main article on the poet is elsewhere (IV, 223–68).

Bashshār’s poetic exchanges with Ḥammād ‘Ajrad are given in the latter’s article (XIV, 320–81), where they form the subject of the first group of *akhbār* (323–33) after the introductory section with Ḥammād’s profile and genealogy and the explanation for his nickname, and are taken up again later on (345–9; 365). If they are not on their own, as the term *ufrīdat* suggests, they have at least been separated from the other reports about Bashshār and given a prominent place in the treatment of

Ḥammād. As for Abū Hishām al-Bāhili, he is mentioned *en passant* in the Bashshār article and again in the one on Ḥammād, but Abū l-Faraj did not give him a separate section – at least in the *Aghānī* as it has survived.¹¹³

The decision to create a special article on Bashshār and ‘Abda may have been inspired by the fact that the Top Hundred songs included a setting of Bashshār’s verses on her. Although songs from the Top Hundred are sometimes encountered embedded in articles on poets and singers,¹¹⁴ the combination of a song from the Top Hundred and a group of *akhbār* with poetry on a clearly demarcated subject would at least suggest to the compiler the possibility of creating a special article on that subject separate from the main treatment of the poet or composer concerned. But even when no song from the Top Hundred is involved, Abū l-Faraj may decide to give a clearly demarcated group of poems with their setting their own place in his book.

At the end of the article on Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī the compiler mentions that he has separated the reports about the musician and the singing-girl called Khunth or Dhāt al-Khāl whom he loved from the main body of material on him

because they can stand on their own and should not be incorporated into the mass of material about him. [Ibrāhīm] composed many poems about this girl which he and other singers set to music. And I had laid down the condition that if reports about poets and singers fell into this category I would set them apart, so that they should not cause a break between the parallel and similar [information] which will be added to and included in [the corpus of reports]”.

(V, 252)¹¹⁵

While the article on Dhāt al-Khāl starts with some *akhbār* (XVI, 342–6) most of it (347–53) is devoted to Ibrāhīm’s poems on her and their settings. In the anecdotes, which focus on Dhāt al-Khāl’s relationship with al-Rashid, Ibrāhīm appears only as a subsidiary character; they indeed “stand on their own”, and to have included them in the main article on the musician would have caused an uneasy shift of focus. As the passage from Bashshār’s article quoted above also implies, the existence of a large number of settings for a group of poems was another reason for giving them a separate place. The context that Abū l-Faraj has chosen for Dhāt al-Khāl’s article is also noteworthy. It is flanked on one side by ‘Abd Yaghūth al-Ḥārithī (XVI, 327–41) and before him by Nā’ila bint al-Farāfiṣa (321–7) and on the other by Ḥujr ibn ‘Amr Ākil al-Murār (353–8). The singing-girl’s article is an oasis of music in an otherwise melody-less part of the text, as well as an interlude of ‘Abbasid court refinement in the midst of the violence of ‘Uthmān’s murder, the second Yawm al-Kulāb and the conflict between Ḥujr Ākil al-Murār and Ziyād ibn Habūla. It also depicts a female protagonist contrasted both with ‘Uthmān’s modest and courageous wife and with Hind, terribly punished by her husband Ḥujr for her disloyalty to him during her captivity in an enemy tribe. Not only has Abū l-Faraj avoided disturbing the flow of Ibrāhīm’s *akhbār*, he has placed Dhāt al-Khāl in a context where her qualities are highlighted.

Ensuring that an article is not excessively long, putting thematically connected *akhbār* together in their own article, and avoiding too many performance indications where they could make the reader lose the train of thought, all these are reasons for separating groups of *akhbār* and songs from the article where they might otherwise have been expected to be placed. When these *akhbār* or songs are mentioned, Abū l-Faraj sometimes observes that they have been put “in the place where they belong”¹¹⁶ or uses an equivalent expression.¹¹⁷ Why the *akhbār* belong there is unfortunately not further specified. But the examination of some instances may throw light on the question.

At the end of the article on Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī Abū l-Faraj notes that while he has rejected some of the many anecdotes about the musician as wordy and uninformative, others he has kept back until the appropriate place (V, 430). One such concerns Iṣḥāq’s quarrel with ‘Alī ibn Hishām and his brother, and it includes the quotation of a letter from Iṣḥāq in which, among other things, he describes the book he is writing – a work which may have served as an inspiration for Abū l-Faraj’s own *Aghānī*.¹¹⁸ After its introductory song, this short article starts as follows: “[Iṣḥāq] composed this poem on ‘Alī ibn Hishām when he was in Basra. He also wrote him a fine letter, and this is the place to mention it” (*hādhā mawḍī‘u dhikrīhā*; XVII, 111). What is behind the compiler’s determined statement?

Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī is one of the *Aghānī*’s main characters;¹¹⁹ he is not only the subject of one of the longest articles in the book (V, 268–435) but he also appears in very many accounts of court life under caliphs from al-Rashīd to al-Wāthiq and as a judge of singers and musicians from the Umayyad period on. A further short article is devoted to his poetry on his servant Ziyād (XX, 321–4). And his name occurs countless times in connection with performance indications. On the face of it anywhere in the book could have been the right place to mention information about Iṣḥāq.

Iṣḥāq’s correspondent ‘Alī ibn Hishām, by contrast, makes very infrequent appearances in the *Aghānī* as a music lover and owner of singing-girls such as Mutayyam al-Hishāmiya (VII, 293–307). But he appears shortly before the article with Iṣḥāq in the one on Badhl, a singer famous for her familiarity with the repertoire. At the caliph’s request he pays her an unexpected visit after a rift between them caused by someone spreading a tale that he had deprecated her knowledge of songs, which he put at a mere four thousand. Reconciled with him, she sits down, writes out all the songs she can think of, a total of twelve thousand, and sends them to him. He thanks her in words and kind for this splendid collection (XVII, 76–7).

There are very few references in the *Aghānī* to the writing of books, as distinct from the composition of poems and songs. In the two instances discussed here, the books are concerned with songs, and they are written for ‘Alī ibn Hishām by a musician who either has just ended a quarrel with him or is still estranged from him. Badhl writes her song collection partly to prove how many songs she knows, but partly as a gesture of good-will to him. Iṣḥāq describes the book he is in the process of writing because he knows that ‘Alī will be interested in it and he values his opinion about it; he may well see the subject as a way of re-establishing harmony between them. The important differences are that while the cause of the misunderstanding between Badhl and ‘Alī is mentioned, the reason for Iṣḥāq’s conflict

with ‘Ali and Aḥmad is never reported in detail,¹²⁰ and the chronology of the incidents which make it up is not clear. Consequently, the *khbar* in which Iṣḥāq agrees to desist from attacking Aḥmad at ‘Ali’s request (XVII, 114) could be either the end of the matter or one episode among others. Although it can be no more than a hypothesis, Abū l-Faraj’s statement that this is the right place in the book to mention Iṣḥāq’s letter could be explained by the similarities between it and the incident of Badhl’s song collection. But the two articles are not side-by-side, which suggests a compilation technique of putting subjects which resemble each other close to one another, but not juxtaposed.¹²¹

It is not always so difficult to understand why Abū l-Faraj designates a place as appropriate. Much of the beginning of al-Akḥṭal’s article is devoted to discussions of the relative merits of him, Jarīr and al-Farazdaq. One anecdote reports the early philologists’ very favourable verdict on him, supported by a list of his ten excellent long *qaṣīdas*, free from coarseness and mistakes in diction; Jarīr, by contrast, only produced three poems of the same quality. Six of al-Akḥṭal’s poems are then indicated by their first half line, followed by Jarīr’s three, and then Abū l-Faraj remarks: “Some of the poems by al-Akḥṭal which have been referred to have settings, and this is the place to mention them”. The performance indications of nos. 2 and 3 on the list are then given (VIII, 291–3).¹²² Apart from two quotations of later couplets from no. 3 (295, 297), neither of these two poems reappear in the article; no other opportunity would have been so good for giving the settings.

A poem by ‘Umar which provided the lyrics of one of the Top Hundred was set by several composers. The setting in ‘Ali ibn Yaḥyā’s list of the Top Hundred was by Mālīk ibn Abī l-Samḥ, and other melodies by ‘Arīb, Ibn al-Makkī, Ibn Surayj, al-Gharīḍ and ‘Ātika bint Shuhda are also given. According to Jaḥḥa it was ‘Ātika’s setting which was selected for the Top Hundred. Abū l-Faraj then remarks: “The information about all¹²³ these musicians has been mentioned, or has a place where it will be mentioned,¹²⁴ except for [the reports about] ‘Ātika bint Shuhda. [They] will be set out here, because there is no other composition of hers which I know about except this one” (VI, 259–60). This is a case of the best, or even the only, opportunity to deal with a personality. And a further reason for treating ‘Ātika here is that Jaḥḥa gives her as the composer of the setting in the Top Hundred, even if Abū l-Faraj does not rate Jaḥḥa’s list of the Top Hundred as highly as ‘Ali ibn Yaḥyā’s.¹²⁵

These examples show some of the considerations which influenced Abū l-Faraj in determining the best or most suitable place for an article, a song setting or a *khbar*. Finally, there are two passages in which he speaks of working the material in an article into an ordered composition (*naẓm*). The more elaborate of the two, which introduces the article on Qays ibn Dhariḥ, can be shown to refer to the organisation of the *akhbār* on chronological lines and then according to themes and connections provided by poetry; it indeed deserves the description of “composition”.¹²⁶

Because the instances discussed here draw on Abū l-Faraj’s own asides, they offer firm evidence of his cast of mind when arranging the material in some articles and sections of the *Aghānī*.

Many other articles tacitly illustrate his following the same approach. It is to the internal organisation of articles that I turn in the following two chapters.

ARTICLES ON SONGS, EVENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Anyone leafing through the *Aghānī* is bound to notice the division of the material into sections or, as they are referred to in this study, articles. Each section is introduced by a song with the name of its poet and composer and the indications for its performance,¹ and this is followed generally by a title indicating the main subject of the subsequent *akhbār*.² When both the poet and the composer are treated, two articles follow a single song. The titles of these articles treating of people are of the type “*Khabar fulān wa-nasabuh*” (The account and genealogy of X), “*Akhbār fulān*” (The accounts about X), “*Nasab fulān wa-akhbāruh*” (The origin and accounts of X), or “*Dhikr khabar fulān*” (The mention of the account about X).³

Less often, a song introduces an account of a memorable event because the poem from which the lyrics are taken was composed on that occasion. Then the article will be entitled, for example, “*Khabar maqtal Ḥujr ibn ‘Adī*” (The account of the killing of Ḥujr ibn ‘Adī; XVII, 133), “*Dhikr al-khabar fī ḥurūb al-Fijār wa-ḥurūb ‘Ukāz*” (The mention of the account of the wars of al-Fijār and the wars of ‘Ukāz; XXII, 54) or, vaguely, “*Dhikr al-khabar fī hādhihi l-ghārāt wa-l-ḥurūb*” (The mention of the account of these raids and wars; XXII, 187).

Another kind of article deals with a relationship between the poet who is the author of the lyrics and someone else, as, for instance, “*Akhbār Bashshār wa-‘Abda khāṣṣatan*” (The accounts about Bashshār and ‘Abda in particular; VI, 242), “*Akhbār al-Aḥwaṣ ma‘a Umm Ja‘far*” (The accounts of al-Aḥwaṣ[’s relationship] with Umm Ja‘far; VI, 254), “*Dhikr al-khabar ‘an al-sabab fī ittiṣāl al-hijā’ bayn Jarīr wa-l-Akhṭal*” (Mention of the report about the reason for Jarīr and al-Akhṭal engaging in lampooning each other; XI, 61), “*Khabar li-Ishāq wa-Ibn Hishām*” ([An account of] something that happened between Ishāq and [‘Alī] ibn Hishām; XVII, 111) or “*Akhbār Abī Nuwās wa-Janān khāṣṣatan*” (The accounts specifically about Abū Nuwās and Janān; XX, 61).

Further, some titles indicate a double subject, namely both the poet or the musician of the introductory song and a particularly significant event in his life, sometimes one connected with that song. The title of al-Ḥuṭay’a’s main article runs: “*Khabar al-Ḥuṭay’a wa-nasabuh wa-l-sabab alladhī min ajlih hajā l-Zibriqān ibn Badr*” (The account of al-Ḥuṭay’a, his genealogy and the reason why he lampooned

al-Zibriqān ibn Badr; II, 157); that of al-Dalāl's article: "*Dhikr al-Dalāl wa-qīṣṣatuh hīna khuṣiyya wa-man khuṣiyya ma'ah wa-l-sabab fī dhālika wa-sā'ir akhbārīh*" (The mention of al-Dalāl, what happened when he was castrated, who was castrated with him, the reason for it and the rest of the accounts about him; IV, 269); that of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī's: "*Dhikr al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī wa-nasabuh wa-akhbārūh wa-l-sabab alladhī min ḡlīh qāla hādha l-shi'r*" (The mention of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, his genealogy, the accounts about him and the reason why he composed this poetry; V, 1). A combination of this type and the preceding one is to be found in the following title: "*Dhikr Layla wa-nasabuhā wa-khabar Tawba ibn al-Ḥumayyir ma'ahā wa-khabar maqtalih*" (The mention of Layla, her genealogy, and the accounts of Tawba ibn al-Ḥumayyir's [relationship] with her and his violent end; XI, 204).

Finally, a title may list several themes: "*Al-khabar fī hādhihi l-qīṣṣa wa-sabab munāfarat 'Āmir wa-'Alqama wa-khabar al-A'shā wa-ghayrih ma'ahumā fihā*" (The report of this story, the reason for the poetic contest between 'Āmir and 'Alqama and the account of [the involvement of] al-A'shā and others with them in it; XVI, 283).⁴

As can be seen from these examples, the headings imply that the words and music of the songs serve as occasions for articles on related subjects, such as their creators or the events which gave rise to them. The possibility that a song itself might be the subject of an article is scarcely ever reflected in titles. One rare exception comes right at the beginning of the whole book, "*Dhikr al-mi'a al-ṣawt al-mukhtārā*" (The account of the Hundred Chosen Songs; I, 7), which sets out the origin of the collection of Top Hundred songs and lists the first three of them. Later, when Abū l-Faraj has worked through the Top Hundred and turns to other collections of songs, a title announces "*Al-armāl al-thalātha al-mukhtārā*" (The three chosen songs in the *ramal* metrical mode; IX, 61). And after the songs have been listed, the next heading is "*Nisbat al-aṣwāt wa-akhbārūhā*" (The authorship and performance indications of the songs and the reports about them; IX, 62). Similar sequences of titles occurs shortly after, with "*Aṣwāt Ma'bad al-ma'rūfa bi-alqābihā wa-hiya khamṣa*" ('Ma'bad's compositions, five in number, which are known by their nicknames; IX, 105), followed by "*Nisbat hādhihi l-aṣwāt wa-akhbārūhā*" (The authorship and performance indications of these songs and the reports about them; 106), and "*Aṣwāt Ma'bad al-musammāh mudun Ma'bad wa-tusammā aydan ḥuṣūn Ma'bad*" ('Ma'bad's songs called "Ma'bad's Cities" and also "Ma'bad's Citadels"; 137) followed by "*Nisbat hādhihi l-aṣwāt wa-akhbārūhā*" (138).

In the body of the text there are a few other references to songs being the subject of *akhbār*. In answer to Ma'bad's Seven Cities⁵ the Meccans chose the seven best compositions from Ibn Surayj's repertoire, and Abū l-Faraj introduces the list with the remark: "As for the Seven Songs which were recognised as Ibn Surayj's equivalents of Ma'bad's Seven, I read the account of them (*khabarahā*) in Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan's book" (IX, 238).⁶ The text of one of the Top Hundred songs, a couplet by Nuṣayb, is given with its performance indications, and then Abū l-Faraj writes: "Of Nuṣayb's *akhbār* enough have been quoted earlier on, and only what can be mentioned by itself in a suitable place has been kept back, like the

reports about this song (*mithla akhbāri hādḥā l-ṣawt*)” (VI, 120). The expression “*khābaru hādḥā l-shi‘r*” (the information about this poetry) is also found in an analogous position introducing a short section on the lyrics of a song (e.g. VIII, 259; the poem on the sand-grouse which five poets vied with each other to describe).

Because the *Aghānī* describes itself as a book about songs, the articles about songs are an appropriate place to start when the composition of articles is being examined. After presenting some examples of articles on songs I will turn to some other short sections, generally untitled, which arise out of songs. They are not centered on them, but at the same time they do not conform to the main types of article treating personalities, relationships or events. But before embarking on this examination, I will make a few general observations about how I have gone to work in the chapters which examine the compilation of articles. In summarising the content of articles or parts of articles, as a rule I consider each statement or narrative introduced by a full or partial *isnād* as a separate *khābar*, whatever its length. When, however, a continuous narrative is put together from information furnished by several sources, it is counted as a single *khābar*, even if some of the *isnāds* indicating these sources are given in the course of the narrative and not at the beginning of it. If one version of a *khābar* is followed by a second which introduces substantial new information, I consider the versions as two *akhbār*. This procedure does not do justice to the complexity of composite *akhbār* put together from different sources, but I believe it is adequate for the purpose at hand, which is to discuss how groups of *akhbār* and songs have been organised into articles.

Since what is being discussed here is Abū l-Faraj’s arrangement of his material, I do not consider it necessary to examine in detail how that material was transmitted to him by analysing the *isnāds*. I shall, however, indicate in passing the number of direct informants from whom he took material, without distinguishing between people and written texts, and also disregarding the sources for the performance indications. As a rule he quoted from different informants (including books as well as people) in the order he thought fit. Sequences such as A, B, A + C, D, B; A + B, C, D, E, E, E, A, C, F; or A, B, C + D + E, F, B, G (where each letter indicates the informant for a *khābar*) are typical; in other words, he did not copy down all the information he derived from one informant before moving on to the next (which would give A, A, A, B, C, C, D, E, E).⁷ I will also mention the rare instances where one source is dominant.

Many of the *akhbār* to be discussed are complex narratives which need detailed examination to bring out their literary qualities and full meaning; I have simply mentioned some of their more obvious features. A thorough analysis of them, taking due account of aspects such as narrative instance, characters, motifs, images or quotations of poetry would also establish that there are often more connexions between the different anecdotes in an article than I indicate here. Given the amount of material I am seeking to cover, I have not been able to do more than suggest a few elementary lines of approach to the composition of articles; there is much more work to be done in this field.⁸

Articles on songs

The article about Nuṣayb's song already referred to ("Akhbār hādhā l-ṣawt"; VI, 120–26)⁹ provides a good example of this rare species. The text runs:

*Bi-Zaynaba almim qabla an yarḥala l-rakbū
wa-qul in tamallinā fa-mā mallaka l-qalbū
Wa-qul fī tajannihā laka l-dhanba innamā
'ātābuka man 'ātābta fimā lahū 'atbū.*¹⁰

After its author, composer and performance indications have been given, and Abū l-Faraj has pointed out that this song is being treated in a place of its own, there follow anecdotes about the poet's attitude towards the poem and its reception by others. Each *khbar* except (8) includes a quotation of at least part of the lyrics.

- 1 Nuṣayb himself says that he believed in his gift for poetry only when he had composed this piece.
- 2–3 Jamīl and Jarīr both regret that they were not the authors of it.
- 4 Al-Kumayt ibn Zayd is able to recite it to Nuṣayb when the poet has forgotten it. On hearing it, he weeps.
- 5 A visitor to Minā sees a black couple resting at an encampment, and when someone passes singing the song, the woman reproaches the man for making her name a byword. The visitor realises that they are Nuṣayb and Zaynab. A variant adds that the singer is Ibn Surayj.
- 6 Nuṣayb relates that he rode past women who were reciting his poem. They asked Ibn Surayj, who was with them, to sing it, and regretted that Nuṣayb was not in their company. Nuṣayb came up to introduce himself, but one woman made a slighting remark about his colour, so he left them alone.
- 7 Someone [the narrator of the anecdote] asks Nuṣayb to recite some of his poetry. Nuṣayb insists that the narrator name a poem. When he hears the line, he smiles and says it was a youthful composition before he complies with the request. One transmitter adds that it was his best poem.
- 8 After 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz becomes caliph, he reproaches Nuṣayb for having ruined women's reputations with his poetry. The poet replies that he no longer composes verses, and the bystanders testify to his ascetic way of life. 'Umar allows him to request a favour, and he asks for gifts for his daughters, so that they can make good marriages although they are dark-skinned.
- 9 On his way to the pilgrimage a man stops at a tent and sees a girl whose beauty moves him to quote Nuṣayb's verses. The girl explains that she is the Zaynab mentioned in them, and that the poet is about to visit her. The traveller waits until Nuṣayb arrives and then gets ready to leave, thinking the lovers want to be alone. But Nuṣayb asks him to wait and soon joins him, affirming that he and Zaynab have always behaved with propriety.

- 10 Ḥammād ibn Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī is asked whose poetry these lines resemble, if one did not know that Nuṣayb was their author. He points to their similarity with Imru' al-Qays's poems, because of their diction. His hearer is amazed that Ḥammād gives the same reply as his father Iṣḥāq did to the question.
- 11 A man is knocked up late at night by a friend, Munqidh al-Hilālī, who explains that after a good meal and some fine wine he has remembered Nuṣayb's poem, recited it and been profoundly moved by it. The only person whom he could trust to appreciate the experience is the man he is visiting. (song 2) Two further lines of the poem which were set to music are given.¹¹

There are several themes running through these *akhbār*. The first is the poet's attitude to this poem of his. It represents a crucial point in Nuṣayb's artistic development, for it proves to him that he can compose just as well as recognised poets (1). Later on, however, he regards it as a work of his youth (7), and even claims to have forgotten it, so that another poet has to recite it to him (4). At all events, he turns his back on poetry, especially the *nasīb* with its dubious moral status, and becomes an ascetic (8). The second theme is the reception of Nuṣayb's verses by others. Poets and critics are unanimously favourable (2–3, 10), as is the wider public, represented by a group of women and the Basran *bon vivant*, Munqidh al-Hilālī (6, 11). But criticism of the lines is expressed both by Zaynab, who is most directly concerned by the poem, and by the guardian of morality, the caliph, because of the ill effect on women's reputations of mentioning their names in the *nasīb* (5, 8).¹² The musical dimension, in this case the performance of the song whose lyrics come from the poem, is a minor theme (5, 6). More important is the connection between the poem and Nuṣayb's biography. It causes him problems with his wife, leads to his encounter with a group of colour-conscious women, and gives him a certain undesirable standing in 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz's eyes, which however he is able to improve (5, 6, 8). The issue of colour, which arises in Nuṣayb's main article,¹³ is brought in here too, both in the women's reaction, and in his reference to the difficulty of finding suitable husbands for his daughters (6, 8).

Apart from themes, this section includes two different types of *khbar*. Almost all can be considered as representing with more or less verisimilitude events which could conceivably have happened, even if some of them are hard to reconcile with each other (e.g. 1 and 7 with 4), and others may be regarded as dramatisations of points to be made (2, 3 and the quite elaborate 10, which are all more imaginative ways of conveying opinions about Nuṣayb's poetry). By contrast, the *khbar* about Zaynab's rendezvous with Nuṣayb which the passing traveller witnesses (9), betrays a re-working of the material according to 'Udhri conventions. In this incident Zaynab is not in the least disturbed that her name occurs in a poem, indeed she identifies herself as the bearer of the name. The type of meeting she and Nuṣayb have is typical of 'Udhri conventions, in which the lovers remain chaste and, as a rule, keep at a certain distance from each other. Although Nuṣayb is not known as an 'Udhri poet, this *khbar* illustrates a tendency to rework material according to

a popular cultural convention, removing it from its historical context and “literarising” it, that is, turning it into a purely literary construct.¹⁴

The list of Ibn Surayj’s Seven provides the occasion for another article on a song (IX, 239–47). The musician composed a setting for ‘Umar ibn Abi Rabi’a’s couplet

*La-qad ḥabbabat Nu‘mun ilaynā bi-wajhihā
masākina mā bayna l-watā’iri fa-l-naq’i
wa-min ajli Dhāti l-khālī a‘maltu nāqatī
ukallifuhā sayra l-kalālī ma’a l-ḡal’i.*¹⁵

After the information about its authorship and performance indications has been given, it is followed by nine *akhbār* and nine songs:

- 1 While ‘Umar and Ibn Abi ‘Atiq are at the Ka’ba they see a woman of the Sufyānid family. ‘Umar immediately scribbles down a couplet (song 2) enquiring whether Dhāt al-Khāl still loves him and sends it over to her. When Ibn Abi ‘Atiq protests, he answers that he has proclaimed his love for her more unequivocally in the poem from which song 1 is taken; moreover, he has never done anything wrong. The next day he receives a reply (song 3) asking him to desist and warning him against his enemies.
- 2 A pious music-lover, asked to name the best musician, designates Ibn Surayj when he is composing in Ma’bad’s style and then quotes song 1.
- 3 Several leading musicians including Ma’bad judge Ibn Surayj to be a feeble composer. On hearing this, Ibn Surayj composes song 1. When he performs it the musicians flee, and Ma’bad warns them not to provoke him again.
- 4 ‘Umar becomes deeply attached to Nu’m and composes many poems about her (song 4). One of ‘Umar’s many poems on Nu’m, with its setting.
- 5 ‘Umar sees Nu’m during the pilgrimage and twice tries to speak to her. She avoids him, but he declares his love in a poem (song 5). (songs 6 and 7) Two more poems of his with their settings.
- 6 Asked to tell of the gift he liked best, ‘Umar recounts that one day Muṣ’ab ibn al-Zubayr sent him a share of clothes and other luxury goods he had received from Iraq. They were worth enough to keep him for a year. The next day ‘Umar went out, dressed to the nines and without a care in the world. In that state he composed the 10-line poem from which the two lines of song 7 are drawn.
- 7 ‘Umar hears that Nu’m has washed in a pool, so he rides there, dismounts, and drinks it dry. (song 8) Another of ‘Umar’s poems on Nu’m, with its setting.
- 8 Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī and other musicians discuss the verdict that Ibn Surayj was at his best when composing in Ma’bad’s style. Ibrāhīm affirms that the reverse is true, since Ma’bad was wont to exclaim that he had become like Ibn Surayj when he made a particularly fine setting. [Abū l-Faraj

adds a critical comment on this, referring to information quoted earlier in the book, and adduces the following *khavar* to support his view]:

- 9 Ibn Surayj and Ma'bad meet after a long separation and exchange notes about the songs they have composed. Ibn Surayj performs one, but without an upper octave note (*ṣayḥa*). Ma'bad notices this and suggests where it should go, upon which Ibn Surayj asks him to demonstrate. Ma'bad complies and Ibn Surayj learns this embellishment from him. Later he has much success with the song, the performance indications of which are given (song 9, on lyrics said to be by ʿAṭīf al-ʿAnbarī).¹⁶

The concern in these *akhbār* is not with a single song or poem, but rather with a well-defined group of them.¹⁷ The introductory song is quoted in anecdotes (1), (2) and (3). But the first anecdote also includes another of ʿUmar's songs on Nu'm, and more are presented in (5) to (7) or on their own (songs 4, 6–8). The same anecdote also portrays something of ʿUmar's relations with Nu'm which led him to compose poetry on her, and this subject returns in (5) and (7). *Khavar* (6) introduces a different and original context for one of ʿUmar's poems on Nu'm, suggesting that his descriptions of episodes of meeting with the beloved may sometimes have been an expression of a feeling of general well-being, rather than a poetic reworking of real-life encounters.

Anecdote (2) introduces the theme of the artistic rivalry between Ibn Surayj and Ma'bad. This is taken up again in (3), and in (8) and (9), which express contrary points of view on the subject. Although the song about Nu'm provides the occasion for this theme, it is not intrinsically bound up with ʿUmar's poetry, as can be seen from the fact that the controversy entails the quotation of a song by another poet. Taken as a whole, then, this article has not such a narrow subject as the one on Nuṣayb's couplet; in particular, the musical component of the songs receives more attention. Nonetheless, the *akhbār* are all still related to the original lyrics and setting, people connected with them and issues arising out of them.

There are other articles which resemble these two in being structured round songs, although their titles do not reflect this. One such, following one of the Top Hundred, is entitled: "Some [more] of the account of Ibn Harma" (*Shay' min dhikr Ibn Harma ayḍan*; V, 260).¹⁸ It consists of 10 *akhbār*, all of which quote at least half a line of the lyrics of the introductory song (V, 259–67; the song is given on p. 259).¹⁹ The pervasiveness of the lyrics justify this section being considered as an article on a song, despite the fact that the title goes back to the MSS. The verses run:

Yā dāra Su 'dā bi-l-jiz 'i min Malālī
 ḥuyyiti min dimnatin wa-min ṭalālī
 Innī idhā mā l-bakhīlu ammanahā
 bātat ḍammūzan minnī 'alā wajālī
 Lā umti 'u l-'ūdha bi-l-ḥṣālī wa-lā
 abtā 'u illā qarībata l-ajālī.²⁰

Of the subsequent *akhbār*,²¹ (1)–(3) and (5)–(6) turn on the discrepancy between the poet's boast of his generosity, expressed in the third (or originally second) line of the song, and his observed tendency to miserliness. But the poet's confrontation with his challengers, who quote this line, has contrasted outcomes. In (1), the poet's daughter neatly gets out of the obligation to provide a traveller with hospitality in her father's absence – to his delight. In (2) and (3), the poet is shamed by the quotation of his boast into inviting the bystanders to help themselves from a flock of his sheep. In (5) a noted wit comments on the boast: "I only buy camels destined soon to be slaughtered", that Ibn Harma has told the truth, for he only ever bought a sheep for the Feast of Sacrifice and then he killed it immediately. And (6) shows Ibn Harma resorting to the Quran's characterisation of poets as liars, who "say that which they do not do" (s. XXVI, 226) in order to escape the obligation to provide hospitality for a large party of Qurashis who had set out to play a joke on him. The tendency towards the "literarisation" of material about a historical figure, already observed in connection with one of the *akhbār* about Nuṣayb, may be sensed in some of these anecdotes, especially (2) and (3), which would appear to be different versions of the same event. At the same time, they emphasise specific traits of Ibn Harma, the man and the poet. In fact, because Ibn Harma's presence is necessary in order to illustrate the contrast between his words and his deeds, this article is somewhat more biographically oriented than others organised round songs.

The statement reported in (4) reflects an interest in the lyrics for their own sake; it situates the poem from which the song is taken as the first one which Ibn Harma composed. (7) and (8) are in the same literary critical vein. In (7) al-Aṣma'ī expresses his admiration for Ibn Harma's poetry in general and the line in which he vaunts his generosity in particular, an opinion Marwān ibn Abi Ḥaṣṣa echoes in (8). (9) links the theme of Ibn Harma's poetic mastery to the one, illustrated in the earlier *akhbār*, of the contrast between his claim to be generous and his miserly behaviour. It recounts how Ibn al-Kawsaj, a minor poet and client of the Āl Ḥunayn, responded to Ibn Harma's boast with a satirical couplet representing Ibn Harma as a female monkey frolicking with her mate at Malal, upon which Ibn Harma threatened to avenge himself upon his protectors if Ibn al-Kawsaj was not delivered into his power. The Āl Ḥunayn, duly apprehensive, handed Ibn al-Kawsaj over to him but he dealt mercifully with him.

Khabar (10) moves on to the occasion when Ibn Harma's lines were set to music. The renowned singer Mukhāriq recounts how one day in Raqqa Ibn Jāmi' monopolised Hārūn al-Rashid's attention with a song. Irritated and jealous, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī decided to put an end to this. He privately taught his pupil Mukhāriq, whose voice was more beautiful than his own, a setting of Ibn Harma's verses and instructed him to seize the occasion, as soon as Ibn Jāmi' fell silent, to perform it in al-Rashid's presence. Even if it was Mukhāriq who received a reward for it, Ibrāhīm would be recompensed by having his song preferred to Ibn Jāmi''. Everything happened as Ibrāhīm had foreseen, al-Rashid was delighted with his song, and when Ibn Jāmi' objected that it was not Ibrāhīm who had performed it,

the caliph simply replied that Ibrāhīm had paid him back in his own coin and produced a finer setting.

While this anecdote relates an essential stage in the song's history, it also provides a contrast with the preceding account, with which it shares the motif of a artistic contest. Ibn al-Kawsaj, as a lesser poet seeking to ridicule Ibn Harma by parodying his verses, loses the competition he has engaged in; Ibrāhīm, who is not only a great artist but also conscious of his own limitations and aware of relevant aspects of the performance context, in this case especially the caliph's habits, succeeds in discomfiting his rival and achieving victory. These two *akhbār*, in fact, neatly illustrate does and don'ts for those engaged in an artistic contest; their juxtaposition gives them an enhanced meaning.²² At the same time anecdote (10), indicating the quality of Ibrāhīm's setting, and (7) and (8), which convey the admiration of noted critics for the lyrics, together serve to certify the excellence of the song.

Whereas the article on Ibn Harma's song raises the issue of the relationship between what poets say and what they do, a later article, entitled by the editors "*Min ghazal Jarīr*" (XVI, 316–21), illustrates the theme of the attitude of well-born members of the Muslim community to *ghazal* and singing. Apart from the first *khabar* (1), a statement that Jarīr stole the lyrics from another poet, the remaining six all quote one of the two verses of the song:²³

Inna lladhīna ghadaw bi-lubbika ghādarū
washalan bi-'aynika mā yazālu ma'īnā
Ghayyaḍna min 'abarātihinna wa-qulna lī
*mādhā laqīta minna l-hawā wa-laqīnā.*²⁴

- 2 When Abū l-Sā'ib al-Makhzūmī heard these verses from his friend 'Abdallāh ibn Muslim ibn Jundab he was so affected by them that he swore not to utter anything else on his walk through the town that day. He chanced to encounter 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn al-Muṭṭalib, the *qāḍī*, whose greeting he was unable to return, and 'Abdallāh, who was with him, did nothing to explain his strange behaviour. Later, released from his oath, Abū Sā'ib went to see the *qāḍī* to apologise, pleading his exceptional fondness for poetry as an excuse. 'Abd al-'Azīz nonetheless chided him for his frivolous behaviour.²⁵
- 3 Abū l-Sā'ib explains the meaning of "*ghayyaḍna*" to a young man called 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, possibly the son of the *qāḍī* in (2).
- 4 A man giving evidence is asked by an anonymous *qāḍī* who can vouch for him. He names Ibn Abi 'Atīq. When asked what he knows of the man, Ibn Abi 'Atīq says that he heard him recite the second of Jarīr's verses, so he must be a sincere believer and fit to be a witness in court.
- 5 Abū l-Sā'ib was standing by a well when Ibn Jundab recited the verses to him, and he was so overcome that he threw himself into it, only being extricated some time later.

- 6 Some young Qurashīs promise Ash‘ab a reward if he performs a song in Sālim ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar’s presence and tells them how this austere grandson of the caliph ‘Umar reacts. Sālim tolerates the first two songs, which the Qurashīs judge uninspired. Despite his protest, Ash‘ab then sings Jarīr’s lines, and only desists when Sālim gives him a basket of dates. Ash‘ab pretends this was a sign of Sālim’s appreciation and receives his reward from the Qurashīs.
- 7 ‘Allūya visits Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, who sings him his setting of Jarīr’s verses. A servant arrives with a present of dates from Ishāq’s father Ibrāhīm, and Ishāq sends back a message that he will soon send him better dates. Ibrāhīm learns from the servant that ‘Allūya is at his son’s house and suspects Ishāq is planning some surprise. After a while the servant returns enquiring after Ishāq’s dates, and Ishāq sends ‘Allūya, who has learned the song in the meantime, to his father to perform it. Ibrāhīm is delighted with Ishāq’s behaviour.

Akhhbār (2) and (5) portray a member of the Qurashī aristocracy with a reputation for piety, Abū l-Sā‘ib al-Makhzūmī, being so carried away by Jarīr’s verses that he entirely forgets his dignity and standing. Even if his behaviour verges on a caricature, it illustrates the effect of poetry on its hearers, while the *qāḍī*’s reaction suggests that his recognition of this is not likely to change. And Abū l-Sā‘ib’s explaining part of the lines to a young man in (3) indicates that appreciation of *ghazal* is being transmitted to the next generation.²⁶ Abū Bakr’s great-grandson Ibn Abī ‘Atīq’s conviction, expressed in *khabar* (4), that only those who are sincere believers will remember and truly appreciate fine *ghazal*, makes a more subtle claim for the moral qualities of poetry, and apparently it is accepted by the *qāḍī* in the story. Both Abū Sā‘ib and Ibn Abī ‘Atīq have a reputation as lovers of poetry and song, unlike Sālim ibn ‘Abdallāh. But even he does not express an objection in principle to Ash‘ab’s singing; *khabar* (6) conveys the impression rather of a man exasperated by Ash‘ab’s persistence. And reviewing these attitudes to Jarīr’s love poetry, Abū l-Faraj’s audience may well have been reminded of ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ’s unexpectedly favourable response to it when he heard it sung by Ibn Surayj.²⁷

The final anecdote (7) is set in Baghdad and the milieu of court musicians. It relates to the preceding ones in three ways. First, it too includes Jarīr’s verses, now accompanied by Ishāq’s fine setting in the *ramal* rhythmic mode.²⁸ Second, it shares with the preceding *khabar* the motif of dates as a gift or reward. But whereas Sālim gives Ash‘ab dates out of a desire to get rid of him, Ibrāhīm’s dates are a father’s spontaneous expression of love for his son. And they in turn call forth something even better, a masterly setting of a poem which has in the past earned its singer a reward of dates. Third, Ibrāhīm’s words expressing his love for Ishāq and pride in him (“Should I be blamed for loving this [boy]? By God, even if we were not related I would love him, so how [could it be otherwise] when he is my son?”) are proof again of the power of this poetry and music to move its hearers. The musician’s reaction is more controlled than that of Abū l-Sā‘ib, but it springs from a similar intense

emotion which, even if it is occasioned by Ishāq's behaviour, is reinforced by the song. And his words recall Ibn Abī 'Atīq's affirmation that anyone who can recite this poetry with true feeling must have a good character. Ibrāhīm seems to imply that Ishāq's beautiful setting for the verses accords with all his other fine qualities.

Another article on *ghazal* by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a (XVII, 156–60) treats both the issue of naming well-born women in love poetry and the more philological concern to identify correctly the person associated with a poem in a *khavar*.²⁹ It has two introductory songs; they have an almost identical second verse but differ in the first one, which names Su'dā in one case and Laylā in the other (songs 1a and 1b). Su'dā's version runs

Ahinnu idhā ra'aytu jamāla Su'dā
wa-abkī in ra'aytu lahā qarīnā
Wā-qad afida l-raḥīlu fā-qul li-Su'dā
*la-'amruki khabbiri mā ta'murīnā*³⁰

- 1 Su'dā bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, seeing 'Umar in the mosque in Mecca, summons and reprimands him for mentioning the names of respected Qurashī ladies in his poems. Despite his reciting a couplet on her (song 1a), she is adamant.
- 2 Ibn Abī 'Atīq, having heard the couplet from 'Umar, rides off and recites it to Su'dā, who is in Fazāra's grazing grounds; she reacts as in (1).
- 3 'Umar recites a couplet (song 1b) to Laylā bint al-Ḥārith ibn 'Awf when he meets her by chance. She says nothing and goes on her way.
- 4 Abū l-Faraj summarises another informant's account, according to which Ibn Abī 'Atīq recited the verses (song 1b) to Layla rather than Su'dā, and gives his reason for preferring this version.³¹
- 5 Resembles (1), except that 'Umar recites other verses (song 2) to Su'dā, and in reply she denies that she has behaved as 'Umar describes. [A philological intervention by the compiler: the singers changed "Su'ayda" to "Sukayna" in the lyrics of song 2.]
- 6 Ishāq al-Mawṣilī performs song 2 before Hārūn al-Rashīd, who violently reprimands him for singing verses by the libertine 'Umar dedicated to Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn, a relative of the Caliph and a descendant of the Prophet. Ishāq is so impressed that he never sings the song again and forgets it.

The propriety of mentioning women's names in love poetry has been identified above as an issue in the articles on Nuṣayb's verses addressed to Zaynab and 'Umar's addressed to Nu'm or Dhāt al-Khāl. It also occurs in many other places in the *Aghānī*, the reactions of the women or their male relatives varying largely according to their social status.³² This short article portrays several different responses to a poet's taking liberties with a woman's name. When Laylā bint al-Ḥārith ibn 'Awf al-Murri, a member of a respected tribe but not a Qurashī, encounters 'Umar in

some unspecified place, she hears his verses in dignified silence. By contrast Su'dā, presumably the daughter of the Qurashī 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, one of the leading Companions, has the confidence to call the frivolous poet over to her in the Maṣjid al-Ḥarām and order him to mend his ways. And the caliph, when he hears the name of his distant relative, a direct descendant of the Prophet, taken in vain, falls into a rage, though he controls himself because he realises that it is an oversight on Iṣḥāq's part. From another point of view the behaviour of the caliph, who is only indirectly affected by the reference to Sukayna, contrasts interestingly with that of Laylā and Su'dā, who are directly concerned by the use of their names in poetry. Al-Rashid's rather primitive response must be understood in the social context of his time, when aristocratic women lived in seclusion and their menfolk had the exclusive right to defend their reputations. Su'dā and Laylā represent two different ways in which women who enjoyed much more freedom defended themselves with dignity.

As can be seen from the examples discussed here, the compiler's decision to group *akhbār* round a song or poem may enable him to concentrate on abstract themes such as attitudes to love poetry and to singing, the reception of individual poems, the question of truthfulness in poetry, and the poet's or composer's relationship to his creation. Apart from the article on the song taken from Jarīr's love poetry, the others presented here could have been integrated into the main articles on the poets or composers of the songs without difficulty.³³ But this would inevitably have deflected attention away from abstract issues to the relation between these songs and the poet's or composer's life and works.

Furthermore, according songs their own articles emphasises the fact that they have a life of their own, independent from that of their creators. In fact these sections betray the biographical approach normally associated with the portrayal of people being applied to some extent to poems and their settings. The poem's beginning or origin is one subject treated. Nuṣayb's and Ibn Harma's verses are dated to the earliest part of their oeuvre, while the song introducing 'Umar's poems on Nu'm is described as the first he composed on her. In Jarīr's case it is the authorship of the verses which is in question; he is said to have appropriated them from the obscure al-Ma'lūṭ. The poems being set to music is another important moment, well documented in the case of 'Umar's, Ibn Harma's and Jarīr's verses. And the song or poem continues to "live" as long as it affects its hearers. Nuṣayb's poem, composed towards the end of the first/seventh century, was enjoyed intensely by Munqidh al-Hilālī some seventy years later. Musicians towards the middle of the third/ninth century still considered Ibn Surayj's setting of 'Umar's lines about Nu'm, which was at least a hundred years old by then, a great artistic achievement. Jarīr's and Ibn Harma's verses were seized upon many decades later by composers who made them into memorable songs. The capacity of poems and songs to survive those which have created them is a recurrent theme in the *Aghānī*, but it is illustrated particularly clearly in these articles.

Untitled short articles arising out of songs

As well as articles on songs, that is, articles where the lyrics or setting are quoted or alluded to in all, or almost all, the *akhbār*, there is a category of articles where a song gives an opportunity for otherwise unattached or “marginal” *akhbār* to be incorporated into the book. Such *akhbār* would not easily have been integrated into the recognised types of articles treating personalities, events or relationships. The song may be a structuring element in these short sections, but it may also simply serve as an introduction to the *akhbār*. Typically, these articles are untitled, although they may be introduced by the phrase “*khabar hādihā l-shiʿ*”.

One instance, already referred to, where this phrase occurs is in the article which follows the couplet describing the sand-grouse in the list of the Top Hundred (VIII, 258).³⁴ After listing the poets to which it is ascribed and the numerous settings of the different verses, Abū l-Faraj announces the information (*khabar*) about the poem (p. 259); it consists of 5 reports (pp. 259–66).³⁵ *Khabar* (1) recounts the five poets’ decision to compete in describing a flock of sand-grouse, the verses they composed, and Layla al-Akhyaliya’s judgement that Aws ibn Ghalfā’ had made the best description. In (2) she awards the palm to al-ʿUjayr al-Salūlī, whereupon Ḥumayd ibn Thawr lampoons her. (3) quotes verses of al-ʿUjayr which closely resemble those of Ḥumayd in (1). (4) ascribes the introductory verses to ʿAmr ibn ʿUqayl and goes on to quote the rest of his poem, with philological comments. (5) confirms this ascription and adds an explanation of a name mentioned in the panegyric section of the poem.

These *akhbār* offer a good example of an article taken up chiefly with philological concerns, but with a literary critical interest too. Moreover, the decision to take the song itself as the subject was imposed on the compiler by the nature of the material; it would have been difficult to integrate the lyrics into a standard biographical article, since they are ascribed with more or less reliability to five different poets. And the author of the Top Hundred setting, Maʿbad, had already been treated at the beginning of the book.

Literary criticism, artistic rivalry and the power of music to move its hearers are major concerns in a section introduced by a song with lyrics by ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabiʿa in which he complains of being bored with Medina (XII, 113–25, with the running title “*Akhbār mutafarriqa*”). It consists of three *akhbār*.³⁶ In the first ʿUmar, having proclaimed his exasperation with Medina (song 1),³⁷ sets off for Mecca in the company of al-Aḥwaṣ and later also Sāʾib ibn Dhakwān, Kuthayyir’s *rāwī*, and Nuṣayb. Kuthayyir refuses to join them and receives them arrogantly, criticising verses by each of the three poets in turn and comparing them unfavourably with each other. Thus, ʿUmar’s love poetry (song 2) has a narcissistic streak, al-Aḥwaṣ has made the mistake of expressing indifference to his beloved’s breaking off their relationship, and Nuṣayb envisages the possibility of his beloved being loved by someone else after his death. Kuthayyir’s visitors counter-attack, picking on his unfortunate comparison of himself and ʿAzza to two camels which escape from their owner (song 3), his listing of the criticisms levelled against him by women,

and his rhetorical question about what 'Azza thinks of him, when his ugliness is obvious to all. After they have left, his *rāwī* delivers a further blow, pointing out the inappropriateness of beginning a *nasīb* conventionally and ending it with the beloved turned into a nanny-goat recognising her billy's domination. Sā'ib explains to the visiting poets that he has merely been trying to teach Kuthayyir not to be so arrogant.

The following *khābar*, told by Sahl ibn Baraka, Ibn Surayj's lute-bearer, recounts first how Sahl, by his quickwittedness, gets the singer past the puritanical governor of Mecca on his way to a meeting with some pleasure-loving young Qurashis. Just before they reach the meeting-place, they stop under a tree and Sahl asks Ibn Surayj for a song. He chooses verses about the longing to leave Mecca because the beloved has set out for Nejd, and Sahl says that even the governor could not be unmoved by his rendition. He then asks for a second song and Ibn Surayj complies, beating the rhythm on the tree trunk. This song begs the beloved not to break with her lover when he is far away. Before they continue on their way Ibn Surayj insists on performing his prayers. As they arrive at the meeting place the mounts whinny, and al-Gharīḍ, who is already there, sings a song alluding to the animals' behaviour. Ibn Surayj is moved to tears by the beauty of al-Gharīḍ's voice, and he is equally captivated when al-Gharīḍ performs again (song 1). The Qurashis gather around the newcomer and entertain him, while al-Gharīḍ falls silent. Later they ask Ibn Surayj to sing, and his performance enralls them, leading them to imitate the words of the song. For the next piece (song 4) some birds join the audience, and the final song has the listeners showering kisses on the singer, till his lute-bearer, alarmed for his safety, drags them off him. There follow the settings of songs 5, 6 and 2, whose lyrics come from the same poem by 'Umar, and of song 3 with lyrics by Kuthayyir.

In the final anecdote 'Azza tells Kuthayyir that she prefers al-Aḥwaṣ's love poetry for its sensitivity, its accessibility and the compliant attitude it expresses towards women. She quotes appropriate lines, and contrasts them with Kuthayyir's rough declaration of his jealousy. Thereupon he recites the lines of song 3, likening himself and her to runaway camels, a comparison she considers far from ideal.

Like the first anecdote in the section on the sand-grouse poem, the *khābar* beginning this section would have been hard to attach to an article treating any of the protagonists. It shares several features with the second *khābar*, apart from song 1 being quoted in both of them. Both are told by an artist's assistant, Kuthayyir's *rāwī* in one case, Ibn Surayj's lute-bearer in the other. Both start with a journey in which some incidents foreshadow the encounter to come. But thereafter contrasts dominate. Kuthayyir attacks his visitors and attempts to play them off against one another, and they respond in kind. Among the musicians harmony reigns; Ibn Surayj is full of admiration for al-Gharīḍ, while the younger singer falls silent when his elder starts to perform. Kuthayyir's *rāwī* takes it upon himself to teach his master a lesson, while Ibn Surayj's lute bearer is an unconditional admirer of the singer. In the judgements of poetry criteria of verisimilitude, the appropriate image and observance of social conventions loom large, whereas music, the most abstract of

arts, is judged through its capacity to move both man and the animal kingdom emotionally. In fact the world of song, as portrayed in this anecdote, has idealised, even mythical traits, and it is perhaps for this reason that Abū l-Faraj chooses to bring the reader back to earth with the third anecdote, in which poor Kuthayyir finds his ‘Azza comparing him unfavourably with one of the poets he has confronted and been worsted by in the first *khabar*.

Untitled articles may provide the compiler with the opportunity to introduce elements of folklore and popular types of narrative into his book, designed though it is for a cultural elite. One instance concerns a song with lyrics probably by the pre-Islamic poet al-Hārith ibn Lawdhān al-Sadūsī and with a setting by the Umayyad singer ‘Azza al-Maylā’ (XII, 155–8, with the running title “*Ba‘ḍ akhbār li-Ibn Abī ‘Atīq*”). As ‘Azza sang it, the text is:

Li-mani l-diyāru ‘araftuhā bi-l-Shurbubi
dhahaba lladhīna bihā wa-lammā tadhhabi
Inna l-rijāla lahum ilayki wasilatun
in ya’khudhūki takahḥali wa-takhaḍḍabi
Wā-anā mru’un in ya’khudhūnī ‘anwatan
uqran ilā sayri l-rikābi wa-ujnabi
Wā-yakūnu markabuki l-qa’ūda wa-ḥidjahu
*wa-bnu l-na‘āmati yawma dhālika markabi.*³⁸

A page of philological notes and performance indications is followed by a single anecdote. ‘Azza al-Maylā’ sings this song, Ibn Abī ‘Atīq’s favourite, at his house. After a slave girl of his complains to him of being harrassed by a young Medinan, Ibn Abī ‘Atīq tells her to ask her admirer to the house, pretending that its owner has gone out for the day. She obeys, and Ibn Abī ‘Atīq invites ‘Azza and a number of friends. The Medinan, hidden in one of the rooms, wants the girl to stay with him, but she escapes twice. The third time he tries to seize her, but Ibn Abī ‘Atīq and his friends, attracted by the scuffle, fall on him. Unabashed, he taxes them with listening to a singer, but ‘Azza puts him in his place and he withdraws.

But he does not give up bothering the girl whenever she leaves the house. So Ibn Abī ‘Atīq thinks of another plan. She is to invite the man in the evening and prepare some corn for grinding. When he arrives, she puts him in the room with the corn, a little of which she has ground, and tells him she will join him when her master is asleep but that she must grind all the corn that night. He starts to grind for her, and throughout the night she or one of the other girls looks in regularly, keeping him informed about Ibn Abī ‘Atīq’s wakefulness and urging him on. So the night passes, and in the morning the girl comes to him and tells him to make off, which he does, realising that he has been tricked. His unaccustomed exertion brings on a nearly fatal illness, during which he vows never to speak to her again.

In the first part of this anecdote the importunate suitor is put to shame by ‘Azza al-Maylā’s witty reply, an example of the prized genre of *ajwiba muskita*, replies

which silence those they are directed at, and more generally of the verbal skills so important in mediaeval Arabic culture. The second part, with the importunate suitor forced to work through the night to carry out a task, only to be disappointed in the end, has the air of a folklore motif, and indeed it has travelled outside the Arab world.³⁹ But this popular element, capable of assimilation in different cultures, is integrated into a context of historical characters of early Islamic history and combined with traditional and quintessentially Arabic forms of poetry and music.

Between the lyrics of 'Azza's song and the events depicted in the anecdote there is an ironic contrast, at least in one respect. For the slave-girl resists "capture" by her Medinan suitor, rather than adorning herself for it, as the poet advises. Whether or not there is another ironic contrast between the suitor's fate and the poet's own behaviour depends on the interpretation of the last line of the song, about which the mediaeval commentators disagreed. For if the poet is being led along while his wife rides in a howdah, then his humiliation is mirrored in that of the suitor. But if the ostrich's son is understood to be a horse, and the final image is of the poet going into battle, then the suitor's ordeal of performing a task allocated to slave-girls is diametrically opposed to this proud stance.

Another example of material with some popular features infiltrating elite literature comes in as an anecdote following a song with lyrics by a man (or, as it later turns out, a woman) of the Banū 'Udhra (XI, 169–75, with running title "['Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a wa-ṣāhibuh al-'udhrī]"):

Idhā qabbala l-insānu ākhara yashtahī
thanāyāhu lam yaḥraj wa-kāna lahū ajrā
Fa-in zāda zāda l-lāhu fī ḥasanātihī
*mathāqīla yamḥū l-lāhu 'anhu bihā wizrā.*⁴⁰

The anecdote portrays 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a in the role, unusual for him, of the narrator of someone else's love story. The hero is his 'Udhri friend and fellow composer of love poetry Abū Mushir al-Ja'd ibn Mihja', whom he used to meet every year at the Pilgrimage. One year Abū Mushir does not appear, but 'Umar learns from his puritanical brother that he is between life and death, tormented by a hopeless love. When 'Umar gets to Arafat, a pale and dishevelled Abū Mushir appears, complaining of his misery. 'Umar advises him to appeal to God on this most favourable of occasions. As they make their way to Muzdalifa at the end of the day, Abū Mushir explains what has brought him to this pass.

He had taken his herds to his relatives of Banū Kalb, where the pasture was good. One day he set out to visit his camels at a distant watering hole and stopped on the way in the shadow of a wide-spreading tree. He saw a young horseman hunt and kill a pair of wild asses, and he invited him to dismount and rest. When the young man removed his turban Abū Mushir was amazed at his beauty. They talked for a while, drinking the wine Abū Mushir had brought with him, and in the course of the conversation the young man sang the introductory song. When he got up to see to his horse, Abū Mushir saw a girl's breast under his thin shirt.

Challenged, the hunter admitted she was a girl. Under the wine's effect she dozed off, but Abū Mushir resisted the temptation to approach her. When she awoke they parted without arranging to meet again, for fear of her jealous relatives. Ever since all his thoughts have been taken up with her.

'Umar offers to help, and when the Pilgrimage is over they set off for the Banū Kalb's grazing grounds and seek out the girl's father who is the tribal chief. 'Umar, introducing himself, asks for the girl's hand. At first the father thinks that he is making the proposal for himself, and when he explains that it is for his friend, her father objects that he only marries his daughters to members of Quraysh. Seeing 'Umar's reaction he relents and offers to let the girl make up her own mind. She entrusts the matter to 'Umar, who marries her off to his friend, providing the bride price, presents for the couple and a silk robe for the girl's father. The morning after the wedding 'Umar goes to see the two, who express their happiness in prose and verse. Then he leaves, boasting in verse of the good deed he has done. The article concludes with a couplet composed by Abū Mushir in praise of him.⁴¹

This article contrasts with other material in the *Aghānī* in a number of ways. First, it consists of a single long narrative about a private matter. Continuous long narratives are quite rare in the *Aghānī*; when they occur, they usually relate either tribal conflicts, *ayyām*, or important events in the history of the early Muslim community. Less often they may be 'Abbāsīd personalities' accounts of their personal experiences. For the *ayyām* Abū l-Faraj draws on Abū 'Ubayda and other earlier scholars who recorded tribesmen's often legendary versions of their past, while for important events he turns to historians such as al-Ṭabarī. Sometimes it is his source who has put together a coherent account, but sometimes, as has been noted, he himself has combined different versions, informing his readers of the fact. In these accounts, especially those of the historians, the scholarly impulse to present the reader with alternative information often leads to interruptions in the narrative. In the anecdote under discussion, this scholarly impulse is entirely absent; the story simply seeks to entertain.

Second, 'Umar, as he appears here, only faintly resembles the famous poet who appears so often in the *Aghānī*.⁴² That 'Umar belongs to the wealthy and carefree Hijazi society of the Umayyad period, he is continuously seeking adventures with aristocratic women in and around Mecca, and he has an extraordinary gift for portraying these encounters in fresh and uncomplicated love poetry. At the same time he is in contact with contemporary poets and singers, and he and they are often the object of censure by guardians of morality. However much posterity has embroidered on this character, he is rooted in an identifiable social and historical context. The 'Umar of the 'Udhri anecdote, by contrast, operates in a social and historical vacuum, there is only a passing reference to his susceptibility to women, and the poetry ascribed to him – only two lines of it – boasts of his generosity and ability to help his friends.

Third, even though the protagonist belongs to the Banū 'Udhra, this romance differs from standard 'Udhri love stories, as they are known in the *Aghānī* and other classical *adab* texts. For thanks to 'Umar's intervention it ends happily, instead of

portraying the young couple parted for ever and dying of despair. It is a story of the *faraj ba'd al-shidda* (delivery from affliction) type, with a *deus ex machina*, a role here given to a famous poet but often played by an important political or religious personality.⁴³

Fourth, Abū Mushir's beloved's entrance dressed as a man and engaged in hunting is unique in 'Udhri love stories, even if later folk epics sometimes portray heroines waging war; Dhāt al-himma is the best example of this.⁴⁴

And finally, there is a marked concentration of religious motifs in the anecdote. When Abū Mushir's brother criticises the two poets for their behaviour, which will bring them to perdition, it parallels the general moralising condemnation of 'Umar's adventures and poetry found in most sections devoted to him. But when, at Arafat, 'Umar exhorts his friend to pray for God's help during what is the most important part of the Pilgrimage, he is expressing an uncharacteristic awareness of the ceremony's spiritual meaning. Later Abū Mushir's exclamation at the hunter's beauty calls forth a sobering enquiry as to how he can be dazzled by something that will finally be laid in the grave; this reminder of how fleeting physical beauty is introduces an ascetic note. Yet the hunter also sings of physical love not as a sin but as a way to obtain the forgiveness of sins.⁴⁵ As for Abū Mushir himself, he says that God has preserved him from the temptation to take advantage of the girl while she sleeps. And at the end, when 'Umar has been given the authority to decide the girl's fate, he thanks God before declaring her married to Abū Mushir. The anecdote reflects a somewhat disconcerting combination of pious, ascetic and libertine tendencies which is absent from other *akhbār* about 'Umar and very unusual elsewhere in the *Aghānī*; it may be read as a good-humoured parody of several contemporary literary themes.⁴⁶

Another function of untitled articles is to integrate historical information which would not otherwise find a place in the book. For instance, a song with lyrics celebrating the beauty of Khawla, the daughter of Manẓūr ibn Zabbān al-Fazārī, enables Abū l-Faraj to include a short section on father and daughter (XII, 192–7, with the running title "*Akhbār Manẓūr ibn Zabbān*").⁴⁷ It consists of six *akhbār*. The first is on the unusual length of Manẓūr's gestation period, and the second on his being obliged by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to divorce his wife, Khawla's mother, because she was his step-mother, and his resentment at this. The next three treat Khawla's second marriage to al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, the final one of this group, the most elaborate, depicting Manẓūr's anger at his daughter being married off to al-Ḥasan without him being consulted, and his relenting when she complains at missing a splendid match and al-Ḥasan shows that he is keen to marry her. The final *khavar* has the singer Ma'bad performing the song before an aged Khawla, who then recalls her past beauty.⁴⁸

This section depicts two aspects of the passage from the *jāhili* to the Islamic mentality. First, marriages between sons and their fathers' widows, an accepted phenomenon in pre-Islamic Arabia, were forbidden by the Quran (IV, 22), because they made women dependent on their step-sons and subject to abuse.⁴⁹ But in individual cases, such as Manẓūr's, the forced separation of husband and

wife could cause great suffering. And second, Manzūr, still a *jāhili* at heart, considers he has the right to dispose of his daughter's hand even after she is a widow, and even when it is the Prophet's grandson who asks for her hand. Khawla has to point out to him what an honour it is to be the wife of al-Ḥasan, before he changes his mind and recognises the value of an alliance with the new Islamic aristocracy.

Manzūr makes only fleeting appearances elsewhere in the *Aghānī*, and he has no claim to fame as a poet. It is scarcely justified to devote an article to him, especially since he is neither the poet nor the subject of the introductory lyrics. Khawla, too, is not the subject of enough *akhbār* to be treated in her own article.⁵⁰ But the important changes brought about by Islam in the institution of marriage, and more generally the difficulty many contemporaries of the Prophet had in leaving behind the pagan mentality, certainly belong in Abū l-Faraj's panorama of Arabic music, literature and society from the Jāhiliya on, and this article offers him one of a number of occasions to illustrate those themes.

A song introducing two linked anecdotes on a historical theme follows the article on Ādam ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (XV, 291–2).⁵¹ Its lyrics are by Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya. The first anecdote portrays Yazīd as caliph appointing Salm ibn Ziyād ibn Abih governor of Khurasan and Sijistan after they have spent an evening in each other's company, and then marking the occasion with a couplet calling for wine for the two of them and celebrating Salm's qualities. The second goes back to the period before Yazīd became caliph, when he went on the pilgrimage.⁵² While he was having a quiet drink in Medina 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abbās and al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī asked to see him. He had the wine removed, but being advised that Ibn 'Abbās would smell wine on his breath he ordered only al-Ḥusayn to be admitted. Al-Ḥusayn turned out to be less naïve than foreseen, and complimented Yazīd on the superiority of his perfume to that found in the Hijaz, despite the Hijazi expertise in the field. Yazīd, explaining it was a Syrian perfume, called for two cups and ordered wine to be poured for al-Ḥusayn, who declined, while not objecting to Yazīd drinking. Thereupon, Yazīd recited the poem of the introductory song's lyrics:

How strange, my friend! I invited you – but you did not accept –
to the delights of singing girls, ruddy wine, song
and a porringer sparkling with light,
the lords of the Arabs gathered round it.
One of those girls bewitched your heart,
and you show no remorse.⁵³

Al-Ḥusayn jumped up, exclaiming: “Not my heart but yours, son of Mu'āwiya!”

There is no article on Yazīd in the *Aghānī*, but this is one of two songs with lyrics by him which introduce untitled sections.⁵⁴ Both the anecdotes summarised here illustrate explicitly Yazīd's fondness for wine. Implicitly, however, they remind the reader of al-Ḥusayn's killing, one of the central events of early Islamic history,

which is not portrayed in the *Aghānī*. For Salm is the brother of ‘Ubaydallāh ibn Ziyād, the governor of Kufa and Basra whose army massacred the ‘Alids at Karbala. Yazīd’s appreciation of one brother’s qualities recalls his support of the other’s bloody action – all the more so since he speaks in the couplet of “Ibn Ziyād”, which could denote either brother. The clash between Yazīd and al-Ḥusayn is even more eloquent. The pleasure-loving Yazīd, who is indulging in an activity forbidden by Islam, taunts the abstemious but tolerant al-Ḥusayn until he reacts. The confrontation between the two men in Medina foreshadows the tragedy to come and the role each one will play in it. It is irrelevant whether the incident related here is historical or not; its function is to evoke the later events, whose historicity is beyond question, from a certain partisan point of view. The portrayal of Yazīd as a drinker will also remind the attentive reader of the quotation from Abū Dahbal’s elegy of al-Ḥusayn (VII, 138) which begins:

Umayya’s drunkards spend the night asleep,
while at al-Ṭaff lie slaughtered men
whose loved ones find no rest.⁵⁵

This untitled section thus allows Abū l-Faraj to get as close as he dares to the controversial subject of the death of al-Ḥusayn. For the article on al-Ḥusayn (XVI, 136–72) in which he appears as an occasional poet and family man, is in fact largely taken up with anecdotes about his daughter Sukayna. It includes a quotation from his wife al-Rabāb’s elegy on him, but that is a woman’s apolitical expression of grief at the loss of her husband. In this brief section, by contrast, the scene is set for a political and religious tragedy which it is unnecessary to trace further. And since Sunni-Shi’i hostility regularly led to eruptions of violence in Buyid Baghdad, Abū l-Faraj presumably preferred to avoid any explicit mention of the controversial events of Karbala in a book devoted in the first place to singing and poetry and intended for a wide audience.⁵⁶

My last example of a song introducing an untitled section has lyrics whose authorship is unclear; each of the two lines is ascribed to two different poets. The section (VII, 279–92; running title “[*Akhhbār ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Alqama wa-Ḥubaysha*]”)⁵⁷ may be summarised as follows:

- 1 ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Alqama (one of the poets of a line of the lyrics) goes with his mother to visit a neighbour and falls in love with her daughter, Ḥubaysha. He composes much poetry about her. Neither family approves of the match, and each tries to prevent it. At that point the Prophet sends Khālīd ibn al-Walīd to ‘Abdallāh’s tribe, the Banū ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abd Manāt, to invite them to become Muslims. Many of them, fearing Khālīd’s aggressive demeanour and remembering his grudge against them for killing his brother, refuse to disarm and some flee.
- 2 Khālīd’s soldiers pursue a group driving along the camels with the women’s litters, and having captured a young man they prepare to kill him. He asks to

be taken to a litter further ahead first, and there he calls out a greeting to Ḥubaysha. She replies, and they have a brief dialogue in poetry (including verses from the poem of song 1) before his captors kill him. Ḥubaysha goes up to him, kisses him and dies in a frenzy of grief. A boy who has witnessed the scene reports it to the Prophet.

- 3 The Prophet learns that two of those present criticised Khālīd's killing his prisoners. He sends 'Alī to pay compensation for the victims and the booty taken.
- 4 The reason for Banū Jadhima's killing of some Qurashīs is explained, followed by another version of Khālīd's attacking and killing some of the Banū Jadhima. On his return to Medina the Prophet asks him why he acted as he did, and he quotes a verse of the Quran to justify himself.⁵⁸ 'Alī is sent to pay compensation.
- 5 The Prophet sends out a group of his followers to call people to Islam on pain of death, and they encounter a young man driving along camels bearing litters. He declines to convert, but before he is killed he goes to one of the howdahs and greets Ḥubaysha, reciting lines from the poem of song 1. Then he is killed, and she comes down from her litter, falls on his body and weeps till she dies.
- 6 Khālīd tells the Prophet of his raid on the Banū Jadhima. After the battle he took a young man prisoner who refused to become a Muslim, but before he killed him the young man went up to Ḥubaysha and took leave of her, reciting lines from the poem of song 1. Ḥubaysha recited an elegy for him, repeating it and weeping until she died. In this version the young man is called 'Amr, an alternative to 'Abdallāh, the name given in the introduction to the section.
- 7 Abū l-Sā'ib al-Makhzūmī sends out his son to buy some food to break his fast with. He comes back only as night is falling, telling his furious (and hungry) father that he stopped at the door of someone's house to listen to singing. When Abū l-Sā'ib hears the song, a setting of a couplet by Kuthayyir, one line of which is in song 1, he is delighted and forgets entirely about food, singing the song all through the night. He even exchanges his cloak for his son's thin clothes, saying the song is enough to keep him warm.
- 8 A seven-line poem ascribed to Sulaymān ibn Abī Dubākīl, the last two verses being the lyrics of song 1.

This article combines several themes. It starts with an 'Udhri love story; a boy falls in love, proclaims his passion in poetry, his love is returned, but the families oppose the couple's marriage ((1), (2), (5) and (6)). Unusually in an 'Udhri love story, however, history breaks in with Khālīd's summoning the unhappy couple's tribe to convert to Islam and his bloodthirsty despatching of those who do not respond to the call ((1), (2), (4) and (6)); in (5) the leader of the conversion campaign is not named. Khālīd's ordering the prisoners to be killed elicits the Prophet's condemnation and his ordering the payment of reparations ((3) and (4)).⁵⁹ In (7) the focus moves from the events surrounding the lyrics of the song to the effect the song has on its hearers, the pious and ascetic Abū l-Sā'ib and his son, while (8) attaches the lyrics to a poem celebrating an extra-marital affair.

Two of the themes, the 'Udhri love story and reactions to Khālīd's butchery, reveal significant variants. The lovers' tribe is the Banū 'Āmir ibn 'Abd Manāt of Kināna in (1) and (2), whereas in (4) and (6) it is the Banū Jadhima, a sub-group of 'Āmir ibn 'Abd Manāt, and in (5) no tribal grouping is mentioned. The slaughtered lover is represented as a pale and sickly youth travelling with the women in (2), whereas in (5) he is driving the camels along, apparently on his own, and in (6) he is one of the Banū Jadhima's warriors. He does not receive a direct invitation to convert to Islam in (2), while (5) depicts him as unresponsive to it, and (6) portrays him making fun of the *shahāda*.

The Prophet's reaction to Khālīd's killing his prisoners is most disapproving in (3), where on hearing the news he first asks whether any of Khālīd's companions objected, and then sends 'Alī to pay compensation. In (4) he confronts Khālīd with his behaviour, and Khālīd justifies himself by quoting a Quran verse and claiming to have received a messenger bringing an order from Muḥammad that he should fight. The Prophet indirectly expresses his disapproval by immediately despatching 'Alī with the blood money. (6) has Khālīd giving his own account of the raid, and Muḥammad commenting at the end that the angels had urged him on to kill the young lover.

Differences in narrative technique emphasise some of these variants more sharply. A first-person narrator makes for vividness and closeness to the action in (2), in the second part of (3), where 'Alī recounts how he paid the blood-money, in (5) and in (6), where Khālīd has the chance to put across his view of what happened. The fighting is treated in most detail in (2), which describes two instances of single combat, while in (6) Khālīd concentrates on his encounter with the blasphemous 'Amr, and (4), which focusses on the pre-existing hostility between the Quraysh and the Banū Jadhima and the Prophet's reaction to Khālīd's deed, despatches the fighting itself in a couple of lines. (5) stands apart from the other two accounts of the lovers' end in being much less precise about historical or quasi-historical details. It does not name the leader of the expedition, nor when it took place, nor which tribe the couple belonged to. In fact, in its vagueness it fits better with the first part of (1) than does the version of their death in the latter part of that *khabar*, with its concern for factual detail.

Anecdote (7) takes the reader from the occasion which produced the poem to a performance of it as a song. This is a move which occurs frequently in the *Aghānī*, and several similar examples have already been quoted; here, as there, the anecdote illustrates the power of music to soften its hearers' hearts. But this anecdote and the preceding ones are also linked in another way. Abū l-Sā'ib, one of the supporting characters throughout the *Aghānī*, belongs to the same Makhzūm clan of Quraysh as Khālīd ibn al-Walid. But the beginning of anecdote (7) presents him as a very different kind of character, not only very susceptible to poetry and music, qualities illustrated in other anecdotes about him, but also as upright, ascetic, abstemious and frequently fasting ("kāna [. . .] ṣāliḥan zāhidan mutaqa'llilan yaṣūmu l-dahr"; VII, 290). The anecdote goes on to show Abū l-Sā'ib's son disobeying him by not coming home quickly with some food. But when the angry father hears the song, he not

only forgives his son but forgets about food, the passage of time and even the cold. His behaviour contrasts with that of Khālīd and his companions. For in the three cases where the young poet, ‘Abdallāh or ‘Amr, says a last farewell to his beloved, reciting part of the song’s lyrics, the hearers are unmoved. They simply wait till he has finished and then kill him; their hardheartedness is particularly striking in the first version, where ‘Abdallāh has not opposed them or refused the invitation to accept Islam. Khālīd’s savagery and ruthlessness, which the Prophet criticises and makes amends for in two of the versions, stands out even more starkly when set against his distant relative’s sensitivity to poetry and music and willingness to forgive his son’s disobedience.

In (8) the tone changes again. After moving from savagery to restraint and refinement, it introduces a note of humour and provocation. For the final poem describes the poet’s meetings with his mistress, snatched in her husband’s absence, and his request to the latter to get lost up a mountain. The adulterous relationship evoked here frankly casts into relief the literary character of ‘Alqama’s (or ‘Amr’s) and Ḥubaysha’s ‘Udhri love story. It is noteworthy that the lines which form the lyrics of the introductory song come at the end of Sulaymān’s short poem, even though they employ the conventional imagery of the *nasīb*; that can be read as a step in the direction of mocking commentary on the genre of *nasīb* itself.⁶⁰

This last untitled section is a good example of the phenomenon of “mixed types” which is encountered frequently in the composition of *Aghānī* articles. The mixture here concerns both themes and modes of narration; an ‘Udhri love story, with a historical setting and a tragic end, is combined with a historical account portraying a controversial incident in the establishment of the Prophet’s authority over the tribes of the Hijaz after the conquest of Mecca – an incident which raises the moral and political issue of the treatment of prisoners of war. Mixed types are very common in the articles treating personalities, the subject of the next chapter. In this chapter, however, I now consider those articles whose titles indicate a concern with a memorable event.

Articles on memorable events

Some examples of titles of articles on memorable historical events have already been given at the beginning of this chapter. The historical events concerned are generally wars, battles or violent deaths, but there are rare instances of occasions which gave rise to poetic contests. Thus, vol. XI includes *Dhikr al-khabar fī l-sabab fī ittīṣāl al-hijā’ bayna Jarīr wa-l-Akhṭal* (The account of the reason for Jarīr and al-Akhṭal engaging in a lampoon contest; XI, 61) as well as *Maqṭal Zuhayr ibn Jadhima al-‘Absī* (The killing of Zuhayr ibn Jadhima; XI, 82) and *Dhikr maqṭal Khālīd ibn Ja’far ibn Kilāb* (The account of the killing of Khālīd ibn Ja’far ibn Kilāb; XI, 94).

Just as untitled sections treating songs are found alongside sections explicitly devoted to songs, there are also untitled sections concerned with events. One such follows a song with lyrics by Ma’dikarib ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Amr al-Kindī taken from his elegy for his brother Shuraḥbil, killed at the first Yawm al-Kulāb. The

section begins “*Wa-kāna l-sababu fi maqtalihi wa-qiṣṣatu yawmi l-kulābi fimā akhbarānā bihi...*” (The reason for his death and the story of the [first] Yawm al-Kulāb are, as we were told by ...; XII, 209). Another instance is the section on the tribal conflict known as the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā’; it has the rather wordy introduction: “*Wa-ammā l-shi’ru lladhī fihi l-ghinā’u fa-inna l-Rabi’a bna Ziyādīn yaqūluhu fi maqtali Mālikin bni Zuhayrin wa-kāna qatluhu fi ba’di tilka l-waqā’i’i llatī yu’rafu mabda’uhā bi-Dāḥisin wa-l-Ghabrā’*. *Wa-kāna l-sababu fi dhālika...*” (As for the poetry with the musical setting, al-Rabi’ ibn Ziyād composed it when Mālik ibn Zuhayr was killed. His death occurred during the events the beginning of which is identified with Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā’. They were caused by ...; XVII, 187). After a song whose lyrics are taken from the elegy al-Walid ibn Ṭarīf’s sister composed on him, Abū l-Faraj continues “*wa-kāna Yazīdu bnu Mazyadin qatalah. Dhikru l-khabari fi dhālika*” (Yazid ibn Mazyad had killed him. The mention of the account of that; XII, 94), and gives the history of al-Walid’s end. As can be seen, “*sabab*” (reason) and “*qiṣṣa*” (story) or their equivalents, common in titles of articles on events, are generally found in the introductions to the untitled sections too.

Two characteristics distinguish the accounts of memorable events, whether battles, deaths or the beginning of poetic contests, from other sections of the *Aghānī*. First, the historiographical impulse is more marked in them than elsewhere. They are organised mainly along chronological lines, and establishing relationships of cause and effect are generally the principal concern of Abū l-Faraj and the sources he draws on for them.

Second, Abū l-Faraj tends to quote his source for a given event at length or, if he is using accounts from different sources, to combine them into one continuous version; this holds good for the period up to the end of Umayyad rule. Whereas in other parts of the *Aghānī* there are often four or five *akhbār* to a page, here a single source may be quoted continuously for four or five pages. One reason for this is that many of the events treated belong to pre-Islamic history or legend, and the accounts of them had already been fixed a century or more before Abū l-Faraj was writing. And as scholars recorded the accounts in writing, the versions which they discarded dropped out of circulation. As will be seen, the later the event, the more versions of it were available, and the more active the part Abū l-Faraj plays as a compiler.

Extensive reliance on a single source affects the nature of these parts of the work profoundly. For a hallmark of the *Aghānī* and many other *adab* compilations is the inclusion of alternative accounts of the same incident, with resulting variations in narrative perspective, pace of narration, information conveyed, poetry quoted and so forth, not to speak of the compiler’s critical observations about his material. As the discussion of articles on songs has shown, the *Aghānī* is also particularly rich in anecdotes relating different occasions on which poems were recited and songs performed. Confronted with this variety in the portrayal of events, people and the destiny of songs the reader is invited, even challenged, to respond by resolving contradictions as he sees fit, reflecting on the issues raised and forming his own opinion based on the materials presented to him. By contrast, when he encounters

a ready-made narrative, as in the *ayyām*, his role is reduced to acceptance or rejection of it *en bloc*.

One example of a section for which Abū l-Faraj relied only on one source relates the beginning of the conflict known as the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' (XVII, 187–208). It is attached to the article on al-Rabī' ibn Ziyād, who composed a poem on one of the victims, Mālik ibn Zuhayr, and the introduction to it has been quoted above. The *Aghānī* text is virtually identical with that of Abū 'Ubayda's *Naqā'id Jarīr wa-l-Farazdaq*, of which Abū l-Faraj used al-Sukkari's redaction.⁶¹ But it breaks off many episodes before the end of the *Naqā'id* account.⁶² Apart from that, the only divergences of any note between the two versions concern the length of quotations of poetry and the position of philological comments on verses; they make no difference to the total effect.

The *Aghānī* account falls into six episodes, marked off from each other by a phrase which denotes the passage of time:

- 1 The stallion of Ḥawṭ, a member of the Banū Riyāḥ, by accident covers a mare belonging to Qirwāsh of the Banū Tha'laba ibn Yarbū'. The resulting foal, Dāḥis, is first claimed by the Banū Riyāḥ, but later they relent and give it back to Qirwāsh (187–9, l. 3).
- 2 Qays ibn Zuhayr al-'Absī raids the Banū Tha'laba. He takes some booty but exchanges it for Dāḥis. He compensates his companions for their loss of a share of the booty. Qirwāsh demands his horse back, but withdraws his demand when he realises that it would entail him restoring to Qays the booty he took in the raid (189, l. 4–190, l. 7).
- 3 Qays ibn Zuhayr and Ḥudhayfa ibn Badr al-Fazārī agree to race their horses against each other for a wager. Possible reasons for that are that they quarrelled because Ḥudhayfa's slave-girl mentioned 'Absī women in a song and Qays attacked her, or they agreed on a race after a Dhubyānī visitor compared Ḥudhayfa's horses unfavourably with Qays's, or else that an 'Absī and a member of Banū Badr agreed on a wager in Qays's absence, and despite Qays's forebodings the Banū Badr refused to abandon the bet. Qays's horses Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' are in the lead, but the Fazārīs ambush and hold them up. The Fazārīs refuse to give the 'Absīs any of the prize camels, but because the 'Absīs are few in number they go away quietly (190, l. 8–194, l. 11).
- 4 Qays raids Fazāra and kills Ḥudhayfa's half-brother, but al-Rabī' ibn Ziyād al-'Absī pays the blood-wit for him and peace is restored (194, l. 12–l. 19).
- 5 Qays's brother Mālik marries a Fazārī woman, but Ḥudhayfa sends warriors to kill him in revenge. Al-Rabī', who is married to Ḥudhayfa's sister and camping under his protection, hears of this, asks Ḥudhayfa for an escort and gets back safely to 'Abs. He and Qays make up their differences (a flashback explains why these arose) and demand back from Fazāra the camels which were paid as bloodwit (195, l. 1–201, l. 6).
- 6 Ḥudhayfa's brother Mālik is killed by one of the Banū Rawāḥa. Al-Asla' ibn 'Abdallāh al-'Absī reconciles the two parties, giving seven young hostages to

be kept by Subay‘ al-Ghaṭafānī. When Subay‘ dies, Ḥudhayfa takes charge of them and kills them one by one. Fazāra, Banū Tha‘laba and Banū Murra encounter ‘Abs, who kill several prominent men. Ḥudhayfa joins with Banū Dhubyān to attack ‘Abs. Qays instructs the warriors and women to take a different path from the herds, Ḥudhayfa’s forces pursue the herds and are split up, and then ‘Abs attack. Their goal is Ḥudhayfa, who is pursued and killed after vainly asking for mercy. Several poems close the section (201, 1.7–208, 1.7).

This account includes a series of situations in which the characters must make choices leading to war or peace. They are continually torn between the temptation to resort to violence and the realisation that tolerance and restraint are the best course. While Ḥudhayfa consistently plays the villain, several other characters are more or less willing to listen to arguments of moderation or even to act as peace-makers – Qays, Qirwāsh, the Banū Riyāh, al-Rabī‘ ibn Ziyād, al-Asla‘ ibn ‘Abdallāh. The exemplary nature of the account is evident.⁶³

Typical features of *ayyām* narrative technique, such as a fast pace, realistic description, lively dialogue, and an absence of superfluous detail, are to be found in this narrative. The progression of events is underlined by the recurrence of “*fa-makatha mā shā’a l-lāhu an yamkutha*” (he remained in that situation for a certain length of time) or an equivalent phrase (189, 190, 194, 201). The section also contains a number of proverbial expressions worked into dialogues, notably the one between Qays and Ḥudhayfa when the horse-race starts. Twice it uses the motif of a slave sent to discover the real intentions of an individual or group whose attitude is suspect (196, 200). In two of the three versions of the reasons for the horse-race Qays tries to persuade those who have involved him in it without his agreement to change their minds, because, as he prophesies, no good can ever come of betting at the races (191, 192).

These literary effects and the moral thrust of the narrative are all achievements of Abū l-Faraj’s predecessors – Abū ‘Ubayda, al-Sukkarī or one of the other transmitters. Abū l-Faraj’s only intervention is to interrupt the account after Ḥudhayfa’s death, making that into the event towards which the action tends and thus emphasising the negative presentation of Ḥudhayfa. He does not try – perhaps the available material did not permit it – to move out of the pre-Islamic world by relating instances where verses generated by the conflict were quoted later on, or by mentioning later poetry which alludes to it. Instead he keeps rigidly within the Jāhili time-frame and does not add anything to the traditional mode of narrating tribal conflicts.

Another section where Abū l-Faraj’s own contribution is scarcely greater is the account of the Battle of Badr (IV, 170–212), which follows the article on Ḥassān ibn Thābit (IV, 134–70). The song introducing the article is taken from Ḥassān’s poem on this victory of the Muslims; it returns after the account of the battle (IV, 212–13). For the account of Badr Abū l-Faraj follows al-Ṭabarī, who himself is largely dependent on Ibn Hishām; Ibn Hishām has created a coherent account from a number of sources, sometimes mentioning individual variations. While

al-Ṭabarī follows Ibn Hishām closely, at times he omits philological comments and adds material from other sources.⁶⁴

Abū l-Faraj starts his quotation some way into al-Ṭabarī's account, at the point where the Prophet hears the news of Abū Suyfān's caravan coming from Syria and calls on the Muslims to attack it (IV, 171 = *T. I*, 1291). He follows the *Ta'rikh* faithfully up to the point where the booty is divided up (IV, 203 l. 8 = *T. I*, 1333), omitting only two short passages.⁶⁵ He does, however, add one report – his only recourse to material from elsewhere in the whole of his version of the battle – after the statement that Abū Lahab ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib did not accompany the other Meccan notables to Badr but sent al-'Āṣi ibn Hishām al-Makhzūmī as a substitute (IV, 174, ll. 4–10).

This report concerns the reason why al-'Āṣi took Abū Lahab's place. Al-'Āṣi, a compulsive gambler, had lost all his possessions and finally his freedom to Abū Lahab, who had set him to work for a smith and forced him to pay him a regular tax. When the call for men to fight Muḥammad went round, Abū Lahab proposed that al-'Āṣi take his place, promising him his freedom. But he was killed by 'Alī during the battle. Al-'Āṣi is the only example in the *Aghānī* of a man so obsessed with gambling that he was willing to stake his own freedom, and Abū l-Faraj was sufficiently struck by the dramatic story and the instance of extreme behaviour it contained to include it twice in his book. It occurs in the introductory section of the article on al-'Āṣi's grandson, al-Ḥārith ibn Khālid (III, 311), where it fits well into the section of interesting information about the subject's forebears which is often found in articles on personalities. Its reappearance in the account of the Battle of Badr, while understandable, is more striking, since it entails a departure from the source Abū l-Faraj otherwise follows so closely here.

From the point where, the battle won, the Muslims share out the spoils and deal with the ransoming or, in a few cases, killing of prisoners, Abū l-Faraj becomes much more selective in his quoting from al-Ṭabarī. He omits many of the details about the division of the booty, the arrival of news of the victory in Medina, the list of names of the Meccans killed, and the Prophet's return to Medina, rejoining his source for the tally of Meccans killed and taken prisoner (IV, 203, ll. 9–12 = *T. I*, 1335, ll. 11–16), and for the dramatic outburst of the prophet's wife Sawda at seeing one of the Meccan prisoners with his hands bound (IV, 204, ll. 1–10 = *T. I*, 1337, ll. 1–11). He includes the Meccans' reactions to the news of the defeat and the fate of al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who was among the prisoners (IV, 204, l. 11–206, l. 9 = *T. I*, 1338, l. 5–1341, l. 15; 1344, l. 10–1345, l. 6). Abū l-Faraj's preference for human interest stories comes to the fore again in the incident when the Prophet's daughter Zaynab, who had remained in Mecca with her unconverted husband Abū l-'Āṣi ibn al-Rabi', sends his ransom, which includes the necklace Khadija gave her at her wedding. The Prophet, deeply moved, asks for permission to send the ransom back and let Abū l-'Āṣi go free, and the Muslims agree (IV, 208, ll. 1–6 = *T. I*, 1347 l. 16–1348 l. 5).⁶⁶

The last part of the narrative of Badr in the *Aghānī* is a passage which Abū l-Faraj has transferred from its place in al-Ṭabarī (*T. I*, 1342 l. 1–1345 l. 5). It

concerns the Meccan al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib's elegy for his three sons killed at Badr, and concludes with a quotation of the poem. This rearrangement of al-Ṭabarī's text can be explained in two ways. In the *Aghānī* the account of the Battle of Badr does not form part of a continuous narrative of the earliest history of the Muslim community; it stands on its own. Formally, it can be assimilated to the *ayyām al-'arab* genre, even if the events it portrays have a far profounder significance than the pre-Islamic tribal clashes. The *ayyām* customarily end with poetry composed on the occasion of the events narrated, most often elegies for the dead, and so it is only fitting that the account of Badr should end with poetry too. Furthermore, these lines of poetry provide a transition to the final part of Abū l-Faraj's version of the battle, which abandons al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Hishām entirely. It draws on other sources for Hind bint 'Utba's elegy of her father, uncle and brother, which was set to music, and for an account of a competition in elegies between her and al-Khansā' which quotes from another poem of hers. And the final *khavar* of all has Mu'āwiya paying a surprise visit to 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far because of rumours that 'Abdallāh has been indulging in the forbidden pleasures of wine-drinking, listening to music and betraying his ecstasy by nodding his head. The caliph hears 'Azza al-Maylā' singing the song which introduces Ḥassān ibn Thābit's article and the appended account of the Battle of Badr, and 'Abdallāh is able to reassure him both about the choice of poems she sets to music and on the two other scores. As in many other articles, the introductory song becomes a frame for the whole article because it appears in the final *khavar* too. And the anecdote itself takes up a recurrent theme in the book, the defence of singing.

Taken as a whole, Abū l-Faraj's treatment of the Battle of Badr can be understood as an adaptation of his main source, al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, to the requirements of the *Aghānī*. Unlike al-Ṭabarī and before him Ibn Hishām, Abū l-Faraj is not concerned to trace the evolution of the early Muslim community and the fate of the Meccan opposition; rather, he aims to provide a coherent account of a famous event which is both a turning point in Islamic history and has also given rise to a poem from which the lyrics of one of the Top Hundred songs have been taken. The Battle of Badr is no longer part of a fresco, it has become an independent picture. And just as when a portion is cut out of a fresco the edges suffer, so here it is the beginning and end of the account which have been abridged or omitted, while the centre remains unaffected. The insertion of the vignette about the compulsive gambler, taken from another source, reflects an *adīb's* interest in varieties of human behaviour, while the addition of the "musical" *akhbār* is dictated by the specific focus of the *Aghānī*.

Another historical event treated in the *Aghānī* is the elimination of the Umayyads after the 'Abbāsīd revolution. The title, which not all MSS have, is *Dhikru man qatala Abū l-'Abbāsi l-Saffāḥu min Banī Umayya* (Mention of the Umayyads killed by Abū l-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ; IV, 343). The section follows an article on the singer and poet Abū Sa'īd the *mawlā* of Fa'īd, who was famous for the elegies on the Umayyads he composed and set to music;⁶⁷ it is introduced with

the words: “*Wā-hādhā l-shi‘ru [...] yaqūluhu Abū ‘Adī ‘Abdullāhi bnu ‘Umara l-‘Abliyu fīman qatalahu ‘Abdullāhi bnu ‘Aliyin bi-nahri Abī Fuṭrusa wa-Abū l-‘Abbāsi l-Saffāhu amīru l-mu‘minīna ba‘dahum min Banī Umayya. Wa-khabaruhum wa-l-waqā‘i‘u llafī kānat baynahum mashhūratun yaṭūlu dhikrūhā jiddan. Wa-nadhkuru hāhunā mā yustaḥsanu minhā*” (“and this poetry [...] was composed by Abū ‘Adī ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar al-‘Abli about the Umayyads killed by ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Ali at the River Abū Fuṭrus and those later killed by the Commander of the Faithful Abū l-‘Abbās al-Saffāh. What befell them and the clashes which occurred between them are well-known, and it would take a very long time to recount them. Here we shall mention an appropriate sample”; IV, 342).

Abū l-Faraj includes thirteen *akhbār* in this section. They can be summarised as follows:

- 1 After Marwān’s defeat at the Zāb, ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Ali pursues him through Syria. The ‘Abbāsīd troops finally catch up with him and kill him in Egypt. His head is sent to ‘Abdallāh, who despatches it to al-Saffāh. The caliph expresses his thirst for Umayyad blood by quoting from a pre-Islamic poem.
- 2 During the battle ‘Abdallāh’s attention is caught by a noble and daring warrior. He offers him a safe conduct, but the man refuses, preferring death to dishonour. It turns out he is the son of Maslama ibn ‘Abd al-Malik.
- 3 At an audience where al-Saffāh is surrounded by members of the Banū Hāshim and the Banū Umayya, Sudayf recites a poem in praise of al-Saffāh, warning the new caliph against the Umayyads’ duplicity and recalling their killing of some Hāshimites. The Khurāsānī guards fall on the Umayyads and club them to death. The only one to escape is the son of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who turns to Dāwūd ibn ‘Alī for protection. At Dāwūd’s request, al-Saffāh spares him. The order then goes out to the governors to kill the Umayyads found in their provinces.
- 4 At an audience al-Saffāh, pleased with a panegyric he has heard, turns to the Umayyads to ask their opinion of it. One replies that it does not compare with Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt’s praise of his family, which proclaims that they are the only rulers under whom the Arabs can prosper. Infuriated, al-Saffāh orders them to be killed.
- 5 Al-Saffāh has an executioner’s leather cloth spread over the bodies and has his meal while some of the victims are still agonising. The corpses are thrown into the road, where the dogs pull at their brocade-clad legs, and finally they are thrown into a pit.
- 6 On his way from Mecca to Medina, Dāwūd ibn ‘Alī stops and holds audience. Both Hāshimites and Umayyads are present. Ibrāhīm ibn Harma recites a poem attacking the Umayyads, and Dāwūd smiles viciously at one of them, ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Anbasa ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣī. The Prophet’s descendant ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Hasan is thankful that his own half-brother Muḥammad, a great-grandson of ‘Uthmān, has escaped Dāwūd’s attention, for as soon as the latter gets to Medina he has ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Anbasa killed.

- 7 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan gets Dāwūd ibn 'Alī to swear that he will not harm 'Abdallāh's Umayyad half-brothers, Muḥammad and al-Qāsim. Dāwūd keeps his oath, despite the disapproval of the Khurāsānīs, but one day warns Muḥammad that accidents can happen. From then on Muḥammad keeps away from him, on 'Abdallāh's advice.
- 8 While al-Saffāḥ has some Umayyads with him, Sudayf recites a poem inciting him against them. He refers to his hatred of them as inherited and has them killed.
- 9 Some Umayyads, luxuriously clad and perfumed, attend Sulaymān ibn 'Alī's audience in Basra. He has them killed and their bodies thrown into the road, where the dogs tear at the brocade-clad legs of the corpses.
- 10 A young Umayyad, fearing he may fall victim to the campaign against his family, decides to appeal to Sulaymān ibn 'Alī to guarantee his dependants' upkeep. He arrives for the meeting dressed far too luxuriously. In order to give him some chance of succeeding with his request, the narrator, a friend of his, exchanges cloaks with him and tones down some of the extravagances in his costume. Sulaymān promises he will not be harmed and advises him to behave discretely.
- 11 Another example of Sudayf's poetry inciting al-Saffāḥ against the Umayyads.
- 12 A poem by an anonymous member of the pro-'Abbāsīd faction inciting the new rulers against the Umayyads.
- 13 At the audience already described in (3) the Umayyad Sulaymān ibn Hishām turns on Sudayf after he has recited the poem. Al-Saffāḥ, despite his friendship with Sulaymān, who helped him in the past, orders the other Umayyads to be killed and then turns to Sulaymān, observing that after this his life is not worth living. Sulaymān concurs and is killed too, and the bodies are exposed in al-Saffāḥ's orchard. When guests complain of the stench, the caliph replies that to him it is the sweetest of perfumes. The setting of lines from Sudayf's poem quoted in (3). Three further songs by Abū Sa'īd mourning the Umayyads.
- 14 Al-Ma'mūn sets out from Damascus on a hunting trip and stops by some beautiful cypress trees planted round a pool. He admires the Umayyad ruins, orders wine and dates and settles down to enjoy himself. The singer 'Allūya, misjudging the caliph's mood, performs the last-mentioned of Abū Sa'īd's elegies. Al-Ma'mūn, infuriated, rebukes him for choosing that moment to mourn the Umayyads, but he retorts that he naturally grieves for them, since their descendants in Spain are treating his colleague Ziryāb so well, while he endures hunger at the 'Abbāsīd court. Al-Ma'mūn's anger at 'Allūya lasts three weeks, but after another singer's intervention he pardons and rewards him (IV, 343–54).

The first *khbar* sketches the general context of the slaughter of the Umayyads. It relates in a conciser form than al-Ṭabarī, for instance, Marwān's flight after his defeat at the Zāb (132/750).⁶⁸ But whereas al-Ṭabarī despatches the massacre of

the Umayyads by ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Alī at Nahr Abī Fuṭrus in two lines, Abū l-Faraj accords several pages to the treatment al-Saffāḥ and his three uncles mete out to them and to the role of poetry in inciting the newly victorious ‘Abbāsids against their vanquished rivals.

‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Alī, the protagonist of (1), returns in (2) as a chivalrous fighter. His offer of a safe-conduct to a gallant enemy gives Maslama’s son the opportunity to affirm his courage and refusal of dishonour. Dāwūd ibn ‘Alī is less well-disposed to the Umayyads, as his response to Ibn Harma’s verses shows (6). But he nonetheless offers effective protection to ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (3) and accedes to ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan’s request to preserve the lives of ‘Abdallāh’s Umayyad relatives (7). Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī has some Umayyads who attend his audience in extravagant clothes killed (9), but when another Umayyad, more simply dressed, turns to him for help with supporting his family, he agrees, on condition that the Umayyad keep out of the public eye (10). Al-Saffāḥ is portrayed as more implacable than his uncles; he proclaims his thirst for Umayyad blood in (1), with the poetry he quotes when Marwān’s head is brought to him. In (3) he has the Umayyads present at his audience clubbed to death and then orders an empire-wide massacre of them. (8) is a shorter variant of this incident. (4) is a different but similar incident, since the panegyric of al-Saffāḥ which starts it is not said to contain an attack on the Umayyads, and it is the tactless reply of one of the vanquished clan which sparks off the violence. (5) portrays the grisly scene of the caliph enjoying a meal after the killing, while the Umayyads breathe their last, and in (13), which Abū l-Faraj introduces as a variant on (3), he is happy to smell the stench of the Umayyads’ rotting corpses. But this same *khbar* adds an interesting nuance, for Sulaymān ibn Hishām had been generous to the ‘Abbāsids before they came to power, and al-Saffāḥ does not deny that. He seems almost to ask Sulaymān to agree to be killed.

The poems inciting the ‘Abbāsids against members of the former ruling house cannot have given al-Saffāḥ the idea of eliminating them, for his quotation in (1) indicates that he already had a well-developed hostility to them. But the verses certainly provide occasions for him and his uncles to act, as the narratives of (3), (6), (8) and (13) show. The inclusion of two further poems, (11) and (12), where only the poet’s aim, but not the result of his words, is mentioned, further emphasises the importance of verse as a form of political communication. The anonymous “member of the ‘Abbāsīd faction” in (12) is not only saying what his ruler wants to hear, he is also affirming that the rank and file support his plans. The comment of the Umayyads in (3) when they hear Sudayf declaim his poem proves that they recognise the political force of the medium; one of them turns to another and says: “The slave has done for us.” Likewise in (6) ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan recognises the danger threatening ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Anbasa after Ibn Harma’s recitation. Poetry can also provoke revealing reactions in those it is directed against. The Umayyad in (5) who claims that the panegyric of al-Saffāḥ he has just heard does not come up to Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt’s praise of his own clan betrays his utter failure to understand that a fundamental political change has taken place.

The changes in status brought about by the Umayyads' loss of power and their response to the new situation constitute a further theme. It is treated in several *akhlbār*, of which (5) is one example. (3) details the revised seating arrangements at the ruler's *majlis*; whereas members of the Umayyad clan were wont to be seated besides the caliph on the royal couch, while the Hāshimīs ('Alids and 'Abbāsids) were given stools, under the new regime the caliph sits on the couch, the Hāshimīs sit on stools and the Umayyads are allotted folded cushions.⁶⁹ A second reference to the Umayyads' being given a more lowly place occurs in (6). In Basra the Umayyads attend Sulaymān ibn 'Alī's *majlis*, for the last time as it turns out, dressed as usual in luxurious brocaded garments and with their hair plastered with perfume (9). Likewise, the young man who appeals to Sulaymān to take care of his family is about to present himself to the governor in a white hooded mantle and loose brocaded trousers, which his friend considers far too flamboyant a costume. But this Umayyad has at any rate tried to dress down; he explains these are his least extravagant clothes (10).

Precedence and styles of dress reflect a consciousness of status which is also expressed in some of the Umayyads' remarks. When one of them hears Sudayf's poem warning al-Saffāḥ that they are planning treachery, he refers to him as a slave, whereas the *khabar* introduces him as a freedman or client (*mawlā*) (3). Another one demands how Sudayf dares recite such verses in their presence, since they are the élite (13). It is this arrogance which blinds one Umayyad to the danger of claiming that better panegyrics have been composed on them than on al-Saffāḥ (5).

But pride and wealth are no protection against the vicissitudes of fate. The striking picture of the Umayyads' corpses thrown out into the road and the dogs coming and tearing at their legs in their brocaded trousers occurs twice, once in connection with al-Saffāḥ (5) and once with Sulaymān ibn 'Alī (9).⁷⁰ The contrast between the Umayyads' past glory and present decay is also alluded to by al-Saffāḥ when he claims that the stench of their corpses is sweeter to him than musk and amber (13). The Umayyads' fall is a vivid illustration of the theme of the fragility of all earthly power and wealth.

Finally, this series of scenes from a revolution reveals the existence of personal ties between members of the opposing clans and the differing results which conflicts between individual and group loyalties may produce. Umayyads and 'Abbāsids attend each others' audiences. Some of them even know others well enough to appeal to them in time of need. Thus, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz asks for Dāwūd ibn 'Alī's protection, arguing that his father was not like the other Umayyads, and Dāwūd grants his request. Thanks to the 'Alid 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan's intervention, his Umayyad half-brothers are spared by Dāwūd, though as time passes the 'Abbāsīd regrets his promise to let them live. A young Umayyad who does not know Sulaymān ibn 'Alī personally throws himself on his mercy, and his gamble pays off. By contrast, although Sulaymān ibn Hishām has treated al-Saffāḥ kindly in the past, that carries no weight when the new caliph decides to eliminate the former ruling family.

Abū l-Faraj has assembled the thirteen *akhbār* treating the fate of the Umayyads from nine different informants. He has not incorporated or adapted an existing historical account; as he says, the main lines of what happened are well-known. He has created his own version of events, not strictly chronological⁷¹ but stressing certain points to which few other texts pay attention.⁷² He is not concerned with the consequences of the end of Umayyad rule for the state. Rather, he examines the behaviour of individual actors, ruthless or merciful in the case of the 'Abbāsids, courageous and occasionally adjusting to new realities but more often retaining the arrogance which made them hated in the case of the Umayyads. And he emphasises the role of poetry as a political weapon.

The final *khabar* acts as an epilogue to this bloody incident. Some three quarters of a century later the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn no longer perceives the Umayyads as a threat; he can afford to admire their building achievements. But the reference to their death, and thus to the bloody deeds of his ancestors, still touches a raw nerve. His anger increases at 'Allūya's reply, for the singer compares his own situation as a descendant of a prisoner of war who became a freedman of the Umayyads, with that of Ziryāb, a client of the 'Abbāsids. The two musicians now each work for the rival dynasty, but the Spanish Umayyads have not made Ziryāb suffer for his connections with the 'Abbāsids, as might have been expected; on the contrary, they have treated him far better than the 'Abbāsids have 'Allūya. This retort does not cost the singer his life, and after a short exile from court he is pardoned by the caliph and restored to favour; al-Ma'mūn shows himself not only more tolerant than al-Saffāh, but also capable of revising his decisions. But beyond demonstrating that the massacre of the Umayyads was still a sensitive subject well into the 'Abbāsīd period, Abū l-Farah uses this incident to remind the reader discretely that some of those who survived it are now in power in Spain and have not lost their habit of royal generosity.⁷³

If the treatment of these three memorable events, the outbreak of the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā', the Battle of Badr, and the massacre of the Umayyads, is compared, two approaches to presenting this type of subject can be distinguished. In the first two articles Abū l-Faraj seeks chiefly to provide the necessary historical information, and to do so he reproduces an older source at length, while adapting it somewhat to the particular demands of the *Aghānī*. In the third he moves away from a chronological presentation to concentrate on the behaviour of the actors and the moral issues involved, which he conveys through the juxtaposition of contrasted scenes drawn from a number of sources. It is true that with the material available to him he could not have adopted the second approach in dealing with a subject from the *ayyām*, but he could have presented the massacre of the Umayyads far more concisely and straightforwardly than he does. His choice to concentrate not on the course of events but on the variety of behaviour exhibited by those engaged in them reflects a changed approach to the writing of history. Historical events are no longer facts to be recorded, but offer material for reflection on human behaviour and the ethical principles informing it. And this is reflected in the title of the article, which reads not *Dhikr maqṭal Banī Umayya*, but

Dhikr man qatala Abū l-‘Abbās min Banī Umayya; the people involved in the event have replaced the event itself as the centre of attention.

Articles on relationships

The third group of articles to be considered here are those whose subject is the relationship between a poet and another person, who may or may not be a poet too. The occasion which gives rise to them is a poem, and this means that the type of relationship is one which is celebrated in verse – a love affair, in the case of *nasīb* or *ghazal*; ties of blood or friendship, in the case of *rithā’*; hostility, where *hijā’* is concerned; the *protégé’s* dependence on his patron, in *madīḥ*.

The largest group of these articles on relationships concerns love affairs. Some involve famous poets and the women associated with them: Bashshār and ‘Abda (VI, 241–53); al-Aḥwaṣ and Umm Ja‘far (VI, 253–9); al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf and Fawz (XVII, 66–73); Abū Nuwās and Janān⁷⁴ (XX, 60–73). In these cases Abū l-Faraj has treated the love affair on its own, apart from the main article, and this is indicated either in the title (with the word *khāṣṣatan*, “in particular”; e.g. VI, 242) or in a subsequent comment (VI, 254). Where less important poets are concerned, the love affair may turn out to be one among a number of themes of the article, as with *Khālīd wa-Ramla wa-akhbārūhumā wa-ansābūhumā* (Khālīd and Ramla, the reports about them and their genealogies; XVII, 340–50). The wording of the title may even suggest a somewhat tenuous connection between the lovers; this is true of *Akhbār Danānīr wa-akhbār ‘Aqīd* (The accounts about Danānīr and those about ‘Aqīd; XVIII, 64–72).

Bashshār’s and ‘Abda’s article⁷⁵ begins with an anecdote (1) telling of the poet’s making the acquaintance of his beloved and addressing a poem to her, and her response, which was to visit him but always in the company of other women. This is followed by three poems where he speaks of his love of her, rejecting the criticism of those who doubt that one can fall in love when one cannot see the beloved and affirming that his heart can see even if his eye is blind. A variant (2) follows on how the two met; it concludes with the famous ascetic al-Ḥasan al-Basrī’s reproach to Bashshār and the poet’s retort. In (3) Mālīk ibn Dīnār, a well-known preacher and traditionist, visits Bashshār and criticises him for composing love poetry on respectable women; Bashshār’s only possible response is to promise to give it up. And then (4) Bashshār’s *rāwī* tells of ‘Abda’s messenger arriving to ask the poet why he has not visited her recently, whereupon he dictates a poem proclaiming his longing to see her but also his fear of being punished by the authorities if he does so (VI, 242–6). These anecdotes are followed by twenty-one poems or poetic fragments by Bashshār with their performance indications (VI, 246–53). Only one *khavar* interrupts this sequence; after song 16, whose last line is of dubious authenticity, (5) Bashshār hears his poem recited and reacts angrily to the end of it, claiming that his *rāwī* has added a verse which doesn’t fit with the rest.

Anecdotes (1) to (3) and the poems attached to them are also included in the main article on Bashshār (III, 237–8; 169–71). The subsequent songs, however,

are new, except for the lyrics of song 16, which appear in the main article as an illustration of Bashshār's poetic gifts (III, 150, 151). The purpose of this article would appear to be to bring together the *akhbār* about Bashshār and 'Abda and then list Bashshār's poems dedicated to 'Abda which were set to music. It is worth noting that there is an unusually high concentration of songs in the section – twenty-three, including the one which introduces the article, in thirteen pages of text.

As for the verses, they are examples of the love poetry for which Bashshār was justly famous. They move from affirmations of his love in the face of incredulous or disapproving reactions, through accounts of meetings with 'Abda, to proclamations of his sincerity, complaints of his suffering and appeals to his beloved to be merciful and fulfill her promises to him. Apart from the narratives of the meetings, which are very much in the Hijazi style, these verses continue the elegaic tone of 'Udhri love poetry, though instead of turning away from society the poet turns to analysing his own feelings; the fragments point towards the later courtly *ghazal*.

The article on al-Aḥwaṣ and Umm Ja'far,⁷⁶ which immediately follows that on Bashshār and 'Abda, reveals a different balance between poetry, songs and *akhbār*. After giving Umm Ja'far's genealogy (she was from the Banī Khaṭma clan of Aws), Abū l-Faraj quotes narratives and poems connected with three incidents. In the first, Umm Ja'far's brother Ayman appeals to the governor of Medina to stop al-Aḥwaṣ mentioning her name in his love poems, and the governor orders the two men to be bound together and given whips with which to beat each other. Al-Aḥwaṣ shows himself a coward, a fact celebrated by another poet, but he defends himself with lines where he suggests that it is his beloved who prevents him from taking revenge on her brother. There follow the performance indications of the songs whose lyrics have been quoted in this *khavar*. The second incident has Umm Ja'far taking the law into her own hands. She goes veiled to al-Aḥwaṣ's clan's meeting place and accuses him of not paying for some animals he has bought from her. When he has insisted that he does not know her, she removes her veil, while he continues to protest he has had nothing to do with her. After the scene has continued for some time and a crowd has gathered, she turns on him, affirming that he has indeed told the truth, and all the references to their love affair in his poems are fabrications. Thus she restores her reputation and he is thoroughly discomfited. The final *khavar* depicts Abū l-Sā'ib al-Makhzūmī acting out the scene, vividly described in one of the poems previously quoted, of al-Aḥwaṣ's enemies watching his every move as he circles round Umm Ja'far's house (VI, 253–9).

The (non-existent) relationship between al-Aḥwaṣ and Umm Ja'far is set about half a century earlier than Bashshār's affair with 'Abda.⁷⁷ Umm Ja'far, referred to respectfully as "Mother of Ja'far" rather than with her own name, belongs to a family of considerable status; she has her own genealogy. The first *khavar*, which gives no hint of why or when the poet started mentioning her in his verse, plunges the reader into a situation where her brother has become so exasperated that he asks the authorities for help. Those readers who recall the principle article on al-Aḥwaṣ

(IV, 224–68) will find the poet's behaviour here consistent with that earlier portrayal of him as obstreperous, provocative and frequently in conflict with influential people. His verses, to which Ayman responds in deeds, also call forth a reply by another poet, but this is a terrain on which al-Aḥwaṣ can – and does – fight back. The second *khavar* shows Umm Ja'far taking the law into her own hands and, unlike her brother, silencing the poet for good. Her success in defending her reputation offers a parallel to that of Su'dā in the untitled article on 'Umar's poem (XVII, 156–70) discussed above. There several different responses to a poet's taking liberties with a woman's name are portrayed, and those of the Umayyad ladies, especially Su'dā, are far more appropriate than the violent reaction of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Here, too, the self-reliant Umm Ja'far is better able than her brother to resolve the problem. In the third *khavar* the focus is on the quality of description in the poetry, which Abū l-Sā'ib responds to like an actor following a script.

In this section poetry sets off the actions narrated in the *akhbār*. It also serves not as a means of communication between the poet and his beloved, but a weapon the poet turns on individuals or groups he wishes to provoke. Interestingly, though, the lines of love poetry are quite chaste, and Abū l-Faraj notes that several lines were also attributed to Majnūn (VI, 256–7). They did not attract musicians in the way that Bashshār's poems did, as can be seen from the fact that the article only contains four songs including the introductory one – although two of them belong to the Top Hundred.⁷⁸

The article on Abū Nuwās and Janān (XX, 60–73) again sets a different emphasis in the combination of *akhbār*, poetry and songs.⁷⁹ It introduces Janān as a slave-girl, naming her owners and sketching her and her accomplishments in a brief profile similar to the ones found in the articles on singers. The first *khavar* refers to when Abū Nuwās first saw her, and then recounts that her decision to make the pilgrimage led him to do so too, a fact he celebrates in poetry (which forms the lyrics of the introductory song). After quoting a devotional poem Abū Nuwās composed during the pilgrimage, the article moves back to Janān. Verses expressing the poet's emotions of love and despair alternate with descriptions of his beloved in different circumstances (a wedding, a funeral), responses to messages she sends him and accounts of dreams in which she appears to him. They are introduced by brief narratives. The penultimate *khavar* mentions Janān being sold to a new owner who takes her away from Basra, and the final one quotes a poem in which Abū Nuwās tells Janān to erase many words in the letter she writes him with her tongue, so that when he reads it he can pass his tongue over the places she has erased and kiss her at a distance.

While some of the *akhbār* merely outline the occasion which gave rise to the verses and may well have been derived from the poetry,⁸⁰ there are three instances where they raise other issues. In one anecdote when a *qāḍī* reproaches Abū Nuwās for talking to a woman who has brought him a message from Janān, the poet gives the excuse that she is his wife, whereupon the *qāḍī* says he should not expose her to such an ambiguous situation. Later Abū Nuwās sends the judge a poem explaining that the woman was really a messenger and the dignitary withdraws his

criticism, in one version because he regards talking to a messenger in public as acceptable, in the other because he does not criticise poets (XX, 65–6). In the second instance, a poem Abū Nuwās composed when Janān was at her owners' estate outside Basra is referred to in three *akhbār*. First, the occasion and the names mentioned in the verses are explained, and then a later quotation of one verse elicits the comment from a relative of her owner that Abū Nuwās was not in love with Janān or interested in women at all, but simply composed poetry on her for fun. Finally, a philologist points out that Abū Nuwās derived one of the ideas in these lines from a poem by al-Nābigha al-Ja'di (XX, 66–7). The final instance concerns the poem Abū Nuwās composed on Janān when she attended a funeral. First, the occasion, the death of a member of her owner's family, is mentioned. Then the traditionist Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna expresses his appreciation of one of the poem's images in two different ways, and finally an alternative occasion for the poem is proposed, in which the funeral is that of a market watchman and the girl is his daughter (XX, 68–9). These *akhbār* reflect preoccupations with the acceptability of the poet's behaviour, the sincerity of his feelings, the sources from which he derived some of his images and concepts, and the aesthetic qualities of his poetry. There are only two songs mentioned in the article apart from the introductory one.

The fourth article on a love affair, that of al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf and Fawz (XVII, 66–73),⁸¹ starts with a *khavar* in which Fawz's owner, who is named, takes her on the pilgrimage and al-'Abbās composes a poem celebrating her return to Baghdad. The subsequent, longer version of this incident quotes his verses lamenting her absence on the pilgrimage before the poem on her return. In the next *khavar* al-'Abbās tries to make fun of al-Aṣma'i with a poem describing his love for Fawz, but the philologist worsts him.⁸² The rest of the article consists of anecdotes combining a brief narrative with a short poem. Usually the narrative gives the occasion for the verses – Fawz's illness, her intervention on behalf of a servant al-'Abbās has treated unjustly, her servant's unfounded accusation of al-'Abbās – but once the poem, which begins the *khavar*, elicits a comment from her.⁸³ The last anecdote which mentions Fawz's actions describes her as becoming interested in someone else, and when she wants to be reconciled to al-'Abbās he composes a short poem of refusal. This is followed by a philologist's quotation of verses by Abū Nuwās from which al-'Abbās borrowed an image in this poem, another fragment of his with its setting, and a final comment of admiration for one of his lines expressed by the secretary-poet Aḥmad ibn Abi Fanan.

About Fawz the article gives no information, except for the name of her owner. As it emerges from the *akhbār*, the relationship between her and al-'Abbās consists of communication through messengers, although al-'Abbās himself refers to meetings between them, and he even boasts of having seduced her (XVII, 71). The messengers may be more than docile go-betweens. One, al-'Abbās's servant, asks Fawz to intercede for him with his master, whom he has angered; another, in Fawz's service, slanders al-'Abbās for refusing a request of hers. And these initiatives both give rise to poems. Other roles in the article are played by al-'Abbās's friends,

who comfort him when he is depressed because Fawz has addressed him as “old fellow” (*yā shaykh*),⁸⁴ the philologist al-Aṣma‘ī, who outwits al-‘Abbās, the grammarian al-Akhfash, who relates an image of his to a poem by Abū Nuwās, and the fellow-poet Aḥmad ibn Abī Fanan, who admires his work. The poems quoted are short pieces in which al-‘Abbās voices his sorrow when his beloved is far from him, his joy at her return, his sympathy with her suffering pain, his complaint at her injustice, and his declaration of innocence when the servant-girl falsely accuses him. The tone is dignified, except when al-‘Abbās responds to Fawz’s being bored with him; then a spiteful note creeps in. Apart from the introductory song, the article contains two songs, but one of them is a setting of the poem by Abū Nuwās which al-Akhfash quotes.

These four articles share a few traits. They all introduce the beloved; since the lover has an article devoted to him elsewhere he needs no introduction here.⁸⁵ There is a tendency to provide a chronological framework for the material. The first time the poet sees or meets his beloved begins the articles on Bashshār and ‘Abda and Abū Nuwās and Janān, and the end of the relationship is described, or at least suggested, in the articles on al-Aḥwaṣ and Umm Ja‘ar, Abū Nuwās and Janān, and al-‘Abbās and Fawz. But between the beginning and end of the relationship there is no attempt to arrange the *akhbār* chronologically; indeed, given that they contain no clue as to when they took place in relation to each other, the compiler could scarcely have tried to create a linear narrative out of them. Significantly, the poetry attracts attention apart from the story which gave rise to it. Bashshār criticises his reciter for adding a line to one of his poems; various people express their appreciation of verses by al-Aḥwaṣ, Abū Nuwās and al-‘Abbās; the indebtedness of Abū Nuwās and al-‘Abbās to other poets is noted.

But there are also obvious differences between these articles. The importance of the poetry as a source of lyrics varies, and here Bashshār’s article stands apart from the other three. The proportion of *akhbār* to lyrics in it justifies it being considered as focussed principally on songs, with the anecdotes (already familiar to the reader from Bashshār’s main article) as a necessary introduction to them.

The poetry varies, reflecting the fact that the poets are from different periods and have different personal styles. The contrast is particularly marked in the case of the *ghazal* of Abū Nuwās and al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf, who were contemporaries. Abū Nuwās describes his beloved’s appearance with brilliant images, sketches the ceremonies where he has seen her and reworks the convention of the beloved’s spirit visiting him in a dream. Al-‘Abbās’s poems are far more limited in theme, concentrating on analysing the emotions his beloved’s behaviour arouses in him. There is also another difference between the articles as far as the poetry is concerned. While *ghazal* is the main genre in each of them, the reader catches a glimpse of other genres: *hijā’*, when al-Aḥwaṣ is publicly disgraced; parody, with al-Aṣma‘ī replying to al-‘Abbās; devotional poetry, when Abū Nuwās is on the pilgrimage; responses to critics, with Abū Nuwās’s note to the *qāḍī* and Bashshār’s allusion to Mālik ibn Dinār.

Different kinds of relationship lie behind the poetry, and these are partly dictated by differences in the status of the women involved. Umm Ja'far is a free woman of a respected family, and as portrayed in the *akhbār* she has given al-Aḥwaṣ no cause to mention her name in his poetry; he is behaving according to a certain convention of the Umayyad period, and his verses are also dictated by convention. Her taking the law into her own hands is part of the same social context, where women could act with considerable freedom. 'Abda, too, is a respectable woman,⁸⁶ who always takes friends along with her when she goes to visit Bashshār; the poet earns a reprimand from pious personalities for mentioning her in his poetry. Janān and Fawz lack Umm Ja'far's independence of spirit, and they seem to have interiorised their status, that of being a possession and a source of pleasure. But whereas in Fawz's case this is underlined by al-'Abbās's "de-personalisation" of his beloved,⁸⁷ in Janān's case it is somewhat mitigated by the fact that Abū Nuwās describes her in real-life situations.

The article on Abū Nuwās and Janān introduces a note of ambiguity absent from the others. Given the poet's well-known preference for boys it is not surprising that the question of his sincerity in the poems he addressed to Janān is raised. So, too is the identity of the girl whom he describes at the funeral. And he himself plays with ambiguity in his response to the disapproving judge, claiming first that he has been caught speaking to his wife, and later that the woman was a go-between.

As the composition of these articles reveals, they are not interested in the love story for its own sake. All of them are chiefly concerned with the poetry to which it gave rise; in the article on Bashshār and 'Abda this is supplemented by the attention for the musical settings, while in Umm Ja'far's confrontation with al-Aḥwaṣ, which is the most developed and vivid anecdote in the four sections, a feel for narrative technique is discernible.

The only article in the *Aghānī* devoted to a homoerotic relationship, *Khabar Ishāq ma'a gulāmih Ziyād* (XX, 320–4),⁸⁸ shows the same interest in the poetry generated by a love affair. The introductory song Ishāq composed on his cup-bearer Ziyād is followed by a profile of the beloved, and a quotation of lines another poet, Di'bil, addressed to him. The beginning of the relationship is passed over, but a typical scene where Ishāq sings while Ziyād pours wine is described. Then, in a more extended anecdote, Ishāq presents Ziyād to an audience charmed by his singing the introductory song and announces that he is freeing the young man and marrying him off to a slave-girl of his, inviting those present to give him gifts to set him up in life. Ishāq's elegy when Ziyād dies closes this sequence of five *akhbār*, all of which include at least half a line of the introductory song.

The two final anecdotes, however, take up another point mentioned earlier, namely that the Umayyad poet al-Akḥṭal might have been the author of the introductory song. In the first of them Ishāq adapts another couplet by al-Akḥṭal to his own circumstances, by substituting "Ziyād" for "*nadīm*" (companion). The other describes the circumstances in which al-Akḥṭal composed this second couplet. 'Abd al-Malik asks him why he enjoys wine, when it starts with a bitter taste

and leaves a hangover, but the poet explains that during the state of euphoria in between he feels like a prince lording it even over the Prince of the Believers. The attribution to al-Akhṭal of the couplet which forms the article's introductory song is thus implicitly rejected (in any case its suggestion of the cup-bearer's erotic significance places it in a later period), and a reason for the confusion is suggested. Even in so short an article as this, poetry is at least as important as the narrative of Ishāq's relationship with his slave, since not only Ishāq's and Di'bil's poems on Ziyād are involved but also al-Akhṭal's couplet on wine and even a problem of attribution of verses.

Not all articles on love affairs treat famous personalities, and this may be reflected in the wording of the title. "*Dhikr khabarihā [ay Sallāma al-Zarqā'] wa-khabar Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath*" (The mention of the accounts about [Sallāma al-Zarqā'] and those about Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath; XV, 56) is the heading introducing an article on two members of the Kufan musical milieu at the beginning of the 'Abbāsid period, the singing-girl Sallāma al-Zarqā' and the poet-composer Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath (XV, 55–73).⁸⁹ After the introductory song, a love poem addressed by Muḥammad to Sallāma, the first *akhbār* portray Muḥammad in the house of Sallāma's owner Ibn Rāmīn, a famous trainer of singing girls, and his being attracted to Sallāma's attendant. He also patronises a rival of Ibn Rāmīn for a time and composes poems on both men and their slave-girls. The focus then moves to Sallāma, Ibn Rāmīn, another slave-girl of his and various notables who frequent them. Sallāma's purchase by Ja'far, the son of the first 'Abbāsid governor of Basra, Sulaymān ibn 'Alī, leads in two new themes. The first is Sulaymān's initial disapproval of his son's occupying himself with Sallāma, especially at a moment of political crisis, until the cultivated and tactful girl succeeds in winning him over. The other is Ja'far's jealousy of Sallāma's former admirers, and his terrible revenge on one who she admits has kissed her. There follow more scenes of life at Ibn Rāmīn's, with a cast of notables and the singing girl Sa'da, and then an eyewitness's description of Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath teaching a very young Sallāma, of delicate androgynous beauty, a song of his. The next *khabar* emphasises Muḥammad's gifts as a composer; a Hijazi musician tells of meeting him in Kufa and learning from him many songs (6 are listed), which were later ascribed to the old Hijazi masters. Music returns in the subsequent anecdote, where Sulaymān ibn 'Alī is reconciled to Sallāma because she can sing a song he requests from her even though it is very old. A glimpse of more bawdy goings-on in Ibn Rāmīn's house is given in a quotation from a minor poet, and the article closes with another description of Sallāma's beauty when she was young, given by a visitor who saw her in Ibn Rāmīn's house.

The love affair between Muḥammad and Sallāma is not represented as an especially significant event in either of their emotional lives; Muḥammad is attracted to other singing girls too, and Sallāma, after having had many admirers, ends up in the household of one of the most prominent men in Basra. The connection between the two is rather loose and short-lived.

But not only do the two go their own ways, they also have different roles. Muḥammad, the witty and elegant *kātib*, consistently appears as either a poet or a composer; the anecdotes portraying him serve to introduce verses of his or to detail his musical gifts, to which ten songs altogether testify. The *akhbār* round Sallāma, by contrast, focus on her social skills and wit, as well as on the milieu in which she moves. Few of them contain poetry, but as anecdotes they are more developed, in particular the vivid account of how one of Sallāma's admirers rewards her with two valuable pearls which he has sworn to give her from mouth to mouth. Because Muḥammad's world is that of music and poetry, it is hard to establish any chronological sequence in the *akhbār* about him. In Sallāma's world of narrative prose, however, the main lines of a life-story can be discerned. As a young girl she was bought by the leading owner of singing-girls in Kufa and was taught songs by Muḥammad, a noted composer. After spending some years in her master's house and enjoying great success among Bohemian circles in Kufa for her skill in singing and her wit, she was acquired by a relative of the Caliph and withdrew from public life.

What holds this article together are the *akhbār* where Muḥammad and Sallāma both appear, the milieu which forms the common background for the anecdotes about them, and – a frequent feature in the *Aghānī* – the *reprise* towards the end of it of a song already quoted at the beginning. But unlike the articles on the famous poets and their loves discussed above, “the Accounts about Sallāma and the Accounts about Muḥammad” is dealing with two individuals who had merely a brief encounter, and the title reflects this. And appropriately Sallāma's name precedes Muḥammad's, since she plays a greater part in the article than he does.⁹⁰

The article on Sallāma and Muḥammad also differs from the ones on couples discussed earlier because it is the only place in the *Aghānī* where either of the protagonists is treated. Abū l-Faraj therefore has to include in it all the information he considers his readers ought to have about them. Another example of a treatment of a love relationship which also contains a general presentation of the heroes is “*Dhikr Khālid wa-Ramla wa-akhbārihimā wa-ansābihimā*” (The mention of Khālid and Ramla, the accounts about them and their genealogies; XVII, 340–50); it is introduced by a poem in which Khālid speaks of his love for Ramla.

The reference to genealogies prepares the reader for the fact that this section is set in an earlier period and more distinguished surroundings; Khālid was a son of Yazid ibn Mu'āwiya, the second Umayyad caliph. After giving his genealogy and that of his mother the article⁹¹ starts by refuting the claim that he put the story of the eschatological figure of the Sufyānid⁹² into circulation after Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam had ended his hopes of ruling. It then quotes poetry his father Yazid addressed to his mother. Ramla's genealogy follows; she was a sister of 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, who had refused to recognise Yazid as caliph and established himself as an independent ruler in the Hijaz. Khālid's proposal to Ramla is recounted; it occurred when Khālid made the pilgrimage after Ibn al-Zubayr had been killed and Umayyad rule re-established in the Hijaz, and it occasioned a sharp exchange of words between Khālid and al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, the then governor of the Hijaz, who considered the alliance unsuitable. Another clash between Khālid and

al-Ḥajjāj in Damascus is reported, and then an allusion to Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam's marriage to Khālīd's mother after Yazīd's death. This leads into the incident where Marwān publicly insults Khālīd and his mother, and after Khālīd complains to her she takes her revenge, smothering the caliph in the knowledge that his son and successor 'Abd al-Malik will not complain, because he does not want it to be known that a woman killed his father.⁹³ Ramla is at the centre of the next anecdote, complaining to 'Abd al-Malik, who is visiting Khālīd, that her son by an earlier marriage is having problems with his wife, Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn, and arguing that there is no excuse for her capriciousness because the Umayyads are just as well-born as the Prophet's family. A poem mentioning Khālīd's marriages to Ramla and to a daughter of one of the Ṭālibids forms a transition to two anecdotes illustrating Khālīd's eloquence and intelligence. In one of them he worsts 'Abd al-Malik's son al-Walīd, who has scattered his brother 'Abdallāh's horses, and in the other he plays a trick on the caliph's simple-minded brother Mu'āwīya. The article closes with a reference to Khālīd's support for the Kalb confederation in their conflict with Qays, an attitude explained by the fact that his father Yazīd and his wife Ramla both had Kalbī connections, and with quotation of lines by a Qaysī poet reproaching him for this.

The love relationship in this article differs in several ways from those discussed above. The couple belong to prominent political families who have been engaged in conflict with each other. Love leads to marriage, and partly for this reason very little is said about it; since Ramla accepts Khālīd's proposal he is not inspired to compose poems of longing such as would have been set to music and could have been mentioned in the article. What prompted Khālīd to propose to Ramla remains a mystery, though since it was a controversial act presumably strong feelings lay behind it. And the final *khabar* states that his love for Ramla influenced his political choices.

Although the relationship between Khālīd and Ramla is not the dominant theme of the article, it is one of a number of mostly problematic marriage relationships mentioned there. Two quotations are given of Yazīd's verses addressed to Khālīd's mother, one to express his feelings on seeing her weep and one, hard-heartedly, advising her to accept the fact that he has taken another wife. Ramla's account of her son 'Abdallāh's problems with Sukayna indicates that in that ménage it is the wife who causes dissension. Khālīd's mother's remarriage to Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, who had succeeded in gaining power for his branch of the Umayyad family at the expense of Khālīd and the other Sufyānids, is a source of humiliation to her son, until an insult of Marwān's goads her into action and she takes her husband's life. As this last example shows clearly, among Umayyad couples both parties might act independently and, if necessary, ruthlessly.

While the marriage relationships in the article give rise to little poetry, another aspect of literary expression, rhetoric, is well-represented in it. The Umayyad period was the great age of Arabic oratory, and the reports about Khālīd and Ramla offer some glimpses of this. Ramla's affirmation that the Umayyads' social standing is equal to that of the Prophet's family is symmetrically phrased. Khālīd's refutation

of al-Ḥajjāj's objections to his marriage to Ramla is terse and to the point, and when he complains to 'Abd al-Malik of al-Walid's arrogant behaviour he shows himself equal to the caliph, capping his Quran quotations and parrying his other arguments. In other words Khālid appears as eloquent as the leading orators of the age.⁹⁴

Besides serving to illustrate the particular literary skills possessed by the subject of the article, the examples of argument have a further function. Khālid complains to 'Abd al-Malik about al-Walid's behaviour in order to forestall 'Abdallāh, who has threatened to kill al-Walid after the incident with the horses. Well-chosen words can thus prevent conflict and blood-letting. The message about the importance of words acquires still more force when the fate of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam is recalled. It is Marwān's insulting reference to Khālid's mother which leads to his being murdered; his ill-chosen words are his undoing. Rhetorical skills are far more than a nice accomplishment, they can assume vital importance.

Dhikr Khālid wa Ramla thus goes beyond describing the love of the two protagonists and giving background information about them. It touches on the marriages of relatives of theirs, also members of the early Islamic political élite, and sketches the situation of an intelligent man kept away from the centre of power but still able to make himself respected. And all these themes give rise either to poetry or, less common in the *Aghānī*, to eloquent speeches.

Another type of relationship, that of friendship, is treated in the article entitled "*Khabar Kuthayyir wa-Khandaq al-Asadī lladhī min ajlih qāla hādha l-shi'r*" (The account of Kuthayyir and Khandaq al-Asadī, because of whom he composed this poetry; XII, 172–92). Khandaq and Kuthayyir shared Shī'ī convictions, and during the pilgrimage one year Khandaq preached the 'Alids' claim to the leadership of the Muslim community, on the understanding that Kuthayyir would take care of his family if anything happened to him. Khandaq was set upon and killed by the pilgrims, and Kuthayyir composed two elegies on his friend, one of which provides the lyrics for the introductory song. This article⁹⁵ falls into three parts.

The first part treats the subject mentioned in the title, the friendship between Khandaq and Kuthayyir. After the occasion for Kuthayyir's composing his elegy has been given, the elegy is quoted at some length, and then two different accounts of how Khandaq earned Kuthayyir's gratitude earlier on are related. The section concludes with Kuthayyir's other elegy on Khandaq and the mention of the settings of different lines of it. The middle part of the article focusses on Ghāḍira, the woman named at the beginning of Kuthayyir's second elegy on Khandaq.⁹⁶ According to one version, Ghāḍira was an attendant of Umm al-Banīn, the wife of al-Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik. When Umm al-Banīn came to the Hijaz on the pilgrimage and invited the poets to compose love poetry on her, Kuthayyir chose prudently to address his *nasīb* to this Ghāḍira, whereas Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman mentioned Umm al-Banīn, which cost him his life. A third poet, Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt, referred to Umm al-Banīn in a *nasīb*, but he kept the poem secret. The poem Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt composed on Umm al-Banīn when she made a second pilgrimage, but this time veiled, is also quoted, as is an anecdote indicating that the

panegyric attached to it was addressed not to al-Walid but to his father 'Abd al-Malik. The next version of who Ghāḍira is starts with a mysterious woman admirer of Kuthayyir's poetry asking his *rāwī* to recite four poems of his. She teases him for describing himself as handsome in some verses, when he is anything but that, until he loses his temper and insults her. She then admits that she is Bishr ibn Marwān's concubine Ghāḍira, and before continuing her journey she puts aside her veil to reveal a most beautiful face. She rewards both the poet and his *rāwī* before bidding them farewell. In the final version of Kuthayyir's meeting with Ghāḍira she is a mysterious figure, apparently one of the Qurashī pilgrims, who immediately challenges the poet to explain how he could boast of his good looks in some of his verses when he is so ugly. She leaves without explaining who she is. Two brief anecdotes follow, illustrating how one of the poems quoted by Bishr's concubine, Kuthayyir's famous complaint when 'Azza's husband took her to Egypt, could move those who heard it, and then the poem itself is given at length. The final part of the article returns to Kuthayyir's elegy of Khandaq, but performed on a much later occasion. Hārūn al-Rashīd has decided to have Ja'far ibn Yahyā al-Barmakī killed, but takes care to treat him with his usual consideration until the last moment, so as not to arouse his suspicions. When Masrūr finally goes to carry out the caliph's order he finds Abū Zakkār singing a line from Kuthayyir's elegy: "May your life never end! Yet to every man death comes, at night or in the morning". Ja'far begs to be allowed to see the caliph, but without success; al-Rashīd is not to be deflected from his aim. Abū Zakkār's plea to be killed with his patron is not granted, however, and later on the caliph grants him a pension.⁹⁷

Abū l-Faraj ignores the basic information about Kuthayyir here because he has given it earlier on, in the main treatment of the poet (VIII, 373–5; IX, 3–39). One might therefore have expected the first part of this article, covering the friendship between Khandaq and Kuthayyir and the poetry to which it gave rise, the last part, a later instance of a performance of one of the songs quoted, and a passing reference to who Ghāḍira might be. But the development of the middle part to take up half of the entire article is disconcerting and needs an explanation.

What binds the various parts of the article together are the themes of truthfulness, falsehood and prudence (or dissimulation), both in poetry and in life. Khandaq feels impelled to proclaim his convictions to the pilgrims at Mecca, even though he foresees that it will lead to his death. Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman speaks freely of his feelings for Umm al-Banīn (whether they are genuine or simply an expression of a literary convention is irrelevant), and he too pays the ultimate price. Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt and Kuthayyir both respond to Umm al-Banīn's provocation more wisely, either by not publicising the poetry composed on her (Ibn Qays) or by addressing it to her attendant (Kuthayyir). Kuthayyir's elegies on his friend provide more evidence of this prudent approach, for while full of feeling they do not refer to the circumstances in which Khandaq died. The song from one of the elegies which is being sung when Masrūr bursts into Ja'far's house is another example of truth in poetry being connected with death, although it is simply prophetic; the vizier's fate has already been decided. But the singer spontaneously takes his cue

from it, asking to be killed with his master; here again, art and life coincide, leading to death, or at least willingness to die. The most devious behaviour in the article is that of the members of the ruling house, who are neither poets nor singers. Umm al-Banīn's motive for inviting the poets to take the dangerous step of composing love-poems on her is not explained in the *akhbār*, although one can hardly imagine that it was entirely innocent. But there is no doubt about the caliph Hārūn al-Rashid's double-facedness, as he continues to treat his intended victim with all consideration so as to prevent him becoming suspicious.

The encounters with the connoisseur of poetry develop another aspect of the subject of truth and falsehood in poetry, for they bring out the discrepancy between Kuthayyir's boasts of his good looks and the reality of his ugliness. This theme has already been encountered in the context of an untitled article on a song, when other poets criticise him for lying about his appearance in his verses; it belongs to the repertoire of often entertaining material which collected round his life.⁹⁸ But the poet's misleading portrayal of himself does not detract from his poetry's ability to express experience so authentically that another poet, al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī, borrows his verses to voice his own sense of loss when his beloved leaves the Hijaz. Kuthayyir may not represent himself in his poems as he really is (indeed if he was as ugly as the sources claim, it is hard to see how he could have told the truth while observing the conventions of early Islamic poetry) but once the umbilical cord between the poet and his creation has been cut, what the poem says comes into its own. And it can describe a real situation, the moment when Ja'far's executioner comes to kill him, with uncanny precision.

Dissimulation of one's convictions (*taqīya*) is an important issue in the Shī'ī tradition to which Khandaq and Kuthayyir (at this stage of his life) adhered. And it provides certain parallels with the controversy over truthfulness and falsehood in poetry which was a much debated question in mediaeval criticism and which recurs in the *Aghānī*.⁹⁹ Abū l-Faraj has in fact taken the friendship between the two Shī'īs as a starting point, drawing on the material provided by the life of one and the poetry of the other for exploration of these issues.

The short article on al-Ḥuṭay'a and Sa'id ibn al-'Āṣ (*Akhbār al-Ḥuṭay'a ma'a Sa'id ibn al-'Āṣ*; XVII, 224–8)¹⁰⁰ starts out from a relationship of protégé to patron; the introductory song is taken from one of the poet's panegyrics addressed to Sa'id. In the first anecdote the poet's son Iyās observes to Sa'id's son Khālīd that when al-Ḥuṭay'a died he left a considerable sum of money acquired as a reward for his panegyrics. Now the money has gone, while the poems still survive. The transmitter then quotes a later section from the poem of the introductory song praising Sa'id. The following anecdote describes the first meeting between Sa'id and al-Ḥuṭay'a; the poet takes part incognito in an evening meal Sa'id, then governor of Medina, gives for the town's inhabitants and invites himself to the governor's *majlis*, where he attracts attention through his knowledge of poetry. Having revealed his identity, he recites two panegyrics addressed to Sa'id, for which he receives a generous reward. In the last anecdote al-Ḥuṭay'a, who is staying in Medina with his clan in impoverished conditions, appeals to Khālīd ibn Sa'id to

help them. Khālīd refuses, upon which al-Ḥuṭay'a turns away. His suspicions aroused, Khālīd asks who the suppliant is, and on hearing it is al-Ḥuṭay'a he has him brought back and gives him clothes and mounts.

About the relationship of the poet to his patron the article contains little information, beyond describing the first meeting between them and showing that the qualities of al-Ḥuṭay'a which the patron appreciated were knowledge of the poetic tradition and skill in composition. But the three anecdotes read together serve as a reflection on the relation of literary art to those who create and reward it. Poetry survives its creator; it also outlives the reward he receives for it. In fact because of its enduring quality it can never be appropriately recompensed. But the poet composing a panegyric has a clear idea of the reward he can expect, and he responds to his patron according to whether he receives what he considers his due or not. The fact that he is offering something far more resistant to time than what he will get in return does not weigh heavily with him, for he has specific needs he wants fulfilled. It is material necessity which leads him to address himself to a patron. And if he is disappointed, he knows how to avenge himself.

In the *Aghānī* there is generally a progression from the specific circumstances in which a poem or song is created, with the material considerations which have influenced the poet or singer, to the independent existence of the work of art later on; several examples of this have already been mentioned, for instance in the discussion of articles on songs. In the article on al-Ḥuṭay'a and Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ the reverse process can be observed – from the work of art to the circumstances of its performance and its author's material needs which dictated its creation. The explicit statement in the first anecdote about the lasting quality of art is unusual in the book, although the idea itself is often reflected in the inclusion of *akhbār* portraying a poem or song being performed many years after the death of its poet or composer.

Two more articles whose proclaimed subject is a relationship with a patron but where the creation and performance of literary or musical works are major themes are *Khabar li-Ishāq wa-Ibn Hishām* (An episode involving Ishāq and Ibn Hishām; XVII, 110–15) and *Khabar Ibn Surayj ma'a Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn* (What happened to Ibn Surayj with Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn; XVII, 41–54). The first, in which Ishāq describes to 'Alī ibn Hishām a book he has started to write about singers, has already been discussed in connection with the "right place" for an article.¹⁰¹ After the long quotation from Ishāq's letter (1), where he asks for his patron's opinion about his project, a *khabar* (2) sketches the reason for the break between the musician and 'Alī's brother Aḥmad, an imprudent fragment of poetry in which Ishāq likens a drunkard's stammering to Aḥmad's incoherence. Subsequently (3) he boasts of his ability to ruin Aḥmad's standing by composing more lampoons and setting them to catchy tunes, but when 'Alī begs him not to attack his brother, he grants his request. The final *khabar* (5) has him complaining of a wrong done him by Aḥmad and 'Alī, without however mentioning what that wrong is.¹⁰²

The *akhbār* do not offer a chronological presentation of the relationship between Ishāq and 'Alī. The musician's letter, written when he was in Basra, presupposes a close acquaintance, as does his agreeing to 'Alī's request not to go on attacking

his brother. But it cannot be determined in what sequence these events occurred. The only *khbar* which can probably be situated in relation to the others is the final one, for the wrong the Ibn Hishām brothers have done Ishāq will have preceded his attack on Aḥmad. In fact these *akhbār* are a development of Abū l-Faraj's own summary of the relationship which follows the quotation from the musician's letter. According to this Ishāq was on very friendly terms with 'Alī, Aḥmad and the rest of their family until he became estranged from them for some reason about which almost nothing is known. Then he lampooned them in many poems, but later their relations improved.¹⁰³

'Alī's patronage of Ishāq is of a different kind from Sa'id ibn al-Āṣ's of al-Ḥuṭay'a. For while 'Alī was one of al-Ma'mūn's generals and related to the powerful Ṭāhirids, Ishāq was the leading composer at court and supported by many music-lovers from the caliph down. The element of economic dependence is consequently far less pronounced. By contrast, patronage in this case involves intellectual complicity. 'Alī can discourage Ishāq from composing more lampoons on his brother, but he can also encourage him to carry on with the book he has undertaken. Even if Ishāq has other reasons for mentioning this project, he is obviously keen to have 'Alī's opinion and comments on it. The patron here is not merely a consumer, however sophisticated; he also gives advice about work in progress.

"What happened to Ibn Surayj with Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn" is also concerned with the patron's ability to encourage the creative process. But Sukayna has a hard task, for the singer, after a severe illness, has adopted an ascetic way of life and vowed never to sing again. During his convalescence he makes a trip to the Prophet's grave in Medina, staying with other ascetics and having nothing to do with musicians. On hearing that he is planning to return to Mecca, Sukayna decides she must hear him sing before he leaves. Her servant Ash'ab tries to dissuade her, but after Sukayna has had her maids beat him up as a punishment for his indiscipline he is inspired to devise a trick to bring Ibn Surayj to her house. When the musician arrives and hears her swear that she will keep him prisoner for a month and have him beaten ten lashes every day if he refuses to perform, he gives in. Sukayna invites the Medinan *diva* 'Azza al-Maylā' to come and keep him company, both of them singing their compositions. After three days Ibn Surayj is permitted to depart, suitably rewarded. This first elaborate *khbar* (XVII, 42–7) is followed by performance indications and philological notes on the songs' texts as well as by three short anecdotes on other occasions when they were performed, indicating that Ishāq's way of performing one of them differed from Mukhāriq's (47–54).¹⁰⁴

The capricious and obstinate Sukayna is set on hearing Ibn Surayj and remains unmoved by his claim to have abandoned his art. She finds herself in the unusual position of seeking to patronise an artist who is unwilling to perform. To get her way she adopts an ambiguous attitude to religious matters, for while making light of the singer's claims to have undergone a spiritual conversion and sworn never to sing again, she exploits the prestige of her own ancestors to make her oath not to let him go without singing more binding. Ibn Surayj's role is equally unusual, for

he three times expresses his unwillingness to perform before a wealthy patron. This is a parody of the conventional patron–protégé relationship.

The atmosphere of comedy, and also of moral ambiguity, is heightened with the arguments Ash‘ab uses to persuade Ibn Surayj to accept Sukayna’s invitation. He first appeals to him to come to Sukayna because it is the only way for him, Ash‘ab, to regain her favour; otherwise he will be dismissed from her service and no-one else will employ him. When pity fails to move Ibn Surayj, Ash‘ab threatens to announce to the Medinans that it is the singer who has beaten him up when he protected a boy from his unwelcome advances. The threat of having his reputation destroyed leads the singer to accompany the servant, but even when the two are on the way to Sukayna’s house he makes a last attempt to keep his oath and escape. Ash‘ab needs to invent a further trick, menacing to accuse Ibn Surayj of having accepted from him one of Sukayna’s bracelets on the understanding that he would sing for her, and then going back on his word and attacking the servant. It is by threatening to slander Ibn Surayj as immoral and a thief that Ash‘ab gets him to his mistress’s house. The contrast with the customary exchanges between a notable’s servant and a well-known singer invited to perform before him could hardly be more marked. At the same time Ibn Surayj’s professed adoption of an ascetic way of life is at variance with his lack of compassion for the battered Ash‘ab and his fear for his own reputation.

Most likely this *khabar* was invented or elaborated when Ash‘ab’s role as a buffoon-like figure in Sukayna’s service had already become established in entertaining anecdotes.¹⁰⁵ Certain aspects of it are more reminiscent of the ‘Abbāsid than the Umayyad period, for instance the reference to Ibn Surayj’s notorious passion for a particular boy. But however frivolously it treats the subject of patronage, the songs which it quotes are serious contributions to the musical repertoire – a point underlined by the three subsequent *akhlbār* about them. Here, too, whatever the relationship between patron and artist, the work of art has its own independent value and history.

These three articles illustrate different facets of the relation of patron to protégé and the theme of patronage. In Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ al-Ḥuṭay’a has a fairly standard type of patron, knowledgeable about poetry, appreciative of his art and capable of rewarding it appropriately. ‘Alī ibn al-Hishām is unusual in sharing Ishāq’s intellectual interests so closely that the musician discusses his projected book with him; this relation reflects the far more sophisticated and book-oriented culture of the ‘Abbāsid court. It enables ‘Alī to restrain Ishāq from continuing his lampoons of Aḥmad, ‘Alī’s brother. Sukayna illustrates the willfulness and violence of the patron determined to have his or her desires satisfied come what may. She conceives of the artist as someone who can be forced to obey her whims, whether he wants to or not. Patronage in all three cases involves an exchange. Its unequalness is made clear in the exchange between the sons of al-Ḥuṭay’a and his patron: the patron offers a fleeting reward for words or a song which will outlast it. In the second example the inequality is reduced, because Ishāq is not in a situation of economic dependence and ‘Alī contributes ideas for the artist’s work. In the case of Sukayna

and Ibn Surayj the inequality is of a different kind, for the reward the musician receives for his songs has been earned at the price of his abandoning his newly adopted ascetic way of life. And behind the exchange of art for a reward lies a relationship of power, most obvious in the case of Sukayna, but also hinted at in that of the Ibn Hishām brothers. But poets and musicians are not always helpless in the face of their patrons' behaviour, as is clear from al-Ḥuṭay'a's and Ishāq's threats to ruin the reputation of patrons they consider have wronged them.

Focusses of interest, available material, tone and sensibility

The discussions of the articles on songs, events and relationships could be taken much further. But, as a first approach to Abū l-Faraj's method of work they allow some preliminary conclusions. The compiler has several aims in mind when assembling his material, and these are reflected in different focusses of interest in the articles.¹⁰⁶ On the most elementary level, he seeks to provide factual¹⁰⁷ information about events and people, quoting historical accounts, legends or anecdotes about the lives of poets and singers. Khālīd's, Ramla's and Umm Ja'far's genealogies, Janān's owners, the length of Manẓūr ibn Zabbān's gestation period, the pursuit and killing of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, al-Saffāh's butchery of the Umayyads and of course the mention of the Battle of Badr and the outbreak of the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' all belong in this category.

Next, he is concerned with the creative process, mentioning the circumstances in which poems and songs have been composed and how they are connected with their authors' careers and personalities. Examples of the circumstances surrounding the genesis of poems and settings include the occasions leading to 'Umar's composing his love poetry on Dhāt al-Khāl/Nu'm, Su'dā and Laylā; Abū Nuwās's sightings of Janān and the verses he composes in consequence; Yazīd's invitation to al-Ḥusayn and his recitation of a provocative couplet; Ibn Surayj's setting of a couplet of 'Umar's to music to prove that he is at least as gifted as Ma'bad; Ishāq al-Mawṣilī's composing a setting of Jarīr's *ghazal* as a present for his father Ibrāhīm; and Kuthayyir's sympathy for his fellow Shī'i Khandaq, leading to his pronouncing an elegy on him. The relation between a poet or musician and his creation varies; while it is usually one of straightforward pride, ambiguity may creep in, as when Nuṣayb later in life regrets the poem where he mentions Zaynab or when Ibn Surayj, having undergone a spiritual conversion, abandons singing entirely. And there may be a contradiction between what the poet is or does in fact and the claims he makes in his poetry, as in the case of the unprepossessing Kuthayyir who represents himself as handsome or that of the miserly Ibn Harma boasting of his generosity – and being forced to live up to his boast. Exceptionally the creative process may concern another form of expression, Khālīd's oratory or Ishāq's planned book.

Further on the poem or song lives an independent life, and Abū l-Faraj quotes instances of reception, commentaries and critical judgements on it. Thus Abu

l-Sā'ib al-Makhzūmī acts out al-Aḥwaṣ's lines and ignores convention under the influence of one of Jarīr's love poems. Ibn Abī 'Atīq considers that the ability to recite this poem with feeling can serve as a testimonial to a witness's good character. Kuthayyir's complaint when 'Azza's husband takes her to Egypt moves its hearers years later. Ash'ab's performance of Ibn Surayj's setting of Jarīr's verses leads the unmusical Sālim ibn 'Abdallāh to give him a basket of dates to get rid of him. The lyrics Abū Zakkār is singing when Masrūr comes to arrest Ja'far ibn Yahyā have a prophetic quality, and it may be under their influence that he asks to be killed with his master. An Umayyad's tactless quotation of Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt's praise of his family infuriates al-Saffāh to the point of having him and his relatives killed. Ishāq al-Mawṣilī and 'Allūya are reprimanded by Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn for singing songs with historical associations they judge undesirable. On a more scholarly level, Nuṣayb's verses are compared with those of Imru' al-Qays, the philologist al-Akhfash notes that al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf derived an image from Abū Nuwās's poetry, al-Aṣma'i and Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣa express their admiration for Ibn Harma's poems, and a music-lover cites one of Ibn Surayj's songs as an instance of his most beautiful style of composition – that where he imitates Ma'bad.

The verses may also belong to a clearly defined group of works by the same poet, or the setting may call forth the mention of other examples of the composer's art. The compiler may then choose to quote a series of poems or songs, as they might be found in a *diwān* or song book. The collection of songs with lyrics drawn from Bashshār's poetry on 'Abda and the list of Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath's melodies fall into this category. And a tendency towards such listing can also be discerned in those articles where one or two poems or songs are quoted without any introductory narrative, as in the article on 'Umar's couplet on Nu'm which forms the lyrics for one of Ibn Surayj's Seven Songs.

Finally, Abū l-Faraj uses the material he has assembled around a given song, relationship or event as a starting-point for examining wider issues. These may be related to mainly literary or musical matters, as with the general comparison between the styles of Ibn Surayj and Ma'bad, or the accounts of the poetic contests between Ibn Harma and Ibn Kawsaj, and Hind bint 'Utba and al-Khansā', and the musical contests between Ibn Jāmi' and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, or the discussion of the discrepancy between what a poet offers – words which will outlive him and his patron – and what he receives, material possessions which are all too quickly exhausted. But often they touch on other spheres too. Poetry may have political implications or be used as a political weapon, for instance in the scenes where 'Abbāsids confront Umayyads, or when Yazīd provokes al-Ḥusayn. It can raise moral issues, as is illustrated on the many occasions when the permissibility of composing and reciting love poetry is called into question. The moral status of singing and of listening to music is also repeatedly discussed. Political and moral inquiries come together when a poet dedicates his verses to a woman of noble birth.

But the wider issues may have no connection with the poetry or music themselves. The ethical aspects of political action are focussed on in the accounts of

Khālid ibn al-Walid killing his prisoners, and in the *ayyām* narrative when the leaders must choose between peace and war. They are also implied in Khandaq al-Asadi's decision to express his politico-religious beliefs openly. The anecdotes about the end of the Umayyads are a vivid reminder of another ethical concern, the fleeting nature of all power and wealth. The section on Manzūr ibn Zabbān and his daughter Khawla documents a historical change, the replacement of *jāhili* by Islamic customs and values.

It will be observed that not all five focusses of interest – factual information about people or events, the creative process, reception of the poem or song, aspects of the poet's or composer's oeuvre as a whole, wider issues – are to be found in each article. Furthermore, the emphases are placed differently in different articles. For example, in the account of the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' factual information prevails, a wider issue, renouncing the resort to violence, occupies a subsidiary position, while the creative process and reception of the poetry are passed over in silence. In the narrative of the Battle of Badr, although it also concentrates on factual information, the reception of poetry plays a minor role. Factual information, by contrast, is absent from the article on Jarīr's love poetry and the long narratives about 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a's 'Udhri friend, Ibn Abī 'Atīq's slave-girl's tricking of her importunate lover and Sukayna's forcing Ibn Surayj to sing. Lists of poems or songs by a single author are generally infrequent, examples in the material discussed above being limited to Bashshār's poems and Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath's melodies. The presence or absence of different focusses, as well as the relative importance the compiler accords them in individual cases, contribute largely to the great variety of the *Aghānī* articles.

Other factors need to be borne in mind with regard to *Aghānī* articles. One concerns the type of material available to the compiler. In the first place the quantity of relevant songs (or to a lesser extent poetry) affects the nature of the article. It appears justified to assume that Abū l-Faraj sought to put into the *Aghānī* all the songs he considered of a sufficient standard,¹⁰⁸ and this explains the inclusion both of *akhbār* which introduce poems set to music and, in some articles, of lists of songs. As far as poems are concerned, he is more selective,¹⁰⁹ but articles containing lengthy quotations of poems can be found in the book, as will be seen in the next chapter.

In the second place the nature of the available *akhbār*, that is, their length and complexity, largely determines how free the compiler is to shape the article and affects the number of focusses it may have. As has already been noted in the discussion of articles on historical events, where an extended narrative has been elaborated by earlier scholars, as for instance with the *ayyām*, Abū l-Faraj can accept or reject it *en bloc*, but he has little leeway to reshape it. Where the material consists of short *akhbār*, he has far more possibility to take the initiative first by including or omitting certain elements, and then by arranging the *akhbār* he has decided to include in a given order. *Akhbār* about people or events from the later Umayyad period tend to be more complex. They may employ a more sophisticated narrative technique, and they may portray more varied aspects of reality and reflect

a greater insight into the working of people's minds. Consequently, they are likely to encourage a focus on a wider issue. Thus, the accounts of the end of the Umayyads use motifs such as the change in court etiquette and the extravagant life-style of the princes of the former ruling house to spark off reflections on the appropriate behaviour for those in authority and the transitoriness of worldly power. The anecdote in which Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili restores his prestige in Hārūn al-Rashid's eyes after he appears to have been eclipsed by Ibn Jāmi' is a fine illustration of the importance of familiarity with caliphal routine and psychology for making one's way at court. And the incident where Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili and his son Ishāq exchange gifts demonstrates eloquently the deep affection and understanding between the two men.

A further factor affecting the nature of the articles is the tone adopted in them. Some articles retain the same tone throughout, heroic, for instance, in the account of the outbreak of the war between Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā', or light-hearted in that of the frustrating of Ibn Abi 'Atiq's slave-girl's suitor. In very many others there may be changes of tone. One example is in the section treating the poem ascribed to 'Abdallāh ibn 'Alqama, which begins in an 'Udhri atmosphere, moves on to the stern history of the expansion of the Prophet's authority in the Arabian peninsula and the refined world of music lovers and then concludes on a subversive note with the poetry being explained as the celebration of an extra-marital affair. As here, the tone usually changes from more serious to more frivolous, but there are a few examples in the other direction, for instance in the article on 'Umar's verses addressed to Su'dā bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān or Laylā bint al-Hārith ibn 'Awf. The ladies' civilised reprimands to the poet for taking their name in vain contrast sharply with Hārūn al-Rashid's fury in the last *khavar* of the article, when Ishāq sings a modified version of the poem which names Sukayna instead of either Su'dā or Laylā. The article on Kuthayyir and Khandaq al-Asadi offers an example of an underlying sombre tone, established by the theme of consciously chosen martyrdom and death, overlaid at times by the playful atmosphere of Ghāḍira's teasing Kuthayyir about his boasting of his appearance.

Yet another variable is sensibility. This is perhaps expressed most clearly in poetry. The concern for precise and striking descriptions of natural phenomena found in pre-Islamic poetry is abandoned later in favour of more abstract themes. Love poetry becomes increasingly introspective, as can be seen from a comparison between 'Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a's portrayal of his meetings with his loves and al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf's meticulous analysis of his own feelings towards Fawz. But the behaviour of the characters portrayed in the *akḥbār* also mirrors this change. Al-Ḥuṭay'a's self-confident attitude towards Sa'id ibn al-'Āṣ and especially his son Khālīd springs from a sense of the poet's importance which is lost in the 'Abbāsid period. Khālīd ibn al-Yazīd belongs to an age where rhetoric is highly developed;¹¹⁰ the article on him and Ramla illustrates his orator's sensibility with examples of how words can be used to best effect, and of how argument can be carefully organised.

Variations in focus, types of available *akhbār* and poetry on a given subject, registers of tone and sensibility: all these contribute to the variety of the articles on songs, events and relationships discussed in this chapter. A far greater diversity is to be found in the articles on people, to which I turn in the following chapter.

ARTICLES ON PERSONALITIES

The examination in the previous chapter of a small specimen of *Aghānī* articles established that although they differ in subject-matter, period and organisation of their material, they all display one or more of a limited number of focusses of interest. The five focusses identified are factual information about people and events, the circumstances and creative process behind a given poem or song setting, the poem's or song's life, aspects of the poet's or composer's art, and wider issues of an artistic, ethical, moral or other nature arising from the *akhbār* and poetry quoted. The discussion of the articles on people, by far the largest category of articles in the *Aghānī*, takes this finding about focusses as its starting point.

Articles on people are those articles entitled "*Akhhbār fulān*", "*Akhhbār fulān wa-nasabuh*", "*Dhikr fulān wa-khabaruh*" (The reports about X; The reports about X and his origin (or genealogy); The mention of X and the information about him) or other similar expressions. Most of them can be considered biographical, in the sense that they focus on factual information about the individual concerned, the creative process behind the lyrics or setting of the song introducing the article, and other examples of the subject's poems or compositions. But the frequent presence of the other two focusses, the independent life of the poems or songs and wider issues, and also the fact that the biographical material, as defined here, is often not arranged chronologically, mean that the term "biographical article", while tempting, is probably too misleading to be useful. I have therefore preferred the more neutral "articles on personalities".

The articles on songs, events and relationships total some seventy in the *Aghānī*. Personalities are the subject of something over four hundred articles, one quarter devoted to the composers and the rest to the poets of the songs introducing the articles.¹ It is impossible to discuss this very varied material thoroughly within the limits of a study which a modern publishing house is willing to bring out (one wonders whether the *Aghānī* itself would have seen the light after Gutenberg's invention had established itself in Baghdad). What I will therefore try to do in this chapter is to identify recognisable types of article, and then discuss some striking or unusual examples. The findings will, I hope, be useful for the reader looking at articles which I cannot examine here. As a rule I will not treat the articles on musicians and poets separately, partly because I have not observed any essential

difference between the way in which material about the two groups is organised,² and partly because many individuals were both poets and musicians, and in some cases it would be hard to assign them to one or the other category. Thus, for instance, Saʿīd al-Dārimī is the author of both the lyrics and melody of one of the Top Hundred Songs; as Abū l-Faraj mentions in his profile, he was a poet, a wit and had some entertaining stories to his name, and he also composed a handful of songs (III, 45). Abū Saʿīd the *mawlā* of Fāʿid is introduced into the *Aghānī* as the composer of the setting for Ṭurayḥ ibn Ismāʿīl al-Thaqafī's lyrics in the Top Hundred, but in his article four songs are quoted whose lyrics and setting are both ascribed to him (IV, 330–8). ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muʿtazz appears in the section on royal composers, but the article starts with Abū l-Faraj's long defence of him as a poet,³ and goes on to mention some songs of which both words and music are by him (X, 274–86).

Fortunately, the volume of material to be considered here can be reduced, because a number of articles on people are very short (four pages or less) and generally read as a random collection of material which was all the compiler could find. On closer examination, however, it emerges that these fragmentary articles are of three kinds. First, there are those which are indeed the meagre product of Abū l-Faraj's wide-ranging researches; here, for instance, the treatment of the pre-Islamic Yemenī king ʿAlas Dhī Jadān (IV, 217–18), the singer from Taif Ibn Mishʿab (IV, 320–22), and the pre-Islamic poet al-Afwah al-Awdī (XII, 168–71)⁴ may be mentioned.

Second, there are some brief articles where Abū l-Faraj chose to restrict himself in the amount of information he provided; this is evident in the section on royal composers, where the treatment of the late third/ninth century caliphs al-Muʿtazz (IX, 305–6, 318–22) and al-Muʿtaḍid (IX, 344–5; X, 41–2; 67–8), for instance, is far shorter than one might expect. The material for more substantial articles was not lacking, as can be seen from a comparison of the *Aghānī* article on al-Muʿtazz with the presentation of him in the source Abū l-Faraj uses, al-Šūlī's *Kitāb al-awraq*.⁵ Whereas al-Šūlī treats al-Muʿtazz's reign in detail, Abū l-Faraj not only ignores the political events, the annalistic information on who died in which year, and even the long poems describing the buildings al-Muʿtazz had constructed, but also omits some of the *akhlbār* about this caliph's connections with singers and his compositions.⁶ The same self-restraint seems to have been at work in the article on ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā (XVI, 340–3), which refers in one *khbar* to his removal from the succession by al-Manšūr, the subject of the introductory song's lyrics, but says nothing else about his role in the early ʿAbbāsīd state.⁷ The brevity of these articles illustrates Abū l-Faraj's increasing disinclination to treat subjects connected with politics, or indeed subjects unrelated to music and poetry, the closer he gets to his own time; the titles of the sections on the two caliphs referred to above reflect this.^{7a}

Third, some articles may owe their fragmentary nature to the fact that they are unfinished. Here the last article of all in the *Aghānī*, on al-Mutalammis (XXIV, 259–61) comes to mind immediately, but other examples may also be mentioned. For instance the article on al-Kumayt ibn Maʿrūf (XXII, 142–5) consists of the

poet's genealogy, followed by one of the standard items of the introductory section of an article, samples of poetry by members of his family.⁸ 'Abda ibn al-Ṭabīb's article (XXI, 24–7) is made up of the poet's genealogy, a profile, and three *akhbār* on the qualities of his poetry, illustrated with short quotations. The lyrics of the introductory song do not figure among them. In the poem from which the lyrics are taken he gives his children advice on his deathbed, and both it and his other poem included in the *Mufaḍḍaliyāt*,⁹ composed after the battle of al-Qādisiyya, could well have provided themes for development in the *Aghānī*, as could the much admired elegy of Qays ibn 'Āṣim, of which three lines are quoted.¹⁰ The distinction made between unfinished articles and articles where the compiler consciously limited himself is not arbitrary. What I judge to be unfinished articles mostly occur towards the end of the book, as is to be expected. Furthermore, they often exhibit deviations from standard patterns, they are not concerned with prominent political figures of the 'Abbāsīd period, and Abū l-Faraj does not state at the beginning that he will only include a certain kind of material.

Special features of the articles on personalities: the focus on kinsfolk and the profile

In the articles on personalities a further focus of interest beyond the five already mentioned may be found. This is what may be termed the focus on the subject's kinsfolk. A genealogy, more or less detailed depending on the individual, is the standard introductory item in articles on subjects of Arab descent. It may include an explanation of an unusual name or nickname or mention a second name of a tribal ancestor. The genealogy's presence fulfils the formal requirement of indicating the subject's origin,¹¹ and often there is no further reference to the information contained in it. But sometimes the compiler turns his attention to the subject's forebears or to other blood relatives.

Relating significant events from the history of a poet's family or clan or providing information about a well-known ancestor is one of his motives. The article on the pre-Islamic 'Adī ibn Zayd starts with the poet's genealogy, his profile and then Ibn al-Kalbī's account of how his great-great-grandfather left al-Yamāma to escape from a blood feud and settled in al-Ḥira. The account runs through the generations until it arrives at 'Adī (II, 97–101). In Imru' al-Qays's article the genealogy with its alternative versions is followed immediately by the story of the poet's ancestors, of how his father became king of Kinda and was later killed, with the poet being left to avenge him (IX, 78–87). Umm Ḥakīm bint Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥakam's article begins not with the genealogy of her father, an Umayyad (it has already been mentioned), but with the names of her mother and mother's mother and information about their beauty, their various marriages and their children (XVI, 274–6). The case of Ṭurayḥ is different, since interest centres not on his immediate family but his tribe, Thaḳīf. Both the dispute about Thaḳīf's origins and the Prophet's hostile remarks about this tribe, which supported Quraysh in its opposition to him,¹² are illustrated at the beginning of the article (IV, 302–8).

Another reason for paying attention to a subject's forebears is that a connection exists between them and the Prophet Muḥammad or his Companions.¹³ This is one of the points which emerges in the discussion about Thaqīf at the beginning of Ṭurayḥ's article. Al-Ḥārith ibn Ṭufayl's article begins with the meeting of his father al-Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr with the Prophet, his conversion to Islam and the subsequent conversion of other members of his tribe, Daws (XIII, 218–20). Abū Wajza's father became affiliated to the Banū Sa'd, the clan of the Prophet's foster-mother, and he himself was one of the Ṭābi'is, relating *ḥadīth* from several of the Companions and recounting how 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb prayed for rain (XII, 239–41). Al-Aḥwaṣ's great-grandfather 'Āṣim was one of several Companions sent by the Prophet to preach Islam to clans of Hudhayl and set upon and killed by hostile members of the tribe. His corpse was miraculously protected by bees from enemies who wanted to mutilate it as an act of revenge, and then carried away by a flash flood (IV, 224–31).

Where al-Aḥwaṣ is concerned Abū l-Faraj moves directly from 'Āṣim to the poet himself, but sometimes he follows the generations from the Prophet's contemporary to the subject of the article. 'Abdallāh ibn Mu'āwiya's great-grandmother was one of a family of four the Prophet called the "Believing Sisters", and both she and her son 'Abdallāh received his blessing. The Prophet's wish for 'Abdallāh was that his commercial dealings would succeed, and the fact that this wish was granted is implied in the series of anecdotes illustrating his generosity and the quotations from elegies on him. 'Abdallāh's son Mu'āwiya is also characterised in a few anecdotes before the compiler arrives at his main subject (XII, 215–25). In al-Farazdaq's case the family history starts in the Jāhiliya with the doings of the poet's grandfather Ṣa'sa'a, famous for ransoming the lives of baby girls who would otherwise have been buried alive. Both Ṣa'sa'a and his son Ghālib visited the Prophet and converted to Islam. Ghālib, al-Farazdaq's father, was noted for his generosity, and this section concludes with a line from al-Farazdaq's elegy on him (XXI, 276–83). Khālid al-Qasri's article first presents his great-great-grandfather Kurz, a shaikh and poet of Bajila. Kurz's son Asad and grandson Yazīd converted to Islam, and the Prophet is reported to have prayed to God to give Islam victory thanks to Asad's descendants, a piece of information Abū l-Faraj has difficulty in accepting.¹⁴ Yazīd transmitted some *ḥadīths*, and an example of them is quoted before his siding with Mu'āwiya and his *khuṭba* at Ṣiffin are mentioned. Khālid's father 'Abdallāh is passed over as a nonentity (XXII, 1–6).

A further reason for paying attention to kinsfolk is to establish that poetry runs in a family; Abū l-Faraj states as much in relation to Khālid al-Qasri's ancestor Kurz.¹⁵ It is with the same aim that he relates *akhbār* about Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣa's grandfather Yaḥyā, after he has given various accounts of the background of Abū Ḥafṣa Yazīd, who became a *maulā* of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam. Yaḥyā ibn Abi Ḥafṣa was both a notable and a poet, and Abū l-Faraj quotes verses of his in different genres, as well as pointing out that his mother was descended from al-Nābigha al-Ja'di, from whom he may have acquired his gift for poetry (X, 71–7). And not only is poetry something one can inherit, but one can share it with one's siblings and pass

it on to one's descendants. Dhū l-Rumma had three brothers all of whom composed poetry, and one sometimes capped the lines that another had made up; in the end, though, the poems were attributed to Dhū l-Rumma because he was the most famous (XVIII, 2–5). Al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr had a brother who was a poet. He also passed his gift for poetry on to some of his descendants; Abū l-Faraj gives samples of the verses of two sons, a grandson and a daughter. The daughter, Ḥumayda, composed lampoons on her husbands, which appears to have been a recipe for marital breakdown (XVI, 51–4).

The focus on kinsfolk may combine a number of these aspects. For instance, in the article on 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a a poem which mentions his great-grandmother and her four famous sons is followed by anecdotes about his father, to whom the Prophet gave the name 'Abdallāh when he converted to Islam, and a reference to the fact that his grandmother Asmā' was also the mother of Abū Jahl. 'Umar's mother, a Hadramawti captive, is said to have passed on to her son a flair for *ghazal* characteristic of her own people. The poet's respected brother al-Ḥārith, his upright son Juwān and his daughter Amat al-Wāḥid also appear briefly before Abū l-Faraj embarks on 'Umar's own life (I, 61–71).

Apart from the focus on kinship, another feature of many articles on personalities is the profile. Chapters 3 and 4, on Abū l-Faraj's interventions concerning songs and poetry, include presentations of his profiles of composers and poets.¹⁶ Here it needs only to be pointed out where they occur. They are most often to be found after the genealogy and information about kinsfolk, as an introduction to the main part of the article treating the personality announced in the title. But they may occur before the genealogy. Exceptionally they are to be found elsewhere; the most obvious case occurs in al-Farazdaq's article, where the profile is at the end (XXI, 393–4).

Articles on personalities mainly focussed on the subject's songs or poetry

A type of article which is easy to identify, and where the compiler's method is relatively obvious, is that which devotes much attention to the subject's creative work – either songs or poetry. It will be evident to the reader of the *Aghānī* that the quantity of poetry or songs quoted in the articles varies widely. The subject's oeuvre occupies much of the space in the articles on, for instance, the poets Ibn Mayyāda, A'shā Hamdān, Abū Dahbal, Dik al-Jinn al-Ḥimṣī, 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zabīr, Ashja' al-Sulamī, Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb and Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar and the composers Ibn 'Ā'isha, Yūnus al-Kātib, Yaḥyā al-Makkī, 'Ath'ath and Abū Ḥashisha. Before a few examples of this type of article are discussed, however, it is worth identifying two differences between songs and poetry which affect the presentation of them in articles.

When quoting poems, Abū l-Faraj may include the whole text or as many lines as he sees fit. As a result, some pages of the *Aghānī* read like a *Dīwān*, where the poems are given in full after they have been briefly introduced either with an

indication of the occasion on which they were composed or as an example of their author's fine work.¹⁷ The text of the poem gives all the information the reader needs in order to appreciate it, even if critical evaluations may be expressed in subsequent anecdotes.

As has already been noted, the texts of songs run to four or five lines at the most. When an article focusses on songs, therefore, it contains relatively short passages of verse with their appropriate performance indications. But a more important difference from articles focussing on poems is that the indications for performing the settings, of which the same poem may have several, do not allow readers to reconstruct the melody and appreciate the composer's work; they can only do so if they have already heard the piece.¹⁸ So even when articles focus on songs they are likely to include anecdotes illustrating appreciation of the compositions, as an indirect way of conveying their effect to readers who have not had the chance to hear them and thus cannot know how they sound. It is far less common to find lists of songs such as might be taken from a composer's Collected Works (*Jāmi'*), than it is to find pages which could be excerpts of a poet's *Diwān*.

One article focussed on songs, and which does contain such a list, is that devoted to the early singer Yūnus al-Kātib (IV, 398–404). It begins with Abū l-Faraj's profile (pr.) setting out the singer's origin, teachers, place in the musical world and particular achievement; he was the first to record songs. There follow a quotation of a poem in praise of Yūnus (*khabar* 1; poem 1) and, as a contrast, an anecdote about how Ibn 'Ā'isha succeeded with a brilliant performance in enticing away an audience which had collected round Yūnus and his fellow-singers (2; s. 2). *Khabar* (3) relates that the lyrics of Ibn 'Ā'isha's song were composed by a man who had married above him, was then forced by Muṣ'ab ibn al-Zubayr to separate from his wife and appealed to Muṣ'ab's brother 'Abdallāh to let him stay together with her, with variants of the names of the poet and the separator being given in (4). In (5) Yūnus recalls how, while on a business trip from Medina to Syria, he was summoned into the presence of al-Walid ibn Yazid, who was not yet caliph. He performed a number of songs, until he thoughtlessly sang a line of a panegyric of Muṣ'ab ibn al-Zubayr¹⁹ and then stopped in confusion. Al-Walid, not in the least put out, remarked that he had no quarrel with Muṣ'ab, who was dead and gone, and asked Yūnus to repeat the song. Yūnus continued his recital for three days, until he expressed his concern to al-Walid that the rest of the caravan would already have gone on its way. Then he was allowed to depart, suitably rewarded. And later, when al-Walid became caliph, he summoned Yūnus and kept him with him until he was killed.²⁰

These five *akhbār* are followed without any transition by a list of seven songs (s. 3–9), all with lyrics by Ibn Ruhayma and settings by Yūnus, known as Yūnus's Zaynab Songs (*Zayāniba*) because a certain Zaynab is mentioned at the beginning of each of them. And Abū l-Faraj also quotes two other songs, frequently thought to belong to the group because the name Zaynab also occurs in them (s. 10–11). He explains that this is a mistake, because Ibn Ruhayma is not the author of the lyrics of either, and one of the melodies is not by Yūnus. All in all, this article of

seven pages contains eleven songs, nine of them Yūnus's compositions.²¹ After a very brief treatment of Ibn Ruhayma, Abū l-Faraj comes back to Yūnus, quoting another song from the Top Hundred whose music he composed (s. 12); it introduces an article on the poet Ismā'il ibn Yasār al-Nisā'i.

Akhhbār (3) and (4) in the article have no direct connection with Yūnus. His place in Arabic music is summed up in the profile, appreciation for him is illustrated in (1) and (5), and a contrasting note is struck in (2), where another musician, Ibn 'Ā'isha, is shown worsting him. The only detailed scene from his life is found in (5), where he himself recounts his experience of meeting al-Walid. By contrast with this rather random collection of *akhhbār* the list of Zaynab Songs, which occupies nearly half the article, forms a solid monument to Yūnus's skill as a composer. And it is especially appropriate in an article devoted to the first man who set himself to record Arabic song.

Another article on a musician which focusses on compositions is that devoted to the 'Abbāsīd singer Muḥammad al-Zaff (XIV, 187–91). After the profile, sketching his main characteristics as a musician, his contacts with colleagues (including his siding with the Mawṣilīs in their conflicts with Ibn Jāmi' and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi) and his tendency to riotous behaviour when drunk, which finally led to his being expelled from court (pr.), Abū l-Faraj recounts two versions of an incident where Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, taking advantage of Muḥammad al-Zaff's ability to learn a song very quickly, claims to al-Rashīd that one of Ibn Jāmi's new compositions is in fact an old favourite known to many singers (*khabar* 1, s. 2; 2, s. 3). Four of Muḥammad's own compositions follow (s. 4–7).²²

Muḥammad's profile lists some important information about him and situates him in the 'Abbāsīd musical scene. The two anecdotes, despite the intrinsic interest of their subject-matter and their vivid narration, illustrate only one of Muḥammad's qualities, his extraordinary ability to learn a song when having heard it once or twice. The second version throws more light on his relations with other singers and gives further background information. Those who wanted to learn a song and were met with a refusal from its composer would arrange for him to hear it and then learn it from him, and they rewarded him appropriately for his help. Whereas Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī treated Muḥammad especially generously, Ibn Jāmi' had aroused his hostility because of his meanness, and so Muḥammad took special care to learn Ibn Jāmi's compositions and supported his rivals.

Although Muḥammad plays an essential part in these anecdotes, it may be asked who is the main character in them, he or Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī. For in both versions²³ Ibrāhīm is the moving spirit behind tricking Ibn Jāmi'. He makes a sign to Muḥammad to learn the song, and then ensures that other singers present take it from him. And it is he who claims to the caliph that the song is well-known, and then reveals the plot against Ibn Jāmi'. But while Ibrāhīm initiates the incident, it depicts Muḥammad in a role summed up in the proverb-like observation which rounds off both versions: "Everything has a scourge, and Ibn Jāmi's scourge is al-Zaff" (XIV, 188, 200). Muḥammad, then, emerges in the two anecdotes as an indispensable accessory to Ibrāhīm and as a thorn in Ibn Jāmi's side. But he comes

into his own as a composer in the list of songs which completes the article. And since four of his songs are given, as against two for Ibn Jāmi' (one in each of the anecdotes), as a composer he dominates the article.

In the article on the pandore player Abū Ḥashisha (XXIII, 75–83) the successful compositions are not appended to the anecdotes but integrated into them. This article too begins with a profile sketching the subject's musical background and the patrons he served, and quoting a poem praising him (pr.; poem 1). Then Jahḥza mentions one of Abū Ḥashisha's finest songs and recalls seeing him perform before al-Mu'tamid (*khavar* 1; s. 2–3). He also mentions 'Arib's complimenting the singer on his artistry (2). Abū Ḥashisha relates how he was summoned to a palace and ordered by two mysterious men to perform his songs. They listened to him for some hours, and then let him go with a reward, after one of them had revealed himself to be Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muṣ'ab al-Ṭāhiri, the chief of the Baghdad police, and warned Abū Ḥashisha to keep silent about the recital on pain of death (3; s. 4). On another visit to Ishāq's palace Abū Ḥashisha teaches his slave-girls one of his songs, and receives another reward (4; s. 5). The singer also remembers the patrons who launched him (5). Then he describes his first performance before a caliph; Mukhāriq introduced him to al-Ma'mūn, who realised he was the descendant of one of al-Mahdī's important officials (6; s. 6). Although he committed a *faux pas* in al-Ma'mūn's presence, the caliph forgave him (7). Abū l-Faraj then quotes from Abū Ḥashisha's own book of reminiscences samples of his songs which caliphs and dignitaries – al-Mu'taṣim, al-Wāthiq, al-Mutawakkil, al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān, al-Musta'in and al-Mu'tamid – liked, and also an anecdote explaining why he did not perform for al-Mu'tazz (8–13; s. 7–12). The pandore-player also relates his nervousness of performing before Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, and how when he received an invitation from him which he could not refuse, he was at first too scared to sing. His courage returned when he heard Ibrāhīm's slave-girls perform his work beautifully. When he left, Ibrāhīm complimented him, and later he praised him for having brought composing for the pandore to new heights (14; s. 13–5). Abū Ḥashisha also records Ishāq al-Mawṣili's favourable judgement of him (15). The article concludes with Abū Ḥashisha's death at Samarra, caused by his eating cold food on a cold day (16).²⁴

Most *akhbār* in this article combine the quotation of one or more of Abū Ḥashisha's songs with the indication of an authority or patron's approval of them or of his oeuvre in general, and several of them indicate stages in his career. Unlike the lists of songs in Yūnus al-Kātib's and Muḥammad al-Zaff's articles, the examples of Abū Ḥashisha's successful compositions in (8–13) are attached to the names of those who admired them, and so they are integrated into the singer's biography. The *akhbār* also shed more light on his life and personality. As well as recounting his *faux pas* before al-Ma'mūn, and running through the names of the important people he played before, Abū Ḥashisha gives detailed accounts of two important occasions, one when he was summoned to perform before Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm and another when, despite his reluctance to sing for Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, he finally appeared before him and was struck with stage-fright. When recalling his first

patrons, he adds a striking detail – the family's extraordinary capacity for eating. Finally, the circumstances of Abū Ḥashīsha's death are the subject of a *khābar*, whereas Yūnus's death is not referred to in his article, and Muḥammad's is only touched on in his profile. Despite all that, however, the fact that this short article includes fourteen of Abū Ḥashīsha's songs²⁵ allows it to be considered as focussed mainly on his creative work.

Among the poets whose poetry is the main focus of an article is the pre-Islamic Dhū l-Iṣba' al-'Adwānī (III, 88–109). The introductory song (poem 1; s. 1) and his genealogy are followed by a short profile situating him historically (pr.), and then the first *khābar* refers to the fratricidal strife which destroyed the once numerous tribe of 'Adwān, quoting a poem of Dhū l-Iṣba' which was set to music (*khābar* 1; poem 2, s. 2). Glosses on allusions in the poem and another version of the size of the tribe follow (2–4). In the next anecdote 'Abd al-Malik takes advantage of a review of the tribes in Kufa to learn more about Dhū l-Iṣba' and hear lines from two of his poems (5; poems 3, 2²⁶), and another allusion is explained (6). The story of Dhū l-Iṣba's daughters' marriages and their sketches of their ways of life in proverb-like terms (7)²⁷ are followed by a transmitter's note that much of poem 2 is not authentic (8). As a very old man Dhū l-Iṣba' had periods of feeble-mindedness when he gave away his livestock, to the annoyance of his sons-in-law; he composed a long poem about aging, part of which was set to music (9; poem 4, s. 3). Before he died he gave his son advice both in prose and in poetry (10; poem 5, s. 4). In a verbal clash with Mu'āwiya's brother 'Utba, 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr indirectly attacked Mu'āwiya, whereupon the caliph quoted an apposite line by Dhū l-Iṣba'. 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr recognised the author but could not recite the rest of the poem; the bystander who could had his pay increased, and 'Abdallāh and 'Utba were silenced (11; poem 6). Dhū l-Iṣba' is also the author of a poem complaining of a cousin of his who slandered him (12; poem 7). This poem reminded the scholar al-Akhfash of similar motifs used by other poets (13; poems 8, 9). When strife between different clans of 'Adwān broke out, one clan agreed to accept blood money for its members who had been killed, while another did not; so the conflict continued until 'Adwān was decimated. Dhū l-Iṣba' composed poems lamenting the failure of his efforts as a peacemaker, the obstinacy of the clan leader who refused blood money and the fate of his tribe (14; poems 3, 1, 2). His daughter also composed a lament of the tribe (15; poem 10). In his old age Dhū l-Iṣba' addressed a poem to this daughter, comparing his enfeebled state with that of his tribe (16; poem 11).²⁸

Dhū l-Iṣba' is the chronicler of his tribe's decline and fall, recording his efforts as a peace-maker and mourning his tribe in poems (1, 14, 15). It is not clear when he composed these poems and the complaint about his cousin (12) or when he married off his daughters (7), but his lament for his own decrepitude, his advice to his son and poem to his daughter all belong to the end of his life (9, 10, 16). At all events, neither the poet's character nor his deeds are detailed in this article. Scholars' comments explaining allusions, indicating motifs also found elsewhere, or questioning the authenticity of a poem are quite well represented (2–4, 6, 8, 13).

They testify to the continued interest in Dhū l-Iṣba's poetry later on, as do, more vividly, the two anecdotes where it is quoted before an Umayyad caliph; the fact that four of his poems attracted composers in the Umayyad period also supports this. And it is noteworthy that the ability to quote his poetry brings its reciters financial rewards (5, 11). But the sketchy information about the poet and the somewhat larger amount of information about the reception of his poetry are outweighed by the quotations of the poetry itself.

Of the eight poems by Dhū l-Iṣba' quoted in the article, several are given at length: 33 lines of poem 1, 27 lines of poem 2,²⁹ 20 lines of poem 4, 21 lines of poem 5, 11 lines of poem 7. They are fluent, accessible expressions of tribal boasting and of the poet's own dignity, reproaches and threats directed at a hostile kinsman, laments of the destruction of the tribe and the weakness of old age, advice to a son, and stoical reflections on the vicissitudes of time. Two have a *nasīb*, one a touching evocation of an idyll with a certain Rayyā (poem 1). The parallel the poet draws between his own decrepitude and his tribe's annihilation gives his reflections on time a special depth and individual character; because of the identity between his and his tribe's fate he is even more of a spokesman for his community than other poets are for theirs. And it is easy to understand his poems' popularity later on as concise formulations of the pre-Islamic ethos.

Another article focussed on a poet's oeuvre is the "Account and Genealogy of A'shā Hamdān" (*Akhbār A'shā Hamdān wa-nasabuh*) (VI, 32–62). A'shā Hamdān was a Kufan poet of the Umayyad period, the traditionist al-Sha'bī's brother-in-law and himself a traditionist until he concentrated his energies on composing poems, which his fellow-tribesman Aḥmad al-Naṣbī set to music. Later he joined Ibn al-Ash'ath's revolt, was taken prisoner by al-Ḥajjāj and died in captivity. The introductory song and genealogy and this profile (pr.) are followed by an anecdote in which al-Sha'bī interprets a dream of al-A'shā as prophesying his abandoning Quranic studies for poetry (*khabar* 1). In the next *khabar* al-A'shā is taken prisoner during a campaign in Daylam, wins the love of a Daylamite³⁰ girl who helps him to escape, and composes a *qaṣīda* on his experience of captivity (2, poem 2; s. 2, 3). Then the occasion of a *qaṣīda* on his participation in a campaign in Makran (3; poem 3) is sketched. This is followed by three incidents where tensions arise between al-A'shā and his commander, Khālīd ibn 'Attāb, most of them resolved amicably (4, poem 4; 5, poem 5; 6, poem 6).

Two anecdotes chronicle al-A'shā's relations with Ibn al-Ash'ath. In the first, the poet calls on the Kufans to support him (7, poem 7); in the second, he asks for his own services to be rewarded appropriately (8; poem 8). Al-A'shā's praise of al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr, the governor of Homs, for collecting money for him is followed by his criticism of al-Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufra for misjudging the enemy's strength when he attacked Nisibin (9, poem 9; 10, poem 10).

The story behind the poem from which the introductory song is taken is that al-A'shā fell in love with a woman who insisted he divorce his first wife before she would marry him. A *qaṣīda* expresses his boredom with his companion of many years. But his second wife develops an aversion to him, which only increases his

passion for her; when he joins Ibn al-Ash'ath he voices his longing for her in poetry (11; poems 11, 1; s. 1). In Basra al-Sha'bi counters the Basrans' boast of their superiority to the Kufans with an aptly chosen quotation from al-A'shā's poem reminding them that they chose the wrong side in the Battle of the Camel (12; poem 12). A'shā Hamdān criticises the commander of the army which the Khārijites defeated at Jalūlā (13; poem 13). The philologist al-Aṣma'i admires al-A'shā's command of Arabic and the content of his poems (14). Al-A'shā, in material straits, composes a panegyric on Khālid ibn 'Attāb and receives an appropriate reward (15; poem 14). 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz is moved to tears by a poem by al-A'shā on man's mortality (16; poem 15). When Shajara ibn Sulaymān al-'Absī refuses a request of al-A'shā's the poet reproaches him for originally being a tailor. Later al-Ḥajjāj comments to Shajara that a wise man satisfies the requests of those endowed with both social prestige and a sharp tongue, so as to protect his reputation (17; poem 16). Brought before al-Ḥajjāj as a prisoner, al-A'shā is confronted with two of his poems praising Ibn al-Ash'ath and attacking al-Ḥajjāj and his tribe Thaqif. He counters with a long panegyric of al-Ḥajjāj and the Umayyads, which the Syrians present consider a reason to let him go. Al-Ḥajjāj, however, reads a hidden meaning into the poem, and, quoting two more fragments as evidence of the poet's faithfulness to the rebel cause, has him executed (18; poems 2, 6, 17–19). Al-A'shā provokes Ibn al-Ash'ath's followers into fighting valiantly against al-Ḥajjāj by defecating in public and taxing them with doing the same secretly out of cowardice. They fight on until the Syrians receive reinforcements and Ibn al-Ash'ath is killed (19). Abū l-Faraj notes that the same incident is ascribed to Abū Kalada al-Yashkuri.³¹

Only anecdotes 1 and 19 tell anything of the poet's life without quoting his poetry. Elsewhere the narrative frame serves simply to situate the poems, except in 12, 14, 16 and 17, which illustrate the reception of al-A'shā's poetry, and 4 and 18, which show the poet revising or retracting earlier verses. The terseness of the prose narratives contrasts with the length of the poems in this article, of which nos. 2, 3, 8, 11 and 19 run to 37, 57, 43, 22 and 24 lines, respectively.^{31a}

And the poetry itself is memorable. A'shā Hamdān is a transitional figure, using pre-Islamic conventions for instance in his descriptions of the beloved at the beginning of *qaṣīdas* and in his vaunting his own and his tribe's achievements, but striking a far more individual note than his *Jāhili* forebears. He reflects the emergence of new loyalties; when he speaks for a group, it is as often for a political faction or for the inhabitants of his city, Kufa, as for his South Arabian fellow-tribesmen. His world has grown wider; the girl whom he recalls in a *nasīb* may live in Ḥaḍr or Āmid, towns of northern Mesopotamia, rather than the Hijaz. And he experiences more complicated emotions, as he expresses the ambivalence of the Muslim soldiers sent on long campaigns to distant regions, boasting of endurance and courage in battle, stoical in facing death, but also weary of long separations from friends and family and finally physically worn out.

A wide range of themes is illustrated in this article: panegyrics of generous patrons, reproaches for unkept promises, satire against those who wrong the poet

or are incompetent military commanders, reflections on the uselessness of amassing wealth which will be lost at death, boasting of the poet's and his tribe's role in the strife of the early Islamic era, reproaches to the wife he has grown tired of and love poetry addressed to the woman he marries later. Some subjects are developed in an unusual fashion; for instance the poet expresses an awareness that he, the aging battle-weary soldier, and his fresh young second wife are ill-matched (poem 1). And in a fascinating snatch of camp-fire gossip he records the wild stories doing the rounds about what life is like in distant Makran, to where the troops have been ordered off (poem 3). Different though al-A'shā's world and poetry are from those of his contemporary 'Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a, the two poets share a facility to record dialogue, and an often unforced, conversational tone, which establish an unexpected link between them.

Given that A'shā Hamdān's poetry is so closely tied up with the history of the period he lived through, the emphasis placed in the article on the occasions when the poems were composed is understandable. Reception in later periods is illustrated only in the anecdotes where 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz and al-Aṣma'i appear, and while 'Umar is moved by the poetry, al-Aṣma'i, decades later, only gives it the philologist's stamp of approval. Apart from his fellow-clansmen Aḥmad al-Naṣbī, al-A'shā seems scarcely to have inspired composers, for few settings of the poems are mentioned.

In the article on a slightly younger poet, Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman (VI, 208–39), poetry is equally important, even if the narrative component is more elaborate. Waḍḍāḥ's article starts with versions of his not entirely straightforward genealogy (he was of mixed South Arabian and Persian descent) and with a mention of his extraordinary beauty (*khabar* 1, poems 2, 3; 2; 3). His love for Rawḍa, a Yemeni or Persian woman, her family's rejection of him, her marriage to another, his discovering later on that she has become a leper and his grieving for her are told in several slightly different versions (5, poem 4, s. 2; 6; 7, poem 5) and then more poetry on this experience is quoted (8, poems 6, 5, 7, s. 3; poems 8–10).

The second part of this article begins with the pilgrimage Umm al-Banīn, the caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik's wife, makes, and her husband's warning to the Hijazi poets not to refer to her (9). She invites Kuthayyir and Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman to compose love poetry on her, but Kuthayyir prudently addresses her servant in the poems he makes public, and keeps his verses on her secret; Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt does the same. Waḍḍāḥ arouses the caliph's fury by bandying his wife's name about in his poems and is killed (10, poem 11, s. 4; poems 12–14; 11, poem 11). According to another version Waḍḍāḥ composes panegyrics on al-Walīd, for which he is rewarded, until the caliph hears about his poems on Umm al-Banīn, turns against him and plans his murder (12; poems 15, 16). When the caliph has Waḍḍāḥ arrested, his son 'Abd al-'Aziz intervenes, reminding him of how Mu'āwiya persuaded Abū Dahbal to desist from composing love poetry on his daughter by treating him generously. Al-Walīd does not heed this advice but has Waḍḍāḥ put into a chest and buried alive. A violent quarrel later on between one of al-Walīd's descendants and a Shu'ūbī leads the latter to invent the story of Umm al-Banīn having Waḍḍāḥ

smuggled into her apartments in a chest (13). One of the servants tells the caliph that he surprised Waḍḍāḥ in Umm al-Banīn's apartment, and that she has hidden him in a chest. Al-Walid goes to his wife and asks her to give him one of her chests; when she agrees he chooses the one where Waḍḍāḥ is hidden, and after a mild protest she allows him to take it. He has it buried in a deep pit, nothing more is heard of Waḍḍāḥ, and the caliph never refers to the matter again (14). When Umm al-Banīn falls ill, Waḍḍāḥ addresses a poem to her (15; poem 17, s. 5). Al-Walid hears that Waḍḍāḥ is composing poetry on his wife and plans to kill him. His son 'Abd al-'Aziz counsels mercy, and despite his resentment he agrees. But Waḍḍāḥ goes on to mention al-Walid's sister's name in his poems, at which the caliph has him buried alive (16; poem 18). An early critic comments on one of Waḍḍāḥ's lines that he made his own rules of behaviour in it (17; poem 19). While Waḍḍāḥ is staying with Umm al-Banīn he hears of the death of his father and brother and composes elegies on them (18; poems 20, 21). He sees the singer Ḥabāba, before Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik buys her and takes her to Syria, and composes a poem on her (19; poem 22). A poem on Rawḍa (poem 23; s. 6) and other poems of Waḍḍāḥ's with musical settings³² (poems 24, 25, s. 7; 26, s. 8; 27, 28, 3, 4, 29, 30, 31, 32, s. 9; 33) conclude the article.³³

As in the case of the two preceding poets, the information about Waḍḍāḥ is extremely fragmentary. While mentioning the occasions for poems on various themes, it concentrates on his two love affairs and tells nothing about how he came to be a poet or who his patrons were; it also gives no indication of how his work was regarded later. His love affairs contrast with each other. The story of Waḍḍāḥ and Rawḍa follows the conventional 'Udhri pattern up to a point; the poet falls in love, his love is returned, the girl's family refuses his proposal and marries her off to another. But Rawḍa falls victim to leprosy, and Waḍḍāḥ, while grieving for her, turns his attentions elsewhere. His second love-affair is of a different nature. He responds to the invitation issued by Umm al-Banīn, despite the dangers it entails. Whatever the nature of the relation between them (it may never have gone beyond poetry), he arouses the caliph's anger, and seems to have paid for his boldness with his life.³⁴

This second incident is given in several versions. For instance, the poet pays attention to Umm al-Banīn during her pilgrimage (9, 10) or she offers to further his cause when he is at al-Walid's court (12); al-Walid's son intercedes with him for Waḍḍāḥ, unsuccessfully (13), or successfully for a time (16). The reason for the murder varies: Waḍḍāḥ's mentioning Umm al-Banīn's name in love poetry (10, 12, 13), his visiting her secretly (14), his mentioning al-Walid's sister's name in love poetry (16). The manner of killing is sometimes not specified (10–12), whereas elsewhere Waḍḍāḥ is buried alive (13, 14, 16), and even put into a chest first (13, 14).

Yet despite the drama of the second episode and the elaborations to which it gave rise, in the end it is the poetry which predominates in Waḍḍāḥ's article. Twenty-nine poems or fragments ascribed to him are included, most of them quite short love poems. Although the *akhbār* focus on his relations with Rawḍa and Umm al-Banīn, other women are also named in the poems, Uthayla in a *nasīb*

(poem 15), Hind (24) and Salmā (32), both of whom the poet apparently loved, and the singer Ḥabāba, whom he admired (22). Waḍḍāḥ's beloveds are responsive, and he often introduces dialogues with them or quotes what they say, for instance to those who reproach them (poems 3, 5, 7, 9, 19, 29, 32, 33). Even when he laments being separated from his love, he never dwells for long on his suffering. And often he describes meetings in which his desires are fulfilled.

Along with many familiar motifs of Umayyad love poetry Waḍḍāḥ has some individual traits. When describing the visit of Rawḍa's phantom, he imagines its long journey to him in terms which recall the descriptions of desert journeys in the *raḥīl* section of the *qaṣīda* (poems 9, 10, 23). And his boasting of his bravery in overcoming obstacles to meeting his beloved leads him into the conventional register of *fakhr*, where he vaunts his courage and prowess as a warrior (3, 4, 7, 33). In the poem addressed to Fāṭima, al-Walid's sister, and also in the one on Umm al-Banīn's illness (17, 18), Waḍḍāḥ moves far from the usual tone and themes of love poetry; instead, with his emphasis on Fāṭima's noble birth and relations and on Umm al-Banīn's generosity and protection of those in need, he appears to be applying some of the themes of panegyric to a woman. When he speaks of his suffering at her departure, however, he strikes a different note, seeking consolation with God (29).

A similar resignation is also found in his response to the news of his father's and brother's deaths. There he reflects on the transitoriness of this world, God's omnipotence and the Day of Judgement which awaits everyone (20, 21). And in another poem, addressed to his brother, he describes himself seeking to gain favour with a prince, and in the evening listening to popular preachers in the hope of obtaining a heavenly reward (26). It may be that poems of different authors were ascribed to Waḍḍāḥ,³⁵ but apparent contradictions between the love poetry and the more meditative fragments might also be explained by changes of mood and perhaps also by their dating from different periods in the life of a poet belonging to an age of profound social and cultural transition.

Another hero of an unhappy love affair whose poetry is quoted at length is Tuwayt, a poet of Yamāma of the late Umayyad period who never left his home region. The narrative framework in his article is much less elaborated than in Waḍḍāḥ's; it serves only to situate the ten poems quoted and may well have been deduced from some of them. His beloved, Su'dā, finds him ugly and treats him harshly, which only increases his passion; when she marries, her husband secludes her, leading Tuwayt to lampoon him. In addressing himself to Su'dā he draws on the repertoire of 'Udhri love poetry but adds to it complaints of the beloved's harshness and injustice, a theme much developed later in the courtly *ghazal*. The simplicity, sensitivity and directness with which he expresses his suffering and despair are sometimes intensified by a striking image, for instance of the traveller through the desert who, taking the mirage for real water, has his hopes dashed when he reaches it (XXIII, 168–74).³⁶

The early 'Abbāsid poet 'Ukkāsha al-'Ammī's article is likewise taken up with the poetry on a love affair, his passion for the slave-girl Nu'aym. After some

introductory remarks on the poet's tribe, the oddly named Banū l-'Amm, the article relates the lovers' meeting, Nu'aym's sale to a Baghdadi, her departure from Basra and 'Ukkāsha's inconsolable grief. Seven poems chronicle the affair, two of them with performance indications. Two subsequent, more light-hearted, *akhbār* portray 'Ukkāsha neatly parrying a caliph's reproach that his descriptions of wine, which have been quoted previously, betray first-hand knowledge of it, and the article concludes with five more fragments of verse set to music (III, 256–65).³⁷ 'Ukkāsha's tone is reminiscent of that of the 'Udhri poets, but his descriptions of his (perhaps only) meeting with Nu'aym, where the wine circulates and a singing-girl accompanies herself on the lute, are more restrained versions of Abū Nuwās's celebrations of drinking sessions. Here, as in Waḍḍāḥ's case, apart from the intrinsic interest of the poetry, the number of musical settings will have been a subsidiary motive for it being quoted at length in the *Aghānī* article.

The final example I will mention of an article focussed on poetry concerns Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar, a freedman of al-Mahdī who established himself as a eulogist. The choicest lines of the poem of the introductory song, a panegyric of Hārūn al-Rashid, follow the profile, and then a series of incidents are mentioned: Nuṣayb's embezzling funds the caliph entrusted to him while he was on a visit to Yemen; his being imprisoned for a time and his request for mercy; his friendly relations with Thumāma ibn al-Walīd al-'Absī and his brother Shayba; his lampoon of a governor who did not reward him as he expected; his exchange of lampoons with al-Rabī' ibn 'Abdallāh al-Ḥārithī; his praise of al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā al-Barmakī and of Umm Ja'far Zubayda; his daughter al-Ḥajnā's praise of al-Mahdī and his daughter al-'Abbāsa;³⁸ his eulogies of two other prominent 'Abbāsid courtiers; and his criticism of those who refused, or granted half-heartedly, his requests for a mount while he was on campaign. The two final *akhbār* convey appreciate judgements of Nuṣayb's poetry, the first of them by al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā, who regrets not having given Nuṣayb a larger reward for some magnificent verses, but at the same time considers that no reward would have been enough (XXII, 359; XXIII, 1–20).³⁹

The narrative introductions to the poems in this article are reduced to a minimum. What is particularly striking is that Nuṣayb's own speech, with the exception of his asking for a horse while campaigning, is always in verse. Panegyrics, poems of thanks for rewards, requests for them to be supplemented, complaints at a patron's meanness, lampoons, a prison poem, an elegy succeed each other almost without interruption, leaving the impression of a poet who bursts into verse at the slightest occasion. And this is very fine poetry, musical, simple in diction yet marked in tone and style by the intellectual awakening of the early 'Abbāsid period. There is often a contrast between the straightforwardness of the words and the grandiose idea they convey, for instance: "The bounty we've received from al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā has made of every man a poet" (XXIII, 20).⁴⁰ An unusual note is struck in some of the *qaṣīdas* by Nuṣayb's breaking off the *nasīb* with a reproach to himself for daring to love well-born women when he is a black slave. Yet the consciousness of his humble origins is combined with dignity and, on occasion, real feeling, as when in a moving fragment he refuses a horse from the stable of a dead patron.

Articles focussed on the life of a poet's oeuvre – its critical reception

While in the articles just discussed the focus of interest is the poet's or composer's oeuvre, which is presented through numerous examples, one or two sections in the *Aghānī* concentrate not on the substance of the oeuvre but on its life, and specifically its critical reception. An obvious example of this category is the article devoted to Abū Tammām (XVI, 382–99).

After the introductory song,⁴¹ Abū l-Faraj lists Abū Tammām's main traits as a poet and immediately launches into a defence of him against the attacks of contemporaries. He observes that officers of state, notables and poets, all connoisseurs of poetry, have admired his work, and adds that since so much has been written for and against it, there is no need to go into the question further (pr., poem 2). The initial *akhbār* portray the secretaries Ibn al-Zayyāt and Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās al-Ṣūlī and the poets 'Umāra ibn 'Aqīl and 'Alī ibn al-Jahm praising his work (*khabar* 1, poems 3, 4; 2, poem 5; 3, poem 6). A jarring note is struck by Di'bil ibn 'Alī, who claims Abū Tammām stole his ideas, but an opponent points out that even if that is true, Abū Tammām put them to better use (4, poem 7). The series of appreciative anecdotes continues with the poets Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥāzim al-Bāhili and 'Umāra ibn 'Aqīl referring to especially noteworthy verses by Abū Tammām, and Ibrāhīm al-Ṣūlī admitting to having borrowed a motif which he worked into one of his own epistles (5, poems 8, 9; 6, poem 10; 7, poem 11; 8). Then Di'bil, trapped into admitting the excellence of some of Abū Tammām's poetry, retorts that he must have been plagiarising someone else (9). His dominating the poetic scene during his lifetime is generally recognised (10).

There follow two personal appearances of Abū Tammām. The first is before 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir in Khurasan, where he is acclaimed by the other poets present but angers his patron for his haughty attitude to the reward he is offered (11, poem 1), the second before Abū Dulaf al-'Ijlī, whose appreciation, which exceeds that of the attendant poets, prompts him to ask Abū Tammām to recite a famous elegy of his (12, poems 12, 13). Al-Wāthiq suspiciously enquires of Aḥmad ibn Abī Du'ād how much he gave Abū Tammām for a panegyric, and the *qāḍī* diplomatically explains that the reward was for praise of the caliph (13, poem 10). Two more meetings of the poet with patrons, Khālīd ibn Yazīd ibn Mazyad and al-Ḥasan ibn Rajā', elicit admiration for his verses and financial rewards (14, poem 14; 15, poem 15). Di'bil is forced to admit his admiration for some verses by Abū Tammām, but defends his critical attitude by claiming that his rival is grossly overrated (16, poem 16). Abū Tammām appears again, thanking Muḥammad ibn al-Haytham for a generous reward (17, poems 17, 18). The tension between the poet and 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir is resolved, thanks to the intervention of 'Abdallāh's poet-in-residence, Abū l-'Amaythal (18, poems 19, 20). An eyewitness reports how Abū Tammām, over-hearing a snatch of dialogue, picked up an unusual image in it and worked it into a poem shortly after (19, poem 21). Di'bil affirms, with arguments, that Abū Tammām plagiarised an obscure poet in one of his famous elegies (20, poem 13).

Abū Tammām and al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb tease each other about their two attractive slaves, and Abū Tammām works their exchange into a cleverly obscene poem (21, poem 22). Di‘bil expresses his sincere admiration for Abū Tammām after his death, and admits that it was jealousy which prompted his hostility (22, poem 23). Abū Tammām recites an elegy of two young sons of ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir who died on the same day (23, poem 24).⁴²

As can be seen, the first half of this article concentrates on the reception of Abū Tammām’s poetry. Only in the second half does the poet himself appear (11, 12, 14, 15, 17–19, 21, 23). He is usually shown declaiming his poetry before patrons, and their appreciation of it determines his attitude towards them and the rewards they give him; in other words, it is the verses’ immediate reception which is illustrated here (11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18).

Within the general theme of the reception of Abū Tammām’s poetry appreciation dominates. But the monotony of this is interrupted by Di‘bil’s criticisms, expressed in several places. He accuses Abū Tammām twice of plagiarism (4, 20) and once of being overrated (16), but he is trapped into admitting that his disapproval springs from personal motives (9) and when the great rival is dead he honestly recognises his achievement (22). Likewise, within the series of *akhbār* portraying Abū Tammām’s contacts with his patrons, a shadow falls across the harmonious picture when ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir takes umbrage at the poet’s haughty attitude. These deviations from norms of evaluation or behaviour add to the article’s interest, while not undermining Abū l-Faraj’s own judgement of the poet expressed at the beginning of the article.

Very little is said about Abū Tammām’s personality. The *akhbār* in which he recites his verses to patrons (11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18) convey two of his characteristics, his sensitivity and pride; he is concerned that his carefully constructed verses should receive the appreciation they deserve, and he is not afraid to show his disappointment when this does not happen. Another side of his character and his poetry is shown in (21), where he is in a relaxed and licentious mood. This anecdote and (19) also shed light on his manner of composing, emphasising his facility in working motifs and images expressed in prose into his verse. In the final *khbar* the poet’s presence recedes again, leaving only his voice lamenting man’s mortality.

The narrative component of the *akhbār* serves simply to set the stage for the poetry and trace responses to it. Only the second incident at ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir’s court in Khurasan and al-Wāthiq’s taking Aḥmad ibn Abi Du‘ād to task are more elaborated, with Abū l-‘Amaythal arguing for a more respectful treatment of Abū Tammām and mediating between him and the governor (18), and with Ibn Abi Du‘ād defending himself from an obviously suspicious caliph’s insinuation that he had given the poet an inappropriately generous reward (13).

The impression left by this article is that the *akhbār* serve to illustrate concisely Abū l-Faraj’s positive but not uncritical opinion of Abū Tammām’s oeuvre and its favourable reception by poets, princes and notables. This impression is strengthened if the article is compared with its main source, al-Ṣūlī’s *Akhbār Abi Tammām*. Whether the material in the *Aghānī* article is drawn from the *Akhbār* or has parallels with it,

it follows the same order; the only exception is the account of the reconciliation between Abū Tammām and ‘Abdallāh ibn Tāhir (18), the *Akhhbār*’s equivalent of which comes after the quotation of the elegy on ‘Abdallāh’s sons (23).⁴³ But Abū l-Faraj has not exploited the latter part of al-Šūlī’s work, and as a result not only are Abū Tammām’s relations with three more patrons ignored, but also there is no quotation from the chapters on his faults, what he transmitted, his appearance, his death and the elegies composed on him. The few personal details which al-Šūlī provides and which affirm Abū Tammām’s historical existence are therefore absent from the *Aghānī*. Another difference is that al-Šūlī quotes Abū Tammām’s poetry at greater length and may give alternative versions of expressions or comment on objections to individual lines.⁴⁴ Abū l-Faraj, by contrast, does not include long passages of Abū Tammām’s poetry, as he does with Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar’s, for example. For it is the reception of the poetry that he is concerned with.

The final *khavar* underlines this concern with the poetry and its reception, rather than with the poet. Al-Šūlī rounds off the *Akhhbār* with information about Abū Tammām’s death and the elegies composed on him. Abū l-Faraj, too, introduces the theme of death at the end of his article, but essentially in the form of the poet lamenting the death of others; there is only a passing reference in *khavar* 22 to Di‘bil expressing a favourable opinion of Abū Tammām “after [his] death”. This is an oblique reference to the poet’s own mortality and at the same time an affirmation that the subject of the article is the verses composed by the poet, not the poet himself. Attentive readers of the article may also recall that this is one of only two *marthiyas* referred to in it, the other being that of Muḥammad ibn Ḥumayd. When Abū Tammām declaims that poem at Abū Dulaf al-‘Ijlī’s request, the governor exclaims: “He who is commemorated with poetry like this is not dead”.⁴⁵ The immortality of the work of art is an idea encountered elsewhere in the *Aghānī*,⁴⁶ and here it is carried further, with poetry being endowed with a life-giving function.

A similar focus on the reception of a poet’s oeuvre is to be found in the main article on al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf (VIII, 351–72). After three *akhhbār* connected with his genealogy and Abū l-Faraj’s profile of him, the article continues with some forty *akhhbār*, mostly illustrating one of two themes. One is critical responses to al-‘Abbās’s poetry, many of the critics’ observations being supported by brief quotations; these responses include general verdicts, almost always appreciative, observations about al-‘Abbās’s unusual specialisation in one genre, quotations of particularly memorable lines, a motif introduced by him and later taken up by another poet, and comments on the sense of verses taken literally. The other dominant theme is the use to which his poetry was put by others to express their feelings, usually towards a lover or beloved. A subsidiary theme, introduced midway through the article, concerns a specific form of reception, the popularity of al-‘Abbās’s verses among singers, who eagerly set them to music. A tendency can be observed to group together *akhhbār* treating the same poem. The absence of the poet himself from the article is striking; he only appears in two *akhhbār*, one where he fails to get the better of al-Aṣma‘ī, and the other where he asks Hārūn al-Rashīd for permission to return to Baghdad.⁴⁷

As can be seen, while the focus, reception of the poetry, is the same as in Abū Tammām's article, there are certain significant differences. Al-'Abbās's absence from his article can be partly explained by the fact that he makes a personal appearance in the section treating his affair with Fawz.⁴⁸ The musical aspect, which in Abū Tammām's article is entirely absent after the introductory song, receives considerable emphasis here. But whereas singers appreciated al-'Abbās greatly, his poetry was not controversial like Abū Tammām's, and his article lacks an equivalent of the Di'bil anecdotes. Both those and the two anecdotes portraying Abū Tammām's contacts with 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir suggest some chronological development. Al-'Abbās's article, by contrast, consists entirely of moments frozen in time. This timeless quality is reflected in the final *khavar*, which picks up the last observation in Abū I-Faraj's profile of the poet; they both affirm exceptional concentration on one genre of poetry, and the fact that his success, even though he restricted himself to *ghazal*, was proof of his remarkable gifts.⁴⁹

Patterns for organising articles on personalities: framing songs or lyrics

The articles on personalities in which one focus dominates are few. As will be seen, in most such articles a number of focusses co-exist. But how an article is focussed is only one of its distinguishing marks. Among the large number of *Aghānī* articles which have several focusses, different ways of organising the material can be discerned, and it is to this topic that I now turn. For an understanding of these patterns of organisation helps to show that what may appear to be chaotic assemblages of anecdotes and poetry have some relation to each other. Here, too, an exhaustive discussion of the subject is impossible; my aim is to present what seem to me the main patterns of organisation encountered in *Aghānī* articles.

In some articles the introductory song or at least its lyrics return at the end, almost always integrated into a *khavar*. The presence of the song or lyrics both at the beginning and at the end of the article can be considered a framing device. It does not affect the material inside, but it emphasises the article's forming an entity.

The most obvious impetus for a frame is illustrated in the article on the Umayyad poet Mālik ibn al-Rayb (*Akhbār Mālik ibn al-Rayb wa-nasabuh*; XXII, 285–301). This section is introduced with a song taken from the elegy Mālik composed on himself when he felt death approaching, and closes with a *khavar* repeating the first line of the poem and naming the two friends he refers to in it. The introductory song alludes to the end of the subject's life, and appropriately the final lines of the article come back to the theme. Although the article on the killing of Ḥujr ibn 'Adī (*Khavar maqatal Ḥujr ibn 'Adī*; XVII, 132–55) is not devoted to a personality, it has a similar frame. The introductory song's four lines of lyrics are taken from a nameless woman of Kinda's⁵⁰ elegy on this partisan of 'Alī and his family. After the events leading up to his arrest and execution, the account is rounded off with a lengthier quotation of the same elegy.

Most frames, however, are not composed of elegies. The article on al-Nābigha al-Dhubayānī starts with a song the lyrics of which are taken from a poem where he presents his excuses to al-Nu'mān (X, 324). It concludes with the setting of four more lines from the same poem (XI, 40–1). And the poem appears elsewhere too. Three of the *akhbār* early on in the article which express judgements of his poetry quote from these lyrics (XI, 5, 6), and they return with lines from two other poems of his in a discussion of fine poetry held before 'Abd al-Malik (XI, 22).⁵¹ The song introducing the article on 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar al-'Abli, a Qurashī poet who straddled the Umayyad and 'Abbasid periods, has lyrics drawn from a poem in which he laments the dissensions among the Umayyad ruling family, and this poem is referred to in a *khbar* early on before being quoted at length at the end of the article (XI, 292, 294–5, 307–9). Al-Akḥṭal's article starts with a song whose lyrics are taken from a poem praising a benefactor and blaming two men who refused him help; the lyrics of the song are from the *nasīb*, while the occasion and main message of the poem are mentioned in the final *khbar* (VIII, 278–9, 319–20). The obscure Umayyad poet Hilāl ibn al-As'ar's article also starts with lyrics from the *nasīb* of one of his poems; they return at the end in three *akhbār* where the song is performed before Hārūn al-Rashid by Mukhāriq (III, 50–1, 70–2). Another framing song is found in the very unusually structured article on the Prophet's contemporary Ḥujayya ibn al-Muḍarrib. The opening song with lyrics by him leads directly⁵² into the account of the Prophet's widow 'Ā'isha's taking the two young children of her dead brother Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr into her house to bring them up. She keeps them with her until they are old enough to look after themselves and then entrusts them to her brother 'Abd al-Raḥmān, exhorting him to care for them as Ḥujayya did for his dead brother's children. She explains the allusion as follows. Ḥujayya used to treat the orphans as least as well as his own children, and when he went on a journey he told his wife Zaynab to do the same. On his return, however, he found them looking thin and miserable, and was furious with her. He gave the orphans some of his camels, which caused a break between him and Zaynab. She then went to Medina and converted to Islam, and when Ḥujayya, a Christian, sought to be reconciled with her, 'Umar opposed it. He returned alone to his land, upon which he composed the lyrics of the introductory song (XX, 315–19).⁵³

In all these examples the closing quotation of the introductory lyrics, or of other lines from the same poem, serves the formal purpose of neatly enclosing the article within a single verbal composition. And Abū l-Faraj's original readers (or hearers) will have had their awareness of the framing poem's presence reinforced when recalling the verses' setting. As far as al-Nābigha's, al-'Abli's and al-Akḥṭal's articles are concerned, the three poems are also represented as fine samples of the poet's art; their appearance as a frame thus emphasises the literary achievement of the article's subject. In Hilāl ibn al-As'ar's article the three anecdotes about Mukhāriq's performing the song portray a progression in the musician's status from slave to freedman (*maulā*) well endowed with material possessions and then to bearer of a *kunya* bestowed by the caliph. Here what is stressed is the song's capacity to enable its gifted performer to rise dramatically in status.⁵⁴

The idea of the frame, as set out here, is developed in the *Aghānī* in two ways. First, instead of a song, an article may be used to frame another one. An embryonic tendency towards this may be seen in the article on the second/eighth century singer Yūnus al-Kātib discussed above. After the main treatment of him a very short section follows on Ibn Ruhayma, the author of a series of poems Yūnus set to music, and then Yūnus returns as the composer of the music of another song from the Top Hundred, the author of whose lyrics is Ismā'il ibn Yasār. The sequence of articles is thus: [introductory song with lyrics by Ibn Harma and music by Yūnus al-Kātib (IV, 366)], Yūnus (398–404), Ibn Ruhayma (405–6), a second song by Yūnus from the Top Hundred (406–7), [Ismā'il ibn Yasār (407 ff.)]. Similarly, in the section on royal musicians al-Mu'taḍid is introduced with an appreciation of his talents as a composer, as evidenced in the setting he made for a *raġaz* poem by Durayd ibn al-Šimma, and Durayd's article follows. Then mention of al-Mu'taḍid's interest in music and his rivalling with earlier composers leads into a quotation of a song of his with lyrics by Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās al-Šūlī, after which two more anecdotes about al-Mu'taḍid are given. The sequence here is: introductory presentation of al-Mu'taḍid as a musician with his setting of lyrics by Durayd ibn al-Šimma (IX, 344–5), article on Durayd ibn al-Šimma (X, 3–40), al-Mu'taḍid's contribution to the musical tradition, exemplified by his setting of Ibrāhīm al-Šūlī's verses (41–2), article on Ibrāhīm al-Šūlī (43–67), two final *akḥbār* about al-Mu'taḍid “which are appropriate to this book” (67–8).⁵⁵

The development of the frame is taken further in the article on 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. Having established in the introduction to the section on royal musicians that 'Umar was a composer (IX, 250–2), Abū l-Faraj quotes two songs with settings by him before embarking on the article about him. This consists of *akḥbār* illustrating 'Umar's strictness about money, his modest rewards to poets and sometimes point-blank refusal to give them anything, his very limited means and the respect he paid the Prophet's descendants. The account of his death is followed by the quotation of one of his songs, the lyrics of which are by al-Ashḥab ibn Rumayla (253–268). After al-Ashḥab's short article (269–72) Abū l-Faraj lists seven songs 'Umar composed for his wife Su'ād and rounds his treatment of this caliph off with two *ḥadīths* he transmitted which accord with his own life-style (272–3).

Similarly, a song from the Top Hundred with lyrics by Ṭurayḥ introduces the article on this late Umayyad poet (IV, 301–20, 322–9), but a second song from the Top Hundred whose lyrics he composed is followed by a short article on the early singer from Taif Ibn Mish'ab (320–2). In the articles on both 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz and Ṭurayḥ the final part returns to and emphasises aspects of the character already described. In 'Umar's article this is obvious; his activity as a composer is affirmed, and the *ḥadīths* he transmits concord with his own unassuming and ascetic life-style. Where Ṭurayḥ is concerned, most of the latter part of his article illustrates his poetry's very favourable reception in the 'Abbasid period. But the final *khabar*, on the face of it, is merely an entertaining account of an escapade in the poet's youth, when he took the place of a bedouin woman while she went to visit her lover and, because he was clumsy in serving her husband, had to endure a savage

beating in silence, since any protest of his would have brought the deception to light. This adventure, however, recalls an earlier *khavar* (309–10) in which the poet's standing by his principles led to his falling from al-Walid ibn Yazīd's favour for a short time. One day al-Walid, who knew that Ṭurayḥ did not drink, passed him a cup with wine in it, and at Ṭurayḥ's protest the caliph explained he just wanted him to pass the cup on to a servant. Ṭurayḥ's reaction, with its implied criticism of the caliph's behaviour, shocked those present, and al-Walid banished him from his court for some time. The last section of Ṭurayḥ's article thus stresses not only the excellence of his poetry but also his willingness to accept the painful consequences when he had committed himself to a course of action. In cases such as these, the themes which return in the final part of the article after an embedded article on another subject stand out; they can be regarded as aspects of the subject which the compiler considered particularly important.

One final example of an article framing another, illustrates a trait already noted in the discussion about Abū l-Faraj's use of the *isnād* – his occasional tendency to take an ironic stand towards his material and amuse himself at his reader's expense. The poet al-Raqāshī is treated in a short article which portrays his close ties to the Barmakids and loyalty to them even after their fall from favour as well as his contacts with the caliph and with other poets (XVI, 244–50). An anecdote in which the gate-crasher Ibn Darrāj quotes a line from the song introducing al-Raqāshī's article provides Abū l-Faraj with the proper occasion to introduce an article on this unedifying figure too; it consists chiefly of anecdotes illustrating his greed and quickwittedness (250–2). Then attention returns to al-Raqāshī, with a final short *khavar* giving the poet's recipe, couched in rhymed prose, for preparing good henna (253). Here the point, I believe, is that the gate-crasher Ibn Darrāj has behaved true to form even in the way he comes into the *Aghānī*; he has intruded into someone else's article.⁵⁶

The presence of one article inside another is not always indicated explicitly. The account of *Yawm* Bu'āth, one of the clashes between Aws and Khazraj (XVII, 118–29), is inserted into the article on Abū Qays ibn al-Aslat al-Sulamī (XVII, 116–31), which in effect is scarcely more than a frame. A profile and a short *khavar* about the poet with quotations from his poetry precede the *yawm*, and two *akhbār* illustrating the reception of verses by him follow it. As this example shows, the enframed article can treat an event.⁵⁷

The other way in which the frame is developed is to set a series of frames one inside the other, to organise the article in concentric circles, as it were. In the instances I have identified the frames are constituted of themes or motifs which either repeat or are clearly contrasted with each other. An example is the account of the early Medinan singer 'Azza al-Maylā' (*Akhbār 'Azza al-Maylā'*; XVII, 161–77). Her profile and anecdotes illustrating her place in musical life, her qualities and the admiration she aroused (162–4) are followed by descriptions of the aged and decrepit Ḥassān ibn Thābit being moved to tears when he hears her perform settings of his poetry (164–6). He is led to recall the occasions in his Jāhili past which gave rise to the poems: his visit to the Ghassānid Jabala ibn al-Ayham,

his love for Sha'thā', and his involvement in the War of Muzāḥim between Aws and Khazraj (166–72). After one more anecdote where Ḥassān weeps when hearing a poem of his sung and information is given about its settings (172–4) attention moves back to 'Azza. A very beautiful song of hers is the subject of two anecdotes, and the article is rounded off with 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far neutralising an attempt by a puritanical governor to have her banned from singing (174–6).

As can be seen, in this article interest shifts from 'Azza through Ḥassān in his old age to Ḥassān in his prime, a lover, warrior and praiser of rulers, and then back again, ending with 'Azza. There is a clear movement backwards and then forwards in time. But more than a simple journey into the past and back is involved, for Ḥassān not only remembers the past, he compares it with the present. And he evidently prefers the harmonious and dignified atmosphere of the Ghassānid court to the rowdy behaviour of his son 'Abd al-Raḥmān and his contemporaries, who as Muslims are forbidden wine but regularly get drunk on other fermented beverages. What might be merely conventional nostalgia for the "good old days" appears in a somewhat ironical light, given that Ḥassān put his poetry at the service of the Prophet and his preaching of Islam.⁵⁸

To link 'Azza with Ḥassān is not arbitrary. Not only is Ḥassān the author of the lyrics of the introductory song, but he is one of 'Azza's admirers. And he is also a rare witness to the pre-history of Arabic music, recalling the presence of Byzantine and Hīran singing-girls at Jafna and the visits of musicians from the Hijaz to the Ghassānid court. 'Azza herself occupies an important place in the history of this music, being the first woman in the Hijaz to use the rhythmic metres in her singing (162).

Another example of a series of frames is found in the treatment of the early 'Abbāsīd poet Abū l-Hindī (XX, 328–34). It can be summarised as follows:

[Introductory song (poem 1), with lyrics by Abū l-Hindī]

Profile (pr.) emphasising Abū l-Hindī's poetic gifts and concentration on wine songs (poem 2)

- 1 Ishāq al-Mawṣilī observes that Abū Nuwās plagiarised Abū l-Hindī on a large scale.
- 2 Abū 'Ubayda notes that a wine poem by another poet owes much to one by Abū l-Hindī (poem 3).
- 3 Abū l-Hindī goes to a tavern and gets drunk. Other people arrive wanting to meet him and start drinking. After they have passed out he comes to, learns of their presence and, trying to catch up with them, starts to drink again. This goes on for three days until the newcomers decide to sober up and wait for the poet to recover (poem 4).
- 4 After a drinking bout in Merv Abū l-Hindī falls off the roof where he has been sleeping and is suspended in mid-air, held by the rope his friends had tied round his ankle to prevent him having just such an accident. He chokes on the wine he has drunk and dies. His tomb, bearing the epitaph he composed for himself (poem 5), becomes a place where young men meet to enjoy themselves.

- 5 One cold night Abū l-Hindī leaves a tavern, drunk. Caught in a snowstorm he freezes to death and his corpse is discovered the next morning.
- 6 Naṣr ibn Sayyār takes Abū l-Hindī with him on the Pilgrimage and makes him swear not to taste a drop during the period of the ceremonies. The poet keeps his word, but as soon as they are over he goes off by himself with a small jar and celebrates being reunited with wine (poem 6).
- 7 In answer to critics of his drinking Abū l-Hindī composes a poem proclaiming his observance of the main prescriptions of Islam, such as the five prayers (poem 7).
- 8 At a tavern Abū l-Hindī sleeps with some prostitutes and then refuses to pay them what he promised (poem 8).
- 9–11 Three incidents which illustrate Abū l-Hindī's skill in repartee.^{58a}

The beginning of the article emphasises Abū l-Hindī's gifts as a poet (pr. 1, 2) while the end of it illustrates his eloquence in prose (8–10). The plagiarism of which Abū l-Hindī is a victim (1, 2) is balanced by his own stealing pleasure from the prostitutes (7). The protracted drinking bout in Kūh-i Ziyān, translated by Abū l-Faraj as Mount Error (3), contrasts with the poet's abandonment of wine in the Hijaz and his affirmation that he observes the religious rituals (6, 7). The centre of the article is his grotesque death (4, 5). As can be seen from this summary, there is a subtle play of similarities and contrasts in the paired *akhbār*: verbal skill in (1), (2) and (9–11), but first in poetry and later in prose; stealing in (1), (2) and (8), with Abū l-Hindī first the victim and then the perpetrator; the unashamedly godless scenes at Mount Error (3) contrasted with the acceptable behaviour at Mecca during the Pilgrimage and the affirmation of religious observance (6) and (7). Here, however, there is no clear temporal movement as in 'Azza's article. Ishāq al-Mawṣili's verdict about Abū l-Hindī's poetry was delivered after the poet's death, while the anecdotes in which Abū l-Hindī indulges in drink and repartee, although impossible to situate in relation to one another, obviously all occurred during his lifetime.

In these last two examples, where several frames surround each other, they affect the reading of the whole article in a way which a single frame does not. In particular, they confer on the central part, Ḥassān's reminiscences of his pagan younger days in 'Azza's article, and Abū l-Hindī's tragic-comic end, especial importance.

Patterns of organisation: thematic sections

Among the patterns of organisation in the *Aghānī*, one which is easy to grasp is that of thematic sections. This pattern can be observed, for instance, in the article on Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman discussed above, which consists of two main parts, one giving the anecdotes and poetry connected with the poet's relations with Rawḍa, and the other giving those connected with his affair with Umm al-Banin. Another example is the initial article in the *Aghānī*, on the author of the first of the Top Hundred songs, Abū Qaṭīfa. After the introductory song (I, 11),⁵⁹ the article starts

with Abū Qaṭīfa's genealogy, which is that of the Umayyads, and information on some of his ancestors and their resistance to the Prophet (12–20). The occasion for the introductory poem, Ibn al-Zubayr's refusal to recognise Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya as caliph and his decision to expel the Umayyads from the Hijaz, follows (21–6), together with quotations of other nostalgic pieces Abū Qaṭīfa composed on this event and their settings, where they exist, and with Ibn al-Zubayr's response to the poetry, namely to invite Abū Qaṭīfa back to the Hijaz (26–9). After verses by another poet on the expulsion and two fragments by Abū Qaṭīfa, one on another subject (30–1), the history of the palace mentioned in the introductory song is explained (31–3). The article concludes with poems by Abū Qaṭīfa on other subjects, two boasting of his noble status, one regretting his former wife's remarriage, and the final one mourning his relative Sa'īd ibn 'Uthmān, who was killed by the Soghdians he brought back to Medina as prisoners of war (33–5).⁶⁰ Interestingly, in the article as a whole poetry plays a fairly minor part.

It is quite easy to follow the organisation of the material in this article: the poet's genealogy and family history, the occasion for the introductory song, other verses composed on the same subject, an explanation of an allusion in the introductory song, and some examples of the poet's compositions on other subjects. These large thematic sections can be related to four of the six focusses identified earlier: family, factual information about events, the occasion for the poetry, and other examples of the poet's art.

The only element difficult to fit into the scheme outlined here is the second fragment on p. 31, where Abū Qaṭīfa appeals to his father, then governor of Kufa, to relieve his sexual frustration by sending him a slave-girl; it might have been expected to come at the end, with other samples of his poetry on different themes. It is possible, however, that this fragment is intended to illustrate the poet's passionate nature, also expressed in his poetry of nostalgia for Medina, for which, as the next anecdote has it, he "burned with longing".⁶¹

Within the thematic sections other methods of organisation can be observed. As is to be expected, a chronological presentation is employed in treating the genealogy and family history, the occasion for the introductory song, and the history of the palace. Alternative versions of the same or related events are given one after the other, for instance the fatal effect of Abū Qaṭīfa's poetry of nostalgia on a Hijazi woman married to a Syrian,⁶² or Sa'īd ibn al-ʿĀṣ's promises of largesse which were redeemed after his death.

Another article constructed in thematic sections is "The mention of 'Adī ibn Zayd, his origin, what happened to him and his death" (*Dhikr 'Adī ibn Zayd wa-nasabuh wa-qisṣatuh wa-maqataluh*; II, 95–154), which treats a famous pre-Islamic poet of al-Ḥira, noteworthy for representing an urban tradition of poetry distinct from the pre-Islamic bedouin tradition which came to be regarded as normative. After the introductory song and an anecdote about when the poet recited it to al-Nu'mān ibn al-Mundhir, the article gives 'Adī's genealogy and Abū l-Faraj's profile of him, which touches on the controversy surrounding his style as a poet belonging to sedentary society (95–7). The saga of four generations of 'Adī's

family, starting with his great-great-grandfather, and their relations with the rulers of al-Ḥira follows (97–101), before ‘Adi’s birth, education and early career are sketched (101–4). Despite his role in ensuring al-Nu‘mān’s appointment as the new king of al-Ḥira and his loyal service as counsellor, ‘Adi falls victim to intrigues and is arrested, addressing poems to al-Nu‘mān from his prison in which he protests his innocence and loyalty and casts the king’s ingratitude in his teeth (104–18). He also sends messages to his brothers to intervene for him with Chosroes, but before the Persian messenger can deliver the order for his release, al-Nu‘mān has him killed (118–21). ‘Adi’s son Zayd avenges his father’s death, and al-Nu‘mān dies (121–8).

A passing reference earlier to ‘Adi’s marriage to Hind bint al-Nu‘mān is taken up, with the couple’s meeting, falling in love and marriage being described. Hind later retires to a monastery, living to a great age, witnessing the Muslim conquest of Iraq and refusing a proposal of marriage from al-Mughira ibn Shu‘ba (128–33). Then the theme of al-Nu‘mān’s conversion to Christianity, touched on after the introductory song, is developed, with the role in this process of ‘Adi’s poetry on the “*ubi sunt*” theme and the renunciation of this world being emphasised (133–6). This is followed by the story of Khālid ibn Ṣafwān’s meeting with Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik and his reminding him of the transitoriness of all earthly beauty and possessions; he concludes his speech with a quotation from ‘Adi’s poetry (136–40). His allusions to two fortresses, al-Ḥaḍr and al-Khawarnaq, and their owners are explained (140–6), before the article concludes with eleven songs whose lyrics are taken from ‘Adi’s poetry; one is followed by an anecdote where it is quoted, and the final one by the account of the occasion when the poem, an elegy, was composed (146–54).⁶³

The thematic organisation is to some extent given with the main type of material in this article, continuous narratives of historical or legendary events, accompanied by the poetry to which they have given rise. It is emphasised by the way in which variant information is grouped together. For instance, the three accounts of al-Nu‘mān’s end, either in prison or trampled to death by elephants, are mentioned consecutively (p. 128), as are the different versions of when and why Hind retired to a monastery, either after ‘Adi’s death, after some years of marriage, after her beloved Zarqu‘ al-Yamāma had been blinded and died (in which case, as the sources note, she would be the first lesbian in Arab history) or after al-Nu‘mān had forced ‘Adi to divorce her (pp. 131–3). Abū l-Faraj’s decision to list all the songs together reinforces the sense of thematic sections. For the lyrics of four of them have already been quoted in the *akhbār*, and he could have inserted the settings there too. As it is, the subjects follow each other clearly – family history, ‘Adi’s life story and the avenging of his death, his marriage to Hind and her fate, the effect of his ascetic poetry on both his contemporary al-Nu‘mān and the later caliph Hishām, explanations of allusions, and the musicians’ use of ‘Adi’s poetry. They correspond to the focusses on the family, on the subject’s life, on the occasion for the introductory poem, on other examples of the poet’s oeuvre, and on its reception later, here chiefly among composers.⁶⁴ In addition, there is a pervasive concern both

with the need for the ruler to exercise power justly and with the fleeting nature of everything in this world; this interest can be subsumed under the sixth focus, on wider issues arising out of the material. One or both of the two issues are explored in the accounts of ‘Adi’s and his family’s relations with the kings of al-Ḥira and the Sassanian emperors, the stories of the rulers of the castles of Ḥaḍr and al-Khawarnaq, some of ‘Adi’s poems and Khālīd ibn Ṣafwān’s address to Hishām; this last *khabar* also stands out in the article for its far more elaborate narrative form and its inclusion of descriptions in rhymed prose, thus giving added importance to the issue it treats.

Most articles organised in discernible sections treat subjects of the pre-Islamic or early Islamic period, where the lengthy narratives of the *akhbār* facilitate the compiler’s task. But a few examples are set in later times and composed of shorter *akhbār*. One such is “The mention of the reports about Kuthayyir and his genealogy” (*Dhikr akhbār Kuthayyir wa-nasabuh*; VIII, 373–5, IX, 3–39). The mention of the introductory song (VIII, 373–5) is longer than usual, because Abū l-Faraj feels impelled to refute ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Tāhir’s claim that the tune he had composed for the lyrics included the ten melodic modes.⁶⁵ Kuthayyir’s presentation begins with his genealogy, the names of his son and daughter, the date of his death and his profile (IX, 3–4). Critics’ favourable opinions of his poetry are given, first in general and then supported by quotations, and his contacts with other poets and with patrons are illustrated; here not only his poetry but also his short stature, his ugliness and his claim to belong to a clan of Quraysh are referred to (5–14). The next section treats Kuthayyir’s extreme Shi‘i convictions, his support for Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīya, his belief in reincarnation, and his good relations with ‘Abd al-Malik and the Umayyads nonetheless (14–23). Kuthayyir’s earliest poetry, his meeting with ‘Azza, their love, and other incidents involving ‘Azza (23–32) are followed by anecdotes illustrating the poet’s inconstancy and his clumsiness in expressing his feelings for his beloved (32–6). After Kuthayyir’s death, which coincided with that of the *tābi‘ī* ‘Ikrima, and his funeral, attended by crowds of mourners, especially women, the article concludes with a song with lyrics by him, quoted as an example of provisions for the traveller as nourishing as food and drink (36–8).⁶⁶

As in the articles on Abū Qaṭīfa and ‘Adī ibn Zayd, the poetry here occupies a relatively modest place. While some seventy of Kuthayyir’s verses are quoted, the most extensive passage from any poem runs to eleven lines. Given that several highly favourable judgements, particularly of his panegyrics, are quoted, the absence of the poetry itself is somewhat surprising. Only seven settings are given; Kuthayyir may not have been as much of a favourite with composers as some of his contemporaries.

But unlike the two articles just discussed, Kuthayyir’s is made up of quite short anecdotes, which usually sketch a context and then either portray the poet interacting with others, or else express an opinion about him. The anecdotes often have a comic undertone⁶⁷ and touch on more than one theme. For instance: “‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz observed, ‘I can tell the good members of the Ḥāshimī family from the bad ones by Kuthayyir’s feelings for them. The ones he loves are

bad, and the ones he hates are good.' For Kuthayyir was an extreme Shi'i who believed in reincarnation" (IX, 19). "'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan went to visit Kuthayyir during his last illness, and Kuthayyir said to him, 'Cheer up! Imagine to yourself that in forty days' time I'll appear to you riding on a thoroughbred mare.' 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan replied, 'What are you going on about, curse you? By God, if you die, I won't see you or visit you or speak to you ever again'" (IX, 17).

In the first example, the Umayyads' interest in Kuthayyir and his Shi'i commitment and involvement with the 'Alids come out clearly, while his lack of discernment is suggested indirectly. In the second one, the 'Alids' relations with the poet and his belief in reincarnation are explicit, as is 'Abdallāh's exasperation with him. Such anecdotes, characteristic of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid periods, can be used to illustrate more than one theme; as raw material for compilations, they have a certain versatility. It is precisely because of their polythematic quality that the division of articles composed mainly of these short narratives into thematic sections is often impossible; even the analysis of Kuthayyir's article proposed here could be considered over-simplified.

The chronological impulse

As became clear from the discussions of articles in the previous chapter, the tendency to organise material chronologically is not absent from the *Aghānī*. Tracing the "lives" of songs or poems, narrating memorable events such as the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' or the Battle of Badr as they happened, or arranging the information about individuals such as Manẓūr ibn Zabbān and his daughter in a time sequence are instances where the chronological impulse makes itself felt strongly.⁶⁸ It is less marked in the articles on love relationships, where it may provide merely a broad framework, and even, somewhat surprisingly, in the treatment of certain events such as the elimination of the Umayyads, where the emphasis is not on tracing what happened but on reflecting about its exemplary value and ethical meaning.⁶⁹

Certain articles already presented in this chapter also display chronological tendencies. Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman's love affairs are treated in the order in which they occurred, even if not all the individual incidents can be situated in time in relation to one another. In 'Adī ibn Zayd's article it is the section covering his forebears and his own life story up till his death in prison which proceeds in one historical sweep. Abū Ḥashīsha's account of his relations with various caliphs, which takes up about a third of the article, treats them in historical succession.

The impulse to present events in the order in which they happened exists elsewhere in articles on personalities, but to different degrees and realised in different ways, as can be seen from the following examples. The pre-Islamic brigand poet al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka's article has three focusses, the poet's life, the occasions for his poems, and the independent life of the song of which he composed the lyrics. It covers successively his genealogy and profile, two illustrations of his character, five accounts of tribal raids or conflicts in which he took part, the description of

his prowess as a runner even when he was an old man, his death, given in alternative versions, and two anecdotes depicting the introductory song being performed in the 'Abbāsīd period (XX, 374–88). The sequence “old age – death” is obviously chronological, and the anecdotes on the song's performance also reflect their historical succession, for the singer in the first is Fulayḥ ibn Abī l-'Awra', a musician at the court of al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd, and in the second the tutor of the sons of al-Ma'mūn's general 'Alī ibn Hishām. The sense of chronology is reinforced, moreover, by the quasi-historical accounts of the tribal raids; while there is no way of telling when each occurred in relation to the others, individually these relatively long narratives are organised as temporal successions of events. Thus the article as a whole has a strong “historical” flavour.

The article on the 'Abbāsīd panegyrist 'Alī ibn Jabala (XX, 13–42) begins, after the profile, with an unusually detailed account of the beginning of the poet's career, recounted by one of his descendants. 'Alī, the youngest of his family, lost his sight as a child but on his father's orders was taken by his older brothers to attend literary and scholarly circles, where he acquired the education necessary for a poet. For his debut as a panegyricist he addressed himself to Abū Dulaf al-Qāsim ibn 'Isā al-'Ijlī, who was famous for his generosity, and although the audience was at first sceptical that he was the author of the poem he recited, he convinced them by composing a fine second piece and was appropriately rewarded (14–19). Different occasions on which the two poems were quoted and appreciated (19–23) mark a shift in focus from the poet to his poetry, but he comes to the fore again in anecdotes about his contacts with patrons, Ḥumayd ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Ṭūsī, al-Ma'mūn, Abū Dulaf again and 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir. Interspersed with these anecdotes are two about 'Alī's lampoons and one explaining an allusion in one of his panegyrics (23–41). The article closes with al-Ma'mūn, enraged by the politically controversial, even blasphemous praise 'Alī had heaped on Abū Dulaf al-'Ijlī, ordering his tongue to be cut out (41–42).⁷⁰ In this case the chronological impulse is most evident in the description of the poet's early years. Implicitly, however, it is also present at the end, where al-Ma'mūn succeeds in silencing 'Alī one way or another, which in the case of a poet living by his words is equivalent to death. The beginning and end of 'Alī's life as a poet serve as a chronological frame surrounding the other *akhlbār*.

These ignore considerations of chronology, as can be seen from the references to 'Alī's famous elegy of Ḥumayd al-Ṭūsī rhyming in *'ayn*. It is first given in full after the lyrics of the introductory song have been identified as taken from a panegyric of Ḥumayd and several lines of the latter have been quoted (26–9). The elegy is followed by quotations from other panegyrics 'Alī addressed to Ḥumayd and anecdotes in which he asks him to intercede with another patron (29–31, 33–6, 37–40), but it returns as the subject of a discussion between 'Alī and the philologist Aḥmad ibn 'Ubayd, in which the poet admits that he modelled it on al-Khuraymī's elegy of Abū l-Haydhām, although he could not hope to equal this earlier masterpiece (40–1). It is noticeable that four of 'Alī's poems are quoted from more than once; lines from the first panegyric on Abū Dulaf appear particularly

frequently (15, 19–22, 24, 25, 36, 39, 41). The recurrent references to these poems serve as links between the different sections of the article with its two main focusses on the creative process and on the poetry it brought forth.

The chronological impulse is more marked in the treatment of al-Walid ibn Yazid, the only caliph to have composed lyrics for one of the Top Hundred (VI, 360; VII, 1–84).⁷¹ After his genealogy and profile, the first topic treated is Yazid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik’s decision to nominate his brother Hishām to succeed him, giving him precedence over his son al-Walid, then still a boy. Subsequently, relations between Hishām and his nephew deteriorate, with Hishām preferring one of his own sons to succeed him, and al-Walid becoming bitterer and behaving more outrageously as time passes, finally retiring with a few companions to a desert palace. The announcement of Hishām’s death and al-Walid’s reaction to it close this section (2–18). At the end of the article a similar chronologically organised section covers al-Walid’s naming his young sons to succeed him, the decision by other members of the Umayyad family to remove him, their taking control of Damascus, Yazid ibn al-Walid being recognised as caliph, al-Walid being killed and his sons being taken captive (70–82). And this section has a coda in which two ‘Abbāsīd caliphs look back on the events, condemning the killing of al-Walid, who had been recognised by the Muslim community as caliph, and refusing to consider him a heretic on the grounds that God would not have allowed the caliphate to be entrusted to someone unworthy of it (82–3).

These substantial chronological sections frame the quotations of al-Walid’s poems with their settings and the anecdotes portraying his activity as a poet and musician, his contacts with poets and singers, his love affairs, especially his passion for his sister-in-law Salmā, his hunting and interest in horses, and his debauchery and blasphemy. The material on some of these subjects is collected together, while others are treated sporadically throughout the article. But from the middle of it al-Walid’s fate begins to be hinted at. Opening the Quran at random one night and coming upon a warning to tyrants, he has the offending leaves suspended and shoots arrows at them; the anecdote concludes: “it was not long after that that he was killed” (49). He fails to respond to Naṣr ibn Sayyār’s appeal for help against the black-clad rebels in Khurasan, the vanguard of the ‘Abbāsīd movement, as the reader knows, on the grounds that he is occupied with singers. And in the next *khabar*, Ḥammād al-Rāwīya recounts his last meeting with the caliph, whom he finds in a childishly shameless mood; the courtier concludes that his end is near (56–7). In a subsequent incident al-Walid’s closest companion, al-Qāsim ibn al-Ṭawīl, leaves him when he has passed out during a drinking bout. When the caliph comes to, he discovers al-Qāsim’s absence, and in a drunken fury he orders a servant to bring him his head. By the time it arrives he has sobered up, and after composing an elegy on his friend he remarks that he does not care if he dies, now that al-Qāsim has gone.⁷² The incident closes with an echo of the earlier comment: “he did not live much longer after that until he was killed” (66–7). And finally, when on a hunting trip he hears that one of his sons has died, and he composes a short but moving elegy on him (69). There is no way of knowing whether these

anecdotes are arranged in chronological order, but they point towards a later event, al-Walid's overthrow and death, and they thus convey a sense of movement in time in the second half of the article towards the narrative of Yazid ibn al-Walid's uprising.

When temporally ordered narratives of some length are lacking, the chronological impulse may be expressed in another way. The Umayyad poet al-Ṭirimmāḥ's article begins with his genealogy (a detail of which is elucidated in *khbar* (1)), an explanation of his nickname, and a short profile sketching his early history. It continues as follows:

- 2 al-Ṭirimmāḥ's arrival in Kufa and his coming into contact with the Khārijites
- 3–6 the friendship between al-Ṭirimmāḥ and al-Kumayt ibn Zayd, their use of obscure words in their poems, al-Kumayt's admiration for his friend
- 7 al-Ṭirimmāḥ and al-Kumayt appear before Makhḥad ibn Yazīd al-Muḥallabī, but al-Ṭirimmāḥ is too proud to recite his poetry standing
- 8, 9 al-Ṭirimmāḥ's pride in his own poetry and his reluctance to express admiration for Dhū l-Rumma's
- 10 al-Ṭirimmāḥ prepares a panegyric of Khālīd al-Qasrī, but the governor is not interested in hearing it. He nonetheless rewards him with booty just arrived from Sijistan
- 11–15 al-Ṭirimmāḥ's penetrating understanding of poetry, and verses of his which critics and poets admire
- 16 al-Ṭirimmāḥ recites poetry before Khālīd al-Qasrī in which he complains of his poverty; the governor gives him a reward
- 17 al-Ṭirimmāḥ's skill in lampoons is admired
- 18 al-Ṭirimmāḥ dies in his bed, not on the battle-field as he had expressed the hope that he would do in one of his poems (XII, 34–45).⁷³

Many of the *akhbār* here have no chronological markers. But (2), (7), (10), (16) and (18) can be dated in relation to each other: first, al-Ṭirimmāḥ's arrival in Iraq from Syria, then his appearance before Makhḥad ibn Yazīd, which occurred around 100/718, and his meetings with Khālīd al-Qasrī some time between 105/724 and 120/738, and finally his death. Thus, together with the focusses on the poet's character and beliefs, the creative processes surrounding his poetry, and reception of it, the article exhibits a perceptible movement forward in time. This movement is paralleled by an evolution in al-Ṭirimmāḥ's attitude towards his patrons; while he foregoes a reward from Makhḥad rather than demean himself or his poetry, his attitude towards Khālīd is much less arrogant. And if his two visits to Khālīd happened in the order the article gives,⁷⁴ even after the governor slighted him by not wanting to hear his poetry, he swallowed his pride and went to him again to appeal for material help. The chronological impulse in articles such as this arises out of a wish to narrate the story of the poet's life, or at least some aspects of it. But it does not dominate; rather it coexists with other, non-chronological, approaches to arranging the material.

“Summarising” *akhbār*

In a few articles one very long *khavar* contains a summary of information which is taken up and developed later on; it may serve as the starting point for part of the article. Perhaps the best example is the account of the musical soirée Ibn Jāmi‘ was invited to take part in before Hārūn al-Rashīd, after he had arrived in Baghdad incognito. It occurs in the middle of this singer’s article, the main lines of which are:

- VI, 288 Introductory song, with lyrics by Nuṣayb
- 289–93 Ibn Jāmi‘’s genealogy; his piety and knowledge of the Quran; prominent religious figures’ attitudes to singing and to him as a singer
- 293–305 His skill as a singer and the great rewards he received; his contacts with Qurashī notables; his relations with Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī and other musicians; his standing with the caliphs; his successful intrigue against a governor
- 305–10 Tricks played on him to bring out the best in his voice; his performing before Umm Ja‘far
- 311–19 The musical soirée, at which fourteen songs are performed (the soirée is preceded by the account of Ibn Jāmi‘’s learning a song (no. 14) from a slave girl and arriving in Baghdad knowing no-one); a variant on the beginning of the anecdote
- 319–25 The songs’ performance indications⁷⁵
- 325–7 Ibn Jāmi‘’s excellent performance of another song; an anecdote about its lyrics
- 327–31 Anecdotes about the lyrics (by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi‘a) of song 5 of the soirée
- 331–4 Anecdotes about the lyrics (by Shurayḥ ibn al-Samaw‘al) of song 6 of the soirée
- 335–6 The treatment of the lyrics (by al-Khansā‘) of song 8 is put off; an alternative version of the lyrics of song 14 and the circumstances of Ibn Jāmi‘’s learning it
- 336–40 Anecdotes about the lyrics (by al-‘Arjī) of song 13⁷⁶.

As can be seen, the latter part of Ibn Jāmi‘’s article is almost entirely based on the songs quoted in the soirée. Interestingly, the singer himself figures in only two of the anecdotes (325–6, 335–6). But this part of the article is not as separate from the beginning as his absence might suggest, mainly because parallel or contrasted motifs furnish a number of links between the two parts. Thus, al-Rabi‘ ibn Yūnus relates how by his discretion and his understanding of poetry he gained al-Manṣūr’s favour, his freedom and a promotion (326–7). This harks back to the anecdote of his son al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabi‘’s foresightedly summoning Ibn Jāmi‘ from the Hijaz after al-Mahdī’s death, because he knows that al-Hādī will want to hear him. Al-Faḍl thus earns himself a generous reward and promotion to *ḥājib* (300). The

article's penultimate anecdote portrays the traditionist Ibn Jurayj obliging some straitlaced Iraqis to hear an eminent Hijazi singer, Ibn Tayzan, and defending this type of music as no different in essence from the camel-drivers' songs they regard as acceptable (339–40). It echoes an incident earlier on in which Ibn Jāmi' defends singing to the *qāḍī* Abū Yūsuf on the grounds that it simply embellishes the poetry which a Bedouin might recite in an unpolished, uncouth style and lets it touch the heart – an argument to which Abū Yūsuf has no reply (291–3). The alternative version of Ibn Jāmi's learning the song from the slave-girl has the musician paying two dirhams on two different days to hear it repeated, and the girl observing that for the four dirhams he gives her she knows very well that he will receive four thousand dinars when he performs it at court – as he does (335–6). Earlier on, it is al-Rashīd who refunds dinars for dirhams when he and Umm Ja'far together listen to Ibn Jāmi'; Umm Ja'far rewards the singer with a hundred thousand dirhams which the caliph then replaces with dinars (309–10).

A somewhat less exact parallel can be seen in the incidents where al-A'shā appeals to Shurayḥ ibn al-Samaw'al to save him, exhorting him to live up to al-Samaw'al's legendary reputation (333–4) and Ibn Jāmi' pleads with al-Mahdī to be let off a beating for his mother's sake (303); in both cases a reference to a parent reinforces an appeal for help, although al-A'shā speaks of his potential benefactor's father, whereas Ibn Jāmi' refers to his own mother.

One contrasted motif is Ishāq al-Mawṣilī's not paying the price a singer asked for teaching him a song, and his lasting regret at having let it escape him (331), over against Ibn Jāmi's paying the (much lower) price the slave-girl asked to teach him a song (311–12). Another contrast can be seen in the incapacity to learn the Quran by heart demonstrated by an effeminate singer from Medina whom 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz tries to reform (337–8), in contrast to Ibn Jāmi's knowledge of the Book and regular recitation of it (291).

It will be seen that each group of anecdotes around a song contains at least one motif echoing an element of the *akhbār* on Ibn Jāmi', which reinforces their integration into the article as a whole. Almost all the *akhbār* which follow the *soirée* predate Ibn Jāmi's lifetime, even though they may treat the same subjects; they reflect the focus on the independent life of poems and songs mentioned in an article, and provide a historical background to the *akhbār* about the singer. And it is the placing of the "soirée" anecdote where it is, in the middle of the article, which enables this background to emerge clearly. At the same time a focus on wider issues, such as the permissibility of listening to music, the advantages to be gained from serving the caliphs intelligently, and the problematic relation of singers to religious observance can be discerned in anecdotes in both parts of the article. The account of the *soirée* thus has a pivotal function in the article as a whole.

Another example of a "summarising" *khbar* is the long account (VIII, 13–28) Jarir gives al-Ḥajjāj of his flytings, some way into his article (VII, 307–8, VIII, 3–89).⁷⁷ Jarir not only defends himself here against the charge of stirring up ill-feeling, since he only responds to the attacks of other poets, but he also provides a minimum of information about his relations with his fellows – information

which is elaborated on subsequently. An outline of the article will make clear the relation of the “summarising” *khabar* to the rest of the material:

- VII, 307–308 Introductory songs (with lyrics from the same poem)
- VIII, 3–13 Jarīr’s name, his status as a poet (especially compared to al-Farazdaq), judgements of his poetry, his worsting al-Aḥwaṣ, his poetry being set to music
- 13–28 His justification to al-Ḥajjāj of his exchanging flytings with (1) Ghassān ibn Dhuhayl al-Saliṭī, (2) al-Ba’iṭh, (3) al-Farazdaq, (4) al-Akhṭal, (5) ‘Umar ibn Laja’, (6) Surāqa al-Bāriqī, (7) al-Balta’ al-‘Anbarī, (8) Rā’i l-Ibl, (9) al-‘Abbās ibn Yazīd al-Kindī, (10) Jafna al-Hizzānī, (11) al-Marrār ibn Munqidh, (12) Ḥakīm ibn Mu’ayya, (13) Thawr ibn al-Nahshal ibn Rumayla, (14) al-Dalahmas, (15) Hubayra ibn al-Ṣalt, (16) and (17) ‘Ilqa and al-Sarandā, (18) al-Ṭuhawī, (19) ‘Uqba ibn Sunay’ al-Ṭuhawī, (20) Suḥma al-A’war al-Nabhānī
- 29–32 The reason for Jarīr’s contest with (8) al-Rā’i and the poem in which he annihilated him
- 32–4 Exchanges with (3) al-Farazdaq
- 34 Jarīr’s own evaluation of his poetry
- 34–6 Exchanges with (3) al-Farazdaq
- 36 Meeting with a patron
- 36–9 Exchanges with (3) al-Farazdaq before patrons
- 39–52 Admiration for Jarīr’s poetry; his own statements about composing it; meeting with a patron; anecdotes with his family
- 52–4 Exchanges with (3) al-Farazdaq
- 54–8 Clash with Dhū l-Rumma and alliance with Hishām al-Mara’i
- 59–61 Admiration for Jarīr; comparison of him, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhṭal
- 61–2 Exchange with (3) al-Farazdaq
- 62–3 Clash with (4) al-Akhṭal
- 63–5 Verdict in Jarīr’s favour; his satire pardoned; his poetry rewarded
- 65–6 Clash with al-Aḥwaṣ avoided
- 66–8 Meeting with a patron
- 68–9 (6) Surāqa al-Bāriqī’s attack on him, his riposte
- 70–3 Clashes with (5) ‘Umar ibn Laja’; with (4) al-Akhṭal
- 73–6 Evaluation of Jarīr’s poetry; its effect; anecdote with his family; meeting with a patron
- 76–8 Competitions between Jarīr and (3) al-Farazdaq; their shared contempt for (5) ‘Umar ibn Laja’; reconciliation between him and Jarīr

79–80	Conflict with ‘Adi ibn al-Riqā’ stifled
81	Evaluation of poetry
82	Jarīr and (5) ‘Umar ibn Laja’ punished for their flytings
82–4	Evaluations of poetry; Jarīr’s attitude to it
84–7	Parallel elegies by Jarīr and (3) al-Farazdaq; clash between them
88–9	Jarīr’s contrasted elegies for al-Farazdaq; his own death ⁷⁸ .

Jarīr’s account of his exchanges with other poets, placed as it is early in the article, announces one of the major themes and indicates its importance. For while friction with rivals is a standard topic in articles on poets, along with relations with patrons, evaluations of the oeuvre and glimpses of the poet’s private life, the anecdote makes clear that Jarīr carried such friction to extremes. And the rest of the article reflects this. It may come as a surprise that not more of the twenty names Jarīr mentions return later on, but as he himself makes clear, some of these poets were merely accessories of his main rivals. Al-Balta’ al-Mustanīr, ‘Ilqa and al-Sarandā sided with ‘Umar ibn Laja’, while al-Marrār ibn Munqidh, Thawr ibn al-Nahshal and al-Dalahmas supported al-Farazdaq and al-Ṭuhawī recited his poetry. Jarīr also goes into some detail about his conflicts with al-‘Abbās ibn Yazīd, Jafna al-Hizzānī and Suhma al-A‘war; there may not have been anything to add to what he says about them.

A comparison between the two “summarising” *akhbār* discussed here shows that beyond them both providing much information in a short space they have distinct functions in their respective articles. Jarīr’s list of his poetic victories does not provide information of a substantially different kind to that found subsequently in his article; it merely emphasises one aspect of his life and creative work which is amply illustrated further on. This is in marked contrast to Ibn Jāmi’s account of the musical soirée which, as has been pointed out, marks a turning point in his article. Even *akhbār* with such unusual characteristics as these two can play very different roles as elements of a compilation, depending on the context in which they occur.

Individual articles of mixed types

This chapter has sought to identify, within the general category of articles on personalities, salient characteristics such as a single focus, marked thematic divisions, a tendency towards chronological arrangement or the use of framing devices. In most cases, even when these features exist, they may not immediately strike the reader, because they are present in combination with others; I have already used the term “mixed type”⁷⁹ when speaking of articles possessing a variety of characteristics. Here I would like to present several further examples of articles which can be described by this term. But as will be seen, the examples chosen may exhibit not only mixed patterns of compilation, but also mixed types of material. My selection from among the wealth of articles has been dictated above all by issues of compilation, rather than by more obvious criteria such as the beauty of the

sections' poetry, the entertaining nature of their *akhbār* or the importance of their subject. It will also serve, I hope, to illustrate the great variety of material and of approaches to organising it found in the *Aghānī*.

i. Imru' al-Qays: legends of a poet

Imru' al-Qays's article (IX, 69–105) is a striking example of a compilation of heterogeneous material. As has already been noted, the poet's *Mu'allaqa*, from which the introductory song is taken, was very popular with singers,⁸⁰ and the list of settings together with the philological notes on the poem itself occupy eight pages (69–76). It is followed by the poet's genealogy, explanations of some of his ancestors' names, and the account of his grandfather al-Hārith king of Kinda's relations with the Sassanians, fall from favour and ultimate death (77–81). The family history continues with the tribe of Asad's revolt against its chief, Imru' al-Qays's father Hujr, because of his harshness, his punishment of them and their killing him out of revenge (81–6). On hearing the news of Hujr's death, Imru' al-Qays swears to avenge him, despite having earlier been banished by his father for composing poetry. He gathers allies from Bakr and Taghlib and attacks Asad. His allies, thinking he has revenged himself enough, then abandon him. He collects another army but it scatters in the face of Persian pursuit. He then takes refuge with various chiefs, among them al-Samaw'al, before going to the Byzantine court, where he is well received by the emperor. But an Asadi whose brother he has killed insinuates that he is a traitor, and the emperor sends him a poisoned shirt which kills him. He is buried at Ankara (87–101).

In a change of period, 'Umar ibn Hubayra, an Umayyad governor of Iraq, invites ten Kufan notables to an evening of story-telling. One of them recounts how Imru' al-Qays had sworn only to marry a girl who could solve his riddle. At last he meets such a one, but she in turn demands that on their wedding night he answer three questions about himself, designed to show whether he is truly noble or not. At first Imru' al-Qays's servant tries to pass himself off as his master, but his replies to the questions betray him. The poet passes the test and marries the girl, and 'Umar ibn Hubayra, declaring the evening at an end since this story is unsurpassable, rewards the teller (101–3).

The final *khbar* portrays a delegation of notables from Asad going to plead with Imru' al-Qays after his father's death, and their leader proposing either that he should kill one of their chiefs in retaliation, or that they should pay blood money, or at least that there should be a waiting period before he leads Kinda to war against them. Imru' al-Qays agrees only to the final alternative, and they leave in the knowledge that war will break out (101–5).⁸¹

In this article the introductory song is treated at such length that it deserves to be considered a section in its own right. It consists of performance indications and philological comments. Imru' al-Qays's family history and life story are presented in the saga form encountered already in this chapter in the article on 'Adi ibn Zayd. They possess a historical core which has obviously been embroidered on.⁸²

The account of the poet's search for a bride and the test his bride puts him to has no pretensions to be historical but is replete with folklore motifs;⁸³ moreover it is set in a conventional frame, that of the caliph or other dignitary who asks for entertaining conversation.⁸⁴ Finally, the unsuccessful negotiations between the Asadis and the wronged poet are an example of an important political and ethical issue, that of whether blood revenge should be taken at all costs, being argued out in rhetorical set-pieces, such as are particularly associated with the Umayyad period.

The four sections, then, treat distinct subjects by different means, even though they are all concerned with one or other aspect of the life and works of a poet called Imru' al-Qays. They can be subsumed under several of the focusses identified earlier: the first is concerned with the poetry and a special type of reception of it, musicians' settings; the second with the poet's family, his own life, and the occasions on which he composed some poems; the third with the poet's life; and the fourth with a wider issue arising out of the life, that of the wisdom of pursuing revenge. But otherwise they are unconnected, except for sections two and four sharing the theme of vengeance, which they approach from different angles. No poetry links them together, for the *Mu'allaqa* is not quoted subsequently, nor do any of the lines of verse in the second section occur more than once. No evaluations of the poet's oeuvre are quoted. Particularly intriguing is the absence of episodes designed to explain the allusions to amorous adventures in the *Mu'allaqa*, similar to those which collected round 'Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a's *ghazal*.⁸⁵ In fact Imru' al-Qays's article offers a quite unusual example of a juxtaposition of highly disparate material which had collected around this legendary figure, arranged in well-defined sections.^{85a}

ii. 'Amr ibn Ma'dikarib: a poet in changing times

The *mukhaḍram* poet 'Amr ibn Ma'dikarib's article (XV, 207–44) is more homogenous. Its main lines are as follows:

- XV, 207 Introductory song (s. 1)
- 208–9 'Amr's name, genealogy, courage and nickname
- 209–13 His conversion to Islam and apostasy; his meeting with the Prophet, who marvels at his immense size
- 213–18 Controversy over his date of death; his request for an extra allowance: his boasting; his bravery, especially at al-Qādisiyya, and poem on his exploits (s. 2)
- 218–25 His retaining pre-Islamic habits; appeals to 'Umar for help; raids; praise of a benefactor; his strength; his lying; his death and wife's elegy of him
- 225–6 s. 1's lyrics explained as: (1) an expression of resignation when 'Amr cannot free his sister, carried off in a raid; or (2) an expression of longing for his divorced wife
- 226–9 'Amr's being threatened by a former ally; his poem on him (s. 3); 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib quotes a line of the poem à propos of his own murderer

- 230–2 After ‘Amr’s brother is killed, his sister urges ‘Amr to take revenge on Banū Māzin, and he complies
- 232–9 A singing girl persuades a prospective buyer to pay a high price for her by quoting a line from s. 1; Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn intrigues to be appointed governor of Khurāsān, and al-Ma’mūn, after a month’s hesitation, confirms his appointment, having listened to three performances of s. 1; Ibn Harma works a line of s. 1 into his lampoon of a tight-fisted patron
- 239–41 Another poem of ‘Amr on his sister (s. 4); its attribution to another poet
- 241–4 ‘Amr attempts to acquire pay or booty from ‘Umar and Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ; ‘Umar recognises his experience in warfare but considers him unsuitable as a governor.⁸⁶

On first sight this may appear a rather chaotic series of subjects. Closer examination, however, shows that some features of the article’s organisation are familiar. The portrayal of the poet’s life (208–25) followed by the treatment of the introductory song represents a pattern already encountered in the article on ‘Adī ibn Zayd. The treatment of s. 1 acts as a frame for that of s. 3. The article’s final two *akhbār* closely resemble two cited earlier (215, 231); they round the section off with a reaffirmation of an essential aspect of the subject in a way which has been noted for ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and Ṭurayḥ. In this case it is ‘Amr’s standing in the eyes of the caliph ‘Umar which Abū l-Faraj places in a prominent position. Three focusses are apparent: the poet’s life and character, occasions when he composed poetry, and the later life of his poems.

Most of the *akhbār* are quite short and straightforward. They are consistent in their depiction of a brave tribesman of unusual size and strength, who becomes a Muslim, apostacizes with other members of his tribe, apparently for reasons of tribal rivalries,⁸⁷ later rejoins the Muslim community, fights bravely in the early conquests but retains much of the pre-Islamic ethos to the end of his life. As a result, he is considered with reserve by the commanders of the early Muslim armies. His capacity for eating,⁸⁸ his tendency to tell lies and his efforts to acquire what he regards as his fair share of pay give him a slightly comic air. Altogether, he is not quite a hero. This also emerges from the anecdotes about his pre-Islamic experiences, where he judges himself equal to all the north Arabian warriors except two, tries to free his sister from captivity but fails, and seriously considers accepting blood money from his brother’s killers before another sister provokes him into fighting them.

The difficulty of accommodating such colourful Jāhili characters in the new Islamic world is nicely illustrated in one of the few elaborated narratives in the article, where ‘Amr in Kufa receives a visit from an old friend. They relapse into pre-Islamic behaviour and ‘Amr, using his authority as the senior both in age and in conversion to Islam, persuades his friend that drinking wine is not forbidden in the Quran. The ambiguity of ‘Amr’s Islamic convictions is also suggested by the fact that in several *akhbār* he appears as a companion of Ṭulayḥa ibn Khuwaylid, one of

those said to have set themselves up as prophets after Muḥammad's death, Ṭulayḥa, too, later repented, but the anecdotes portray 'Umar as never entirely forgetting their past.⁸⁹

The sections on the songs introduce important events from later history into the article, and with them a change of tone. First, the accounts of the context of introductory lyrics both emphasise 'Amr's realistic response to situations with no easy solutions, summed up in the line which is quoted most often: "*Idhā lam tastatī 'shay'an fa-da 'hū/wa-jāwizhū ilā mā tastatī 'ū*" (XV, 207, 225, 232, 236, 239).⁹⁰

These explanations are followed by the incident of 'Amr's being threatened by his dissatisfied ally Ubayy al-Murādī, and quotation of the poem where 'Amr proclaims his good faith and boasts of his prowess. It contains the line "*Urīdu ḥibā'ahū wa-yurīdu qatlī/ 'adhīraka min khalīlīka min Murādī*" (XV, 227–229).⁹¹ This line was made famous by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib when he applied it to the Khārījī 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥjam al-Murādī, whom he foresaw would assassinate him.⁹² Two different versions of the circumstances in which 'Alī quoted the verse are given, together with another anecdote where he recites a couplet on not resisting death when it approaches. This short section round the third song represents a radical change of atmosphere, since it recalls a tragic event of early Islamic history which brought to an end the earliest period of the caliphate – an event not treated in detail in the *Aghānī*.⁹³ And it shows an idealised figure, the Prophet's son-in-law and ancestor of the Shī'ī dynasties, accepting a violent death without resistance. His willingness to undergo a kind of martyrdom contrasts sharply with the down-to-earth attitude of cutting one's losses expressed in the first song.

After this the article briefly returns to 'Amr's avenging his brother's death and then follows the later history of the introductory song. First, in a fairly banal context, a singing-girl uses the line "*Idhā lam tastatī 'shay'an ...*" to provoke a would-be buyer into paying a high price for her; it functions as a catalyst for action. In the second, the longest *khabar* in the article, which takes the reader into the world of 'Abbāsīd palace intrigues, the line has the same effect. Two courtiers dispute before al-Ma'mūn about Shī'ī claims to the office of imam, and one of them, losing his self-control, insults the other. Al-Ma'mūn takes offence at this breach of etiquette, and the erring courtier appeals to his brother-in-law, Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn, to intercede with the caliph for him. When Ṭāhir enters al-Ma'mūn's presence he notices him wiping his eyes. Al-Ma'mūn agrees to forget the courtier's *faux pas*, but Ṭāhir, disturbed at what he has seen, sets out to discover the reason for the caliph's gesture. It turns out that he was recalling his brother al-Amin's death. Ṭāhir, fearful that he may fall victim to the caliph's vengeance, intrigues to be appointed governor of Khurāsān and thus to put a safe distance between them. His intrigues succeed, but although he is named the new governor and receives the order to prepare for his departure, al-Ma'mūn hesitates to ratify the appointment. Finally, the caliph summons the singers to perform before him the song "*idhā lam tastatī ...*",⁹⁴ thus preparing himself mentally to let Ṭāhir set out. Once in Khurasan Ṭāhir ceases to mention al-Ma'mūn in the *khuṭba*, but he dies before measures can be taken against him and his son Ṭalḥa succeeds him (XV, 234–8).

This is not the only version of how Ṭāhir obtained the governorship of Khurasan, nor is it without problems.⁹⁵ Two things set Abū l-Faraj's account of the events apart from that of other historians. First, it accords prominence to the song as a catalyst for action which liberates the caliph from his uncertainty. Second, it places the incident in the context of the article on 'Amr ibn Ma'dikarib, with its pre- and early Islamic *akhbār*. And whatever the intrinsic interest of the subject, the reader will thus relate it to the material surrounding it. Ṭāhir's response to what he perceives as al-Ma'mūn's growing resentment about his responsibility for al-Amin's death contrasts with 'Alī's reaction when he recognises the man who will murder him. Ṭāhir weaves a plan to acquire the governorship of Khurasan, which will provide him with a safe refuge while incidentally giving him great power, whereas 'Alī submits to his foreordained fate, martyrdom, accepting it freely.⁹⁶ Equally striking is the contrast between al-Ma'mūn's exercise of power and that of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, which is illustrated in several *akhbār* about his attitude to 'Amr. 'Amr can meet 'Umar without formality to present a request, and the caliph responds immediately with a firm answer. No officials come between them. Al-Ma'mūn is surrounded by courtiers and protected from contact with his subjects by an elaborate etiquette; even as important a dignitary as Ṭāhir has a fixed time for visiting the caliph. At the same time the caliph is much more cautious and self-aware, which renders him indecisive on occasion. And, as this incident shows, he can be manipulated by his entourage. By juxtaposing the account of Ṭāhir's appointment as governor of Khurasan with the anecdotes about 'Amr's requests to 'Umar, Abū l-Faraj can convey an understanding of how the exercise of power in the Islamic state has evolved over nearly two hundred years.⁹⁷

When examined in detail, then, the article on 'Amr does more than provide a lively portrait of its subject together with information on when he composed his poetry and when it was later performed. It also documents profound historical changes. They are explicit in 'Amr's frictions with leading Companions, which reflects the transition from a pre-Islamic to an Islamic mentality. And they are implied in the juxtaposition of the accounts of the simple, direct style of government of the first caliphs with the elaborate formality and bureaucratic administration of the 'Abbāsids. Tracing the evolution of the Arab and Muslim community in this way cannot be considered a controversial issue of the same kind as the permissibility or otherwise of composing and listening to music or love poetry. But it is a concern which emerges from the material assembled in many *Aghānī* articles, and it certainly deserves to be considered a focus of interest arising out of this material.

iii. Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa: portrait of a mean panegyrist

The article on the panegyrist Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa (X, 70–95) starts off with clearly marked thematic sections, such as have been identified in connection with 'Adī ibn Zayd, but subsequently the pattern of organisation is less obvious.

Here is a summary:

- X, 70–7 Introductory song (poem 1); Marwān's genealogy; his great-grand-father's and grandfather's careers and poetry
- 77–80 Marwān's meanness, despite the rewards given him (poem 2)
- 80–4 Judgements of his poetry (poem 1); beginning of his career (poem 3)
- 84–6 Ma'n ibn Zā'ida's encounter with a generous soldier; his regaining al-Manṣūr's favour
- 87–92 Marwān's obtaining caliphal favour (poems 3, 4, 1); fine verses of his, for which caliphs and Ma'n reward him (poems 1, 3, 5–8, 9, 11, 12)
- 92–3 Marwān's haughty attitude in his private life (poem 13)
- 93–4 Poems of congratulation (poems 14, 15)
- 94 Marwān's eerie encounter with a ghoul
- 94–5 a Shī'ī reply to a pro-'Abbāsīd poem by Marwān (poem 7); he is murdered by a Shī'ī because of his poetry (poem 7)⁹⁸.

The section on Marwān's ancestors not only offers various explanations of their origin, it also establishes their links with the ruling establishment and their activity as poets.⁹⁹ But before embarking on Marwān's own literary career, Abū l-Faraj quotes a series of anecdotes on the poet's salient character trait, his meanness; these stories, entertaining in tone, indicate Marwān's imperviousness to the disapproval of his friends and patrons.¹⁰⁰ It is only after this that Marwān's *raison d'être* in the *Aghānī*, his poetic activity, is broached, with his command of Arabic being affirmed and a poem of his being compared favourably with one by al-A'shā. There follows the account of his first success, a panegyric which he acquired from a tribesman of Bāhila and adapted to address it to Ma'n ibn Zā'ida, the patron who established his reputation.

At this point Abū l-Faraj diverts attention to Ma'n, who after loyal service to the last Umayyads had to go underground when the 'Abbāsids took power. He was making his way in disguise to the desert when a soldier of the city garrison, who had recognised him, stopped him. Ma'n finally had to admit who he was, but he attempted to buy the soldier off with the gift of a very valuable jewel, worth many times more than his pay. The soldier refused to accept it, but let Ma'n go because of his reputation for generosity and, as he put it, to show him that there was someone more generous than him in the world. Later on, after Ma'n had gained al-Manṣūr's favour, he tried to find the man to reward him but failed. The account of Ma'n's reconciliation with al-Manṣūr and his appointment as governor of Yemen follows. Another critical moment occurs when Ma'n, returning from Yemen, is reproached by al-Manṣūr for having rewarded Marwān excessively for lines of one of his panegyrics on him. But Ma'n explains that the reward was for two other lines alluding to his bravery in combatting al-Manṣūr's enemies, and the caliph shamefacedly congratulates him.

The problem of transferring allegiance, which Ma'n's story illustrates in political terms, also occurs in Marwān's career but in the field of poetry, as the next *akhbār* indicate. When Ma'n dies, Marwān composes a superb elegy on him in which he speaks of not wanting to seek another patron after the death of this paragon of generosity, but later, when he appears before al-Mahdī, the caliph, reminding him of it, has him expelled. Marwān returns, however, with a magnificent panegyric (from which the introductory song's lyrics are taken) supporting the 'Abbāsids' claim to the throne, and from then on his position is established. When Hārūn al-Rashid succeeds his father, he reproaches Marwān for the same two lines, but Marwān defends himself with another fine poem.¹⁰¹

The article continues with *akhbār* alternately on Marwān's achievements as a poet and on his private life. While Marwān the poet is a skilled and successful artist, Marwān the man emerges as lacking in judgement and not a little ridiculous. The end of the article confirms the power of Marwān's poetry, whose success was fatal to him. For his *qaṣida* affirming the 'Abbāsids' claim to the caliphate was intolerable to the Shī'is, and indeed it drove one of them to murder him.

Three focusses in this article are clear: first Marwān's forebears (both their literary gifts and their connection with the ruling family are illustrated), second his own character and career and third the creative process. These last two are treated alternately, each time with the *akhbār* about the man preceding those about the poet. There are no quotations of poems independent of *akhbār* or examples of later reception of the poetry, and singers were apparently not attracted to it.

The anecdotes about Marwān's salient characteristic, his meanness, are often comic in tone, in contrast to the portrayal of the sessions where the poet proclaims his verses. Since his avarice is treated before his art, there is a gradual change of tone in the article from amusing to serious, an interesting inversion of the sequence *jidd-hazl* more familiar in mediaeval Arabic literature. It could have been dictated not so much by the desire to do something different as by the fact that the account of Marwān's death, told by his murderer, provides an excellent conclusion to the article. And the reason for the poet's death, the effect of his verses, was thoroughly serious.

It may seem strange that Abū l-Faraj accords so much space in the article to a subsidiary character, Ma'n ibn Zā'ida. But Ma'n's experience in politics offers a parallel to Marwān's in poetry, for they both have to persuade a new patron of their sincerity and loyalty. This parallel is brought home to the reader by the fact that the account of Ma'n's being restored to favour by al-Manṣūr immediately precedes Marwān's attempts, finally successful, to establish himself at al-Mahdī's court. The man of the sword and the man of letters are equal here: they both need to win the ruler's confidence, the one with deeds and the other with words. The question of how to gain, or regain, a patron's favour can thus be considered a wider issue in the article.

At the same time the account of Ma'n's meeting with the nameless guard offers an example of an ideal of generosity which is the opposite of the poet's penny-pinching. Ma'n, himself famed for his liberality, is out-classed by a simple

foot-soldier, and together they make Marwān, with his miserable tricks to save every farthing, seem a despicable figure. It is particularly ironical that Marwān himself is the narrator of this account of two generous men vying with each other.¹⁰²

But Marwān's lack of insight is illustrated in another anecdote too. There, quoting his line of poetry defending the 'Abbāsids' claims to the caliphate and rejecting those of the Shī'a, he explains that it has aroused the hostility of al-Mahdī's disgraced vizier, Ya'qūb ibn Dāwūd, towards him. And it is this very line that incites Marwān's murderer to plan his death. Marwān's self-centered attitude to his possessions, expressed in his meanness and imperviousness to social conventions, is consistent with his self-centered attitude to his poetry, where he only registers its success and is incapable of measuring the true extent of the hostility it stirs up. In compiling the article as he has, Abū l-Faraj has provided this gifted but unattractive poet with a psychological portrait of some subtlety.

iv. al-Šimma al-Qushayrī: a case of literary elaboration

Al-Šimma al-Qushayrī is an obscure Umayyad poet, a fact reflected in the length of his article (V, 435; VI, 1–8). It can be presented as follows:

[Introductory song (poem 1), with setting by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī]

Name, genealogy, profile

- 1 Information on his great-grandfather's meeting with the Prophet.
- 2 Al-Šimma falls in love with his cousin, who is married off to another suitor; al-Šimma lampoons him (poem 2). Al-Šimma is married to a cousin, but soon abandons her (poem 3). He composes poems of longing for his cousin Rayyā (poems 4–6).
- 3 He goes to Syria, from where he joins an expedition to Daylam. There he dies.
- 4 Another poem on Rayyā (poem 7; s.2).
- 5 Dressed in rags, al-Šimma recites a couplet (poem 8) in an orchard in Tabaristan, repeating it until he dies.
- 6 Ibn al-A'rābi admires a poem of his (poem 9; s. 3).
- 7 Another admired poem of uncertain attribution (poem 9b; s. 4).¹⁰³
- 8 A poem admired by Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī (p. 10).
- 9 Al-Šimma is seen reciting poetry (poem 9) and talking to himself.
- 10 Al-Šimma's suit is rejected over problems with paying the bride-price (poem 9b).
- 11 Another version of his being rejected (poem 9b with additions).¹⁰⁴

It will be clear from the summary that al-Šimma is one of the so-called 'Udhri poets of the Umayyad period who were heroes of unhappy love affairs. In later times their stories came to resemble each other, but in the *Aghānī* each poet's article has individual traits.¹⁰⁵

Al-Šimma's article begins, in a fashion conventional for the *Aghānī*, with a short profile – "a bedouin poet of the Umayyad period who composed little" – and a brief focus on the subject's family. Then it gives the minimalist version of

al-Šimma's story. It does not describe the couple's meeting and falling in love, nor does it explain the reasons for al-Šimma's suit being refused and later for his joining an expedition to Daylam. Only the poet's departure to Syria is motivated – by his anger at his family. The interspersed lines of poetry, however, hint at al-Šimma's feelings. In a brief vicious outburst, he compares his successful rival with a dung-beetle, and when taking leave of his wife he contemptuously tells her to continue her monotonous and mindless existence. His verses for Rayyā, by contrast, movingly evoke the pain of separation and his beloved's sweetness with subtle images and musical diction.

The glimpse of al-Šimma in Tabaristan (5) is provided by a first-person narrator, the orchard's owner. He sketches the stranger's appearance before quoting his poetry, and only at the end does he discover his identity (although the reader has guessed it straight away). The poems which follow this anecdote (poems 9, 9b, 10) are introduced not simply as al-Šimma's compositions, but as verses admired by critics. The *khavar* portraying al-Šimma crazed by love, reciting his poetry and then commenting on it (9), is also told by an eye-witness. Finally, the founding event of the story, Rayyā's father's refusal to marry his daughter to al-Šimma, is given in two versions. The first (10) has Rayyā's father set a high bride price and al-Šimma's father refuse to pay it despite his wealth. The resourceful al-Šimma collects the required number of camels from other members of the tribe, but Rayyā's father does not accept them, insisting that they must come from al-Šimma's father. The latter remains adamant, and al-Šimma decides to leave, at which Rayyā laments the cruelty of his close relatives; the poet later regrets his deed. The second version (11) adds a refinement: al-Šimma's father is willing to provide the required camels, but when his brother counts them, he finds them one short. Al-Šimma's father refuses to make up the number, and al-Šimma, disgusted at their mean-spiritedness, leaves for one of the frontiers of the Umayyad empire, staying there until he dies. Both versions are rounded off by al-Šimma expressing his feelings in the same poem (9b), which the second version quotes more fully.

Three styles of narration of al-Šimma's story can be distinguished in this article. In the first (2, 3), a third-person narrator conveys bare facts and ignores dialogue, descriptions or explorations of the characters' feelings. In the second (5, 9) a first-person narrator uses description economically but effectively; there is a nice contrast between the idyllic setting of the orchard and the sorry state of the poet. He also reports overhearing the poet reciting his verses, and engages with him in a brief dialogue which reveals the lover's mental confusion. The final style returns to the third-person narrator (10, 11). He concentrates on one crucial event, providing relevant details about the situation of the actors involved, the alternative solutions sought by al-Šimma and his negotiations with his father and uncle. This narrator includes dialogues and Rayyā's and al-Šimma's criticism of the behaviour of the older generation.

Depending on the style of narration, the quotations of poetry have a different function. In the minimalist *khavar*, it is only through verses that the poet comments on the events and expresses his feelings – towards his rival (poem 2) and his

abandoned wife (poem 3), as well as his beloved (poems 4–7); he indulges in satire as well as love poetry. But the verses are not essential to the progress of the narration. The first-person narrator, by contrast, understands the poet's situation when he hears him recite his verses (poem 8) and comment on them. And between the anecdotes narrated in the first person, the reader is provided with quotations of al-Šimma's poetry admired by connoisseurs (poems 9–10); the poetry's status is thus established. As is to be expected, it is only love poetry which is quoted; the reader is treated to fragments from three poems. The detailed accounts of the refusal of al-Šimma's suit are followed by quotations from a single poem, again as comments and expressions of the poet's emotions. But the final quotation is the longest in the article.

The original story (2, 3) is thus elaborated in two different ways. In the closing *akhbār* (10, 11) a single incident from it is recounted in detail, but in the same realistic manner as the initial version. The attached poetry has become longer, but at the same time it is concentrated on the single theme of the poet's forced separation from his beloved.¹⁰⁶ Whereas in the original story al-Šimma expresses hostility to his rival and his wife in verse, here he and Rayyā resort to pithy prose in commenting on their fathers' heartlessness. The difference between the opening and closing *akhbār* reflects an increase in the concern to explore human interaction, with the consequently greater possibility of alternative versions of events arising. It also reveals a more developed sense of how to exploit the possibilities of dialogue. But the qualitative difference between the initial and final versions remains limited, since in all of them al-Šimma emerges as a (presumably) historical figure with consistent individual traits.

The *akhbār* in the second narrative style (5, 9) take up the statement in the original version (3) that al-Šimma joined troops fighting in northern Iran and died there. But they entirely ignore his military aim; they portray him as solitary, ragged, half-crazy and close to death. As they stand, therefore, they do not represent a logical development of the original information. Rather, they show al-Šimma being assimilated to the standard figure of the 'Udhri poet, whose most famous representative is Majnūn. And although, on the face of it, an eye-witness narrator offers a firmer guarantee of the authenticity of what is told, these narrators turn out to be elusive figures, "one of the inhabitants of Tabaristan" (5) or "one of the Banī 'Uqayl" (9), and their very elusiveness casts doubt on the reliability of what they tell. In fact the two *akhbār* reflect a far more advanced stage of literary elaboration. They also frame the poems by al-Šimma which critics are recorded as admiring in three very short *akhbār* (6–8). Here the poet is absent, and only his verses are of importance. Literary elaboration has reduced him to nothingness at the same time that it has established his poetry in the eyes of connoisseurs.¹⁰⁷

Short though it is, the article on al-Šimma provides an interesting example of literarisation. But in contrast to the much fuller article on Qays ibn Dhariḥ,¹⁰⁸ where the process of literarisation is illustrated in detail in three consecutive sections, Abū l-Faraj here resorts to the device of frames. The outer frame (2, 3, 10, 11) includes *akhbār* which treat al-Šimma's story realistically; within it are *akhbār* (5, 9) where

al-Šimma has lost his individuality and become an average ‘Udhri poet; and at the centre only the poems are left, timeless expressions of an unhappy lover’s emotion.

v. *Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir: a “pointillist” portrayal*

Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir is one of a number of ‘Abbāsīd poet-secretaries¹⁰⁹ treated in the later sections of the *Aghānī*. The introductory song to his article (XXII, 156–85), with a setting by ‘Arib, is followed by the poet’s name and profile, in which Abū l-Faraj stresses the important positions Ibrāhīm held in the state, his closeness to al-Mutawakkil and his famous love-affair with ‘Arib. The article proceeds to develop these aspects of his life alternately; sections dealing with Ibrāhīm’s public life are indicated by small Roman numerals, those dealing with his private life by large Roman numerals:

- 157–62 Poem of congratulation on al-Mutawakkil’s recovering from an illness; prison poems composed while Ibrāhīm was in disgrace; eulogy of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir, who secured his release (i).
- 162–8 A poem for ‘Arib; poems à propos of Nabt, a singing-girl Ibrāhīm loved; poems connected with ‘Arib; meetings with the singer Abū l-‘Ubayy ibn Ḥamdūn and contribution to lyrics for his songs (I).
- 168–9 An appeal from prison to Abū l-‘Ubayy’s father, Abū ‘Abdallāh, to intervene with al-Mutawakkil (ii).
- 169–75 Poems à propos of another singing-girl Ibrāhīm loved; answer to a riddle set by ‘Arib; quotations from ‘Arib’s letters to Ibrāhīm and a poem of his to her (II).
- 175–6 Poem attacking a former enemy, now disgraced (iii).
- 176–7 Poem of longing for a singing-girl left behind (III).
- 177 Ibrāhīm’s brother consoles him for fate’s blows (iv).
- 177–80 Poems about and for ‘Arib (IV).
- 180–1 Panegyric of Ibrāhīm when he is recalled from the governorship of Basra (v).
- 181–2 Ibrāhīm’s and ‘Arib’s exchanges of letters and poetry; his poems for Bid’a and Tuḥfa, ‘Arib’s singing-girls (V).
- 182–3 A poem composed during Ibrāhīm’s disgrace (vi).
- 183 A poem for Bid’a, Tuḥfa and their mistress (VI).
- 183–5 A prison poem; a poem of reproach to a friend (vii).
- 185 ‘Arib visits Ibrāhīm, they invite Abū l-‘Ubayy and spend the day singing (VII).¹¹⁰

Within the divisions between public and private life, each of the *akhbār* in the article can be considered as a discrete unit. Chronology is generally ignored; (ii), for instance, precedes the second part of (i) in time, while (vi) and (vii) precede (v).

The anecdotes about Ibrāhīm's private life carry almost no chronological markers, and he is portrayed as pursuing each of his various love affairs independently of the others.¹¹¹

From the scheme set out above each section may appear entirely independent, but in fact there are often links between the "public" and the "private" *akhbār* through the people, events or emotions they refer to. Thus, the first anecdote in which 'Arib appears (162) shows her adding her voice to those asking for Ibrāhīm's release, and the poem which he sends her expresses his gratitude. His appeal to Abū 'Abdallāh ibn Ḥamdūn to intercede for him with al-Mutawakkil follows anecdotes in which he has contributed lyrics for Abū 'Abdallāh's son's songs (166–8). Ibrāhīm's poem on his disgraced enemy, 'Īsā ibn Ibrāhīm al-Naṣrānī (175–6), dates from after he was restored to favour, as does the following poem on a singing-girl he had to leave behind in Manbij during a duty tour of strongholds on the Syrian frontier. The poem composed during Ibrāhīm's disgrace (183) expresses longing for the absent beloved, an emotion similar to that of the preceding piece, where he wishes for a meeting with 'Arib and her two singing-girls.

Recurrent elements in the article are the references to Ibrāhīm's disgrace and return to favour and his liaison with 'Arib. These correspond to Abū l-Faraj's remarks in the profile, stressing his famous love affair and his prominence in the administration. For occupying high positions almost inevitably entailed falls from grace, followed by the restoration of one's fortunes if one was lucky. A noteworthy feature of the article which the profile does not, however, indicate is the importance of music and musicians. Abū l-'Ubays ibn Ḥamdūn appears in (I), (II) and (VII), the singing-girl Nabt in (I), an anonymous singing-girl in (II), the girl left behind in Manbij in (III), and 'Arib's two assistants Bid'a and Tuḥfa in (V) and (VI). 'Arib is not only the object of Ibrāhīm's affection, she sets poems of his to music (156 (the introductory song), 167, 174, 179). And Ibrāhīm's poems have several references to music, comparing 'Arib's letters to a wonderful tune by Ma'bad (162), inviting Abu l-'Ubays to come and perform a song in the quick *hazaj* rhythm (166), suggesting Abū 'Abdallāh ibn Ḥamdūn invite his friends to a morning drinking party and order a song in the *ramal* mode to be sung (171), portraying Bid'a as singing with Tuḥfa accompanying her on the flute (180), and finally describing his dream of Abū l-'Ubays singing (185).

The *akhbār* composing this article are very simple. As a rule a sketch of a situation introduces the poem or quotation of rhymed prose to which it has given rise. Once or twice the structure becomes slightly more complicated, with the poem eliciting a response in deeds or words, which may then be countered in its turn. This is taken furthest in the anecdote where Ibrāhīm flirts with Nabt, who is interested in a handsome boy; Ibrāhīm's friend 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Munajjim sends him a poem in which he condoles with him about Nabt's coolness, to which Ibrāhīm replies claiming to be more interested in the boy, and 'Alī responds with praise for his finding an elegant explanation for the situation (162–4). Sometimes even the barest narrative setting is absent, as when quotations are given from Ibrāhīm's poems on Nabt (164) and 'Arib (179–80) and from 'Arib's letters to

Ibrāhīm (173, 174–5). The final anecdote is slightly more elaborate, with Ibrāhīm telling ‘Arib of a dream he has had in which she and Abū l-‘Uways are singing in turn, and her suggesting he turn the dream into reality by inviting Abū l-‘Uways to join them. This he does, and the anecdote and the article conclude with the three of them devoting the day to poetry and song.

Ibrāhīm is not a great, or even a good, poet. He has a certain facility, but he lacks inspiration and fails to innovate or to rework conventional themes in a fresh manner.¹¹² It is not for nothing that Abū l-Faraj in his profile simply notes he is a “*shā‘ir*” and then moves on to his standing as a secretary and his connection with al-Mutawakkil. This article therefore does not seek to show off fine samples of poetry;¹¹³ it provides an all-round picture of a leading representative of ‘Abbāsid court society, who followed the conventions of his day in responding with poetry to events in both his public and his private life. And the organisation of the article reflects this. The regular alternation of glimpses of the two aspects of his life can be read as betraying a wish not to lose sight of the subject of the article, Ibrāhīm, as a whole.

In this respect Ibrāhīm’s article is typical of many which treat poets of the ‘Abbāsid period, although it is simpler (and much shorter) than some of them, such as those devoted to Bashshār ibn Burd, Abū l-‘Atāhiya, and the Mawṣilīs, father and son. These articles resist analysis simply according to chronological arrangement, thematic sections, framing devices and other methods of organising the material outlined earlier.¹¹⁴ They too appear to be chiefly aimed at an all-round presentation of their subjects. And here a drawback of literature, both written and oral, becomes apparent. A literary text has the disadvantage, in comparison to a portrait, of not letting the different aspects of a person’s life or activities be perceived simultaneously by a reader or listener; these can only be apprehended consecutively. The constant moving back and forth between different elements of the subject characteristic of these ‘Abbāsid articles may be interpreted as a desire to compensate for the inevitably sequential manner of providing information. Each anecdote or quotation of poetry can be read as a brush-stroke contributing to the portrait, and the compiler moves from section to section of the canvas, adding elements as he goes. By never working long on any one section, he prevents the reader’s attention being monopolised by a particular aspect of the subject. For this reason I have used the term “pointillist” to refer to Ibrāhīm’s portrait, in which a balance is carefully maintained between his career, with its ups and downs, and his leisure pursuits.

vi. ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a: the composers’ favourite

The article on ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a (I, 60–248) is the longest in the *Aghānī*, exceeding the one on Ishāq al-Mawṣilī by some twenty pages. It falls into a number of sections, as emerges from the following summary.

- 60–1 Introductory song, with its four settings
- 61–71 Introductory information about ‘Umar’s family background
- 67–9 Setting of verses quoted on p. 62 and musical digression

- 69–71 Information about ‘Umar’s son and daughter, quotation of verses mentioning them
- 71 Dates of ‘Umar’s birth and death
- 71–105 First part (I)
- 71–9 Judgements of ‘Umar’s poetry by pious men and connoisseurs of poetry; doubts about the veracity of ‘Umar’s (contradictory) declarations about his love affairs; his poetry’s harmful effect on women; a woman defends herself from his importunities; his poetry’s linguistic qualities
- 79–84 Settings of the verses given on p. 72; their excellence, occasions when they were quoted and comments on them (including a theological objection)
- 84–91 Settings of the poem given on p. 73 with further verses; the occasion for it – an adventure (1) with Bint Muḥammad ibn al-Ash’ath (with 1 further song)
- 91–105 Settings of the poem given on p. 74 with further verses; adventure with (2) Zaynab bint Mūsā after Ibn Abi ‘Atiq drew ‘Umar’s attention to her; eight poems on her set to music; anecdotes quoting or commenting on them
- 106–73 Second part (II)
- 106–16 Positive judgements of ‘Umar’s poetry by poets and connoisseurs; comparison of it with al-Hārith ibn Khālīd’s poetry; ‘Umar’s brother’s disapproval of it; ‘Umar tells the caliph of one of his adventures; comparisons between ‘Umar’s poetry and that of Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt; ‘Umar’s contests with Jamīl
- 117–18 Settings of Jamīl’s and ‘Umar’s poems given previously
- 118–19 Criticism of ‘Umar’s tendency to indulge in boasting (*fakhr*); his abandoning poetry in his old age
- 120–45 List of 46 traits of ‘Umar’s poetry (qualities of diction and style, successful and original imagery) illustrated by quotations with their settings [trait no. 44 is not illustrated]
- 134–5 Following quotation no. 21: the occasion for it, ‘Umar’s adventure with (3) Asmā’, and quotations of it in other situations
- 141 Following quotation no. 34: a *khbar* on the danger to women of ‘Umar’s poetry, illustrated by this quotation
- 145–8 ‘Umar’s generosity and his love of beauty; Abū l-Aswad’s wife wards off his attentions
- 148–56 Al-Farazdaq’s opinion of ‘Umar’s poetry; ‘Umar composes poetry in his old age; a rainstorm giving rise to a poem; the truth or untruth of his poetry; his refusal to follow other poets in describing lightening; second version of the rainstorm incident, followed by another poem

- 156–61 ‘Umar’s adventures with (4) Laylā, (5) al-Nawār, (6) Umm al-Ḥakam
- 161–3 Sukayna invites ‘Umar to meet her and other women
- 163–8 His adventures with (7) Baghūm, (8) Umm Muḥammad bint Marwān, (9) Ḥumayda
- 169–71 His meeting with libertine ladies, and with a former love
- 171–3 Adventure with (10) an Iraqi woman
- 173–209 Third part (III)
- 173 Jarīr’s admiration for ‘Umar’s poetry
- 174–90 Adventure with (11) Hind; fourteen poems on her with settings
- 190–8 Adventure with (12) Fāṭima bint ‘Abd al-Malik [romanticised version, more sober version]; five poems on her with settings
- 198–204 Adventure with (13) ‘Ā’isha bint Ṭalḥa; six poems on her with settings
- 204–9 Adventure with (14) Kaltham bint Sa’d, which ends in marriage; with (15) Lubāba bint ‘Abd al-Malik
- 209–46 Fourth part (IV), taking up the introductory song [p. 226]: ‘Umar’s adventure with (16) al-Thurayyā bint ‘Alī
- 209–11 Introduction: information about al-Thurayyā’s ancestress and her father
- 211–21 Occasion of the composition of the introductory lyrics; Ibn Qays’s poem on al-Thurayyā; al-Thurayyā breaks with ‘Umar because of (17) Ramla bint ‘Abdallāh; Kuthayyir’s response to ‘Umar’s poem on her; Ramla’s ugliness; another version of the identity of Ramla, who becomes ‘Umar’s wife
- 221–30 Ibn Abī ‘Atīq reconciles ‘Umar and al-Thurayyā; judgements of the poems ‘Umar composed about this incident
- 230–43 Incidents between al-Thurayyā and ‘Umar, between her and ‘Umar’s brother; her marriage; her request to al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik for money and her statement that ‘Umar was chaste; eleven poems on her with settings
- 244–6 Last meeting between ‘Umar and al-Thurayyā, who is leaving with her husband for Syria; Kathīr ibn Kathīr’s elegy on her
- 247–8 Epilogue
- ‘Umar’s advances to a nameless woman, who asks God to punish him if he has told lies about her. Some time later he dies from an infected wound.¹¹⁵

Despite its length, ‘Umar’s article turns out to be quite amenable to analysis. As in many other articles on personalities, the first pages focus on the poet’s family, and they form a distinct part. The treatment of ‘Umar begins (Part I) with the reception of his poetry, but while its literary qualities are unanimously acclaimed, its moral status is controversial for two reasons. If the poet has done what he claims

in his poetry, then he has transgressed the moral code. And whether or not the scenes he describes are based on fact, the poems present dalliance in a far too attractive light not to have a dangerous influence on women (their effect on men is never an issue). Personalities of religious standing can be found among both his admirers (Ibn ‘Abbās) and his detractors (Ibn al-Zubayr). It is only after this discussion about ‘Umar’s poetry that Abū l-Faraj turns to the occasions which gave rise to the poetry, narrating the first of ‘Umar’s many meetings with women (78–9), one in which the woman does not show any interest in the poet or take any initiative.¹¹⁶ After a return to critical and moral evaluations, the full text and numerous settings of a poem referred to earlier (73) are given (84–7) and they lead into the account of ‘Umar’s adventure with the lady to whom they are addressed, Bint Muḥammad ibn al-Ash’ath. And the text and settings (91–3) of another poem referred to earlier (74) introduce the episode with Zaynab bint Mūsā (93–105).

A pattern can be discerned here: discussions and evaluation of ‘Umar’s poetry are followed by the full texts of the poems referred to and their performance indications, and these in turn introduce accounts of the love affairs which gave rise to the poetry, the whole being rounded off by the other songs occasioned by those love affairs. The focus moves from reception of the poetry to the poetry itself, to the process of its creation and then back again to the poetry. The pattern of reception, settings of poems quoted, adventures and further songs repeats itself twice (106–73, 173–209), although the adventures are not always connected with poetry quoted immediately before them. It is because of this pattern that I have divided ‘Umar’s article up in the way set out above.

Part II returns to reception, although the opinions expressed are more unanimously positive. ‘Umar’s relations with other poets are also given more prominence. The most striking feature of the section, however, is the list of traits of ‘Umar’s poetry illustrated by quotations and their settings, which occupies a fairly central position. This list is a “summarising” *khābar*, similar to Jarīr’s account to Hishām of his flytings discussed above, and it too includes material referred to elsewhere in the article, as well as introducing one adventure. Unlike Jarīr’s list of flytings, however, it includes verses already quoted as well as verses which return later. In fact, nearly half the quotations reappear elsewhere. ‘Umar’s adventures are again relegated to the end of the section, with one exception.

But while the pattern of Part I recurs in Part II, a shift in emphasis is evident. The main interest is now directed to ‘Umar the poet, his life (not only his love affairs) and the qualities of his poetry. The adventures occupy a proportionately smaller part of the whole, and the musical component is drastically reduced; the affair with Laylā gives rise to three songs, and the others to one or two. In Part III the balance has changed yet again. Critical judgements have vanished almost entirely, while the adventures have become more elaborate and given rise to numerous songs. They prepare the way for Part IV, which deviates from the established pattern. Instead it returns to the song introducing the whole article, treating the relationship which gave rise to the lyrics in the form of an enframed article on

the lady in question. Appropriately information about Thurayyā's family and an elegy dedicated to her mark the beginning and end of this mini-article, which is well endowed with songs on her (a total of eleven, not including the introductory one). It also portrays a more complicated relationship than those found elsewhere in the article. For Thurayyā is temperamental, and 'Umar's adventure with Ramla provokes her jealousy, leading her to break with him, until Ibn Abi 'Atiq reconciles the two of them.

After this article-in-an-article the epilogue appears to deliver a final, Divine, judgement on 'Umar's morality and the truthfulness of his poetry. The veracity of this report is, however, called into question by the existence of earlier anecdotes (71, 77) which portray 'Umar as dying at the ripe old age of seventy or eighty; one version states that he was a lady-killer for the first forty years of his life and an ascetic for the second forty years. His ascetic period is referred to in passing later on as well (174). In fact the epilogue recalls once again the equivocacy of almost everything concerned with 'Umar's life, as distinct from his poetry.

The analysis of 'Umar's article proposed above is only a first stage.¹¹⁷ Further study of the different types of material shows that the accounts of 'Umar's adventures, for instance, all share the common elements of 'Umar seeing a woman, her not immediately rejecting him, and him composing poetry about their meeting, but thereafter they differ widely. For instance, they begin differently. The adventure with Baghūm has a particularly original introduction. A decrepit old one-eyed woman greets someone in the courtyard of the Ka'ba, and when she has left he exclaims at how this world treats its children, adding that she is the Baghūm 'Umar sang, the loveliest woman in Mecca in her day (164). 'Umar himself, as an old man, relates his adventure with Laylā in response to two young men keen to see whether he has remembered anything of love poetry (174–5). But the use of flashbacks to narrate an adventure, as in these two cases, is rare. The adventures with Nawār (158) and the Iraqi woman (172) begin much less imaginatively, and more typically, with 'Umar catching sight of the ladies, and the account proceeds straightforwardly. In the various episodes both the techniques of narration and the events narrated undergo variations, so that no two adventures resemble each other completely – not to speak of them all being attached to different poems.

The anecdotes expressing judgements about 'Umar's poetry also vary. For instance, al-Farazdaq's praise of 'Umar twice concerns his treatment of the parting of lovers in the *nasīb*: "This is what the poets were aiming for, but they missed their target and wept over the deserted encampment", a remark quoted once in an unembellished form, and once as a comment on two lines of 'Umar's poetry (75, 116). Al-Farazdaq's third expression of his admiration for 'Umar occurs when they meet and recite their own poetry, after which the Iraqi declares the Hijazi "the best love poet ever" (149). Exact duplications of such anecdotes are very rare, and when they occur, as with Jarīr's praise of 'Umar's poetry (81–2 = 173), it may be asked whether they are not a *reprise*, called for in a particular context, of a motif stated much earlier on, rather than an oversight by the compiler, unwittingly repeating himself. These remarks are intended only to suggest directions a more

thorough examination of the compilation of ‘Umar’s article might take; space does not permit me to pursue them here.

There is, however, one aspect of ‘Umar’s article which should still be mentioned, the place occupied in it by musical information. As the discussion of the pattern visible in Part I has shown, songs provide a bridge between evaluations of ‘Umar’s poetry and accounts of the adventures which gave rise to it. The summary of the article shows, too, that a song given in connection with an adventure may be followed by two or three *akhbār* depicting occasions when lines from it were quoted or commented on, forming a section organised round a song within the article. For example, seven anecdotes follow the poem “*A-min āli Nu‘min anta ghādin fa-mubkirū*” and its settings, two of them illustrating critical admiration for it, three different occasions when a line from it was quoted as appropriate, and two commenting on expressions it contains, one of them in a frivolous and the other in a bigotted vein (79–84).

But what does not immediately emerge from the summary is the sheer quantity of songs contained in ‘Umar’s article. Ninety-six poems, or fragments of poems, are followed by performance indications. In an article running to 187 pages, this works out at a ratio of songs to pages of slightly over 1:2. For comparison, Jamil’s article of sixty-five pages contains twenty-eight songs, Majnūn’s article of ninety-six pages thirty-seven songs.¹¹⁸ In its density of musical information, expressed in ratios of songs to pages, ‘Umar’s article approaches those of Ishāq al-Mawṣilī (slightly under 1:2), Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (1:2), and al-Walid ibn Yazid (slightly over 1:2). Only articles on musicians like Ibn Surayj (1:1.7) and on al-Wāthiq and ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdi (both 1:1) display a significantly greater concentration of settings. But the Mawṣilis, al-Walid, Ibn Surayj, al-Wāthiq and ‘Ulayya were either full-time or occasional composers; such a large amount of musical information in their articles is therefore no surprise.

‘Umar’s attractiveness to composers is further underlined by the fact that his lyrics generally possess several settings. While the poem “*Tashuṭṭu ghadan dāru jirāninā/wa-la-l-dāru ba‘da ghadin ab‘adū*”¹¹⁹ is exceptional in having been set to music nineteen times (84–7), three or four different settings of the same lyrics (or lyrics from the same poem) are common, and a few instances of six or seven settings are found. By comparison, Jamil’s and Majnūn’s lyrics each have one or two settings, or at most three or four.¹²⁰ ‘Umar earns his place at the beginning of the *Aghānī* as the poet of the second of the Top Hundred, but the grandiose conception of his article is due to his importance as a source of lyrics for composers of his own time and later.

vii. *Mukhāriq: a composition in words*

The early ‘Abbasid singer Mukhāriq’s article (XVIII, 336–73; the introductory song, with lyrics by ‘Urwa ibn Udhayna, is on p. 321), may on first sight be considered another “pointillist” treatment, like that of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir. For between the first two *akhbār* and Abū l-Faraj’s final noting of when and how the singer died, the material does not follow any obvious thematic or chronological

order or display other patterns described above. Moreover, none of the singer's compositions are referred to more than once.¹²¹ But Mukhāriq's article differs from Ibrāhīm's in one important respect; after the profile it starts with two extensive accounts of the subject's background, early years, teachers and first steps in his career.

The length of these two introductory accounts (XVIII, 336–8; 338–40) is unusual.¹²² Less so, but nonetheless noteworthy, is the presence of four other very substantial anecdotes later on (355–7; 361–3; 364–6; 370–2) as well as five other quite elaborate ones scattered through the article. Mukhāriq's life seems to have inspired more developed narratives than many other subjects of *Aghānī* articles.¹²³ It is also striking that many of the motifs encountered in the article are to be found already in the profile and the first two anecdotes. In an experimental approach to analysing this article, I will summarise the first pages and then trace through the article the themes and motifs they contain. I will also note motifs introduced later and then repeated.

XVIII, 336 Profile by Abū l-Faraj: name, father's name (with variant); Mukhāriq's *kunya*, bestowed by Hārūn al-Rashīd; his first owner, 'Ātika bint Shuhda, a skilled singer and lute-player; his early years spent in Medina (or Kufa); his father's occupation (butcher); his voice revealed when he cries his father's wares; his mistress gives him some voice training before selling him; his buyer, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili, gives him to al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā; who in turn gives him to al-Rashīd, who frees him.

336–8 Mukhāriq's mistress takes him, still a playful young boy, from Kufa to Baghdad to sell him. He is brought to Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili's attention by a slave-merchant friend. Having heard him sing, Ibrāhīm asks his mistress to name her price, and when she does he triples it to 30,000 dirhams, with 3,000 thrown in as a present, remarking that Mukhāriq is still a bargain at that price. Ibrāhīm then presents his new acquisition to al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā, who is not impressed with the boy's singing and considers that the price Ibrāhīm is asking for him, expressed in dinars instead of dirhams, is unreasonable. Ibrāhīm suggests as a compromise that they each take a half share in him until he has had more training, when al-Faḍl can buy the other share if he likes. Al-Faḍl is still angry, so Ibrāhīm gives him the boy. The next day al-Rashīd asks Ibrāhīm about Mukhāriq, and Ibrāhīm praises him highly. Al-Rashīd, hearing him sing, asks what he is worth, and receives the answer, "The tax revenues of Egypt". Despite the caliph's amazement Ibrāhīm insists, and al-Rashīd, who has sworn an oath not to ask any gift of the Barmakids, sends Masrūr to request the boy in his place. Al-Faḍl dare not refuse, and so Mukhāriq enters al-Rashīd's possession, although later, when he boasts of being the caliph's freedman, 'Allūya objects, taxing him with having been al-Faḍl's slave or Masrūr's freedman.

338–40 Mukhāriq's butcher father gets his nickname Nā'ūs from an incident when he bets someone that he will go to the Christian

cemetery (*nā'ūs*)¹²⁴ in Kufa and prepare a dish which takes a whole day to cook. As night falls and the dish is ready, a man planted among the graves by the other party to the wager stretches out his hand for food. Mukhāriq's father scalds it with hot gravy from the pot, saying that the living must be fed before the dead. When crying his father's wares Mukhāriq attracts attention for his fine voice, and Ibrāhīm buys him, gives him to al-Rashīd and is ordered to train him.

One day, while Mukhāriq still takes his place with the young musicians not allowed to sit during performances, Ibn Jāmi' performs a song which so delights al-Rashīd that he ignores the other singers. Mukhāriq makes a sign to Ibrāhīm and they both retire to the lavatory. There the young singer tells his master that he has picked up Ibn Jāmi's song, and is prepared to sing it, in order to divert the caliph's attention. Ibrāhīm fears the game is too risky, given the caliph's status and Ibn Jāmi's skill, but Mukhāriq says if he sings well, it will redound to Ibrāhīm's credit, and if he sings badly, it will be put down to his own inexperience. Ibrāhīm then announces to the caliph that Mukhāriq, too, knows Ibn Jāmi's song, which puts the latter's claim to its authorship in doubt. Summoned to perform it, Mukhāriq exerts himself to the utmost, and al-Rashīd is delighted. Ibn Jāmi' insists that he is the song's author, and now the victim of a trick, whereupon the caliph orders Ibrāhīm to explain what has happened. When Mukhāriq confirms his story, al-Rashīd says that he has advanced beyond the ranks of the young standing singers and may take his place with those who have the right to sit in the caliph's presence. He also receives his freedom, some money, an estate and a house.

The profile incorporates standard information about the name of the article's subject and then sketches the start of his career. It mentions both his humble origins and his rise to contact with the caliph, and touches on his fine voice. A good part of the first anecdote develops this last theme in a striking fashion, with Ibrāhīm being so sure of the boy's musical potential that he offers a higher and higher price for him. By contrast al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥya does not appreciate him, and al-Rashīd appears only half convinced. This anecdote also portrays the butcher's son being introduced into the highest circles and looks forward to his manumission and his competing with other recognised musicians. The second anecdote brings the reader back to Mukhāriq's origins and early years at court. It introduces the themes of preparing food and playing tricks on rivals and portrays an important stage in the young singer's career, when he is allowed to take his place among the seated senior musicians and receives his freedom from the caliph. The secondary characters who appear in both anecdotes are Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili, Mukhāriq's teacher, the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and one or other musician. Performing a task in a cemetery and accepting wagers or taking risks are prominent motifs.

The theme of Mukhāriq's exceptional voice and his musical skills is developed in various ways in the article. First, he affects his listeners profoundly. He can move such masters as Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili to tears (XVIII, 351). He exerts a spell on his hearers, whether they be al-Mu'taṣim's servants, who no longer hear their master calling them (360), al-Wāthiq's attendants, who listen impassively to all other singers but sway to Mukhāriq's rhythms (345), party-makers at night on the banks of the Tigris whose candles keep abreast of his launch as he sings on his way home from a palace (359), pilgrims starting out for the Hijaz, stopped in their tracks when he performs the call to prayer (345),¹²⁵ or gazelles encountered on a trip into the country, who come up to listen to him, but shy away again as soon as he falls silent (358). Likewise his own servants abandon their tasks and listen motionless as he performs a song for the caliph's singers, sent to learn it properly from him (352–3).

Second, Mukhāriq's outstanding status among the musicians of his time, already indicated in his vanquishing Ibn Jāmi', is taken up repeatedly. Ishāq al-Mawṣili judges him superior to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī because he can perform the old songs in solemn rhythms correctly (354), and considers that he is more naturally gifted and has a finer voice, although Ibrāhīm can sing better when he exploits his greater knowledge of music (341, 360–1). Mukhāriq is generally judged a better singer and composer than 'Allūya (348–9, 369–70) to the latter's chagrin (368–9), and al-Wāthiq rates him close to Ishāq himself (345). Abū l-'Atāhiya prefers Mukhāriq's setting of one of his poems to 'Amr ibn Bāna's (348–9), although he likes Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī's setting of the same verses even better (349).

Third, Mukhāriq's voice and musical gifts earn him his freedom and his *kunya* (teknonymic) and ward off punishment. The account of his contest with Ibn Jāmi' in the second anecdote above is followed by another version recounting how he sings a different song before al-Rashīd and is rewarded with his freedom, an estate, a house and servant (340–1; variant 341). Mukhāriq also relates how the caliph bestows on him the unusual *kunya* Abū l-Muhanna' after a successful performance (341–2).¹²⁶ Later on al-Mu'taṣim in a fit of anger demotes him to the rank of muezzin and obliges him to take his place with the other muezzins, until one day, when the call to the afternoon prayer comes, he performs it so movingly that the caliph and all who hear it weep. He is immediately reinstated as a singer (368).

Mukhāriq's willingness to undertake challenges like his contest with Ibn Jāmi' and his engaging in wagers like his father manifest themselves on several occasions. One such is when he stops the pilgrims in their tracks in imitation of Ibn Surayj (345). Another is when he bets some members of the Nawbakhtī family that he can bring all business in the livestock market in West Baghdad to a halt and draw everyone within earshot to him when he sings in the nearby graveyard. The street empties, people flock into the cemetery and he receives the stake, a sorrel horse which 'Abdallāh ibn Abi Sahl had earlier refused to give him (347–8). It is to win the gilded bow belonging to one of his companions that he charms the gazelles with his singing (358). And a game of backgammon involving a wager is the start

to an anecdote in which the husband of the midwife who delivered Mukhāriq's son extorts some songs from him (355–7).

This anecdote also portrays Mukhāriq as having inherited his father's skill in cookery, for when the singer wins his wager in the anecdote just referred to, he offers his friends a meal prepared with his own hands. It is after that that the midwife's husband interrupts them. The *khbar* thus takes up the idea of the affinity between food and music already hinted at in the second of the introductory anecdotes. Another illustration of this idea occurs in the account by the poet Abū l-Maḍā' al-Asadī of his chance meeting with Mukhāriq, who takes him home, plies him with food and drink, and then sings to him (350–1). It is further developed in Abū l-'Atāhiya's response to one of Mukhāriq's performances: "Remedy of the demented, you have become so rarified that I could almost sip you. If music were food, your singing would be the condiment, and if it were drink, your singing would be the water of life" (346).¹²⁷ But if people of the same social status can enjoy food and music together, the situation changes when one of the parties is a caliph. Mukhāriq tells of singing once in the presence of al-Amin, who was so delighted with his art that he bestowed some magnificent clothes on him. When Mukhāriq had put them on, the caliph regretted his generosity. He called for some food and insisted on the singer eating with him. As soon as Mukhāriq dipped his hand into the dish al-Amin, protesting that he had polluted it, kicked it into his lap, ruining the clothes he had just received. Some years later Mukhāriq was pressed by al-Ma'mūn to share his table. Again he obeyed, against his better judgement, but in the subsequent singing session the caliph ostentatiously preferred 'Allūya's performance to his. Soon after al-Ma'mūn invited him again to eat with him, but he refused to accept, and the caliph, seeing that he had understood the lesson that servants should not eat with their masters, now preferred his singing to 'Allūya's (361–3).

As is clear from this anecdote, it is important to know how to behave correctly with food. And, if Ibn Khurdādhbih's information is correct, it was Mukhāriq's carelessness in eating some cold food which killed him (373). So the association between cemeteries and food, established when Mukhāriq's father cooks stew for a wager, turns out to be equivocal.¹²⁸ And the cemetery itself, where Mukhāriq wins one of his wagers, does not lose its ominous character; in one incident some friends of the musician visit him to find him looking out on a graveyard and singing a song about the transitoriness of human life (357–8).

In the two opening anecdotes the theme of death is embryonically present, implied in the mention of the graveyard and the apparition of the "dead" man. One of the few themes entirely absent from these two lengthy *akhbār* but introduced later is that of the relation between music and religion. As has been noted, Mukhāriq stops the pilgrims in their tracks by singing the call to prayer (345) and is punished by al-Mu'taṣim with being relegated to the muezzins' rank (368). The closeness of profane music to the *adhān* is illustrated on other occasions too; when al-Mu'taṣim is travelling down the Tigris by boat, his muezzin performs the call to prayer, and immediately afterwards Mukhāriq repeats it so well that the muezzin,

deeply embarrassed, wishes the river would swallow him up (368). And a Quran reciter hears a girl performing one of Mukhāriq's settings, and is inspired to recite a verse of *Sūrat Maryam* to the same tune (355). Singing is not necessarily incompatible with fulfilling religious obligations either. After Mukhāriq has performed the hajj, one of his fellow-pilgrims asks him to sing something, and he complies. The man then prays to God to bestow the merit of his pilgrimage on the singer (373). But there is also a suggestion that Mukhāriq's inspiration is demonic, for he dreams of Iblīs making him the musicians' standard-bearer (351–2), and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī speaks of him as one of the Devil's offshoots (355).

The end of the article (372–3) returns to the themes of death – first of al-Ma'mūn's slave-girl, then of Mukhāriq himself – and of the singer's extraordinary gifts, which lead his fellow-pilgrim to bestow on him the merit of his own pilgrimage, a reward of a quite different order from the material recompenses he has usually received, but somewhat comparable to his manumission and acquisition of a teknonymic. While almost all the main themes are already introduced in the first two anecdotes, only some of the principal characters – Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, Hārūn al-Rashīd, 'Allūya – appear in them. Others, such as Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, al-Ma'mūn and Abū l-'Atāhiya, come on to the scene later. Through their deeds and words the characters provide variations and developments on the themes, either at various places scattered through the article, or, as with Abū l-'Atāhiya, at one point; the six anecdotes mentioning him or his poetry have been grouped together (345–9).

I would like to suggest, as a hypothesis, that Mukhāriq's article can be read as an arrangement of material in words akin to an arrangement of sound, such as is encountered in some Arabic musical forms like the modern *taqsim*. The *taqsim*, an instrumental form, starts and ends with the basic tonal group, progressing from the lower to the higher register and back. The performer elaborates on the basic modal structure, and may make transitions to related modes.¹²⁹ In Mukhāriq's article the first two unusually long anecdotes which introduce major themes would be equivalent to the statement of the basic tonal group, while the subsequent *akhbār* would correspond to embellishments and developments of the basic structure.

The objection may be made that since the *taqsim* in the form sketched here is a relatively recent phenomenon, it should not be projected into the past as a model for composition of articles of the *Kitāb al-aghānī*. But modulations and the ornamentation of basic rhythmic and melodic patterns are attested in mediaeval treatises such as al-Fārābī's *Kitāb al-mūsīqī al-kabīr* and al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad al-Kātib's *Kamāl adab al-ghinā'*.¹³⁰ However these basic patterns were executed, and here the sources are regrettably silent, they served as the foundation for modulation and ornamentation. It cannot be proved that the article on Mukhāriq, where the main themes are first stated in the profile and the long introductory anecdotes and then developed with variations, mirrors a certain type of musical composition in the fourth/tenth century, but what little evidence there is does not contradict this hypothesis.¹³¹

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ARTICLES

The common fund of material

The two preceding chapters have discussed the articles of the *Aghānī* almost as though they were discrete texts. Since, as a rule, articles are marked off from each other by an introductory song and a title, they can be read in isolation from each other. But an attentive reading of the book in its entirety, or of substantial parts of it, will identify recurrent themes, repeated quotations, secondary characters who frequently appear and other elements shared by various articles. These elements belong to a common fund of material from which the *Kitāb al-aghānī* draws. Another characteristic encountered throughout the work is the introduction of articles by songs, and the fact that lines of poetry set to music precede every new subject (in the central part of the book, on royal musicians, this is slightly modified) gives the book a particular rhythm.¹ It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that the *Aghānī* resembles a woven cloth, with the articles functioning as the warp, and the elements from the common fund and the introductory songs linking articles as the weft.

One of the main links between articles is the compiler's voice. Abū l-Faraj's interventions have been examined earlier on. Here it may be noted that they mainly contribute to the *Aghānī*'s cohesion in three distinct ways. They serve as frequent reminders of the compiler's aims and method of work. They also convey his appreciation of the poets and musicians he presents and thus draw attention to the artistic qualities of the poems and settings included in the book. And when they trace the development of motifs in poetry and prose, or compare alternative versions of the same events, they call to mind that the material may well have undergone a process of literary elaboration. All in all they give readers a sense that the compiler is accompanying them through the book.

Another very important link is the presence of music. The original readers of the *Aghānī*, seeing performance indications, were reminded of songs they knew, and they may have hummed or whistled the tunes to themselves as they turned the book's pages. Modern readers can do no more than note the existence of the performance indications. But even so these lists of rhythmic and melodic modes which occur throughout the book distinguish the *Aghānī* from all other mediaeval Arabic texts which have survived. For the handful of other works which mention settings do not even list alternative melodies. The *Aghānī*, by contrast, aims at

exhaustiveness, often mentioning several, and even all the settings the compiler knew of any given poem, and indicating their sources.²

Poetry and songs

Beyond the compiler's interventions and the indications of song settings there are many repetitions of material of different kinds drawn from the common fund of pre- and early Islamic poetry and prose. As far as songs and poetry are concerned, the poem quoted most frequently throughout the book is the *Mu'allaqa* of Imru' al-Qays, parts of which are found in seven volumes of the *Aghāni*.³ The reader first encounters a line from this famous poem in al-Ḥuṭay'a's article, where the dying poet refuses to observe the convention of giving his loved ones wise advice in a testament (*waṣīya*), preferring to recite the verses he admires most (II, 196; *Mu'allaqa*, l. 46).⁴ Bashshār quotes the poem's first line as one of the best beginnings to a pre-Islamic poem (in Bashshār's article, III, 148), while one of al-Mahdī's courtiers designates another line as one of the best examples of love poetry (in al-Aḥwaṣ's article, IV, 265; *Mu'allaqa*, l. 22). At al-Rashid's behest Ishāq al-Mawṣilī performs a setting of one line during a private recital (in Ishāq's article, V, 300; *Mu'allaqa*, l. 19), while Sā'ib Khāthir is said to have used the same line as the lyrics of his first song (Sā'ib Khāthir's article, VIII, 322). In Imru' al-Qays's own article the poem is given at length with its numerous settings.⁵ Shortly afterwards a line from it is quoted by a jinni whom a traveller has the presence of mind to question about the best poets (al-A'shā's article, IX, 111; *Mu'allaqa*, l. 22). And it reappears yet again in al-Farazdaq's article, where Imru' al-Qays's meeting with girls at Dārat Juljul forms the subtext to the Umayyad poet's own more inglorious encounter with some girls (XXI, 342; *Mu'allaqa*, l. 14).

The next most quoted poem, 'Antara's *Mu'allaqa*, appears in six volumes. It is first mentioned in Ibn Surayj's article, during a discussion between Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī and Ishāq al-Mawṣilī about the Umayyad singer's best compositions, when his setting of the line is given (I, 270, 271; *Mu'allaqa*, l. 51).⁶ Ḥunayn al-Ḥirī's grandson performs this same song before Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, explaining that it was composed in Ḥunayn's house (in Ḥunayn's article, II, 353; a setting by Ḥunayn 356). Other lines of the poem set to music were performed by the singers referred to as the Three Hudhalis during the song festival which Jamīla organised after her pilgrimage (in Jamīla's article, VIII, 215; *Mu'allaqa*, ll. 6, 10, 11, 29). Ma'bad composed one of the settings known as his Cities (*mudun*) on lyrics from the *Mu'allaqa*, which gives Abū l-Faraj the opportunity to quote all the verses which were set to music, their performance indications and philological notes, and to relate the circumstances of 'Antara's making the poem; this is in fact a short article on the *Mu'allaqa* (IX, 220–4; *Mu'allaqa*, ll. 1, 2, 5, 10, 6, 9, 74, 75, 71, 68, 44, 47, 67, 50, 40, 41). The poem returns fleetingly in Zuhayr's article, because 'Antara mentions Harim ibn Ḍamḍam al-Murri, the subject of Zuhayr's praise, in it (X, 293; *Mu'allaqa*, l. 79). And it makes a final appearance in a song 'Azza al-Maylā' sings to Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn and Ibn Surayj, whom the *grande dame* has detained against

his will (XVII, 46–8; *Mu‘allaqa*, ll. 6, 11).⁷ Interestingly, it is not mentioned in the article on ‘Antara.

The third most quoted poetry is two lines of *nasīb* by Jarīr,⁸ which are found in five places. Ibn Surayj sings them to silence his critic ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ – a judicious choice, since ‘Aṭā’ is delighted with them (in Ibn Surayj’s article, I, 257, setting p. 272). Ibn Munādhir quotes them, followed by three lines of panegyric from the same poem, to illustrate his opinion that Jarīr is the best poet of the Umayyad period (in Abū l-‘Atāhiya’s article, IV, 57). The same combination of two and three lines appears in Jarīr’s own article as an example of playfulness followed by gravity (VIII, 59–60). Much later they are the subject of a short article (XVI, 316–21),⁹ and they are finally sung by Ash‘ab to Sālim ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar in order to win a wager (Ash‘ab’s article, XIX, 167). Ten other poems are quoted in four different volumes each, and forty-eight in three. All these repetitions create a web of familiar lines of poetry, sometime with settings, in the book. And as the examination of Abū l-Faraj’s cross-references has shown, he expected his readers to recall poetry and performance indications they had encountered several volumes away.¹⁰

Characters

While modern readers may have difficulty recalling lines of poetry they have come across hundreds of pages earlier, they will certainly realise that the *Aghānī* contains a repertoire of characters who appear over and over again. Some of them play a central part in several articles: ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi’a, subject of the longest article in the book (I, 60–248), also figures in three short articles with his poetry dedicated to Nu‘m, Zaynab bint Mūsā and Su’dā (or Laylā) (IX, 239–47; XV, 262–5; XVII, 369–73, respectively), in another with verses on Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam’s daughter which angered the Umayyads against him (IX, 62–9), and as the narrator of a love story with a happy ending whose hero is an ‘Udhri friend of his (XI, 169–75). Al-Aḥwaṣ has a substantial main article (IV, 223–68), but his love for Umm Ja‘far is treated separately (VI, 253–9), and poems of his are the subject of two further short sections (XVI, 293–7; XXI, 95–101). While Abū l-‘Atāhiya’s main article comes quite early on in the *Aghānī* (III, 368; IV, 1–112), the account of his conflict with ‘Abdallāh and Zā’ida, the sons of Ma’n ibn Zā’ida al-Shaybānī, is given much later (XV, 277–82), as is a short section on poetry he composed at Umm Ja‘far’s request (XX, 301–5). Ishāq al-Mawṣili’s main article (V, 268–435) is not quite as long as ‘Umar’s, but in addition his relationships with his patron and fellow music-lover ‘Alī ibn Hishām and with his slave Ziyād are treated, each in a few pages (XVII, 110–15; XX, 321–4).

Ishāq, however, is far more present in the *Aghānī* than is suggested by his leading part in these three articles; indeed, he wins the prize for ubiquity.¹¹ It is worth distinguishing the various roles which he plays elsewhere in the book, since some of them are typical of other characters too. As far as music is concerned, Ishāq composed numerous settings, as a glance at performance indications anywhere in the book will show; sometimes he is the author of the melody of the introductory

song.¹² For the original readers of the *Aghānī* this written information reflected Ishāq's distinct musical style, which they heard when they recalled the tunes to themselves.¹³ As has been pointed out earlier,¹⁴ Ishāq was also one of Abū l-Faraj's major authorities for performance indications; he is not only a composer but a transmitter of the compositions of others. Where settings and performance indications are concerned, then, it is hard to get away from Ishāq in the *Aghānī*.

But Ishāq was also a central figure of early 'Abbāsīd musical life. He appears as a performer before caliphs from Hārūn al-Rashīd to al-Wāthiq.¹⁵ He is in contact with princely musicians¹⁶ and contemporary singers at court and occasionally elsewhere,¹⁷ often delivering verdicts on their gifts and skill in general,¹⁸ or on particular compositions and performances.¹⁹ Depending on whether they follow his father's and his musical preferences and style of performing or those of his rival Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, they may be designated as friends or foes.²⁰ Sometimes he engages in controversies. In the lengthy dispute with Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī on musicological questions he is portrayed as the winner,²¹ but this is not always the case elsewhere. For instance, as a foolhardy youth he prefers his own setting to his father's for a poem, but the stranger whom Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī invites to arbitrate unhesitatingly declares Ibrāhīm's tune to be better, and Ishāq gets his ears boxed (V, 199–200). Much later he argues with Badhl before al-Ma'mūn about the authorship of a song she has sung, and she retaliates by asking him who the composers of three other songs are, to which he has no answer (XVII, 79).

Ishāq is also an authority about the early history of music and musicians, transmitting reports about Umayyad singers such as Hunayn al-Ḥirī (II, 347, 348, 350), al-Abjar (III, 344–5) and 'Azza al-Maylā' (XVII, 162–4) and judgements of Ibn Surayj (I, 268–71, 293–4) and Ibn 'Ā'isha (II, 204–5). Concerned as he is with the correct transmission of songs, he takes a critical view of Yaḥyā al-Makkī, who was notoriously inaccurate in his attributions of authorship (VI, 177–9). Since he is steeped in the present and past of Arabic music, he is a prominent teacher, counting Qalam al-Ṣāliḥiyya, Danānir, and 'Abdallāh ibn Abī l-'Alā' among his pupils (XIII, 347; XVIII, 65; XXIV, 1–2). But he dislikes teaching his own songs to others, leaving the task to one of his own slave-girls if it is unavoidable.²²

As a singer, composer, and courtier, Ishāq is also concerned with poetry. He himself is portrayed composing poetry on different occasions, for instance, elegies on his father (V, 256–7), an expression of homesickness for Baghdad (IX, 283–5), or a reply to a poem of reproach addressed to him by Abū 'Uyayna on Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī's prompting (XX, 91–2). He adopts a motif from Ibn Mayyāda, successfully in Abū l-Faraj's view (II, 294). But he occasionally runs out of inspiration; after composing half a line of poetry, he has a mental block, and it is his friend al-Taymī who completes the line and adds another (XX, 45–6).

Like any educated man, he is capable of quoting poetry. When al-Rashīd chooses a theme, he recites verses by Jamīl which illustrate it (VII, 146–7). He cheers al-Ma'mūn by reciting a poem of Abū l-Ṭamahān al-Qaynī's which fits his mood (XIII, 12). He is rewarded for his recitations, in appropriate circumstances, of Ashja' al-Sulamī's panegyric and description of an evening wine-drinking session (XVIII,

221–2, 237–8). And by declaiming his friend al-Taymī's verses to al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā he gets the hitherto unknown poet admitted into the presence of one of the most prominent men in the state and later rewarded (XX, 51, 54).

Ishāq also has his own views on poetry. He criticises Bashshār for having an uneven style (III, 155–6), judges al-Ḥuṭay'a to have been the most gifted poet after Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā (III, 169), and prefers 'Abdallāh ibn Abī 'Uyayna's poetry to that of his father and brother (XX, 85). He admires a poem by Muzāḥim, and recalls that Jarīr thought highly of this poet too (XIX, 98–9). In his opinion Abū Nuwās is inferior to Ashja' al-Sulamī in his wine songs (XVIII, 220–1), for which he borrowed many motifs from Abū l-Hindī (XX, 329). He recognises a similarity between a line by Nuṣayb and one by Imru' al-Qays – an observation that his father Ibrāhīm had made before him (VI, 125). Ishāq interacts with other judges of poetry too, asking Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣa who is the best contemporary poet excluding himself (V, 264), and expressing a typically Iraqi response to a line by Kuthayyir, as 'Abdallāh ibn Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī points out to him (IV, 267). He has his own ideas about the attribution of poetry, not all of which are shared by others, and some of which are wrong.²³

In some incidents it is less Ishāq the musician and poet than Ishāq the human being who is portrayed. He is shown as a young man accompanying his father Ibrāhīm to al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā's, where they hear Salm al-Khāsir recite a poem (XIX, 282–3). In another *khābar* he and his father encounter Ibn Jāmi' one hot day outside Baghdad, and Ibn Jāmi' offers them hospitality, including – to Ishāq's horror – wine which has stood in the sun. But Ibrāhīm, who is more discerning, accepts the invitation, and they are rewarded with some splendid singing by their host (XV, 22–4). When Ibrāhīm dies, al-Rashid consoles Ishāq for his loss in a fatherly way (V, 258).

Among Ishāq's friends are the poet Ibn Sayāba, on whose account he intercedes with al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabi' (XII, 90–1), and al-Taymī, whom he reconciles with 'Amr ibn Mas'ada (XX, 44, 56–7). When he first meets al-'Attābī, the two men engage in learned plays on words, and very soon sympathy is established between them (XIII, 111–12). Court life being what it is, he has enemies too, such as 'Amr ibn Bāna, who persuades a friend, Ibn Shughuf, not to admit Ishāq when he comes to call, thus causing a temporary estrangement between them (VII, 172–4). The reasons for hostility may be profound; when Ishāq attacks Sulaym in poetry, it is out of jealousy because Ibrāhīm had loved this singer, who was his pupil (VI, 164).

Of course many other subjects of articles besides Ishāq appear elsewhere in the *Aghānī* as singers, poets, critics, transmitters of literary or musical traditions, friends, enemies or a combination of these roles. And personalities who have no article of their own, such as the Prophet Muḥammad, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the caliphs Mu'āwiya, 'Abd al-Malik, al-Mahdi, Hārūn al-Rashid and al-Ma'mūn play a part in articles on contemporary or earlier poets and singers. In fact *Aghānī* characters can be divided into those who belong to the regular cast, and those, many pre-Islamic poets for instance, who make a single guest appearance. And when one considers the characters of the *Aghānī* as a whole, one cannot help being struck by

the prominence in the regular cast of political actors, not only caliphs but also lesser men like al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf and al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabiʿ, and the very modest part played by representatives of scholarly disciplines.²⁴

One such political actor who often appears is the caliph al-Manṣūr.²⁵ His reign, like those of other rulers, serves to situate some poets and singers in time; it was during his caliphate that Ibn Mayyāda, Mālik ibn Abī l-Samḥ, and Ruʿba all died (II, 269; V, 101; XX, 345). Political events of his caliphate are referred to several times. Among the most prominent is the uprising of the ʿAlids Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan, and a number of episodes connected with it are recounted: al-Manṣūr's sending ʿUqba ibn Salm to spy on the suspected rebels' followers in Khurasan and using him to frighten their father ʿAbdallāh into revealing their presence (XXI, 121–3), the caliph's blaming the old man's stubbornness for his being imprisoned (I, 414–15), his imprisoning another of ʿAbdallāh's sons, Mūsā (XVI, 360), the recitation of ʿUwayf al-Qawāfi's poetry at the last battle Ibrāhīm fights against the caliph's army (XIX, 191–3), and the involvement of ʿAbdallāh ibn Muṣʿab and other members of the Zubayrid clan on Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh's side (XXIV, 237). Another significant event is the removal of ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā from the succession, treated in a short section on ʿĪsā (XVI, 241–2) and also in the article on Abū Nukhayla, who, driven by the desire to please the caliph, composed an *uḥḍa* calling for ʿĪsā's destitution – and was killed as a result (XX, 390, 416–18, 420–1).²⁶ A much less serious problem connected with the succession, the unstable Jaʿfar ibn Abī Jaʿfar's refusal to recognise his brother al-Mahdī as heir to the throne, is touched on in the article on Muṭiʿ ibn Iyās (XIII, 287–9). Al-Manṣūr's own past as a rebel, joining ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya, and his eliminating one of ʿAbdallāh's companions after he became caliph, are referred to only in passing (XII, 229–1), as is his having Abū Muslim killed (XXII, 208). The more mundane business of ruling the empire is seldom mentioned; it is hinted at in a few appointments or destitutions of governors (XIV, 326, 359–60, 363, 375; XX, 79), the edict that women descended from ʿAbd Manāf and thus members of the the Prophet's clan should only marry men related to them (XIV, 129–30) and the caliph's imposition of the wearing of black (X, 236; XVII, 335).

More than as a political leader, al-Manṣūr is portrayed as a patron of poets and as a man with a marked interest in, and knowledge of, the Arabic literary heritage. As for his contacts with poets, he is the subject of panegyrics by, for instance, Ibn Harma, al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, Abū Ḥayya al-Numayrī and Abū Nukhayla (VI, 109–13; VII, 260–2; XVI, 309; XX, 416–17). His reluctance to reward poets appropriately for their praise is a recurrent trait, illustrated for instance in his response to Ibn Harma (VI, 112–13), and supported by the statement that during his rule poets left Baghdad in search of patronage (XIII, 300). He even demands back from al-Muʿammil ibn Umayl part of the reward his son, al-Mahdī, had given him on the grounds that the amount is excessive, though when al-Mahdī becomes caliph he pays the balance of what he had promised (XXII, 245–8). At the same time al-Manṣūr is jealous if he believes that a poet has produced a better panegyric of someone else, as with Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa's praise of Maʿn ibn Zāʿida (X, 85–6)

or Abū Dulāma's of al-Saffāh (X, 242). The issue becomes more sensitive when the poet has been a protégé of one of the Umayyads. Al-Manṣūr is willing to overlook Ibn Harma's praise of one of the Umayyad princes (VI, 109–10). But he refuses to reward Abū 'Aṭā' al-Sindī for his *madīḥ*, since he had previously praised the Umayyads and composed an elegy on their governor Naṣr ibn Sayyār, and in return Abū 'Aṭā' lampoons him (XVII, 332–3).

But while al-Manṣūr's well-known meanness hampers him from giving poets the material rewards they expect, he may show his appreciation in other ways. After hearing Muṭi' ibn Iyās's poem mentioning the palms of Ḥulwān, he abandons his idea of cutting them down, and also warns al-Mahdī not to touch them (XIII, 334). When Ibn Harma asks, as a reward for a poem, that he may be allowed to indulge his love of wine, al-Manṣūr indirectly grants his request by proclaiming that anyone who denounces him for drinking will receive a greater punishment than he does (IV, 375). And hearing that the inhabitants of Wasit refused to bury al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī when he died there, he responds that if the report is true he will burn the town down (VII, 277).

Like other Umayyad and early 'Abbasid caliphs, al-Manṣūr is concerned not only with the panegyrics composed by his contemporaries but also with the heritage of poetry and prose in Arabic. He responds to it in different ways. Hearing that the imprisoned 'Alid 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan frequently quotes verses which al-'Arjī composed criticising those who imprisoned him, he observes that it is the prisoner's own obstinacy which has caused his downfall (I, 414–15); in other words, he contests the applicability of the poetry to 'Abdallāh's situation. After the burial of his son Ja'far al-Akbar, he looks for a member of his family who knows Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhali's famous elegy of his five sons. Not finding one, he remarks that this proof of his relatives' lack of interest in culture is as great a blow as the loss of his son. Finally an old man is brought in who recites the poem to him, repeating one verse in particular which he finds apt (VI, 272–4). On the same occasion he also has al-Rabī' ibn Yūnus recite Muṭi' ibn Iyās's elegy of Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithī (XIII, 289). In another ritual of mourning Ḥammād al-Rāwiya is summoned from a tavern in Basra to recite to him an elegy appropriate to his brother (VI, 80–1). The caliph in these three instances already knows the poem in question, but he wishes to hear it performed; verbal communication is an essential part of the experience he seeks. How important this communication is can be seen from an incident when he asks Thumāma ibn al-Walid al-'Absī if he remembers the story of his fellow-tribesman 'Urwa ibn al-Wārd and a horse-thief. Thumāma is at a loss, and so al-Manṣūr tells it himself, following it with a second story about the robber-poet (III, 83–8). In other words, here he does not want information but to re-tell and share a familiar incident. And his interest in the literary heritage is not academic; he himself enjoyed a considerable reputation for eloquence. 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir, writing to Ibn al-Mu'tazz, says that al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's rhetorical gifts were divided up among his descendants with Ibn al-Mu'tazz receiving one half, and the other half being shared by al-Manṣūr and al-Ma'mūn (X, 276–7).

The same interest in the heritage leads him to discuss and exchange with poets and men of letters. On his way back from the pilgrimage the caliph is met by a group including Bashshār ibn Burd. He recites a line of poetry and Bashshār caps it, for which he is rewarded (III, 178–9). He hears from Ibn Mayyāda how the latter defended himself from al-Walid ibn Yazīd's criticism that in praising the Prophet's family he had given them precedence over the Marwānids, and he is impressed with the poet's answer (II, 294). The young al-Rabī' ibn Yūnus demonstrates his literary education by being able to explain to the caliph why the exclamation "Ah! Ah!" follows two lines of poetry scribbled on a wall; for this, his good manners and his tact he is given his freedom and promoted to chamberlain (VI, 326–7). And when al-Manṣūr wants to know who is the greatest poet, he sends a messenger to Ḥammād al-Rāwīya, who is relaxing at home, to provide the answer – al-A'shā (IX, 110). But discussions about poetry are not always so innocent. Al-Manṣūr asks Ṭurayḥ if he had not praised al-Walid ibn Yazīd extravagantly in one of his poems, quoting the lines in question. Ṭurayḥ, however, neatly extricates himself from a threatening situation by explaining that he was addressing God, not the caliph, an interpretation al-Manṣūr accepts (IV, 315–16). The poet Abū l-'Abbās al-A'mā is not so devious. He had met al-Manṣūr on his way to Syria in the days of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam and recited a panegyric of Marwān to him. After al-Manṣūr becomes caliph, he approaches Abū l-'Abbās incognito and asks him if he remembers their meeting. Abū l-'Abbās recites an elegy he composed on Marwān, adding that the Umayyad had rewarded him so generously that he would have no material cares for the rest of his life. Al-Manṣūr is furious but restrains his anger, and when he later looks for Abū l-'Abbās, the poet has disappeared (XVI, 299–300). This incident, however, ends better than the one where the caliph orders al-'Abī to recite his panegyric of the Umayyads and then curses him. In reaction the poet joins Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh's revolt in Medina (XI, 294–5).

While al-Manṣūr is well-versed in poetry and narratives, his taste in music is unsophisticated. When 'Abdallāh ibn Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī criticises him for leaving Medina on the way back to Iraq without hearing Baṣbaṣ's singing he is angered, preferring the old camel-drivers' style of singing (*ḥudā'*) and the lyrics of their songs. But even then he gives the man who performs Ṭarīf al-'Anbarī's poetry for him in this style a miserable reward (XV, 30–1). He cannot understand why the sons of Sulaymān ibn 'Alī reward Ḥakam al-Wādī so generously, although when he sees one of his generals, not known for his extravagance, give the singer a large recompense he concedes that there may be some reason for it (VI, 285). His son al-Mahdī, who later as caliph laid the foundations of the court musical tradition, dares not admit to him that he has bought a well-known singing girl, Maknūna (X, 162). This indifference to music, bordering on hostility, together with his ungenerous attitude to poets, helps to explain why he is mentioned less often in the *Kitāb al-aghānī* than, for instance, al-Mahdī or al-Ma'mūn, neither of whom ruled for so long.

Al-Manṣūr is portrayed consistently in the *Aghānī* and his salient characteristics both as a ruler and as a man emerge clearly.²⁷ The same generally holds good

for other subsidiary characters who appear repeatedly in the book, although they are not often presented in as much detail as important historical figures like caliphs. Thus, for instance, the cultured Medinan Ibn Abi 'Atiq, Abū Bakr's great-grandson, plays a supporting part in many articles on Hijazi poets and musicians of the later Umayyad period, as a connoisseur of poetry and music, an intermediary, for example, between singers and the authorities, and occasionally a go-between a poet and his beloved.

Typical situations

Besides the regular cast of characters, another recurrent feature of the *Aghānī* is the portrayal of typical situations such as are likely to occur in any biography. In poets' or singers' lives, which are the commonest theme, one such situation concerns turning points in their careers. The moment when they gain recognition, the way they negotiate a difficult passage from a patron who has lost his influence to a new one, how they cope with challengers: the representation of these crucial events in different articles provides a series of examples of some types of man's behaviour in society, the exploration of which is one of the main concerns of *adab*. The indications of how singers embarked on their artistic career may serve to illustrate this aspect of the *Aghānī*.²⁸

The beginning of a singer's career is sketched in eighteen articles; it is not automatically part of the presentation of a singer.²⁹ The first singer treated in the *Aghānī*, and one of the greatest, is Ma'bad, and his first steps in singing are appropriately exceptional. He was a slave charged by his owners with watching for bedouin outside Medina, intercepting them and buying their livestock before they got to market.³⁰ During the night, when he dozed off, tunes would go round in his head, and when he woke up he would reproduce them (I, 41). His untaught genius is affirmed in the anecdote where Ibn Surayj and al-Gharīḍ see him in the graveyard, setting traps for birds and singing to himself the first of the Top Hundred songs (I, 44).

Other musicians started by imitating the songs they heard around them. Ibn Miṣjaḥ learned the Persian style of singing from Persian workmen rebuilding the mosque in Mecca (III, 276–7, 279). As a boy, Ḥunayn al-Ḥirī delivered fruit and sweet-smelling herbs to the *beau monde* of al-Ḥira. His customers invited him in, and he got to know and love the music he heard in their homes, listening intently to it until he had picked up the art of singing (II, 345). Mālik ibn Abī l-Samḥ was an orphan whom his mother sent to beg in the streets of Medina. He would hang around at the gate of Ḥamza ibn 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr's house, to which Ma'bad was a regular visitor. When he realised that singing was often to be heard there, he stationed himself there regularly, even though he often earned nothing all day, to his mother's fury. One day Ḥamza, noting that this boy was always hanging around, invited him in. He explained that he had picked up all Ma'bad's settings but didn't know the words, and Ḥamza invited Ma'bad to audition him. The result was impressive enough for Ḥamza to persuade Ma'bad to take him on as a pupil, while

ensuring that the rest of his family had enough to live on (V, 102–5). A well-known pandore player, al-Zubaydī, was a frequent visitor to ‘Ubayda’s father’s house, and when he was there he would often sing. ‘Ubayda loved music and when al-Zubaydī realised that she was gifted, he gave her lessons (XXII, 208). Jamīla, a freedwoman, lived next door to Sā’ib Khāthir and she started by secretly imitating his style, though she soon began to improve on it. One day her mistresses overheard her singing, and from then on she became known as a musician and started to teach others, earning her mistresses much money (VIII, 187).

Sometimes it was an outsider who recognised that a boy or girl was promising. Mukhāriq, a butcher’s son, started off crying his father’s wares, and his owner, realising that he had an exceptional voice, had him take some lessons before selling him to Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī for a phenomenal price (XVIII, 337–9). Shāriya’s gifts, too, must have been evident early on, for her owner arranged for her to receive some instruction before taking her from Basra to Baghdad and selling her to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, who continued her training (XVI, 3–5). In these two examples, both from the ‘Abbāsīd period, it was the singer’s owner who realised that the young slave was a valuable commodity for whom a high price could be asked.

But for the upper classes, becoming a singer had no such positive connotations. ‘Amr ibn Bāna taunted Ishāq al-Mawṣilī with the fact that as the son of an influential *kātib* he was beaten as a punishment for his interest in music, while Ishāq, the son of a musician, was beaten in order to make him learn music (XV, 270). If well-born young men acquired a musical education, it might be a means to a very different end. ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘ī, the grandson of the chamberlain al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabī‘, who lost his father as a child, fell in love with a singing-girl belonging to his aunt, and he claimed to be interested in learning to sing in order to be able to spend time with her. His doting aunt allowed him to take lessons with her. Not only did the love affair progress, but ‘Abdallāh became a fine singer, to his grandfather’s horror (XIX, 212–22).

Most unusual of all was Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar’s initiation into singing. Al-Ma’mūn assigned him to keep him informed about the sayings and doings of his uncle Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, who for a brief period had claimed the caliphate when al-Ma’mūn proclaimed ‘Alī al-Riḍā as his successor. Muḥammad, however, promised Ibrāhīm only to pass on the information which Ibrāhīm was willing to have known. During the time he spent with the prince he learned to sing and play the lute, and became the recognised transmitter of Ibrāhīm’s repertoire (XXIII, 177).

Nothing is told of how Ishāq al-Mawṣilī’s musical talents were first discovered or manifested themselves; probably as the son of an eminent musician he was simply expected to follow in his father’s footsteps.³¹ But he gives an account of his curriculum of study as a boy. It included studying the Quran and *ḥadīth*, learning to play the lute from Maṣṣūr Zalzal, learning songs from ‘Ātika bint Shuhda, and studying grammar and early Arabic history (V, 271–2). This strict programme stands in sharp contrast to his father’s haphazard initiation into singing. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, whose father died when he was very young, was a drop-out from school

who gravitated naturally to Bohemian circles and developed a love of music, despite his uncles' opposition. Wanting to become a singer, he went first to Mosul and then to Rayy, taking lessons in both cities. In Rayy he received his first reward for singing and, more attracted by music than by the financial gains it offered, decided to reinvest the money in further lessons (V, 157–8).

These pieces of information are scattered through the book. But when they are brought together, as I have done here, they can be seen to offer a series of samples of behaviour in a particular situation, connected with a given theme, in this case singers' debuts. If the information is compared, certain factors emerge as important for the beginning of a singer's career, for instance early exposure to fine music, contacts with skilled musicians, or the singer's social background. At the same time an element of pure chance may be present, as when a spy learns to sing because the man he has to inform on is a musician, or a young lover needs an excuse to be with his beloved.

Another situation depicted in some articles is the subject's confronting death.³² Here attitudes vary greatly. Some poets face a violent death heroically. The pre-Islamic Qays ibn al-Ḥudādiya refuses to surrender and be taken prisoner, for he knows his tribe will not ransom him. Instead, he fights to the last while reciting defiant poetry (XIV, 160). Šakhr al-Ghayy, one of the Banū Hudhayl, is surrounded by enemy tribesmen and fights them off, taunting them and lamenting the absence of his allies, until he drops (XXII, 348–9). 'Abd Yaghūth, about to be killed in revenge for a champion of an enemy tribe, asks to die a noble death, that is, to be given some wine and then allowed to recite a lament. His request is granted, and he proclaims his own elegy as he bleeds to death from a slashed vein in his forearm (XVI, 333). Ja'far ibn 'Ulba, a victim of tribal feuding in the early 'Abbasid period, shows his courage by even refusing a drink of water and ostensibly mending the thong of his sandal before he is executed (XIII, 53).³³ Especially impressive in facing a violent end is Ḥujr ibn 'Adī, who refuses to renounce his loyalty to 'Alī, despite the urging of Mu'āwiya's messengers, and prepares for death with dignity and pious resignation; even his fear of the executioner's sword does not lead him to waver (XVII, 150–1).

A less spectacular form of heroism is shown by the singer Abū Zakkār al-A'mā, who is entertaining Ja'far ibn Yahyā al-Barmakī at the moment when the executioner comes for him. Abū Zakkār asks to be killed with his patron, to whom he owes everything (VII, 227); this request is, however, refused. By contrast Sā'ib Khāthir, who had performed before Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya, is undecided in his loyalty. He does not leave Medina when Ibn al-Zubayr revolts, but at the Battle of al-Ḥarra, judging that the Syrian army will win, he goes to them and explains that he has sung to the caliph. The Syrians ask him for a song, but his singing does not efface his disloyalty, and he is killed (VIII, 325–6).

When the death is not violent, the poet or singer may think about those dear to him. During his last illness Ibn Surayj expresses concern for his daughter's future, until she proves to him that she has learned his repertoire. Then he marries her off to a pupil of his, Sa'īd al-Hudhali, thus ensuring that both she and his songs will

be taken care of (I, 319).³⁴ Far away in Egypt, the 'Udhri poet Jamil remembers Buthayna as his death approaches, and he has a messenger take his robe and ride his camel to his beloved's people, where he is to recite verses Jamil has composed announcing his end (VIII, 153). When close to death, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz collects his children round him and expresses his love for those of them who are poor. He angrily rejects the suggestion of his cousin Maslama ibn 'Abd al-Malik that he should bestow wealth on all of them, recalling that after his uncle 'Abd al-Malik died he had a vision of him undergoing fearful punishment. 'Umar has always sought to avoid acting like him, for he lives in the hope of receiving Divine forgiveness (IX, 264–5).

Arrangements for the burial may also be on the dying poet's mind. Labid, who has no son, instructs his nephew to lay him out facing the *qibla*, cover his body with his robe, and ensure that the women do not start their lamentations. He is to prepare food in the two cauldrons Labid used when entertaining guests, take them to the mosque and invite those present to partake of them after the prayer. Then he is to ask them to attend the funeral of their friend. The poet also describes in poetry the grave he would like, covered with large stones, and orders his daughters not to tear their cheeks or shave their hair as a sign of grief, or to mourn him for more than a year (XV, 378). Al-Kumayt has decided where he wants to be buried, not in the usual graveyard on the outskirts of Kufa, for he has heard that the graves there will be dug up and the corpses reburied, but in a place called Makrān. His son fulfils his request, and al-Kumayt is the first to be buried in what becomes the Banū Asad's cemetery (XVII, 40).

But al-Kumayt is not only concerned about his last resting-place. He reaffirms his devotion to the Prophet's family. And he shows remorse at having lampooned the women of Banū Kalb and accused them all of immorality; he admits to having expected divine retribution for that (XVII, 40). Another poet who looks back on his poetry in his last hours is al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī; afflicted with a painful skin disease, he cries out: "O God, is this my reward for my devotion to Muḥammad's descendants?" In another version he reaffirms his loyalty to 'Alī and his rejection of the first three caliphs just before breathing his last (VII, 276–7).

While the attitude of these two poets, and also of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz and Ḥujr ibn 'Adī, during their last hours is dictated by their belief in the afterlife and the Day of Judgement, some men face death in a very different spirit. Ibn Qunbur, an early 'Abbasid poet of Basra, contests the competence of Khaṣīb, the doctor who has been called to treat him in his last illness, in three neat lines of poetry (XIV, 168). In a remarkable example of continuity with the spirit of the Jāhiliya, Yaḥyā ibn Ṭālib, a poet of the 'Abbasid era who got into debt and died far from home, is depicted in one account as boasting of his generosity to travellers while breathing his last (XXIV, 142). Most striking is the behaviour of al-Ḥuṭay'a when he is close to death. First he refuses to make the pious recommendations (*waṣīya*) expected of a dying man, preferring to name the poets he admires most. He does not free his slaves or give any money to the poor. He assigns equal shares of his estate to his daughters and his sons, in contravention of Islamic law, and

enjoins the exploitation of orphans. Finally, he asks his relatives to mount him on a donkey and let him ride it till he dies, for, as he says, no noble man dies in his bed, and no noble man has even died riding a donkey. And in his last verses he attacks his own base behaviour (II, 195–7).

These are examples of some poets' last days and hours. In other cases a poet foresees his death at some time in the future, mostly in a spirit of stoic resignation. For instance, when Jarīr hears of al-Farazdaq's death, he weeps, knowing that his own end is near. For, as he says, when two people have been so taken up with each other, if one dies the other is bound to follow soon (VIII, 89). The Basran poet Muḥammad ibn Yaṣīr composes a poem on the importance of the remembrance of death in which he refers to his own coming end, reciting it in the circle of one Muḥammad, a friend of the early ascetic and Sufi al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (XIV, 39–40). Musāwir al-Warrāq goes to visit a seriously ill friend, Abū l-'Īṣ al-Jarmī, and Abū l-'Īṣ, after keeping silent, recites three verses of poetry on the inescapability of death, even if it is slow in coming (XVIII, 153). Ashja' al-Sulamī broaches the subject of death when he and his two brothers come across the graves of al-Walid ibn 'Uqba and his friend Abū Zubayd al-Ṭā'i, who had asked to be buried close to him.³⁵ Inspired by this example of companionship beyond death, Ashja' wonders which of the three of them – Aḥmad, Ashja' or Yazid – will first fall victim to fate (XVIII, 251–2).

As these examples show, being confronted with death reveals a subject's most authentic behaviour, with regard both to the ordeal itself and to the people closest to him. It brings out his profound convictions, whether they are inspired by Islam or by the pre-Islamic belief in fate. And when the different illustrations of a given situation, in this case facing death, are brought together, they create a setting for each individual instance, which gains in significance by being related to the composite picture of pre- and early Islamic poets and singers seeing their end approach. Where other subjects are concerned, too, following up recurrent themes enables the individual pieces of information to be situated in a wider context, and thus to gain an additional dimension of meaning.

Controversial issues

Many themes reappear throughout the *Aghānī*. An obvious example is love – love among the nomads of pre-Islamic Arabia, at the court of al-Ḥīra, in the pleasure-loving aristocratic society of the Hijaz, among the aesthetes of Baghdad. Another is war – among tribesmen, against Byzantines, Persians or renegade Muslims, or in campaigns of conquest in Iran and further east. Among recurrent themes a particular type is represented by controversial issues, wine-drinking, for instance, the composing of lampoons and love poetry, or the status of music-making and listening to singing. Unlike some *adab* compilations, such as al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'*, where arguments for and against a given position are set out in two sections one after the other, the *Aghānī* has statements about controversial issues and anecdotes bearing on them scattered throughout the book. As an example

I will present the material on the morality of singing and listening to music, an issue central to the whole work. As can be imagined, Abū l-Faraj is not a neutral recorder of this controversy but a partisan of the pro-music position; consequently, the great majority of *akhbār* bearing on the subject aim to justify composing, singing and listening to music. They represent a diffuse reply to the attacks levelled by legal scholars and other puritanically minded Muslims on the practice of music.³⁶

Several religious authorities, including the highest, are represented as not objecting to singing. One *ḥadīth* reports the Prophet, on a journey, having nothing against a camel-driver chanting poetry (XX, 347); another portrays him making no comment when he sees Ḥassān ibn Thābit and his friends listening to a singing-girl (XII, 67).³⁷ But he manifests his disapproval of a song composed by the pious Abū Saʿīd the *maulā* of Fāʿid, appearing to him in a dream and getting him to swear he will never again perform it; evidently the text, which expresses the love-stricken poet's indifference to the *ṭawāf* he has just performed, was objectionable (IV, 331–2).³⁸ Another example of problematic lyrics occurs in connection with Sufyān ibn ʿUyayna, who asks a friend why Ibn Jāmiʿ has received money from one of the caliphs. When he hears the song which has earned Ibn Jāmiʿ his reward, he approves of the first two lines but not the last one (VI, 293).³⁹

Other members of the early Muslim community are portrayed as more obviously favourable to singing. ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar hears Ashʿab singing songs, both new and familiar ones, and he asks him to repeat them (XIX, 161).⁴⁰ Ibn al-Zubayr happens to pass by Ibn Surayj performing, and he admires his singing (I, 266–7). Al-Shaʿbī enjoys Ibn Surayj's singing so much that he even invites him into his house to sing (I, 314).⁴¹ The presence of an unnamed pious and ascetic old man inhibits a group of travellers from asking the musician who is with them to perform some songs, until the musician asks the old man's permission to recite some poetry. When this is granted he starts to sing, and the old man, delighted, regrets that they have lost so much time without music (XV, 7–8).

Some, however, were more reserved. ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā, hearing an unusual sound coming from the servants' quarters in his palace in al-Ḥira, sends a freedman to find out what it is. The freedman discovers a singer accompanying himself on the lute, and he ejects him and breaks his instrument; ʿĪsā is evidently quite ignorant of this kind of music (XVI, 243).⁴² ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar's son Sālim only gives Ashʿab a reward to silence him, not because he likes his singing (XIX, 166–7). And when Sālim's son has Ashʿab perform a song in his father's presence, Sālim says nothing (XIX, 139). But a more positive attitude might develop. The legal scholar ʿAṭāʾ ibn Abī Rabāḥ disapproves of music until he hears Ibn Surayj sing, upon which he ceases his opposition (I, 256–7). And during a party for his son's circumcision, while he does not join the guests in listening to Ibn Surayj and al-Ghariḍ, he is attentive enough to their singing to judge who is the better musician (I, 278–81).

Supporters of music sometimes tried to persuade opponents of it to change their minds by putting forward arguments in favour of it. The legal scholar Ibn Jurayj, a confirmed music-lover, one day invites the singer Ibn Tayzan to perform before

him and a group of Iraqi visitors. Rather unwillingly, the singer, who is on his way to another appointment, complies. The visitors disapprove, whereupon Ibn Jurayj asks what is the difference between this manner of performing poetry and the singing of work songs in *rajaz* metre, which they consider acceptable (VI, 339–40). A similar argument is used by Ibn Jāmi' in his confrontation with the *qāḍī* Abū Yūsuf in Baghdad. The *qāḍī* comes into conversation with Ibn Jāmi' without knowing who he is, and he is impressed by his piety and knowledge of religious matters. But after a friend has told him of Ibn Jāmi's profession, he tries to avoid him. The singer, raising his voice, challenges Abū Yūsuf to explain why, if he does not object to a bedouin with a rough voice and unpolished pronunciation reciting a line by al-Nābigha, he takes exception when Ibn Jāmi' performs the same line more beautifully, without adding to it or leaving anything out. Abū Yūsuf has no good answer (VI, 291–3).⁴³

The effort to persuade an opponent of singing to change his mind becomes more urgent when the person in question is a governor of the Hijaz who decides to forbid musical performances, and the measures employed by the music-lovers are consequently more imaginative. When 'Uthmān ibn Ḥayyān al-Murri arrives in Medina as the new governor, some of the notables persuade him to clean the city up by getting rid of singing and prostitution. At the very last moment before the singers are expelled, Ibn Abī 'Atīq, one of the Hijazi connoisseurs of music, a great-grandson of Abū Bakr and himself noted for his good conduct, learns of the order and goes to see 'Uthmān, whom he congratulates on his decision. But he presents the case of a former singer who has repented, adopted an irreproachable way of life and does not want to be forced to live far from the Prophet's grave. 'Uthmān is prepared to make an exception for her simply for Ibn Abī 'Atīq's sake, but Ibn Abī 'Atīq insists he must see her and judge for himself. Sallāma is introduced, with prayer-beads in her hand and a modest demeanour, and when the governor speaks to her, she is well-informed about the eminent members of the community. She recites the Quran to him, and then sings in the traditional style of the camel-drivers. His admiration increases, and he agrees to hear her sing one of her own compositions. When he hears it, he refuses to let her leave Medina. Ibn Abī 'Atīq says the governor cannot accord her exceptional treatment, whereupon he rescinds the expulsion order (VIII, 341–2).

A similar example of a governor being manipulated occurs in the article on 'Azza al-Maylā'. While Ibn Abī 'Atīq and 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far are visiting her, a message comes from the governor ordering her to give up singing because she has caused too much disorder among the people of Medina. 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far sends the messenger back with the request for the governor to have the public crier summon those who have had their morals undermined by 'Azza's singing to come forward. No-one responds, and 'Abdallāh tells 'Azza she can go ahead and sing without being disturbed (XVII, 176–7).

A more effective, if implicit, argument in favour of singing is the moral character of those who engage in it. The *qāḍī* Abū Yūsuf is clearly impressed by Ibn Jāmi's piety. Three singers in the Hijaz perform religiously significant functions. One,

al-Burdān, is accepted as a witness in court, and he is also in charge of the market in Medina, which includes duties such as sending debtors to prison (VIII, 277).⁴⁴ Another, Abū Saʿīd the *maṭlā* of Faʿīd, is also a recognised witness. When the judge Muḥammad ibn ʿImrān al-Taymī rejects his testimony because of one of his songs, he takes offence and refuses to appear before him again. Public pressure forces the judge to retract, and when anyone calls Abū Saʿīd as a witness, the court has to move to his house (IV, 337–8). Typically, when musicians visit Abū Saʿīd in his old age, they find him in the mosque (IV, 330) and it is there that he performs a song (IV, 336–7). A third Hijazi singer, Khalil the Teacher, has classes, which he runs at the same time, for boys to learn Quran recitation and writing and girls to learn singing (XXI, 196). The most irreproachable figure to have engaged in singing and composing, however, is ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, while he was governor of the Hijaz.⁴⁵

Apart from the far from exemplary behaviour of some singers,⁴⁶ what made singing such a threat in the eyes of its opponents was the effect it had on its hearers. The judge Muḥammad ibn ʿImrān al-Taymī, who criticises Abū Saʿīd, is also the owner of a slave-girl whose singing makes him behave in the most undignified fashion (VI, 338–9). When ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī ʿAmmār, who is nicknamed al-Qass because of his asceticism, is persuaded against his better judgement to listen to the singer Sallāma, he is overwhelmed by the beauty of the music and its performer and falls deeply in love. Finally, he breaks with her, for fear of sinning with her and being condemned on the Day of Judgement (VIII, 335–6).

As well as these anecdotes, which present the arguments for and against singing in a fragmentary fashion, there is one lengthy defence of it, in Jamila's article. The singer invites her admirers to her house to tell them that she has had such a frightening dream that she believes her last hour is at hand. Now she is considering giving up singing in order not to be punished for it in the hereafter. Some of those present applaud her decision, but others affirm that singing is not reprehensible. Finally, an old man, full of years and discernment, gets up and delivers a speech. He warns the Hijazis not to be moved by the attacks of Iraqis and others who have adopted their musical traditions and then condemned them for them, pointing out that the ascetics who keep aloof from singing do not forbid it but seek to distance themselves from earthly pleasures, of which music is the greatest. It infuses new life in the heart, increases intelligence, rejoices the soul, widens understanding, makes hardship bearable, and enables armies to conquer. When tyrants hear it, they become humble, acting as their own servants. It heals the sick and revives those whose hearts, minds and sight are dead. It brings more wealth to the wealthy and makes the poor accept their poverty, for in listening to it they cease to seek riches. Since nothing is more beautiful than it, how can abandoning it be considered the right thing, rather than it being used to make people more active in God's service? No-one raises objections to the old man's arguments, and he invites Jamila to sing to the company before they leave, which she does (VIII, 224–5).⁴⁷

Motifs

Motifs, understood here as formulae and topoi, also recur in the *Aghānī*. An example of a recurrent formula is the phrase *ḍaḥika ḥattā stalqā*, “he laughed until he fell over backwards”. This occurs in an anecdote where Iṣḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muṣ‘ab has his servant order ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘i to compose a setting for two lines of poetry and teach it to one of his singing-girls. Upon the musician asking if anyone has set the couplet to music before, the answer comes that Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī had done so. He retorts that even the Devil himself could not do better than Iṣḥāq, and the servant, hearing this frank answer, falls about laughing (*ḍaḥika ḥattā stalqā*). Then he tells ‘Abdallāh to do his best (V, 313). Often the hearty laughers are someone in authority. Hārūn al-Rashīd falls about laughing when the flautist Barṣawmā, who is accompanying Sulaym ibn Sallām, breaks off to criticise his performance and thereby demonstrates his faulty pronunciation of Arabic (VI, 165). The caliph responds in the same way when the singer Abū Ṣadaqa, exasperated at seeing him treat the other musicians far more generously, flings the money he has received back at him (XIX, 295). Again, when al-Rashīd disclaims any but a literary interest in the cultured poetess ‘Inān, al-Aṣma‘ī wittily encourages him in his opinion, observing that he would not want to sleep with al-Farazdaq either, and the caliph *ḍaḥika ḥattā stalqā* (XXIII, 91). Other hearty laughers include Ja‘far ibn Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī (VI, 18), al-Walid ibn Yazid (VII, 57), al-Mahdī (X, 250, 264), al-Mutawakkil (XII, 86), Ma‘n ibn Zā‘ida (XIII, 325) and ‘Abd al-Malik (XVI, 190). The phrase, which evokes a vivid picture, occurs thirteen times in the book, and a further three times with slight variants.⁴⁸

Among topoi in the *Aghānī* one is the destructive effects of time – “*ubi sunt qui ante nos fuere*”.⁴⁹ It causes beauty to disappear, turning Baghūm, the most beautiful woman in Mecca in her day and one of ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a’s loves, into a ragged, bent old crone walking with a stick (I, 164), and Rizq, ‘Allūya’s handsome servant whom al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk mentioned in a poem, into a white-haired old man (XV, 274). The classic example of the topos is in ‘Adī ibn Zayd’s poem, recited by Khālīd ibn Ṣafwān to the caliph Hishām, asking:

Where is Chosroes Anushirwan, King of Kings,
or Shapur who reigned before him?
Where Rome’s fair-skinned noble rulers,
whom no man speaks of any more?

(II, 138–40)

And it is hinted at in a scene at the end of Mālik ibn Abī l-Samḥ’s article; in his old age the singer had become weak and his voice so quavery that he could not longer perform in public,⁵⁰ though he could still teach his son his repertoire (V, 116).

Yet this motif may be given unusual twists. Buthayna, Jamīl’s beloved, challenged by ‘Abd al-Malik to explain what the poet saw in her, reminds the caliph that time has affected both of them adversely; the caliph, too, is no longer the man he was (VIII, 122). That is, commenting on the harm which time has done to someone

else is a double-edged weapon, which can easily be turned against the person who uses it. And the aged Khawla bint Manzūr, hearing Ma'bad sing a lines composed on her when she was a young girl, laughs as she proudly recalls her past beauty (XII, 197). Khawla, who evidently has a positive attitude to life, refuses to be depressed by the realisation that she is no longer as lovely as she was; what matters is that she did once inspire poets.

Poetry's value is another motif developed in different ways. Poetry cannot be measured against material rewards, as 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir, for one, realises. Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār visits him asking for advice and material help in extricating himself from being appointed judge, and 'Ubaydallāh gives them, requesting that in return he tell him something worth knowing (*fā'ida*). Al-Zubayr recounts a short but picturesque anecdote which concludes with poetry. When he has gone, 'Ubaydallāh comments to his brother that the benefit they have received from the story and the last line of the poem is far greater than the value of the gifts they had given the scholar (IX, 42–3).

Because of poetry's value, it is something to be cherished and preserved. Not to do so is a serious offence. When 'Abd al-Malik asks 'Abdallāh ibn Jaḥsh's son to recite some of his father's poems he cannot. Three times the caliph quotes opening lines without the son continuing the recitation, and the last time he excuses himself that that is love poetry his father composed for his mother. The caliph, retorting that there is nothing wrong in love poetry about one's mother if the author is one's father, accuses the son of being undutiful in not transmitting his father's poems and sends him away empty-handed (XIX, 213–15). After the death of his son Ja'far, al-Manṣūr searches among his relatives for someone to recite to him Abū Dhu'ayb's famous elegy on his five sons in order to console himself. When no-one can be found, he exclaims bitterly about his relatives' indifference to culture (VI, 273).

Poetry has a far longer life than wealth or material objects. After al-Ḥuṭay'a's death his son Iyās meets the son of the governor Sa'id ibn al-'Āṣ, to whom the poet had dedicated several panegyrics. Iyās remarks that the money which his father received in rewards has gone, while the poems he composed for Sa'id have survived (XVII, 225). In another anecdote, the 'Alid al-Ḥasan, the son of Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Naṣf al-Zakīya, asked by his sister to cut the Achilles tendons of a camel, puts so much force into the blow that the sword he is using, a fine old weapon given to his father, plunges into the ground. While he digs it out, he recalls a couplet of the Prophet's contemporary al-Namir ibn Tawlab, boasting of how his sword, which is all he has left, ploughs into the ground after it has cut through its victim (XXII, 283–4). The incident, which took place after Muḥammad's death in 145–6/762, shows not only that al-Namir's poem had survived for about a century and a half but also that the poet was mistaken in thinking that only his sword had withstood the passage of time. For the sword was now gone, while his poetry was still alive in people's memories.

The idea that poetry endures far beyond the life-span of its authors is expressed bluntly by Ibn Munādhir when he addresses Khalaf al-Aḥmar: "While al-Nābigha,

Imru' al-Qays and Zuhayr are dead, their poetry is immortal. So measure my poetry against theirs ..." (XVIII, 174). And the thought is taken further. If poetry cannot save its creators from death, it can immortalise those who are the object of it, as Abū Dulaf al-ʿIjlī recognises when he exclaims, on hearing Abū Tammām's elegy of Muḥammad ibn Ḥumayd, "He who has been lamented in poetry like this has not died" (XVI, 390).

These anecdotes referring to poetry's immortality can be read as expressions of an idea inspiring the whole work. As has already been pointed out, poetry's and music's capacity to resist time is one of the *leitmotifs* of the whole *Aghānī*, illustrated not only in individual *akhbār* like these, but also in those sections of articles which focus on the life of verses and songs, and in the articles whose subject is a song or poem.⁵¹ And the *Aghānī* itself may be understood as a contribution to preserving this domain of Arab culture for later generations – a further act of resistance to time.

THE FRAMEWORK OF INTRODUCTORY SONGS

Ordering the articles

The previous three chapters have discussed individual articles as examples of compilation and indicated common elements running through the *Aghānī*. The last important feature requiring attention is the framework of songs enveloping the whole work. Their importance is obscured in modern printed editions of the *Aghānī*, where the divisions in the text which stand out most clearly are those between articles, with the title of each article occupying a position similar to that of a chapter heading. But, as has already been pointed out, these articles on poets, musicians or both are preceded by a song they composed, and it is this song which is the true introduction to the article or pair of articles. These songs are usually appended to the preceding article by the printers, so that the relationship between them and the subsequent material is concealed.¹ The greatest obscurity arises when an introductory song comes at the end of one volume, while the articles it introduces are in the next one; for instance, the song from the Top Hundred with lyrics by Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm and a setting by Ṭuways comes at the end of *Aghānī* vol. II, while the articles on them are the first ones in vol. III. This is the rule in the Dār al-kutub edition of the *Aghānī*; only vol. XV opens with an introductory song, composed by Jaʿfar ibn al-Zubayr, and then continues with the article on him.²

The way in which the list of contents of the *Aghānī* in Appendix Two is set out aims to make clear the relationship between the songs and the articles they introduce. Except for those Top Hundred songs about whose poets and composers Abū l-Faraj could find no information, introductory songs have at least one article attached to them. Often both the poet and the composer are treated, and exceptionally a song is followed by a chain of articles, as happens in vol. XI with Warqāʾ ibn Zuhayr's poem lamenting his failure to prevent his father's death, which introduces a section on the poet and then accounts of the clashes and killings of tribal leaders, including Warqāʾ's father Zuhayr, culminating in the battle of Shi'b Jabala. Most of the articles are biographical, in the broad sense of the term, while other types, treating events, relationships or the history of a song, are fairly unusual. In the central part of the book (vols. IX and X), however, the introductory function of songs is modified, since they are subordinated to the list of names of the royal musicians. A similar modification can be seen in the clusters of articles on

members of the Yazidī family (vol. XX), *ṣaʿālik* (vol. XXI) and Jewish poets (vol. XXII), where the list of names of poets is the determining factor.

As the list of contents shows, the *Aghānī* falls into three main parts. In the first, the Top Hundred songs and a few smaller collections introduce the articles. In the third part, where songs also introduce the articles, it appears to be the compiler's own choice which has determined the order of the songs. The second part contrasts with the other two, for in it Abū l-Faraj treats composers of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd families in chronological order; here it is people, not songs, who consistently introduce the articles. In what follows I propose to look at the organisation of the three parts in detail.

Part One: the Top Hundred and other song collections

The first part of the *Aghānī* is based mainly on the list of the Top Hundred songs drawn up by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī for al-Wāthiq, as has already been mentioned. Establishing the list was not a straightforward matter, for Abū l-Faraj had two versions in front of him, one transmitted by 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim, the other by Jaḥḥa al-Barmakī. The way in which he dealt with this problem has been discussed above.³ The list in Appendix Two⁴ shows how Abū l-Faraj combined these conflicting reports; he treated the first two songs of 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā's version, the song common to both versions (it is the third in both cases) and then the second and first songs of Jaḥḥa's version. The presence in the article on Ibn Surayj of another song from Jaḥḥa's list of the Top Hundred, a setting by Ma'bad of lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ or Sa'id ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, is to be explained by the fact that it is quoted with several other songs in an account of a recital following a circumcision feast.

Abū l-Faraj goes on to work through the list of the Hundred Songs, mostly designating songs as belonging to the Top Hundred, but sometimes indicating that they were present in only one of the two versions he had before him. His method is straightforward; he quotes the song and its performance indications, and follows it with one article on the poet and another on the composer. This basic pattern has some variations. First, a few poets and composers were responsible for the lyrics or setting of more than one song from the Top Hundred. Where poets are concerned, the second song may be used to introduce a separate article on a subject not dealt with previously, as happens with the relationships of Bashshār with 'Abda and al-Aḥwaṣ with Umm Ja'far, both found in vol. VI, Bashshār and al-Aḥwaṣ having already been the subject of articles, one in vol. III and the other in vol. IV. More often a poet's second or subsequent Top Hundred song is mentioned in the course of his article, for example, in the case of Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm (vol. III) and al-Aḥwaṣ and Umm Ja'far (vol. VI), or at the end of the article, for example, in that of Dhū l-Iṣba' al-'Adwānī (vol. III). Three songs from the Top Hundred are connected with al-Walid ibn Yazid's article (vol. VII), one introducing it, another in the middle and a third at the end.

Where a musician contributed the setting for more than one of the Top Hundred, the second song is often mentioned at the end of his article, and it is

followed by an article on the poet of the lyrics. For instance, one of the Top Hundred was Yūnus al-Kātib's setting of lyrics by Ibn Harma, and so it introduces articles on the poet and composer, but Yūnus's article ends with his setting of lyrics by Ismā'il ibn Yaṣār al-Nisā'i, who is the subject of the next article (vol. IV). A similar chain of articles starts with a song whose lyrics are by al-Ḥuṭay'a and setting by Ibn 'Ā'isha, and the composer's article ends with his Top Hundred setting of lyrics by Ibn Arṭāh, giving the sequence: al-Ḥuṭay'a – Ibn 'Ā'isha – Ibn Arṭāh (vol. II). A quite elaborate series of articles starts with a song by the poet Ṭurayḥ ibn Ismā'il and the musician Abū Sa'id the *mawlā* of Fā'id, but works in another Top Hundred song by Ṭurayḥ, set to music by Ibn Mish'ab, and ends with a third song, a lament for the Umayyads, for which Abū Sa'id composed the words as well as the music. The resulting sequence of articles is: Ṭurayḥ – Ibn Mish'ab – Abū Sa'id – the Umayyads killed by al-Saffāḥ (vol. IV).

The names of some particularly prolific poets and composers occur quite often, and then Abū l-Faraj does not group together all the songs with which they are associated. Ibn Muḥriz's own article is in vol. I, but he also composed Top Hundred settings for lyrics by 'Adī ibn Zayd (vol. II), Jarīr and al-Akhṭal (vol. VIII) and a poem partly by al-Walīd ibn 'Uqba (vol. V). Al-Aḥwaṣ is treated in vol. IV, but thereafter he appears several times, not only in the article on his relationship with Umm Ja'far (vol. VI), but also as the author of lyrics set by Daḥmān (vol. VI), Jamīla, al-Burdān and Sallāmat al-Qaṣṣ (all in vol. VIII).

As a rule a poet or composer is the subject of an article the first time his name is associated with a song. There are some exceptions to this, however. One of the first songs has lyrics by al-'Arjī and a setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, but while al-'Arjī is treated immediately (vol. I), Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī's article occurs much later (vol. V). One explanation for this may be that Ibrāhīm is both the poet and the composer of the later song. Another could be that the song with al-'Arjī's lyrics is drawn from Jaḥẓa's version of the Top Hundred, which Abū l-Faraj considers less reliable. For Siyāt, too, is not treated after 'Urwa ibn al-Ward, for whose lyrics he composed a setting listed in Jaḥẓa's Top Hundred (vol. III), but after the lines on the Battle of Dūlāb ascribed to three different Khārijī poets which he made the setting for and which is part of the common list (vol. VI). Al-Hudhalī is the composer of both the second song with lyrics by Dhū l-Iṣba' in the Top Hundred (vol. III) and the song, listed by Jaḥẓa with lyrics by Umayya ibn Abī l-Salt (vol. IV), but he is treated only in vol. V, as the author of the setting of al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī's lyrics. Here the disinclination to use Jaḥẓa's songs as introductions to articles unless absolutely necessary could partly explain the treatment of al-Hudhalī being delayed, although the question still remains why his article does not follow Dhū l-Iṣba'.

Where lyrics are ascribed to several poets, or singers created a composite text from lines by different authors, Abū l-Faraj treats the various poets one after the other. Six alternative authors, all pre-Islamic, are given for the lyrics of a song in vol. III, and Abū l-Faraj goes through the list, mentioning the meagre information available about five of them in turn.⁵ The song with lyrics partly by a member of

the Banū Nahd and partly by al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba ibn Abi l-Mu‘ayt is followed by information on both poets (vol. V). In Abū l-Faraj’s view the lyrics of a song ascribed to ‘Antara were mostly not by him, so he follows ‘Antara’s article with the fragments he has found about the other possible poet, ‘Abd Qays al-Burjūmī. He seems later to have come to the conclusion that Ḥāritha ibn Badr al-Ghudānī was the author of the first two lines of the song, and he has therefore compiled an article on him too (vol. VIII).⁶

As far as I can see, the single partial exception to the rule that only poets and composers of songs in the Top Hundred are the subject of articles in Part One occurs when a short untitled section is devoted to ‘Ātika bint Shuhda (VI, 260–2). ‘Ātika was one of several singers who set lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abi Rabi‘a to music, with Mālik ibn Abi l-Samḥ being the author of the setting given as that of the Top Hundred. Abū l-Faraj explains that unlike the other musicians mentioned, ‘Ātika does not appear as a composer elsewhere, so this is the only occasion to treat her. He adds that according to Jaḥḥa her setting is the one in the Top Hundred, which qualifies her for attention.⁷

Whether it reflects the order of the list of the Hundred Songs or not, the first part of the *Aghānī* contains a cluster of articles, a feature which reappears in the third part, where Abū l-Faraj was free to make his own choice. This cluster focusses on al-Walid ibn Yazīd’s circle (vol. VII). It starts with the article on the caliph and continues with articles on two composers of settings for his lyrics, ‘Umar al-Wāḍi and Abū Kāmil, two poets, Yazīd ibn Ḍabba and al-Nābigha al-Shaybānī, whose lyrics were falsely ascribed to him, and the composer of the setting of one of these poems, Ismā‘īl ibn al-Hirbidh. All five men at some time attended al-Walid’s court, although al-Nābigha’s association with him was short-lived.

In his biographical entry on Abū l-Faraj Yāqūt mentions that the Hundred Songs of the *Aghānī* were in fact only ninety-nine.⁸ Using the information in Appendix Two and ignoring one or two repetitions, I come to a total of 103 songs, 76 of them presumably common to both lists, 14 drawn from ‘Alī ibn Yahyā’s list and 13 from Jaḥḥa’s. Given that Abū l-Faraj was using two versions of the list of the Top Hundred it is not surprising that the number of songs he gives exceeds 100. The question remains why Yāqūt thought that the *Aghānī* contained only 99 songs; had he miscounted (which is easy enough to do, as anyone who has tried to draw up a list of the Top Hundred knows), or was he using an incomplete text?

Some way into Part Three of the *Aghānī*, the reader is disconcerted to find four songs described as belonging to the Top Hundred, with their appended articles (XII, 253–334). Either these articles have been misplaced, as apparently happened with the one on Ḥāritha ibn Badr, restored to vol. VIII in the reprint of the Dār al-kutub edition, or a copyist has added the words *min al-mi‘a al-mukhtāra* to the heading *ṣawt* in error. Several arguments support the second hypothesis. First, the word *mukhtār* is not used in any of the performance indications, whereas it generally (though not invariably) occurs to mark Top Hundred settings in Part One. Second, the sources for the settings are given in the same way as they are for any

other songs not drawn from the Top Hundred: specifically from Aḥmad al-Makki's book, or on the authority of 'Amr ibn Bāna or Ishāq al-Mawṣili. Third, the composers of the first and fourth of these songs, Aḥmad ibn Yahyā al-Makki and 'Allūya, have their own articles in Part Three (vols. XVI and XI, respectively), introduced by their settings of lyrics by Abū Ḥayya al-Numayri and Abū Jilda al-Yashkuri. But if the songs in vol. XII belonged to the Top Hundred, one would expect them to introduce the articles on their composers as well as their poets, as is the rule in Part One. If one believes that these songs and their attached articles should have been in Part One, one must assume not only that the text is corrupt, leading to them being misplaced, but also that the logic behind the organisation of articles in that Part has been abandoned, which is most improbable. And the deviations from the normal manner of giving performance indications for Top Hundred Songs still have to be explained. On the other hand, if the heading "*min al-mi'a al-mukhtāra*" is an interpolation, how did it come about? One explanation could be that a scribe who was not copying the *Aghānī* from beginning to end but only selected parts of it moved from Part One to Part Three and by mistake continued to add the heading to some of the articles there. And once these songs had been labelled part of the Top Hundred, the label stuck. But the matter needs proper investigation in the light of more research into the state of the text.

After the Top Hundred Abū l-Faraj treats further memorable songs, attaching articles on poets and composers to them where appropriate; some are noteworthy for a specific musical feature, while others belong to famous composers' collections of songs.⁹ The first two songs stand out for employing an unusually wide range of melodic modes, ten in one case, eight in the other.¹⁰ Next come the three chosen songs in the *ramal* rhythmic mode; this list reflects a consensus among connoisseurs of singing, apparently arrived at without any caliphal encouragement. Two of these *ramal* songs are then treated, the first in a few pages because both the poet and the composer are already familiar figures, the second at greater length because the lyrics come from Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allāqa* and provide the occasion for his article. The last of this group is simply alluded to with the quotation of its first half line; there is no reference to its already having been discussed.¹¹

Ma'bad dominates the song collections, first with his group of five songs each with its own nickname, then with his "Cities" or "Fortresses"¹² and finally with his songs about Qutayla. If the author of the lyrics has already been treated, only the performance indications are given, but where this is the poet's first appearance in the *Aghānī*, as happens with al-A'shā, al-Shammākh and Kuthayyir, he is the subject of an article.¹³ There were two versions of which songs made up the "Cities", and Abū l-Faraj deals with each of them in turn. The last song in the second list (C6a) could also be included in the collection of songs about Qutayla, since it mentions her too. When presenting the last collection in Part One, Ibn Surayj's Seven, Abū l-Faraj lists eight songs, but he does not comment on the discrepancy in the numbers; he points out, however, that four of them have been dealt with before and only pays attention to the remaining ones.

Part Two: the royal musicians

Having come to the end of the song collections, Abū l-Faraj adopts a different method of ordering the articles on poets and musicians. Instead of working through a list of songs, he takes the names of the members of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid families who were practising musicians and treats them in chronological succession, together with the authors of the lyrics of one of their memorable songs. The first member of this royal section, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, composed a song with lyrics by al-Ashhab ibn Rumayla. Abū l-Faraj quotes the song, includes an article on al-Ashhab and then returns to 'Umar. This pattern of naming the royal musician, quoting one of his (or her) songs, treating the author of its lyrics and then providing information about the composer is repeated many times. For instance, in the section on caliphs' descendants, 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdī is named, and a song for which she composed the setting is quoted, to be followed by an article on the author of the lyrics, the poet Abū l-Najm al-'Ijlī, and then one on 'Ulayya herself (X, 149–85). A more elaborate version of this pattern can be found in connection with al-Mu'taḍid: naming of al-Mu'taḍid – his song with lyrics by Durayd ibn al-Ṣimma – article on Durayd – information about this and other songs of al-Mu'taḍid, including one with lyrics by Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās al-Ṣūlī – article on Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās – information about al-Mu'taḍid (IX, 344–5; X, 3–68).¹⁴

Deviations from this pattern occur, however. Al-Walid ibn Yazīd, who has been treated at length in Part One as the poet of three Top Hundred songs, has just over one page devoted to descriptions of him performing songs and giving one of his compositions (IX, 274–5). Al-Wāthiq's article starts with an anecdote of him singing one of his compositions to Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī, and though several of his songs are mentioned, none of the authors of their lyrics receive particular attention (IX, 276–300). The beginning of 'Abdallāh ibn al-Mu'tazz's article is devoted to a defence of him as a poet and man of letters,¹⁵ and only afterwards are samples of his compositions and poems quoted (X, 274–86).

There is reason to doubt that the treatment of all the royal musicians is complete. This holds true particularly for Abū 'Isā ibn al-Mutawakkil, a skilled and prolific composer two of whose songs serve to introduce articles on poets (X, 202, 234). Al-Ṣūlī portrays him as having pious and scholarly inclinations, as well as himself being a poet.¹⁶ Abū l-Faraj promises some *akhbār* about him after the authors of his songs' lyrics have been treated (X, 201) but does not keep his word.

Part Three: Abū l-Faraj's choice

The transition from Part Two on the royal musicians to Part Three is marked by a return to introductory songs preceding articles; Abū l-Faraj is no longer working through a list of names of musicians. The formal trait of the introductory song followed by one or, far more rarely, two articles, is the rule for the rest of the book. Examples of songs introducing two articles include one with lyrics with 'Alī

ibn Ādam al-Kūfī set to music by ‘Amr ibn Bāna (XV, 266), one with lyrics by al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf set by Badhl (XVII, 66), one with lyrics by Mas‘ūd ibn Kharsha al-Māzinī set by Baḥr (XXI, 249) and one with lyrics by al-Find al-Zimmānī set by ‘Abdallāh ibn Daḥmān (XXIV, 91). As can be seen from the Appendix, leading composers already treated in Part One, such as Ma‘bad, Ibn Surayj, Ibrāhīm and Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, are often responsible for melodies in Part Three, which explains why many songs only introduce an article on the poet. Occasionally, it is the poet of an introductory songs whose article has already been given, and then only the singer is treated; examples are the songs with settings by Khalīl al-Mu‘allim (XXI, 195) and ‘Ubayda al-Ṭunbūriya (XXII, 204), whose poets, Ibn Ruhayma and either al-Wāthiq or Abū Ḥaḥṣ al-Shitrānjī, form the subject of articles in vols. IV, IX and the early part of XXII respectively.

Yet the rule of according musicians an article on their first appearance as the composer of an introductory song has a surprising number of exceptions. Only slightly more than half of the new composers of Part Three have their article following the first mention of them. Of the rest, ten have their article deferred; for instance, Mukhāriq is named as the composer of the setting of a song in vol. XIII (108), but his article occurs after another song whose melody he composed, in vol. XVIII. Likewise, while ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘ī and Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa first appear as composers in vols. XI (280) and XIV (16), their articles are delayed until vols. XIX and XXII. The most striking case of a composer’s appearance being delayed concerns ‘Arīb, who is responsible for the lyrics of songs in vols. XI (163, 169), XIV (50) XVIII (154), and XIX (20, 300) before she has her own article in vol. XXI. No explanation is given for the postponement of these articles, but it is likely that Abū l-Faraj was trying to ensure a fairly equal distribution of articles on musicians throughout the Part.

The other deviation from the rule of introductory songs being followed by articles on the authors of both lyrics and setting concerns composers who are not treated at all. They outnumber the musicians whose treatment is deferred. Some of them were no doubt as obscure as their colleagues, contributors to the Top Hundred, about whom Abū l-Faraj could find no information; indeed some shadowy musicians from Part One reappear in Part Three, like Ma‘bad’s son Kardam (VI, 120; XI, 74; XXII, 354) and Bābawayh (IV, 213; XIII, 125). Other obscure composers are Kunayz Ḍabba (XXIV, 51), Da‘āma al-Baṣrī (XXIII, 21), Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn ‘Amr ibn Bazī (XXI, 174) and Miqāsa ibn Nāṣih (XIX, 97; XX, 204). But for some authors of song settings material cannot have been lacking; Sulaymān, Jaḥḥa’s brother (XX, 74, 215), Bunān (XII, 79, 214; XVI, 359; XVIII, 168; XXIII, 123, 205), al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr al-Ṭā’ifi (XIII, 199, 225; XVI, 382; XXII, 222; XXIII, 142, 188) and Abū l-‘Ubayy ibn Ḥamdūn (XIII, 83, 174; XVI, 134; XX, 218) were working in the mid-third/ninth century, and they have left traces in other sources.¹⁷ Another composer, better known for his political role, is ‘Alī ibn Hishām (XIX, 211), and for him, too, Abū l-Faraj would have been able to put together an article, judging by the *akḥbār* about him which the *Aghānī* contains. It may well be that Abū l-Faraj intended to defer the articles on these

musicians, just as he had done with others, but that he never succeeded in putting them together. That would be another indication of the unfinished state of the *Aghānī*.¹⁸

The rule “one personality, one article” also appears to be infringed in a handful of instances where a poet or composer is named as the subject of two articles. Ṭuways and al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd already seem to have received special treatment in Part One (III, 27–43 and IV, 219–22 for Ṭuways; III, 310–43 and IX, 227–35 for al-Ḥārith). Umayya ibn Abī l-Salt is announced as the subject of articles in Part One and Part Three (IV, 119–33 and XVII, 302–22) and Bayhas al-Jarmī, Marwān al-Aṣghar and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar have two articles each in Part Three (XII, 45–6 and XXII, 134–41; XII, 79–87 and XXIII, 206–15; XII, 47–53 and XXIII, 175–9). On closer inspection, however, what is announced as an article on Ṭuways in vol. IV is in fact an article on a song of which he was the composer, introduced by a paragraph giving his name and profile (IV, 219).¹⁹ The article on al-Ḥārith in vol. IX also turns out to be on his poem which forms the introductory song’s lyrics (*khabaruh fi hādha l-shiʿr*), prefaced by his genealogy and a reference (IX, 227) to the main article on him earlier on. The article on Umayya ibn Abī l-Ṣalt in vol. XVII is introduced by a panegyric he composed on Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan and the Persians, and the article’s main subject is the events leading up to the expulsion of the Abyssinians from Yemen and then the occasion for the poem’s being recited, the visit of a delegation of Hijazi notables to Sayf after he had been established as ruler of Yemen.²⁰ In these instances the second article is not in fact devoted to a personality, so there is no duplication. But the heading is misleading, and the repetition of the genealogy, where it occurs, is superfluous. As for Bayhas, the very short article on him in vol. XII consists of his genealogy and an account of his seeking refuge with Muhammad ibn Marwān after the accidental death of a young Qaysī; the same incident is also found in the longer article in vol. XXII, where it forms the occasion for a panegyric of Muhammad. The two articles have the same introductory song, and the short one in vol. XII could be no more than a misplaced page from another version of the longer one, or else something Abū l-Faraj had noted in preparation for it.²¹

Each of the two articles on Marwān al-Aṣghar and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar, by contrast, centres on these two personalities. Marwān’s articles both have the same introductory song (XII, 79; XXIII, 205), but only the second contains the account of his reciting it to al-Muntaṣir (XXIII, 211), whereas Abū l-Faraj has promised in the first article to mention it (XII, 80). The articles share an anecdote of him reciting a panegyric to al-Mutawakkil (XII, 80–1; XXIII, 208) but the version in vol. XII is fuller and has a variant. They also both have Abū l-ʿAnbas al-Ṣaymarī giving al-Mutawakkil a frivolous explanation of a line of Marwān’s poetry, to the caliph’s amusement and Marwān’s fury (XII, 86; XXIII, 207). They illustrate the theme of Marwān worsting ʿAlī ibn al-Jahm in the verbal contests of which al-Mutawakkil was so fond, although with different anecdotes, and they portray Marwān’s contacts with contemporaries, al-Muʿtaṣim, Ashnās and ʿAlī ibn

Yaḥyā al-Munajjim in vol. XII, Khālīd al-Kātib, Aḥmad ibn Abī Du'ād and 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir in vol. XXIII.

Where Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar's articles are concerned, there is not even a shared introductory song; in XII, 47 the author of the introductory lyrics is an anonymous bedouin, while in XXIII, 175 Muḥammad is the poet as well as the composer. The only material common to both articles concerns Ishāq al-Mawṣili's admiration of al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar's singing girls (XII, 48; XXIII, 179). They each have a fairly long anecdote about a gathering of friends with musical accompaniment, either at Muḥammad's house with 'Abdallāh ibn al-'Abbās al-Rabī'i (XXIII, 178–9) or at the house of a well-connected inhabitant of Samarra with a nephew of 'Alī ibn Hishām (XII, 52–3). But otherwise the emphases in them vary; vol. XXIII has *akhbār* about Muḥammad's father and about why Muḥammad became a singer, while vol. XII stresses his skill in learning songs. It is conceivable that the articles on Muḥammad and Marwān were preparatory drafts, which would in the end have been combined with each other; if so, this is further evidence for the *Aghānī* being unfinished.

The transition from Part Two to Part Three is marked not only by the return to songs as the way to introduce the article. There is also an abrupt change of period and milieu. Most of the royal musicians in Part Two are 'Abbāsids, and after Abū l-Najm al-'Ijlī, the author of 'Ulayya's lyrics, the poets are too. But after Ibn al-Mu'tazz the scene suddenly shifts back to pre-Islamic times. Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥilliza and 'Amr ibn Kulthūm are authors of *Mu'allaqāt*, while al-Nābigha al-Dhubayānī is recognised as one of the greatest of the pre-Islamic poets. Although al-Marrār al-Faq'asī straddles the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid periods, he represents a continuation of the Bedouin poetic tradition;²² placed where it is, his short article's function is to separate Zuhayr from al-Nābigha, but it does not take the reader far from their world. And thanks to the chain of articles introduced by Warqā' ibn Zuhayr's lament of his father, there is an unbroken succession of pre-Islamic material until halfway into vol. XI, apart from al-Marrār's article and the one on Jarīr's and al-Akhṭal's exchange of lampoons. It is as though after the concentration on the 'Abbāsids in Part Two Abū l-Faraj was trying to redress the balance in the *Aghānī* with a strong dose of Jāhiliya.

Although the ordering of articles in Part Three appears unstructured when compared with the two earlier Parts, it contains three clusters of articles which are named as such: the one on Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī, his sons Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm and his grandson Aḥmad (vol. XX, 215–62); Ta'abbāṭa Sharran and his friends 'Amr ibn Barrāq and al-Shanfarā, all of them brigands (*ṣa'ālik*) (XXI, 126–94); and the Jewish poets (XXII, 106–33). In the articles on the Yazīdīs and the brigands Abū l-Faraj can be seen reverting to the method he used for Part Two, that is, he gives the name of the subject first and then quotes a song of which he composed the lyrics. The presence of these clusters shows that Abū l-Faraj sometimes employed a principle of organisation in this part which went beyond the individual article. Each cluster, however, brings together poets belonging to a different category – members of a family (the Yazīdīs),²³ members of a social group

(the brigands), members of a socio-religious group (the Jews). As already pointed out, Part One also has a cluster of articles (though not announced as such) on the members of the literary and musical circle round al-Walid ibn Yazīd. It is typical of the aesthetics of compilation in the *Aghānī* that though clusters recur, the principle of variety is observed in the groups from which they are drawn; there are no exact repetitions.

A final feature of Part Three which deserves to be noted is the occurrence of two consecutive introductory songs with settings by the same composer. The articles on the killing of ‘Amlīq and on ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi’a and his ‘Udhri friend are preceded by ‘Arib’s settings for the introductory lyrics (XI, 163, 169); the next two articles begin with Ma’bad’s settings of poetry by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt and ‘Amr ibn Sha’s al-Asadi (XI, 175, 194). Ma’bad is also the composer of songs introducing short articles on al-Aḥwaṣ and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr (XVII, 351, 355) and on al-Mutanakhkhil al-Hudhalī and Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī (XXIV, 99, 108). Settings by Ibn Surayj introduce the articles on al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka and Abū Nukhayla al-Ḥimmānī (XX, 374, 389). Ishāq is the composer of the songs introducing the account of the Wars of al-Fijār and ‘Ukāz and the information about Mālik ibn al-Ṣimṣāma (XXII, 54, 76). Ibn Jāmi’s settings introduce the articles on Abū Duhmān and Abū Ḥuzāba al-Tamīmī (XXII, 256, 259), Mutayyam’s those on ‘Umāra ibn ‘Aqīl and al-Mutalammis (XXIV, 244, 259). The only instance, as far as I can see, of three consecutive songs having the same composer occurs in the section on Jewish poets, where Ibn Muḥriz’s settings accompany lyrics by al-Samaw’al, Sa’ya ibn Ghariḍ and al-Rabi’ ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq (XXII, 116, 122, 127). Since the settings have fallen silent it is impossible to draw conclusions about these juxtapositions, but either similarities or differences in the composer’s approach could conceivably have been features the compiler sought to highlight in this way.

Articles put in the right place

By giving clusters of articles special titles, Abū l-Faraj makes clear that he grouped them together intentionally. Likewise, his statements about putting articles or information in the “right place”²⁴ show that at least sometimes his arrangement of his material was not arbitrary. Often the “right place” is simply the one place in the book where a person or a poem has been mentioned, thus offering a unique occasion for including further information about him, her or it. But one instance, the announcement of the “right place” for the article including Ishāq al-Mawṣilī’s description to ‘Alī ibn Hishām of a book he was writing (XVII, 111), has been interpreted as referring to the fact that it shares with another article some thirty pages earlier a character, ‘Alī ibn Hishām, a subject, the composition of books about music, and a motif, the ending of a quarrel. In another case, the article on Dhāt al-Khāl and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī’s songs for her (XVI, 341–53), Abū l-Faraj emphasises that this article should stand on its own, separate from the main article on Ibrāhīm. And he has put it in a place where it contrasts with the surrounding material, on

Nā'ila bint al-Farāfiṣa (XVI, 321–7), 'Abd Yaghūth al-Hārithī (XVI, 327–41) and Ḥujr ibn 'Amr Ākil al-Murār (XVI, 353–8) in a number of ways: it has many songs; it is set in the refined urban world of the 'Abbāsid court, whereas the articles round it portray the harsh customs of pre-Islamic life or, in Nā'ila's case, the bloody end of her husband the caliph 'Uthmān; it portrays a type of woman, a sophisticated, witty and licentious slave-girl who is very far both from the modest and courageous Nā'ila and from Hind, the wife of Ḥujr, who is terribly punished for her disloyalty to her husband. If Abū l-Faraj does not proclaim that he has put Dhāt al-Khāl's article in the right place, he appears nonetheless to have chosen to situate it close to other articles with which it offers meaningful comparisons.

There are other instances in the *Aghānī* where articles which have something in common are placed close to one another. What the common element may be varies, as will be clear from the following examples, but I believe that its presence in the two articles is a hint to the reader to compare them with one another.

Two articles next to each other have introductory songs by women called Umm Ḥakīm. Few introductory songs have lyrics by women, and Umm Ḥakīm is a fairly uncommon name. It is therefore worth asking whether these two sections can have any bearing on each other apart from the authors of their poetry being namesakes. The first article is devoted to the murder of 'Ubaydallāh ibn al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's two sons (XVI, 265–73). Umm Ḥakīm Juwayriya bint Khālīd ibn Qārīz al-Kināniya is their distraught mother and the lyrics are taken from an elegy of hers on them. 'Ubaydallāh had been appointed governor of Yemen by 'Alī, but after Siffin Mu'āwiya sent Busr ibn Arṭāh to Arabia to eliminate 'Alī's supporters and ensure the region's allegiance. 'Ubaydallāh fled, leaving his two young sons behind, and Busr killed them (266).²⁵ When 'Alī heard the news he cursed Busr, asking God to send him mad before he died, and his prayer was granted. And a Yemenī who heard Umm Ḥakīm lamenting her sons was so moved that he decided to avenge them and succeeded in killing two of Busr's sons (271–3). In between these *akhbār* Abū l-Faraj introduces other information about 'Alī's response to the weakening of his position: his speech after he hears of the death of his governor of al-Anbār, his exchange of letters with his brother 'Aqīl affirming his belief in his right to the caliphate, his condemnation of Quraysh for turning against him as they did against the Prophet, and his refusal of offers of reinforcements (267–70). Mu'āwiya's awareness of the consequences of his policy also becomes clear when Busr and 'Ubaydallāh confront each other in his presence and he remarks that 'Ubaydallāh and the other Hāshimīs see him as their chief enemy (272).

The following article is entitled "The mention of Umm Ḥakīm and information about her" (XVI, 273–81). This Umm Ḥakīm is the daughter of Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥakam and the wife of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik. The article focusses first on her grandmother and mother (274–6) before treating her, her marriages, and her love of wine, which al-Walīd ibn Yazīd alluded to when lampooning her son (276–9). The last subject is Umm Ḥakīm's famous goblet of green glass with gold

handles, which came into the 'Abbāsīd treasury and remained there until al-Muntaṣir's time, being brought out on special occasions (280–1).

The two Umm Ḥakīm have contrasted fates. Of the one, all the reader knows is that she becomes crazed after her two young sons have been killed and composes elegies. The other lives the life of a princess with a loving husband and at least two sons who reach adulthood, yet she is rumoured to drink to excess and is the author of a wine-song. More than two women, however, it is two milieus which are contrasted, that of 'Alī and his supporters and that of the later Umayyads. 'Alī sees Quraysh under Mu'āwīya's leadership rejecting the Prophet's teaching, and later the Marwānids provide examples of irreligious behaviour with princes lampooning each other, Hishām avenging Umm Ḥakīm by marrying and immediately divorcing a former rival of hers, and Umm Ḥakīm herself taking to the bottle. All this is a far cry from the ideals of leadership which 'Alī expresses in his speeches – and implicitly a further justification for the overthrow of the Umayyads, which has been portrayed earlier on.²⁶ Had the articles treating the Umm Ḥakīm been far apart, the contrasts between their situations would not have stood out so clearly, even if readers with a trained memory might have made the connection between them in any case. As it is, putting articles with poetry by two different Umm Ḥakīm side-by-side is bound to set readers thinking, when they know that the compiler often expresses a concern to find the right place for his material.

It is most unusual for two successive articles to have lyrics by different poets with the same name. Cases where two articles close to one another share an important motif are more common. For instance, the article entitled "The information about al-Muhājir ibn Khālīd and his origin, and the information about his son Khālīd" (XVI, 192–201) has two main parts, the first devoted to the Companion and famous general Khālīd ibn al-Walīd (194–97), and the second to his grandson Khālīd ibn al-Muhājir (197–200). Khālīd ibn al-Muhājir is remembered for having killed Ibn Uthāl, Mu'āwīya's doctor, in revenge, after Ibn Uthāl had poisoned his uncle 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālīd on Mu'āwīya's orders. 'Abd al-Raḥmān was popular in Syria, and Mu'āwīya decided to eliminate him to ensure that his own son, Yazīd, would succeed as caliph. Khālīd was captured and imprisoned for a time, but later Mu'āwīya released him and he returned to Mecca.

Two articles separate the treatment of Khālīd ibn al-Muhājir from that of 'Īsā ibn Mūsā (XVI, 240–3). The introductory lyrics were composed by 'Īsā when his uncle al-Manṣūr obliged him to renounce his right to the succession in favour of al-Mahdī. After the profile two *akhbār* in the brief article affirm that 'Īsā recited the poetry when he learned that al-Mahdī was being given preference over him. Two other *akhbār* illustrate character traits of 'Īsā, his ignorance of singing and his famed generosity.

In both these articles a central issue is settling the succession; the incumbent ruler wishes to secure his son's position as heir-apparent at all costs. Mu'āwīya took drastic measures to eliminate a potential rival; since the manner of succession to the caliphate was by no means assured, three of the four preceding caliphs had died violent deaths and he himself had come to power as a result of a civil war, his

killing of 'Abd al-Raḥmān could be seen as a necessary precaution. Al-Manṣūr does not appear in 'Īsā's article, and it is only the effect of his actions on the destituted heir which is portrayed. But the context was very different, for al-Saffāḥ had named al-Manṣūr as his heir, to be succeeded by 'Īsā, and now al-Manṣūr was not removing 'Īsā from the succession entirely but placing al-Mahdī before him – although his chances of ever succeeding were evidently diminished. Diplomacy had taken the place of brute force, and 'Īsā, an 'Abbāsīd himself, was committed enough to the family cause to accept the caliph's decision, however unwillingly.²⁷ The two articles illustrate contrasted solutions to a critical political problem, how to prepare for a smooth succession of rulers.

Another very unusual motif which occurs in two articles close together is that of flight from the authorities caused by an accusation of fomenting unrest. It is treated in one of the two main parts of al-Kumayt ibn Zayd's article (XVII, 3–15). Al-Kumayt had angered Khālīd al-Qasrī by repaying a Yemeni poet who had lampooned the north Arabian tribes in his own coin, so Khālīd had slave-girls recite to the caliph Hishām al-Kumayt's pro-'Alid poems, and Hishām ordered Khālīd to arrest and silence the poet. Al-Kumayt escaped from prison disguised as a woman and managed to get to Syria, where he turned to Hishām's son Maslama for help. Maslama asked his father to pardon the fugitive, and after al-Kumayt had sought sanctuary at the grave of one of Hishām's sons, who had died shortly before, Hishām agreed to hear him and then to pardon him. These events are given in two versions (3–8, 8–15) which agree on the essentials but vary in detail. The second fugitive is Ḥujr ibn 'Adī, whose violent death is the subject of an article a hundred pages later (XVII, 132–55). Ḥujr was a rallying point for the 'Alid faction in Kufa, and after some Shi'ī unrest Ziyād ibn Abih, Mu'āwiya's governor, decided to make an example of him. The search parties sent to arrest him failed to do so, and Ḥujr escaped, seeking refuge with fellow tribesmen but finally surrendering to Ziyād on condition that he would send him to Mu'āwiya. Despite the testimonies to the seditious acts of Ḥujr and thirteen of his companions which Ziyād had collected or forged, the caliph hesitated whether to execute them or not, and he released six of the group into the protection of fellow-tribesmen. But with Ziyād pressing him to act, he refused to accept Ḥujr's protestation of loyalty, and after he had offered the prisoners a chance to save their lives by cursing 'Alī the recalcitrants were killed. Ḥujr died with dignity, and Mu'āwiya later regretted having given in to Ziyād's pressure.

There are obvious similarities in content between these two articles. Both al-Kumayt and Ḥujr express their Shi'ī convictions openly, and the governor of Iraq decides to punish them as an example. They appeal to the caliph, from whom they evidently have more hope of justice. But the differences between the articles are equally evident. Al-Kumayt's attacks on the Yemeni tribes, while encouraging unrest and obliquely criticising Khālīd, do not undermine the fundamentals of the state, whereas Ḥujr's proclamation of 'Alī's just claims to the caliphate represents a real threat to it. As a poet, al-Kumayt speaks for himself; Ḥujr, by contrast, is not a poet but an authoritative figure in the embryonic Shi'ī movement. Al-Kumayt

escapes from prison by employing the classic ruse of disguising himself as a woman, while Ḥujr surrenders after having been on the run. Above all, al-Kumayt achieves a pardon, thanks to his supporters among Hishām's relatives and his being able to convince Hishām of his loyalty by reciting appropriate poetry. Ḥujr never meets Mu'āwiya; they only communicate through a messenger, and Ḥujr has no chance to defend himself against the charges levelled against him. The presentation of the two incidents differs too. Abū l-Faraj gives two versions of al-Kumayt's flight and appeal to well-disposed Umayyads, and the fact that they differ in details and degree of elaboration encourages the reader to take a critical distance to them. For Ḥujr's arrest, imprisonment and death he relies on Abū Mikhnaḥ's account, which has been carefully crafted to present Ḥujr and his loyal followers as martyrs.²⁸

Read on its own, the account of Ḥujr's violent end is moving enough. But it gains in effect by being set against al-Kumayt's clash with Khālīd and Hishām. For the tragedy no longer seems quite as inevitable. *If* Ḥujr had had relatives of Mu'āwiya to intercede for him, *if* he had met Mu'āwiya, *if* Ziyād had been less unscrupulous, might he have escaped? A tragedy which could have been avoided has an added depth, and this is brought out by placing the articles on the two Shi'i fugitives close together.

The theme of response to the Prophet's invitation to accept Islam is illustrated in two articles separated by some dozen pages. One is the "Account of Labīd's lament for his brother" (XVII, 55–65).²⁹ It treats the incident when a delegation from 'Āmir ibn Ṣa'sa'a, including 'Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl and Labīd ibn Rabī'a's half-brother Arbad ibn Qays, went to the Prophet who invited them to accept Islam. 'Āmir, who refused to submit to another man's authority, devised a plan with Arbad to kill the Prophet; 'Āmir would engage him in conversation while Arbad would fall on him. But each time Arbad made to strike him, he saw 'Āmir between them. When the two men left, Muḥammad prayed to God to deal with 'Āmir for him, and on the way home 'Āmir was struck down by the plague and died.³⁰ Arbad, explaining to their tribe what had happened, rejected Muḥammad's preaching in violent terms, and a few days later he was killed by a thunderbolt (XVII, 56–60). Labīd's elegies on his brother make up most of the rest of the article.³¹

The second treatment of an invitation to Islam is found in the article on Ka'b ibn Zuhayr (XVII, 81–91). Ka'b's brother Bujayr went to Medina, met the Prophet and became a Muslim. But Ka'b satirised the new religion in a poem, upon which the Prophet called for him to be killed. Bujayr advised Ka'b that the only course for him was to recite the *shahāda* in the Prophet's presence, which would cancel his previous outburst. Ka'b went to the Prophet, asked for a guarantee of safety and then recited the poem he had prepared for the occasion, his famous "*Bānat Su'ād*", which greatly impressed Muḥammad (86–9).³²

In these two incidents the protagonists' first response to Islam is hostile, despite the fact that they both have a brother who has already accepted the new religion. But their opposition differs in degree; Arbad, together with 'Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl, tries for kill Muḥammad, and even when 'Āmir has been overtaken by divine vengeance, Arbad is still adamant in his rejection of Islam. That seals his fate. Ka'b

mocks the new religion in poetry, which is serious enough for the Prophet to declare him an outlaw, but when he announces his conversion he also makes good his previous error by composing a panegyric far finer than his satire of Islam. Behind these two contrasted responses of individuals to the call to Islam lie differences in social status. Arbad and 'Āmir are among the leaders of 'Āmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'a, and their refusal to recognise Muḥammad is also a refusal to recognise a superior authority. Ka'b is a poet but not a tribal leader, and Muḥammad's call to have him killed puts his life in danger. The only motive the *Aghānī* mentions for his change of mind is his brother's advice, but the absence of a support group may well have played a part too. (The actors' reflections and inner life are not portrayed in material dealing with this period, so other reasons for Ka'b's behaviour cannot be determined.) By placing these articles close together, Abū l-Faraj encourages his readers to reflect on two reactions to the appearance of Islam which, while resembling each other to start with, ended in opposite ways.

In some neighbouring articles a common element may be a character trait which the subjects share. The early Islamic poet Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī is described in his profile as a heavy drinker, for which he suffered the prescribed punishment (XIX, 1). The drinking of wine is a frequent theme in the rest of the article; it is one possible reason why 'Umar banished the poet for a time, it caused his imprisonment shortly before the battle of al-Qādisiyya, and it gave rise to a discussion between 'Umar and 'Alī about whether a verse in the Quran could be interpreted as permitting drinking. Several fragments reflect Abū Miḥjan's love of wine, and one of the lines of the introductory song celebrating it (XVIII, 374) returns to round off the article (XIX, 13):

Bury me when I die by the stock of a vine
so its roots may slake my bones' thirst
after I'm gone.³³

The subject of the following article, Zuhayr ibn Janāb, is also associated with the drinking of wine; as his profile states, he became "fed up with living, so he drank wine unmixed with water until he died" (XIX, 15). But Zuhayr, a pre-Islamic tribal leader and valiant warrior, is not known to have composed wine-songs, nor do the *akhbār* in his article portray him visiting taverns. He appears to have taken to drink to hasten death when he became old, frail and confused and was supplanted as the leader of his tribe by his nephew (XIX, 24).

There is an association of ideas here; in both poets' lives wine plays an important part. But there is also a contrast. For Zuhayr wine leads to death and an escape from an intolerable situation, whereas Abū Miḥjan celebrates wine as a fundamental pleasure of life, and even as something whose joys may transcend death. It is ironical that the pre-Islamic poet and champion merely sees wine as a grim expedient, while to his younger colleague it is something convivial and even worth suffering punishment for. Islam's prohibition of alcohol would seem to have made it more attractive, if this juxtaposition of articles is anything to go by.

In the articles on Kulthūm al-‘Attābī (XIII, 108–25) and Manṣūr al-Namarī (XIII, 139–57; the article on al-Ubayrid separates them) the link comes from the poets’ biographies. As explained in their profiles, Manṣūr learned the art of poetry from al-‘Attābī and was his *rāwī* for a time. Al-‘Attābī introduced his pupil to al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā al-Barmakī and thus secured his entry into court circles. Later the two men quarrelled, and the *Aghānī* has accounts of Manṣūr complaining to Ṭāhīr ibn al-Ḥusayn and al-Rashīd about his former teacher. As emerges from one anecdote, al-‘Attābī was reacting to what he considered was Manṣūr’s bad behaviour towards him. But when the two articles are read in conjunction, it becomes clear that although both men aimed at success at court, they had very different personalities. Al-‘Attābī’s article shows him not only as a skilled poet but also as a master of rhetoric and wit and well versed in the Arabic language. He was also something of a non-conformist (or, from another point of view, an unreformed bedouin), setting little store by the luxuries of palace life. His intellectual calibre is suggested by the fact that three of the first four anecdotes are set in al-Ma’mūn’s court and show him to advantage. Manṣūr al-Namarī was essentially a poet and he took his bearings in court literary circles from others, in particular Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa, whose anti-‘Alid poems al-Rashīd greatly appreciated. Manṣūr’s own leanings, however, were to the Shī‘a, and the poems in which he expressed his sincere sentiments were his undoing. For al-‘Attābī, wishing to revenge himself after Manṣūr had got him into trouble with al-Rashīd, recited them to the caliph, and if Manṣūr had not conveniently died in the meantime he would probably have been executed. These two articles, which are set in the same milieu, illustrate the importance of a sharp intelligence for manoeuvring through the intrigues of court life. Manṣūr, however gifted as a poet, lacked the perspicacity of his teacher whom he was unwise enough to alienate.

Samples of a genre not often represented in the *Aghānī* may occur close to one another, thus encouraging comparison. One such is oratory. Several speeches are included in the article on the Khārījī ‘Abdallāh ibn Yaḥyā Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq: his address to the people of Yemen when he took control of Sanaa, and Abū Ḥamza al-Mukhtār ibn ‘Awf’s call to the Medinans to repent (XXIII, 226–7, 237–9, 239–40, 240–4). Abu Ḥamza’s three successive *khutab* in Medina develop Khārījī teaching and attitudes to other Muslims in increasing detail. The account of the battle of Dhū Qār contains a number of short speeches by tribal leaders before the fighting starts (XXIV, 64, 69–70). In a bold response to ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr’s refusal to pay out his pension, the poet Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhālī praises the Umayyads and denigrates the Zubayrids (XXIV, 111–12). And towards the end of the same article there is an illustration of the introduction of abstract concepts in a dialectical exchange between Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām and a handsome youth (XXIV, 127–9).³⁴

These examples of the art of public speaking treat different subjects. The Khārījīs call the Muslims to repentance, affirming that the Umayyads have fallen away from the Prophet’s teaching and ruled unjustly. Fear of Hell and the hope of Paradise inspire their preaching; their references are essentially Islamic and stress the

importance of morality and justice. The short speeches before the battle of Dhū Qār are those of tribal leaders who appeal to pre-Islamic values, honour, clan solidarity and courage, and apply wisdom born of experience to the situation. Abū Ṣakhr's praise of the Umayyads, with its concomitant blaming of Ibn al-Zubayr, refers both to pre-Islamic qualities, such as noble descent, generosity and leadership, and, although they are less prominent, to elements of Islamic legitimacy, closeness to the Prophet and leadership of the Muslim community. In it the opposition between eulogy and satire is very marked. Finally, al-Nazzām's dialogue with the handsome youth illustrates the use of dialectic in an intellectual climate whose references are neither Islamic nor pre-Islamic Arabian but the *ḥukamā'*, representatives of the Near Eastern tradition of wisdom literature. In the space of 150 pages Abū l-Faraj has illustrated four types of oratorical prose, situating each in its own ideological and intellectual climate and tacitly inviting the reader to compare and contrast them.

In the various cases mentioned above the compiler does not announce that he has juxtaposed the articles intentionally. But since he explicitly states elsewhere that finding the right place for material is one of his concerns, it is permissible to keep in mind the question of why he might have put articles where they are throughout at least the third part of the book, where he was free to choose how he ordered them. It is certain that not every article gains an additional dimension of meaning by being placed in a particular context, but I believe that examples such as the ones I have discussed above are evidence of his paying attention at times to the effect that could be achieved by arranging close together articles which display meaningful similarities and contrasts to each other.³⁵

A musical framework for a panorama of culture

The last issue which should be considered in connection with the framework is why what started off as a Book of Songs should have become a panorama of four centuries of Arabic literature and culture. On the face of it, the reason for this is simple and set out by Abū l-Faraj in his preface. He was asked to establish the correct list of the Hundred Songs drawn up by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī for al-Wāthiq, and he appended to each song the information about the composers of lyrics and settings and any other useful material he thought fit.³⁶ He had earlier song books for models, and he may well have been influenced by the plan for a book which Ishāq described to 'Alī ibn Hishām;³⁷ the *Aghānī* in its final form has much in common with Ishāq's sketch.

Yet this only explains Part One of the *Aghānī*, the starting point of which are the song collections. What persuaded Abū l-Faraj to go on and compile Parts Two and Three? Unfortunately, he says nothing about why he did not stop after Ibn Surayj's Seven in vol. IX. But I would like to suggest two reasons, even if they are no more than hypotheses. The first, which is indirectly supported by statements from the compiler, is his desire to defend music as an integral part of mediaeval Arabic culture and of court culture in particular; it helps to explain the existence

of Part Two. As has been pointed out, in Baghdad attacks were regularly launched on the practice of music, especially by the Ḥanbalis, from the end of the third/ninth century. The justification of singing, which is one of the themes recurring regularly throughout the whole book, is no doubt partly a response to them. And what better defence of music could there be, at least in the eyes of representatives of court culture, than to show that caliphs and other members of the ruling house not only enjoyed listening to singing but even engaged in composing and performing themselves? The central position in the *Aghānī* of a Part devoted to royal musicians corresponds to an affirmation of the centrality of music in court culture, and indeed of its status as what al-Ṣūlī calls “the science of princes, of which they have almost the monopoly.”³⁸

The second reason has a bearing on the whole of the work, with its wide-ranging portrayal of Arabic pre-Islamic and Islamic literature, history and culture, and concerns ideas about the relation of music to other phenomena of creation. The philosopher al-Kindī (late second/eighth-mid third/ninth century) had a marked interest in music and left several writings on the subject.³⁹ In one of them, he makes a connection between the seasons of the year, the humours of the body, the primary elements, the quarters of the zodiac and other tetrads (or groups of four) on the one hand and the four strings of the lute, the basic instrument referred to in Arabic musical theory, on the other. He also links the four strings to different rhythmic modes and associates in turn with these certain colours and perfumes. Sight and smell as well as hearing are thus appealed to in his system.⁴⁰ He even goes so far as to say that those who invented the four-stringed lute did so with the aim of revealing the underlying correspondences in the universe to the soul when it is moved to its core by music.⁴¹

The ideas about correspondences between the lute-strings and other phenomena of the created world reappear later in different contexts. Al-Masʿūdī mentions the relation between the four strings of the lute and the humours.⁴² The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren (*Rasāʾil ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*), an encyclopaedia of contemporary knowledge and gnostic thought most probably written in the mid-fourth/tenth century, develop the theory further.⁴³ The treatise on music in the *Rasāʾil*, the fifth in the work, not only affirms the effect music exerts on individuals and groups, it also sees music on earth as a reflection of the music of the spheres, as Pythagorean theory conceived of it.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Brethren explicitly state that within the tetrads and what corresponds to them, all natural beings and sensory things appear either in agreement or in opposition.⁴⁵ By implication, then, the tetrads comprise the whole of the universe. Interestingly, the Brethren also propose the image of music as a text, in which the “notes ... play the role of letters, the melodies that of words, the chant that of discourse, the air that serves them as support ... the role of paper.”⁴⁶

The secretary al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī puts forward some ideas in his treatise on musical practice which also reflect this Pythagorean inspiration. He refers to the philosophers’ belief that music enables people to arrive at knowledge of the universal soul, and he has a chapter on the resemblance between the soul, melodies

and the celestial sphere.⁴⁷ In contrast to the Sincere Brethren, al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad was a practising musician familiar with the tradition of court culture, and the *Kamāl adab al-ghinā'* provides evidence that neo-Platonic ideas about the correspondences between music and cosmic phenomena were current in the court milieu. Al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad quotes extensively not only from al-Kindī but from his pupil Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Sarakhsī (c. 220/835–285/899), the tutor and later companion of the caliph al-Mu'taḍid, whom Abū l-Faraj admired as a composer. Unlike al-Kindī, who only appears once in the *Aghānī* in an *isnād*, al-Sarakhsī is quoted in it several times,⁴⁸ the intermediary between him and Abū l-Faraj almost always being Abū l-Faraj's uncle or Jaḥḥa. Al-Sarakhsī's writings on music have not survived except in a few quotations, but al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ranks his writings on musical theory together with those of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī.⁴⁹ A concern with the philosophical dimension of music and with its place in the world was evidently well established in the circles in which Abū l-Faraj moved.

Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) derives his ideas about the philosophy of music not from Pythagoras and the neo-Platonists but from Aristotle.⁵⁰ But he makes some remarks in the *Kitāb al-mūsīqī al-kabīr* which reveal how he experienced and evaluated the musical world of his time. He regards as important the fact that because the "Arab empire" includes so many peoples, its inhabitants have the opportunity to get to know the different musical traditions. He also notes how musical innovations can spread from one part of the empire to another, giving as an example the *shahrūd*, a larger kind of lute. And he sees advances in the understanding of music in his time as being arrived at through the ideas of the Greek philosophers and their followers being combined with the pragmatic ideas and experience of practising musicians.⁵¹

Abū l-Faraj's own writings do not betray Pythagorean or neo-Platonic influences, but he mentions among the accomplishments of 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir, whom he admired, an impressive familiarity with the Greek science of music theory (IX, 40). He also recounts an anecdote in which Ishāq al-Mawṣilī expressed interest in reading translations of Greek texts on music, but that nothing came of it because Ishāq died soon after. Nonetheless the singer arrived independently at the same results as the Greeks, and this the compiler rates an extraordinary achievement (V, 271). It is fair to assume, then, that Abū l-Faraj accepted the less esoteric aspects of music theory as al-Kindī and his successors took it over from the Greek tradition and developed it. Whether he had moments of viewing the contemporary musical scene as positively as al-Fārābī did is less likely,⁵² but he may well have shared the philosopher's sense of standing in a long musical tradition, enriched by the contributions of different peoples making up the 'Abbāsīd empire.

Furthermore, one or two passages in the *Aghānī* illustrate the extraordinary effect music could have both on human beings and on animals. Ibn Surayj's singing to some young men outside Mecca attracted the birds too (XII, 122). The mentally unstable Mānī was very sensitive to music, violently attacking a muezzin who performed the call to prayer with an ugly quavering voice, but behaving entirely normally in a gathering where a singing-girl belonging to one of al-Mahdi's

daughters performed, and even adding to the lyrics of her songs (XXIII, 183–5). When Mukhāriq sang, he not only caused servants to stop what they were doing and listen (XVIII, 353), on another occasion ignoring the caliph's summons (360), but he also drew everyone within earshot into a graveyard where he was performing (347–8). Gazelles interrupted their flight to come up and hear him (358), and when he burst into song as he was going home by boat one night, the banks of the river were full of moving lights as the people in the courtyards of the palaces and houses tried to keep up with him (359). Such incidents fit well with the theory of connections between music and other aspects of the cosmos.

Set against the background of the ideas outlined above, Abū l-Faraj's use of music as the occasion and starting-point for his epic panorama of pre- and early-Islamic literature, history and culture would reflect not a whim but a conscious and carefully weighed decision. Like some other aspects of his practice in the *Aghānī* it cannot be demonstrated, but it should at least be taken seriously as a possibility.

There is a final consideration with respect to the choice of songs as a framework for the material in the *Aghānī*. Abū l-Faraj was probably unaware of the fact, familiar to ethnomusicologists, that music is a major symbol of cultural identity, often functioning to maintain cultural traditions;⁵³ it may even represent the last bastion of such an identity, when it is threatened from within or without.⁵⁴ The capacity of music and poetry to outlive those who composed them and those for whom they were intended is a recurrent theme in the book, as has been noted.⁵⁵ Whether Abū l-Faraj realised it or not, his framing early Arabic poetry, history and culture in music was a remarkably effective way of preserving them, even if in the course of the centuries the frame itself was largely lost.

EPILOGUE

Prospects for further research

Those who have persevered with this study believing that it would provide them with a précis of the *Kitāb al-aghānī* and free them of the need to turn to the book itself will, I hope, have been disappointed. It was not my intention to produce a substitute for Abū l-Faraj's work. Instead, I wanted to shed light on how he had put his book together, so that readers would understand better the nature of this complex text and thus derive more profit and pleasure from it. And at the same time I assembled in a kind of Companion what seems to me relevant information for readers to draw on when they open the *Aghānī*.

The first five chapters have been designed chiefly to document research on the *Aghānī*, its author's life, and the statements he made when compiling the book. Even when the interpretations which I have added can be called into question or turn out to be wrong, the information itself should still be useful to scholars. Chapter 8 and the first part of Chapter 9 are in the same descriptive style and should have a similar documentary value.

Chapters 6 and 7 and part of Chapter 9 are more speculative. They are based on two ideas which are supported by Abū l-Faraj's own remarks. First, he had the contents of the entire book in mind as he was working, and his placing of the material in the *Aghānī* is not necessarily arbitrary. And second, an awareness of motifs in narrative prose existed in mediaeval Arabic literature, and on occasion *akhbār* were consciously brought together to illustrate the use and development of a particular motif which they shared. A third determining consideration in these chapters is the recognition that different types of source material and subjects produce different kinds of articles. The analyses I have proposed reflect my conviction that the major *belles-lettres* compilations of the fourth/tenth century were not intended to be understood on one level only, but instead offered an exciting variety of interpretations to readers who cared to relate anecdotes and quotations of poetry to each other in various ways. They were, and are, faithful expressions of the spirit of *adab*, that elusive term embracing at the same time behaviour, literary culture and learning.

Nonetheless, a great deal of work needs to be done on the way in which these components of *adab* compilations relate to each other. Time and space have prevented me from developing the analyses of some passages as I would have liked,

and as they require. In any case it is better that others should now address this question, with fresh insights and theoretical starting points. But the issue itself seems to me the major one in the study of compilations of this period in general, and the *Aghānī* in particular. A further specific requirement in connection with research on the *Aghānī* is to address certain of the textual problems I have identified in passing – even if making a better edition of the whole text, using all the major manuscripts, will probably remain a dream.

It is true that there are many important texts of this period which are waiting for thorough study; why, then, should the *Aghānī* receive special attention? Beyond the fact that it has remained one of the central works of Arabic literature, as is shown by the continuous tradition of abridgements among other things, the *Aghānī* has a place apart in literary traditions. Unlike most European literatures and the Indian tradition, Arabic literature does not have a founding epic. It shares this trait with Chinese literature among others. But the *Aghānī*, more than any other work, occupies a place in Arabic literature equivalent to what has been termed a secondary epic, a poem such as the *Aeneid* or the *Shāhnāmeh*. Ibn Khaldūn indicated as much when he called the *Aghānī* the *diwān* of the Arabs, the record of their music, poetry, history and other spheres of activity.¹ To recognise this and to integrate the *Aghānī* into the typology of the essential texts of different literatures not only does it justice, but it modifies ideas of what such essential texts can be. In this perspective study of the *Aghānī* is a contribution to the study of world literature.

In conclusion, I can do no better than to invite researchers to further efforts, echoing the words of Abū l-Faraj when he asked his readers to correct his mistakes and supplement his information where they could, doing their best to arrive at the truth. He encouraged them with the reflection that if they fulfilled his wish, “that would do [them] no disservice, indeed [they] would earn merit and a good name” (VI, 9).

APPENDIX 1

Concordance of the Dār al-kutub and Būlāq editions of the *Kitāb al-aghānī*

This concordance seeks to enable those who use another edition of the *Kitāb al-aghānī* than the Cairo one (Dār al-kutub/Al-hay'a al-'amma al-miṣriya li-l-kitāb: 1927–1974) to find the passages referred to in this study, by noting the equivalent page in the Būlāq (1268 H.) edition, the pagination of which is found in the margin of later editions. The Būlāq equivalent of the first line of every tenth page of the Cairo edition, starting from the first page in each volume, is given. Where possible, I have noted significant lacunas in the Būlāq text. Towards the end Brünnow's 21st volume, indicated by Br., replaces Būlāq for some passages, and equivalent pages in the Cairo edition are given.

Cairo		Būlāq		Cairo		Būlāq	
I	1	I	2, 1	I	311	I	124, 3
	11		7, 6		321		128, 6
	21		11, 24		331		132, 14
	31		16, 22		341		136, 7
	41		21, 9		351		139, 29
	51		25, 26		361		144, 12
	61		30, 4		371		147, 19
	71		34, 11		381		152, 4
	81		38, 10		391		156, 6
	91		42, 4		401		160, 3
	101		45, 21		411		164, 3
	111		49, 17		417		167, 1
	121		54, 1				
	131		58, 4	II	1		167, 2
	141		62, 8		11		170, 12
	151		66, 8		21		174, 20
156, 3–163, 5			—		31		178, 16
	171		70, 28		41		182, 9
	181		74, 15		51		185, 28
	191		77, 9		61	II	2, 5
	201		80, 26		71		7, 6
	211		84, 7		81		11, 6
	221		88, 8		91		15, 23
	231		91, 25		101		20, 10
	241		94, 19		111		24, 27
	251		98, 7		121		28, 14
	261		102, 11		131		33, 1
	271		106, 9		141		37, 9
	281		110, 23		151		41, 9
	291		115, 1		161		45, 5
	301		119, 10		171		49, 4

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	Cairo		Bulāq		Cairo		Bulāq
II	181	II	53, 4		201		50, 3
	191		57, 23		211		54, 26
	201		61, 27		221		59, 17
	211		65, 30		231		64, 3
	221		70, 14		241		69, 2
	231		75, 3		251		73, 14
	241		79, 11		261		78, 6
	251		84, 2		271		82, 11
	261		88, 17		281		86, 13
	271		92, 24		291		90, 23
	281		96, 28		301		95, 26
	291		100, 23		311		100, 6
	301		105, 7		321		104, 20
	311		109, 4		331		109, 6
	321		112, 17		341		113, 27
	331		116, 19		351		118, 1
	341		120, 22		361		122, 21
	351		125, 1		368		125, 30
	361		129, 23				
	371		134, 8	IV	1		126, 11
	381		138, 21		11		130, 15
	391		143, 16		21		135, 9
	401		148, 7		31		140, 20
	411		152, 9		41		145, 29
	421		156, 21		51		151, 4
	428		159, 16		61		156, 16
					71		161, 19
					81		166, 18
					91		171, 19
III	1		159, 17		101		176, 28
	11		163, 18		111		182, 9
	21		167, 31		121		187, 7
	31		172, 10		131		191, 16
	41		176, 23		141	IV	5, 22
	51		181, 10		151		9, 28
	61		185, 13		161		13, 26
	71		189, 17		171		17, 27
	81		193, 30		181		21, 30
	91	III	3, 13		191		26, 10
	101		7, 21		201		30, 21
	111		11, 21		211		34, 31
	121		14, 22		221		39, 10
	131		18, 18		231		42, 30
	141		22, 13		241		46, 12
	151		26, 18		251		50, 28
	161		31, 3		261		55, 16
	171		35, 27		271		60, 2
	181		40, 11				
	191		45, 9				

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	Cairo		Bülâq		Cairo		Bülâq
IV	281	IV	64, 20		301		67, 13
	291		69, 7		311		72, 17
	301		74, 1		321		77, 7
	311		77, 30		331		81, 22
	321		82, 3		341		86, 27
	331		87, 2		351		91, 14
	341		91, 20		361		95, 25
	351		95, 29		371		100, 9
	361		99, 19		381		105, 7
	371		103, 28		391		110, 3
	381		107, 26		401		115, 6
	391		111, 26		411		120, 1
	401		116, 2		421		125, 1
	411		120, 14		431		129, 22
	421		124, 19		435		131, 4
	429		128, 10				
				VI	1		131, 28
V	1		128, 22		11		136, 8
	11		131, 29		21		141, 6
	21		135, 16		31		145, 25
	31		139, 12		41		150, 11
	41		143, 7		51		155, 26
	51		146, 27		61		160, 20
	61		150, 21		71		164, 25
	71		154, 22		81		169, 7
	81		159, 2		91		173, 10
	91		163, 14		101		177, 9
	101		168, 1		111		182, 2
	111		172, 20		121		186, 23
	121		177, 1		131		191, 7
	131		181, 1		141	VI	2, 12
	141		185, 3		151		7, 4
	151		189, 14		161		11, 9
	161	V	5, 8		171		15, 23
	171		9, 25		181		20, 13
	181		14, 14		191		25, 5
	191		19, 12		201		29, 9
	201		23, 21		211		33, 9
	211		28, 15		221		27, 29
	221		32, 6		231		42, 23
	231		36, 5		241		47, 21
	241		40, 12		251		52, 13
	251		44, 30		261		57, 12
	261		49, 13		271		60, 27
	271		53, 22		281		64, 31
	281		58, 1		291		69, 13
	291		62, 21		301		73, 21

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	Cairo		Bulāq		Cairo		Bulāq
VI	311	VI	77, 25		71		68, 19
	321		82, 15		81		73, 10
	331		87, 12		91		77, 23
	341		92, 6		101		82, 9
	351		96, 25		111		87, 23
	360		101, 2		121		92, 25
VII					131		98, 1
	1		101, 10		141		103, 3
	11		106, 4		151		108, 14
	21		111, 4		161		113, 6
	31		116, 3		171		117, 30
	41		121, 4		181		122, 17
	51		125, 29		191		126, 27
	61		130, 12		201		130, 28
	71		135, 10		211		136, 3
	81		140, 1		221		140, 28
	91		144, 17		231		146, 1
	101		149, 7		241		150, 15
	111		153, 19		251		155, 6
	121		158, 6		261		160, 8
	131		163, 13		271		165, 13
	141		168, 13		281		170, 5
	151		173, 8		291		174, 10
	161		178, 11		301		178, 27
	171		183, 21		311		183, 16
	181		188, 25		321		188, 11
	191		194, 2		331	VIII	4, 26
	201		199, 10		341		9, 26
	211		204, 18		351		14, 25
	221		209, 14		361		19, 27
	231	VII	3, 17		371		24, 24
	241		7, 29		375		26, 27
	251		12, 19		383–425 ¹		—
	261		27, 1				
	271		21, 13	IX	3		27, 4
	281		25, 30		11		30, 19
	291		30, 24		21		35, 11
	301		34, 26		31		40, 2
	308		37, 18		41		44, 25
					51		49, 23
VIII	3		38, 2		61		54, 22
	11		41, 10		71		59, 27
	21		46, 4		81		64, 27
	31		50, 6		91		69, 26
	41		54, 22		101		73, 31
	51		59, 19		111		78, 19
	61		64, 3		121		83, 14

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	Cairo		Bulāq		Cairo		Bulāq
IX	131	VIII	88, 1		231		118, 26
	141		93, 3		241		123, 28
	151		98, 8		251		129, 3
	161		102, 30		261		134, 2
	171		107, 28		271		139, 5
	181		112, 18		281		143, 3
	191		117, 31		291		145, 25
	201		123, 21		301		152, 12
	211		129, 17		311		156, 21
	221		134, 27		321		160, 19
	231		139, 24		324		161, 23
	241		144, 25				
	251		149, 26	XI	3		162, 1
	261		154, 31		11		165, 1
	271		160, 2		21		169, 7
	281		165, 15		31		173, 10
	291		170, 26		41		177, 19
	301		176, 4		51		181, 22
	311		180, 31		61	X	2, 1
	321		185, 21		71		6, 22
	331		190, 10		81		11, 17
	341		195, 14		91		15, 29
	345		197, 15		101		20, 22
					111		25, 8
X	3	IX	2, 1		121		29, 30
	11		5, 29		131		34, 17
	21		10, 20		141		38, 26
	31		15, 8		151		42, 30
	41		20, 3		161		47, 2
	51		25, 13		171		51, 19
	61		30, 20		181		56, 17
	71		36, 8		191		61, 11
	81		41, 10		201		65, 26
	91		46, 11		211		70, 3
	101		51, 24		221		73, 32
	111		57, 3		231		76, 30
	121		62, 19		241		80, 25
	131		67, 27		251		84, 31
	141		72, 29		261		89, 18
	151		78, 4		271		94, 11
	161		82, 26		281		98, 12
	171		87, 26		291		103, 2
	181		93, 11		301		107, 3
	191		98, 5		311		111, 7
	201		103, 28		321		115, 17
	211		108, 19		331		120, 9
	221		113, 26		341		124, 19

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	Cairo		Bulāq		Cairo		Bulāq
XI	351	X	129, 11		51		149, 17
	361		134, 3		61		153, 17
	371		138, 17		71		156, 30
	381		142, 20		81		161, 10
XII					91		165, 25
	3		143, 1		101		170, 20
	11		145, 25		111	XII	3, 15
	21		150, 19		121		8, 7
	31		154, 16		131		12, 27
	41		158, 28		141		17, 10
	51		163, 8		151		22, 8
	61		167, 16		161		27, 6
	71		171, 3		171		31, 24
	81	XI	2, 1		181		36, 22
	91		7, 26		191		41, 8
	101		11, 25		201		45, 22
	111		16, 19		211		50, 17
	121		21, 19		221		54, 27
	131		25, 19		231		59, 22
	141		29, 27		241		64, 12
	151		35, 8		251		69, 1
	161		40, 6		261		73, 12
	171		44, 31		271		77, 19
	181		49, 15		281		82, 10
	191		54, 10		291		87, 5
	201		59, 18		301		92, 9
	211		64, 30		311		97, 13
	221		69, 26		321		102, 19
	231		75, 3		331		107, 24
	241		80, 13		341		112, 29
	251		84, 16		351		117, 23
	261		88, 31		361		122, 6
	271		93, 20		363		123, 5
	281		98, 6				
	291		102, 21	XIV	1		123, 16
	301		107, 19		11		127, 6
	311		112, 26		21		130, 29
	321		118, 2		31		134, 6
	331		123, 3		41		137, 17
	341		127, 22		51		141, 31
	347		130, 7		61		146, 16
					71		150, 17
					81		153, 24
					91		158, 4
XIII	3		130, 22		101		162, 4
	11		133, 11		111		166, 27
	21		136, 18		121		170, 20
	31		140, 22				
	41		145, 10				

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	Cairo		Bulāq		Cairo	Bulāq
XIV	131	XII	174, 22		191	17, 23
	141		178, 5		201	22, 3
	151	XIII	4, 29		211	26, 25
	161		8, 25		221	31, 8
	171		13, 10		231	35, 8
	181		17, 8		241	39, 4
	191		21, 19		251	44, 1
	201		26, 6		261	48, 26
	211		30, 15		271	53, 5
	221		34, 10		281	58, 5
	231		37, 24		291	62, 31
	241		41, 5		301	67, 13
	251		44, 11		311	71, 16
	261		48, 21		321	75, 28
	271		52, 27		331	80, 12
	281		56, 8		341	84, 30
	291		60, 12		351	89, 2
	301		64, 18		361	93, 18
	311		68, 25		371	98, 4
	321		73, 1		381	102, 20
	331		77, 23		391	107, 10
	341		82, 21		394	108, 24
	351		86, 24			
	361		91, 29	XVI	3	109, 4
	371		96, 31		11	112, 11
	381		102, 2		21	116, 17
	386		104, 13		31	120, 21
XV					41	124, 24
	3		104, 15		51	128, 24
	11		107, 28		61	132, 27
	21		112, 7		71	137, 6
	31		116, 17	76, 15–82, 8		ZDMG L, 145 ff.
	41		121, 6		91	143, 18
	51		125, 9		101	148, 2
	61		129, 27		111	152, 10
	71		134, 8		121	156, 29
	81		138, 12		131	160, 29
	91		142, 7		141	164, 20
	101		145, 30		151	168, 31
	111		150, 4		161	173, 9
	121		154, 19		171	177, 26
	131		158, 28		181	XV 5, 7
	141		163, 30		191	10, 8
	151		168, 5		201	14, 23
	161	XIV	4, 4		211	19, 17
	171		8, 26		221	24, 17
	181		12, 22		231	29, 8

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	Cairo		Bulāq		Cairo		Bulāq
XVI	241	XV	33, 27		281		62, 14
	251		37, 7		291		66, 16
	261		42, 2		301		70, 30
	271		47, 1		311		75, 6
	281		52, 2		321		79, 17
	291		56, 10		331		83, 18
	301		61, 9		341		88, 1
	311		65, 28		351		92, 4
	321		70, 7		361		95, 26
	331		74, 17		371		100, 2
	341		79, 15		381		103, 31
	351		84, 17		391		107, 19
	361		89, 6		399		110, 9
	371		94, 20				
	381		99, 12	XVIII	1		110, 18
	391		104, 2		10, 13–11, 4		—
	401		108, 30		21		117, 24
	408		112, 22		31		121, 17
					41		125, 23
XVII	1		113, 8		51		129, 25
	11		117, 19		61		134, 14
	21		121, 26		71		138, 24
	31		126, 2		81		142, 30
	41		130, 21		91		145, 16
	51		134, 30		101		148, 23
	61		139, 6		111		152, 29
	71		143, 15		121		157, 27
	81		147, 6		131		160, 20
	91		151, 1		141		164, 13
	101		154, 31		151		168, 4
	111		158, 25		161	XVII	5, 22
	121		162, 21		171		10, 6
	131		166, 27		181		15, 12
	141	XVI	5, 22		191		20, 10
	151		9, 30		201		25, 13
	161		13, 13		211		30, 14
	171		17, 15		221		35, 2
	181		21, 12		231		40, 3
	191		25, 27		241		45, 21
	201		30, 2		251		50, 29
	211		33, 25		261		55, 7
	221		37, 21		271		60, 7
	231		41, 18		281		65, 5
	241		45, 22		291		69, 23
	251		50, 1		301		73, 26
	261		54, 15		311		78, 11
	271		58, 24		321		Br. 163, 12

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	Cairo	Bulāq		Cairo		Bulāq
	331	Br. 168, 18		300		Br. 176, 9
	335	Br. 171, 18		301		Br. 176, 13
	336	Br. 220, 11		311		Br. 183, 20
	341	Br. 224, 14		313		Br. 185, 9
	351	Br. 232, 6		314	XVIII	94, 13
	361	Br. 239, 11				
	371	Br. 247, 9	XX	1		94, 21
	373	Br. 248, 19		11		99, 20
	374	Br. 210, 5		21		104, 2
				31		108, 31
XIX	1	Br. 210, 11		41		114, 2
	11	Br. 218, 12		51		118, 14
	13	Br. 220, 3		59		122, 11
	14	Br. 93, 7		60	XVII	168, 1
	21	Br. 98, 10		61	XVIII	2, 1
	29	Br. 104, 3		71		7, 15
30, 1–71, 16 ²		—		81		10, 2
	73	XVII 141, 20		91		15, 3
	81	144, 26		101		20, 1
	91	149, 26		111		25, 3
	101	151, 17		121		29, 25
	111	156, 15		131		34, 16
	121	161, 13		141		39, 2
	131	166, 18		151		43, 27
	133	167, 15		161		48, 19
	134	82, 29		171		53, 13
	141	86, 1		181		58, 1
	151	91, 2		191		62, 25
	161	95, 31		201		67, 3
	171	99, 21		211		71, 3
	181	104, 17		221		75, 7
	191	109, 6		231		80, 8
	201	114, 2		241		83, 27
	211	118, 21		251		88, 22
	221	122, 14		261		93, 22
	231	127, 17		262		94, 6
	241	132, 12		263		Br. 249, 10
	251	137, 13		271		Br. 254, 22
	259	141, 13		273		Br. 44, 20
	260	Br. 110, 10		281		Br. 49, 15
	261	Br. 110, 16		287		Br. 53, 18
	271	Br. 117, 23		288		Br. 256, 6
	281	Br. 125, 1		291		Br. 257, 21
	287	Br. 129, 5		293		Br. 129, 17
	288	Br. 153, 22		300		Br. 133, 17
	291	Br. 155, 16		301		Br. 16, 22
	299	Br. 162, 1		306		Br. 7, 9

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	Cairo	Bulāq	Cairo	Bulāq
XX	311	Br. 10, 13	198	Br. 72, 5
	314	Br. 12, 17	199	Br. 171, 19
	315	Br. 14, 1	203	Br. 174, 7
	319	Br. 16, 13	204	Br. 54, 7
	320	Br. 2, 2	211	Br. 58, 20
	327	Br. 6, 11	221	Br. 65, 6
	328	Br. 276, 18	228	Br. 68, 16
	334	Br. 280, 18	229	Br. 72, 20
	335	Br. 104, 10	241	Br. 79, 24
	341	Br. 108, 9	248	Br. 84, 1
	343	Br. 109, 17	249	Br. 258, 19
	344	Br. 84, 12	251	Br. 259, 13
	351	Br. 88, 10	252	Br. 13, 9
	355	Br. 91, 3	253	Br. 263, 19
	356	XVIII 125, 26	261	Br. 268, 18
	361		271	Br. 274, 13
	371	132, 8	274	Br. 276, 14
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	411	148, 4	301	9, 26
	421	152, 5	311	13, 1
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	21	162, 3	361	31, 12
	31	165, 10	371	34, 28
	41	169, 8	381	38, 31
	51	173, 30	391	42, 29
	61	178, 23	401	47, 1
	71	183, 29	404	51, 9
	81	189, 1		52, 15
	91	193, 28	XXII 1	52, 31
	101	197, 24		57, 20
	111	202, 14	11	61, 17
	121	206, 20	21	65, 6
	131	211, 8	31	69, 13
	141	215, 11	41	72, 29
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	174	Br. 175, 3	61	80, 28
	177	Br. 176, 7	71	84, 13
	178	Br. 134, 1	81	88, 15
	181	Br. 135, 12	91	92, 9
	191	Br. 141, 10	101	95, 30
	194	Br. 142, 24	111	100, 11
	195	Br. 70, 10	121	105, 30
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APPENDIX 1

	Cairo		Bulāq		Cairo		Bulāq
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	171		120, 22	205, 1–215, 9 ⁵			—
	181		125, 2		231		100, 22
	191		129, 3		241		105, 31
	201		133, 6		251		111, 18
	211		137, 25		256		114, 4
	221		141, 12				
	231		144, 26				
	235		146, 19	XXIV	1		114, 16
	236		102, 11		11		117, 7
	243		105, 21		21		120, 3
	244		146, 29		31		124, 22
	251		150, 5		41		129, 5
	261		153, 7		51		132, 5
	271		156, 31		61		134, 16
	281		160, 31		71		137, 11
	291		164, 26		81		140, 13
	301		169, 15		91		143, 9
	311	XX	6, 6		101		145, 19
	321		9, 17		108		Br. 143, 20
	331		13, 17		111		Br. 144, 16
	341		18, 8		121		Br. 148, 12
	351		22, 3		131		Br. 152, 7
	359		25, 8		134		Br. 153, 15
					135	XX	149, 21
XXIII	1		25, 16		141		151, 8
	11		30, 11		151		153, 31
	21		34, 29		161		156, 18
	31		39, 18		171		159, 14
	41		44, 7		181		162, 5
	51		48, 21		191		164, 29
	61		53, 8		201		167, 22
67, 7–116, 15 ⁴			—		211		170, 30
	117		56, 16		221		174, 15
	121		57, 31		230		178, 20
	131		62, 12	230, 12–231, 6			—
	141		66, 21		241		182, 1
	151		71, 10		251		185, 11
	161		75, 27		258		187, 29
	171		80, 7	259, 1–261, 3			—

APPENDIX 2

List of contents of the *Kitāb al-aghānī*

This appendix lists the articles of the *Kitāb al-aghānī* as given in the Dār al-kutub edition. It also indicates songs belonging to the Top Hundred (*al-mi'a al-mukhtāra*) which do not introduce an article. The following abbreviations are used to indicate songs from different collections: (M) for Top Hundred songs, with (MM) and (MJ) for those mentioned as being drawn from 'Alī ibn Yahyā al-Munajjim's and Jaḥẓa's lists of the Top Hundred, respectively; (R) for the chosen songs in the *ramal* rhythmic mode; (C) for Ma'bad's seven songs known as his Cities; (S) for Ibn Surayj's Seven Songs. Where a song has settings by several composers, either the composer who is the subject of a following article or else the first-named composer is given.

In general the author of the lyrics is mentioned first, but where a link to a previous article is provided by the composer of the setting, his name precedes that of the poet. The numbers refer to pages.

Aghānī I

- 1 Preface (by an unknown author; from p. 3 by Abū l-Faraj)
- 7 *Account of the Hundred Chosen Songs*
- 11 Song (MM): lyrics by Abū Qaṭīfa; setting by Ma'bad
- 12 Account of Abū Qaṭīfa and his origin
- 36 Mention of Ma'bad and some of information about him
- 60 Song (MM): lyrics by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 61 Account of 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a and his origin
- 248 Information about Ibn Surayj and his origin
- 269 Song (MJ): lyrics [by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'a]; setting by Ibn Surayj (song included in Ibn Surayj's article)
- 286 Song (MJ): lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ or Sa'id ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān; setting by Ma'bad (song included in Ibn Surayj's article)
- 323 Song (M): lyrics by Nuṣayb; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 324 Mention of Nuṣayb and information about him
- 378 Information about Ibn Muḥriz and his origin
- 382 Song (MJ): lyrics by al-'Arjī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī

- 383 Information about al-‘Arjī and his origin
 417 Song (MJ): lyrics by Majnūn; setting by Ibn Muḥriz

Aghānī II

- 1 Information about al-Majnūn of Banū ‘Āmir and his origins
 95 Song (MM): lyrics by ‘Adī ibn Zayd; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 97 Mention of ‘Adī ibn Zayd, his origin, his story and his violent death
 155 Song (M): lyrics by al-Ḥuṭay’a; setting by Ibn ‘Ā’isha
 157 Information about al-Ḥuṭay’a and his origin and the reason why he lam-
 poned al-Zibriqān ibn Badr
 203 Information about Ibn ‘Ā’isha and his origin
 240 Song (MM): setting by Ibn ‘Ā’isha; lyrics by Ibn Arṭāh
 242 Information about Ibn Arṭāh and his origin
 260 Song (MM): lyrics by Ibn Mayyāda; setting by Ḥunayn
 261 Information about Ibn Mayyāda and his origin
 341 Information about Ḥunayn al-Ḥirī and his origin
 357 Song (M): lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi’a; setting by al-Gharīḍ
 359 Mention of al-Gharīḍ and information about him
 402 Song (MJ): setting by al-Gharīḍ; lyrics by al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Abdal
 404 Information about al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Abdal
 426 Song (M): lyrics by Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm; setting by Ṭuways

Aghānī III

- 1 Mention of Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm, information about him and his origin
 18 Song (M): lyrics by Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm; setting by Qafā the carpenter (song
 included in Qays’s article)
 27 Mention of Ṭuways and information about him
 43 Song (M): setting by Ṭuways; lyrics said to be by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt
 44 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by Qafā the carpenter
 44 Song (M): lyrics and setting by Sa’id al-Dārimī
 45 Mention of al-Dārimī, the information about him and his origin
 50 Song (M): lyrics by Hilāl ibn al-As‘ar al-Māzinī; setting by ‘Azzūr al-Kūfi¹
 52 Information about Hilāl and his origin
 72 Song (MJ): lyrics by ‘Urwa ibn al-Ward; setting by Siyāṭ
 73 Information about ‘Urwa ibn al-Ward and his origin
 88 Song (M): lyrics by Dhū l-Iṣba’ al- ‘Adwānī; setting by Qayl, freedman of the
 ‘Abalāt
 89 Mention of Dhū l-Iṣba’ al- ‘Adwānī and his origin
 110 Mention of Qayl, freedman of the ‘Abalāt
 114 Song (M): lyrics by Dhū l-Iṣba’, setting by al-Hudhalī (song appended to
 Dhū l-Iṣba’s article)
 114 Song (M): lyrics variously ascribed to Gharīḍ, that is, al-Samaw’al ibn ‘Adiyā,
 Sa’ya ibn Gharīḍ, Zayd ibn ‘Amr ibn Ṭufayl, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, Zuhayr

- ibn Janāb, ‘Āmir ibn al-Majnūn al-Jarmī, nicknamed Madraj al-Riḥ; setting by Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Wuḍū’
- 116 [Information about Gharīd the Jew]²
- 119 Mention of Warāqa ibn Nawfal and his origin
- 123 Mention of Zayd ibn ‘Amr and his origin³
- 133 Information about Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Wuḍū’ and his origin
- 134 Song (MM): lyrics by Bashshār; setting by Yazīd Ḥawrā’
- 135 Information about Bashshār and his origin
- 251 Information about Yazīd Ḥawrā’
- 256 Song (M): lyrics by ‘Ukkāsha al-‘Ammī; setting by ‘Abd al-Raḥīm the Tambourine-player
- 257 Information about ‘Ukkāsha al-‘Ammī and his origin
- 266 Information about ‘Abd al-Raḥīm the Tambourine-player and his origin
- 268 Song (M): lyrics by al-Ḥādira al-Tha‘labī; setting by Sa‘īd ibn Miṣjah
- 270 Information about al-Ḥādira and his origin
- 276 Information about Ibn Miṣjah and his origin
- 285 Song (M): lyrics by Ibn al-Mawlā; setting by ‘Aṭarrad
- 286 Information about Ibn al-Mawlā and his origin
- 303 Information about ‘Aṭarrad and his origin
- 310 Song (M): lyrics by al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd al-Makhzūmī; setting by al-‘Abjar
- 311 Information about al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd al-Makhzūmī and his origin
- 344 Information about al-‘Abjar and his origin
- 350 Song (MJ): lyrics by Mūsā Shahawāt; setting by Ma‘bad
- 351 Information about Mūsā Shahawāt and his origin, and the story about him and this poetry
- 366 Song (M): lyrics by al-Walīd ibn Yazīd, also ascribed to ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi‘a and al-‘Arjī; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 368 Song (M): lyrics by Abū l-‘Atāhiya; setting by Farīda

Aghānī IV

- 1 Mention of Abū l-‘Atāhiya’s origin and information about him
- 113 Information about Farīda
- 119 Song (MJ): lyrics by Umayya ibn Abī l-Ṣalt; setting by al-Hudhalī
- 120 Mention of Umayya ibn Abī l-Ṣalt, his origin and information about him
- 133 Song (M): lyrics by Ḥassān ibn Thābit; setting by Mūsā ibn Khārīja al-Kūfī⁴
- 134 Information about Ḥassān ibn Thābit and his origin
- 170 Mention of the account of the Battle of Badr
- 213 Song (M): lyrics partly by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi‘a; setting by Bābawayh al-Kūfī
- 217 Song (M): lyrics by ‘Alas Dhī Jadān al-Ḥimyarī; setting by Ṭuways⁵
- 217 ‘Alas Dhī Jadān’s origin and information about him
- 219 Information about Ṭuways and his origin⁶
- 223 Song (M): lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ; setting by al-Dalāl
- 224 Mention of al-Aḥwaṣ, information about him and his origin

- 269 Mention of al-Dalāl and what happened to him when he was castrated, who was castrated with him, the reason for it and the rest of the information about him
- 299 Song (M): lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ; setting by Yaḥyā ibn Wāṣil al-Makki⁷
- 301 Song (M): lyrics by Ṭurayḥ ibn Ismāʿil al-Thaqafi; setting by Abū Saʿid the freedman of Fāʿid
- 302 Mention of Ṭurayḥ, the information about him and his origin
- 320 Song (M): lyrics by Ṭurayḥ; setting by Ibn Mishʿab al-Ṭāʿifi
- 321 Mention of Ibn Mishʿab and the information about him
- 330 Mention of the information about Abū Saʿid the freedman of Fāʿid and his origin
- 333 Song (M): setting by Abū Saʿid; lyrics by Abū Saʿid, otherwise ascribed to Majnūn (song in Abū Saʿid's article)
- 343 [Mention of the Umayyads whom Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ killed]⁸
- 354 Song (M): lyrics by Ḥumayd ibn Thawr al-Hilālī; setting by Fulayḥ ibn Abi l-ʿAwraʾ
- 356 Mention of Ḥumayd ibn Thawr, his origin and information about him
- 359 Information about Fulayḥ ibn Abi l-ʿAwraʾ
- 366 Song (M): lyrics by Ibrāhīm ibn Harma; setting by Yūnus the Secretary, otherwise ascribed to Marzūq the Lutenist⁹ or Yaḥyā ibn Wāṣil
- 367 Mention of Ibn Harma, information about him and his origin
- 398 Mention of the information about Yūnus the Secretary
- 401 Song (M): lyrics by Ibn Ruhayma al-Madani; setting by ʿUmar al-Wādi (song included in Yūnus's article)¹⁰
- 405 Information about Ibn Ruhayma
- 406 Song (M): setting by Yūnus; lyrics by Ismāʿil ibn Yasār al-Nisāʾi, otherwise ascribed to al-Ghūl ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Sayfi al-Ṭāʿi
- 408 Information about Ismāʿil ibn Yasār and his origin
- 427 Song (M): lyrics by al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi; setting by al-Hudhali

Aghānī V

- 1 Mention of al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, his origin and information about him, and the reason for the composition of this poetry¹¹
- 65 Mention of al-Hudhali and information about him
- 69 Song (M): setting by al-Hudhali; lyrics anonymous (song included in al-Hudhali's article)
- 72 Song (MJ): lyrics by ʿUbaydallāh ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt; setting by Mālik ibn Abi l-Samḥ
- 73 Mention of ʿUbaydallāh ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt, his origin and information about him
- 100 Song (M): lyrics by ʿUbaydallāh ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt, also ascribed to Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman (song appended to Ibn Qays's article)¹²
- 101 Mention of Mālik ibn Abi l-Samḥ, information about him and his origin

- 117 Song (MJ): first line of the lyrics by a member of the Banū Nahd, second and third by al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba ibn Abī l-Mu‘ayt; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 118 Account of the Nahdī’s connection with this poetry, and information about al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba whose origin has been set out at the beginning of this book
- 122 Mention of the rest of the information about al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba and his origin
- 153 Song (M): lyrics and setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
- 154 Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili’s origin and information about him
- 259 Song (M): lyrics by Ibn Harma; setting by Marzūq the Lutenist, otherwise ascribed to Yaḥyā ibn Wāṣil
- 260 Some further mention of Ibn Harma
- 267 Song (M): lyrics and setting by Ishāq
- 268 Information about Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm
- 435 Song (M): setting by Ishāq; lyrics by al-Ṣimma al-Qushayrī

Aghānī VI

- 1 Information about al-Ṣimma al-Qushayrī and his origin
- 8 Song (MM): lyrics by Dāwūd ibn Salm; setting by Daḥmān
- 10 Information about Dāwūd ibn Salm and his origin
- 21 Information about Daḥmān and his origin
- 31 Song (MM): setting by Daḥmān; lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ
- 32 Song (M): lyrics by al-A‘shā of Hamdān; setting by Aḥmad al-Naṣbī
- 33 Information about al-A‘shā of Hamdān and his origin
- 63 Information about Aḥmad al-Naṣbī and his origin
- 69 Song (M): lyrics by Ḥammād the Transmitter; setting by ‘Abādīl
- 70 Information about Ḥammād the Transmitter and his origin
- 96 Information about ‘Abādīl and his origin
- 100 Song (M): first line of the lyrics by Ṭurayḥ, second line by Ibn Harma; setting by Shahīya freedwoman of the ‘Abalāt¹³
- 119 Song (M): lyrics by Ibn Harma; setting by Ḥunayn
- 120 Song (M): lyrics by Nuṣayb; setting by Kardam ibn Ma‘bad
- 126 Song (MJ): lyrics by al-Muraqqish al-Akbar; setting by Ibn ‘Ā’isha
- 127 Information about al-Muraqqish al-Akbar and his origin
- 140 Song (M): lyrics ascribed variously to Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abdallāh al-‘Abshamī, Qaṭarī ibn al-Fujā’a al-Māzinī, or ‘Ubayda ibn Hilāl al-Yashkurī; setting by Siyāt
- 142 Account of the battle about which these two pieces of poetry¹⁴ were composed, that is, the Battle of Dūlāb, together with some information about these Khārījīs, their origins and the account of the Umm Ḥakīm mentioned here
- 152 Information about Siyāt and his origin
- 158 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by the Date-seller¹⁵
- 159 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by Dukayn ibn Yazid al-Kūfi

- 159 Song (M): lyrics by ‘Abdallāh ibn Hārūn the Prosodist;¹⁶ setting by Nubayh the Singer
- 161 Mention of Nubayh and information about him
- 163 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by Sulaym
- 164 Information about Sulaym
- 170 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by Ibn ‘Abbād the Secretary
- 171 Information about Ibn ‘Abbād
- 172 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by Yaḥyā al-Makkī
- 173 Information about Yaḥyā al-Makkī and his origin
- 189 Song (M): lyrics by al-Numayrī; setting by al-Gharīḍ
- 190 Information about al-Numayrī and his origin
- 208 Song (M): lyrics by Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman; setting by Šabbāḥ the Tailor¹⁷
- 209 Information about Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman and his origin
- 239 Song (M): lyrics and setting by al-Mu‘allā ibn Ṭarīf
- 241 Song (M): lyrics by Bashshār; setting of Yemenī origin or ascribed to Sulaym
- 242 Information about Bashshār and ‘Abda in particular
- 253 Song (M): lyrics by al-Aḥwaš; setting by Umm Ja‘far al-Madaniya, freed-woman of ‘Abdallāh ibn Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib
- 254 Information about al-Aḥwaš and Umm Ja‘far
- 257 Song (M): lyrics by al-Aḥwaš, part of them also ascribed to al-Majnūn; setting by Daḥmān (included in the article about al-Aḥwaš and Umm Ja‘far)
- 259 Song (M): lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a; setting by Mālik¹⁸
- 262 Song (M): lyrics by Abū Dhu‘ayb al-Hudhalī; setting by Ḥakam al-Wādī
- 264 Mention of Abū Dhu‘ayb, information about him and his origin
- 280 Mention of Ḥakam al-Wādī, information about him and his origin
- 288 Song (M): lyrics by Nuṣayb; setting by Ibn Jāmi‘
- 289 Mention of Ibn Jāmi‘, information about him and his origin
- 340 Song (M): lyrics by Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb; setting by Sulaymān the brother of Bābawayh al-Kūfī, client of the Banū l-Ash‘ath
- 341 Mention of Abū Sufyān, information about him and his origin
- 357 Mention of the account of the Sawīq raid and Abū Sufyān’s staying with Salām ibn Mishkam
- 360 Song (M): lyrics by al-Walīd ibn Yazīd; setting by Abū Kāmil

Aghānī VII

- 1 Information about al-Walīd ibn Yazīd and his origin
- 69 Song (MM): lyrics by al-Walīd; setting by Sinān the Secretary (included in al-Walīd’s article)
- 84 Song (M): lyrics by al-Walīd; setting by ‘Umar al-Wādī
- 85 Mention of information about ‘Umar al-Wādī and his origin
- 91 Information about Abū Kāmil

- 94 Song (M): lyrics by Yazīd ibn Ḍabba, falsely ascribed to al-Walid; setting by Ismā'il ibn al-Hirbidh
- 95 Information about Yazīd ibn Ḍabba and his origin
- 104 Information about Ismā'il ibn al-Hirbidh
- 105 Song (M): lyrics by al-Nābigha of the Banū Shaybān, falsely ascribed to al-Walid; setting by Abū Kāmil
- 106 Al-Nābigha of the Banū Shaybān's origin
- 113 Song (M): lyrics by Abū Dahbal al-Jumaḥi; setting by Fazzār al-Makki
- 114 Information about Abū Dahbal and his origin
- 145 Song (MM): lyrics by Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk; setting by Abū Zakkār al-A'mā
- 146 Information about Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk and his origin
- 227 Information about Abū Zakkār al-A'mā
- 228 Song (MJ): lyrics by al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī; setting by Muḥammad Na'ja al-Kūfi¹⁹
- 229 Information about al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī
- 279 Song (M): lyrics of which the first line is ascribed to Kuthayyir or Abū Jundab al-Hudhali, the second to a man of Banū Jadhīma or to 'Abdallāh ibn 'Alqama, one of Banū 'Āmir ibn 'Abd Manāt ibn Kināna, or to 'Amr whom Khālīd ibn al-Walid killed; setting by Mutayyam, 'Alī ibn Hishām's freedwoman and the mother of his children²⁰
- 293 Mention of Mutayyam al-Hishāmiya and some information about her
- 307 Song (M): lyrics by Jarīr; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 308 Song (M): lyrics by Jarīr; author of setting not mentioned

Aghānī VIII

- 3 Jarīr's origin and information about him
- 89 Song (MM): lyrics by Jamīl; setting by Ibrāhīm
- 90 Jamīl's origin and information about him
- 154 Song (MJ): lyrics by Yazīd ibn al-Ṭathriya; setting by Ishāq
- 155 Mention of Yazīd ibn al-Ṭathriya, information about him and his origin
- 184 Song (M): lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ; setting by Jamīla
- 186 Mention of Jamīla and information about her
- 235 Song (M): lyrics ascribed to 'Antara ibn Shaddād al-'Absī or 'Abd Qays al-Burjūmī; setting by Abū Dulaf al-Qāsim ibn 'Isā al-'Ijlī
- 237 Mention of 'Antara, his origin and some information about him²¹
- 248 Mention of Abū Dulaf, his origin and information about him
- 258 Song (MM): lyrics ascribed to Aws ibn Ghalfā' al-Hujaymī, Muzāḥim al-'Uqayli, al-'Abbās ibn Yazīd ibn al-Aswad al-Kindī, al-'Ujayr al-Saluli or 'Uqayl ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Hujaymī (the last being most likely right); setting by Ma'bad
- 259 [Information about the poetry]
- 266 Song (MM): lyrics by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a; setting by Bābawayh al-Kūfi²²
- 267 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by Riyād, Abū Ḥammād's slave-girl²³

- 267 Song (M): lyrics anonymous; setting by Nāfi‘ ibn Ṭunbūra²⁴
 268 Song (MM): lyrics by Sa‘id ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān ibn Thābit;
 setting by Ibn ‘Abbād the Secretary
 269 Mention of Sa‘id ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān
 276 Song (MJ): lyrics by al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyārī; setting by Muḥammad Na‘ja
 al-Kūfi²⁵
 276 Song (M): lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ; setting by al-Burdān
 277 Information about al-Burdān
 278 Song (M): lyrics by al-Akhṭal; setting by Sā‘ib Khāthir
 280 Mention of al-Akhṭal, information about him and his origin
 320 Song (M): lyrics by al-Akhṭal; setting by Ibn Muḥriz (song appended to
 al-Akhṭal’s article)
 321 Information about Sā‘ib Khāthir and his origin
 326 Song (M): lyrics by Abū Far‘a al-Kinānī; setting by ‘Abdallāh ibn Jud‘ān’s Two
 Crickets
 327 Mention of ‘Abdallāh ibn Jud‘ān’s Two Crickets, the account of them and
 some information about Ibn Jud‘ān
 332 Song (M): lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ; setting by Sallāma, the Ascetic’s sweetheart
 334 Mention of Sallāma, the Ascetic’s sweetheart, and information about her
 351 Song (M): lyrics by al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf; setting by Sulaymān al-Fazārī
 352 Information about al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf and his origin
 373 *Mention of the songs which combine the ten melodic modes.*
 373 Song: lyrics by Kuthayyir; setting by ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir²⁶
 383 Song (M): lyrics falsely attributed to ‘Antara ibn Shaddād or to ‘Abd Qays
 ibn Khufāf al-Burjūmī; correctly ascribed to Ḥāritha ibn Badr al-
 Ghudānī; setting by Abū Dulaf al-‘Ijlī
 384 Mention of Ḥāritha ibn Badr’s origins and information about him²⁷

Aghānī IX

- 3 Mention of the information about Kuthayyir and his origin
 40 Information about ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir
 47 Song which combines eight of the melodic modes: lyrics by Musāfir ibn
 Abī ‘Amr ibn Umayya ibn ‘Abd Shams; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 49 Mention of Musāfir and his origin
 55 Account of ‘Umāra ibn al-Walid and the reason why the Negus com-
 manded the enchantresses to cast a spell on him
 61 *The three chosen songs in the ramal rhythmic mode*
 62 Song (R1): lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a; setting by Ibn Surayj
 69 Song (R2): lyrics by Imru’ al-Qays; setting by Ishāq²⁸
 77 Mention of Imru’ al-Qays, his origin and information about him²⁹
 105 *Ma‘bad’s songs, five in number, which are known by their nicknames*
 106 “The top”: setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-A‘shā
 108 Information about al-A‘shā and his origin

- 128 “The striped song”: setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by Ismā‘il ibn Yāsār
 128 “The curler of locks”:³⁰ setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by ‘Amr ibn Sa‘īd ibn Zayd
 130 ‘Amr ibn Sa‘īd ibn Zayd’s origin and information about him³¹
 132 “The strutter”: setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ
 132 “The cutter of cruppers”: setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ
 137 *Ma‘bad’s songs known as his “Cities” or “Fortresses”*
 137 Song (C1): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Utba
 the Jurist
 139 Mention of ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh and his origin
 152 Song (C7): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-A‘shā³²
 156 Song (C3): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-Shammākh
 158 Mention of al-Shammākh, his origin and information about him
 174 Song (C4): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by Kathīr ibn Kathīr, otherwise ascribed
 to Kuthayyir ‘Azza
 178 Song (C5): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by Qays ibn Dhariḥ
 180 Mention of Qays ibn Dhariḥ, his origin and information about him
 220 Song (C6): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by ‘Antara³³
 224 Song (C4a)³⁴: setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by Kuthayyir
 225 Song (C5a): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd al-Makhzūmī
 227 Mention of al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd, his origin and the account of his com-
 posing this poetry
 236 Song (C6a): setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-A‘shā³⁵
 237 *Settings of Ma‘bad’s songs about Qutayla*
 237 Song: setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-A‘shā
 238 Song: setting by Ma‘bad; lyrics by al-A‘shā
 238 *Ibn Surayj’s Seven corresponding to Ma‘bad’s Seven*³⁶
 239 Song (S2): setting by Ibn Surayj; lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a³⁷
 248 Song (S3): setting by Ibn Surayj; lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a
 249 Song (S5): setting by Ibn Surayj; lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a
 249 Song (S8): setting by Ibn Surayj; lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a
 250 *The songs of the caliphs, their children and their children’s children*
 254 Mention of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and some of the information about him
 268 Song: setting by ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz; lyrics by al-Ashhab ibn Rumayla
 269 Al-Ashhab ibn Rumayla’s origin and information about him³⁸
 274 Among those of them who composed is al-Walīd ibn Yazīd
 276 Among the ‘Abbāsids whose compositions were collected is al-Wāthiq
 bi-llāh
 300 Among those said to have set his own and others’ poetry to music is
 al-Muntaṣir
 305 Among those with a like reputation for composing is al-Mu‘tazz bi-llāh
 305 Song: setting by al-Mu‘tazz; lyrics by ‘Adī ibn al-Riqā‘
 307 Information about ‘Adī ibn al-Riqā‘ and his origin
 318 Information about al-Mu‘tazz connected with singing, singers and related
 subjects

- 323 One of the caliphs mentioned as a composer is al-Mu'tamid
 323 Song: setting by al-Mu'tamid, also ascribed to 'Arib; lyrics by al-Farazdaq
 324 Mention of information about al-Farazdaq in connection with this
 poetry only
 344 [The only caliph after al-Wāthiq whose compositions are noteworthy is]
 al-Mu'taḍid
 345 Song: setting by al-Mu'taḍid; lyrics by Durayd ibn al-Ṣimma

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- 3 Information about Durayd ibn al-Ṣimma and his origin
 41 Information about al-Mu'taḍid in connection with the composition of
 this song and others³⁹
 42 Song: setting by al-Mu'taḍid; lyrics by Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās
 43 Information about Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās and his origin
 67 Information about al-Mu'taḍid bi-llāh appropriate to this book
 69 *The compositions of the caliphs' descendants, both male and female*
 69 [Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi]⁴⁰
 70 Song: setting by Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi; lyrics by Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣa
 71 Information about Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣa and his origin
 95 [Some information about Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi]⁴¹
 149 Among the caliphs' descendants who composed is 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdi
 149 Song: setting by 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdi; lyrics by Abū l-Najm al-'Ijlī
 150 Information about Abū l-Najm and his origin
 162 Information about 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdi, her origin and a few reports
 about her
 186 Among the caliphs' descendants who composed is Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Rashīd
 186 Song: lyrics and setting by Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Rashīd
 187 Information about Abū 'Īsā and his origin
 193 Among the caliphs' descendants whose compositions are known is 'Abdallāh
 ibn Mūsā al-Hādī
 193 Song: lyrics and setting by 'Abdallāh ibn Mūsā al-Hādī⁴²
 197 Among the caliphs' descendants whose compositions are transmitted is
 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Amīn
 197 Song: lyrics and setting by 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Amīn
 198 Information about 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad and his origin
 201 Among the caliphs' descendants who composed is Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil
 202 Song: setting by Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil; lyrics by Abū l-'Atāhiya
 202 Song: setting by Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil; lyrics by 'Alī ibn al-Jahm
 203 Information about 'Alī ibn al-Jahm and his origin
 234 Song: setting by Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil; lyrics by Abū Dulāma
 235 Information about Abū Dulāma and his origin
 274 Among the caliphs' descendants who composed [...] is Abū l-'Abbās
 'Abdallāh ibn al-Mu'tazz

- 274 [Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Mu‘tazz]⁴⁴
 286 Song: lyrics by Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā; setting by al-Gharīd
 288 Zuhayr’s origin and information about him
 315 Song: lyrics by al-Marrār ibn Sa‘īd al-Faq‘asī; setting by Ishāq
 317 Mention of al-Marrār, information about him and his origin
 324 Song: lyrics by al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī; setting by Ibn Šāhib al-Wuḍū’

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- 3 Information about al-Nābigha and his origin
 41 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥilliza al-Yashkurī; setting by Ma‘bad
 42 Information about al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥilliza and his origin
 50 Song: lyrics by ‘Amr ibn al-Kulthūm al-Taghlibī; setting by Ishāq
 52 ‘Amr ibn Kulthūm’s origin and information about him
 60 Song: lyrics by Jarīr from a lampoon of al-Akhṭal; setting by Ma‘bad, otherwise ascribed to Ḥunayn
 61 Account of the reason for Jarīr and al-Akhṭal exchanging lampoons
 68 Song: lyrics by Aws ibn Ḥajar, otherwise ascribed to ‘Abid ibn al-Abras; setting by Ibrāhīm
 70 Mention of Aws ibn Ḥajar and some information about him
 74 Song: lyrics by Warqā’ ibn Zuhayr; setting by Kardam
 75 Information about Warqā’ ibn Zuhayr, his origin and the account of this poetry of his
 82 The killing of Zuhayr ibn Judhayma al-‘Absī
 94 Mention of the killing of Khālīd ibn Ja‘far ibn Kilāb
 121 The account of al-Ḥārith and ‘Amr ibn al-Itnāba
 124 Here we mention the account of Raḥraḥān and the killing [of Ma‘bad] since they belong with the killing of al-Ḥārith and the information about him
 131 Here is the battle of Shi‘b Jabala
 163 Song: lyrics by ‘Afira bint ‘Ifār al-Jadisiya; setting by ‘Arib
 164 [The killing of ‘Amliq and the reason for it]⁴⁵
 169 Song: lyrics by a man of ‘Udhra; setting by ‘Arib
 169 [‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī’a and his ‘Udhri friend]⁴⁶
 175 Song: lyrics by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt on ‘Ā’isha bint Ṭalḥa; setting by Ma‘bad
 176 Information about ‘Ā’isha bint Ṭalḥa and her origin
 194 Song: lyrics by ‘Amr ibn Sha’s al-Asadī; setting by Ma‘bad
 196 ‘Amr ibn Sha’s’s origin and information about him in connection with this and other poetry
 202 Song: lyrics by Laylā al-Akhyaliya mourning Tawba ibn al-Ḥumayyir; setting by Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
 204 Mention of Laylā, her origin, the account of her and Tawba and of his violent death
 249 Song: lyrics by al-Uqayshir al-Asadī; setting by Daḥmān

- 251 Mention of al-Uqayshir and information about him
 277 Song: lyrics by Ibn al-Gharīza al-Nahshalī; lyrics by Yaḥyā al-Makkī
 278 Information about Ibn al-Gharīza and his origin
 280 Song: lyrics by al-A'shā of Banū Taghlib; setting by 'Abdallāh ibn al-'Abbās
 281 Information about al-A'shā of Banū Taghlib and his origin
 284 Song: lyrics by Abū l-Naḍīr; setting by Ishāq
 285 Information about Abū l-Naḍīr and his origin
 292 Song: lyrics by 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar al-'Abli; setting by Abū Sa'id the freed-man of Fā'id
 293 Information about al-'Abli and his origin
 309 Song: lyrics by Abū Jilda al-Yashkurī; setting by 'Allūya
 310 Information about Abū Jilda and his origin
 333 Information about 'Allūya and his origin
 363 Song: lyrics by Ismā'il ibn 'Ammār al-Asadī; setting by Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath ibn Fajwa^{46a} al-Zuhri al-Kūfi
 364 Ismā'il ibn 'Ammār's origin and information about him
 380 Song: lyrics by al-A'shā praising the Banū 'Abd Madān; setting by Ḥunayn

Aghānī XII

- 3 Information about al-A'shā's relations with the Banū 'Abd Madān and about their relations with others
 22 Song: lyrics by 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥashraj al-Ja'dī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 23 Information about 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥashraj
 34 Song: lyrics by al-Tirimmāḥ ibn Ḥakīm; setting by Yaḥyā al-Makkī
 35 Information about al-Tirimmāḥ and his origin
 45 Song: lyrics by Bayhas al-Jarmī; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 46 Information about Bayhas and his origin
 47 Song: lyrics by a bedouin; setting by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar
 48 Information about Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar
 53 Song: lyrics by Ma'n ibn Aws al-Muzanī; setting by 'Arīb
 54 Information about Ma'n ibn Aws and his origin
 65 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ubaydallāh ibn al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib; setting by 'Aṭarrad
 66 Information about al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abdallāh
 70 Song: lyrics by Faḍāla ibn Sharik al-Asadī; setting by Ibrāhīm ibn Khālīd al-Mu'ayṭī
 71 Information about Faḍāla ibn Sharik and his origin
 79 Song: lyrics by Abū l-Simṭ Marwān al-Aṣghar ibn Abī l-Janūb ibn Marwān al-Akbar ibn Abi Ḥafṣa; setting by Bunān
 80 Information about Marwān al-Aṣghar
 87 Song: lyrics by Ibn Sayāba; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
 88 Information about Ibrāhīm ibn Sayāba and his origin

- 92 Song: lyrics by al-Walid ibn Ṭarīf's sister; setting by 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir
- 94 [Account of the killing of al-Walid ibn Ṭarīf]⁴⁷
- 101 [Some information about 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir]⁴⁸
- 113 Song: lyrics by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a; setting by al-Gharīd
- 113 [Information connected with these lyrics]⁴⁹
- 125 Song: lyrics by Abū Zubayd al-Ṭā'i; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 127 Information about Abū Zubayd and his origin
- 139 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥuṭay'a from a panegyric of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī; setting by Mālik
- 139 [Information connected with these lyrics]⁵⁰
- 144 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Umayya; setting by Abū Ḥashīsha
- 145 Information about Muḥammad ibn Umayya, his brother 'Alī ibn Umayya and the poetry of theirs set to music
- 155 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥārith ibn Lawdhān ibn 'Awf ibn al-Ḥārith, ascribed by some incorrectly to 'Antara; setting by 'Azza al-Maylā'⁵¹
- 158 Song: lyrics by al-Mutawakkil al-Laythī; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 159 Al-Mutawakkil al-Laythī's origin and information about him
- 168 Song: first line of the lyrics by al-Afwah al-Awdī, the rest by Kuthayyir; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 169 Al-Afwah al-Awdī's origin and some information about him
- 172 Song: lyrics by Kuthayyir mourning Khandaq al-Asadī; setting by al-Hudhali
- 174 Account of Kuthayyir and Khandaq al-Asadī
- 192 Song: lyrics by a man of Fazāra from a poem on Khawla bint Manzūr ibn Zabbān; setting ascribed to Ma'bad or Ibn Miṣjah
- 193 [Information about Manzūr ibn Zabbān]⁵²
- 197 Song: lyrics by al-Jahhāf al-Sulamī; setting by al-Abjar
- 198 Account of al-Jahhāf and what happened to him at the Battle of al-Bishr
- 208 Song: lyrics by Ghalfā', that is, Ma'dikarib ibn al-Ḥārith ibn 'Amr al-Kindī mourning his brother Shuraḥbīl who fell at the first Battle of al-Kilāb; setting by al-Gharīd
- 209 [The reason for Shuraḥbīl's killing and account of the Battle of al-Kilāb]⁵³
- 214 Song: lyrics by 'Abdallāh ibn Mu'āwiya ibn 'Abdallāh al-Ja'farī; setting by Bunān
- 215 Information about 'Abdallāh ibn Mu'āwiya and his origin
- 238 Song: lyrics by Abū Wajza al-Sulamī; setting by Ishāq
- 239 Information about Abū Wajza and his origin
- 253 Song [M]⁵⁴: first line of the lyrics by 'Aqīl ibn 'Ullafa, second line by Shabīb ibn al-Barṣā'; setting by Aḥmad ibn al-Makkī
- 254 Information about 'Aqīl ibn 'Ullafa
- 270 Song [M]: lyrics by Shabīb ibn al-Barṣā'; setting by Duqāq the slave-girl of Yaḥyā ibn al-Rabī'
- 271 Information about Shabīb ibn al-Barṣā' and his origin
- 282 Information about Duqāq
- 285 Song [M]: lyrics by Yazīd ibn al-Ḥakam; setting by Ibrāhīm

- 286 Yazid ibn al-Ḥakam's origin and information about him
 296 Song [M]: lyrics by Abū l-Aswad al-Du'alī; setting by 'Allūya
 297 Information about Abū l-Aswad al-Du'alī and his origin
 334 Song: lyrics by Abū Nafīs ibn Ya'lā ibn Munya; setting by Ma'bad
 335 Information about Abū Nafīs and his origin
 339 Song: lyrics by Suwayd ibn Kurā'; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 340 Information about Suwayd ibn Kurā' and his origin
 347 Song: lyrics by Abū l-Ṭamaḥān al-Qaynī; setting by Ibrāhīm

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- 3 Information about Abū l-Ṭamaḥān al-Qaynī
 14 Song: lyrics by al-Aswad ibn Ya'fur; setting by Sulaym
 15 Information about al-Aswad and his origin
 28 Song: lyrics by Arṭāh ibn Suhayya; setting by Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath
 29 Information about Arṭāh and his origin
 44 Song: lyrics by Ja'far ibn 'Ulba al-Ḥārithī; setting by Ma'bad
 45 Information about Ja'far ibn 'Ulba al-Ḥārithī and his origin
 57 Song: lyrics by al-'Ujayr al-Salūlī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 58 Information about al-'Ujayr al-Salūlī and his origin
 83 Song: lyrics by al-Mughīra ibn Ḥabnā'; setting by Abū l-'Ubays ibn Ḥamdūn
 84 Al-Mughīra ibn Ḥabnā's origin and information about him
 101 Song: lyrics by Suwayd ibn Abī Kāhil al-Yashkurī; setting by 'Allūya
 102 Information about Suwayd ibn Abū Kāhil and his origin
 108 Song: lyrics by al-'Attābī; setting by Mukhārīq
 109 Information about al-'Attābī and his origin
 125 Song: lyrics by al-Ubayrid al-Riyāḥī; setting by Bābawayh
 126 Information about al-Ubayrid and his origin
 139 Song: lyrics by Maṣṣūr al-Namarī; setting by 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir
 140 Information about Maṣṣūr al-Namarī and his origin
 157 Song: lyrics by 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Tha'labī; setting by 'Allūya
 158 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥajjāj's origin and information about him
 174 Song: lyrics by Nāhiḍ ibn Thūma al-Riyāḥī; setting by Abū l-'Ubays ibn Ḥamdūn
 175 Information about Nāhiḍ ibn Thūma and his origin
 188 Song: lyrics by al-Mukhabbal al-Sa'dī; setting by Ibrāhīm
 189 Information about al-Mukhabbal and his origin
 199 Song: lyrics by Ghaylān ibn Salama al-Thaqafī; setting by Ibn Zurzur
 al-Ṭā'ifī
 200 Information about Ghaylān and his origin
 208 Song: lyrics by Ḥājiz al-Azdī; setting by Nubayh
 209 Information about Ḥājiz and his origin
 216 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥārith ibn al-Ṭufayl al-Dawsī; setting by Ma'bad
 218 Information about al-Ḥārith ibn al-Ṭufayl and his origin

- 225 Song: lyrics by ‘Abd al-Šamad ibn al-Mu‘adhdhal; setting by al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr
- 226 Information about ‘Abd al-Šamad ibn al-Mu‘adhdhal and his origin
- 258 Song: lyrics by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Abī l-‘Āš; setting by Ibn al-Hirbidh
- 259 Information about ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and his origin
- 269 Song: lyrics by Mas‘ada ibn al-Bakhtari; setting by ‘Abādil
- 270 Information about Mas‘ada and his origin
- 273 Song: lyrics by Muṭī‘ ibn Iyās; setting by Ḥakam al-Wādi
- 274 Information about Muṭī‘ ibn Iyās and his origin
- 336 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Kunāsa al-Asadi; setting by Qalam al-Šāliḥiya
- 337 Information about Muḥammad ibn Kunāsa and his origin
- 347 Information about Qalam al-Šāliḥiya
- 350 Song: lyrics by al-Shamardal ibn Sharik; setting by ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘i
- 351 Information about al-Shamardal and his origin
- 363 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥuṣayn ibn al-Humām al-Murri; setting by Badhl

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- 1 Information about al-Ḥuṣayn ibn al-Humām and his origin
- 16 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Yaṣir; setting by Aḥmad ibn Šadaqa
- 17 Information about Muḥammad ibn Yaṣir and his origin
- 50 Song: lyrics by Dik al-Jinn al-Ḥimši; setting by ‘Arib
- 51 Information about Dik al-Jinn and his origin
- 68 Song: lyrics by Qays ibn ‘Āšim al-Minqari; setting by ‘Allūya
- 69 Information about Qays ibn ‘Āšim and his origin
- 91 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Ḥāzim al-Bāhili; setting by Ibn al-Qaṣṣār the Pandore Player
- 92 Information about Muḥammad ibn Ḥāzim and his origin
- 112 Information about Ibn al-Qaṣṣār and his origin
- 115 Song: lyrics anonymous; setting by Ma‘bad al-Yaqtīnī
- 116 Information about Ma‘bad al-Yaqtīnī
- 120 Song: lyrics by Ibn Abī l-Zawā‘id; setting by Ḥakam
- 121 Information about Ibn Abī l-Zawā‘id and his origin
- 130 Song: lyrics by Abū l-Asad; setting by ‘Allūya
- 131 Information about Abū l-Asad and his origin
- 142 Song: lyrics by Qays ibn al-Ḥudādiya; setting by Ishāq
- 144 Information about Qays ibn al-Ḥudādiya and his origin
- 161 Song: lyrics by Ibn Qunbur; setting by Yazīd ibn [sic] Ḥawrā’
- 162 Information about Ibn Qunbur and his origin
- 168 Song: lyrics by al-Aswad ibn ‘Amāra al-Nawfali; setting by Daḥmān
- 169 Information about al-Aswad and his origin
- 173 Song: lyrics by ‘Ali ibn al-Khalil; setting by Muḥammad al-Zaff

- 174 Information about ‘Alī ibn al-Khalīl
 187 Information about Muḥammad al-Zaff
 192 Song: lyrics by Abū l-Shibl al-Burjūmī; setting by ‘Ath‘ath the Black
 193 Information about Abū l-Shibl and his origin
 211 Information about ‘Ath‘ath
 216 Song: lyrics by ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zabīr al-Asadī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 217 Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zabīr and his origin
 262 Song: lyrics by Thābit Quṭna, ascribed by some to Ka‘b al-Ashqarī; setting
 by Yahyā al-Makki
 263 Information about Thābit Quṭna
 282 Song: lyrics by Ka‘b al-Ashqarī, ascribed by some to Thābit Quṭna; setting
 by al-Hudhali
 300 Song: lyrics partly by al-‘Abbās ibn Mirdās, partly by Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya;
 setting by Mālik
 302 Information about al-‘Abbās ibn Mirdās and his origin
 320 Song: lyrics by Ḥammād ‘Ajrād; setting by Ḥakam al-Wādī
 321 Information about Ḥammād ‘Ajrād and his origin
 381 Song: lyrics by Ḥurayth ibn ‘Attāb al-Ṭā‘ī, ascribed by some to Ismā‘īl ibn
 Yasār al-Nisā‘ī; setting by al-Gharīd
 382 Information about Ḥurayth and his origin

Aghānī XV

- 3 Song: lyrics by Ja‘far ibn al-Zubayr; setting by al-Gharīd
 4 Information about Ja‘far ibn al-Zubayr and his origin
 11 Song: lyrics by Muḍāḍ ibn ‘Amr al-Jurhumī, ascribed by others to al-Ḥārith
 ibn ‘Amr ibn Muḍāḍ; setting by Yahyā al-Makki
 12 Mention of the information about Muḍāḍ ibn ‘Amr
 25 Song: lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi‘a; settings by Ibrāhīm and Baṣbaṣ, the
 slave-girl of Ibn Nafīs
 27 Mention of Baṣbaṣ, Ibn Nafīs’s slavegirl, and information about her
 36 Song: lyrics by Uḥayḥa ibn al-Jallāḥ; setting by Ibn Surayj
 37 Mention of Uḥayḥa ibn al-Jallāḥ; his origin; information about him and
 the reason why he composed this poetry
 55 Song: lyrics and setting by Muḥammad ibn al-Ash‘ath ibn Najwa al-Kūfī the
 Secretary
 56 Mention of the information about [Pale Sallāma]⁵⁵ and Muḥammad ibn
 al-Ash‘ath
 72 Song: lyrics wrongly ascribed to ‘Adī ibn Nawfal, correctly to al-Nu‘mān
 ibn Bashīr; setting by Ma‘bad (included in Muḥammad ibn al-Ash‘ath’s
 and Sallāma’s article)
 74 ‘Adī ibn Nawfal’s origin and information about him
 75 Song: lyrics by al-Khansā’ bint ‘Amr ibn Sharīd mourning her brother
 Ṣakhr; setting by Ibrāhīm

- 76 Al-Khansā's origin, information about her and the killing of her brothers Ṣakhr and Mu'āwiya
- 104 Song: lyrics by al-Akḥṭal; setting by 'Umar al-Wādi
- 106 [Occasion for al-Akḥṭal's composing this poem]⁵⁶
- 111 Account of the exchange of lampoons between him and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān and the reason for it
- 121 Song: lyrics by 'Umar ibn Abi Rabī'a; setting by Ḥabāba, Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik's slavegirl
- 122 Information about Ḥabāba
- 146 Song: lyrics by Abū Ṭufayl; setting by Ibrāhīm
- 147 Information about Abū Ṭufayl and his origin
- 154 Song: lyrics by Ḥassān ibn Thābit; setting by Ḥunayn ibn Balū'
- 157 Information about Ḥassān and Jabala ibn al-Ayham
- 173 Song: lyrics by Nuṣayb, ascribed by some to al-Majnūn; setting by Budayḥ
- 174 Information about Budayḥ in connection with this song and otherwise
- 177 Song: lyrics by 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ziba'rā al-Sahmī from a poem on the Battle of Uḥud; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 179 Ibn al-Ziba'rā's origin, information about him and account of the Battle of Uḥud
- 207 Song: lyrics by 'Amr ibn Ma'dikarib al-Zubaydi; setting by al-Hudhali
- 208 Mention of 'Amr ibn Ma'dikarib and information about him
- 245 Song: lyrics by Quss ibn Sā'ida, ascribed by some to 'Isā ibn Qudāma al-Asadī or al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥārith; setting by Ḥāshim ibn Sulaymān
- 246 Mention of information about Quss ibn Sā'ida, his origin and account of his composing this poetry
- 250 Mention of Ḥāshim ibn Sulaymān and some information about him
- 254 Song: lyrics by Rushayd ibn Rumayd al-'Anazī; setting by Yazīd Ḥawrā'
- 255 [Information about al-Ḥuṭam ibn Ḍubay'a and the apostasy of the tribes of Bahrain]⁵⁷
- 262 Song: lyrics by 'Umar ibn Abi Rabī'a; setting by al-Gharīd
- 263 ['Umar's poetry on Zaynab bint Mūsā al-Jumaḥī]
- 265 Song: lyrics by 'Alī ibn Udaym al-Ju'fī al-Kūfī; setting by 'Amr ibn Bāna
- 266 Mention of 'Alī ibn Udaym and information about him
- 269 Mention of 'Amr ibn Bāna
- 277 Song: lyrics by Abū l-'Atāhiya; setting by Ibrāhīm
- 277 [Abū l-'Atāhiya's relations with 'Abdallāh and Zā'ida, sons of Ma'n ibn Zā'ida]⁵⁸
- 283 Song: lyrics by Kuthayyir; setting by Ma'bad
- 283 [Kuthayyir's meeting with Ibn Muḥjam's beloved]
- 285 Song: lyrics by Ādam ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz; setting by Ibrāhīm
- 286 Mention of Ādam ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz and information about him
- 297 Song: lyrics by Mutammim ibn Nuwayra mourning his brother Mālik; setting by Siyāt

- 298 Mention of Mutammin and information about him, and information
about Mālik and his violent death
- 322 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥazīn ibn Sulaymān al-Dīlī; setting by Ishāq
- 323 Information about al-Ḥazīn and his origin
- 347 Song: lyrics by al-Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī; lyrics by Jamīla
- 349 Al-Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī's origin and information about him
- 355 Song: lyrics and setting by Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza ibn Nuṣayr Loaf-face
- 356 Origin of Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza ibn Nuṣayr the Attendant and infor-
mation about him
- 360 Song: lyrics by Labid ibn Rabi'a al-ʿĀmirī; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 361 Origin of Labid and information about him
- 379 Song: lyrics by Ziyād al-A'jam; setting by Shāriya
- 380 Information about Ziyād al-A'jam and his origin

Aghānī XVI

- 3 Information about Shāriya
- 16 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥusayn ibn Muṭayr al-Asadī; setting by Ishāq
- 17 Information about al-Ḥusayn ibn Muṭayr and his origin
- 26 Song: lyrics partly by al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr al-Anṣārī, partly by Yazīd ibn
Mu'āwiya; setting by Ma'bad
- 28 Information about al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr and his origin
- 55 Song: lyrics ascribed to Ḥassān ibn Thābit, Dīrār ibn al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri and
others; setting by Mālik
- 56 Information about the killing of Rabi'a and his origin
- 78 Song: lyrics by al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba al-Thaqafi; setting by Ḥunayn
- 79 Information about al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba and his origin
- 101 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Bashīr al-Khārījī; setting by Ibrāhīm
- 102 Information about Muḥammad ibn Bashīr al-Khārījī and his origin
- 134 Song: lyrics by Sudayf, freedman of Banū Hāshim; setting by Abū l-'Ubayy
ibn Ḥamdūn
- 135 Mention of Sudayf and information about him
- 136 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 136 Information about al-Ḥusayn and his origin
- 172 Song: lyrics by al-Faḍl ibn al-'Abbās al-Lahabī; settings by Ma'bad and other
singers including Khulayda al-Makkiya
- 175 Information about al-Faḍl ibn al-'Abbās al-Lahabī and his origin
- 190 [Mention of Khulayda al-Makkiya]⁵⁹
- 192 Song: lyrics by al-Muhājir ibn Khālīd ibn al-Walīd or his son Khālīd ibn
al-Muhājir; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 194 Information about al-Muhājir ibn Khālīd, his origin and information
about his son Khālīd
- 201 Song: lyrics by Ḥamza ibn Bīḍ; setting by Ma'bad
- 202 Information about Ḥamza ibn Bīḍ and his origin

- 225 Song: lyrics by Ka'b ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 226 Information about Ka'b ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī and his origin
 240 Song: lyrics by 'Īsā ibn Mūsā al-Hāshimī; setting by Mutayyam
 241 Information about 'Īsā ibn Mūsā and his origin
 244 Song: lyrics by al-Raqāshī, setting by Ibn al-Makkī
 245 Mention of al-Raqāshī and information about him
 251 Information about Ibn Darrāj the Gatecrasher
 253 Song: lyrics by Rabī'a al-Raqqī; setting by 'Abd al-Raḥīm the Tambourine-player
 254 Information about Rabī'a al-Raqqī and his origin
 265 Song: lyrics by Umm Ḥakīm Juwayriya bint Khālīd al-Kināniya, wife of 'Ubaydallāh ibn al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib mourning her two sons killed in Yemen; setting by Ibn Surayj
 266 Mention of the account of the killing of the two sons of 'Ubaydallāh ibn al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib
 273 Song: lyrics by Umm Ḥakīm bint Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥakam ibn al-'Āṣī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī
 274 Mention of Umm Ḥakīm and information about her
 281 Song: lyrics by al-A'shā of Banū Qays ibn Tha'laba praising 'Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl and lampooning 'Alqama ibn 'Ulātha; setting by Ma'bad
 283 Information about this event, the reason for the contest between 'Āmir and 'Alqama and the account of al-A'sha's and others' involvement with them in it
 297 Song: lyrics by Abū l-'Abbās al-A'mā; setting by Ibn Surayj
 298 Information about Abū l-'Abbās al-A'mā
 306 Song: lyrics by Abū Ḥayya al-Numayrī; setting by Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī
 307 Information about Abū Ḥayya al-Numayrī and his origin
 311 Information about Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī
 316 Song: lyrics by Jarīr; setting by Ishāq
 317 [From Jarīr's love poetry]⁶⁰
 321 Song: lyrics by Nā'ila bint al-Farāfiṣa; setting by Ibn 'Ā'isha
 322 Information about Nā'ila bint al-Farāfiṣa and her origin
 327 Song: lyrics by 'Abd Yaghūth ibn Salā'a al-Ḥārithī; setting by Ishāq
 328 Information about 'Abd Yaghūth and his origin
 341 Song: lyrics and setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī on Khunth, the Girl with the Mole
 342 Information about the Girl with the Mole
 353 Song: lyrics by Ḥujr ibn 'Amr Ākil al-Murār; setting by Ḥunayn
 354 Ḥujr ibn 'Amr's origin and the reason why he composed this poetry
 359 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Alawī; setting by Radhādh or Bunān
 360 Information about Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Alawī and his origin
 372 Song: lyrics by Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī; setting by Ḥunayn
 373 Mention of information about Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī and his origin

- 382 Song: lyrics by Abū Tammām al-Ṭā'i; setting by al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr
 383 Information about Abū Tammām and his origin
 399 Song: lyrics by Abū l-Shiṣ; setting by Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī
 400 Information about Abū l-Shiṣ and his origin
 407 Song: lyrics by al-Kumayt ibn Zayd; setting by Ibn Surayj

Aghānī XVII

- 1 Mention of al-Kumayt, his origin and information about him
 41 Song: lyrics ascribed to 'Umar; setting by Ibn Surayj
 42 Account of Ibn Surayj and Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn
 55 Song: lyrics by Labid ibn Rabi'a; setting by al-Abjar
 56 Account of Labid's lament for his brother
 66 Song: lyrics by al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf; setting by Badhl
 67 Mention of the account of al-'Abbās and Fawz
 75 Mention of Badhl and information about her
 81 Song: lyrics by Ka'b ibn Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā al-Muzani; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 82 Information about Ka'b ibn Zuhayr
 92 Song: lyrics partly by Ibn Dumayna; setting by Ibn Jāmi'
 93 Information about Ibn Dumayna and his origin
 107 Song: lyrics by al-Muqanna' al-Kindī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 108 Al-Muqanna' al-Kindī's origin and information about him
 110 Song: lyrics and setting by Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili
 111 Account of Iṣḥāq and Ibn Hishām
 116 Song: lyrics by Abū Qays ibn al-Aslaṭ; setting by Ibrāhīm
 117 Abū Qays ibn al-Aslaṭ's origin and information about him⁶¹
 132 Song: lyrics by a woman of Kinda mourning Ḥujr ibn 'Adī; setting by Ḥakam al-Wādi
 133 Account of the killing of Ḥujr ibn 'Adī
 156 Song: lyrics by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a on Su'dā bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf; setting by Ibn Surayj
 157 [Information about 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a]⁶²
 161 Song: lyrics by Ḥassān ibn Thābit; setting by 'Azza al-Maylā'
 162 Information about 'Azza al-Maylā'
 178 Song: lyrics by al-Rabi' ibn Ziyād al-'Absī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 179 Mention of al-Rabi' ibn Ziyād's origin, some information about him, the account of this poetry and the reason why he was killed because of it
 209 Song: lyrics by Yazid ibn Mu'āwiya; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 210 [Information about Yazid ibn Mu'āwiya]⁶³
 214 Song: lyrics by Shurayḥ the Judge on his wife Zaynab bint Ḥudayr al-Tamimiya; setting by 'Amr ibn Bāna
 215 Mention of Shurayḥ, his origin and information about him
 220 Mention of Zaynab bint Ḥudayr and Shurayḥ's marriage to her

- 224 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥuṭay'a from a panegyric of Sa'īd ibn al-ʿĀṣ; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 225 Information about al-Ḥuṭay'a's connection with Sa'īd ibn al-ʿĀṣ
- 229 Song: lyrics by Mālik ibn Asmā' ibn Khārīja; setting by Ḥunayn
- 230 Information about Mālik ibn Asmā' ibn Khārīja and his origin
- 240 Song: lyrics by Ismā'il ibn Yasār al-Nisā'i from a lament of Muḥammad ibn 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr; setting by Daḥmān
- 241 [Some information about 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr]⁶⁴
- 244 Song: lyrics by Zayd al-Khayl al-Ṭā'i; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 245 Information about Zayd al-Khayl and his origin
- 270 Song: lyrics by 'Ubaydallāh ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt; setting by Find the Effeminate, freedman of 'Ā'isha bint Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ
- 271 [Information about Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt]⁶⁵
- 276 Mention of Find and information about him
- 279 Song: lyrics by Nubayh ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Sahmī; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 280 Information about Nubayh and his origin
- 302 Song: lyrics by Umayya ibn Abi l-Ṣalt al-Thaqafī, wrongly ascribed by some to al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī; setting by Sā'ib Khāthir
- 303 Umayya ibn Abi l-Ṣalt's origin and the account of his composing this poetry
- 323 Song: lyrics by Ḥassān ibn Thābit; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
- 324 [Mention of the account of Zayd ibn Ḥāritha's night raid]⁶⁶
- 326 Song: lyrics by Abū 'Aṭā' al-Sindi; setting by Ibrāhīm
- 327 Mention of Abū 'Aṭā' al-Sindi
- 340 Song: lyrics by Khālīd ibn Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya on his wife Ramla bint al-Zubayr; setting by Yaḥyā al-Makki
- 341 Mention of Khālīd and Ramla, information about them and their origin
- 351 Song: lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ; setting by Ma'bad
- 352 [Information about al-Aḥwaṣ]⁶⁷
- 355 Song: lyrics by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddiq; setting by Ma'bad
- 356 Mention of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr, information about him and the account of Bint al-Jūdī
- 362 Song: lyrics by Ḥātīm al-Ṭā'i; setting by Ishāq
- 363 Information about Ḥātīm and his origin
- 398 Song: lyrics by Dhū l-Rumma; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili

Aghānī XVIII

- 1 Mention of Dhū l-Rumma and information about him
- 48 Mention of Ibrāhīm's composing these songs in the *mākhūrī* rhythm
- 53 Song: lyrics by Jarīr from a lampoon of al-Farazdaq reproaching his tribe with killing al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām; setting by al-Gharīd
- 54 Mention of the killing of al-Zubayr and information about him
- 64 Song: lyrics and setting by 'Aqīd, freedman of Ṣāliḥ ibn al-Rashīd, from a poem on Danānīr

- 65 Mention of information about Danānir and ‘Aqīd
73 Song: lyrics by Khufāf ibn Nudba; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
74 Information about Khufāf and information about him
93 Song: lyrics by Jabhā’ al-Ashja’ī; setting by Ishāq
94 Information about Jabhā’ and his origin
99 Song: lyrics by Wāliba ibn al-Ḥubāb; setting by Yazīd
100 Information about Wāliba
108 Song: lyrics by ‘Imrān ibn Ḥiṭṭān, also ascribed to ‘Isā al-Ḥabaṭī; setting by Muḥammad ibn al-Ash‘ath al-Kūfī
109 Information about ‘Imrān and his origin
121 Song: lyrics by ‘Umāra ibn al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī; setting by Ibn Surayj
122 Information about ‘Umāra ibn al-Walīd and his origin
127 Song: lyrics by al-Aḍbaṭ ibn Quray’; setting by Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makki
128 Information about al-Aḍbaṭ and his origin
131 Song: lyrics by al-A’shā of Banū Rabī’a; setting by Ibrāhīm
132 Information about al-A’shā and his origin
138 Song: lyrics by ‘Amr ibn Qamī’a; setting by Ḥunayn
139 Information about ‘Amr ibn Qamī’a and his origin
145 Song: lyrics by al-Mu’ammil ibn Jamīl ibn Yaḥyā ibn Abī Ḥafṣa; setting by Ibn Jāmi’
146 Information about al-Mu’ammil ibn Jamīl
148 Song: lyrics by Musāwir al-Warrāq; setting by Ibrāhīm ibn Abī l-‘Ubays
149 Information about Musāwir and his origin
154 Song: lyrics by Sa’īd ibn Ḥumayd the Secretary; setting by ‘Arib
155 Information about Sa’īd ibn Ḥumayd and his origin
168 Song: lyrics by Ibn Munādhīr; setting by Bunān
169 Information about Ibn Munādhīr and his origin
211 Song: lyrics by Ashja’ al-Sulamī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
212 Ashja’’s origin and information about him
253 Song: lyrics by Yazīd ibn Rabī’a ibn Mufarrigh al-Ḥimyarī; setting by Siyāṭ
254 Information about Ibn Mufarrigh and his origin
299 Song: lyrics ascribed to Bashshār; setting by al-Zubayr ibn Daḥmān
300 Information about al-Zubayr ibn Daḥmān
310 Song: lyrics by al-‘Umānī; setting by Shāriya
311 Al-‘Umānī’s origin and information about him
321 Song: lyrics by ‘Urwa ibn Udhayna; setting by Mukhāriq
322 Information about ‘Urwa ibn Udhayna and his origin
336 Mention of Mukhāriq and information about him
374 Song: lyrics by Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili

Aghānī XIX

- 1 Mention of Abū Miḥjan and his origin
14 Song: lyrics by Zuhayr ibn Janāb al-Kalbī; Meccan setting

- 15 Information about Zuhayr ibn Janāb and his origin
 20 Song: lyrics by Muslim ibn al-Walid; setting by ‘Arib
 21 Muslim ibn al-Walid’s origin and information about him
 73 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb; setting by ‘Allūya
 74 Information about Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb
 97 Song: lyrics by Muzāḥim al-‘Uqayli; setting by Miqāsa ibn Nāṣih
 98 Information about Muzāḥim and his origin
 105 Song: lyrics by Bakr ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ; setting by Ḥusayn ibn Muḥriz
 106 Information about Bakr ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ and his origin
 121 Song: lyrics by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt; setting by Yūnus the Secretary
 122 The killing of Muṣ‘ab ibn al-Zubayr
 134 Song: lyrics by Kuthayyir; setting by Ash‘ab known as the Voracious
 135 Mention of Ash‘ab and information about him
 183 Song: lyrics by ‘Uwayf al-Fazāri the Rhymer; setting by al-Hudhali
 184 Information about ‘Uwayf and his origin
 211 Song: lyrics by ‘Abdallāh ibn Jaḥsh of the Brigands; setting by ‘Alī ibn Hishām
 212 Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn Jaḥsh
 216 Song: lyrics by al-‘Arjī; setting by ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘i
 217 Some accounts of al-‘Arjī
 219 Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘i
 260 Song: lyrics by Salm the Loser; setting by Hāshim ibn Sulaymān
 261 Information about Salm the Loser and his origin
 288 Song: lyrics by a Hijāzi poet whose name has not survived; setting by Abū Ṣadaqa
 289 Information about Abū Ṣadaqa
 300 Song: lyrics by Faḍl the Poetess; setting by ‘Arib
 301 Information about Faḍl the Poetess
 314 Song: lyrics by ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Sālim al-Khayyāt; setting by the Jeddān Date-seller

Aghānī XX

- 1 Ibn al-Khayyāt’s origin and information about him
 13 Song: lyrics by ‘Alī ibn Jabala; setting by Zurzūr, al-Māriqī’s slave
 14 Information about ‘Alī ibn Jabala
 43 Song: lyrics by al-Taymī; setting by Sulaym ibn Sallām
 44 Information about al-Taymī and his origin
 60 Song: lyrics by Abū Nuwās; setting by al-Zubayr ibn Daḥmān
 61 Information about Abū Nuwās and Janān in particular
 74 Song: lyrics by Ibn Abī ‘Uyayna; setting by Sulaymān the brother of Jaḥza
 75 Ibn Abī ‘Uyayna’s origin and information about him
 119 Song: lyrics by Di‘bil ibn ‘Alī al-Khuzā‘i; setting by Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makki
 120 Information about Di‘bil ibn ‘Alī and his origin
 187 Song: lyrics by Ju‘ayfirān the Deluded; setting by Mutayyam

- 188 Information about Ju‘ayfirān and his origin
 197 Song: lyrics by al-Sarī ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān; setting by Ma‘bad
 198 Information about al-Sarī and his origin
 204 Song: lyrics by Miskīn al-Dārimī; setting by Miqāsa ibn Nāṣiḥ
 205 Information about Miskīn and his origin
 215 Song: lyrics by Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī; setting by Sulaymān
 216 Information about Abū Muḥammad and his origin
 240 *Information about the descendants of Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī who had poetry set to music:* Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad
 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad al-Yazīdī; setting by Sulaym ibn Sallām
 248 Among those of Abū Muḥammad’s sons who had poetry set to music is Ibrāhīm
 Song: lyrics by Ibrāhīm ibn Abī Muḥammad al-Yazīdī; setting by Abū l-‘Ubayy ibn Ḥamdūn
 249 Information about Ibrāhīm
 257 Among the descendants of Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī whose poetry was set to music is Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad
 Song: lyrics by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad; setting by Baḥr
 263 Song: lyrics by al-Mukhabbal al-Qaysī; setting by Ibrāhīm
 264 Information about al-Mukhabbal al-Qaysī and his origin
 273 Song: lyrics by Khālīd the Secretary; setting by al-Masdūd
 274 Information about Khālīd the Secretary
 288 Information about al-Masdūd
 293 Song: lyrics by Salama ibn ‘Ayyāsh; setting by Ḥakam
 294 Information about Salama ibn ‘Ayyāsh
 301 Song: lyrics by Abū l-‘Atāhiya from a panegyric of al-Mahdī; setting by Ishāq
 302 Information about Umm Ja‘far
 306 Song: lyrics by Ayman ibn Khuraym al-Asadī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
 307 Information about Ayman ibn Khuraym
 315 Song: lyrics by Ḥujayya ibn al-Maḍrib al-Kindī, ascribed by others to Ismā‘il ibn Yasār; setting by Yūnus the Secretary
 316 Information about Ḥujayya ibn al-Maḍrib
 320 Song: lyrics and setting by Ishāq
 321 Account of Ishāq and his slave Ziyād
 325 Song: lyrics by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a; setting by Ibn ‘Ā’isha
 326 Account of Ḥabāba and Ibn ‘Ā’isha
 328 Song: lyrics by Abū l-Hindī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
 329 Information about Abū l-Hindī and his origin
 335 Song: lyrics by Sa‘id ibn Wahb; setting by Sulaym
 336 Information about Sa‘id ibn Wahb
 344 Song: lyrics by Ru‘ba ibn al-‘Ajjāj; setting by ‘Amr ibn Bāna
 345 Information about Ru‘ba and his origin

- 356 Song: lyrics by Qays ibn Dhariḥ; setting by ‘Amr ibn Abī l-Kannāt
 357 Information about ‘Amr ibn Abī l-Kannāt
 362 Song: lyrics by Asmā’ ibn Khārīja al-Fazārī, ascribed wrongly by some to Abū
 l-Aswad al-Du’alī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
 363 [Asmā’ ibn Khārīja and his daughter Hind]⁶⁸
 374 Song: lyrics by al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka; setting by Ibn Surayj
 375 Information about al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka and his origin
 389 Song: lyrics by Abū Nukhayla al-Ḥimmānī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 390 Information about Abū Nukhayla and his origin
 423 Song: lyrics by al-Munakhkhal al-Yashkurī; setting by Ibrāhīm

Aghānī XXI

- 1 Information about al-Munakhkhal and his origin
 8 Song: lyrics by Umayya ibn al-Askar al-Laythī; setting by ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir
 9 Information about Umayya ibn al-Askar and his origin
 24 Song: lyrics by ‘Abda ibn al-Ṭabīb; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 25 ‘Abda ibn al-Ṭabīb’s origin and information about him
 28 Song: lyrics by al-Aghlab al-‘Ijlī; setting by ‘Amr ibn Bāna
 29 Information about al-Aghlab and his origin
 36 Song: lyrics by al-Buḥturī; setting by ‘Arib
 37 Information about al-Buḥturī and his origin
 54 Mention of some appreciated information about ‘Arib
 89 Song: lyrics by al-Kumayt ibn Zayd; setting by Ma‘qil ibn ‘Īsā, Abū Dulaf
 al-‘Ijlī’s brother
 92 Mention of Ma‘qil ibn ‘Īsā
 95 Song: lyrics by al-Aḥwaṣ ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī; setting by Ma‘bad
 96 [Al-Aḥwaṣ and some information about him]⁶⁹
 113 Song: lyrics by ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan; setting by Ibn Surayj
 114 Mention of ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan, his origin, and infor-
 mation about him and this poetry
 126 Song: lyrics by Ta’abbaṭa Sharran; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 127 Information about Ta’abbaṭa Sharran and his origin
 173 *Mention of Ta’abbaṭa Sharran’s friends ‘Amr ibn Barrāq and al-Shanfarā*
 174 Song: lyrics by Ibn Barrāq or, as some say, Ibn Barrāqa; setting by
 Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn ‘Amr ibn Bazī
 175 [‘Amr ibn Barrāq]⁷⁰
 178 Song: lyrics by al-Shanfarā; setting by Ibrāhīm
 179 Information about al-Shanfarā and his origin
 195 Song: lyrics by Ibn Ruhayma; setting by Khalil the Teacher
 196 Information about [al-]Khalil and his origin
 199 Song: lyrics by ‘Alqama ibn ‘Abda; setting by Ibn Surayj
 200 Information about ‘Alqama and his origin

- 204 Song: lyrics by Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhālī; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 205 Mention of Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhālī and information about him
 229 Song: lyrics by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Musāfi’ ibn Dāra; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 230 Information about Ibn Dāra and his origin
 249 Song: lyrics by Mas‘ūd ibn Kharsha al-Māzini; setting by Baḥr
 250 Information about Mas‘ūd ibn Kharsha
 252 Information about Baḥr
 253 Song: lyrics by Hudba ibn Khashram; setting by Ma‘bad
 254 Information about Hudba ibn Khashram and his origin
 275 Song: lyrics by al-Farazdaq from one of his lampoons against Jarīr; setting by Ibn Surayj
 276 Al-Farazdaq’s origin, information about him and mention of his flytings
 404 Song: lyrics by Khālīd al-Qasrī, ascribed to ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabi’a; setting by al-Gharīd

Aghānī XXII

- 1 Information about Khālīd al-Qasrī
 30 Song: lyrics by Ṣakhr ibn al-Ja’d al-Khuḍrī; setting by ‘Arib
 31 Information about Ṣakhr ibn al-Ja’d and his origin
 43 Song: lyrics by Abū Ḥaṣṣ al-Shiṭranjī; setting by Ibrāhīm
 44 Information about Abū Ḥaṣṣ al-Shiṭranjī and his origin
 52 Song: lyrics by Umayma bint ‘Abd Shams ibn ‘Abd Manāf; setting by Ishāq
 54 Mention of the account of the Wars of al-Fijār and ‘Ukāz and the origin of Umayma bint ‘Abd Shams
 76 Song: lyrics ascribed to Mālīk ibn al-Ṣimṣāma and others; setting by Ishāq
 77 Information about Mālīk and his origin
 80 Song: lyrics by ‘Abīd ibn al-Abrāṣ; setting by Ibrāhīm
 81 Information about ‘Abīd ibn al-Abrāṣ and his origin
 96 Song: lyrics by Rabī’a ibn Maqrūm al-Ḍabbī; setting by Siyāṭ
 97 Information about Rabī’a ibn Maqrūm and his origin
 106 Song: lyrics by Aws ibn Dhubayy al-Quraṣī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 107 Information about Aws and origin of the Jews settled in Yathrib and information about them
 115 *Among the songs in the poetry of the Jews*
 116 Song: lyrics by al-Samaw’al ibn ‘Ādiyā; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 117 Information about al-Samaw’al and his origin
 122 Song: lyrics by al-Samaw’al’s brother Sa’ya ibn Gharīd; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 127 Song: lyrics by al-Rabī’ ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq; setting by Ibn Muḥriz
 128 Information about al-Rabī’ ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq
 131 Song: lyrics by Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf the Jew; setting by Mālīk
 132 Information about Ka’b, his origin and his killing
 134 Song: lyrics by Bayhas al-Jarmī; setting by Aḥmad ibn al-Makkī
 135 Information about Bayhas and his origin

- 142 Song: lyrics by al-Kumayt ibn Ma'rūf al-Asadī; setting by Ma'bad
 143 Information about al-Kumayt ibn Ma'rūf and his origin
 146 Song: lyrics by Ya'lā al-Azdi the Squinter amongst others; setting by 'Arib
 147 Information about Ya'lā and his origin
 150 Song: lyrics by Jawwās al-'Udhri; setting by Sā'ib Khāthir
 151 Jawwās's origin and information about his connected with this poem
 156 Song: lyrics by Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir; setting by 'Arib
 157 Information about Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir
 186 Song: lyrics by Qays ibn Jarwa al-Ṭā'i composed about a raid carried out by
 'Amr ibn Hind on Ṭayyi's camels; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
 187 Mention of the account of these raids and wars
 199 Song: lyrics by Maḥbūba; setting by 'Arib
 200 Information about Maḥbūba
 204 Song: lyrics ascribed to al-Wāthiq or to Abū Ḥafṣ al-Shiṭranjī; setting by
 'Ubayda the Pandore-player
 205 Information about 'Ubayda the Pandore-player
 211 Song: lyrics by Khālīd al-Kātib, also ascribed to Muḥammad ibn Umayya;
 setting by Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa
 212 Information about Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa
 216 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥārith ibn Wa'la al-Jarmi; setting by Ibn Jāmi'
 217 Information about al-Ḥārith ibn Wa'la
 222 Song: lyrics by 'Alī ibn 'Abdallāh al-Ja'fari; setting by al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr
 223 Information about 'Alī ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far and his origin
 226 Song: lyrics by 'Utayba ibn Mirdās; setting by Jamila
 227 Information about 'Utayba and his origin
 236 Song: lyrics by 'Abdallāh ibn al-'Ajlān al-Nahdī; setting by Mālik
 237 Information about 'Abdallāh ibn al-'Ajlān
 244 Song: lyrics by al-Mu'ammil; setting by Ibrāhīm
 245 Information about al-Mu'ammil and his origin
 252 Song: lyrics by Abū Mālik the Lame; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
 253 Information about Abū Mālik and his origin
 256 Song: lyrics by Abū Duhmān; setting by Ibn Jāmi'
 257 Information about Abū Duhmān
 259 Song: lyrics by Abū Ḥuzāba al-Tamīmī; setting by Ibn Jāmi'
 260 Information about Abū Ḥuzāba and his origin
 269 Song: lyrics by Zuhayr al-Sakb al-Tamīmī al-Māzinī; setting by Ibrāhīm
 Zuhayr al-Sakb's origin and information about him
 272 Song: lyrics by al-Namir ibn Tawlab; setting by Khazraj
 273 Information about al-Namir ibn Tawlab and his origin
 285 Song: lyrics by Mālik ibn al-Rayb; setting by Ma'bad
 286 Information about Mālik ibn al-Rayb and his origin
 302 Song: lyrics by the Slave of Banū l-Ḥaṣḥās; setting by Ibn Surayj
 303 Information about the Slave of Banū l-Ḥaṣḥās
 312 Song: lyrics by Jamīl; setting by Ishāq

- 313 [Mutammim al-‘Abdī and the young girl]⁷¹
 315 Song: lyrics by Ḥassān ibn Tubba‘; setting by Aḥmad al-Naṣbī
 316 Information about Ḥassān ibn Tubba‘
 320 Song: lyrics by Murra ibn Maḥkān al-Sa‘dī; setting by Ibn Surayj
 321 Information about Murra ibn Maḥkān
 326 Song: lyrics by al-‘Udayl ibn al-Farkh al-‘Ijlī; setting by Ma‘bad
 327 Information about al-‘Udayl and his origin
 344 Song: lyrics by Ṣakhr al-Ghayy al-Hudhalī, also ascribed to ‘Amr Dhū l-Kalb; setting not mentioned
 345 Information about Ṣakhr al-Ghayy and his origin
 351 ‘Amr Dhū l-Kalb’s origin and information about him
 354 Song: lyrics by Laqīṭ al-Iyādī; setting by Kardam ibn Ma‘bad
 355 Information about Laqīṭ, his origin and the reason for his composing this poetry
 359 Song: lyrics by Nuṣayb the Younger, freedman of al-Mahdī; setting by Yaḥyā al-Makki

Aghānī XXIII

- 1 Information about Nuṣayb the Younger
 21 Song: lyrics by Abū Shurā’a al-Qaysī; setting by Da‘āma al-Baṣrī
 22 Information about Abū Shurā’a and his origin
 37 Song: lyrics by ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Bawwāb; setting by Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa
 38 Information about Ibn al-Bawwāb
 45 Song: lyrics by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt; setting by Abū Ḥaṣhīsha
 46 Information about Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt and his origin
 75 Information about Abū Ḥaṣhīsha
 84 Song: first line of the lyrics by ‘Inān, al-Nāṭifī’s slavegirl, second line ascribed to her and others; setting by ‘Arib
 85 Information about ‘Inān
 94 Song: lyrics by al-Ḥasan ibn Wāḥb; setting by ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘ī
 95 Information about al-Ḥasan ibn Wāḥb
 117 Song: lyrics by Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf the Secretary; setting by ‘Ubayd ibn al-Ḥasan al-Nāṭifī al-Laṭafī
 118 Information about Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf
 123 Song: lyrics by al-‘Aṭawī; setting by Bunān
 124 Information about al-‘Aṭawī
 129 Song: lyrics by Murra ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Nahdī; setting by Aḥmad al-Naṣbī
 133 Song: lyrics by ‘Alī ibn Umayya; setting by ‘Umar al-Maydānī
 134 Information about ‘Alī ibn Umayya
 140 Information about ‘Umar al-Maydānī

- 142 Song: lyrics by Abū Ayyūb Sulaymān ibn Wahb; setting by al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr
- 143 Information about Sulaymān ibn Wahb and reports about him appropriate to this book
- 154 Song: lyrics by Abān ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥamid al-Lāḥiqī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
- 155 Information about Abān ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥamid and his origin
- 168 Song: lyrics by Tuwayt al-Yamānī; setting by Abū Zakkār al-A‘mā
- 169 Information about Tuwayt and his origin
- 175 Song: lyrics and setting by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar
- 176 Information about Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith
- 180 Song: lyrics by Mānī the Deluded; setting by ‘Umar al-Maydānī
- 181 Information about Mānī the Deluded
- 188 Song: lyrics by Bakr ibn Khārīja; setting by al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr
- 189 Information about Bakr ibn Khārīja
- 193 Song: lyrics by Ismā‘il al-Qarāṭisi; setting by ‘Abbās ibn Maqām
- 194 Information about Ismā‘il al-Qarāṭisi
- 196 Song: lyrics by Abū l-‘Ibar al-Hāshimī; setting by ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdi
- 197 Information about Abū l-‘Ibar and his origin
- 205 Song: lyrics by Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa the Younger; setting by Bunān
- 206 Information about Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa the Younger
- 216 Song: lyrics by Yūsuf ibn al-Ṣayqal; setting by Ibrāhīm
- 217 Information about Yūsuf ibn al-Ḥajjāj and his origin
- 223 Song: lyrics by the Khārījī ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥasan from a lament of ‘Abdallāh ibn Yaḥyā and his companions; setting by ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī l-‘Alā’
- 224 Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn Yaḥyā; his revolt and his killing

Aghānī XXIV

- 1 Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī l-‘Alā’
- 4 Song: lyrics by Umayya ibn Abī ‘Ā’idh; setting by Ḥakam al-Wādī
- 5 Umayya ibn Abī ‘Ā’idh’s origin and information about him
- 9 Song: lyrics by ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī Ma‘qil al-Anṣārī; setting by Sulaym
- 10 Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī Ma‘qil and his origin
- 16 Song: lyrics by al-Quṭāmī; setting by Ishāq
- 17 Mention of al-Quṭāmī’s origin and information about him
- 51 Song: lyrics by Abū Najda Lujaym ibn Sa’d al-‘Ijlī; setting by Kunayz Ḍabba
- 53 Account of the Battle of Dhū Qār which is boasted of in this poetry
- 82 Song: lyrics by al-Quḥayf al-‘Uqaylī; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
- 83 Information about al-Quḥayf and his origin
- 91 Song: lyrics by al-Find al-Zimmānī; setting by ‘Abdallāh ibn Daḥmān
- 93 Information about al-Find al-Zimmānī and his origin
- 97 Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn Daḥmān
- 99 Song: lyrics by al-Mutanakhkhil al-Hudhālī; setting by Ma‘bad

- 101 Information about al-Mutanakhhil and his origin
- 108 Song: lyrics by Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī; setting by Maʿbad
- 110 Information about Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī and his origin
- 135 Song: lyrics by Yaḥyā ibn Ṭālib al-Hanafī; setting by ʿAllūya
- 136 Information about Yaḥyā ibn Ṭālib
- 143 Song: lyrics by ʿUrwa ibn Ḥizām; setting by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili
- 145 Information about ʿUrwa ibn Ḥizām
- 167 Song: lyrics by al-Qattāl al-Kilābī; setting by Ibn Surayj
- 169 Information about al-Qattāl and his origin
- 196 Song: lyrics by Abū l-ʿIyāl al-Hudhalī; setting by Maʿbad
- 197 Information about Abū l-ʿIyāl and his origin
- 204 Song: lyrics by al-Rāʿī; setting by Ishāq
- 205 Al-Rāʿī's origin and information about him
- 219 Song: lyrics by ʿAmmār Dhū Kināz; setting by Ḥakam al-Wādi
- 220 Information about ʿAmmār Dhū Kināz and his origin
- 236 Song: lyrics by ʿAbdallāh ibn Muṣʿab al-Zubayrī; setting by Ḥakam al-Wādi
- 237 Information about ʿAbdallāh ibn Muṣʿab and his origin
- 244 Song: lyrics by ʿUmāra ibn ʿAqīl; setting by Mutayyam
- 245 Information about ʿUmāra and his origin
- 259 Song: lyrics by al-Mutalammis; setting by Mutayyam
- 260 Information about al-Mutalammis and his origin

APPENDIX 3

List of *Kitāb al-aghānī* personalities referred to in this study

The information about these personalities has been drawn mostly from works of reference such as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, Sezgin's *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* and 'Umar Farrūkh's *Ta'rikh al-adab al-'arabī*, and for the musicians Neubauer's *Musiker am Hof der frühen 'Abbāsiden*.

People who are only mentioned fleetingly in this study and those about whom I have found no useful information have been omitted. The equivalences between AH and AD dates are sometimes approximate, especially where periods (e.g. 1st half 8th cent.) are concerned. The article *-al* is ignored in the alphabetical arrangement, as are names not in heavy type.

'Abbād ibn Ziyād: Umayyad general and governor of Sijistan under Mu'āwiya and Yazīd; fl. 61/681.

Al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib: half-brother of Muḥammad's father and ancestor of the 'Abbāsids. Fought against the Muslims at Badr but later converted; d. c. 32/653 aged nearly 90.

Al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf: poet of the 'Abbāsid court famed for his love poetry; d. c. 193/808.

Al-'Abbās ibn Mirdās: renowned warrior of the Banū Sulaym and poet in the time of the Prophet; d.c. 24/645.

'Abd al-'Azīz ibn ['Abd] al-Muṭṭalib: member of the wealthy Makhzūm clan of Quraysh, occupied the position of judge in Medina and Mecca under al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī; fl. mid-second/eighth century.

'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān: 5th Umayyad caliph, succeeded 65/685, restored the unity of the caliphate after the secession of Ibn al-Zubayr and revolts in Iraq; 26/646–86/705.

'Abd Qays ibn Khufāf al-Burjūmī: poet, rival of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī at the court of the Lakhmid al-Nu'mān III; fl. late sixth century AD.

'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr: son of Abū Bakr, the first Rightly Guided caliph; d. c. 53/673.

'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf: early convert to Islam from the Banū Zuhra and a revered Companion of the Prophet; d.c. 31/652.

- ‘**Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān ibn Thābit**: poet, son of the Prophet’s panegyrist Ḥassān, supporter of the *Anṣār* of Medina over against Quraysh; d. c. 104/722–23 at a great age.
- ‘**Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālīd ibn al-Walīd**: son of the famous general Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, said to have been poisoned by Mu‘āwīya ibn Abī Sufyān; d. 46/666.
- ‘**Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muljam al-Murādī**: see Ibn Muljam.
- ‘**Abd Yaghūth al-Ḥārithī**: tribal chief and poet, captured and killed following the second Battle of Kulāb; d. after 620 AD.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās**: cousin of the Prophet, grandfather of the first ‘Abbāsids, leading early transmitter of Muslim traditions; d. 68/688.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘ī**: musician, grandson of the chamberlain al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabī‘, first performed before al-Rashīd, d. 247/861.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Abī l-‘Alā**: singer from Samarra, pupil of Ishāq al-Mawṣili; fl. early third/ninth century.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī ‘Uyayna**: poet, sometime governor of Bahrain and al-Yamāma; fl. early third/ninth century.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn ‘Ajlān**: tribal chief and poet, said to have died for love of his wife Hind whom he had been forced to divorce; fl. end of sixth century AD.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn ‘Alī**: uncle of al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr, a leader of the campaign against the Umayyads, later opposed al-Manṣūr’s accession; d. 147/764.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Daḥmān**: singer from the Hijaz, adept of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī’s style, sang before al-Rashīd; fl. late second/eighth century.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥajjāj**: courageous warrior and poet from Kufa, joined Ibn al-Zubayr, later pardoned by ‘Abd al-Malik; fl. late first/seventh century.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan** ibn al-Ḥasan: chief of the ‘Alids, fell into disfavour with al-Manṣūr because his sons Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm were suspected of planning a rebellion; d. in prison 145/763.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Ja‘far** ibn Abī Ṭālib: nephew of the caliph ‘Alī, spent most of his life in Medina, famous for his generosity; d. c. 85/704.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Mu‘āwīya**: grandson of ‘Abdallāh ibn Ja‘far, led an ‘Alid revolt in Kufa in 127/744, fled to Khurasan, executed by Abū Muslim; d. 131/748.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Muṣ‘ab al-Zubayrī**: descendant of ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, court companion and governor under al-Mahdī, al-Hādī and al-Rashīd, poet; d. 184/800.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir** ibn al-Ḥusayn: governor of Egypt and then Khurasan under al-Ma’mūn and al-Mu‘taṣim, patron, man of letters, poet and musician; 182/798–230/84.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar** ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: son of the second Rightly Guided caliph, leading personality and transmitter of traditions among the first generation of Muslims; d. 73/693.
- ‘**Abdallāh ibn Yaḥyā** al-Kindī: leader of an Ibādī (Khārijī) uprising in Hadramawt and Yemen from 127/744, proclaimed *imām*; killed by an Umayyad general 130/748.

- ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zabīr:** Kufan poet, author of panegyrics on the early Umayyad caliphs; fl. late first/seventh century.
- ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr:** see Ibn al-Zubayr.
- ‘Abīd ibn al-Abras:** poet, spokesman of his tribe, the Banū Asad, fl. early sixth century AD.
- Al-Abjar** ‘Ubaydallāh ibn al-Qāsim: Meccan singer who attached himself to al-Walid ibn Yazid; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Al-‘Abli, ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar:** Medinan poet, supporter of the ‘Alids, took part in Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh’s revolt and fled to Yemen; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Abū l-‘Abbās al-A’mā:** panegyricist of the Umayyads in Mecca; d. after 136/753.
- Abū ‘Abdallāh Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥamdūn:** of the cultured Banū Ḥamdūn family, companion of al-Mu‘taṣim, al-Wāthiq and al-Mutawakkil; fl. mid-third/ninth century.
- Abū ‘Amr al-Shaybānī:** leading philologist in Kufa; fl. second/eighth century.
- Abū l-‘Anbas al-Ṣaymarī:** buffoon, poet, man of letters and companion of al-Mutawakkil; 213/828–275/888.
- Abū ‘Aṭā al-Sindī:** panegyricist of the Umayyads of partly Indian origin, later sought favour with the ‘Abbāsids; d. c. 160/777.
- Abū l-‘Atāhiya:** poet at al-Mahdī’s court, famous for his love poems to ‘Utba and later his ascetic verses; 130/748–211/826.
- Abū Bakr** al-Ṣiddīq: one of the first converts to Islam, chosen to lead the Muslim community after Muḥammad’s death, first Rightly Guided caliph; reg. 11/632–13/634.
- Abū Dahbal** al-Jumaḥī: Meccan poet, author of panegyrics and love poetry; d. after 96/715.
- Abū Dhu’ayb al-Hudhalī:** the greatest of the Banū Hudhayl poets, famous for his elegy on his five sons killed by the plague; d. 28/649.
- Abū Dulaf** al-Qāsim ibn ‘Isā al-‘Ijlī: ‘Abbāsīd general, patron, poet, and composer; d. 226/840.
- Abū Dulāma:** son of a black slave, poet and jester under the early ‘Abbāsids; d. c. 160/776–777.
- Abū Ḥafṣ al-Shiṭranjī:** poet of ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdī, wit, famous chess-player; fl. late second/eighth century.
- Abū Ḥanīfa** al-Nu’mān ibn Thābit: theologian and jurist from Kufa, considered as the founder of the Ḥanafī school of law; c. 80/699–150/767.
- Abū Ḥashīsha** Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Umayya: court musician, pandore player, author of two books on singers and instrumentalists; d. before 279/892.
- Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī:** leading philologist in Basra; d. 255/869.
- Abū Ḥayya al-Numayrī:** Basran poet, panegyricist of the later Umayyads and early ‘Abbāsids; d.c. 180/796.
- Abū Hiffān** ‘Abdallāh ibn Aḥmad: Basran poet and philologist, later in Baghdad, known as a transmitter of *akhbār*; d.c. 255/869.

- Abū l-Hindī** Ghālib ibn ‘Abd al-Quddūs: Khurasani poet, famous for his wine songs; d. soon after 132/750.
- Abū ‘Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil:** ‘Abbāsīd prince known for his piety, poet, scholar and composer; d. after 279/892.
- Abū ‘Īsā ibn al-Rashīd:** ‘Abbāsīd prince close to al-Ma’mūn, poet and composer; d. 209/824.
- Abū Jilda al-Yashkurī:** Kufan poet, author of panegyrics and lampoons, took part in a revolt; killed by al-Ḥajjāj 83/702.
- Abū Lahab** ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā **ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib:** half-brother of Muḥammad’s father and chief of the clan of Hāshim, hostile to Muḥammad’s preaching; d. 2/624.
- Abū Mihjan al-Thaqafi:** poet of Taif, took part in the conquest of Iraq, famous for his wine poetry; d. after 16/637.
- Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā al-Yazīdī:** grammarian and man of letters from Basra, tutored al-Ma’mūn and other ‘Abbāsīd princes, founder of a dynasty of scholar-poets; d. 202/817–818.
- Abū Muslim:** organiser of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution in Khurasan, helped to consolidate ‘Abbāsīd power; killed by al-Manṣūr 137/755.
- Abū l-Najm al-‘Ijlī:** Kufan bedouin poet using the *rajaz* metre, praised the Umayyads; c. 40/660–c. 120/738.
- Abū Nukhayla al-Ḥimmānī:** poet from Basra using the *rajaz* metre, praised the Umayyads and the first ‘Abbāsīds; killed in revenge by ‘Īsā ibn Mūsā c. 137/755.
- Abū Nuwās al-Ḥasan ibn Hānī:** leading “modern” poet especially famous for his wine songs, praised al-Rashīd, was a companion of al-Amin; c. 140/755–c. 198/813.
- Abū Ṣadaqa** Miskīn ibn Ṣadaqa: singer from Medina, introduced to al-Rashīd by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Abū Sa’īd** Ibrāhīm **mawlā Fā’id:** Medinan poet and musician, author of memorable elegies of the Umayyads whom the ‘Abbāsīds killed; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Abū Ṣakhr** ‘Abdallāh **al-Hudhalī:** well-known Hijazi love poet, praised ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Abū l-Shiṣ** Muḥammad ibn Razīn: “modern” poet, courtier of al-Rashīd; c. 130/748–196/812.
- Abū Shurā’a** al-Qaysī: Basran poet and prose-writer in the circle of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir; d. c. 280/893.
- Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb:** leader of the ‘Abd Shams clan, organised armed opposition to Muḥammad but later converted; d. c. 32/653.
- Abū Tammām Ḥabīb ibn Aws:** major poet from Syria, panegyricist of al-Mu’taṣim and his court, creator of a consciously “intellectual” style, compiler of poetic anthologies; c. 189/805–c. 232/845.
- Abū ‘Ubayda** Ma’mar ibn al-Muthannā: Basran philologist, collector of poetry and historical and tribal traditions; 110/728–209/824.

- Abū l-‘Ubays ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥamdūn:** singer at court from al-Mutawakkil’s reign on, transmitter of songs, member of the cultured Banū Ḥamdūn; fl. end of third/ninth century.
- Abū ‘Uyayna ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī ‘Uyayna:** Basran poet, brother of ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī ‘Uyayna, known for his love poetry, lampoons and descriptions of Basra; fl. latter part of the second/eighth century.
- Abū Wajza al-Sulamī:** poet in Medina, panegyricist of Hijazi notables, transmitter of some *ḥadīths*; d. 130/747.
- Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qāḍī:** prominent religious lawyer from Kufa and co-founder of the Ḥanafī school, appointed judge in Baghdad; c.113/731–182/798.
- Abū Zakkār al-A‘mā:** singer and pandore-player from Baghdad, attached to the Barmakids, later sang before al-Rashīd; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Abū Zubayd al-Ṭā‘ī:** Christian poet from the Jazīra, praised Lakhmid and Ghassānid princes and later the governor of Kufa al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba, famous for his lion descriptions; d.c. 61/680.
- Ādam ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz:** grandson of the caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, amnestied by al-Saffāh, known for his wine poetry; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- ‘Adī ibn al-Riqā‘ al-‘Āmīlī:** court poet of several Umayyad caliphs; d.c. 99/717.
- ‘Adī ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī:** counsellor of the Lakhmid al-Nu‘mān III at al-Ḥīra, urban poet known for his wine songs and ascetic poetry incorporating Christian themes; d.c. 600 AD.
- Aḥmad ibn Abī Du‘ād:** Mu‘tazilī from Basra, companion of al-Ma’mūn, chief *qāḍī* under al-Mu‘taṣim and al-Wāthiq, disgraced under al-Mutawakkil; c. 160/776–240/354.
- Aḥmad ibn Abī Fanan Ṣālīḥ:** secretary and noted poet in Baghdad, protégé of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir and al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān; fl. mid-third/ninth century.
- Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kharrāz:** poet, man of letters and historian in Baghdad; d.c. 256/870.
- Aḥmad ibn Hishām:** cousin of Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn, commander of al-Ma’mūn’s guard, later governor of Rayy; disgraced and killed 217/832.
- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Yazīdī:** poet, transmitter of poetry and *akhbār*, companion of al-Ma’mūn; d. before 260/874.
- Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa:** grandson of Abū Ṣadaqa, singer at the courts of al-Ma’mūn and al-Mutawakkil; fl. early third/ninth century.
- Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Ammār:** Shī‘ī transmitter of *akhbār*, author of works on poets and history; d. 319/931.
- Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Kātib:** secretary famed for his artistic prose, poet, head of the chancery under al-Ma’mūn; d. 213/828.
- Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī:** son of the famous singer Yaḥyā al-Makkī, court musician from the time of al-Ma’mūn, author of song collections; d. 248/862.

- Aḥmad** ibn Usāma al-Hamdānī **al-Naṣbī**: Kufan singer, set his cousin A'shā Hamdān's poetry to music; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Al-Aḥwaṣ** 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad **al-Anṣārī**: Medinan poet, author of panegyrics on Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik and his brother Yazīd and of much love poetry, exiled for his provocative allusions to well-born ladies, later pardoned; c. 40/660–c. 105/724.
- 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr**: daughter of Abū Bakr, favourite wife of the Prophet, briefly active in politics before and after 'Uthmān's murder, well-versed in poetry; c. 614 AD–58/678.
- 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalḥa**: daughter of a Companion of the Prophet, niece of 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr, beautiful and coquettish, married several times; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Al-Akhfash** 'Alī ibn Sulayman: youngest of three grammarians of this name, littérateur, philologists and grammarian in Baghdad; c. 235/849–315/917.
- Al-Akhṭal** Ghiyāth ibn Ghawth al-Taghlibī: leading court poet of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik, joined with al-Farazdaq in flytings against Jarīr, also composed wine poetry; c. 20/640–c. 92/710.
- 'Alī** ibn Abī Ṭālib: 1st *imām* of the Shī'a, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, elected 4th caliph after 'Uthmān's murder in 35/656, failed to end the civil strife, assassinated by Khārijīs. Came to be seen by Shī'as as an ideal ruler; d. 40/661.
- 'Alī ibn Hishām**: cousin of Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn, one of al-Ma'mūn's generals, commander of the campaign against Bābak, music lover, owner of singing-girls, patron and friend of Ishāq al-Mawṣilī; disgraced and executed 217/832.
- 'Alī ibn Jabala** al-'Akawwak: gifted poet from Baghdad who praised generals and ministers of al-Ma'mūn, arousing the caliph's anger with his magnificent compliments; 160/776–213/828.
- 'Alī ibn al-Jahm**: poet and man of letters with philosophical interests, praised al-Mutawakkil, whose companion he was for a time, fell into disfavour but was later pardoned; c. 188/804–249/863.
- 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim**: member of the cultivated Banū l-Munajjim family, man of letters, poet and musician, companion of caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Mu'tamid, patron of poets and writers, author of books on poets and music; 200/815–275/888.
- 'Alī** ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far **al-Riḍā**: 8th *imām* of the Twelver Shī'a, pious and learned, appointed by al-Ma'mūn as his heir in an effort to reconcile the Shī'a to 'Abbāsīd rule. Died mysteriously in Ṭūs; c. 151/768–203/818.
- 'Alī** ibn al-Ḥusayn **Zayn al-'Ābidīn**: 4th *imām* of the Twelver Shī'a, sole surviving son of al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, lived in Medina, transmitted traditions and kept aloof from politics; 38/658–c. 99/717.
- 'Allūya** 'Alī ibn 'Abdallāh al-A'sar: singer at court from the time of al-Amin to al-Mutawakkil, pupil of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī; d. 236/850.
- 'Alqama** ibn 'Abada: poet of the Tamīm tribe, author of three famous odes, one of which competed with a poem of Imru' al-Qays; fl. mid-sixth century AD.

- Al-Amīn**, Abū Mūsā Muḥammad: 6th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, succeeded 193/809, generous patron of poets. Tried to restore Baghdad’s authority over Khurasan, his brother al-Ma’mūn’s province, brought on a civil war, was defeated and killed; 170/787–198/813.
- ‘**Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl**: poet, warrior and chief of the tribal confederation of ‘Āmir ibn Ṣa’sa’a, opponent of the Prophet; c. 570 AD–c. 10/632.
- ‘**Amr ibn Bāna**: son of a secretary, singer at court from the time of al-Ma’mūn, adept of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī’s style, author of two song books; d. 278/891.
- ‘**Amr ibn Ma’dikarib** al-Zubaydī: tribal chief, warrior and author of poems glorifying himself and his tribe. Converted to Islam, fought against the Sassanians at al-Qādisiyya; d. after 16/637.
- ‘**Antara** ibn Shaddād al-‘Absī: poet and warrior, song of a slave-girl, acknowledged by his father because of his bravery, author of one of the *Mu‘allaqāt*, later hero of a popular epic; fl. second half of sixth century AD.
- ‘**Arib**: leading singer at the ‘Abbāsīd court, adept of Ishāq al-Mawsilī’s style, poet and courtier. Perhaps daughter of Ja‘far al-Barmakī, owned by al-Amīn and then al-Ma’mūn, freed by al-Mu‘taṣim, performed before subsequent caliphs; 181/797–277/890.
- Al-‘Arjī** ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar: grandson of the caliph ‘Uthmān, Hijazi poet of love songs and satires reflecting his conflict with a governor; c. 68/687–c. 124/741.
- A’shā Hamdān** ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abdallāh: Kufan poet, served in many campaigns, fought with Ibn al-Ash‘ath against al-Ḥajjāj, was captured and killed; c. 30/650–83/702.
- Al-A’shā Maymūn** ibn Qays: outstanding pre-Islamic poet from al-Hira, praised patrons in both urban and bedouin milieus, also author of lampoons and wine songs; before 565 AD–c. 7/629.
- Ash‘ab** al-Ṭammā‘: singer, comic entertainer and poet in Medina, famed for his greed, later subject of many jokes; fl. early second/eighth century.
- Al-Ashhab ibn Rumayla** al-Nahshalī: poet from Najd, lived later in Basra, engaged in flytings with al-Farazdaq; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Ashja’ al-Sulamī**: poet from Basra, panegyricist and companion of al-Rashīd, composed in the *muḥdath* style; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Al-Aṣma‘ī** ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Qurayb: Basran philologist and grammarian, collector and critic of pre-Islamic poetry, tutor to al-Amīn and al-Ma’mūn; 122/740–c. 213/828.
- ‘**Aṭā** ibn Abī Rabāḥ: early Meccan jurisconsult, transmitter of *ḥadīth*, commentator on the Quran, in contact with many Companions of the Prophet; d. 114/732.
- ‘**Ātika bint Shuhda**: singer’s daughter, singer, moved from the Hijaz to Basra, excellent lute-player, taught Ishāq al-Mawṣilī; fl. late second/eighth century.
- Al-‘Attābi** Kulthūm ibn ‘Amr: poet from northern Syra, praised the Barmakids and al-Rashīd, famous prose stylist; d. 220/834.
- Aws ibn Ghalfā** al-Hujaymī: tribal poet; fl. late sixth century AD.

- ‘Azza al-Maylā’**: famous singer in Medina, freedwoman of the Anṣār; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Badhl**: singer trained in Basra, owned by Ja‘far ibn al-Hādī and later al-Amīn, vastly knowledgeable about the musical repertoire, author of a book of songs; fl. early third/ninth century.
- Bakr ibn Khārīja**: Kufan poet, ill-paid copyist, notorious drinker, composed love and wine songs; fl. first half of third/ninth century.
- Bashshār ibn Burd**: leading innovative poet from Basra, praised late Umayyad governors and the caliph al-Mahdī, author of love poems (many dedicated to ‘Abda) and satires, accused of heresy and killed; c. 95/714–c. 167/784.
- Bid‘a**: singer, pupil and later confidante of ‘Arib, sang before al-Mu‘tazz and al-Mu‘taḍid; c. 242/856–302/915.
- Bishr ibn Marwān**: son of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, spent time in Egypt, appointed by ‘Abd al-Malik governor of Kufa and Basra, generous patron of poets; d. 74/793–794.
- Al-Buḥturī** al-Walid b. ‘Ubayd: major court poet from northern Syria, pupil and protégé of Abū Tammām, eulogised al-Mutawakkil and al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān, representative of a “natural” style; 206/821–284/897.
- Bunān**: singer, performed before al-Mutawakkil, al-Muntaṣir and al-Mu‘tazz; fl. mid-third/ninth century.
- Daḥmān** al-Ashqar: Hijazi musician, performed before al-Manṣūr’s governor of Basra, later sang at al-Mahdī’s court; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Al-Dalāl** Abū Zayd Nāqid: Medinan musician, gifted composer and entertainer. Castrated with other effeminates by order of Sulaymān or Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik; c. 70/690–c. 145/762.
- Danānīr**: singer from Medina, author of famous songbook, pupil of Badhl, slave-girl of Yaḥyā al-Barmakī; fl. early third/ninth century.
- Dāwūd ibn ‘Alī**: uncle of al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr, one of the leaders of the campaign against the Umayyads, governor of Kufa; d. 133/751.
- Dāwūd ibn Salm**: poet in Medina, author of panegyrics; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Dhū l-Iṣba’** Ḥurthān al-‘Adwānī: poet and warrior, mourner of the past glories of his tribe ‘Adwān; fl. late sixth century AD.
- Dhū l-Rumma** Ghaylān ibn ‘Uqba: bedouin poet from Central Arabia deeply rooted in the pre-Islamic tradition, praised the governor of Basra, engaged in polemics with Jarīr and Ru‘ba ibn al-‘Ajjāj; c. 77/696–c. 117/735.
- Di‘bil** ibn ‘Alī al-Khuzā‘ī: Shī‘ī poet and anthologist from Kufa, attended the courts of al-Rashīd and al-Ma’mūn, composed very fine panegyrics and elegies of ‘Alī and his descendants and biting attacks on some contemporary caliphs and personalities, including Abū Tammām; 148/765–246/860.
- Dik al-Jinn** ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Raghbān al-Ḥimṣī: Syrian Shī‘ī poet, author of elegies of al-Ḥusayn, panegyrics and love poetry. Killed his beloved wife, Warda, on suspicion of infidelity, then composed poems of grief and repentance; 161/778–c. 235/850.

- Durayd ibn al-Ṣimma:** poet and tribal chief, powerful bedouin opponent of the Prophet, author of poems describing battle scenes and praising tribal virtues, and of laments for his brothers; d. 8/630.
- Faḍl al-Shā'ira:** poetess, singer and woman of letters, brought up in Basra, freed-woman of al-Mutawakkil, centre of a literary circle in Baghdad; d.c. 257/871.
- Al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabī':** son of al-Rabī' ibn Yūnus, vizier of al-Rashīd and al-Amīn, whom he supported against al-Ma'mūn, later pardoned by al-Ma'mūn; 138/757–208/823.
- Al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā al-Barmakī:** eldest son of Yaḥyā al-Barmakī, very influential at al-Rashīd's court, tutor of al-Amīn, disgraced when his brother was executed; 148/765–193/808.
- Al-Farazdaq** Hammām ibn Ghālib: prominent poet of bedouin origin, author of panegyrics of leading Umayyad personalities, famous for his exchange of flytings with Jarir ibn 'Aṭīya; c. 20/640–110/728.
- Al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān:** son of a Turkish army commander, secretary and companion of al-Mutawakkil, man of letters, patron of writers and poets, murdered with al-Mutawakkil; c. 200/817–247/861.
- Fulayḥ ibn Abī l-'Awrā':** prominent singer from Mecca, performed before al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd; fl. late second/eighth century.
- Al-Gharīḍ** Abū Yazīd 'Abd al-Malik: famous Meccan singer, pupil of Ibn Surayj, sang before al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik and Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn; d.c. 98/716.
- Ḥabāba:** beautiful and gifted Medinan singing-girl, bought and taken to Damascus by Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik who became infatuated with her; d. c. 104/723.
- Ḥabash:** major collector of songs, probably identical with Ḥubaysh ibn Mūsā; fl. mid-third/ninth century.
- Al-Hādī** Mūsā: 4th 'Abbāsīd caliph, son of al-Mahdī, succeeded 169/785, died suddenly soon after; c. 145/763–170/786.
- Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf:** famous governor, restored Umayyad authority in the Hijaz, for twenty years governed Iraq. Harsh but effective ruler, gifted orator and patron of poets; c. 41/95–661-714.
- Ḥakam al-Wādī:** singer from Wādī l-Qurā, performed before al-Walīd ibn Yazīd and later al-Mahdī; fl. 2nd half of second/eighth century.
- Ḥammād 'Ajrād:** poet from Kufa, notoriously dissolute, famous for his satire, also composed panegyrics and elegies; d. c. 158/775.
- Ḥammād ibn Ishāq al-Mawṣilī:** son of Ishāq, courtier, transmitter of his father's books and songs; fl. 1st half of third/ninth century.
- Ḥammād al-Rāwīya:** leading collector and transmitter of poetry from Kufa of doubtful reliability, courtier and libertine; 75/695–155/772.
- Al-Ḥaramī ibn Abī l-'Alā':** secretary of Meccan origin in Baghdad, transmitter of poetry and *akhbār*, major source of Abū l-Faraj; d. 317/929.
- Al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd al-Makhzūmī:** Qurashī poet of the Makhzūm clan, composer of love songs in a style like 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a's; fl. late first/early eighth century.

Hārūn al-Rashīd: see al-Rashīd.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī Abū Saʿīd: very eloquent preacher, model of ascetic piety and probity, independent of politics, not afraid to criticise rulers; 21/642–110/728.

Al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib: 2nd Shīʿī *imām*, son of ʿAlī and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, recognised by ʿAlī's supporters as caliph in 40/661. Abdicated in Muʿāwiya's favour and lived quietly in Medina; 3/624–49/669.

Al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb: noted poet and writer of artistic prose, secretary, protégé of Ibn al-Zayyāt, occupied important posts, patron of poets; d.c. 248/862.

Ḥassān ibn Thābit: poet of Medina already prominent before his conversion to Islam, author of panegyrics of the Prophet and of attacks in the pre-Islamic style on his adversaries; d. c. 40/661.

Al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī: historian from Kufa, courtier of al-Mahdī and al-Hādī, teacher and author of many books, not considered always reliable; d. 207/822.

Al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī: Medinan poet, author of satirical epigrams and flytings with contemporary poets; fl. 2nd half of first/seventh century.

Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik: 10th Umayyad caliph, succeeded 105/724, very capable ruler and strict administrator, gave the empire internal stability, interested in Sassanian historical traditions; 72/691–125/743.

Al-Hishāmī, Abū ʿAbdallāh: transmitter of songs, musician, probably a son or nephew of ʿAlī ibn Hishām; fl. mid-third/ninth century.

Hudba ibn Khashram: Hijazi bedouin poet, composed lampoons, love poetry, boasting and sentential poems; victim of revenge killing c. 60/680.

Ḥujr ibn ʿAdī al-Kindī: supporter of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, leader of the Shīʿa in Kufa, fomented unrest until arrested by Ziyād ibn Abih and sent to Muʿāwiya, executed outside Damascus 51/671.

Ḥumayd ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Ṭūsī: ʿAbbāsīd general chiefly responsible for al-Maʾmūn's victory over Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, generous patron of poets, poisoned 210/825.

Ḥunayn ibn Balūʿ al-Ḥirī: Christian singer from al-Ḥira, only notable representative of the Iraqi musical tradition in the Umayyad period; fl. early second/eighth century.

Al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib: 3rd Shīʿī *imām*, son of ʿAlī and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, refused to recognise Yazīd as Muʿāwiya's successor, on his way to Kufa killed by Umayyad forces at the battle of Kerbela; 4/626–61/680.

[Al] **Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk:** poet and eloquent profligate from Basra, frequented caliphal courts from al-Rashīd on, known especially for his wine poetry; 155/772–250/864.

Al-Ḥuṭayʿa Jarwal ibn Aws: itinerant extortionist poet, *rāwī* of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, took part in the Ridda wars, imprisoned for violently attacking the governor of Medina, author of panegyrics and satires; fl. mid-first/seventh century.

Ibn ʿAbbās: see ʿAbdallāh ibn al-ʿAbbās.

Ibn Abī l-Azhar, Muḥammad ibn Mazyad: transmitter of literary and historical *akhbār* and author, secretary of al-Mubarrad; d. 325/937.

- Ibn Abī ‘Atīq**, ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad: great-grandson of Abū Bakr, Medinan aristocrat, elegant wit, friend of poets and singers; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Ibn ‘Ā’isha**, Muḥammad: very gifted singer from Medina, pupil of Ma‘bad and Mālik, performed before al-Walid ibn Yazīd; fl. early second/eighth century.
- Ibn ‘Ammār**: see Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Ammār.
- Ibn al-A‘rābī**, Muḥammad ibn Ziyād: Kufan philologist, later in Baghdad and Samarra, learned in poetry, genealogies, grammar and lexicography; 150/767–230/233.
- Ibn al-Ash‘ath**, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad: commander in Sijistan, led a revolt against al-Ḥajjāj, defeated; died in prison 85/704.
- Ibn Durayd**, Abū Bakr Muḥammad: lexicographer from Basra, taught in Nishapur and Baghdad, cultured music-lover; 223/837–321/933.
- Ibn Ḥabīb**, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad: Baghdad philologist, scholar of poetry, genealogy and history; d. 245/860.
- Ibn Harma**, Ibrāhīm: poet from Medina, praised the Umayyads but also al-Manṣūr, regarded as the last poet in the “classical” style; 90/709–c.176/792.
- Ibn Hishām**, ‘Abd al-Malik: Egyptian scholar, reviser and editor of Ibn Ishāq’s biography of the Prophet, the *Sira*; d. 218/833.
- Ibn Jāmi‘**, Ismā‘īl: famous singer from Mecca, member of Quraysh reputed for his piety, performed in Baghdad before al-Mahdī and al-Rashid; fl. late second/eighth century.
- Ibn al-Jarrāḥ**, Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd: ‘Abbāsīd administrator and man of letters, member of Ibn al-Mu‘tazz’s circle, author of a poetic anthology; executed 298/908.
- Ibn al-Kalbī**, Hishām: scholar from Kufa patronised by al-Mahdī, authority on genealogy, pre-Islamic antiquities and poetry, judged unreliable by some later writers: 120/737–c. 204/819.
- Ibn Khurdādhbih**, ‘Ubaydallāh: scholar and secretary of Iranian origin, Director of Posts and Intelligence, companion of al-Mu‘tamīd, wrote on geography, history, cooking, drinking and music; c. 205/820–c. 300/911.
- Ibn al-Mawlā**: poet from Medina, praised ‘Abbāsīd princes and governors, patronised by al-Mahdī, also author of love poetry; d.c.165/781.
- Ibn Mayyāda**, al-Rammāḥ ibn Abrad: bedouin poet from the Hijaz, praised al-Walid ibn Yazīd and Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd dignitaries, also author of love poetry and lampoons, considered one of the last “classical” poets; d.c. 146/763.
- Ibn Mish‘ab**: excellent Meccan singer originally from Taif, many of his compositions ascribed to others; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Ibn Misjah**, Sa‘īd: important singer in Mecca, contributed to the development of Arabic music and its assimilation of Persian and Byzantine elements; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Ibn Muljam al-Murādī**, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān: adherent of the Khārījī movement, murderer of the caliph ‘Alī; killed 40/661.
- Ibn Munādhir**, Muḥammad: poet from Aden, studied in Basra, praised al-Mahdī, al-Rashid and the Barmakids, also composed satires, expelled from Basra for scandalous conduct; d.c. 198/813.

- Ibn al-Mu‘tazz**, ‘Abdallāh: ‘Abbāsīd prince, poet in the “new style”, critic and musician, man of letters and patron, author of books on poetry and criticism, killed in struggles for the succession to the caliphate; 247/861–296/908.
- Ibn al-Naṭṭāh**, Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ: scholar from Basra, historian, genealogist and transmitter of *ḥadīth* in Baghdad; d. 252/866.
- Ibn al-Qaṣṣār, Sulaymān**: singer and pandore player of humble origin in Baghdad, performed at court; fl. late third/ninth century.
- Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt**, ‘Ubaydallāh: Qurashī poet from the Hijaz, sympathised with Ibn al-Zubayr, later pardoned by ‘Abd al-Malik, famous for his love poetry, also author of panegyrics and elegies; c. 15/636–80/699.
- Ibn Qutayba**, ‘Abdallāh: influential scholar from Kufa, *qāḍī*, later wrote and taught in Baghdad, author of handbooks, literary anthologies and books on criticism; 213/828–276/889.
- Ibn Ruhayma**: Median poet, composed love-songs on Zaynab, Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik’s sister, went into hiding until Hishām’s death; fl. first part second/eighth century.
- Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī**, Muḥammad: philologist and critic from Basra, worked in Baghdad, transmitted information about literary and musical life in the Hijaz, author of early poetic anthology; 139/756–232/846.
- Ibn Sīrīn**, Muḥammad: respected Basran traditionist and jurist, interpreter of dreams; 34/654–110/728.
- Ibn Surayj**, ‘Ubaydallāh: leading singer in Mecca, started as professional mourner, performed before al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, teacher of al-Gharīḍ; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Ibn al-Zayyāt, Muḥammad** ibn ‘Abd al-Malik: vizier and man of letters, served al-Mu‘taṣim and al-Wāthiq, fell from favour and executed under al-Mutawakkil, considered best poet among his generation of secretaries, important patron; 173/789–233/848.
- Ibn al-Zubayr, ‘Abdallāh**: Companion of the Prophet, refused to recognise Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya and declared self caliph in Mecca, defeated by al-Ḥajjāj; 2/64–73/692.
- Ibrāhīm ibn al-‘Abbās al-Ṣūlī**: secretary and highly regarded poet, official and courtier under several caliphs from al-Ma’mūn on, author of panegyrics, love poems and wine songs; c.176/792–243/857.
- Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abdallāh** ibn al-Ḥasan: great-great-grandson of ‘Alī, refused to recognise the ‘Abbāsīds, rebelled against al-Manṣūr in Basra while his brother Muḥammad rebelled in Medina; killed 145/763.
- Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī**: prince, singer, composer and poet. Briefly counter-caliph when al-Ma’mūn was in Merv, resigned and was later pardoned. Subsequently concentrated on musical activities. Possessed an exceptional voice but an idiosyncratic style of interpretation; 162/779–224/839.
- Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir**: secretary, poet and man of letters, companion of al-Mutawakkil, occupied important administrative posts; c. 215/829–279/893.

- Ibrāhīm** ibn Māhān/Maymūn **al-Mawṣili**: leading singer, composer of genius and courtier from Kufa, adherent of the “classical” Hijazi style, performed at court in Baghdad from al-Mahdī’s time on; 125/742–188/804.
- Ibrāhīm** ibn Sayyār **al-Nazzām**: Mu‘tazili theologian from Basra with poetic and rhetorical talents; d. c. 230/845.
- Imru’ al-Qays**: pre-Islamic poet, author of one of the most famous *Mu‘allaqāt*, spent much of his life seeking to revenge his father’s death; fl. early sixth century AD.
- ‘Isā ibn Mūsā**: nephew of the first two ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, governor of Kufa, twice designated second successor to the caliphate and obliged to renounce his rights; 102/720–172/788.
- Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muṣ‘ab** al-Ṭahiri: member of the influential Ṭahiriid family, long time police chief of Baghdad and the caliph’s representative there; d. 235/850.
- Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili**: greatest musician of his time, leader of the “classical” school, poet, courtier, man of letters, author of books on music and of the list of the Top Hundred for al-Wāthiq, 150/767–235/850.
- Ismā‘il ibn Yasar** al-Nisā‘i: poet of Persian origin in Medina, supporter of Ibn al-Zubayr, composed love songs, lampoons, poems vaunting the Persians, panegyrics; d. c. 728/110.
- Ismā‘il ibn Yūnus** al-Shi‘i: Baghdad scholar, transmitter of historical traditions; d. 323/935.
- Jabala ibn al-Ayham** al-Ghassānī: last of the Ghassānid rulers allied with the Byzantines in Syria, twice defeated by Muslim armies; fl. early first/seventh century.
- Ja‘far ibn Qudāma** ibn Ziyād: secretary, man of letters, poet in Ibn al-Mu‘tazz’s circle; d. c. 319/931.
- Ja‘far ibn Yaḥyā al-Barmakī**: administrator, companion of Hārūn al-Rashīd, assisted his father Yaḥyā in governing the empire until fell into disfavour, very generous patron of poets, musicians and men of letters; executed 187/803.
- Al-Jāhiz**, ‘Amr ibn Baḥr: man of letters from Basra, adherent of the Mu‘tazili and publicist for official Mu‘tazili policy, patronised by viziers. Wrote on theology, many aspects of society, rhetoric, language, and the animal world in an extremely lively style; c. 160/776–255/868.
- Jaḥḥa** Aḥmad ibn Ja‘far **al-Barmakī**: descendent of the Barmakids, musician, transmitter of songs including a list of the Top Hundred, poet, court companion; c. 224/839–324/936.
- Jamīl** ibn Ma‘mar al-‘Udhri: famous Hijazi love poet, composed poems on his beloved Buthayna who was married off to another man, also author of panegyrics; d. 82/701.
- Jamīla**: leading singer in Medina of great natural talent, trained many later singers; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Jarīr** ibn ‘Aṭiya: famous poet of bedouin origin, author of panegyrics of prominent Umayyad personalities, renowned for his exchange of flytings with al-Farazdaq, also author of sensitive love poetry; c. 33/653–111/729.

- Ju'ayfirān** al-Muwaswis: Baghdad poet and man of letters, suffered from mental disturbance; fl. early third/ninth century.
- Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf**: poet, tribal chief and warrior near Yathrib (Medina), active opponent of the Prophet; murdered c. 3/624.
- Ka'b ibn Zuhayr** ibn Abī Sulmā: bedouin poet from a family of poets, famous for his ode of apology to the Prophet for having satirised Islam, also composed eulogies, satires and poems vaunting his tribe; fl. early first/seventh century.
- Khalaf al-Aḥmar**: Basran specialist and transmitter of early poetry, himself a poet; d.c. 180/796.
- Khalīd ibn al-Walīd** al-Makhzūmī: commander during the early conquests, converted to Islam before the conquest of Mecca, fought against the rebels in the Ridda, led armies in Iraq and Syria; d. 21/642.
- Khalīd ibn Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya**: son of the caliph Yazīd, named to succeed Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam but forced to renounce his claim, governor of Homs under 'Abd al-Malik; d.c. 85/704.
- Khalīd ibn Yazīd al-Kātib**: poet and secretary from Baghdad, companion of leading officials, mainly author of brief poems of love and longing, finally lost his mind; d. c. 262/876.
- Khalīd ibn 'Abdallāh al-Qasrī**: very competent governor of Mecca and then of Iraq, loyal to the Umayyads, sacrificed to his rival Yūsuf ibn 'Umar ibn Hubayra; d. 126/743.
- Khalifa ibn Khayyāṭ** al-'Uṣfurī: Basran historian, genealogist and traditionist; d.c. 240/854.
- Al-Khalīl** ibn 'Amr **al-Mu'allim**: Meccan singer and music teacher; fl. late second/eighth century.
- Al-Khansā'** Tumāḍīr bint 'Amr: greatest early elegiac poet, famous for her laments of her brothers Ṣakhr and Mu'āwiya killed in tribal skirmishes; d. after 23/644.
- Al-Kumayt ibn Zayd** al-Asadī: Kufan poet of Shī'i persuasion, praised the Prophet's family and attacked South Arabian tribes, killed by a Yemenī; c. 59/679–128/744.
- Kuthayyir 'Azza** ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān: Hijazi poet, famous for love songs on 'Azza, also praised Umayyad caliphs; c. 40/660–105/723.
- Labīd ibn Rabī'a**: bedouin poet, converted to Islam, noted for animal descriptions, laments for his brother Arbad and expressions of religious sensitivity; d.c. 41/661.
- Laylā al-Akhyaliya**: poet famed for her elegies on Tawba ibn al-Ḥumayyir, whom her family forbade her to marry, also composed panegyrics on Umayyad personalities; d.c. 85/704.
- Ma'bad** ibn Wahb: leading singer and prolific composer of the Medinan school, performed in Mecca and before caliphs and princes, had many pupils; d.c. 125/743.
- Al-Madā'inī**, 'Ali ibn Muḥammad: scholar from Basra, moved to Baghdad, patronised by Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī, wrote copiously on historical and literary subjects; 135/752–c. 228/843.

- Al-Mahdī**, Muḥammad: 3rd ‘Abbāsīd caliph, son of al-Manṣūr, succeeded 158/775, sought to conciliate different factions but suppressed gnostic heretics (*zindīqs*). Made the court the musical centre of the empire; c. 126/743–169/78.
- Al-Majnūn** Qays ibn al-Mulawwāḥ: possibly legendary bedouin poet of the Banū ‘Udhra, famous for his unhappy love for his cousin Laylā and his poems about it. Went mad and died; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Mālik ibn Abī l-Samḥ**: leading singer from Medina, trained by Ma‘bad, sang before al-Walid ibn Yazīd and Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī; d.c. 136/754.
- Mālik ibn al-Rayb** al-Māzinī: brigand poet, composed poems of valour and description, joined Arab armies in Khurasan, died on the way home; d.c. 56/676.
- Al-Ma‘mūn** ‘Abdallāh: 7th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, declared second successor by al-Rashīd, fought a civil war with his brother al-Amin who sought to restore Baghdad’s authority over Khurasan, proclaimed caliph 196/812. Patron of poets and scholars, imposed Mu‘tazilī doctrine as official ideology, encouraged translation movement; 170/786–218/833.
- Ma‘n ibn Zā‘ida** al-Shaybānī: tribal aristocrat, commander under the last Umayyads, went into hiding after the ‘Abbāsīd revolution, pardoned by al-Manṣūr, governor of rebellious provinces, generous patron of poets; killed 152/769.
- Mānī al-Muwaswis**: mentally unstable poet from Egypt, composer of love-songs, settled in Baghdad, patronised by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir; d. 245/859.
- Al-Manṣūr** Abū Ja‘far: 2nd ‘Abbāsīd caliph, succeeded 136/754. Consolidated ‘Abbāsīd rule, established centralised state, founded Baghdad, initiated translation movement, patron of poets; c. 90/709–158/775.
- Manṣūr ibn Salama al-Namārī**: poet from the Jazīra, chiefly of panegyric, pupil of al-‘Attābī, praised al-Rashīd and the Barmakids, fell from favour when his Shi‘ī poems were discovered; d.c. 190/805.
- Marwān al-Aṣghar ibn Abī l-Janūb**: grandson of Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣa, panegyricist of caliphs from al-Ma‘mūn to al-Mutawakkil, also author of lampoons; d. after 247/861.
- Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣa**: notoriously mean poet from Central Arabia, first patronised by Ma‘n ibn Zā‘ida, later praised al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd with telling poems putting across ‘Abbāsīd political propaganda; 105/723–c. 182/798.
- Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam**: 4th Umayyad caliph, proclaimed 64/684, restored Umayyad authority after the contested succession to Mu‘āwīya; c. 2/623–65/685.
- Marwān ibn Muḥammad**: 14th and last Umayyad caliph, grandson of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, governor of Armenia, recognised as caliph 127/744, defeated by the ‘Abbāsīd army, killed in Egypt: c. 76/695–132/750.
- Maslama ibn ‘Abd al-Malik** ibn Marwān: Umayyad prince and general, led campaigns against the Byzantines and Iraqi rebels, besieged Constantinople; d. 121/738.
- Masrūr** al-Khādim: eunuch, al-Rashīd’s executioner, played an important part in the fall of the Barmakids; fl. late second/eighth century.

- Mu‘āwiya** ibn Abī Sufyān: founder of the Umayyad dynasty, appointed governor of Syria by ‘Umar, opposed ‘Alī after ‘Uthmān’s murder, recognised as caliph 40/660. Clever and successful ruler in the tradition of the pre-Islamic tribal chief; c. 610 AD.–60/680.
- Al-Mubarrad** Muḥammad ibn Yazīd: grammarian and philologist from Basra, worked in Samarra and Baghdad, famous for his disputes with Tha‘lab, author of important works of *belles-lettres*; c. 210/815–285/898.
- Al-Mughīra ibn Shu‘ba** al-Thaqafi: Companion of the Prophet, intelligent opportunist, governor of Kufa under Mu‘āwiya; d.c. 48/668.
- Al-Muhalhil** ibn Rabi‘a: very early poet, author of elegies with calls for revenge; fl. late fifth century AD.
- Al-Muḥallab ibn Abī Ṣufra**: commander, governor of Basra and later Khurasan, campaigned against the Khārijis; c. 10/632–c. 82/702.
- Muḥammad ibn al-‘Abbās al-Yazīdī**: from a family of scholars, tutor of al-Muqtadir’s children, transmitter of historical and literary *akhbār* and poetry; c. 230/845–310/922.
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh** ibn al-Ḥasan **al-Nafs al-Zakiya**: great-great-grandson of ‘Alī, refused to recognise the ‘Abbāsids, rebelled against al-Manṣūr in Medina while his brother Ibrāhīm rebelled in Basra; killed in battle 145/762.
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir**: governor of Baghdad and later Iraq, quelled various ‘Alid uprisings, poet, patron of scholars and singers; 209/824–253/867.
- Muḥammad ibn Bashīr al-Khārijī**: Hijazi poet from the Banū Khārija, naturally gifted, composed eloquent love poems; fl. early second/eighth century.
- Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Jarrāḥ**: see Ibn al-Jarrāḥ.
- Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza ibn Nuṣayr**: singer and transmitter of songs, court attendant, pupil of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīya**: son of ‘Alī by a slave-woman, used as a figurehead by ‘Alids in the uprising in Iraq after Yazīd’s death, recognised ‘Abd al-Malik as caliph; 16/637–81/700.
- Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar**: son of a music-loving governor, singer, pupil of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī; fl. mid-third/ninth century.
- Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥāzim al-Bāhili**: unambitious poet from Basra, worked in Baghdad, composed many invective poems but few panegyrics; fl. early third/ninth century.
- Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ** al-‘Alawī: Hijazi poet, involved in uprising against al-Mutawakkil, pardoned, lived in Samarra, composed sensitive love-songs, panegyrics, poems of self-praise; d. c. 250/864.
- Muḥammad ibn Umayya**: poet from Basra, administrator for Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, author of polished and sensitive love-songs and of invectives; d. c. 230/845.
- Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb**: poet from Basra, praised al-Ma’mūn, al-Mu‘taṣim and high officials in Baghdad, also composed love-songs and invectives; fl. 1st half of third/ninth century.

- Muḥammad ibn Yasīr** al-Riyāshī: dissolute Basran poet and man of letters, composer of wine-songs, invectives, love poetry, reflections on death; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr al-Zaff**: singer from Kufa, follower of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, performed before al-Rashīd until banned for rowdy behaviour; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Al-Mukhabbal al-Sa’dī**: bedouin poet from Central Arabia, composed panegyrics and invectives, also fine descriptions of camels; d. mid-first/seventh century.
- Mukhāriq** ibn Yaḥyā Abū l-Muḥanna’: leading singer of slave origin, trained by ‘Ātika bint Shuhda and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, freed by al-Rashīd, famous for his beautiful voice, adopted Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī’s style; d.c. 231/845.
- Al-Muktafi** ‘Alī: 17th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, succeeded 289/902, continued his father al-Mu’taḍid’s policy of restoring ‘Abbāsīd power, cultured ruler and patron of poets; 264/877–295/908.
- Al-Munakhkhal** al-Yashkurī: poet at al-Nu’mān ibn al-Mundhir’s court in al-Ḥira who boasted of his seductive capacities and was killed by al-Nu’mān; fl. end of sixth century AD.
- Munqidh al-Hilālī**: Basran poet of dissolute reputation, friend of Muṭī’ ibn Iyās and his circle; fl. late second/eighth century.
- Al-Muntaṣir** Muḥammad: 11th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, involved in the conspiracy leading to his father al-Mutawakkil’s murder, succeeded 247/861; 222/837–248/862.
- Al-Muqtadir** Ja’far: 18th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, succeeded in 295/908 aged 13, left government to his viziers, mostly from established families of secretaries, who changed frequently; 282/895–320/932.
- Al-Muraqqish**: name of two poets, both known as heroes of unhappy love stories; fl.? sixth century AD.
- Muṣ’ab ibn al-Zubayr**: brother of ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, who appointed him governor of Iraq, generous patron of poets. Suppressed a Shī’i uprising, refused to surrender to Umayyad forces, fell in battle; d. 72/691.
- Musāwir** ibn Sawwār al-Warrāq: Kufan traditionist and occasional poet; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Muslim ibn al-Walid** al-Anṣārī: poet from Kufa, patronised by ‘Abbāsīd dignitaries, one of the first masters of the “refined” *badī’* style, best known for wine and love songs, also composed panegyrics; c. 130/748–207/823.
- Al-Musta’in** Aḥmad: 12th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, chosen by Turkish commanders to succeed al-Muntaṣir 248/862, abdicated in favour of al-Mu’tazz 251/866, murdered in Samarra; 217/832–252/866.
- Al-Mu’taḍid** Aḥmad: 16th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, son of the regent al-Muwaffaq, successful general, ruthlessly reasserted ‘Abbāsīd power, reestablished Baghdad as the capital, cultured patron of scholars and poets, musician; c. 245/860–289/902.
- Al-Mutalammis**: poet, said to have attended the court of ‘Amr ibn Hind, king of al-Ḥira and to have saved his own life by not delivering a letter containing his death-warrant to the king’s governor; fl. sixth century AD.

- Al-Mu'tamid** Aḥmad: 15th 'Abbāsid caliph, succeeded 256/870 as a figurehead for his brother al-Muwaffaq, the regent; c. 229/843–279/892.
- Al-Mu'tasim** Muḥammad: 8th 'Abbāsid caliph, succeeded 218/833, organised campaigns against rebels and the Byzantines, founded Samarra, continued al-Ma'mūn's support for Mu'tazilī doctrine; c. 191/807–227/842.
- Al-Mutawakkil** Ja'far: 10th 'Abbāsid caliph, succeeded 232/847, sought to break the power of the Turkish military, rejected Mu'tazilī doctrine and persecuted the Shī'a, inclined to unrefined extravagance, murdered by Turkish soldiers; 206/822–247/861.
- Mutayyam** al-Hishāmīya: singer, composer and occasional poetess from Basra, 'Alī ibn Hishām's concubine, pupil of Badhl; fl. early third/ninth century.
- Al-Mu'tazz** Muḥammad: 13th 'Abbāsid caliph, succeeded al-Musta'in 252/866, unable to master events in Baghdad and Samarra, deposed and killed; 231/845–255/869.
- Muṭī' ibn Iyās**: Kufan poet and libertine, companion of al-Walid ibn Yazid and of 'Abbāsid princes, composed wine-songs and poems in other genres, employing both refined and vulgar styles; d. 169/785.
- Muzāḥim** ibn 'Amr al-'Uqaylī: bedouin poet, hero of an unhappy love story, composed love-songs, descriptions of desert life; fl. end of first/seventh century.
- Al-Nābigha al-Dhubayānī**: leading poet of bedouin origin, composed panegyrics, especially of al-Nu'mān ibn al-Mundhir, king of al-Ḥīra, in highly developed style; fl. end of sixth century AD.
- Al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī**: bedouin poet famed for his longevity, settled in Basra. Involved in political contests of his time, engaged in flytings with other poets, composed many poems on old age and death; d.c. 63/683.
- Al-Namir ibn Tawlab**: tribal aristocrat, converted to Islam, author of eloquent didactic and aphoristic poems; fl. early first/seventh century.
- Naṣr ibn Sayyār** al-Kinānī: last Umayyad governor of Khurasan, attempted to heal tribal tensions and redress Arab grievances, unable to counter 'Abbāsid propaganda, forced to flee; d. 131/748.
- Nubayka al-Dayzanī**: singer, performed in Baghdad and Fuṣṭāṭ at the courts of al-Mu'tamid, Khumarawayh ibn Ṭūlūn and al-Muqtadir; fl. late third/ninth century.
- Al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr** al-Anṣārī: Companion of the Prophet, poet, supporter of Mu'āwiya, governor of Kufa and Homs, later sided with 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr; killed 65/684.
- Al-Nu'mān III ibn al-Mundhir**: last king of al-Ḥīra, the greatest centre of Arab culture before Islam, converted to (Nestorian) Christianity, patron of poets, vassal of the Sassanian emperor who finally had him killed; fl. end of sixth century AD.
- Nuṣayb** ibn Rabāḥ: poet of Nubian slave origin from the Hijaz, praised Umayyad caliphs and officials, also author of sensitive, chaste love-songs; fl. end of first/seventh century.
- Nuṣayb al-Aṣghar**: poet of African slave origin from Central Arabia, panegyricist of al-Mahdi, al-Rashid and the Barmakids, also composed poems of self-glorification and love-songs of traditional style; fl. mid-second/eighth century.

- Qalam al-Šālihiya:** singer, composer, pupil of the Mawšilis, owned by a high official, later bought by al-Wāthiq; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Al-Qāsim ibn Yūsuf** al-Kātib: poet, secretary, brother of Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf, noteworthy for his elegies of animals; fl. early second/eighth century.
- Qays ibn Dhariḥ:** bedouin poet, hero of an unhappy love story. Composed poems on his wife, whom he was forced to divorce because she was childless; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm:** poet from Aws in Yathrib (Medina), composed poems glorifying his tribe and exchanged flytings with contemporaries; killed in a blood-feud shortly before the Hījra 622 AD.
- Quss ibn Sā'ida** al-Iyādi: semi-legendary orator and poet, said to have been a monotheist, admired by the Prophet; fl. ?c. 600 AD.
- Al-Quṭāmī** 'Umayr ibn Shiyaym: bedouin poet, composed poems of description, panegyrics and love-songs; fl. end of first/seventh century.
- Qutham ibn al-'Abbās:** cousin and Companion of the Prophet, governor of the Hījaz for 'Alī; said to have died at the siege of Samarqand 57/677.
- Quṭrub** Abū 'Alī Muḥammad: prominent grammarian and lexicographer from Basra, worked in Baghdad, tutored Abū Dulaf al-'Ijlī's son; d. 206/821.
- Al-Rabī' ibn Yūnus:** slave from Medina, emancipated by al-Manšūr who appointed him chamberlain, able and industrious administrator; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Rabī'a** ibn Thābit **al-Raqqī:** blind poet from Raqqa, author of panegyrics on al-Mahdi and important officials, also of flytings and love-songs, admired for his natural gift and accessible style; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Al-Rā'ī al-Numayrī:** bedouin poet, renowned for his descriptions of camels, engaged in flytings with Jarīr, composed panegyrics; d. c. 90/709.
- Al-Raqāshī** al-Faḍl ibn 'Abd al-Šamad: poet from Basra, praised the Barmakids, Hārūn al-Rashīd and 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir, adept of a "natural" style, exchanged flytings with Abū Nuwās; d. c. 200/815.
- Al-Rashīd, Hārūn:** 5th 'Abbāsīd caliph, succeeded his brother al-Hādī in 170/786, at first left administration to Barmakids, after their fall took over government, led many campaigns against Byzantines, divided the empire between his sons al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn. Patron of poets, writers, singers and scholars; 145/763–193/809.
- Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās:** leading Companion of the Prophet and commander of the Arab armies during the conquest of Iraq; d.c. 50/670.
- Al-Saffāḥ** Abū l-'Abbās: 1st 'Abbāsīd caliph, proclaimed caliph in Kufa 132/749, cautious and determined ruler, ensured elimination of Umayyad opposition; d. 136/754.
- Sā'ib Khāthir:** singer of Persian origin in Medina, protégé of 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far, first to accompany himself on the lute; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Sa'id ibn al-'Āṣ:** Qurashī notable, governor of Kufa and later Medina; d. 59/678.
- Sa'id ibn Wahb:** poet from Basra, protégé of the Barmakids, known for his wine poems and love songs; d. 209/824.

- Ṣakhr al-Ghayy al-Hudhali:** brigand poet, author of elegies and flytings; fl. early first/seventh century.
- Sālim ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Umar:** grandson of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, legal expert, ascetic, associate of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in Medina; d. 106/725.
- Sallāma:** possibly legendary Medinan singer, pupil of Jamila, performed before Yazid ibn Mu‘āwiya; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Sallāma al-Zarqā’:** Kufan singing-girl, beloved of Muḥammad ibn al-Ash‘ath, bought by Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī’s son; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Sallāmat al-Qass:** Medinan singer, pupil of Ma‘bad and others, beloved of a well-known ascetic, bought and taken to Syria by Yazid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, whom she outlived; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Salm ibn Ziyād ibn Abih:** son of Ziyād ibn Abih, commander and governor in Khurasān; d. 73/692.
- Salm ibn ‘Amr al-Khāsir:** poet from Basra with a natural talent, pupil and *rāwī* of Bashshār, author of panegyrics, elegies, and laments of his poverty; d. 186/802.
- Al-Samaw’al ibn ‘Ādiyā:** Jewish semi-legendary poet and notable, proverbial for his loyalty; fl. mid-sixth century AD.
- Sa‘ya ibn Ghariḍ:** Jewish poet, relative of al-Samaw’al, possibly converted to Islam; fl. early first/seventh century.
- Al-Sayyid Ismā‘il al-Ḥimyari:** Basran poet who became Shī‘ī, composed panegyrics on first ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, praised ‘Alī and his descendants and lampooned some Companions, employed simple elegant style; 105/723–173/789.
- Al-Sha‘bī,** ‘Āmir ibn Sharāḥīl: Kufan legal expert and transmitter of *ḥadīth*, well-versed in poetry, took part in uprisings in Iraq but later pardoned; c. 40/660–c. 103/721.
- Shajā:** singer trained by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī and given by him to al-Wāthiq; fl. mid-third/ninth century.
- Al-Shammākh ibn Ḍirār:** bedouin poet, took part in early Islamic conquests, famous for his descriptions of the wild ass and the bow; d. after 30/651.
- Shāriya:** singer from Basra, bought and trained by Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, proponent of his style over against ‘Arib, who adhered to the classical style of Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, had many pupils; fl. mid-third/ninth century.
- Shurayḥ ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kindī:** long-serving judge in Kufa, famed for his probity; d.c. 80/699.
- Al-Ṣimma al-Qushayrī:** Hijazi poet, hero of an unhappy love story, composer of love poetry, took part in campaign in Tabaristan; d. c. 95/714.
- Siyāt** ‘Abdallāh ibn Wahb: singer from Mecca, performed before al-Mahdī and al-Hādī, taught Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī and Ibn Jāmi‘; c. 122/739–169/785.
- Sudayf ibn Maymūn:** Shī‘ī poet and orator in Mecca hostile to the Umayyads, after the ‘Abbāsīd revolution incited al-Saffāḥ against them, took part in Shī‘ī uprisings; executed under al-Manṣūr 147/764.
- Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna:** traditionist, jurist and Quran commentator in Mecca; 107/725–196/811.

- Suḥaym ‘abd Banī l-Ḥaṣḥās:** slave poet from the Hijaz, composed unusually explicit and provocative love poetry, killed by his owners out of jealousy; d. c. 40/660.
- Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn:** daughter of al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī, married to several members of the Qurāshī aristocracy, prominent patroness of poets and singers in the Hijaz with independent tastes; c. 50/670–117/736.
- Al-Sukkārī** Abū Sa‘īd al-Ḥasan: philologist from Basra, worked in Baghdad, collected and edited the poems of many tribes and individual poets; 212/827–275/888.
- Sulaym ibn Sallām:** singer from Kufa, pupil of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, performed before al-Rashīd; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik:** 7th Umayyad caliph, governor of Palestine, succeeded 96/715, campaigned against Byzantines; c. 55/675–99/717.
- Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī:** uncle of al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr, a leader of the campaign against the Umayyads, governor of Basra; 83/702–142/759.
- Al-Ṣūlī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad:** courtier, man of letters, companion of three caliphs, writer on “modern” poets and collector of their works, chess master; c. 257/874–c.335/946.
- Suwayd ibn Kurā’** al-‘Uklī: tribal warrior and poet; fl. mid-first/seventh century.
- Ta’abbata Sharran** Thābit ibn Jābir: brigand, hero of legends, poet of bravery and conflicts with tribes; fl. ? early sixth century AD.
- Al-Ṭabarī,** Muḥammad ibn Jarīr: scholar from Tabaristan with private means, worked in Baghdad, author of authoritative history and Quran commentary, also works on jurisprudence and tradition; 224/839–310/923.
- Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn:** directed al-Ma’mūn’s rebellion against al-Amin, took Baghdad, head of police in Baghdad and governor of Khurasan, prose-writer and patron; 159/776–207/822.
- Tawba ibn al-Ḥumayyir:** brigand poet, forbidden to marry his cousin Laylā al-Akhyaliya, author of love songs and boasting in bedouin style, killed in raid; d. c. 5/674.
- Tha‘lab** Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad: grammarian, representative in Baghdad of “Kufan” tradition, teacher whose sessions were recorded, known for his piety; 200/815–291/904.
- Thumāma ibn al-Walīd al-‘Absī:** general of al-Mahdi; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Al-Ṭirimmāḥ** ibn Ḥakīm: poet of Khārījī tendency in Kufa, author of panegyrics, poems of valour and flytings; c. 50/670–110/728.
- Ṭurayḥ ibn Ismā‘īl** al-Thaqafī: poet from Taif, companion of al-Walīd ibn Yazīd to whom he dedicated much poetry, unsuccessful with al-Manṣūr; d. 165/782.
- Ṭuways** Abū ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Isā: important singer in Medina, introduced there the “new style” of singing and had many pupils, as an effeminate forced to flee the city; c. 11/632–92/711.
- ‘Ubayda al-Ṭunbūriya:** highly regarded pandore-player and singer, pursued an independent career, performed in court circles; fl. first part of third/ninth century.

- ‘Ubaydallāh ibn al-‘Abbās** ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib: cousin of the Prophet, strong partisan of ‘Alī, who appointed him governor of Yemen, supported al-Ḥasan’s claims to the succession but was bought off by Mu‘āwīya; d.c. 85/704.
- ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir**: son of ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir, police-chief in Baghdad, highly cultivated patron and man of letters, author, poet and musician; 223/838–300/913.
- ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Utba**: one of the seven jurists of Medina, extremely learned collector and transmitter of traditions, occasional poet; d.c. 98/716.
- ‘Ubaydallāh ibn Ziyād** ibn Abih: son of Ziyād ibn Abih, governor of Khurasan and later Basra, harshly suppressed Khārijī revolts and al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī’s uprising, supported Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam; killed in battle 67/686.
- ‘Ukkāsha** ibn ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-‘**Ammī**: Basran poet, parted from the singing-girl he loved when her owner took her to Baghdad, composed chiefly love and wine-songs; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdī**: ‘Abbāsīd princess, daughter of al-Mahdī, composer, musician and poetess; 160/777–210/825.
- ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz** ibn Marwān: 8th Umayyad caliph, governor of Hijaz, succeeded Sulaymān 99/717, undertook fiscal reforms, later seen as model of piety; c. 60/680–101/720.
- ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī Rabi’a**: leading love poet, member of Hijazi aristocracy, composer of light-hearted, charming love songs with marked narrative element and use of dialogue; 23/644–c. 93/712.
- ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb**: 2nd Rightly Guided caliph, converted to Islam before the Hijra, succeeded Abū Bakr 13/634, stern and uncompromising ruler, directed the conquests, organised the system of settlement and finance; c. 597 AD.–23/644.
- ‘Umar ibn Shabba**: scholar from Basra, taught in Baghdad and Samarra, authority on *akhbār* about history and literature; d. 262/878.
- ‘Umar al-Wādī**: singer and composer from Wādī l-Qurā, surveyor, court musician of al-Walid ibn Yazid; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- ‘Umāra ibn ‘Aqīl**: poet from Basra, descendant of Jarīr, composed especially panegyrics and flytings, renowned for the purity of his diction; fl. 1st half of third/ninth century.
- Umayya ibn Abī ‘Ā’idh al-Hudhālī**: Hijazi bedouin poet of conservative style, praised ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān in Egypt, author of panegyrics, sentential poems and descriptions; fl. end of first/seventh century.
- Umayya ibn Abī l-Ṣalt**: poet of Taif, composed on religious topics reflecting monotheistic ideas current in pre-Islamic Arabia; d.c. 9/631.
- Al-Uqayshīr** al-Asadī: Kufan poet and libertine, unambitious, composed chiefly wine-songs and some panegyrics and lampoons in style close to that of the “moderns”; fl. late first/th century.
- ‘Urwa ibn Hizām**: ‘Udhri poet, prevented by poverty from marrying his cousin ‘Afrā, died of despair; d. c. 30/650.
- ‘Urwa ibn al-Ward**: warrior and brigand poet, composed mostly about raids and his own valour, also some love-poetry; fl. end of sixth century AD.

- ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān:** 3rd Rightly Guided caliph, wealthy merchant from the Umayyad clan, early convert to Islam, succeeded 23/644. Sought to ensure that the Muslim empire remained under the control of Quraysh, which led to widespread revolts and his death; d. 35/655.
- Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman** ‘Abd al-Raḥmān: Hijazi poet of Yemenī or Persian origin, composed poems on Rawḍa, whom he was not allowed to marry, and later on Umm al-Banīn, al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik’s wife. His poems, much appreciated by singers, contributed to the development of courtly love poetry; d.c. 93/712.
- Wālība ibn al-Ḥubāb:** poet and libertine from Kufa, failed to become accepted at court, composed chiefly on wine and homosexual love; fl. late second/eighth century.
- Al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik** ibn Marwān: 6th Umayyad caliph, succeeded 85/704, continued his father’s policies and maintained internal peace, patron of architecture; c. 54/674–96/715.
- Al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba:** poet, warrior, half-brother of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, governor of Kufa till removed because of his dissolute life-style, author of occasional poems; d. 61/680.
- Al-Walid ibn Yazid** ibn ‘Abd al-Malik: 11th Umayyad caliph, succeeded 125/743. Spent twenty years as heir to Hishām living dissolute life in desert palaces, patronising poets and musicians. Sensitive poet, gifted composer and musician; killed 126/744.
- Al-Wāthiq** Hārūn: 9th ‘Abbāsīd caliph, succeeded 227/842, continued his father’s support for the Mu‘tazila and other policies, composer and musician; c. 198/814–232/847.
- Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī** ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim: man of letters, courtier, poet, wrote on music, literary history and theology, author of collections of songs, including a list of the Top Hundred; 241/855–300/912.
- Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithī:** poet from Kufa, panegyricist of early ‘Abbāsīds, famed for his prose style, libertine and friend of Muṭī‘ ibn Iyās; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Yaḥyā ibn Marzūq al-Makkī:** leading singer from Mecca, moved to Baghdad at al-Mahdī’s accession, prominent representative of the Hijazi tradition, court singer until the time of al-Ma’mūn, author of a book of songs; c. 110/728–c. 218/833.
- Yazid Ḥawrā’:** singer from Medina, under al-Mahdī moved to Baghdad, court singer; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Yazid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik** ibn Marwān: 9th Umayyad caliph, succeeded 101/720, abandoned ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s policies, resumed military expansion, patron of poets and singers; c. 71/690–105/724.
- Yazid ibn Mu‘āwiya** ibn Abī Sufyān: succeeded 60/680 amid much opposition, quelled uprisings including that of al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī, died while establishing his authority; c. 26/647–64/683.
- Yazid ibn Ziyād ibn Mufarrigh:** poet of South Arabian origin from Basra, composed in an accessible style and pure diction, author of panegyrics, love songs but especially lampoons of two governors; d. 69/688.

- Yazīd ibn al-Ṭathriya:** bedouin poet and warrior, composed love-songs on several women; killed during a tribal conflict 126/744.
- Yūnus ibn Sulaymān al-Kātib:** singer from Medina, performed before al-Walid ibn Yazid, composer, poet and author of earliest known books on songs and singers; fl. mid-second/eighth century.
- Zayd ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn:** proclaimed himself *imām* and led revolt in Kufa, fueled by discontent against Umayyad policies. His followers, the Zaydis, form one of the three main branches of the Shi’a; killed 122/740.
- Zayd al-Khayl ibn Muḥalhil al-Ṭā’i:** Bedouin warrior and poet, famed for his horses, converted to Islam, composed mainly on raids, battles and his own and his tribe’s valour; d.c. 13/634.
- Ziyād al-A‘jam ibn Sulaymān:** poet in Khurasan, a feared author of lampoons, also composed panegyrics and elegies; fl. late first/seventh century.
- Ziyād ibn Abīh/Abī Sufyān al-Thaqafi:** effective governor of Iraq, loyal supporter of the Umayyads recognised by Mu‘āwiya as his adopted brother, noted orator; d. 53/673.
- Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār al-Qurashī:** scholar from Medina, worked in Baghdad and later Mecca, author of books on history, genealogy and literary subjects; 172/788–235/850.
- Al-Zubayr ibn Daḥmān:** singer from Mecca, performed before al-Rashid, adept of Ishāq al-Mawṣili’s style; fl. end of second/eighth century.
- Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā:** bedouin poet famous for careful composition, author of a *Mu‘allaqa*, panegyrics, elegies and occasional poems on political matters; d. 609 AD.
- Zuhayr ibn Janāb al-Kalbī:** tribal chief, warrior and poet from Central Arabia, by his harshness in collecting tribute from Bakr and Taghlib brought them into conflict with Kalb. Attended the Ghassānid court, composed on themes of valour and wisdom; d.c. 560 AD.

NOTES

1 MODERN RESEARCH ON THE KITĀB AL-AGHĀNĪ

- 1 E. Quatremère, “Mémoire sur l’ouvrage intitulé *Kitāb alagānī*, c’est-à-dire *Recueil de chansons*”, *Journal asiatique* série 2,16 (1835), 395. He names M. Raige as the far-sighted purchaser.
- 2 Antoine Isaac Sylvestre de Sacy, *Notice sur le poète Lēbid, tirée de l’ouvrage intitulé Kitāb alagānī*, Paris 1816.
- 3 Joannis Gothofredo Ludovicus Kosegarten, *Amrui ben Kelthūm Taglebitae Moallakam, Abu Abd Allae el Hossein ben Achmed Essuseni scholiis illustratam et vitam Amrui ben Kelthūm e libro Kitāb el Aghānī excerptam e codicibus Parisiensibus edidit, in latinum transtulit, notasque adiecit*, Jena 1819.
- 4 E. Quatremère, “Mémoire sur l’ouvrage intitulé *Kitāb alagānī*, c’est-à-dire *Recueil de chansons*”, *Journal asiatique* série 2,16 (1835), 385–419; 497–545; série 3,6 (1838), 465–526. He mentions his plan pp. 394–5.
- 5 W. MacGuckin de Slane, *Le diwān d’Amro’lkāis; précédé de la vie de ce poète par l’auteur du Kitāb al-Aghānī accompagné d’une traduction et de notes*, Paris 1837.
- 6 M. Perron, “Lettre sur l’histoire des Arabes avant l’islamisme, de l’époque du petit Tobbā, du siège de Médine, et de l’introduction du judaïsme dans le Yaman”, *Journal asiatique* série 3,6 (1838), 433–64. Perron was a professor at the Cairo School of Medicine, as the JA indicates.
- 7 Fulgence Fresnel, “Quatrième lettre sur l’histoire des Arabes avant l’islamisme”, *Journal asiatique* série 3,6 (1838), 196–221.
- 8 M. C Barbier de Meynard, “Ibrahim, fils de Mehdi, fragments historiques, scènes de la vie artistique au IIIe siècle de l’hégire (778–839 de notre ère)”, *Journal asiatique* série 6,13 (1869), 201–342; Armand Pierre Caussin de Perceval, “Notices anecdotiques sur les principaux musiciens arabes des trois premiers siècles de l’islamisme”, *Journal asiatique* série 7,2 (1873), 397–592.
- 9 Heinrich Thorbecke, *Antarah, des vorislamischen Dichters Leben*, Heidelberg 1868.
- 10 These have sometimes been made for dissertations, for example, Guido von Goutta, *Der Aganiartikel über ‘Aṣā von Hamdān*, Diss. Freiburg, Kirchhain 1912. They may form part of a study of sources and transmission, as in ‘Aṭīya Rizk, *Baṣṣār Ibn Burd, ein Dichter der ‘abbāsīdischen Moderne, in der Überlieferung und der Darstellung des Kitāb al-Agānī*, Diss. Heidelberg 1966. They have not always been published; Alfred Bloch’s private papers bequeathed to the library of the University of Basel (Arabistischer Nachlass Alfred Bloch) include German versions of the articles on Thābit Quṭna, Ja’far ibn ‘Ulba, A’shā Hamdān and Abū Jilda. They form part of the preparatory material for a book which Bloch planned but never completed on the significance of early Arabic poetry for the study of literature. (I am indebted to Professor Gregor Schoeler for this information.)

- 11 Franz Rosenthal, *Humour in Early Islam*, Leiden 1955, 36–102.
- 12 For the detailed history of the editing of the *Aghānī*, see Aḥmad Ṭālib, “Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī wa-kitābuh al-aghānī: muqāraba bibliyūghrafiya”, *Āfāq al-thaqāfa wa-l-turāth* 5, no. 17 (Muḥarram 1418/May 1997), 90–4. (I am grateful to Dr. Sebastian Günther for bringing this article to my attention.)
- 13 Joannis Gothofredo Ludovicus Kosegarten, *Alii Ispahanensis liber cantilenarum magnus ex codicibus manu scriptis Arabice editus adiectaque translatione adnotationibusque illustratus*, Greifswald 1840. It includes the preface, the account of the Hundred Songs, and the articles on Abū Qaṭīfa and Maʿbad. It stops halfway through the article on ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabiʿa.
- 14 My reprint of the Būlāq edition appeared in the series “Rawāʿiʿ al-turāth al-ʿarabi” in Beirut in 1390/1970. An interesting feature of this early edition is that the indexes to the articles at the end of each volume refer to the author as “al-imām Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī”.
- 15 Rudolf Brünnow (ed.), *Al-juzʿ al-ḥādī wa-l-ʿishrūn min Kitāb al-aghānī li-l-imām Abi l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī*, Leiden 1306/1888. Brünnow arranged the articles in this volume alphabetically. Another contribution to a fuller text of the *Aghānī* is Julius Wellhausen, “Ergänzung einer Lücke im Kitāb al-aghānī”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 50 (1896), 145–51.
- 16 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-taqaddum, 21 vols 1905; Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Shinqīṭī, *Tashīḥ kitāb al-aghānī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Jawād al-Aṣmaʿī, Cairo 1916.
- 17 The Cairo MSS are described in the editors’ introduction: Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, ed. Dār al-kutub, 16 vols, 1927–1961, I, 42–52. See also X, 1–2 for the correction of the attribution of one volume to a copy to which it does not belong, and XIV, *jīm-dāl*, for the mention of two MSS from Munich and one from Tübingen, microfilms of which the editors obtained.
- 18 Cf. their arguments, *Aghānī* I, 52–3.
- 19 *Aghānī* (reprint) VIII, 381–425. His edition is based on two MSS, one of Dār al-kutub, the other of the Feyzallah library in Istanbul.
- 20 Abu l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, Beirut, Dār al-thaqāfa 1955–1961. Vols I–XIV were supervised by a committee made up of ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAlāʿī, Mūsā Sulaymān and Aḥmad Abū Saʿd, who explain in their introduction that they have provided explanatory notes for more proper names, made the text more exact and elucidated some of the obscure poetry (I, 7). From vol. XV on the editor was ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj.
- 21 For this problem see below, p. 30 and notes 155 and 156.
- 22 Admittedly, these headings are almost always in brackets.
- 23 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, vol. XVII, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, Cairo 1389/1970, preface of the general editor, Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. This and the subsequent volumes were published by the Egyptian General Book Organisation (Al-hayʿa al-miṣriya al-ʿamma li-taʿlīf wa-l-nashr).
- 24 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, vol. XVIII, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm al-ʿIzbāwī, Cairo 1390/1970; vol. XIX, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm al-ʿIzbāwī, 1391/1972; vol. XX, ed. ʿAlī al-Najdī Nāṣif, 1392/1972; vol. XXI, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm al-ʿIzbāwī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ghunaym, 1393/1973; vol. XXII, ed. ʿAlī al-Sibāʿī, ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿIzbāwī and Maḥmūd Ghunaym, 1393/1973; vol. XXIII, ed. ʿAlī al-Sibāʿī, 1394/1974; vol. XXIV, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿIzbāwī and ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Maṭar, 1394/1974.
- 25 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* vol. I, ed. Lajnat nashr Kitāb al-aghānī, Cairo 1390/1970, 9–12 (preface of the editor-in-chief Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm), for a list of the manuscripts used.
- 26 Cf. ʿAlī Jawād al-Ṭāhir’s review of vols I and XVIII in *Majallat Majmaʿ al-Lugha al-ʿArabiya* 46 (1971), 819–22.

- 27 The lucky few have the original volumes with indices, but most make do with the amputated offset version.
- 28 Thus, for this study I have used the Dār al-kutub/Lajna edition unless otherwise stated, referring to it with the abbreviation *Agh*.
- 29 He was the editor of the article on Ḥāritha ibn Badr mentioned above.
- 30 Abū l-Faraj ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, Cairo, Dār al-sha‘b, 33 vols, 1389/1969–1402/1982.
- 31 *Aghānī* (ed. Dār al-sha‘b), XXVIII, 9698 fn.
- 32 In recent years publishers, especially in Beirut, have been increasingly reprinting texts of the Arabic literary heritage, including the *Aghānī*. Sometimes these versions are presented as new editions, but on closer inspection they turn out to innovate only in inessentials. For instance, the Dār iḥyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī’s *Aghānī*, published in Beirut in 1414–15/1994, reproduces the Dār al-kutub and al-Hay’a al-miṣriyya al-‘amma text without indices but with an attractive use of red ink for titles, the word *ṣawt*, and the marginal indications of subjects which here, as in the Dār al-thaqāfa printing, are introduced into the main body of the text. The only contribution of the so-called “editorial office” is to have added the Dār al-kutub pagination to the Būlāq one in the margin. I am not aware that anyone has undertaken a new scholarly edition of the work.
- 33 I. Guidi *et al.*, *Tables alphabétiques du Kitāb al-aḡānī*, Leiden 1900. The Preface (pp. v–vii) explains how the team divided up the work. Guidi’s *Tables* were translated into Arabic by M. Maṣ’ūd, *Jadawil Kitāb al-aghānī*, Cairo 1323/1906.
- 34 ‘Abd al-Mu‘in al-Mallūḥī, *Fihrist mawādd wa-tarājim wa-a‘lām Kitāb al-aghānī li-l-shaykh Abī l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī*, Damascus (?), n.d. Whereas the index by volumes notes indications of a specific theme such as a *maqtal* (violent death) mentioned in the article’s title, these do not appear in the alphabetic index.
- 35 *Fahāris Kitāb al-aghānī li-Abī l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī*, prepared by Maktab al-taḥqīq, Beirut 1407/1987. It includes the same categories of index as the Dār/Lajna volumes, except for titles mentioned in the text and sources used for the edition.
- 36 Ḥasan Muḥsin, *Mu‘jam al-alfāz al-mufasssara fi Kitāb al-aghānī*, Kuwait 1407/1987.
- 37 Dāwūd Sallūm and Nūri Ḥammūdī al-Qaysī, *Shakhṣiyāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, Baghdad 1402/1983.
- 38 Muḥammad al-Mansī Qindil, *Shakhṣiyāt ḥayya min al-Aghānī*, Cairo 1990.
- 39 For lists of the mediaeval abridgements, see GAS I, 381–2; *Agh*. I, 35–6; and below, p. 33.
- 40 Anṭūn Ṣāḥḥānī, *Rannāt al-mathālith wa-l-mathānī fi riwāyāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, Beirut 1888.
- 41 For the issue of whether the style of the *Aghānī* should be ascribed to Abū l-Faraj or not, cf. Shafīq Jabrī’s remarks cited below.
- 42 Ṣāḥḥānī, *Rannāt*, 6–9.
- 43 Muḥammad al-Khuḍarī, *Muhadhḥib al-aghānī*, 8 vols, Cairo 1925. Its organisation is described in *Agh*. I, 36–7.
- 44 Karam al-Bustānī, *Qutūf al-aghānī*, Beirut 1950.
- 45 Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn Āl Kāshif al-ghīṭā’, *Mukhtārāt min shu‘arā’ al-Aghānī*, Baghdad 1950. This abridgement is referred to in Muḥammad Khayr Al-Shaykh Mūsā’s “Mu‘allafāt Abī l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī” (see below, note 66).
- 46 Aḥmad Kamāl Zakī (introduction and presentation), *Mukhtārāt min Kitāb al-aghānī li-Abī l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī*, Cairo 1961. The aims of the selection are set out on pp. 3–4.
- 47 Khalīl al-Hindāwī (selection and arrangement), *Al-muntakhab min al-Aghānī li-Abī l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī*, 5 vols, Beirut 1386/1967.
- 48 He is referred to sometimes as Yūsuf al-Khūrī, but as is clear from both the cover and the preface by Shaykh ‘Abdallāh al-‘Alā’ī, “al-Khūrī” is his title, not part of his family name. This abridgement is in fact a nice example of inter-religious cooperation, since al-‘Alā’ī checked and corrected the notes as well as writing the preface.

- 49 Yūsuf ‘Awn (selection and compilation), *Aghānī al-aghānī mukhtaṣar Aghānī al-Isfahānī*, 3 vols, Damascus (?) n.d., I, 17–19. In the case of some famous poets, he appends a selection from the *Diwān* (collected works) to the article.
- 50 ‘Umar al-Nuṣṣ, *Ikhtiyārāt min Kitāb al-aghānī*, 4 vols, Beirut 1978.
- 51 Muḥammad ‘Alī Khalīlī (ed.), *Muntakhab-e kitāb-e aghānī* [Tehran] 1319/1940–1.
- 52 Samīr Sirḥān and Muḥammad ‘Inānī (select. and introd.), *Al-mukhtār min al-Aghānī li-Abī l-Faraj al-Isfahānī*, Cairo 1996. Both the series and the festival, Mihrijān al-qirā’a li-l-jamī’, enjoy the patronage of Mrs. Suzanne al-Mubārak. (I thank Dr. Fawzia al-Ashmawī for giving me a copy of this book.)
- 53 Abū l-Faraj al-Isbahānī, *Kitāb-e aghānī*, tr. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Mashāyikh Farīdānī, Tehran 1358/1979–80, vol. 1, parts 1 and 2.
- 54 Abu l-Faradsch, *Und der Kalif beschenkte ihn reichlich*, adapt. and tr. Gernot Rotter, Tübingen 1977. (It is the second volume in the series Bibliothek arabischer Klassiker, following the *Sira* of Ibn Ishāq.) Rotter’s introduction (pp. 7–18) includes a readable but freely embroidered account of Abū l-Faraj’s life.
- 55 This introduction was translated with slight modifications into Arabic and published as: Khalidov, “‘Kitāb al-aghānī’ li-Abī l-Faraj al-Isfahānī”, in Valeria Kirpitchenko and Alexander Kudelin (eds), *Buḥūth sūfiyītiya jadīda fī l-adab al-‘arabī*, Moscow 1986, 33–48.
- 56 Abu-l’-Faradzh al’-Isfakhānī, *Kniga pesen*, tr. A. B. Khalidov and B. Ya. Shidfar, Moscow 1980.
- 57 Jacques Berque, *Musiques sur le fleuve. Les plus belles pages du Kitāb al-Aghānī*, Paris 1996.
- 58 Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Jawād al-Aṣma’ī, *Abū l-Faraj al-Isbahānī wa-kitābuh al-aghānī. Dirāsa wa-taḥlīl li-azhā al-‘uṣūr al-islāmīya*, Cairo 1951.
- 59 Notably in the quotation of Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī’s sketch of Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Jaz’iri, whose physical habits resembled those ascribed to Abū l-Faraj (Al-Aṣma’ī, *Abū l-Faraj*, 159–61).
- 60 Shafīq Jabrī, *Abū l-Faraj al-Isbahānī*, Damascus 1955.
- 61 Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalafallāh, *Ṣāhib al-aghānī Abū l-Faraj al-rāwīya* [1953] 3rd edn, Cairo 1968.
- 62 Thus, for instance, a fairly recent study of one of Abū l-Faraj’s works, Sebastian Günther’s *Quellenuntersuchungen zu den “Maqātil at-Ṭālibīyyīn” des Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī* (gest. 356/967) (Hildesheim 1991), is unaware of Khalafallāh’s work and repeats the traditional account of Abū l-Faraj’s life (pp. 8–10).
- 63 Moustafa Mandour, *Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī. Sa vie et son “Livre des Chansons” (Kitāb al-aḡānī)*. Thèse principale présentée par Moustafa Mandour, Université de Paris, Faculté des Lettres, n.d. [c. 1956] (typescript).
- 64 Ḥusayn ‘Aṣī, *Abū l-Faraj al-Isbahānī: ‘aṣrūh, sīrat ḥayātih, mu’allaḡātuh*, Beirut 1993.
- 65 Muḥammad Khayr al-Shaykh Mūsā, “Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī (283–ba‘da 362 h.) adīb mashhūr maghmūr”, *‘Ālam al-fikr* 15(1), 1984, 259–92.
- 66 Ṭāniyūs Fransīs, *Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī, 282–362/897–972. Adīb shahharahu kitāb*, Beirut 1996.
- 67 Muḥammad Khayr al-Shaykh Mūsā, “Mu’allaḡāt Abi l-Faraj al-Isbahānī wa-āthāruh”, *Al-turāth al-‘arabī*, II (7), Jumādā al-thānī 1402/April 1982, 172–94.
- 68 See note 12 above.
- 69 Quatremère, “Mémoire”, *Journal asiatique* série 2, 16, 393.
- 70 Shafīq Jabrī, *Dirāsāt al-Aghānī*, Damascus 1951.
- 71 The approach to the *Aghānī* as a portrayal of early Arab culture is given a new twist in Nadhir Muḥammad Maktabī’s *Jawla fī āfāq al-Aghānī li-Abī l-Faraj al-Isfahānī* (Beirut 1410/1990). Maktabī subscribes to Ibn Khaldūn’s positive judgement of the work as a whole, but considers that mistakes and unfounded statements have crept into the portrayal of some Companions and caliphs, and that these need to be eliminated. In other words, he argues for a correction of the “errors” and partial views to be found

- in the *Aghānī* according to a certain idealised and normative vision of early Islamic society (pp. 117–18).
- 72 Dāwūd Sallūm, *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī wa-manhaj mu'allifih*, 3rd (sic) edn, Beirut 1985. The original book, entitled *Manhaj Abi l-Faraj al-Iṣḥāhānī fī Kitāb al-aghānī fī dirāsāt al-naṣṣ wa-l-sīra*, came out in Baghdad in 1969, but *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī* also includes two articles on this subject which were published in periodicals in Baghdad in 1969 and 1970.
 - 73 In this he may be following Shawqī Dayf, whose MA thesis was entitled *Al-naqd fī Kitāb al-aghānī* (unpublished, Cairo 1939; mentioned in Robert B. Campbell, *Contemporary Arab Writers. Biographies and Autobiographies*, Beirut 1996, 832).
 - 74 This holds good despite the striking misconceptions which Sallūm betrays of the social and intellectual history of the period in which the *Aghānī* was written. He speaks of the “fanatical (*muta'aṣṣib*) Muslim milieu” in which Abū l-Faraj lived; Sallūm, *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, 145; cf. 143, where Abū l-Faraj is described as “*al-muslim al-muta'aṣṣib*”.
 - 75 Muṣṭafā al-Shak'a, *Manāhij al-ta'lif 'inda l-'ulamā' al-'arab. Qism al-adab*, 3rd edn, Beirut 1979 [1973], 325–33.
 - 76 Muḥammad Khayr Shaykh [kadhā] Mūsā, “Mawāṭin al-khalal wa-l-iqṭirāb fī Kitāb al-aghānī”, *Al-manāhil* 27 (Shawwāl 1402/July 1983, 338–62; republished in a slightly revised form in *Al-turāth al-'arabī* yr. 9, 34 (1409/1989), 47–57.
 - 77 The article on Abū l-Faraj in *El¹* (C. Brockelmann) describes him simply as a historian, a judgement to which the *EP²* (M. Nallino) adds the qualifications “littérateur and poet”. *GAS I* by contrast classifies him as a historian, man of letters and musicologist. Paul Auchterlonie includes the *Aghānī* in his *Arabic Biographical Dictionaries: A Summary Guide* (Durham 1987, 23), describing it as “the most important single source of information on pre- and early-Islamic poets”.
 - 78 The judgement expressed in *GAS I*, 380, “Dem *K. al-Aḡānī* fehlt nahezu jede Ordnung und jede chronologische Reihenfolge, und doch ist es eine unschätzbare Quelle für die Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte” is a faithful reflection of such feelings.
 - 79 Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, Paris 1952–66, 135.
 - 80 Shafīq Jabrī, “Lam yunṣifū ṣāhib al-Aghānī”, *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī* 41 (1381/1965), 24–9. His arguments are countered by Sezgin, who believes that Abū l-Faraj only employed written sources (*GAS I*, 380, n. 6). The most unequivocal specimens of Abū l-Faraj's style are found in his interventions, especially those in favour of controversial figures; his defences of two of them, 'Arib and Ibn al-Mu'tazz, are translated at the end of [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#).
 - 81 Blachère, *Histoire*, 135–6. This point is also dealt with at some length by Mandour in *Abū l-Faraḡ al-Iṣḥāhānī*.
 - 82 Leon Zolondek, “An approach to the problem of the sources of the *Kitāb al-aḡānī*”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* XIX (1960), 217–34.
 - 83 Zolondek does not pay attention to differences in the formal traits of the narrative units (*akhbār*, pl. of *khabar*), although these could contribute to a history of the *khabar* in classical *adab* works. This aspect is discussed for instance by Shidfar in connection with the stories of lovers in the *Aghānī*; she distinguishes primitive and more sophisticated levels of aesthetic expression. (B. Ya. Shidfar, *Obraznaya sistema arabskoi klassicheskoi literatury*, Moscow 1974, 45–58.)
 - 84 Manfred Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-aḡānī*, Habilitationsschrift, Halle (Saale) 1965 (typescript).
 - 85 Admittedly, Fleischhammer does not concern himself with the transmission of songs; he seems to have thought that Farmer had dealt with this question (cf. *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 15*).
 - 86 Fuat Sezgin, “Maṣādir kitāb al-aghānī li-Abi l-Faraj al-Iṣḥāhānī”, in idem, *Vorträge zur Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, Frankfurt, 1404/1984, 147–58.

- There is no mention of Abū l-Faraj's second most important source, his uncle, in this paper.
- 87 Frank Dyer Chester, "Ibrahim of Mosul: a study in Arabic literary tradition", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 16 (1896), 261–74.
 - 88 Hartmut Fähndrich, "Compromising the Caliph. Analysis of several versions of an anecdote about Abū Dulāma and al-Manšūr", *Journal of Arabic Literature* VIII (1977), 36–47.
 - 89 Waḡḡāh Sharāra, *Akhbār al-khabar*, appended to Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Akhbār Majnūn Banī 'Āmir*, Beirut 1990. (I owe this reference to Professor As'ad Khairallah.) Sharāra is chiefly interested in the figure of Majnūn and does not seek to relate the article on the poet to the rest of the *Aghānī*.
 - 90 'Abdallāh al-Simṭī, "Jamāliyyāt al-ṣūra al-sardiya fi akhbār al-Aghānī wa-ḥikāyātih. Abū l-Faraj al-Aṣfahānī qāṣṣan", *Fuṣūl*, XII (3), 1993, 108–24.
 - 91 As'ad E. Khairallah, *Love, Madness and Poetry. An Interpretation of the Maḡnūn Legend*, Beirut 1980, 54–5.
 - 92 Cf. 'Abd al-Fattāh Kiliṭī's analysis of the *Aghānī akhbār* on Abū l-Ibar in his *Al-ḥikāya wa-l-ta'wil. Dirāsa fi l-sard al-'arabī*, Casablanca 1988, 45–57. His observation about not being bound by the expectation of a chronological progression is on p. 46. Unfortunately, he does not discuss the arrangement of the material in the *Aghānī* article.
 - 93 Henry George Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music To the XIIIth Century*, London [1929] repr. 1973, 164; Eckhard Neubauer, *Musiker am Hof der frühen 'Abbāsiden*, Diss. Frankfurt am Main 1965, 5.
 - 94 George Dimitri Sawa, *Musical Performance Practice in the Early 'Abbāsid Era 132–320 AH/ 750–932 AD*, Toronto 1989, 29.
 - 95 Cf. Ibn Wāsil al-Ḥamawī, *Tajrīd al-aghānī*, ed. Ṭahā Ḥusayn and Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, 6 vols, Cairo 1374/1955–1382/1963, I, 4.
 - 96 Henry George Farmer, "The Song Captions in the "Kitāb al-Aghānī al-Kabīr", *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 15 (1953–54), 1–10.
 - 97 "Fi ma'āni asma' al-aṣwāt fi Kitāb al-aghānī", tr. Jirjis Faṭḥallāh, *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī* 5 (1958), 172–200.
 - 98 For example, Ḥāshim Muḥammad Rajab, *Ḥall rumūz Kitāb al-aghānī li-l-muṣṭalahāt al-musiḡiyya al-'arabiya*, Baghdad 1967; Ghaṭṭās 'Abd al-Malik Khashaba, *Kitāb al-mūjiz fi sharḥ muṣṭalahāt al-Aghānī*, Cairo 1979.
 - 99 See note 94 above. The relevance of al-Fārābī's treatises for understanding the songs described in the *Aghānī* was recognised already by Kosegarten, whose extensive introduction to his edition and translation combines Abū l-Faraj's data about singers with al-Fārābī's information about musical modes and rhythms (Kosegarten, *Alii Ispahanensis liber cantilenarum*, 5–193).
 - 100 See note 74 above. Admittedly, Sallūm was writing in the 1960s, before some major studies of intellectual life in fourth/tenth century Baghdad had been undertaken.
 - 101 Quoted in Berque, *Musiques sur le fleuve*, 31.

2 ABŪ L-FARAJ'S LIFE, TIMES AND WORKS

- 1 The main sources for Abū l-Faraj's life are, in chronological order: Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995), *Kitāb al-fihrist*; al-Tha'ālībī (d. 429/1038), *Yatīmat al-dahr*; Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430/1038), *Tārīkh Iṣbahān*; al-Tūsī (d. 460/1067), *Fihris kutub al-shī'a*; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), *Tārīkh Baghdād*; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), *Al-muntazam fi tā'rīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*; Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), *Irshād al-arīb*; Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), *Wafayāt al-a'yān*.
- 2 Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, London 1931, V, 149; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen 1838, V, 27–8.

- 3 The mediaeval sources do not give Abū l-Faraj's place of birth, though some mention him as being "*īshbahānī al-aṣl*". Although many modern scholars understand this to mean he was born in Isfahan, it need indicate no more than that his family came from there or had spent some time there. A *nisba* denoting a place of origin could be handed down in a family, and it is noteworthy that Abū l-Faraj's great-grandfather already bore the surname al-*īshbahānī* (Khalafallāh, *Ṣāḥib al-aghānī*, 23). There is no evidence that Abū l-Faraj ever went to Isfahan.
- 4 Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-ʿarab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn, 5th edn, Cairo 1982. In view of this family connection with Samarra, it is conceivable that Abū l-Faraj was born there (Khalafallāh, *Ṣāḥib al-aghānī*, 25).
- 5 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 29+.
- 6 Hilary Kilpatrick, "Women as poets and chattels. Abū l-Faraj al-*īshbahānī*'s "Al-*imāʾ al-ṣawāʾir*", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 9 (1991), 170–1.
- 7 For instance, al-Ḥusayn: *Agh.* XXIII, 22, XXIV, 52; ʿAbd al-ʿAziz: XX, 195, XXIII, 197; Muḥammad: X, 67; Aḥmad: XVI, 396, XVIII, 119.
- 8 *Agh.* XII, 37; XIV, 162; XVI, 403; XIX, 4. Abū l-Faraj always mentions this *kitāb jaddi li-ummī* ("my maternal grandfather's book") so that it seems he had no personal contact with his grandfather about poets and poetry (cf. Khalafallāh, *Ṣāḥib al-aghānī*, 45).
- 9 Khalafallāh, *Ṣāḥib al-aghānī*, 44–5. For the family, see *EI*², art. "Ibn Ṭhawāba" (S. Boustany).
- 10 Yūnus, Ṭhawāba's father, was a barber by trade, a fact which ill-intentioned acquaintances of his descendants brought up when they wanted to shame them (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Riḍā Tajaddud, 3rd impr., Beirut 1988, 143–4).
- 11 The *Fihrist* lists three members of the family as writers of letters (loc.cit.) but does not mention Abū l-Faraj's grandfather. Elsewhere Ibn al-Nadīm refers to a geographical work attributed to one of the Ṭhawāba family (p. 418). The social status which the Banū Ṭhawāba had achieved makes a marriage alliance with the *īshbahānīs* quite credible.
- 12 *Agh.* XXIII, 146–8.
- 13 Khalafallāh (*Ṣāḥib al-aghānī*, 45–7) observes that Abū l-Faraj avoids mentioning anything damaging to the Āl Ṭhawāba, such as the satires by al-Buḥturī and other poets.
- 14 Al-ʿĀmilī, *A ʿyān al-shiʿa*, ed. Muḥsin al-Amin al-Ḥusaynī, Beirut 1960, IX, 330.
- 15 Al-Ṭūsī, *Fihris kutub al-Shiʿa*, ed. Sprenger, Calcutta 1271/1853, 379, who specifies that he was a Zaydī. Al-Tanikhī (quoted by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdaḍī, *Taʾrikh Baghdad*, Cairo 1349/1931, XI, 399) and most later sources simply say that he was a Shiʿī.
- 16 The first to do so is al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1342) in his *Lisān al-iʿtidāl fi naqd al-rijāl* (ed.) Cairo 1325/1907–8, II, 223). He is followed by several other mediaeval and modern scholars.
- 17 Khalafallāh (*Ṣāḥib al-aghānī*, 33–5) gives some examples.
- 18 The *Aghānī* was appreciated by non-Muslims too, as can be seen by the fact that a copy of it was owned by a Jewish doctor in Cairo in the late twelfth century (S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. Vol. V: *The Individual: Portrait of a Mediterranean Personality of the High Middle Ages as Reflected in the Cairo Geniza*, Berkeley 1988, 425).
- 19 Al-Ṭūsī mentions two other titles which betray a Shiʿī tendency (*Fihris*, 379), but since these texts have not survived there is no way of knowing when Abū l-Faraj wrote them.
- 20 *Agh.* XX, 195. Other references to him are XIV, 165 and XIX, 47.
- 21 For the al-Kalbīs and their scholarly interests, see Tarif Khalidī, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge 1994, 50–4. The general intellectual history of Kufa is summed up in *EI*², art. "al-Kūfa" (Hichem Djaīt).
- 22 Little is known about this, since the sources concentrate on music in the Hijaz during the Umayyad period. The later court music tradition in Baghdad developed out of the Hijazi school, following al-Mahdi's invitation to Hijazi singers to perform

- before him. But the importance of the Hiran tradition is hinted at in the anecdote which portrays the Hijazi virtuosi Ibn Surayj, al-Gharīḍ and Ma'bad inviting their "brother from Iraq", Ḥunayn al-Ḥirī, to come and sing with them in Mecca (*Agh.* II, 355), and its distinct characteristics are noted by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī (II, 352). And cf. Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam. A Socio-cultural Study*, Aldershot 1995, 13.
- 23 Khalafallāh, *Ṣāhib al-aghānī*, 106.
- 24 Such as Muḥammad Na'ja al-Kūfī (*Agh.* VII, 228), and Bābuwayh (VIII, 226).
- 25 This is in marked contrast to his contemporary al-Mas'ūdi. A comparison of the *Aghānī* with the *Murūj al-dhahab* shows the very different orientations of these two men of letters, each brilliant in his own way, within the secular culture of their time.
- 26 *Agh.* XXIII, 22. The remark "*qadīma 'alaynā bi-Madīnat al-salām... wa-fātānī fa-lam alqahu*" can be understood to mean either that Abū l-Faraj arrived in Baghdad later than 300, or else that he was already living there but for some reason (such as business out of town or illness) did not manage to meet Abū l-Fayyād. Both Abū l-Faraj and his father received the poet's written permission to use his historical and literary reports and linguistic information.
- 27 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, XI, 398.
- 28 The *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyīn*'s sources have been studied by Sebastian Günther in his *Quellenuntersuchungen zu den "Maqātil at-Ṭālibīyīn"*. He distinguishes 'Umar ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Jamīl al-'Atakī, Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim and Aḥmad (ibn Muḥammad) ibn Sa'īd al-Hamdānī as the main sources for it (pp. 219, 225 and 127, respectively).
- 29 Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 149.
- 30 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 35–6, noting 314 references to him. The discrepancy between the teachers listed in the *Ta'rikh Baghdād* and those who are significant for Abū l-Faraj's works can be explained by the fact that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's concern was with *ḥadīth* studies, a branch of learning marginal to the *Aghānī*. The lack of correlation between the *Irshād* list and Abū l-Faraj's writings is more unexpected.
- 31 Khalafallāh, *Ṣāhib al-aghānī*, 52–3, emphasises the need to distinguish between formative influences and teachers or authorities.
- 32 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen* 29+, lists the most important ones.
- 33 *Agh.* XX, 217.
- 34 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 48–9, lists 415 references to him. For his life and works, devoted to court culture and *muḥdath* poetry, see *EI*², art. "al-Ṣūlī" (S. Leder). Al-Ṣūlī was one of the very few men of letters to pay attention to the musical settings of the poems he transmitted, for instance in the *Akhbār awlād al-khulafā'*.
- 35 *Agh.* XXII, 179. In *isnāds*, "*raḥimahu llāh*" most often precedes names of Abū l-Faraj's relatives.
- 36 *Agh.* XIX, 76. On this descendant of the famous Barmakid family, see *EI*², art. "Ḍjaḥza" (Ch. Pellat). Jaḥza is one of the main authorities mentioned for settings; see below, p. 38. Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 8–9, lists 201 references to him in *isnāds*.
- 37 *Agh.* XXII, 205, 208; XXIII, 75.
- 38 Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 152.
- 39 On him see Neubauer, *Musiker*, 42–5, 187–9 and *passim*.
- 40 *Agh.* I, 4–5, with the justification that Ishāq's system had established itself as the one generally followed in Abū l-Faraj's day.
- 41 *Agh.* X, 142–4 (Ishāq's letter) and 144–8 (Ibrāhīm's reply). Abū l-Faraj's introduction to the exchange (141–2) reflects his *parti pris*.
- 42 *EI*² s.v. (B. Lewin).
- 43 *Agh.* X, 274–7. See below, pp. 83–5, for a partial translation of this passage.
- 44 *GAS* II, 551–8.
- 45 *Agh.* XVI, 383–4.

- 46 J. E. Bencheikh, “Les musiciens et la poésie. Les écoles d’Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili (m. 235 H) et d’Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi (m. 224 H.),” *Arabica* XXII (1975), 145–7.
- 47 *Agh.* XXI, 56–7. See below, pp. 53–4 for a partial translation of this passage.
- 48 Mongi Kaabi, *Les Ṭāhirides au Ḥurāsān et en Iraq (IIIème H./IXème J.-C.)*, Tunis 1983, 357–71.
- 49 *Agh.* IX, 40.
- 50 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 25–6, mentions 805 references to him. (He thus scores 77 more than Abū l-Faraj’s uncle.) No information seems to exist about him.
- 51 Abū l-Faraj quotes from him 89 times, almost always from the *Ta’rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 40).
- 52 *Agh.* XXII, 324.
- 53 *Agh.* IX, 61. And see pp. 42, 47, below.
- 54 *Agh.* VI, 173 (*ṣadiqunā raḥimahu llāh*). He was a descendant of al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabi’, the chamberlain of al-Rashid and al-Ma’mūn.
- 55 *Agh.* XXIV, 52. Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn al-Marzubān (d. 309/921) was a transmitter of poetry and anecdotes; he also translated from Persian (*EI*², s.v. (G. Troupeau)). This aside has the air of a old man’s reminiscence of the family life of his youth.
- 56 Abū l-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd (278/892–342/953), a judge, man of letters, poet and the father of the author of *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara* and *al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda*. (‘Umar Farrūkh, *Ta’rikh al-adab al-‘arabi*. II: *Al-a’ṣur al-‘abbāsiya*, 3rd edn, Beirut 1400/1980, 446–8).
- 57 Quoted in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rikh Baghdād*, XI, 399. Al-Tanūkhī’s testimony is sufficient to invalidate Khalafallāh’s contention that Abū l-Faraj was a run-of-the-mill transmitter who only attained fame in the later mediaeval period, when his books were recognised as preserving information otherwise lost (e.g. *Ṣāhib al-aghānī*, 17). Al-Tha’ālibī, too, recognises Abū l-Faraj’s prominence in the cultural life of Baghdad in his time (*Yatīmat al-dahr fī maḥāsīn ahl al-‘aṣr*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamid, 2nd edn, Beirut 1392/1973, III, 109).
- 58 He was accused by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Nawbakhtī (320/932–402/1011) of dishonesty, buying up books to study at home and acquiring all his information from them, instead of from scholars’ lectures. But Abū l-Ḥasan al-Bustī defended his reliability (*Ta’rikh Baghdād*, XI, 399–400).
- 59 Ibn al-Jawzī’s criticism of Abū l-Faraj is based on what he considers the immorality and reprehensible character of much *Aghānī* material and its compiler’s permissive attitude towards the drinking of wine (*Al-muntaẓam fī ta’rikh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, Hyderabad 1358; VII, 40). Among later mediaeval authors only Ibn Ḥajar and al-Dhahabī echo this condemnation. In modern times Ibn al-Jawzī’s arguments have been repeated, but in no way developed, in Walid al-A’ẓamī’s gruesomely entitled *Al-sayf al-yamānī fī naḥr al-Iṣfahānī ṣāhib al-aghānī* (which may be rendered as “The Yemeni sword for slaughtering Iṣfahān’s son, source of ‘The Songs’”) (Al-Manṣūra 1408/1988).
- 60 *Agh.* XIV, 63, XVII, 218 and XXIV, 110, respectively.
- 61 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb adab al-ghurabā’* (ed. Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Beirut 1972), 32, 33, 37, 41 and 51, respectively. Apart from Daskarat al-Malik, near Shahrabān on the road to Khurasan, all these places are in southern Iraq or Khuzistan. For the question of the authenticity of the *Adab al-ghurabā’* (henceforth abbreviated to *Ghurabā’*), see below, pp. 27–8.
- 62 *Ghurabā’*, 73 (“*shakhaṣtu ilā Bājistrā fī ba’ḍi l-mutaṣarrafaṭ*”). The location of Bājistrā is given in a note.
- 63 291/903–352/963 (*EI*² s.v. (K. V. Zettersteen–C. E. Bosworth), which gives the main lines of his career). But Abū l-Faraj was already a companion of al-Muhallabī’s before he became vizier (Yāqūt, *Irshād* V, 155).

- 64 The founder of the family, al-Muhallab ibn Abi Šufra, was prominent in quelling rebellions and campaigning in Khurasan in the first decades of the Umayyad caliphate. (*EI*², s.v. (P. Crone).)
- 65 Al-Tha‘ālibi, *Yatima*, II, 223–4.
- 66 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, in H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth (eds and trs.), *The Eclipse of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate*, Oxford 1921, vols I and II; here I, 382. For al-Sūsī’s career, see Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, Princeton 1980, 127–9.
- 67 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, II, 124–5, observes that al-Muhallabi had all the qualities for *riyāsa* (heading the administration) even if some others were more competent *kātib*s (clerks).
- 68 Al-Tawhīdī’s list of the habitués of al-Muhallabi’s *majlis* (*Al-imtā‘ wa-l-mu‘ānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amin and Aḥmad al-Zayn, 2nd edn, Cairo 1963, III, 213) includes some of these names. Others occur in historical and anecdotal texts, such as Hilāl al-Šābi’s *Kitāb al-wuzarā’*, of which fragments have been preserved, and al-Tanūkhī’s *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara* and *Al-faraj ba’d al-shidda*. Cf. Heribert Busse, *Chalif und Großkönig. Die Buyiden im Iraq (945–1055)*, Beirut 1969, 503–4.
- 69 Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, ed. ‘Abbūd al-Shālji, Beirut 1971/1391, I, 69.
- 70 ‘Alī ibn Zāfir al-Azdī, *Badā’i’ al-badā’ih* (ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1970, 78) speaks of “*al-ḥikāyāt al-mansūba ilā Abi l-Faraj wa-l-Muhallabi*”, which suggests that in his time, the sixth/twelfth century, they were a recognised sub-genre.
- 71 ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab*, ed. ‘A. M. Hārūn, Cairo 1388/1968, II, 355.
- 72 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Al-imā’ al-shawā’ir*, ed. Jalīl al-‘Aṭīya, Beirut 1404/1984, 23, where al-Muhallabi is simply referred to as “*al-wazīr*”, with the conventional prayer to God to grant him a long life. Another book Abū l-Faraj is said to have compiled for him is the lost *Manājiḥ al-khiṣyān* (*Irshād*, V, 152).
- 73 *Agh*. I, 5. Abū l-Faraj never completed the *Aghānī* (see below, pp. 30–1), but the preface was no doubt written, or revised, after al-Muhallabi’s death and posthumous disgrace. There would therefore have been a good reason for Abū l-Faraj to omit his former patron’s name. Cf., for another instance of omitting al-Muhallabi’s name after his death, S. A. Bonebakker, *Ḥātīmī and his Encounter with Mutanabbī: a Biographical Sketch*, Amsterdam 1984, 36. For the term *ra’is* in this period, see Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 133–5.
- 74 Unfortunately, no later author thought to continue the *Aghānī*, whose coverage of events peters out at the end of the third/ninth century. This accounts for the huge discrepancy between the detailed picture of court musical culture in the heyday of the ‘Abbāsids and what is known of later periods.
- 75 Ibn Faḍlallāh al-‘Umari, *Masālik al-abṣār fi mamālik al-amṣār*, ed. Fuat Sezgin *et al.*, Frankfurt 1408/1988, X, 278–9, recounts an incident in which al-Muhallabi rewarded Abū l-Faraj with a thousand dirhams for a poem of his which Tajanni, the vizier’s favourite, had set to music and performed, exactly fitting his mood.
- 76 Al-Tha‘ālibī’s often quoted description of these soirées (*Yatimat al-dahr*, II, 335–6) refers to beautiful singing and the emotion (*tarab*) it inspired.
- 77 For a graphic account of the brutal measures to which al-Muhallabi’s relatives and especially his clerk were subjected, see Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, II, 197–8.
- 78 He himself gives the date of this, 313 A.H. (=928 A.D.) (Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyin*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr, Cairo 1365/1946, 4 and 721). This book is henceforth referred to as *Maqātil*.
- 79 He transmitted *ḥadīths* to al-Dāraquṭnī, Abū Ishāq al-Ṭabarī, Ibrāhīm ibn Makhlad, Muḥammad ibn Abi l-Fawāris, ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Razzāz and Abū ‘Alī ibn Dūmā (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, II, 398–9). Among those who read the *Aghānī* with him were ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Dahakī, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm

- ibn Dīnār al-Kātib and Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maghribī (Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 78; V, 279; VI, 274).
- 80 Al-Muḥassin ibn ‘Alī al-Tanūkhī thus mentions Abū l-Faraj dictating to him from memory (*Al-faraj ba’d al-shidda*, ed. ‘Abbūd al-Shālji, Beirut 1398/1978, IV, 372). One of the stories he quotes from Abū l-Faraj, about Ja’far al-Barmakī’s generosity (IV, 331–8), is not in the *Aghānī*. (I owe this reference to Dr Julia Ashtiany-Bray.)
- 80a Iḥsān ‘Abbās, *Ta’rīkh al-adab al-andalusī*. ‘Aṣr siyādat Qurṭuba, 6th edn, Beirut 1981, 66. Abū l-Faraj knew and appreciated one of the Spaniards who came to the East in search of learning, Yaḥyā ibn Mālik ibn ‘Ā’idh from Tortosa (Yāqūt, *Irshād* V, 166).
- 81 Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 150, quoting from Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥasan al-Maghribī’s introduction to his abridgement of the *Aghānī*.
- 82 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, V, 27.
- 83 It is absent from the long list of poets, scholars, and men of letters belonging to this circle (*EI*², art. “Sayf al-Dawla” (Th. Bianquis)).
- 84 Ibn Faḍlallāh al-‘Umari, *Masālik al-abṣār*, X, 273.
- 85 See below, pp. 30–1, for the unfinished state of the text.
- 86 Khalafallāh argues for a corruption in the text of Yāqūt, who is quoting al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Wazīr al-Maghribī’s abridgement of the *Aghānī*. Khalafallāh, who did not know of the extant MS of this abridgement, believes that the reference is to the copy of the *Aghānī* made by the famous calligrapher al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Khazīn al-Baghdādī (d. 502/1108) for the Mayzadī Sayf al-Dawla Abū l-Ḥasan Ṣadaqa (reg. 479/1086–501/1108) and mentioned in Ibn al-Furāt’s *Ta’rīkh al-duwal wa-l-mulūk*. The question of Sayf al-Dawla’s connection with Abū l-Faraj is discussed in *Ṣaḥīb al-aghānī*, 76–78.
- 87 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 158, introduces Abū l-Faraj’s account of the *Book of Songs* attributed to Ishāq al-Mawsili with “*ḥaddathānī Abū l-Faraj*” and continues shortly after: “*wa-qāla li Abū l-Faraj*”.
- 88 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 128 (“*sanata nawayyifin wa-sittina wa-thalāthimi’a*”). A recent editor of the *Fihrist* observes that the date of Abū l-Faraj’s death is missing in one MS and so he is inclined to favour 356 or 357 (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Shuwaymī, Tunis 1405/1985) p. 507, note 502.
- 89 Abū Nu’aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ta’rīkh Iṣbahān*, ed. S. Dederling, Leiden 1934, II, 22. Abū Nu’aym only arrived in Iraq in 356/967 (*EI*², s.v. (J. Pedersen)).
- 90 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, XI, 400.
- 91 Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 150.
- 92 *Ghurabā’*, 88. For the authenticity of the *Ghurabā’*, see below, p. 27, note 133.
- 93 Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 156 (the stroke); *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, XI, 400 (on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Fawāris). For the author’s introduction to the *Ghurabā’* (pp. 20–1), which casts light on Abū l-Faraj’s state of mind at this time, see below, p. 27.
- 93a Al-Balādhuri is another example (*EI*², s.v. (C. H. Becker-F. Rosenthal)).
- 94 “*aswa’a qitlatin*” (*Agh.* X, 275).
- 95 The procedures followed in the third/ninth century for retrieving public money when important administrators were destituted are discussed in Antonella Ghersetti, “Un tema sempre attuale: malgoverno e dishonestà dei pubblici funzionari. Testimonianze nella letteratura d’*adab* del X secolo”, *Oriente Moderno* N.S. IX (1990), 101–14.
- 96 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam* II, 197–8. When it was the turn of al-Muhallabī’s family and entourage, his favourite Tajannī, a woman of character, observed that his own brutality towards a dispossessed rival had created a new precedent in tormenting those who had fallen from favour (ibid.). Cf. S. Sabarī, *Mouvements populaires à Bagdad à l’époque ‘abbāsīde, IXe-XIe siècles*, Paris 1981, 50–1.
- 97 *Agh.* XVII, 65. Khalidī, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 97, quotes a parallel version from Abū Zayd al-Qurashī’s *Jamharat ash’ār al-‘arab* (ed. ‘Alī Fā’ūr, Beirut 1406/1986, 91) with a different transmitter of ‘Ā’isha’s words; it lacks an outburst like Abū l-Faraj’s.

- 98 Sabari, *Mouvements populaires*, 42–3, 71–5; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates. The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, London 1986, 187–99.
- 99 Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, I, 130.
- 100 Al-Masʿūdī, *Murīj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. Ch. Pellat, Beirut 1965–79, V, 119 (al-Muʿtamid); 138, 149, 155 (al-Muʿtaḍid); 183–5 (al-Qāsim ibn ʿUbaydallāh); 213, 215 (al-Qāhir).
- 101 J. E. Bencheikh, “Le cénacle poétique du Calife al-Mutawakkil (m. 247). Contribution à l’analyse des instances de légitimation socio-littéraires”, *Bulletin d’Etudes Orientales* 29 (1977), 38–41.
- 102 *Agh*. IX, 319–20.
- 103 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 31–2, 35–6. He observes, however, that it was not entirely unrelated to the real situation.
- 104 *Agh*. IX, 344.
- 105 Busse, *Chalif und Großkönig*, 500; al-Šūlī, *Akhbār al-Rāḍī*, ed. J. Heyworth-Dunne, repr. Beirut 1403/1983, 46.
- 106 Busse, *Chalif und Großkönig*, 499–500.
- 107 For instance Muʿizz al-dawla (Busse, *Chalif und Großkönig*, 504). Al-Muhallabī’s excellent command of Persian was one of his qualifications for becoming the Būyid’s secretary (Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, II, 124).
- 108 Sabari, *Mouvements populaires*, 105–6, mentions such attacks for 323/934, 327/938 and 329/940. For a detailed presentation of the unrest of the period, cf. Elizabeth Greene Heilman, *Popular Protest in Medieval Baghdad*, 295–334 A.H./908–946 A.D., unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton 1978.
- Hostility to music among different theological and legal schools in Islam has been documented in detail (though without relating it to specific socio-economic contexts) by Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge 2000; see, for the Ḥanbalis’ activities in Baghdad, 114–28.
- 109 d. 329/941, *ET*² s.v. (H. Laoust).
- 110 Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, II, 233.
- 111 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, I, 269, 271. In his private life, however, al-Qāhir drank to excess and collected singing girls (ibid.)
- 112 *Agh*. X, 70.
- 113 In the following lists the sources are abbreviated as *FT* (al-Tūsī, *Fihris kutub al-shīʿa*, 379); *FN* (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-fihrist*, 128); *YD* (al-Thaʿālībī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, III, 109); *TB* (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrikh Baghdad*, XI, 398); *IA* (Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb* V, 151–2); *WA* (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, V, 27–8). The minus sign (–) before a source indicates its author’s admission that he had not seen a book but knew of its existence.

I have not included in the list of Abū l-Faraj’s works one text given by Ḥājji Khalifa, *Tihfat al-uasāʾid fī akhbār al-walāʾid* (Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. G. Flügel, London 1858, II, 218) because the title is uncharacteristic of Abū l-Faraj; either the book was falsely ascribed to him, or if it was by him it had been renamed. In his bibliography of Arabic music, Farmer includes two further titles which al-Sakhāwī ascribes to Abū l-Faraj, *Akhbār al-mughannīn al-mamālīk* and *Akhbār al-mughannīn*, but observes that they are probably extracts from the *Aghānī* (Henry George Farmer, *The Sources of Arabian Music*, Leiden 1965, 31, referring to al-Sakhāwī’s *Al-iʿlān bi-l-tawbikh li-man dhamma al-taʾrikh*). I take the *Akhbār al-qiyān* and *Kitāb al-qiyān*, which Farmer mentions as separate texts on the authority of al-Sakhāwī and Ibn Khallikān respectively, to refer to the same book. Likewise, I assume that Ibn Khallikān’s *Daʿwat al-aṭibbā* is a corruption of al-Thaʿālībī’s *Daʿwat al-najjār*. Lists of lost works such as these inevitably have a hypothetical character, and only the rediscovery of the texts can clear up problems of identification entirely.

- 114 *Agh.* XXII, 3; just afterwards Abū l-Faraj speaks of the *Kitāb al-nasab* as containing the *akhbār* of the poets of the different tribes (XXII, 4). He also included in it *ḥadīths* about the unreliability of genealogists and a discussion of variants in the names of the Arabs' forefathers (I, 14).
- 115 Al-Shaykh Mūsā, "Mu'allafāt Abi l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī", 175. He suggests the *Kitāb al-ta'dīl wa-l-intiṣāf* as an alternative. The references to "*al-kitāb al-kabīr*" are in *Maqātil*, 398, 491 fn. and 616. They may also be taken as indicating the *Aghānī*, though this identification has its problems; cf. Hilary Kilpatrick, *Songs or sticky ends: alternative approaches to biography in the works of Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī*, *Actas del XII congreso de la U.E.A.I. (Málaga 1984)*, Madrid 1986, 413, 420–1. They may also apply to a book in preparation which had not yet received its definite title.
- 116 Cf. Al-Shaykh Mūsā, "Mu'allafāt Abi l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī", 185–6. For the various members of this family, see *El*², art. "Munadjjim, Banū 'I" (M. Fleischhammer). Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī was a slightly older contemporary of Abū l-Faraj, living from 277/890–352/963.
- 117 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-fihrist*, 161.
- 117a Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Sha'bān Khalīfa and Walid Muḥammad al-'Awza, Cairo 1991, vol. 1, 206.
- 118 *Agh.* VIII, 374–5. Probably the same text is meant in X, 97 (*Kitāb fī l-nagham*), where Abū l-Faraj says he explains the rules of the tones, and in V, 270 (*a risāla* on melodic modes). Cf. Eckhard Neubauer, "Al-Ḥalīl ibn Aḥmad und die Frühgeschichte der arabischen Lehre von den "Tönen" und den musikalischen Metren", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* X (1995/6), 316–23, where the passage from VIII, 374–5 is translated.
- 119 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Al-qiyān*, ed. Jalil al-'Aṭīya, London 1989, 58, 89, 91, 97, 99, 103, 119, 130. There are also instances where the source (Ibn 'Asākir) refers to "Abū l-Faraj 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn's book", but where the passages are not found in the *Aghānī* or the *Imā' al-shawā'ir*: 45, 55, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 70.
- 120 Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Al-diyārāt*, ed. Jalil al-'Aṭīya, London 1991, 74 (quoted by al-Bakrī in *Mu'jam mā ista'jam*). Possible fragments of Abū l-Faraj's book are on 64, 73, 78, 116, 122, 127, 133, 137, 139, 141, 148, 154.
- 121 *Al-qiyān*, 47, 56, 58, 65, 66, 71. It would be analogous to some of the factual information in the profiles introducing *Aghānī* articles.
- 122 *Al-diyārāt*, 53, 64, 73, 78, 122, 127, 128, 133, 139, 141, 148, 154.
- 123 Cf. the cautious approval of al-'Aṭīya's work by Khālīd Ziyāda, "*I'adat binā' al-nuṣṣ*", *Al-nāqid* 47 (May 1992), 76–7.
- 124 Fragmentary indications (independent of the *Aghānī*) in *Al-qiyān*, 62; in *Al-diyārāt*, 145, 155, 164. The parallel *Aghānī* text (XV, 267) to *Al-qiyān* 92 names the composer of the melody. Since the editor of *Al-qiyān* understands "*qiyān*" to mean "concubines" [sic] (*Al-qiyān*, 6) he probably underestimates the importance of the book's musical component.
- 125 Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*', ed. Nizār Riḍā, Beirut 1965, 201. The translation of *Al-mujarrad fī l-aghānī* is Farmer's (Farmer, *The Sources of Arabian Music*, 31).
- 126 For the editions of the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyīn* see Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 11–13. The development of the *maqātil* genre, of which Abū l-Faraj's work may be regarded as the apogee in Arabic, has been traced by him: Sebastian Günther, "*Maqātil* literature in Medieval Islam", *Journal of Arabic Literature* XXV (1994), 192–212.
- 127 There is one exception to this rule, Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Alawī, who led an insignificant uprising, was imprisoned and later released, spending the rest of his life in Samarra (Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyīn* (henceforth *Maqātil*), ed. Aḥmad Ṣāqr, Cairo 1365/1946, 600–14). He died of smallpox in about 255/869 (*GAS* II, 647).

- 128 This use of collective *isnāds* goes back to al-Wāqidi (Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 48). They occur in *Maqātil* 27, 29, 51, 67, 95, 133, 219, 443, 562 and several other instances.
- 129 Comments on the accuracy of information: *Maqātil* 14, 22, 229, 625; checking a date: 78; selection of material: 33, 177, 234; justification of the inclusion of material: 162, 202, 396; conversely, indication of the omission of inappropriate material 81, 398, 616, 665.
- 130 Two editions came out in the same year: Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-imā' al-shawā'ir*, ed. Jalil al-'Aṭīya, Beirut: Dār al-niḍāl, 1404/1984, and eds. Nūri Ḥammūdī al-Qaysī and Yūnus Aḥmad al-Sāmarrā'ī, Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, 1404/1984. Both these editions leave something to be desired. Al-'Aṭīya's vowelling of the poetry is idiosyncratic and his list of parallel passages owes something to the imagination. Al-Qaysī and al-Sāmarrā'ī do better with the poetry, but they bowdlerise the text and do not take Ibn Faḍlallāh al-'Umari's *Masālik al-abṣār* into account for the parallel passages. References are to al-'Aṭīya's edition, indicated simply as *Imā'*.
- 131 *Imā'*, author's preface, 23.
- 132 Given the absence of biographical information about the more obscure slave poetesses and even their owners, this was the only possible solution. For more details about the composition of the *Imā'*, see Kilpatrick, "Women as poets and chattels", 173–4.
- 133 The *Adab al-ghurabā'* has recently been translated into English: Abu 'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (attributed to), *The Book of Strangers. Mediaeval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia*, tr. Patricia Crone and Shmuel Moreh, Princeton 2000. This is a very readable translation, attractively produced and helpfully annotated. The translators believe, however, that it was ascribed to Abū l-Faraj by its author, who lived slightly later. They base their arguments on the discrepancy between the dates mentioned in it and the commonly accepted date of Abū l-Faraj's death (for which see above, p. 20), but also, for instance, on other questions of dating, on differences they observe between the *Adab al-ghurabā'*, on the one hand, and the *Maqātil* and the *Aghānī*, on the other, and on certain assumptions about Abū l-Faraj's life (*The Book of Strangers*, 128–43). Their position, while forcefully argued, has numerous flaws, such as their apparently not realising that the *Maqātil* and the *Aghānī* differ among themselves, their disregarding the *Imā' al-shawā'ir*, which resembles the *Adab al-ghurabā'* more closely in scope than either of the other two books do, and their failure to take account of the available relevant sources. More conclusive arguments need to be furnished for Abū l-Faraj's authorship to be rejected.

For a detailed discussion of the question, see Kilpatrick, "On the difficulty of knowing mediaeval Arab authors. The case of Abū l-Faraj and pseudo-Iṣfahānī" in Robert G. Hoyland and Philip F. Kennedy (eds.), *Islamic Reflections, Arabian Meditations. Studies in honour of Professor Alan Jones from his students*, Warminster, forthcoming.
- 134 *Ghurabā'*, 20–2. The poem he composed during his stay in Basra (p. 38) expresses this change of fortune eloquently.
- 134a For further discussion of this work, see Hilary Kilpatrick-Waardenburg, "The *Kitāb adab al-ghurabā'* of Abū l-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī", *La signification du bas Moyen Age dans l'histoire et la culture du monde musulman. Actes du 8e. Congrès de l'Union Européenne des arabisants et islamisants* (Aix-en-Provence 1976), Aix-en-Provence 1978, 127–35; Crone and Moreh in Abū 'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *The Book of Strangers*, 8–15, 146–82.
- 135 But other anecdotes in which Abū l-Faraj relates his own experiences have been preserved in al-'Umari's *Masālik al-abṣār* (X, 278, where he describes being rewarded by al-Muhallabi and his singing-girl Tajanni) and al-Azdi's *Badā'i' al-badā'i'h* (340, where he recalls the late arrival of a singing-girl he loved at a party he had organised for her).
- 136 As pointed out in connection with his teachers, Abū l-Faraj drew on different sources for different books. For certain fields, in particular musical settings, he quotes extensively from authorities who are otherwise unknown (see below, pp. 36–7, 38–9), and

he comes up with obscure informants in other connections too, for example, ‘Arafa, the poetess Bid’a’s steward (*Imā*, 139, 201–203). He undoubtedly had a wider circle of informants than the one which can be established from his extant works. Moreover, to provide only fragmentary information about sources could be judged appropriate in a book entitled *Adab al-ghurabā*. Two anecdotes which are introduced with nothing and “*qāla*”, respectively, in the *Ghurabā*, are ascribed to Aḥmad ibn al-‘Abbās al-‘Askarī and Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Šūlī in the *Aghānī* (*Ghurabā*, 44 = *Agh.* IV, 21; 52 = X, 182), and a third, introduced by “*dhuḥkira*” in the *Ghurabā*, comes from Ibn al-Naṭṭāh’s book in the *Aghānī* (53 = XX, 330).

- 137 For this method of compiling, see in particular the analysis of the article on Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir pp. 226–8. There the term “pointillist” is employed for it.
- 138 Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 150, referring to *Ghurabā*, 88, 83. The MS of the *Ghurabā* does not have the phrase “*wa-waliya Bakhtiyār*” (p. 83), which the editor has added from Yāqūt’s text, a paraphrase of Abū l-Faraj at this point.
- 139 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, XI, 400.
- 140 *Ghurabā*, 47, 52. As pointed out above, the fragments published in *Al-diyārāt* and *al-qiyān* also contain one or two similar indications.
- 141 *Imā*, 74, 76, 80. The melodic mode is also given once, p. 72.
- 142 There is also one setting in al-Marzubānī’s *Mu’jam al-shu’arā*. For more information about settings in mediaeval Arabic texts, see Hilary Kilpatrick, “The transmission of songs in mediaeval Arabic culture”, in U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet (eds.), *Philosophy and Arts in the Islamic World. Proceedings of the 18th UEAI Congress, Leuven 1996*, Leuven 1998, 73–82.
- 143 *Agh.* I, 5–6. It is unfortunate that more of Abū l-Faraj’s preface has not been preserved; the first two and a half pages are a description of the book by someone who refers to him in the third person, and only after that does the expression “*qāla mu’allifu ḥadḥā l-kitāb*” introduce his own words.
- 143a See Chapter 9 for further discussion of the frame of songs in the *Aghānī*.
- 144 In early Arabic music theory the rhythmic mode forms the main characteristic of a melody (Eckhard Neubauer, “Die Theorie vom *iqā*”. II. Übersetzung des *Kitāb Iḥṣā’ al-iqā’āt* von Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī”, *Oriens* 34 (1994), 104).
- 145 Ibn Khurdādhbih’s *Mukhtār min kitāb al-lahw wa-l-malāḥī* (ed. Ighnāṭiyūs ‘Abduh Khalifa, Beirut 1969) consists largely of short sections on singers arranged according to *ṭabaqāt* (classes). The text is poorly preserved and the arrangement of *ṭabaqāt* in it confused. Neubauer suggests that it has been misnamed, and is in fact the author’s *Ṭabaqāt al-mughannīn* (Eckhard Neubauer; “Zur Bedeutung der Begriffe Komponist und Komposition in der Musikgeschichte der islamischen Welt”, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 11 (1997), 312).

Al-Šūlī’s *Ash’ār awlād al-khulafā’ wa-akhbārūhum* (ed. J. Heyworth Dunne, repr. Beirut 1982) has chapters on each prince and the poetry he composed. Sometimes the musical indications are added after poems (e.g. in the section on Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī), but in the chapter on ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdī there are separate subsections grouping the poetry which she set to four different rhythmic modes. Abū l-Faraj is presumably alluding to books like these or to collections of songs.

- 146 *Agh.* I, 3–4. For further discussion of this passage, see below, pp. 104–5.
- 147 For remains of song books, see *Agh.* IX, 293–6, where Ḥammād ibn Iṣḥāq al-Mawsilī is the source for al-Wāthiq’s songs; XIV, 190–1, where he is the source for Muḥammad al-Zaff’s songs; XXIII, 79–80, where the songs of Abū Ḥashīsha which various caliphs preferred are quoted from a book by the composer/singer himself. Cf. Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Mukhtār*, 25–6, 30–1, 33–5, 43–4.
- 148 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-fihrist*, 158–9. Abū l-Faraj also observes that the *Aghānī* ascribed to Iṣḥāq is no more than a compilation of the *diwāns* of the Ancient poets which his son Ḥammād transmitted from him (*Agh.* XVII, 112).

- 149 See Kilpatrick, “Abū l-Faraj’s profiles of poets” (as in note 50, p. 364), 96–7. See pp. 252–4 for material in the *Aghānī* relating to the acceptability of listening to music.
- 150 *Agh.* XVII, 112. The translation of “*al-qawm*” as “eminent singers” is dictated by the rest of the sentence.
- 151 *FN, FT, TB, WA.* Ibn Ḥazm already refers to Abū l-Faraj as “*ṣāḥib al-Aghānī*”, the author of the *Aghānī* (*Jamharat al-ansāb*, 107).
- 152 “*Hunā nqaṭa’a mā dhakarahu l-Isfahānīyu raḥimahu llāh*” (XXIV, 261), following Brünnow’s edition, in which the article has been completed by another hand (*Al-juz’ al-ḥādī wa-l-‘ishrūn*, 186 (which has “*al-Isfahānī*”)). The lacuna in the first part of the *Aghānī*’s preface can be ascribed to the loss of a few folios at the beginning of the MSS.
- 153 *Agh.* XXIV, 261–2 (al-Mutalammis), 237–42 (‘Abdallāh ibn Muṣ’ab al-Zubayrī). Al-Mas’ūdī (*Murāj*, IV, 202–3), quoting al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabī’, recounts in detail how ‘Abdallāh died after he had perjured himself falsely accusing an ‘Alid of plotting against al-Rashid. Since information about a subject’s death belongs to the standard themes of an article, Abū l-Faraj could have been expected to make some reference to this account, whether he agreed with it or not.
- 154 See the descriptions of the 31 *Aghānī* MSS in the Munich collection in Joseph Aumer, *Die arabischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek*, Munich 1866, 194–208 and the 5 MSS in the Berlin collection in W. Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, vol. VI, Berlin 1894, 476–80.
- 155 These lacunas are discussed in Sallūm, *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, 14–15 and Al-Shaykh Mūsā, “*Mawāṭin al-khalal wa-l-idṭirāb*”, 48–51. Abū l-Faraj’s announcements are in XX, 61 (Abū Nuwās) and IV, 1 and 112 (Abū l-‘Aṭḥiyya). Yāqūt had already commented on them (*Irshād*, V, 151).
- 156 The earliest abridgement of the *Aghānī*, *Mukhtaṣar* (or *Intikhāb*) *kitāb al-aghānī* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MSS Arabe 5766 and 5769), which was made by Al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥasan al-Wazīr al-Maghribī (d. 418/1027), lacks an Abū Nuwās article, although the *muḥdath* poets are generally well represented in it.

Al-Shaykh Mūsā, having concluded, I believe correctly, that the *Aghānī* never possessed these two articles, goes on to interpret Abū l-Faraj’s remark about the reports on Abū l-‘Aṭḥiyya and ‘Utba, “*hiya tudhkaru fī mawḍi’in ākhar*” and “*afṛadtuḥā*” to mean that he put them into another book, such as the *Mujarrad fī al-Aghānī* (“*Mawāṭin al-khalal wa-l-idṭirāb*”, 49). But the combination of reports and songs would exclude the *Mujarrad* as a possibility. “*Afṛadtuḥā*” is also used by Abū l-Faraj in other contexts to mean that the material is presented separately in the *Aghānī* itself; see below, pp. 124–5.
- 157 *Agh.* VII, 271. At least one line of poetry seems to have been dropped in VII, 303, in a *khavar* which tells of Mutayyam al-Hishāmiyya singing “a song”, the first half line of which is quoted on the following page for performance indications.
- 158 *Agh.* VII, 307. From *Al-imā’ al-shawā’ir*, where the *khavar* is complete, it is clear that the *Aghānī* copyist has given the first line of al-Ma’mūn’s poem and the second of Mutayyam’s (*Imā’*, 119–20).
- 159 *Agh.* XIV, 297–8. The *Tajrid al-aghānī*, however, has ‘Abd al-Malik quoting the panegyric, and it later adds an elegy on al-Muhallab not found in the *Aghānī* (Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī, *Tajrid al-aghānī*, ed. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, Cairo 1374/1955–1382/1963, 1585–6, 1587–8).
- 160 *Agh.* XIX, 141; cf. Franz Rosenthal, *Humor in Early Islam*, 48–9.
- 161 *Agh.* XX, 361–2. The song introducing the next article has lyrics by Asmā’ ibn Khārīja, but the familiar setting is by Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili, though there is an older one too, ascribed to the Umayyad singer al-Gharīd. Neither the text nor the setting’s composer have anything to do with ‘Amr’s article.
- 162 *Agh.* XVIII, 128 (al-Aḍbat). Something of al-Aḍbat’s genealogy is given in *Al-shi’r wa-l-shu’arā’* (Ibn Qutayba, *Al-shi’r wa-l-shu’arā’*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden 1904, 226).

- Agh. IX, 130–2 ('Amr ibn Sa'id). The editors, ignoring the link between the following two *akhbār* and the introductory song, have entitled pp. 131–2 “*Ba'd akhbār al-mughannīn wa-l-shu'arā'*”.
- 163 Agh. XX, 386–7; Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtār al-aghānī fī l-akhbār wa-l-tahānī*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī *et al.*, Cairo 1385/1965, IV, 282–3. The *Mukhtār* only gives the first part of the *khbar* with the crucial line (=XX, 387 ll. 1–11) but it indicates that this *khbar* came earlier in the *Aghānī* text Ibn Manẓūr used (p. 385, after l. 4).
- 164 Agh. XII, 253, 270, 285, 296. See pp. 261–2, for the discussion of this question.
- 165 Sallūm, *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, 19–25; al-Shaykh Mūsā, “*Mawāṭin al-khalal wa-l-idṭirāb*”, 49.
- 166 Al-Shaykh Mūsā, “*Mawāṭin al-khalal wa-l-idṭirāb*”, 52, gives examples.
- 166a Blachère observes that the Dār al-kutub edition is based on too few MSS (*Histoire* 138).
- 167 The set is described in Chapter Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Arabic MSS in the British Museum*, London 1894, 438–40. Or. 2076 is vol. 5, containing parts 9 and 10, Or. 2078 is vol. 29, containing part 57 and an incomplete part 58. (I did not succeed in obtaining a microfilm of the Alexandria MS).
- 168 For instance, the MSS sometimes have “*mu'allifu hādḥā l-kitāb*” where the edition has “*al-Iṣḥānī*”; the order of “*nasab*” and “*akhbār*” in titles of articles may be reversed; the edition may add “*inḡaḍat akhbārūhī*” at the end of an article; in quotations of poetry either the edition or the MS may omit a line; the MS may have “*qāla lī*” where the edition has “*qāla*”.
- 169 Agh. XXII, 47 = Or. 2078, fol. 94 r. The MS mentions 14 settings. The edition gives 10 of them, but among those it omits is the one by Sulaym which, as it observes at the end, was al-Rashīd's favourite.
- 170 For the main characteristics of these two abridgements and that of al-Wazīr al-Maghribī, mentioned above, see Hilary Kilpatrick, “The Abridgement in Mediaeval Arabic *Belles-lettres*: a Guide to Reception, a Pointer to Boundaries” in *Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association. Space and Boundaries. München 1988*, Munich 1990, III, 433–8.
- 171 Al-Shaykh Mūsā's list of 9 pre-modern abridgements (“*Mu'allafāt Abī l-Faraj*”, 176–7) was my starting point.
- 172 Little is known of Ibn Nāqīyā's writings. Ibn Faḍlallāh al-'Umārī draws on his collection of modern songs in his *Masālik al-abṣār* (*Masālik* X, 256 refers to his *Al-muḥḍath fī l-aghānī*). Did Ibn Nāqīyā abridge Abū l-Faraj's *Aghānī* as well, or is this a confusion on Ibn Khallikān's part?
- 173 GĀL VIII, 1212. Ibn Manẓūr mentions it in the preface to his *Mukhtār al-aghānī* (I, 1).
- 174 Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, ‘*Uyūn al-anbā'*, 671, who adds that he deposited a copy written in his own hand in the Umayyad mosque.
- 175 GĀS I, 382.
- 176 The title is given thus by his younger contemporary Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a ('*Uyūn al-anbā'*, 735).
- 177 Edited, see above, note 159. The title alludes to the omission in this abridgement of performances indications in which the names of the lute strings frequently occur.
- 178 Edited, see above, note 163.
- 179 Cf. Sallūm, *Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, 25–9, which emphasises the *Aghānī*'s unity.

3 ABŪ L-FARAJ ON SONGS AND SINGERS

- 1 There are nearly 2000 of them according to Fleischhammer, who nevertheless observes that they make up a relatively small component of the *Aghānī* (*Quellenuntersuchungen* 15*, 10*).

- 2 “*Sawt*” (a song) is an especially unstable element of the text, as was pointed out above, p. 32.
- 3 The terms used have been the object of musicological study; see the references given above in [Chapter 1](#), pp. 11–12.
- 4 The distinction between written and oral transmission familiar from the study of mediaeval Arabic texts is not, however, applicable to musical settings. See my “The transmission of songs”, 76–7.
- 5 The description of Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili’s achievement in conveying a melody he had composed to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī so accurately in writing that Ibrāhīm could sing it without having heard it (*Agh.* X, 105), implies that this was, if not a unique occurrence, at least extremely rare in the world of singers.
- 6 Neubauer points out (*Musiker*, 35) that song books were simply aids to memory.
- 7 The dates of people mentioned in the *Aghānī* are given in Appendix 3.
- 8 The translation of the poem is approximate. A number of variants exist, with the lines sometimes in a different order; cf. Muslim ibn al-Walid, *Diwān*, ed. Sāmī al-Dahhān, Cairo 1960, 274. I am grateful to Dr Julia Ashtiany-Bray for her comments on an earlier version.
- 9 For the translation of the technical terms I follow Sawa, *Musical Performance Practice*, 41–5 and 76.
- 10 See the review of his oeuvre in *EI*² s.v. (R. Sellheim).
- 11 Neubauer, *Musiker*, 161. He was a grandson of the *ḥājib* al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabī’.
- 12 He is therefore absent from Fleischhammer’s *Quellenuntersuchungen*, which consciously excludes song captions from its purview (p. 15*) and has equated the al-Hishāmī mentioned in *isnāds* with the Shī’i poet al-Bassāmī (*Quellenuntersuchungen*, 73).
- 13 *Imā’*, 113, 114 (*ḥaddathani*); *Agh.* IX, 296, where he is the source of performance indications, his name being given as “al-Hishāmī al-mulaqqab bi-Misk”.
- 14 It can be inferred from this form of address that al-Hishāmī was a relative of ‘Alī ibn Hishām, the cousin of al-Ma’mūn’s general Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn and commander of the expedition against Bābak before his fall from grace and execution in 217/832. ‘Alī was one of the leading music lovers of his time, a collector of accomplished singing girls and for a time a friend and confidant of Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣili (Albert Arazi, *Amour divin et amour profane dans l’Islam médiéval à travers le Diwān de Khālid al-Kātib*, Paris 1990, 14–21; *Agh.* XVII, 110–15).
‘Alī had two brothers, al-Ḥusayn, who was killed with him, and Aḥmad (Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, ed. ‘Izzat al-‘Aṭṭār al-Ḥusaynī, Cairo 1368/1949, 119, 145). Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Hishāmī could have been the son of any of them. Since Abū l-‘Abbās, otherwise known as Musk, is a source for information about one of ‘Alī’s singing girls, it is quite possible that he too was a member of the family.
The anecdote in *Agh.* XXI shows Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Hishāmī’s human side; he criticises the *diva* ‘Arīb undeservedly harshly out of rancour because she once condemned his style of singing in al-Mu’tazz’s presence.
- 15 In at least one instance the source for performance indications is given as Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Hishāmī (*Agh.* XX, 119).
- 16 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 17.
- 17 *GAS* I, 372–3.
- 18 The line is by ‘Ukkāsha al-‘Ammī; I have followed the version in ‘Ukkāsha’s article (*Agh.* III, 265), which gives a better reading.
- 19 Ḥabash is one of the mystery men of mediaeval Arabic music. The only clue to his identity seems to be the reference in the *Fihrist* to Ḥubaysh ibn Mūsā al-Ṣinī, a major collector of songs (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 162). Given Ḥabash’s prominence in the *Aghānī*, I am inclined to identify him with Ḥubaysh, especially since he appears once as Ḥabash ibn Mūsā (*Agh.* IV, 366).

- 20 Farmer lists twenty-one titles by Ishāq al-Mawṣilī mostly on music and musicians, two collections of songs by ‘Amr ibn Bāna, two collections by Aḥmad al-Makki, one of them a revised version of a book by his father Yaḥyā, and four books on music and singing girls by Yūnus al-Kātib, the first of their kind in Arabic, as he points out (Farmer, *The Sources*, 3–5, 11, 6, and 1, respectively).
- 21 Farmer (*The Sources*, 24–5) mentions two titles of Yaḥyā’s, but not his version of the list of the Top Hundred which is the core of the first part of the *Aghānī*, since Abū l-Faraj considered it more reliable than Jahḥa’s version (cf. *Agh.* I, 7–8, 11).
- 22 For his musical writings, see Farmer, *The Sources*, 23–4.
- 23 Neubauer (*Musiker*, 164–5) notes the different spellings of the name of this member of the cultured Banū Hamdūn family.
- 24 Abū l-Faraj observes that he has found eleven settings. The discrepancy between this figure and the number given in the text has not escaped the *Aghānī* editors (VIII, 259, fn. 5). But a copyist could have been responsible for the omission; cf. above, p. 32 for an example of this.
- 25 Other lists of settings drawn from a variety of sources and Abū l-Faraj’s own knowledge are in II, 223–5; III, 337–8; IV, 428–9; XV, 156; XXI, 197–8; XXIV, 196.
- 26 As can be seen from the abridgements which omit the musical information.
- 27 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 157–63. The references in the song captions are too imprecise, in almost all cases, to determine which work Abū l-Faraj used. For further titles of song collections he drew on, see the list in Neubauer, *Musiker*, 35–6.
- 28 For the works by Ishāq which may have inspired Abū l-Faraj, see above, p. 29.
- 29 I read *jāmi’ aghānīh* for the text’s *jami’ aghānīh*.
- 30 Presumably the singer Muḥammad ibn Q.r.y.ṣ whom Ibn al-Nadīm intended to mention (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 163).
- 31 As already pointed out (fn. 4), the relationship between written and oral transmission when songs were concerned is not comparable with the situation for texts, because the absence of notation made the oral transmission of melodies indispensable.
- 32 In Shajā’s case, her book of songs included her repertoire. Where singers famous as composers were concerned, collections of their songs most likely contained only their own compositions.
- 33 This possibly reflects differences in terminology in his sources; cf. Neubauer, “Die acht ‘Wege’ der arabischen Musiklehre und der Oktoechos”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 9 (1994), 381.
- 34 The term *nisba*, which strictly speaking signifies only the attribution to a composer and poet, is used more generally for the indication of rhythmic and melodic modes as well.
- 35 The criterion of compatibility with a composer’s known style is also employed by some of Abū l-Faraj’s authorities, for example, *Agh.* I, 200; V, 200.
- 36 For other examples, see X, 311; XV, 57, 138; XXII, 285.
- 37 Cf. Farmer, *The Sources*, XI.
- 38 In the great majority of cases where alternative attributions exist, the composers named are of the same period and from the same place. If it is correct to assume that the attribution of a melody to two singers reflects affinities in their manner of composition, a systematic study of these alternative ascriptions could throw light on the existence of distinct styles in early Arabic music.
- 39 Those scholars who have tried to establish whether or not the *Aghānī* includes all the Top Hundred do not seem to have realised that as Abū l-Faraj was combining two different lists of one hundred songs, the total should exceed that number.
- 40 The qualification *madhmūm*, “objectionable”, applied to a setting sung by Muḥammad Qurayṣ and Dhukā’ (*Agh.* IX, 293), should be corrected to *mazmūm*, the name of one of the four main modes current in the practice-orientated musical school which

- emerged in the fourth/tenth century, as Neubauer (“Die acht ‘Wege’”, 403) points out.
- 41 His refusal to mention the details of a “modern, inartistic (*fāsid al-ṣan’a*) setting in the light rhythm” (*Agh.* V, 210) is evidence of this eclectic method.
 - 42 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 45–6, prefers the spelling Qariṣ. From *Agh.* XVI, 4, fn. 3, the sense of this nickname is evidently “little lump of dough” (cf. the meaning of “al-Farazdaq”).
 - 43 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 19.
 - 44 Neubauer, *Musiker*, 210, on him, his father and his grandfather Zurzūr “al-Ṣaghīr”.
 - 45 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 51 suggests an origin for her *nisba* al-Baktamūriya. The statement that she was the only woman among Abū l-Faraj’s informers (loc.cit.) should be corrected.
 - 46 Another case of a well-known setting performed in Abū l-Faraj’s time was the adaptation of Iṣḥāq’s melody to a couplet of Majnūn (*Agh.* II, 69) already referred to.
 - 47 For the controversy between Iṣḥāq and Ibrāhīm and Abū l-Faraj’s biased account of it, see Neubauer, *Musiker*, 28–9; Sawa, *Musical Performance Practice*, 187–9.
 - 48 See above, p. 22.
 - 49 For these see [Chapter 4](#).
 - 50 For more discussion of the role of profiles, see Hilary Kilpatrick “Abū l-Faraġ’s profiles of poets. A fourth/tenth century essay at the history and sociology of Arabic literature”, *Arabica* XLIV (1997), 100, 125–8. The profiles of singers, and also the articles on them, would appear to be an exception in Asian traditions of scholarly biographies of musicians, for they do not seek to portray the subject as a hero. Cf. Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology. Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts*, Urbana, Ill., 1983, 279. But it is not quite clear what Nettl understands by a “scholarly biography”.
 - 51 Lengthy discussions of controversial figures such as Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī contrast with terse statements that a singer did not serve any caliph and remained almost unknown (e.g. Bābuwayh al-Kūfī (*Agh.* VIII, 266) and Nāfi’ ibn Ṭunbūra (VIII, 267–8)).
 - 52 Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī’s mother (X, 96–7); ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdī’s mother, a singer (X, 162); Abū ‘Isā’s (X, 187); ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Amin’s (X, 198).
 - 53 Jamīla (VIII, 186), Khulayda (XVI, 190) and ‘Azza al-Maylā’ (XVII, 162) all belonged to the *mawālī*.
 - 54 It will have been noticed that Abū l-Faraj’s acquaintances among the singers had nicknames too.
 - 55 Kufa is mentioned almost as often for obscure singers about whom Abū l-Faraj could discover nothing as for well-known ones; this suggests that musical life in al-Ḥīra/Kufa was less well-documented than that of the Hijaz.
 - 56 For example, Yazīd Ḥawrā’ (III, 251), al-Zubayr ibn Daḥmān (XVIII, 300), Abū Ṣadaqa (XIX, 289).
 - 57 Sā’ib Khāthir (VIII, 321), al-Raṭṭāb (= the date-seller) (VI, 159), Mukhāriq (XVIII, 336).
 - 58 Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 5–6.
 - 59 Muḥammad ibn ‘Abbād *al-kātib* (*Agh.* VI, 171); ‘Amr ibn Bāna (XV, 269); Abū Ḥashisha (XXIII, 75). Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar’s father, of noble Persian descent, was a provincial governor and owned singing slave-girls (XII, 48).
 - 60 Siyāṭ, the teacher of Ibn Jāmi’ and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (VI, 152); ‘Umar al-Wādī, the teacher of the singers of Wādī l-Qurā (VII, 85). ‘Allūya was a particularly good teacher (XI, 333).
 - 61 This sense of *ṭabaqa* is distinct from that introduced under Hārūn al-Rashīd to rank court singers. See Neubauer, *Musiker*, 57. It corresponds somewhat to the usage found in Ibn Khurdādhbih’s so-called *Mukhtār min kitāb al-lahw wa-l-malāhī*, where Yūnus and Daḥmān are placed together in the second *ṭabaqa*.

- 62 The *mughannī* is not only a singer but also a composer and transmitter of the repertoire (Bencheikh, “Les musiciens et la poésie”, 114).
- 63 For the meaning of this term in the context of singing, see Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 145–7.
- 64 The exact meaning of this word, denoting an open-stringed instrument, is uncertain.
- 65 Following Farmer, *History*, 132–3, who understands *awtār* as “stringed instruments”.
- 66 The term *naṣb*, like a number of other ones connected with early Arabic music, is obscure. According to recent studies the *naṣb* was an indigenous form pre-dating the rise of Islam (O. Wright, “Music and Verse”, in *CHAL* I, 435–7; Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 6). V. S. Fotieva (“Pevtsy omeiyadskogo perioda po ‘Knige pesen’ Abū-l-Faradžha al-Isbakhānī (The singers of the Umayyad period according to the ‘Book of Songs’ of Abū l-Faraj al-Isbakhānī) in *Problemy arabskoj kultury*, Memorial Volume for I. Yu. Krachkovskii, Moscow 1987, 113–14) notes the connection made between Aḥmad al-Nuṣaybī (sic) al-Hamdānī and the *naṣb*, but draws no conclusions from it. For a possible explanation of this apparent contradiction see Hilary Kilpatrick “*Mawālī* and music” in Monique Bernards and John Nawas (eds), *Patrons and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam: Mawla, Mawālī and Others*, Leiden, forthcoming
- 67 Neubauer, “Die acht ‘Wege’”, 373–6, discusses this point thoroughly and gives a translation of the relevant passage.
- 68 Cf. Neubauer, “Die acht ‘Wege’”, 375.
- 69 Similar eulogies are devoted to Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī (*Agh.* V, 268, followed by a lengthy description of Iṣḥāq’s reform of the modal system, 269–70); to Abū Dulaf al-‘Ijlī (VIII, 248); to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī (X, 96 and 97, with a partisan account of his controversy with Iṣḥāq and his weakness as a composer sandwiched between the two passages); to ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Mu‘tazz (X, 274, followed by a defence of his poetry, for which see below, [Chapter 4](#), p. 37–8); and to ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhīr (XII, 101).
- 70 Other examples are Bābuwayh (VIII, 266) and Nāfi‘ ibn Ṭunbūra (VIII, 267–8).
- 71 From the following *khbar* it would appear that the caliph disliked his quavery voice, *pace* Neubauer, *Musiker*, 175.
- 72 For example Siyāṭ (VI, 152), ‘Umar al-Wāḍi (*Agh.* VII, 85), Jamīla (VIII, 186), Hāshim ibn Sulaymān (XV, 251).
- 73 They may also have continued to ply the trade they exercised before they became famous; cf. Neubauer, *Musiker*, 175. But the sources are silent on this.
- 74 Another *maqbul al-shahāda* was ‘Abādīl (*Agh.* VI, 96).
- 75 That Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī also transmitted *ḥadīth* (V, 269) must be seen as part of his activity as a scholar and man of culture, not a musician.
- 76 This phenomenon is also underlined in the organisation of the *Aghānī*, with its middle section devoted to royal musicians. For further discussion of this point, see below, pp. 263, 275
- 77 See p. 37 above for him.
- 78 This song is the second of Ibn Surayj’s Seven, which were collected by the Meccans as a counterpart to Ma‘bad’s Seven (IX, 238). Its rhythmic mode was second heavy (IX, 239) and it was considered an example of the most beautiful music, that in which Ibn Surayj composed *à la* Ma‘bad (IX, 241). Evidently Abū l-Faraj expected his readers to remember this information when he quoted the song in ‘Arib’s article. (The version in vol. IX has *masākina* where vol. XXI has *masāfata*, which I have translated as “the country”.)
Ibn Surayj also set the second line of this song, a poem by ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘a, separately, and here he used a *ramal* rhythm (I, 273).
- 79 In Ibrāhīm’s article Iṣḥāq gives the total number of songs as nine hundred, divided into groups of three hundred (V, 187).
- 80 I read *muwāqafatihi* with *Agh.* (Būlāq), XVIII, 177.
- 81 I read *yaḍṭaghīnuhu* for the text’s *yaṣṭāni ‘uhu*.

4 ABŪ L-FARAJ ON POETRY AND POETS

- 1 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a, *Diwān*, ed. Paul Schwarz, Leipzig 1901–1909, no. 375 (in the Appendix). The text is that of the *Aghānī*.
- 2 The comment comes in the survey of settings of the poem: "*Fī hādihā al-shi'ri alhānūn kathirātun wa-l-shi'ru fihā 'alā ghayri hādihī l-qāfiyati....illā anna l-mughannina ghayyarū hādihī l-abyāta fī hādhayni l-laḥnayni fa-ja'alū makāna l-alifi kāfan*". Here, as elsewhere in the discussion of Abū l-Faraj's interventions, I have sought to confine myself to instances whose authorship is unambiguous.
- 3 Rudolph Geyer (ed.), *Gedichte von 'Abū Baṣīr Maimūn ibn Qais al-'Aṣā nebst Sammlungen von Stücken anderer Dichter des gleichen Beinames und von al-Musaiyab ibn 'Alas*, London, 1928, poem no. 10 by 'Amr ibn al-Ahyam A'shā Taghlib. There are two versions of this poem, one in the main section on A'shā Taghlib and one in the Appendix. In the first, the beginning of the line has *rasmun ...bihī*, but in the second it has *dimanun ...bihā*, which raises the same grammatical problem as *dārun*.
- 4 'Umar, *Diwān*, no. 266. Evidently the singers' version prevailed, for the *Diwān* has Sukayna.
- 5 Changing texts to fit a given situation was a common practice of singers; cf. Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 190–2.
- 6 'Umar, *Diwān*, no. 50 (with *fa-btakarū* instead of *fa-nshamarū*).
- 7 The poem is to be found in al-Sukkari, *Sharḥ ash'ar al-Hudhaliyin*, ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo n.d., 494–514. The numbers of the lines refer to this version.
- 8 In fact the wild ass section starts in line 27.
- 9 Bencheikh, "Les musiciens et la poésie", 135–7. This fact will be illustrated often in the discussion below.
- 10 'Umar, *Diwān* no. 54, beginning *A-lam tas'ali l-aṭlāla wa-l-mutarabba'a / bi-baṭni Ḥulayyātūn dawārisa balqa'a* (the *Aghānī* first half line being '*Arafū maṣīfa l-ḥayyi wa-l-mutarabba'a*').
- 11 Nuṣayb ibn Rabāḥ, *Shi'r*, ed. Dāwūd Sallūm, Baghdad 1967, no. 138. This fragment, *Aḥāja hawāka l-manzilu l-mutaqādimū / na'am wa-bihī mimman shajāka ma'alimū*, is only found in the *Aghānī*.
- 12 'Umar, *Diwān* no. 1.
- 13 It is printed in (Muzāḥim al-'Uqayli), *The Poetical Remains of Muzāḥim al-'Uqayli*, ed. and tr. F. Krenkow, Leiden 1920, no. 25.
- 14 The piece in the *Aghānī* corresponds to ll. 1, 2, (7), 6, 3, 21, 22 of Krenkow's text.
- 15 Other examples of Abū l-Faraj's comments on musicians rearranging the lines of poems are *Aghl.* I, 177 and XI, 381.
- 16 Abū l-Faraj mentions two different poems by 'Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a being drawn on for lines for one song, I, 93. One of them is the piece, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, whose rhyme, in another series of settings, was changed from *-ā* to *-ak*.
- 17 'Adī ibn Zayd al-'Ibādi, *Diwān*, ed. Muḥammad Jabbār al-Mu'ayyib, Baghdad 1385/1965, no. 32.
- 18 Yazid ibn al-Tathiriya, *Shi'r*, ed. Hātim Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin, Baghdad 1973, no. 12 in the section of pieces also ascribed to other poets. Ibn al-Dumayna and al-Majnūn are named as alternative authors.
- 19 Al-Sukkari, *Sharḥ ash'ar al-Hudhaliyin*, 957. The complete poem is on 956–9.
- 20 Nūrī Ḥammūdī al-Qaysi, "Shā'irān thaqaḥiyān", *Ḥawliyyāt al-jāmi'a al-tūnisīya* 16 (1978), 139, gives the lines of Ṭurayḥ's poem which Abū l-Faraj quotes except for the one incorporated in the song. According to him it is more closely associated with Ibn Harma. Ibn Harma's poem is in Ibrāhīm ibn Harma al-Qurashī, *Shi'r*, ed. Muḥammad Naffā' and Ḥusayn 'Aṭwān, Damascus 1389/1969, nos. 78 (the major part of the *Aghānī* piece), 142, and 143 (the lyrics of the song).

- 21 Qays Lubnā, *Diwān*, comm. ‘Adnān Zakī Darwīsh, Beirut 1416/1996, no. 24. *Agh.* IX, 178, gives ll. 23, 24, 3, 1, 5, 9, 10, 14 and 15 of this poem.
- 22 Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, *Shiʿr Zuhayr bi-sharḥ al-ʿAlam al-Shantamari*, ed. Fakhr al-Dīn Qabāwa, Aleppo 1390/1970, no. 11, l. 6. As the preceding line of the poem makes clear, the poet is speaking of a flock of gazelles crossing his path as his beloved’s tribe is departing, and the realistic detail of “*jarat sunuḥan*” (they crossed my path from left to right) contrasts sharply with the general tone of the lover’s complaint in the song’s second line.
- 23 As is clear from the account in III, 317. The poem is no. 39 in al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd al-Makhzūmī, *Shiʿr*, collected by Yahyā al-Jabbūrī, Najaf 1392/1972.
- 24 ‘Ulayya also changed the rhyme of al-Ḥārith’s line at the same time that she added her own line to it.
- 25 ‘Umar, *Diwān*, no. 280. ‘Umar’s second line runs: *Hal laka l-yawma in naʿat Ummu Bakrin/ wa-tawallat ilā ‘azā’in tariqū*, while the interpolation has: *Man yakun min hawā ḥabibin qariban / fa-anā l-nāziḥu l-baʿidu l-saḥiqū*.
- 26 In the quotation of this line in the *Lisān al-ʿArab* and Lane’s *Arabic-English Lexicon*, on which my translation is based (s.v. *janā*) the last word is vowelised *jurbi*. But, assuming that Abū l-Faraj’s comment is not of a merely general nature, it only makes sense in the light of the *Aghānī* vowelising, since it is then that the rhyme of the last line differs from that of the rest of the poem.
The poem is contained in Abū Tammām’s anthology *Kitāb al-waḥshīyāt* (ed. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Maymanī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr, Cairo 1963, 36–7), where it starts: “*Li-mani l-diyāru ‘afawna bi-l-sahbī/buniyat ‘alā khaṭṭin min al-khaṭṭi; buniyat ‘alā sa’di l-suʿūdi wa-lam/tūda‘ ‘alā l-dabarāni wa-l-qalbī*.” Its eight lines do not include the one beginning *jānika*....
- 27 Al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf, *Diwān*, ed. ‘Ātika al-Khazrajī, Cairo 1373/1954, 178–9. Not all the lines are identical; against Bakr’s lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, al-‘Abbās’s lyrics have 1a, 4, x, 2a and 1, 3, 4, 2, and the *Diwān* has 1, 2, 4, 3, y.
- 28 The poem is given in Arazī, *Amour divin et amour profane dans l’Islam médiéval*, 264, in the appendix of poems not found in Khālīd’s *Diwān*. It is also in Abū Tammām’s poetry: *Diwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrizī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abduḥ ‘Azzām, vol. IV, Cairo 1965, no. 332, ll. 1, 2, 3, x, 4.
- 29 From the context it may be inferred that this Yahyā was a son of Marwān al-Aṣghar, but I have been unable to find any evidence to support that.
- 30 The poem of Kuthayyir’s to which the bedouin’s lines were thought to belong is in Kuthayyir ‘Azza, *Diwān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, Beirut 1391/1971, no. 3. The appendix to this poem mentions 7 lines attached to it in a variety of sources.
- 31 For ‘Urwa, see *GAS* II, 264–5. ‘Alī ibn ‘Amr seems to be one of the personalities whom only Abū l-Faraj has rescued from oblivion. But these lines had a timeless character; they were confused with poetry by Ibn Dumayma, Qays ibn Dhariḥ, Majnūn, Kuthayyir and al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf (Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’i and Aḥmad Maṭlūb, “*Shiʿr ‘Urwa ibn Ḥizām*”, *Majallat Kulliyat al-ādāb* (Baghdad), 1961 (4), 4 and 23).
- 32 Abū l-Faraj says that he has cleared up the matter in the article on ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, but it contains no such passage. This is most likely an example of his unkept promises. The lines are not in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān’s poetry, collected by Sāmī Makki al-‘Ānī (*Shiʿr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān al-Anṣārī*, Baghdad 1971).
- 33 Immediately before Abū l-Faraj gives these attributions he quotes al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār’s observation that much of Jaʿfar’s poetry was included in ‘Umar’s *Diwān*.
- 34 Al-Namir ibn Tawlab, *Shiʿr*, coll. Nūri Ḥammūdī al-Qaysī, Baghdad 1969, no. 5 of the fragments ascribed variously to al-Namir and others. In a note, the editor suggests that it is the last line of the genuine no. 14, the first line of which also mentions Daʿd.
- 35 The poem is in al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashir al-Anṣārī, *Shiʿr*, ed. Yahyā al-Jabbūrī, Baghdad 1388/1968, part of it in no. 13 (from the MS collection of al-Nuʿmān’s

- poetry), part in no. 25, of which some lines are attributed to other poets. There is no mention of it in *Shi'r Yazid ibn Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan*, ed. Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Beirut 1982.
- 36 Another reason for doubting this attribution was that the lines also had a setting by Ḥakam al-Wādī, who was an established musician before Ishāq was born. But it is to be found in the modern *Diwān* of Ishāq al-Mawṣili, ed. Mājid Aḥmad al-'Izzī, Baghdad 1970, 10, with parallels, all from later texts.
- 37 'Antara ibn Shaddād, *Diwān*, ed. 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Shalabī, Cairo n.d., 123–4, has a fragment two lines of which correspond to ll. 3 and 4 of these lyrics. Later Abū l-Faraj revised his opinion, attributing the poetry to Ḥāritha ibn Badr (VIII, 383).
- 38 Cf. Abū 'Alī al-Qālī, *Dhayl al-amālī*, ed. (as an appendix to *Al-amālī*) Dār al-kutub, Cairo 1344/1926, III, 8, for a similar discussion between al-Qālī and Ibn Durayd about this elegy of al-Mughīra ibn al-Muhallab. Abū l-Faraj gives ll. 5–7 and 1–4 of the text printed in F. Krenkow, "The Elegy upon al-Mughīra b. al-Muhallab", *Islamica* II (1926), 344–54, which has 50 lines altogether. Krenkow too prefers Ziyād as the author (p. 346).
- 39 Geyer includes poems by twenty-two poets nicknamed al-A'shā in his collection *Gedichte von 'Abū Baṣīr Maimūn ibn Qais al-'Aṣā*.
- 40 Imru' al-Qays, *Diwān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1958, no. 24 of the Appendix of poetry not found in the *Diwān* MS. Dārim is named as a transmitter of information about Imru' al-Qays earlier on (IX, 78).
- 41 Cf. art. "Al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī", *EI*² (Wadad Kadi) for the poet's beliefs.
- 42 He refers here to XI, 191. Cf. III, 319 (the article on al-Ḥārith), where other transmitters give the right report. Besides, the poem's mention of the caravan travelling east does not make sense if it was setting out from the Hijaz for Syria. The poem is no. 23 in al-Jabbūri's collection of al-Ḥārith's poetry.
- 43 Fāris al-Naqqāsh, "Bakr ibn Khārīja, ḥayātuh wa-shi'ruh", *Al-mawrid* 5(3) (1976), 169, includes the poem and assumes that it is addressed to Mālik ibn Ṭawq. The parallel passage in Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Al-'iqd al-farīd*, ed. Muḥammad Sa'id al-'Uryān, Cairo n.d., I, 161, does not commit itself either way.
- 44 The poem is in 'Amr ibn Ma'dikarib al-Zubaydī, *Shi'r*, ed. Muṭā' al-Ṭarābīshī, Damascus 1394/1974, no. 35, with 14 lines. There is no reference to it in 'Amr's own article in the *Aghānī*. This comment and many others where there is a reference to the context in the *Aghānī* in which the lines are quoted remove any doubt about whether it is Abū l-Faraj who has made the selection.
- In some cases Abū l-Faraj's source is extant, and it can be established where the selection has taken place; for instance in an anecdote in Abān al-Lāḥiqī's article the description of a poem from which a few lines are quoted as very long (*ṭawīla jiddan*: XXIII, 160) goes back to al-Ṣūlī (Al-Ṣūlī, *Akhhār al-shu'arā' al-muḥdathin*, ed. J. Heyworth Dunne, Cairo 1936, 3, which has only *ṭawīla*). At least once Abū l-Faraj himself observes that his source gives only part of a long poem (XXII, 231, à propos of a *qaṣīda* by 'Uṭayba ibn Mirdās). Elsewhere the source is not extant, and doubts may subsist about whom the comment on the length of the poem stems from. I have tried to avoid such ambiguous examples.
- 45 The *Ash'ār al-Azd* were collected by al-Sukkārī. Since at this point in Ta'abbata Sharran's article Abū l-Faraj is quoting from his uncle, whose source is 'Abdallāh ibn Abi Sa'd, the remark can only come from one of the Iṣbahānīs. It fits with what is known of Abū l-Faraj's habit of consulting *diwāns*, as illustrated above. About his uncle's habits there is no information.
- 46 For some details of this conflict between Qays 'Aylān and Quraysh see al-Mufaḍḍal al-Dabbī, *Al-mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, ed. C. J. Lyall, London 1918, ii, 302–5.
- 47 Collections of the poetry of a number of tribes belonging to Qays 'Aylān are known to have existed, such as *Ash'ār Ashja'*, *Ash'ār Fazāra*, *Ash'ār Banī Yashkur*, *Kitāb Bāhila*,

- Ash'ar Fahm*, and *Ash'ar Banī 'Āmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'a* (cf. the lists in GAS II, 38, 39, compiled from the *Fihrist* and al-Āmidī's *Muwāzana bayn shi'r Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī*).
- 48 At this point Abū l-Faraj's source is Abū 'Ubayda, and the *Aghānī* version corresponds closely with that of the *Naqā'id*. But the *Naqā'id* has five lines of the poem, and also nine lines of another poem by Imru' al-Qays on the same subject (Abū 'Ubayda, *Naqā'id Jarīr wa-l-Farazdaq*, ed. A. A. Bevan, Leiden 1908–9, 1078–9).
- 49 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a, *Dīwān*, no. 54, which has 23 lines.
- 50 Al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd, *Shi'r*, no. 36, for which the *Aghānī* is the main source.
- 51 The section (*Agh.* VII, 32–44) includes some twenty songs.
- 52 The songs are on XVI, 347–53. Other examples include VII, 92 (introducing al-Walid's poems on Abū Kāmil), IX, 150 (a poem by 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Utba on his wife) and VI, 229 (Waddāḥ al-Yaman's elegy of his father and brother). In this last case, although Abū l-Faraj says he is only quoting the lines set to music, the setting itself is not mentioned in the text – at least as it has survived.
- 53 See, for instance, IX, 151, where another of 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Utba's poems on his divorced wife which has a setting (*ua-fihā ghinā*) is quoted; of the six lines only the first three were sung.
- 54 The poem is in *Abū l-'Atāhiya, ash'arūh wa-akhbārūh*, ed. Shukrī Fayṣal, Damascus 1384/1965, 444–65. Abū l-Faraj does not appear to be concerned with the possibly dualist tone of the poem, the aspect of it discussed by G. Vajda, "Les zindiqs en pays d'Islam" *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* XVII (1937–38), 219–20.
- 55 Ḥatīm Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin, "Shi'r Suwayd ibn Kurā' al-'Uklī". *Al-mawrid* 8(i) (1979), 152–3, has only the *Aghānī* lines.
- 56 For quotation as a way to establish the authenticity of an attribution, see above pp. 62–3, with the examples of Ibn al-Mawlā and al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī.
- 57 Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et al.*, Leiden 1879–1901, I, 2008–15, mentioning the incident, gives 'Abd al-Malik's name in full and quotes the poem.
- 58 Al-Marzubānī, *Al-muwashshaḥ fī ma'ākhidh al-'ulamā' 'alā l-shu'arā'*, Cairo 1343, 210–11.
- 59 The poem is no. 2 in Ṭufayl's *Dīwān*: F. Krenkow (ed.), *The poems of Ṭufayl ibn 'Auf al-Ghanawī and al-Ṭirimmāhī* (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series XXV), London 1927. Abū l-Faraj quotes ll. 1–4, x, 5–7, 9, 11. If, as is possible, nos. 2 and 3 of the *Dīwān* constituted one poem, it was indeed long, running to some 60 lines.
- 60 In al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh* (II, 1008–17) the poem has 87 lines. Abū l-Faraj gives ll. 1–4, 6–8, 10, 11, 21, 25–7, 42 (a variant reading), 40, 41, 61.
- 61 Another instance where Abū l-Faraj admits that he is abbreviating his source is *Agh.* XXI, 259–60, where he observes that he has made his own selection from al-Yazīdī's wealth of examples of the poetry Hudba ibn Khashram and Ziyāda ibn Zayd exchanged.
- 62 Ibn Mayyāda, *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥannā Jamīl Ḥaddād, Damascus 1402/1982, no. 47. The poem there has 20 lines, of which Abū l-Faraj quotes ll. 8–16.
- 63 It may be that the complete poem is extant in another anthology, but I am not aware of it.
- 64 Ḥassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwān*, ed. Walid N. Arafat (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial New Series XXV), London 1971, no. 13.
- 65 Four lines from the poem are in Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa*, no. 9.
- 66 'Alī ibn Jabala, *Shi'r*, coll. and ed. Ḥusayn 'Aṭwān, Cairo 1972, no. 35 (for which the *Aghānī* is the main source).
- 67 Al-Walid ibn Yazīd, *Shi'r*, coll. and ed. Ḥusayn 'Aṭwān, Amman 1979, no. 5.
- 68 It is no doubt because of Abū l-Faraj's admiration for al-Walid that as much of his poetry has survived as it has. The *Aghānī* is the main source for it (al-Walid, *Shi'r*, editor's introduction, 8).

- 69 By its nature, the process of selecting poetry in which Abū l-Faraj engages involves practical criticism, whether explicit or not. Another example of implicit or quasi-implicit criticism from the same period is the anthology of the Khālidi brothers, *Kitāb al-ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir* (Iḥsān 'Abbās, *Ta'rikh al-naqd al-adabī 'inda l-'arab*, revised ed., Amman 1986, 129).
- 70 Balance in critical judgements is a trait Abū l-Faraj shares with one of his teachers, al-Ṣūlī ('Abbās, *Ta'rikh al-naqd al-adabī*, 150–1).
- 71 *Agh.* VII, 36. Judging by the quotation, *sakhif* is not intended in the much stronger sense it later acquired, for instance in connection with Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's poetry; cf. *El*², art. "Sukḥf" (J. E. Montgomery). Here, as in the case of al-Muntaṣir's feeble (*rakik*) verse (IX, 300), Abū l-Faraj finds himself obliged to include poor material because it is set to music. Once he includes poor (*da'if*) poetry because it is pleasant and amusing, bad though it is (XXIV, 232).
- 72 It would need a separate study to set all the judgements quoted above beside the poems to which they apply in order to infer what Abū l-Faraj is referring to in each case. And his characterisation of the poets' oeuvres in the profiles discussed below would need to be taken into account too.
- 73 This reference to philosophers, uncharacteristic of Abū l-Faraj, can be explained by the fact that earlier sources had already noted the resemblance between Abū l-'Atāhiya's poems and proverbial wise sayings. Both the sayings specifically mentioned by Abū l-Faraj are also referred to in the *Kāmil* of al-Mubarrad (ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm and al-Sayyid Shihāṭa, Cairo n.d., II, 11), but there they are ascribed to two different occasions, one the death of the Sassanian monarch Qubādh, where the speaker is the chief of the Zoroastrian priestly hierarchy, and the other the death of Alexander, where the words are put into the official mourner's mouth. In other sources the "philosopher" only pronounces one saying.
- 74 *Agh.* II, 293–4 (Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī improving on a metaphor of Ibn Mayyāda); XVIII, 249–50 (a nameless contemporary of Abū l-Faraj giving one of Ashja' al-Sulami's images a coarser twist – perhaps the only example of poetry from Abū l-Faraj's time in the whole book); and XX, 29 (the more general references to al-Buḥturī's and Abū Tammām's dependence on 'Alī ibn Jabala already referred to).
- 75 Al-Akḥṭal, *Diwān*, ed. Fakhr al-dīn Qabāwa, Aleppo 1391/1971, 485–6, gives other versions of both lines. There the first half of line 2 runs "*Walākin qadhāh kullu ash'atha nābi'in*".
- 76 The *khavar* is quoted from Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu'arā'* (ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo 1394/1974, 472). Remarking that the *Aghānī* variant is not in Ibn Sallām's text, Shākir wonders whether it and the comment "*wa-huwa l-jayyid*" stem from Ibn Sallām or Abū l-Faraj (472, n. 4). But since Abū l-Faraj immediately afterwards quotes a parallel anecdote which contains the preferred variant from another source (*Agh.* VIII, 313–14), the natural conclusion is that he is responsible for the comment.
- The variant parallels the first line syntactically, repeats the key word "*qadhā*" and has the more concise "*zā'inun lā nuḥibbuhū*" for the unwanted guest. Abū l-Faraj could have had any or all of these points in mind in reaching his verdict.
- 77 Ḥasan Muḥsin, *Al-alfāz al-mufasssara fī Kitāb al-aghānī*, treats all the linguistic glosses, noting that they cover explanations of proper names and foreign words as well as difficult terms and expressions in poetry. He rightly points out that this linguistic concern is a fundamental component of the *Aghānī*, but he fails to realise that often it is not Abū l-Faraj but his source who provides the philological information (compiler's introduction, 8–11).
- 78 Al-Mukhabbal is mentioned briefly in al-Marzubānī's *Mu'jam al-shu'arā'* (ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, [Cairo 1960] repr. Damascus n.d., 235. I owe this reference to Prof. Geert Jan van Gelder.) Al-Mukhabbal's poetry is in the 'Udhri style, and his story

belongs with those of the ‘Udhri lovers. After his wife imprudently remarked that her sister was even more beautiful than she was, he managed to see the girl and fell in love with her. When her family discovered it he fled from the Hijaz to Syria in shame. Returning to the tribal encampment on the day that his beloved was being buried, he collapsed and died immediately (*Agh.* XX, 264–8).

- 79 “‘Is it because of an old love that each day you look towards the towering peaks of Maylā’s mountains, your eyes so swollen with long weeping that they seem small and narrow, or as though you have half-closed them?’

The metre is *ṭawīl*. ‘*Ghubbarun*’ means ‘the remains of’ something; one says ‘X is still suffering from the remains of his illness’. It is most often used in contexts such as this. ‘*Al-shummu*’ means ‘lofty’; ‘*al-a‘lāmū*’ is the plural of ‘*alamun*’ meaning ‘mountain’ (...); ‘*khaẓarun*’ denotes ‘smallness and narrowness of the eye’, hence the Khazars’ name, because they have small eyes (...).’

- 80 See pp. 34–5.

- 81 But the modern editor of the *Aghānī* provides a handful of glosses. The lines are not in Dhū l-Rumma’s *Diwān* (ed. ‘Abd al-Quddūs Abū Ṣāliḥ, Damascus 1972–1973).

- 82 ‘Umar Farrūkh, *Ta’rīkh al-adab al-‘arabī*, I: *Al-adab al-qadīm min maṭla‘ al-jāhiliya ilā suqūṭ al-dawla al-umawiya*, 3rd edn, Beirut 1978, 440.

- 83 ‘Dearer to my heart than the gates of Jayrūn
are the palace, the palm grove and between them al-Jammā’,
and close by the palace the Qarā’in,
dwellings far removed from depravity or shame.
Though people hide their secrets, I know them;
but what I conceal they’ll never learn until I die.’

These lines are in the first *baṣīṭ* metre. The palace referred to here is the one belonging to Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ at al-‘Arṣa, and the palm grove is one which he owned between it and al-Jammā’, an estate of his. All these properties came into Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān’s possession after Sa‘īd’s death. He acquired them from Sa‘īd’s son ‘Amr when he took over responsibility for his debts; about that there is a report which will be quoted later on. The gates of Jayrūn are in Damascus. There is a variant ‘*ḥādhat qarā’inuhū*’ from the verb ‘*ḥādha*’, ‘to be opposite to’. The Qarā’in were some houses connecting with one another which belonged to Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ, so called because they [looked as though they were] harnessed together. ‘*Nazaḥna*’ means ‘they are distant’, and ‘*al-nāẓiḥu*’ means ‘the distant one’, [the verb being] ‘*nazaḥa*, *nuzūḥan*’. ‘*Al-hūnu*’ is the same as ‘*al-hawānu*’, meaning ‘humiliation’ (...). ‘*Al-maknūnu*’ denotes ‘concealed, hidden’, and is derived from ‘*al-kinn*’.

- 84 This song has been discussed above in connection with singers’ alterations of texts.

- 85 Al-Sukkārī, *Sharḥ ash‘ār al-Hudhaliyin*, 511, 498, 495.

- 86 Dhū l-Rumma, *Diwān* no. 39, lines 44, 45, 46, 51 (pp. 1212–16 in Abū Ṣāliḥ’s edition).

- 87 See the editor’s introduction to Dhū l-Rumma, *Diwān*, 38–53, for the transmission of the poet’s oeuvre, and especially pp. 47–8 for Tha‘lab’s role as both transmitter and compiler.

- 88 The copious notes provided by the modern editors indicate that these lines are not as elementary as Abū l-Faraj might seem to think.

- 89 Although the amount of commentary the *Aghānī* gives for the four songs decreases, with the last song being entirely unglossed, this is not an oversight but reflects the amount of commentary in the *Diwān*. The lines are drawn from poems no. 21, 42 and 26.

- 90 The conviction that composers and singers should thoroughly understand the meaning of the lyrics they set to music and perform is also reflected in the late fourth/tenth century al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Kātib’s *Kamāl adab al-ghinā’* (ed. Ghaṭṭās ‘Abd al-Malik Khashaba, Cairo 1395/1975, 31). Performers’ concern with the meaning of the words used in a song would appear to be a constant in the Arabic musical

tradition; cf. the attention Umm Kulthūm paid to the sound and meaning of the words in her songs (Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt. Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago 1997, 139–41). Knowledge of *tafsir* is essential for Qur'an reciters, since their understanding of the text affects the style and structure of the recitation (Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an*, Austin, Texas 1985, xvii).

- 91 Al-Aṣma'i, *Al-Aṣma'iyyāt*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir and 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 4th edn, Cairo 1976, 58–61 (poem no. 14).
- 92 For profiles of singers, see above, pp. 49–54. Poets' profiles are discussed in my "Abū l-Farag's profiles of poets", on which this section is based. A profile is not always placed at the very beginning of an article, if it has a preliminary section devoted to the poet's forebears. As often in the *Aghānī*, there is an exception to the rule; al-Farazdaq's profile comes towards the end of his article (*Agh.* XXI, 393–4).
- 93 For brief discussion of the *ṣa'ālik* see Alan Jones, (ed., tr. and comm.), *Early Arabic Poetry. I: "Marāthī" and "Ṣu'lūk" Poems*, Reading 1992, 27; Ewald Wagner, *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung. I: Die altarabische Dichtung*, Darmstadt 1987, 135.
- 94 Dīk al-Jinn was a "follower of the Shī'a, and a good one" (*Agh.* XIV, 51); Abū l-Aswad al-Du'ālī was "one of the leaders of the Shī'at 'Alī" (XII, 297); Kuthayyir was "an extremist in his Shī'i beliefs" (IX, 4). Dāwūd Sallūm seems to consider that Abū l-Faraj was influenced by the "bigoted Muslim milieu" in which he lived to condemn poets who opposed "traditional religious thinking" or the Abbāsī theory of the caliphate (*Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, 145). As can be seen from the nuances in his description of these three poets' beliefs, beliefs with which he himself, as a Zaydī, had some sympathy, Abū l-Faraj was more measured in his judgements than Sallūm gives him credit for – quite apart from whether Sallūm's own characterisation of political and religious tendencies during the fourth/tenth century is correct.
- 95 See above, [Chapter 2](#), pp. 15–16.
- 96 *ET*², art. "Al-Kūfa" (Hichem Djait).
- 97 G. Schoeler, "Bashshār ibn Burd, Abū l-'Atāhiya and Abū Nuwās" in *Abbasid Belles-Lettres* (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature), eds. Julia Ashtiany *et al.*, Cambridge 1990, 281–2.
- 98 'Alī ibn Jabala was born in the Harbiya quarter (*Agh.* XX, 14), while 'Umar al-Maydānī settled in the Maydān quarter, hence his name (XXIII, 140).
- 99 See above, p. 64.
- 100 Al-Mughīra ibn Ḥabnā' and his brother (XIII, 84); Ibn Abi 'Uyayna and his cousin (XX, 78).
- 101 Respectively al-Ḥārith ibn Ṭufayl al-Dawsi's father (XIII, 218); Muḥammad ibn Kunāsa's uncle (XIII, 337); al-Ḥārith ibn Khālīd's brother (III, 312); A'shā Hamdān's brother-in-law (VI, 33).
- 102 The forebears of 'Abd al-Ṣamad ibn al-Mu'adh dhal (XIII, 226) and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Yazidī (XX, 257).
- 103 X, 235 (Abū Dulāma); XVI, 175 (al-Faḍl ibn al-'Abbās); XVIII, 74 (Khufāf ibn Nadba).
- 104 IX, 139 ('Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Utba); XII, 271 (Shabīb ibn al-Barṣā'); VI, 343 (Abū Sufyān, who lost his eyes in successive battles).
- 105 XIX, 301 (*ḥasanatu l-wajhi wa-l-jismi wa-l-qawām*) and XXIII, 85 (*jamilatu l-wajh*). These descriptions are reminiscent of those of male and female singers, for which see above, p. 52.
- 106 For example, IX, 49 (Musāfir); XIV, 69 (Qays ibn 'Āṣim); XIV, 145 (Qays ibn al-Ḥudādiya); XIV, 263 (Thābit Quṭna); XXII, 321 (Murra ibn Maḥkān).
- 107 XIX, 106 (Bakr ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ); XXI, 205 (Abū Khirāsh).
- 108 IV, 2 (Bashshār ibn Burd); XVI, 307 (Abū Ḥayya al-Numayrī).

- 109 III, 129 (Madraj al-Riḥ); IX, 4 (Kuthayyir); XXIV, 220 ('Ammār Dhū Kināz, whose name is given in this edition as Dhū Kubār; cf. GAS II, 341).
- 110 XVI, 307 (Abū Ḥayya al-Numayrī), XII, 254 ('Aqil ibn 'Ullafa) and II, 157 (al-Ḥuṭay'a) respectively.
- 111 III, 45 (al-Dārimī); III, 286 (Ibn al-Mawlā); X, 187 (Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Rashīd); XIII, 277 (Muṭī' ibn Iyās); XXIII, 223 ('Alī ibn 'Abdallāh). For a discussion of the concept see al-Bashīr al-Majdhūb. *Al-ẓarf wa-l-ẓurqā' bi-l-Ḥijāz fī l-'aṣr al-umawī*, Tunis 1988; idem, *Al-ẓarf bi-l-'Irāq fī l-'aṣr al-'abbāsi*, Tunis 1992.
- 112 *Agh.* XIV, 131 (Abū l-Asad).
- 113 I, 385 (al-'Arjī); VII, 1 (al-Walid ibn Yazid); XI, 285 (Abū l-Naḍir); XIII, 277 (Muṭī' ibn Iyās).
- 114 II, 244 (Ibn Arṭāh); III, 128 (Zuhayr ibn Janāb); V, 122 (al-Walid ibn 'Uqba); VII, 1 (al-Walid ibn Yazid); XV, 286 (Ādam ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz); XIX, 1 (Abū Miḥjan); XXIII, 189 (Bakr ibn Khārija); XXIV, 220 ('Ammār Dhū Kināz). Wine was already indulged in by pre-Islamic poets, of course.
- 115 XIV, 17 (Muḥammad ibn Yaṣir); XIV, 321 (Ḥammād 'Ajrād); XV, 286 (Ādam ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz). For the term, see Julie Scott Meisami, "Arabic *Mujūn* Poetry: the literary dimension" in *Verse and the Fair Sex. Studies in Arabic Poetry and in the Representation of Women in Arabic Literature*, ed. Frederick de Jong, Utrecht 1993, 8–30.
- 116 *Agh.* IX, 40 ('Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir); X, 44 (Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās); X, 276 (Ibn al-Mu'tazz); XII, 101 ('Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir); XVI, 250 (Ibn Darraj); XIX, 301 (Faḍl); XX, 188 (Ju'ayfirān); XXIII, 85 ('Inān); XXIII, 95 (al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb). In this sense the term seldom occurs in the Umayyad profiles; cf. the following note.
- 117 IX, 139 ('Ubaydallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Utba, who combined *fiqh* with *adab*); XII, 297 (Abū l-Aswad al-Du'ālī); XIII, 337 (Muḥammad ibn Kunāsa); XVIII, 149 (Musāwir); XVIII, 322 ('Urwa ibn Udhayna).
- 118 XIII, 175 (Nāhiḍ ibn Thūma); XX, 216, 217, 257 (members of the Yazidī family of scholar-poets); XXIII, 38 (Ibn al-Bawwāb, a source of information about the caliphs); XXIV, 245 ('Umāra ibn 'Aqil).
- 119 It is one of a category of rare and often lengthy interventions in the *Aghānī*, each one *sui generis*. They may illustrate a certain literary genre – here a summary of historical narrative, elsewhere critical disputation, as in the defence of 'Arīb quoted in [Chapter 3](#), and that of Ibn al-Mu'tazz given below. Or they may function as a commentary, drawing attention to an issue of compilation, as in the introduction to the article on Qays ibn Dhariḥ, or to the contradictory nature of the available material, as in the comment on the first section of Majnūn's article, for which see below, pp. 100–101.
- 120 Of those mentioned in note 103, al-Walid ibn Yazid and Bakr ibn Khārija were very heavy drinkers, while Zuhayr ibn Janāb drank himself to death.
- 121 XX, 188 (Ju'ayfirān); XX, 274 (Khālīd al-Kātib). For the representation of insanity in *adab* books, cf. Michael Dols, *Majnūn: the Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, Oxford 1992, 349–65, which however only discusses al-Naysabūri's '*Uqalā' al-majānin*.
- 122 *Agh.* XV, 266 ('Alī ibn Udaym); XXII, 237 ('Abdallāh ibn 'Ajlān).
- 123 *El*², art. *rāwī* (R. Jacobi); Wagner, *Grundzüge*, I, 12, 33.
- 124 Such affiliations have a bearing on the problems of attribution of poems referred to above.
- 125 *Agh.* XII, 340 (Suwayd ibn Kurā'); XIII, 351 (al-Shamardal); XIX, 98 (Muzāḥim al-'Uqayli).
- 126 XIII, 84 (al-Mughīra ibn Ḥabnā' and Ziyād al-A'jam); XII, 271 (Shabīb ibn al-Barṣā' and 'Aqil ibn 'Ullafa); XXIV, 246 ('Umāra ibn 'Aqil and Farwa ibn Ḥamiṣa).
- 127 XVIII, 100 (Wālība ibn al-Ḥubāb, who withdrew to Kufa after being vanquished by Bashshār and Abū l-'Atāhiya).
- 128 XX, 198 (al-Aḥwaṣ and Nuṣayb did not reply to al-Sarī al-Anṣārī).

- 129 XII, 156 (al-Mutawakkil al-Laythi approved by al-Akhṭal).
- 130 XX, 336 (Sa'id ibn Wahb, the subject of an elegy by Bashshār).
- 131 The clearest example of how music could enhance undistinguished poetry is provided by the first of the Top Hundred Songs, with Abū Qaṭīfā's lyrics set to music by Ma'bad, discussed above in connection with philological commentary.
- 132 XIX, 261 (Salm al-Khāsir and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili); XX, 44 (al-Taymī and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili and his son Ishāq).
- 133 VI, 33 (A'shā Hamdān and Aḥmad al-Naṣbī).
- 134 Eulogists of Umayyad caliphs: IX, 307 ('Adī ibn al-Riqā'); XII, 159 (al-Mutawakkil al-Laythi); XXIV, 5 (Umayya ibn Abī 'Ā'idh); of 'Abbāsīd caliphs: X, 205 ('Alī ibn al-Jahm); XIV, 193 (Abū l-Shibl); XXII, 245 (al-Mu'ammil ibn Umayl); of members of both dynasties: XIII, 277 (Muṭī' ibn Iyās); XVI, 17 (al-Ḥusayn ibn Muṭayr); XVI, 307 (Abu Ḥayya al-Numayri).
- 135 XVI, 202 (Ḥamza ibn Biḍ); XI, 285 (Abū l-Naḍir); XIX, 261 (Salm al-Khāsir).
- 136 III, 286 (Ibn al-Mawlā); XVI, 400 (Abū l-Shiṣ).
- 137 XII, 54 (Ma'n ibn Aws).
- 138 XVI, 298 (Abū l-'Abbās al-A'mā); X, 235 (Abū Dulāma).
- 139 XIII, 140–41 (Manṣūr al-Namari); XXIII, 206 (Marwān al-Aṣghar).
- 140 XXIII, 128 (al-'Aṭawī); XIX, 74 (Muḥammad ibn Wuhayb); XIV, 193 (Abū l-Shibl).
- 141 For the system of patronage, cf. the discussion in J. E. Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe*, 2nd edn, Paris 1989, 19–39.
- 142 *Agh.* XIV, 17 (Muḥammad ibn Yasir); XIV, 51 (Dik al-Jinn).
- 143 Al-Ubayrid, another outsider, is described as having "clear and eloquent diction" (XIII, 126).
- 144 III, 258 ('Ukkāsha al-'Ammā); XXIII, 169 (Tuwayt).
- 145 XIV, 92 (Muḥammad ibn Ḥāzim); XV, 323 (al-Ḥāzin ibn Sulaymān).
- 146 XIV, 382 (Ḥurayth).
- 147 II, 243 (Ibn Arṭāh); VI, 1 (al-Ṣimma al-Qushayri); XIII, 58 (al-'Ujayr al-Salūli) and nearly twenty other instances.
- 148 XXII, 355 (the ancient Jāhili poet Laqīṭ al-Iyādi) where this is implied.
- 149 For Abū l-Faraj's explanation of why he included this extremely controversial poet, see below, p. 107.
- 150 Prose works: *Agh.* XXIII, 22 (Abū Shurā'a); XXIII, 118 (Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf); letters: XIII, 109 (al-'Attābi); XVIII, 155 (Sa'id ibn Ḥumayd); poems in *rajjaz*: XVI, 17 (al-Ḥusayn ibn Muṭayr); XVI, 307 (Abū Ḥayya al-Numayri); XIX, 98 (Muzāḥim al-'Uqayli); unconventional metres: IV, 2 (Abū l-'Atāhiya); VI, 160 ('Abdallāh ibn Hārūn).
- 151 Horses: XIV, 345 (Tufayl al-Ghanawī); XVI, 373 (Abū Du'ād al-Iyādi); wild asses: IX, 161 (al-Shammākh); wine: XVII, 100 (Wālība ibn al-Ḥubāb); XX, 44 (al-Taymī); XX, 329 (Abū l-Hindi); boys: XVII, 100 (Wālība ibn al-Ḥubāb). The expression used is *waṣṣāf li-* or its equivalent.
- 152 III, 312 (al-Ḥārith ibn Khālid); VI, 190 (al-Numayri, who dedicated his poetry to Zaynab bint Yūsuf); XX, 78 (Ibn Abī 'Uyayna); XXIII, 181 (Mānī al-Muwaswis); XXIV, 145 ('Urwa ibn Ḥizām, who composed only on 'Afrā').
- 153 II, 157 (al-Ḥuṭay'a); XIII, 109 (al-'Attābi); XIX, 31 (Muslim ibn al-Walid).
- 154 Such terms are notoriously difficult to define; cf. the problem of determining the sense of *ẓarf*, discussed in al-Majdhūb, *Al-ẓarf bi-l-'Irāq*, 5–8. They are commonplace in literary evaluations of the period.
- 155 *Agh.* IV, 135 (Ḥassān ibn Thābit); IX, 4 (Kuthayyir 'Azza); IX, 108 (al-A'shā); XII, 35 (al-Ṭirimmāh); XIII, 189 (al-Mukhabbal al-Sa'di, who is also described as *muqill*), XVI, 202 (Ḥamza ibn Biḍ) and several more. Cf. the discussion of al-Aṣma'i's definition of *fuḥūla* in 'Abbās, *Tārīkh al-naqd al-adabi*, 51–3.

- 156 XIII, 15 (al-Aswad ibn Ya'fur); XVI, 17 (al-Ḥusayn ibn Muṭayr); XX, 120 (Di'bil); XXI, 254 (Hudba ibn Khashram).
- 157 II, 262 (Ibn Mayyāda); II, 404 (al-Ḥakam ibn 'Abdal); XVI, 307 (Abū Ḥayya); XXIV, 197 (Abū l-'Iyāl).
- 158 III, 286 (Ibn al-Mawlā); XI, 293 (al-'Ablī); XII, 254 ('Aqil ibn 'Ullafa, also a *muqill*); XXIII, 47 (Muḥammad ibn al-Zayyāt).
- 159 XIII, 30 (Arṭāh ibn Suhayya); XVII, 245 (Zayd al-Khayl).
- 160 XII, 88 (Ibn Sayāba); XIII, 259 ('Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam); XVI, 400 (Abū l-Shiṣ); XXII, 245 (al-Mu'ammil ibn Umayl).
- 161 It may indeed be that the lines he designates as *mukhtār* or *jayyid* exemplify the qualities he admires in poets' oeuvres; this would be a subject for a separate investigation.
- 162 VIII, 91 (Jamil); XII, 271 (Shabīb ibn al-Barṣā'); XIII, 136 (al-Ubayrid, a *muqill*); XV, 380 (Ziyād al-A'jam) and over twenty other instances.
- 163 XIII, 109 (al-'Attābī); XXIII, 47 (Muḥammad ibn al-Zayyāt).
- 164 XI, 285 (Abū l-Naḍir); XXII, 253 (Abū Mālik); XXIII, 38 (Ibn al-Bawwāb).
- 165 XVI, 245 (al-Raqāshī).
- 166 XV, 380 (Ziyād al-A'jam); XX, 14 ('Ali ibn Jabala); XX, 329 (Abū l-Hindī).
- 167 XXIII, 181 (Mānī al-Muwaswis).
- 168 XXIV, 220 ('Ammār Dhū Kināz).
- 169 XVI, 102 (Muḥammad ibn Bashīr); XIX, 261 (Salm al-Khāsir); XXII, 200 (Maḥbūba) and several other instances.
- 170 IV, 2 (Abū l-'Atāhiya, *qalil al-takalluf*); VII, 146 (Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk, *yakhlū min al-takalluf*). The opposition between *ṭab'* and *takalluf/taṣannu'*, brought into circulation by Ibn Qutayba, was an issue of particular relevance to the evaluation of Abū Tammām's poetry, as critics' attitudes to him show (Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Poetik, Rhetorik, Literaturkritik, Metrik und Reimlehre" in *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie, Band II: Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Helmut Gätje, Wiesbaden 1987, 185–6). Since Abū l-Faraj regarded Abū Tammām as *maṭbū'* (*Agh.* XVI, 383), he evidently defined *takalluf* narrowly.
- 171 XVI, 360 (Muḥammad ibn Šālih); XVII, 100 (Wāliba ibn al-Ḥubāb); XX, 78 (Ibn Abī 'Uyayna).
- 172 XIII, 226 ('Abd al-Šamad ibn al-Mu'adhdhal); XIV, 217 ('Abdallāh ibn al-Zabīr); XX, 120 (Di'bil).
- 173 XIV, 7 (Muḥammad ibn al-Yasīr); XXIII, 189 (Bakr ibn Khārīja); XXIV, 220 ('Ammār Dhū Kināz).
- 174 XX, 1 (Ibn al-Khayyāt).
- 175 Abū l-Faraj's insistence here on making a distinction between a poet's behaviour and his verses resembles that of al-Šūlī when he argues in his defence of Abū Tammām that unbelief does not detract from poetry, nor faith improve it ('Abbās, *Tārīkh al naqd al-adabī*, 151, referring to al-Šūlī, *Akhlbār Abī Tammām*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abduh 'Azzām, Khalīl Maḥmūd 'Asākir and Naẓīr al-Islām al-Hindī, 3rd edn, Beirut 1400/1980, 172–4).
- 176 This statement has been understood to mean that Dīk al-Jinn imitated Abū Tammām (Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe*, 36–7 and note 57), which is inherently improbable, since Dīk al-Jinn was the older by some twenty years. But what the *Aghānī* says is that Dīk al-Jinn "*kāna yadhhabu madhhaba Abī Tammāmīn wa-l-shāmiyina fī shi'rīh*". When Abū l-Faraj speaks of imitation he uses unambiguous terminology, cf. I, 385; XIII, 140; XXI, 39.
- 177 Abū l-Faraj also has some interesting observations about Ibrāhīm al-Šūlī's whittling down his poems to a few excellent lines (X, 42).
- 178 I read with Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtār al-aghānī* (V, 69) *wa-nẓur*, instead of *Agh.* X, 276: *wa-lā nuẓira*.
- 179 Unfortunately, Abū l-Faraj does not fulfil this promise.

- 180 Even the reception of court music in wider urban circles is scarcely mentioned in the *Aghānī*. One of the most revealing glimpses of it is given in the article on ‘Ubayda the pandore player, which describes her chequered career in detail (XXII, 208–10).
- 181 For this he is the major source, as is reflected in the footnotes in Bencheikh, “Les musiciens et la poésie”.
- 182 Although there is a somewhat greater concentration of late Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid material towards the end of the *Aghānī*, this is not enough to explain the marked increase in the volume of the profiles.

5 ABŪ L-FARAJ ON PROSE, *AKHBAR* AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL

- 1 Cf. George J. Kanazi, *Studies in the Kitāb aṣ-Ṣinā‘atayn of Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī* (Leiden 1989, 202), who notes that historiography is not recognised as a form of literary prose in Abū Hilāl’s work, the first in the mediaeval Arabic critical tradition to discuss poetry and prose together.
- 2 Abū l-Faraj’s direct informant here, as very often, is al-Ḥaramī ibn al-‘Alā’, who transmitted al-Zubayr’s works but is otherwise unmemorable (Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 23–4). The decision not to include all the *saj’* al-Zubayr mentions is paralleled on the following page where many of the *rajaḥ* exchanges between the two poets are omitted, and it concords with Abū l-Faraj’s eclectic approach to the inclusion of material, already illustrated in his attitude to the quoting of poetry (see above, p. 63–65). It seems scarcely conceivable that these omissions could be the work of al-Ḥaramī.
- 3 “By God, if you engage with me in a *saj’* competition, you’ll discover I am courageous, a true defender of those who have sought my protection, while I’ll find you lily-livered, prodigal of your reputation. If I get my hands on you, I’ll startle you out of your wits, battering your bones till the ground is sprinkled with your piss.”
- 4 Discussions of *saj’* with illustrations are to be found, for instance, in Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, *Kitāb al-ṣinā‘atayn*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī and Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2nd edn, Cairo 1971, 266–71.
- 5 *La-qaḍ ṭuṭū sab‘an qultu lammā qaḍaytuhā/a-lā layta ḥadhā lā ‘alayya wa-lā liyā*, the lyrics of which are also by Abū Sa‘īd, according to Abū l-Faraj, although some sources ascribe them to al-Majnūn (*Agh.* II, 332). They are not in Majnūn’s *Diwān* (*Kays b. al-Mulawwah (al-Macnūn) ve Diwānı*, ed. with introd. Şevkiye İnalçık, Ankara 1967).
- 6 *Afāḍa l-madāmi‘a qatlā Kudan/wa-qatlā bi-Kuthwata lam turmasī*, from a poem by al-‘Abī mourning the Umayyads killed by al-Saffāḥ, other lines of which are quoted *Agh.* II, 339 and 340–1.
- 7 Kuthayyir, *Diwān*, no. 22.
- 8 The passage occurs in the article on Kuthayyir and Khandaq al-Asadi. After Kuthayyir’s elegy of his friend, which begins: “*Shajā az ‘ānu Ghāḍirata l-ghawāḍi*” Abū l-Faraj gives two accounts of the identity of Ghāḍira and the occasion for the allusion to her before relating this encounter (*Agh.* XII, 177–82).
- 9 The word also occurs XII, 223, in connection with the narrative content of ‘Abdallāh ibn Mu‘āwiya’s uprising. *Ma’nā* is used XXIV, 8, in a different sense: “[This song] has been mentioned in the information about [Ibn ‘Ā’isha] with [the explanation of] its unusual words, and anecdotes of Ibn ‘Ā’isha connected with it (*aḥāditha li-Bni ‘Ā’ishata fi ma’nāh*)”; Abū l-Faraj is referring here to II, 220, where in fact only one anecdote mentions the song.
- 10 This contrasts with his discussions of *ma’ānī* in poetry, which ignore the context and concentrate on the verses; cf. [Chapter 4](#), pp. 68–9.
- 11 *Idhā ballaghtinī wa-ḥamaltī raḥlī/‘Arābata fa-shraqī bi-damī l-wafatī* (Al-Shammākh, *Diwān*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Hādī, Cairo 1968, no. 18, l. 8).

- 12 Anecdotes (iv) and (v) share identical narrative motifs, the only difference being that (v) develops the idea further. By contrast, the connections between (ii), (iii) and (iv) are more tenuous. In (ii) and (iii) a ruler disapproves of the slaughter of a camel to fulfil a vow or promise, while (iii) and (iv) have al-Muhallab as a protagonist and turn on a vow. But the vows are different, for one engages the person who has made it, while the other imposes an obligation on another party. The order in which they appear in the *Aghānī* (which may or may not go back to al-Madā'inī or one of the intermediaries between him and Abū l-Faraj), points to a lower degree of awareness of narrative structures than that reflected in the bringing together of (iv) and (v).
- 13 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a, *Diwān*, no. 155 (*Layla Hindan anjizatnā mā ta'id* ...).
- 14 For a concise survey of the development and main characteristics of the transmission of *ḥadīth* and related scholarly information, see art. "Riwāya" in *EL*² (S. Leder). Gregor Schoeler has devoted a series of studies to the examination of methods of transmitting knowledge and the different scholarly conventions associated with them in the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd periods. Three are directly relevant to the *Aghānī*: "Die Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im frühen Islam", *Der Islam* 62 (1985), 201–30; "Weiteres zur Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im Islam", *Der Islam* 66 (1989), 38–67; "Schreiben und Veröffentlichen. Zu Verwendung und Funktion der Schrift in den ersten islamischen Jahrhunderten", *Der Islam* 69 (1992), 1–43.
- 15 For the interrelation between history and *adab* see Khalidī, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 83–130. Changing attitudes to the use of the *isnād* are discussed on pp. 100, 116, 129–30.
- 16 For Abū l-Faraj's working techniques in the *Maqātil*, especially his use of the *isnād*, see Sebastian Günther, "... nor have I learned it from any book of theirs". Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī: A Medieval Arabic Author at Work" in R. Brunner, M. Gronke, J.P. Laut, U. Rebstock (eds.), *Islamstudien ohne Ende. Festschrift für den Islamwissenschaftler Werner Ende zum 65. Geburtstag*, Würzburg, 2002, 139–53.
- 17 Sezgin, *GAS* I, 240–3, lists the technical terms used in *isnāds* and indicates the variations which they denote in forms of transmission. Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 44–8, sets them out in more detail.
- 18 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, Chapter II, names them as Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Dubā'i, Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ṭūsī, al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥubāb Abū Khalīfa al-Jumaḥī, al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Qāsim Abū 'Alī al-Kawkabī al-Kātib, Ismā'il ibn Yūnus ibn Abī l-Yasā' Abū Ishāq al-Shī'i, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Durayd Abū Bakr al-Azdī, and Riḍwān ibn Aḥmad Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ṣaydalānī (nos. 37, 41, 62, 91, 105, 124 and 139, respectively).
- 19 Modern scholars have sometimes regretted that Abū l-Faraj did not mention the titles of the books he was quoting from. Given that they are concerned with establishing the evolution of the texts included in compilations such as the *Aghānī* and identifying the appearance of independent books, their frustration is understandable. But it is certain that compilers mentioned their sources for quite different reasons.
- 20 Handwriting was judged according to two qualities, attractiveness and accuracy (A. B. Khalidov, *Arabskie rukopisi i arabskaya rukopisnaya traditsiya*, Moscow 1985, 128–9). Abū l-Faraj's naming the individual who had copied a text may have conveyed to his contemporaries something about the reliability of that copy. He lets himself go once about the appearance of a document, when he says à propos of one of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī's letters to Ishāq al-Mawṣilī that it was written in a feeble hand, which he supposes to be Ibrāhīm's because a secretary would have had better handwriting (*Agh.* X, 141–2).
- 21 "*Alkhabarānī Ḥabībun bnu Naṣrīn al-Muhallabiyu wa-'ammī qālā ḥaddathanā 'Abdullāhi bnu Abī Sa'dīn wa-ra'aytu ḥādihā l-khabara ba'da dhālika fī ba'di kutubi bni Abī Sa'dīn fa-qābalu bihi mā rawayāhu fa-wajadtuhu muwāfiqan*".

- 22 Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 100–9, sets out the main ways in which the *isnād* in the *Maqātil* integrates narratives.
- 23 The combining of accounts goes back to al-Wāqidi (d. 207/823); cf. Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 48.
- 24 He does not specify which transmission of Abū ‘Ubayda’s account he follows, which suggests they were more or less identical.
- 25 Such cases require a detailed analysis which goes beyond the scope of this book.
- 26 Many other examples of such additions could be given. In one, Abū l-Faraj notes a appendix to an anecdote in which Marwān ibn Abī l-Janūb recites a *qaṣida* in praise of al-Mutawakkil and his three sons, receives a generous reward and immediately produces a poem of thanks, upon which the caliph affirms his intention to continue his patronage of the poet. The compiler introduces the addition with “*dhakara* [‘*ammī*] *mithla hādihā l-khabari sawā’an wa-qāla ba‘da qawlih...*” (*Agh.* XII, 81). The second version portrays the poet acquiring further largesse from al-Mutawakkil in the form of an estate already promised him by al-Wāthiq and a tax-farm. Another example concerns two different versions of Muṭi’ ibn Iyās sending Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād a poem inviting him to join him in a drinking session. In the first version the poem has four lines and the anecdote closes with a comment from al-Mahdī, while the second version lengthens the poem, which alludes to it being the season of the Pilgrimage, but omits al-Mahdī’s remark (XIII, 295–7).
- 27 As outlined by Schoeler, “Die Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung”, 227–8.
- 28 Fleischhammer (*Quellenuntersuchungen*, 36 and 132) argues that the text in question is al-Kharrāz’s version of al-Madā’ini’s book of this name, and Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī was merely a transmitter. Schoeler (“Die Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung”, 214–5), citing al-Mas’ūdī, points out that al-Madā’ini was one of those scholars who did not give their books a fixed form but studied them with students. He also observes that up till the fourth/tenth century the distinction between transmitters and authors is by no means always clear, since the transmitters expanded, abridged or adapted the material they had read with their teachers (*ibid.*, 222). Ibn al-Nadīm does not mention a *Kitāb al-jawābāt* among al-Yazīdī’s books.
- 29 He gives a variant from the other source in the course of the *khabar*.
- 30 See pp. 34–5, 41 for the transmission of performance indications and pp. 61–2, 71–2 for poetry.
- 31 I have discussed this section of the *Aghānī* in more detail in “The ‘genuine’ Ash‘ab. The relativity of fact and fiction in early *adab* texts” in Stefan Leder (ed.), *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature*, Wiesbaden 1998, 94–117.
- 32 This passage is discussed in A. Khairallah, “Collective Composition and the Collector’s Art. Observations on the Dīwān of Maḡnūn Lailā”, *La signification du Bas Moyen Age dans l’histoire et la culture du monde musulman*, Actes du 8me congrès de l’Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants (Aix-en-Provence – Septembre 1976), Aix-en-Provence 1978, 121–2.
- 33 *A-tirbayya min a’lā ma’addin huḍitumā/ajiddā l-bukā inna l-tafarruqa bākiri*; the author of this line appears to be unknown.
- 34 Some of the subsequent indications of variants in the anecdote can also be considered to contribute to the narrative effect. For instance, the interpolated note “*kadhā ruwiya ‘an Yūnusa wa-lam yadhkurhu l-bāqūn*”, by making the reader wait for the text of Ma’bad’s song, increases his interest in what it will be. Like the combining of versions of a narrative, the mentioning of variants, carefully orchestrated, can have an aesthetic dimension.
- 35 For other instances of a new *isnād* interrupting a narrative which has just begun and creating varying degrees of suspense see *Agh.* VIII, 208–9; IX, 111, 251–2; XII, 113;

- XV, 341; XXI, 108. Sometimes the introduction of the second version entails a change from third to first person narration. Here, too, a literary effect is achieved, for the events when recounted by an eye-witness are brought closer to the reader.
- 36 See above pp. 63–6.
- 37 The condition referred to was presumably set out in the earlier part of Abū l-Faraj's preface, which has been lost and replaced with a third party's description of the *Aghānī* (I, 1–3). Abū l-Faraj's own preface begins halfway down p. 3, with an initial "*qāla mu'allifū hādhā l-kitāb*".
- 38 *Ḥashw* has both these senses; see Abu Hilāl al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-ṣinā'atayn*, 54–5, and Kanazi, *Studies in the Kitāb aṣ-Ṣinā'atayn*, 78.
- 39 He returns to this later (*Agh.* IX, 344), when he affirms that no caliph between al-Wāthiq and al-Mu'taḍid composed anything memorable. But he does not condemn al-Šūlī, his source for their compositions, for portraying them as musicians; evidently he regards al-Šūlī as simply mistaken, but not misled by a general theory about caliphs and music, such as he imputes to Ibn Khurdādhbih.
- 40 Al-Aḥwaṣ al-Anṣārī, *Shi'r*, coll. and, ed. 'Ādil Sulaymān Jamāl, 2nd edn, Cairo 1411/1990, no. 61.
- 41 Conceivably it was an elaboration on elements of the stories of al-Aḥwaṣ's meetings with Sallāmat al-Qass in Medina and later in Damascus, when she asked him to introduce al-Gharīd surreptitiously into Yazīd's presence so that she could hear him sing (*Agh.* VIII, 337 ff.).
- 42 Similar instances are I, 236, commenting on a report about the correspondence in verse between 'Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a and one of his loves, al-Thurayyā, who had been married off to another during his absence; X, 40, on Durayd ibn al-Šimma's supposed abandonment of his comrades during a battle; and XXI, 268, on the quotation of a line by Hudba ibn Khashram in Medina.
- 43 Abū l-Faraj here repeats the distinction he has made earlier in al-Aḥwaṣ's profile between the man and the poet; see above, p. 82. Sallūm (*Dirāsāt Kitāb al-aghānī*, 143) speaks of Abū l-Faraj here giving free rein to his fanaticism in attacking al-Aḥwaṣ so violently through the reports he quotes. But he also recognises Abū l-Faraj's fairmindedness in evaluating the poet's oeuvre on its own.
- 44 See above, p. 81.
- 45 For al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī's politico-religious beliefs, see Wadād al-Qāḍi, *Al-kaysāniya fī l-ta'rīkh wa-l-adab*, Beirut 1974, 322–56.
- 46 The *Aghānī* omits a few of the *akhbār* which Abū l-Faraj quotes in the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyīn* on the subject, even though the general effect of the two treatments is the same; see my "Songs or Sticky Ends", 407–9. Interestingly, the *Aghānī* says that 'Abdallāh "died" (*tuwuffiya*; *Agh.* XXI, 124) in prison, while the *Maqātil*, quoting the same authorities, says he "was killed" (*qutila*; *Maqātil*, 183).
- 47 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 1342–3, quoting Ibn Hishām, gives a short elegy by al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib on the Meccans killed at Badr, but it does not mention Nubayh or his brother by name.
- 48 Such verdicts have their parallel in those delivered about some poor-quality poetry which Abū l-Faraj therefore does not quote at length; see above, p. 64.
- 49 Here, too, there are parallels with the treatment of poetry; see above, pp. 63–64.
- 50 *EI*² art. "Al-Ḳādisiyya" (L. Vecchia Vaglieri) gives *Yawn 'Amās* as the third day.
- 51 As will be seen, there are several occasions in the *Aghānī* where an article on a poet leads into the account of a battle or conflict. But Abū l-Faraj here declines to involve himself in an excursus which would have cost him much space. (Al-Ṭabarī devotes about 100 pages to the subject.) It is also worth noting that the *ayyām* treated in the *Aghānī* are inter-Arab conflicts, in almost all cases.
- 52 The *isnād* for the first version is Muḥammad ibn al-'Abbās al-Yazīdī > Sulaymān ibn Abi Shaykh > Ṣāliḥ ibn Sulaymān > Ibrāhīm ibn Jabala ibn Makhrama al-Kindi, and

- for the second ‘Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Akhfash and al-Yazidi > al-Sukkari > Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb > Abu ‘Ubayda > Ru’ba ibn al-‘Ajāj and Qatāda > Abū ‘Ubayda > Ru’ba.
- 53 The *isnāds* of the two versions are al-Ḥaramī ibn Abī l-‘Alā’ > al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār > Muṣ‘ab ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Zubayrī and ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Rāzi > Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kharṣāz > Ibn al-A‘rābī, respectively.
- 54 Some have been given above in the section on the indication of sources.
- 55 Neubauer, “Die acht ‘Wege’”, 381–4, discusses Iṣḥāq’s knowledge of Greek musical practice.
- 56 Another case, in the domain of poetry, where he is concerned to illustrate an opinion concerns the state of al-Buḥturi’s *diwān*. Abū l-Faraj contests al-Buḥturi’s son’s claim that the reason why so little of his father’s *hiǰā’* survived was that he ordered it to be destroyed on his deathbed. The compiler affirms that he was not gifted for the genre and quotes two fragments to support his view, but then adds that the poet composed a couple of good pieces of invective, from one of which he gives several lines, before observing: “It is a long poem. And my only purpose in mentioning it was to make known his style in this genre” (*Agh.* XXI, 39).
- 57 At the same time the version Abū l-Faraj quotes is unusual. It comes from an informant in Ahwaz, ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Iṣḥāq, the nephew of Dāhir ibn Nūḥ, who is not otherwise quoted in the *Aghānī* (Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 4) and it deviates from the account in Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Khalaf Waki’, *Akhbār al-quḍāt* (ed. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, Cairo 1366/1947, II, 194–5). There Shurayḥ refuses to accept al-Ḥasan’s testimony in the case about the ownership of a coat of mail, because a son may not bear witness in his father’s favour, even though in this case the father is ‘Alī, the caliph. In the *Aghānī* the Jew is so impressed by Shurayḥ’s probity that he converts to Islam and becomes a faithful supporter of ‘Alī; instead of the story illustrating a rule about the admissibility of evidence, it portrays the moral excellence of the Muslims, especially ‘Alī who, as caliph, bows to an unfavourable decision from a judge.
- 58 The first *isnād* includes the well-known scholars Khalifa ibn Khayyāt and (presumably) Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī, as well as the Companion Jarir ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Bajālī. The second *isnād* arrives at Jarir ibn ‘Abdallāh by a more obscure path, none of the transmitters to al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad being among Abū l-Faraj’s usual authorities.
- 59 They mention al-Nu‘mān ibn al-Mundhir al-Akbar, surnamed al-A‘war, who renounced the world and abandoned his palace for a wandering life. But this al-Nu‘mān was the son of Imru’ al-Qays; he lived in the early fifth century. There was another al-Nu‘mān ibn al-Mundhir between al-A‘war and ‘Adī ibn Zayd’s contemporary; cf. art. “Lakhmids” in *EI*² (Irfan Shahid).
- 60 See above, pp. 42–44 and 60–63.
- 61 There is at least one similar appeal to the reader to cooperate in providing information for the book. It concerns the names of the authors of the lyrics of some of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s songs and reports about them, which Abū l-Faraj has not been able to discover but which he hopes to come across later on. “But if I do not find them out, and one of those who copies [lit. “writes”] this book knows them, then it is the least he can do to undertake to record them, not finding this limited task an imposition. For he will have acquired a plethora of useful information which we have gone to great pains to collect for him and his fellows in this book, and he will have gained it without any effort or fatigue. And the merit of [including this supplementary information] will accrue to him when it is ascribed to him, while the disgrace of [not having been able to find it], for which we offer our excuses, will be removed from us, God willing” (*Agh.* IX, 251).

- 62 It is one of al-Šūlī's specimens of royal compositions which Abū l-Faraj has little confidence in; IX, 323, and cf. IX, 300, 305.
- 63 Her name is given as Bunān in the *Tajrīd al-aghānī*, 2375, 2378, and as Banān in *Agh. VIII*, 357; there are other examples of these forms. But al-Tawhīdī, *Al-baṣā'ir wa-l-dhakḥā'ir* (ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī, Beirut 1408/1988), IX, 214, states unequivocally that her name is the plural of *bint*.
- 64 The text has *khabarihā*; I read *khabarihimā*, as in the preceding line.
- 65 Ibn al-Jarrāḥ was highly thought of as a scholar; Ibn al-Nadīm notes his carefulness in reading through and correcting whatever he had written (*Fihrist*, 142).
- 66 See above, p. 44.
- 67 For instance, *Agh. I*, 211, where Abū l-Faraj prefers Ibn al-Kalbī's identification of al-Thurayyā, one of the ladies 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a mentioned in his poetry, to al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār's, and XV, 58, for an instance of Abū l-Faraj's not automatically rejecting Ibn Khurdaḍbih's information (about the singing-girl Baṣbaṣ) on the grounds that another *khavar* contradicts part of it.
- 68 See above, p. 62.
- 69 For other instances of arguments based on psychological considerations, see above p. 45 (about the accounts of the Top Hundred), pp. 53–4 (on 'Arib's critics) and p. 84 (on Ibn al-Mu'tazz's critics).
- 70 Khālid al-Qasrī is the only subject of an *Aghānī* article to be systematically cursed; see XXII 2, 5, 14, 15, 17, 18, 29. The next most unpopular figure, 'Imrān ibn Ḥiṭṭān, is cursed only half as often (XVIII, 109, 111, 112).

Why Khālid deserves this special treatment is not explained in so many words. His article in the *Aghānī*, although occasioned by the role he played in his youth as a poet and a go-between for 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a and various ladies, accords most place to his deeds and words during his political career, as relayed by the far from favourable al-Madā'ini. And reports, for instance of him inciting a visitor to curse 'Alī or boasting that he was prepared to move the Ka'ba from Mecca to Damascus (XXII, 16), may have been justification enough for condemning him, in Abū l-Faraj's eyes. But there is a hint of a more specific reason for the author's hostility in the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyin* (p. 133), which begins the account of the events leading up to Zayd ibn 'Alī's revolt and death as follows: "*Kāna awwalu amri Zaydin bni 'Aliyin ṣalawātu llāhi 'alayhi anna Khālida bna 'Abdallāhi l-Qasriyi dda'ā mālan qibala Zaydin bni 'Alī*". This remark tallies with the account of the outbreak of Zayd's uprising given by al-Ya'qūbī (*Tārīkh*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma, 2 vols, Leiden 1969 [1883], II, 387–91). According to that, when Khālid had been deposed by Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik and imprisoned by the new governor of Iraq, Yūsuf ibn 'Umar ibn Hubayra, he claimed under torture to have deposited a large sum with Zayd. Hishām reported the accusation to Zayd and the two men quarrelled. The caliph thereupon sent Zayd to Iraq. There Yūsuf confronted him with Khālid, who retraced his accusation. Yūsuf immediately sent Zayd away from Kufa, but he returned there and the Shī'a rallied round him, leading to the revolt. The implication is that had Khālid not made his false claim, Zayd would never have gone to Iraq, and he might well have ended his days peacefully in Syria. As a Zaydī, Abū l-Faraj was no doubt more affected by this than by Khālid's repression of Shī'i uprisings while he was governor of Iraq (for which see *EI*², art. "Khālid b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī" (G. R. Hawting)).

Khālid was in any case an enigmatic figure, who gave rise to different interpretations by historians; cf. the detailed analysis in Stefan Leder, *Das Korpus al-Haiṭam ibn 'Adī* (st. 207/822). *Herkunft, Überlieferung, Gestalt früher Texte der aḥbār-Literatur*, Frankfurt 1991, 141–95.

- 71 This is a reference to the *ḥadīth*: "*Man kadhaba 'alayya muta'ammidan fa-l-yatabawwa' maq'adahū minā l-nār*", in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-musnad*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad 'Āshūr,

- Cairo 1394/1974, III, 116 (transmitted by Anas ibn Mālik). Abū l-Faraj's version is slightly different: *Man qāla 'alā rasūli llāhi mā lam yaqul fa-qad tabawwa'a maq'adahū minā l-nār*.
- 72 Al-Walid was killed in 126/744 (*GAS* II, 317), while Salm, who died in 186/802, made his name in the time of al-Mahdī and al-Hādī (*EI*², art. "Salm al-Khāsir" (G. H. van Gelder)).
- 73 Al-Samaw'al is dated to the mid-sixth century (*GAS* II, 249–50), and al-A 'shā to the late sixth and early seventh century, so this observation of Abū l-Faraj's is correct. 'Amr ibn 'Āmir Muzayqiyā was associated with the legends surrounding the bursting of the dam of Mārib, placed by most mediaeval Muslim historians in the first three centuries AD (*EI*², art. "Mārib" (W. W. Müller)).
- 74 The date of Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm's death is given as 620 AD (*GAS* II, 285). Qays ibn Shammās is mentioned in the Appendix to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, III, 2403. His son Thābit was a Companion of the Prophet.
- 75 A similar case concerns the name of the owner of the singer Baṣbaṣ, which is given variously as Yaḥyā ibn Nafis and Nafis ibn Muḥammad. Abū l-Faraj considers Yaḥyā ibn Nafis more correct (*Agh*. XV, 27), a view substantiated by the *akhbār* he includes, which refer to Baṣbaṣ as Ibn Nafis's *jāriya*.
- 76 Or al-Ḥasan ibn Yaḥyā al-Mirdāsī; the editors note that both names occur (VI, 74, n.1.). Fleischhammer (*Quellenuntersuchungen*, 30) mentions only the form "al-Ḥusayn".
- 77 The grazing grounds of Laylā's tribe, Murra, were contiguous with those of Fazāra (*EI*², art. "Murra, Banū" (Ella Landau-Tasseron)), whereas Su'dā belonged to Quraysh.
- 78 The recourse to poetry in conjunction with prose narrative to provide and correct historical information has parallels in, for instance, Japanese literature; see Earl Miner, *Comparative Poetics. An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature*, Princeton N.J. 1990, 139.
- 79 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 94–109, reports under 50/670–1 how al-Farazdaq, in flight from Ziyād ibn Abih after he had composed poems publicising his injustice, took refuge with a Christian woman in Qasīmat Kāzima, on the road from Basra to Bahrain, and she helped him to escape his pursuers. Abū l-Faraj's apparent confusion here is discussed below.
- 80 [Al-Ḥusayn ibn Yaḥyā al-Mirdāsī > Ḥammād ibn Ishāq] > Ishāq al-Mawṣilī > Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī > Siyāt; [Ishāq] > Ibn Jāmi' > Yūnus [al-Kātib]; Ismā'il ibn Yūnus [al-Shī'i] > 'Umar ibn Shabba > Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm > Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī > Siyāt and Ibn Jāmi' > Yūnus al-Kātib; al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī [al-Khaṭṭāf] > Aḥmad ibn Sa'id al-Dimashqī > al-Zubayr ibn Bakkkār > Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī (*Agh*. VIII, 208–9).
- 81 The chain of transmission runs: al-Riyāshī > [Muḥammad] ibn Zakariyā al-Ghallābī > Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Taymī > his father > Hishām ibn Sulaymān ibn 'Ikrima ibn Khālid al-Makhzūmī, with an unexplained hiatus between al-Riyāshī and Abū l-Faraj. In this form the *isnād* only occurs here in 'Umar's article. There is one other *khabar* with the sequence of transmitters al-Ghallābī > Hishām ibn Sulaymān al-Makhzūmī, but the link between al-Ghallābī and Abū l-Faraj is al-Khaṭṭāf and Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn al-Marzubān (I, 204).
- 82 *Ayyuhā l-munkihū l-thurayyā suhaylā' 'amraka llāha kayfa yaltaqiyāni*; already quoted I, 122 and 234. It is included in 'Umar ibn Abī Rabi'a, *Diwān*, fragment no. 439.
- 83 In fact it represents an attempt to adapt 'Umar's biography to the conventions of the 'Udhri lovers.
- 84 The first, fantastic, report has the *isnād* Muḥammad ibn Mazayd [ibn Abi l-Azhar] > Ḥammād ibn Ishāq > his father > his grandfather Ibrāhīm (*Agh*. V, 231); the second comes from Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Jawharī and Aḥmad ibn 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Ammār > 'Umar ibn Shabba > Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm > his father (V, 236).

- 85 The “true” account has two *isnāds*: [Abū l-Faraj’s] uncle > al-Khazanbal al-Iṣbahānī – one or more nameless transmitters > al-Madā’inī; and al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī [al-Khaḫfāf] > Ibn Mahdī > Ibn Abī Sa’d > Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Nakha’ī > Ibn al-Khaṣīb al-Kātib (XI, 244). The “mistaken” account comes from al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī [al-Khaḫfāf] > Ibn Abī Sa’d > Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Mughīra > his father > al-Aṣma’ī (XI, 243).
- 86 The sources for the composite account of the romance of Qays and Lubnā are listed IX, 181.
- 87 Ibn Qutayba in fact says that he died at the age of 120 (*Al-shi’r wa-l-shu‘arā’*, 160).
- 88 Aws ibn Maghrā’ al-Sa’dī was a poet of the earliest period of Islam who died during Mu‘āwiya’s caliphate (GAS II, 382).
- 89 GAS II, 246, arguing from the fact that the last caliph with whom he was in contact was Yazid ibn Mu‘āwiya, who died in that year. According to Blachère (*Histoire*, 477), he was in Mecca before the end of ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr’s uprising (73/692) and it is perhaps because of this that the article on him in *EI*² (Albert Arazī) dates his death to c. 79/698–9. But al-Nābigha’s visit to ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr in Mecca, recorded in *Agh.* V, 28–9, is likely to have taken place when the latter had just proclaimed his independence (64/683) and before his support started to crumble.
- 90 The *Lisān al-‘arab* (s.v.) gives several possible meanings, ranging from 10–100 years. It quotes the same line of al-Nābigha to which Abū l-Faraj refers (*thalāthatu ahlina qfiyaytuhum/wa-kāna l-ilāhu huwa l-musta’asā*) but interprets *qarn* to mean 40 years.
- 91 Elsewhere Abū l-Faraj relates the traditional version of the circumstances surrounding the death of Ḥarb and Mirdās; they were killed by the jinn in revenge for them burning down the trees of al-Qurayya, a habitat of the jinn, as a preparation for bringing the land under cultivation. He evidently finds it an unconvincing tale (*Agh.* VI, 341).
- 92 But the poem does not appear in al-‘Abbās ibn Mirdās al-Sulamī, *Diwān*, ed. Yahyā al-Jabbūri, Beirut 1412/1991.
- 93 Between 604 and 611 (*EI*² s.v. (L.Vecchia Vaglieri)). Kennedy (*The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphs*, 27) gives only 611.
- 94 The slip about the date of Dhū Qār does not necessarily invalidate Abū l-Faraj’s point, however, for the start of the Prophet’s mission is customarily dated to 610, so that Mirdās’s death must be put several years earlier.
- 95 Blachère, *Histoire*, 497–8.
- 96 Al-Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, II, 191–3, for ‘Abbād’s relations with Yazid, and II, 392 for Salm’s appointment. Charles Pellat attributes the sources’ hesitation between the two caliphs to the fact that ‘Abbād remained in office after Yazid’s accession (“Le poète Ibn Mufarrig et son oeuvre”, *Mélanges Louis Massignon* t. III, Damascus 1957, 198, n. 4). But that does not explain Abū l-Faraj’s statement about when ‘Abbād was appointed.
- 97 Abū l-Faraj claims that Ibn Mayyāda is in this class along with ‘Umar ibn Laja’, al-‘Ujayf al-‘Uqayli and al-‘Ujayr al-Salūli (*Agh.* II, 262). He also refers to Kuthayyir being in the first Islamic class (IX, 4) and to ‘Adī ibn al-Riqā’ being in the third Islamic class (IX, 307). The three poets mentioned with Ibn Mayyāda belong in the fourth, tenth and fifth classes respectively (Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā’*, 583 n. 2). Kuthayyir and ‘Adī are in the second and seventh classes. Comparing Abū l-Faraj’s references to Ibn Sallām’s ordering of poets with their actual arrangement in the *Ṭabaqāt*, the editor suggests that Abū l-Faraj had muddled the papers on which he had made notes of the *Ṭabaqāt*’s contents, or else that he was suffering from a severe bout of forgetfulness and was perhaps drunk at the time (*Ṭabaqāt*, 47–50).
- 98 This latter suggestion is made by the *Aghānī* editors (*Agh.* II, 262, n. 8), and refuted by Shākir (*Ṭabaqāt*, 50).
- 99 See above, pp. 28–9.
- 100 About the relationship of these poets the *Aghānī* reflects the confusion in the Arabic tradition; cf. *EI*², art. “al-Samaw’al” (Th. Bauer). For while Abū l-Faraj in one place identifies al-Gharīd with al-Samaw’al ibn ‘Ādiyā and sees Sa’ya ibn Ghariḍ as his son

(*Agh.* III, 115), a little later he describes Sa'ya ibn Gharid as being the grandson of al-Samaw'al ibn Gharid ibn 'Ādiyā (III, 129). In the section on Jewish poets, however, he considers Sa'ya ibn Gharid (*pace* the editors, who prefer "'Urayd'") to be al-Samaw'al's brother (XXII, 122).

- 101 It represents a tradition independent of the one found in Ibn Hishām's *Sīra* and al-Ṭabari's *Ta'rikh*.
- 102 It resembles the apparently equally incomplete article on 'Abdallāh ibn Muṣ'ab referred to above (p. 30).
- 103 It is noteworthy that Hassān ibn Thābit's *Dīwān* contains only one fragment of an exchange with Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, a response to Ka'b's elegy of those who fell at Badr (Hassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwān*, no. 246).
- 104 See above, p. 30 and notes 155 and 156 on these passages.
- 105 *Agh.* III, 129, à propos of the poet 'Āmir ibn al-Majnūn, otherwise known as Madraj al-Rih; VI, 174, à propos of the singer Ibn Ṣaghīr al-'Ayn.
- 106 X, 201, about Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil. This promise is followed by two articles on poets whose lines Abū 'Īsā set to music, 'Alī ibn al-Jahm and Abū Dulāma, after either of which the article on Abū 'Īsā could have been expected.
- 107 X, 276, referring to the slanders put about by Ibn al-Mu'tazz's critics.
- 108 My record of cross-references throughout the *Aghānī* confirms this picture. If all references, even those to material close by (apart from performance indications), were counted, the percentage of valid cross-references would be even higher.

I have ignored the subject of song settings in this discussion for two reasons. First, the settings are given within a few pages of being announced, for they are closely linked to their lyrics. Second, as has already been remarked on (see above, p. 42), promises of settings to come are not always fulfilled; this is more often the case than where references to other material are concerned. Given that the performance indications appear to be the most unstable element of the text (see above, p. 32) it is an open question whether Abū l-Faraj failed, or forgot, to track down settings as he intended, or whether they were dropped by later copyists. At all events, the situation with regard to song settings is a special case; I do not believe that it invalidates the general conclusion about Abū l-Faraj's awareness of what the *Aghānī* should contain.

- 109 The editors are presumably following the Būlāq edition (II, 73), which has Abū Hāshim. Elsewhere in the text the name occurs as Abū Hishām al-Bāhili (*Agh.* III, 141, 152, 248 and XIV, 250).
- 110 VI, 242–3 = III, 237–8; VI, 243–4 = III, 169–70; VI, 245–6 = III, 170–1.
- 111 III, 134, 148–9, 151, 170, [177], 180, 189, 193, 197, [200], 226. Page numbers in square brackets here and in similar lists indicate lines of poetry introduced by the word *ṣawt* but not followed by performance indications.
- 112 VI, 208–39. Between the two is a song with words and music by al-Mu'allā ibn Ṭarīf, celebrating the women attending the feast of St Sergius [sic] in Lydda. Waḍḍāh's article has twelve settings and as many poetic fragments introduced by *ṣawt* but void of performance indications. The setting of one of them (VI, 221) Abū l-Faraj intends to mention elsewhere, and it is given XII, 181.
- 113 His name is given as 'Amr ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Khalq (al-Marzubānī, *Mu'jam al-shu'arā'*, 20). He is mentioned in many poems in Bashshār's *Dīwān* (ed. and comm. Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, 4 vols, Cairo 1369/1950–1386/1966): I, 119, 120, 132, 236, 237; II, 46, 48, 312; III, 88, 104, 238, 259, 266, 268.
- 114 See Appendix Two and p. 259. Examples occur in the articles on Ibn Surayj and al-Walid ibn Yazid.
- 115 “*li-annahā munfaridatun bi-dhātihā mustagniyatun ‘an idkhālihā fī ghimārī akhbārihi wa-lahu fī hādhihi l-jāriyati shi’run kathīrun fīhi ghinā’un lahu wa-li-ghayrihi wa-qad sharaṭtu anna l-shay’a min akhbāri l-shu’arā’i [wa] l-mughannīna idhā kānat hādhihi sabīlahu ufriduhu li-allā yaqta’a bayna l-qarā’ini wa-l-naẓ’iri mimma tuḍāfu ilayhi wa-tudkhalu fīhi*”.

- 116 “... *akhbārūn ufrīdat fī mawḍi‘in ṣalāḥat lah*” (*Agh.* VI, 99); “*wa-fī l-khabari ziyādatun wa-qad dhakartuhu fī mawḍi‘in ākhara yaṣlahu lah*” (VI, 132).
- 117 For example, “*akhbārūn tudhkaru fī mawāḍi‘ihā*” (XIII, 109 and 140); “*fī mawāḍi‘a taliqū bihā*” (V, 430).
- 118 See above, p. 29, for the similarities and differences between the two works.
- 119 Although they do not cover the text of the entire Dār al-kutub edition, Guidi’s *Indices* give a sufficient idea of the distribution of characters in the *Aghānī*.
- 120 The mediaeval scholars noticed this. When Yahyā ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Munajjim reports Ishāq’s account of his meeting with al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabī’, in which the musician complains of the brothers’ treatment of him, he remarks that Ishāq does not mention what they had done to him (*Agh.* XVII, 115). (I read “*Banū Hishām*” for the text’s “*Banū Hāshim*”.)
- 121 For more discussion of this point, see below, p. 267–74. The two articles are separated by the reports about the Prophet’s contemporary Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr (XVII, 82–91), Ibn al-Dumayna (93–106) and al-Muḡanna’ al-Kindī (108–9).
- 122 No. 6 is the song introducing the whole article; its setting has already been given (VIII, 279). After the setting of no. 2, Abū l-Faraj announces that the information about that poem will be given in the article about the lampoon contest between al-Akḥṭal and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān. It comes in XV, 104 ff.
- 123 The text has “*kullu akhbāri hā’ulā’i al-mughannīna qad dhukirat. (...) illā ‘Ātika*”.
- 124 The articles are as follows: Mālik ibn Abī l-Samḥ: V, 101–17; ‘Arīb: XXI, 54–89; Aḥmad ibn al-Makki: XVI, 311–16; Ibn Surayj: I, 248–323; al-Gharīd: II, 359–402.
- 125 See above, pp. 45–6.
- 126 This passage is discussed further in Hilary Kilpatrick, “*Akhbār manzūma*: the Romance of Qays and Lubnā in the *Aḡānī*” in Wolfhart Heinrichs und Gregor Schoeler (eds), *Festschrift Ewald Wäagner zum 65. Geburtstag*. Bd. 2: *Studien zur arabischen Dichtung*, Beirut 1994, 350–61.

6 ARTICLES ON SONGS, EVENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- 1 These have been discussed above in Chapter 3.
- 2 The great majority of the titles go back to the manuscript tradition. Some titles of short articles, particularly in the later volumes, have been added by the modern editors, who have usually indicated this by putting them in square brackets. But the division of the material into articles with separate titles is so characteristic of the work that it must go back to the author himself, who ordered the material of the *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyīn* and the *Imā’ al-shawā’ir* in the same way.
- 3 Although the absence of *nasab* in the title may correspond to an absence of genealogy for the subject (many singers, for instance, were slaves or *mawālī* by origin), this is by no means a firm rule. The choice of wording for the titles of articles focussed on people appears arbitrary.

The term *nasab* is conventionally translated “genealogy”. But as recently argued, its meaning was originally much looser, indicating “origin”, “context” or similar concepts (Zoltan Szombathy, “The *nassābah*: anthropological fieldwork in mediaeval Islam”, *Islamic Culture* LXXIII (1999), 65–9). In the *Aghānī* this looser usage is encountered in the titles of the articles on for example, Muḥammad ibn Umayya (*Agh.* XII, 145), Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza ibn Nuṣayr (XV, 356), Ziyād al-A‘jam (XV, 380) and al-Raqāshī (XVI, 245). It is for this reason that I have consistently translated *nasab* as “origin” in the title of articles in Appendix 2.

- 4 The use of titles using words like *khabar* or *dhikr* to introduce different sections of a work is frequent in mediaeval Arabic texts such as histories and *adab* texts. Here, as in many other respects, Abū l-Faraj is working within a tradition.
- 5 This curious name for a group of songs is explained as follows: Ma‘bad heard that Qutayba ibn Muslim had conquered seven impregnable cities or citadels in Khurasan,

- which prompted him to observe that he had composed seven tunes each one of which was harder to master than the citadels were to take (*Agh.* IX, 137).
- 6 As listed (IX, 238–9), the songs are eight in number. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan’s “book” (perhaps it was only a list of songs) does not seem to be referred to anywhere else.
 - 7 Even when several *akhbār* come from the same informant, however, Abū l-Faraj could still have arranged them in a different order from that in his source. This question can be settled in comparisons between the *Aghānī* and its written sources, where they are extant.
 - 8 Some more detailed examinations of *akhbār* in the *Aghānī* and other contemporary or near-contemporary texts already exist. See, for instance, Julia Ashtiany Bray, “*Isnāds* and Models of heroes: Abū Zubayd al-Ṭā’i, Tanūkhī’s sundered lovers and Abū ’l-ʿAnbas al-Ṣaymari”, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* I (1998), 7–30; Andras Hamori, “Exemplum, anecdote and the gentle heart in a text by al-Jahshiyārī”, *Asiatische Studien* L (1996), 363–70; idem, “Tinkering with the text: Two variously related stories in the *Faraj Ba’d al-Shidda*”, in Stefan Leder (ed.), *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature*, Wiesbaden 1998, 61–78.
 - 9 The editors of the Dār al-kutub edition did not realise that this was a separate article, and so they carried over the running title of the previous one, *Akhbār ‘Abādil wanasabuh*, at the top of the pages.
 In giving an article’s page numbers I include the introductory song when it immediately precedes the article itself. This is a departure from the Dār al-kutub system, where articles are considered to begin with a title.
 - 10 Go quickly to visit Zaynab, before the caravan sets off.
 And say, ‘Though you may have grown tired of me,
 yet my heart has not wearied of you.’
 Say too, for she claims falsely that you have wronged her,
 that one only reproaches a person when one has good cause
 (Nuṣayb, *Shiʿr*, no. 6)
 - 11 In the case of the article on Nuṣayb’s poem Abū l-Faraj draws on four informants. But except for the sequences (2)–(3) and (9)–(11) he changes informant from *khabar* to *khabar*.
 - 12 The reprehensibility of naming the beloved in the *nasīb* or in *ghazal* poetry is an issue found in the *Aghānī* articles on many Umayyad poets, particularly those favouring the Hijazi style of love poetry such as ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabi’a. Cf. J.-C. Vadet, *L’esprit courtois en Orient dans les cinq premiers siècles de l’Hégire*, Paris 1968, 126, 133.
 - 13 For example, *Agh.* I, 338, 342–4.
 - 14 Another instance of the same phenomenon can be observed in the article on Qays ibn Dhariḥ (*Agh.* IX, 181–220). See my “*Akhbār manẓūma*”. For further examples, see below, pp. 147–50 and pp. 223–6.
 - 15 ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabi’a, *Diwān*, no. 56.
 For Nu’m’s sake we’ve come to love camping-grounds
 between [the wells of] al-Watā’ir and al-Naq’,
 because they’re on the way to her.
 I urged my camel on for the sake of Dhāt al-Khāl,
 making it move at an exhausting pace,
 lame though it was.
 - 16 Abū l-Faraj has five direct informants for this section. *Akhbār* (4)–(7) all come from the same informant, but the sequence is broken up by the interpolation of songs (4), (7) and at least the setting of (6).
 Another song taken from one of ʿUmar’s poems on Nu’m forms the introduction to a short article in *Agh.* IV, 213–16. The song’s lyrics combine two lines by him with one by a more recent poet (cf. p. 59). There, however, the narrative element is

minimal, and the poetry and songs dominate. Nu‘m is identified as belonging to the Banī Jumāḥ. The only *khavar* common to the two articles is (7), on ‘Umar’s drinking the pool dry.

- 17 It would be tempting to speak of them as a song cycle, but only in songs 1, 2, 5, 8, 9 and perhaps 6 are the settings by Ibn Surayj, while the verses of songs 3 and 9 are not by ‘Umar.
- 18 Ibn Harma’s main article, *Dhikr Ibn Harma wa-akhbārūh wa-nasabūh*, occurs earlier (IV, 367–97).
- 19 The Dār al-kutub editors use the running title *Shay’ min dhikr Ibn Harma* for this section up to p. 264. After the ninth *khavar* they insert three asterisks, explaining (p. 265, note 2) that at that point Abū l-Faraj has finished Ibn Harma’s *akhbār* and returned to those of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili. And in accordance with this interpretation they return to the running title of the previous article, *Nasab Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili wa-akhbārūh*, for p. 265. But although Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili is one of the main characters in anecdote (10), what occasions its presence after the others is that it turns around the setting of Ibn Harma’s poem which is the occasion for the previous *akhbār*. Moreover, Ibrāhīm’s article closes with a clearly marked section (V, 253–8) on his last illness, his death and his entourage’s reactions to it. To insert Ibn Harma’s article just before one final anecdote in Ibrāhīm’s article, as the editors assume Abū l-Faraj has done, would make little sense. For an example of an inserted article, that on Ibn Darrāj, see below, p. 202.
- 20 *Shi‘r Ibn Harma*, no. 99. As the editors of the *Aghānī* remark (V, 259 fn. 5), lines 2 and 3 in the text of the song appear to have been reversed, for the pronoun *-hā* of *ammanahā* refers to the camels in the following line. Moreover, the philological commentary which follows the lines treats l. 3 before l. 2. This is the order I have followed in the translation:

Dwelling of Su‘dā
by the bend in the valley at Malal,
greetings to you, blackened patches
left by the cooking fires and traces of the tents.
I don’t suffer my camel mares to enjoy their new-born foals;
I only buy camels whose fate is soon to be slaughtered.
Whereas with the miser they feel secure,
from me they withhold their milk out of fear.

As printed in *Shi‘r Ibn Harma*, however, the poem has 7 lines, of which 1, 5 and 6 form the lyrics of the song. In that version the *-hā* of *ammanahā* refers to *kam nāqatan* in the previous line.

- 21 Abū l-Faraj has seven informants for this section. He does not draw on any of them for more than two consecutive *akhbār*.
- 22 For more examples of the enhancement of the meaning of individual *akhbār* through their juxtaposition with others, see Hilary Kilpatrick, “Context and the enhancement of the meaning of *akhbār* in the *Kitāb al-aḡānī*”, *Arabica* XXXVIII (1991), 351–68.
- 23 Abū l-Faraj draws on four informants for this article. *Akhbār* (2)–(5) come from the same informant.
- 24 *Diwān Jarīr bi-sharḥ Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb*, ed. Nu‘mān Muḥammad Amin Ṭāhā, Cairo 1969, no. 66, ll. 8, 7.

Those who took your heart with them
as they set out in the morning
have left your eyes still brimming over.
Brushing away their tears, the women said to me,
‘What you have suffered for love,
and what sufferings have been ours!’

This couplet has already been quoted; altogether it occurs in five different places in the *Aghānī* (see p. 241 below). A report in Jarīr's article portrays Ibn Munādhīr citing it together with lines of *fakhr* later in the same poem as evidence of Jarīr's capacity to be frivolous or serious as the occasion requires. Ibn Munādhīr judges Jarīr the finest poet of the early Islamic period (*Agh.* VIII, 59–60; the same report is also found in Abū l-'Atāhiya's article, III, 57–8, with an addition establishing a parallel between Jarīr and Abū l-'Atāhiya, whom Ibn Munādhīr judges the most accomplished *muḥdath* poet.)

The couplet also occurs as a song in Ibn Surayj's article (I, 256–7). The musician is rebuked by the prominent legal scholar 'Aṭā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ for his outrageous attire and behaviour and above all for his subversive songs, which people find attractive. He proposes to perform a specimen song and, if the scholar takes exception to it, to abandon singing altogether. 'Aṭā' agrees to listen, hoping to bring Ibn Surayj's career to an end, but he is caught in his own trap. He finds nothing to criticise and, in an expansive mood, swears not to reply to anyone that day except with the poetry he has just heard. And, sitting in the Maṣjid al-Ḥarām, he replies to all legal queries with Jarīr's lines until the sunset prayer. Thereafter he leaves Ibn Surayj in peace.

- 25 This *khbar* has obvious affinities with the anecdote about Ibn Surayj and 'Aṭā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ summarised in note 24, and it may well be that one is derived from the other.
- 26 If indeed the young man is the *qāḍī* 'Abd al-'Azīz's son, it adds an ironic touch to the story.
- 27 It has been noted (p. 365 n. 78) that Abū l-Faraj sometimes expected his readers to remember material quoted volumes before.
- 28 According to the performance indications (XVI, 316) Iṣḥāq's melody for these lines was one of his best in the *ramal* mode. The one that Ash'ab sang to Sālim ibn 'Abdallāh was presumably the older setting by Ibn Surayj which so charmed 'Aṭā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ.
- 29 Three informants are named. One of them provides *akhbār* (1)–(3) and (5).
- 30 When I see Su'dā's beauty it touches my heart
 And when I glimpse one of her companions I weep.
 Now that the time for departure is at hand, say to Su'dā
 'Tell me, by your life, what you'd have me do.'
- 31 This passage has been discussed above (p. 115) as an example of Abū l-Faraj's comments about the accuracy of information.
- 32 Another short article portraying reactions, some offended, others humorous, to 'Umar's *ghazal* is XV, 262–5 (under the editors' running title *Dhikr Hāshim ibn Sulaymān wa-ba'ḍ akhbārīh*, which covers not only the section on Hāshim, a singer (pp. 251–4) but also one on the *rida* in Bahrain (pp. 254–62). In that article the lady is Zaynab bint Mūsā al-Jumāhī. She is also accorded a passage (I, 91–105) in the main article on 'Umar, which includes more *akhbār* and songs devoted to her. The naming of prominent women in love poetry is a recurrent theme in 'Umar's article (I, 61–248).
- 33 There is no reference to Jarīr in these *akhbār* on his love poetry; Abū l-Faraj has not included in this section Ibn Munādhīr's judgement of his poetic gifts which occasions the quotation of the verses in Jarīr's main article.
- 34 For the text of the poem, which starts "*ammā l-qatā...*", see above, p. 58.
- 35 Abū l-Faraj had a different informant for each *khbar*.
- 36 *Khbar* (1) is put together from accounts transmitted by four different informants, one of whom, together with a fifth informant, provides (2). (3) comes from a sixth informant.
- 37 Here and elsewhere, verses are only designated "Songs" when their setting is given. It is not enough for them to be portrayed as being sung in an anecdote.
- 38 Al-Jāhīz, who quotes lines 2 and 4, names the poet as Khuzaz ibn Lawdhān, and gives a variant "*l-'adūwa*" for "*l-rijāla*" (Al-Jāhīz, *Al-Ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, 2nd

edn, Cairo 1385/1965–1389/1989, IV, 363–4). The poet is addressing his wife, who grudges his horse the milk he gives it; he accuses her of wanting to be taken captive in a raid.

Whose encampment have I recognised at Shurbub?
Those who dwell there are gone, but traces of their stay can still be seen.
The enemy will surely find a way to you, so trace round your eyes with Kohl
and put henna on your hands.
If they take me by force, I'll be one of those bound
by a thong to a stirrup, led alongside a horse.
Your mount will be a young camel bearing a litter,
but mine that day will be the ostrich's son.

The commentators differ about the last expression, interpreting it as a shadow, the sole of the foot (in which case the poet would be a captive, led alongside his capturer), or the name of the poet's horse (in which case he is riding out to attack the enemy) (*Agh.* XII, 155–6; *Ḥayawān*, IV, 364, n. 1 and 2).

- 39 Marzolph, *Arabia ridens. Die humoristische Kurzprosa der frühen adab-Literatur im internationalen Traditionsgeflecht*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, II, no. 428, mentioning a Romanian version.

- 40 He who kisses another whose lips he has desired
commits no crime.
He'll have his reward in heaven.
And if he kisses again, God
will weigh down further the scale of his good deeds,
wiping out his sins with them (*Agh.* XI, 169).

The setting was composed by the 'Abbāsid *diva* 'Arīb.

- 41 This account is also found in Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Al-'iqd al-farīd*, VIII, 137–41, going back to the same source, Ḥammād al-Rāwīya; in both texts Ḥammād claims to have heard the tale from 'Umar himself. Apart from not being introduced by a song, the 'Iqd version has some variants. For example, it simply ascribes Abū Mushir's quotation of a line describing the sweetness of the hunter's conversation to a nameless "poet", while the *Aghānī* mentions Abū Dhu'ayb. It alters the order of events in Abū Mushir's meeting with the hunter, and only has him/her declaim the first line of the couplet which he/she sings in the *Aghānī*, while what he/she sings in the 'Iqd is a song with lyrics by Jarīr. It omits the 'Udhri's final couplet praising 'Umar, and some other life-like details of the narrative which I have had to leave out of my summary, notably the girl's mother's objection to the wedding taking place without proper preparation. The 'Iqd version occurs in the last book, devoted to *fukāhāt wa-mulāḥ* (Jokes and Pleasant Stories).

- 42 Some short articles on 'Umar have already been presented. See below, pp. 228–33, for a discussion of the main article on him. An anecdote in that article (*Agh.* I, 145) where 'Umar pays the dowry for a penniless young man could have provided the basis for this story.

- 43 The *Aghānī* includes a few other accounts of this entertaining type, however, such as the reuniting of al-Aḥwās with Sallāma after Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik had bought the singer and taken her to Syria. That anecdote and Abū l-Faraj's criticism of it as not genuine (IX, 133–4) have been discussed above (p. 106).

Another case of a couple of lovers being reunited through the intervention of influential personalities is at the very end of Qays ibn Dhariḥ's article, where Ibn Abī 'Atīq, accompanied by al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, goes to see Lubnā's husband and gets him to divorce Lubnā so that Qays can marry her again and live happily ever afterwards (IX, 219–20).

- 44 But this early example of the motif of a woman dressed as a man, pursuing a typically masculine activity and composing poetry, could conceivably have its origin in

- a phenomenon of a certain bedouin milieu, if the female transvestites observed in southern Iraqi tribes in the 1950s have a parallel in the early Islamic period (cf. Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch, “Transvestiten bei Arabischen Stämmen”, *Sociologus* N.F. 6 (1) (1956), 126–37).
- 45 In fact it represents a direct challenge to the *ḥadīth al-‘ishq*: “*Man ‘ashīqa fa-‘affa fa-katama fa-māta fa-huwa shahīd*” (He who loves, remains chaste, conceals his passion and dies, dies as a martyr), especially in its variant form: “*Man ‘ashīqa wa-katama wa-‘affa wa-ṣabara ghafara llāhu lahu wa-adkhalahu l-janna*” (If anyone loves, conceals his passion, remains chaste and endures, God will forgive him and allow him to enter Paradise) (quoted in e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbin wa-nuzhat al-mushtāqin*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Ubayd, Cairo 1375/1956, pp. 117, 180). See, on this *ḥadīth* (which is absent from the canonical collections), its origin and its place in love theory, Vadet, *L’esprit courtois*, 307–16, 459–63. As is clear from the contexts in which Ibn al-Qayyim quotes it, it was applied to heterosexual as well as homosexual love.
- 46 ‘Umar’s appearance as a story-teller belongs to a tradition of portraying poets as entertainers which developed in the third/ninth century (cf. Aboubakr Chraïbi, “Classification des traditions narratives arabes par ‘conte-type’: application à l’étude de quelques rôles de poète”, *Bulletin d’études orientales* L (1998), 54). This no doubt served to contemporary readers as a sign that the whole *khavar* was not to be taken seriously.
- 47 Brünnow included this article in his vol. XXI of the *Aghāni* (260–3) with other material absent from the Būlāq edition, even though Būlāq’s vol. XI, 55–7 prints it. Brünnow may have missed it because there is no title to introduce it.
- 48 Abū l-Faraj has four informants for these *akhbār*, two of whom together transmit the first four of them.
- 49 *EI*², art. “al-Mar’a (2)” (J. Chelhod). The marriage of a man to his widowed step-mother is known as *nikāḥ al-maqt* (the loathsome marriage).
- 50 Articles devoted to the subject of a poem are rare but not unknown; one example is the one on ‘Ā’isha bint Ṭalḥa (*Agh.* XI, 176–94), with lyrics by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt.
- 51 The running title “*Dhikr Ādam ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wa-akhbārūhi*” continues for this very short section and the one following it, which is on a song with lyrics by al-Aḥwās (XV, 292–7).
- 52 I read “*wa-lammā ḥajja*”, following Ibn Wāṣil, *Tajrid al-aghāni*, 1656, in preference to the *Agh.*’s “*wa-lammā raja’a*”.
- 53 *Shi’r Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya*, 51 (no. 13 of the pieces ascribed to Yazīd):
A-lā yā ṣāḥi li-l-‘ajabi / da’awtuka thumma lam tujibi
ilā l-qaynāti wa-l-ladh / dhāti wa-l-ṣahbā’i wa-l-ṭarabi
wa-bāṭiyatin mukallalatin / ‘alayhā sādātu l-‘arabi
wa-fihinna llatī tabalat / fu’ādaka thumma lam tatubi
- The tone of the poem is obviously provocative, but whether it is intended to allude to a specific incident in al-Ḥusayn’s biography I have not been able to discover. The editor of *Shi’r Yazīd* casts doubt on the authenticity of the verses for several reasons. First, al-Ḥusayn was just as likely to recognise the smell of wine as Ibn ‘Abbās was. Second, when Yazīd visited the Hijaz in 51, 52 and 53, he had not yet been designated his father’s successor, so there was no motive for al-Ḥusayn to visit him. Third, al-Ḥusayn was more than twenty years older than Yazīd, which makes it very unlikely that Yazīd would have offered him wine. And finally, al-Ḥusayn was unlikely to accept that Yazīd perform a reprehensible act like drinking wine in his presence (*Shi’r Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya*, 51).
- 54 The other is *Agh.* XVII, 209–13, following lyrics in which Yazīd, on campaign against the Byzantines, expresses his forebodings when receiving news of Mu‘āwiya’s last illness.
- 55 “*Tabitu sukārā min Umayyata nūwaman / wa-bi-l-Ṭaffi qatlā mā yanāmu ḥamimuhā*”; *Dīwān Abī Dahbal al-Jumālī. Riwayāt Abī ‘Amr al-Shaybānī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm ‘Abd al-Muḥsin, Najaf 1392/1972, no. 40. The *Dīwān* has “*al-nashāwā*” instead of “*sukārā*”.

- 56 The differences between al-Ḥusayn's treatment in the *Aghānī* and in the *Maqātil al-Ṭalibīyīn* are discussed in Kilpatrick, "Songs or Sticky Ends", 411–14.
- 57 Abū l-Faraj has five informants for it; (1) to (4) come from the same source.
- 58 S. IX, 14: "Qātīlūhum yu'adhhdhibhumu llāhu bi-aydikum wa-yukhzihim wa-yanṣurkum 'alayhim wa-yushfi ṣudūra qawmīn mu'minīna wa-yudhhib khayṣa qulūbihim" (Fight them, and God will chastise them at your hands and degrade them, and He will help you against them, and bring healing to the breast of a people who believe, and He will remove the rage within their hearts; Arberry's translation).
- 59 This incident is one of a number in which Khālīd ibn al-Walīd is represented as following his own rather savage instincts rather than obeying the orders of the Prophet or his successors; cf. *EI*², art. "Khālīd ibn al-Walīd" (P. Crone). It occurred just after the Meccans had submitted to Muḥammad and he had adopted a conciliatory policy towards them (Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate*, 42–3).
- 60 The parody of the *nasīb* encountered in early 'Abbāsīd poetry, especially that of Abū Nuwās, often includes the quotation of a line from a genuine *nasīb* at the end of a wine-song (Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry. Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition*, Oxford 1997, 47–52). The poet of *khābar* (8), Sulaymān ibn Abī Dubākīl, is said to have lived in the Umayyad period. The fragment of his in the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām (no. 550) is an example of a conventional *nasīb*.
- 61 Fleischhammer, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 77–8; 86–7.
- 62 Abū 'Ubayda, *Naqā'id Jarīr wa-l-Farazdaq*, 83–108 (83–97 for the parallel to the *Aghānī* account).
- 63 For the general background to the conflict, the subsequent wanderings of 'Abs and the bias in the *Naqā'id*'s presentation, see *EI*², art. "Dāḥīs" (J. A. Bellamy).
- 64 For al-Ṭabarī's account see *Ta'rikh*, I, 1285–359; for Ibn Hishām's, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen 1858, I, 427–62.
- 65 These are *T. I*, 1297 ll. 1–7 and 10–15; the first passage names the sources which give the number of those who set out with the prophet as 313, and the second passage mentions other figures, all close to 313.
- 66 The story of Zaynab and Abū l-'Āṣī, whom the Prophet appreciated as a son-in-law even though he did not convert when his wife did, and especially the difficulties they faced after Badr, take up some space in al-Ṭabarī (I, 1346–51). Abū l-Faraj is following his anthologising bent in choosing this one incident.
- 67 As his profile (*Agh.* IV, 330) explains.
- 68 Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, III, 47–51.
- 69 For the meaning of the terms used for the furniture, *sarīr*, *wisāda* and *kursī*, and their relationship to etiquette, see J. Sadan, *Le mobilier au Proche Orient médiéval*, Leiden 1976, 36–8, 103–5 and 127–8.
- 70 The detail of the corpses clad in brocade evidently caught the imagination, for it also occurs in the *Iqd al-farīd*'s independent account of al-Saffāḥ's killing the Umayyads (V, 213), where the bodies are thrown into the desert.
- 71 Al-Azdī, *Ta'rikh al-Mawṣil* (ed. 'Alī Ḥabība, Cairo 1387/1967, 155) dates al-Saffāḥ's audience and bloodbath of (3) and (13) to 134, whereas Dāwūd ibn 'Alī died in 133/751. Sulaymān ibn 'Alī was governor of Basra from 133/750–1 to 139/56, and (10) could have happened some time into that period.
- 72 There are parallels, however, in other accounts. Dāwūd ibn 'Alī's audience on the way to Medina and the names of the Umayyads present are mentioned in Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Al-ta'rikh, bi-riwāyat Baqī ibn Khālīd*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār, Beirut 1414/1993, 331. 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan intervenes with Dāwūd ibn 'Alī for some Umayyads in al-Azdī, *Ta'rikh al-Mawṣil*, 141, but without success. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, Cairo 1380–1/1960–1, II, 341–3, includes the account of the young Umayyad's appeal to Sulaymān ibn 'Alī.

- 73 This section is probably one of those in the *Aghānī* most closely connected with the compiler's personal history. As a descendant of the Umayyads, Abū l-Faraj no doubt felt pride in their political success in Spain, which culminated in 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad's proclamation of himself as caliph in 316/929, and the final *khbar* gives him the chance to allude to it. The two incidents portraying 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan's intervention on behalf of some Umayyads must also have been congenial to Abū l-Faraj, given his own (Zaydī) Shī'ī convictions.
It is also noteworthy that although the section is devoted to the Umayyads killed by the 'Abbāsids, two of them are depicted as being spared – as was Abū l-Faraj's ancestor.
- 74 In the *Agh.* the name is vocalised Jinān; I follow the critical edition of Abū Nuwās's *Diwān*, vol. IV, ed. Gregor Schoeler, Wiesbaden 1402/1982, and Ewald Wagner, *Abū Nuwās. Eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen 'Abbāsidenzeit*, Wiesbaden 1964, 39–51.
- 75 Abū l-Faraj draws on six informants for these *akhbār*.
- 76 Abū l-Faraj names four informants for these *akhbār*, the first of which is a combined version.
- 77 One of Abū l-Faraj's sources (VI, 254–5) names the governor of the Hijaz to whom Aymān appeals as 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, which would date the incident to between 87/706 and 93/711–2 (*EI*¹, art. "'Omar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz" (K. V. Zetterstéen)).
- 78 Al-Aḥwaš's main article demonstrates a similar limited interest in his poetry on the part of composers; eight songs are mentioned in the course of 45 pages.
- 79 Ten informants are given for the *akhbār*.
- 80 Cf. Ewald Wagner's typology of Abū Nuwās *akhbār*, "Die *Aḥbār* Abi Nuwās in den *Diwānen*" in Leder, *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature*, 275–80.
- 81 Abū l-Faraj draws on four informants for this section. Cf. the discussion of it in Susanne Enderwitz, *Liebe als Beruf. Al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf und das Gazal*, Beirut 1995, 97–101.
- 82 See the discussion of different versions of this anecdote in Thomas Bauer, "Al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf: Ein literaturgeschichtlicher Sonderfall und seine Rezeption", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 88 (1998), 89–95.
- 83 The three-line poem includes the lyrics of the song which introduces the article (*Agh.* XVII, 66).
- 84 As is clear from the anecdote, the expression denotes not so much al-'Abbās's advancing years (although the fear of being reproached for aging is a familiar motif in Arabic love poetry) as Fawz's boredom and exasperation with her lover.
- 85 In practice Abū Nuwās is not introduced, but that is because the *Aghānī* does not contain the article Abū l-Faraj meant to write on him; cf. above, p. 3.
- 86 She is said to have been the wife of a Basran notable (Régis Blachère, "Le cas Baššār", in idem, *Analecta*, Damascus 1975, 590). In connection with the *Aghānī* article on her and Bashshār the problem of whether the 'Abda the poet mentions in his verses is an ideal figure or not (cf. Schoeler, "Bashshār ibn Burd, Abū l-'Atāhiyah, Abū Nuwās" 282) need not be discussed.
- 87 The expression is that of Enderwitz, *Liebe als Beruf*, 69.
- 88 Four informants provide the *akhbār* for this article. There are of course many references to homoeroticism and homosexuality in the sections of the *Aghānī* set in the 'Abbāsīd period, but I have found no other treatment of these themes in a separate article.
- 89 For this article Abū l-Faraj names four informants; in particular he draws on a book on the couple compiled by Hārūn, the son of the vizir Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt. The article is noteworthy for the rare glimpse it gives of the Kufan musical world before the Hijazi tradition was imported into Iraq by al-Mahdi.

- 90 An article which resembles this one in several ways is “*Akhbār Danānir wa-akhbār ‘Aqīd*” (The accounts about Danānir and those about ‘Aqīd; *Agh.* XVIII, 65–72).
- 91 Five informants are named for this section.
- 92 The Sufyānid (*al-Sufyānī*), that is, a descendant of the caliph Mu‘āwīya’s father Abū Sufyān, appears in apocalyptic *ḥadīth* as the rival and opponent of the Mahdī. The emergence of this figure, especially among Syrian Muslims, followed the defeat of an Umayyad insurgent against the ‘Abbāsids in 133–4/751 (W.M.Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 1973, 168; Wilferd Madelung, “The Sufyānī between tradition and history”, *Studia Islamica* LXIII (1986), 5–48).
- 93 For a recent discussion of the historicity of this striking episode and alternative versions of Marwān’s death, see Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad. A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge 1997, 350–5.
- 94 Khālīd is described by al-Jāḥiẓ as a noted orator, gifted in rhetoric, wise and with a wide culture (al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, I, 328, in the chapter listing orators and eloquent people).
- 95 Eight informants provided material for it.
- 96 The line where her name occurs runs:
Shajā az ‘ānu Ghāḍīra l-ghawāḍi/bi-ghayri mashūratin ‘aradan fu’ādi
(Ghāḍīra’s litters left in the early morning,
taking no counsel with me.
Unwittingly they have grieved my heart.)
The similarities and differences between the *akhbār* about the meeting between Ghāḍīra and Kuthayyir are discussed above, pp. 90–1.
- 97 It is noteworthy that Hārūn al-Rashīd’s killing of Ja‘far ibn Yaḥyā, which was one of the most sensational events of early ‘Abbasid history and which many writers of elite and more popular works imagined explanations for, is not dealt with directly in the *Aghānī*. This scene is the closest Abū l-Faraj comes to it, and it is not a subject he promises to come back to in a later part of the book. For its treatment by other authors, cf. András Hámori, “Going down in style: the pseudo-Ibn Qutayba’s story of the fall of the Barmakīs”, *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1994), 89–125; Julie Scott Meisami, “Mas‘ūdi on love and the fall of the Barmakids”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1989), 252–77.
- 98 For the accretions to Kuthayyir’s biography, cf. *EI*², art. “Kuthayyir ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān” (Iḥsān ‘Abbās).|
- 99 As in the article on Ibn Harma’s verses discussed earlier in this chapter.
- 100 Three informants are responsible for this article.
- 101 See above, pp. 126–7.
- 102 Three informants are named for this article, together with an unspecified number of others for Ishāq’s letter. An intermediate anecdote (4) quotes an example of a libertine Basran poet’s lampoon of himself and two worthies mentioned in (2) as objects of another of Ishāq’s satires. Ways of reacting to and parrying satire are a subsidiary theme in the article.
- 103 “*Wa-kāna Ishāqu ya‘lafu ‘Aliyan wa-Aḥmada wa-sā’ira ahlihimā ilfan shadīdan thumma waqa‘at baynahum nabwatun wa-waḥshatun fī amrin lam yaqa‘ ilaynā illā luma‘an ghayra mashrūḥatin fa-hajāhum hijā’an kathīran wa-nfarajat al-ḥālu baynahu wa-baynahum*” (*Agh.* XVII, 112–13).
- 104 Two informants are responsible for these *akhbār*.
- 105 For Ash‘ab’s different characteristics and his evolution as a literary figure, see Kilpatrick, “The ‘genuine’ Ash‘ab.” This particular report has two *isnāds* both going back to an anonymous Meccan elder (*shaykh min al-makkiyin*).
- 106 “Focus of interest” is a term I use to denote a cluster of related subjects or themes, as can be seen from the examples given here. “Centre of interest” would be another possible designation, but I prefer “focus”, for the associations it has with movement.

- A camera can easily shift its focus from one object to another, and likewise the compiler may easily redirect his interest from one cluster of subjects to another. One of the aspects of the *Aghānī* which most disconcerts modern readers, I believe, is precisely the frequent changes in the focus of interest, and this has blinded them to the fact that the number of clusters of themes involved is limited.
- 107 While using the term “factual”, I leave open the question of the historicity of the information as it can be determined by modern research.
- 108 For his declaration about including only those compositions he regards as up to standard, cf. above, pp. 46–7.
- 109 For remarks indicating his motives for including poetry, see above, pp. 64–9
- 110 The apogee of rhetoric in the Umayyad period has to do with the fact that writing was being introduced on a wider scale into Arabic culture at that time. And writing may “enhance orality by organizing the principles by which it is practised into an art” (Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Ibn Abi Tāhir Ṭayfūr (D. 280/893): Merchant of the Written Word*, Ann Arbor, Michigan 1998, 33).

7 ARTICLES ON PERSONALITIES

- 1 There are one or two exceptions. The articles on ‘Ā’isha bint Ṭalḥa (*Agh.* XI, 175–94) and Dhāt al-Khāl (XVI, 341–53) are introduced by songs with lyrics addressed to these ladies by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt and Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili respectively, and the untitled article on ‘Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (XVII, 240–3) is introduced by Ibrāhīm ibn Yasar’s elegy on ‘Urwa’s son Muḥammad.
- 2 But see the discussion of Mukhāriq’s article below for what may be a distinctive trait of the material about some musicians.
- 3 See pp. 83–5 for a translation of this passage.
- 4 This last is followed by an untitled article on the Tamīmī robber Abū l-Nashnāsh (XII, 171–2), attached by the editors, who ignore its introductory song, to al-Afwah’s article. The section on Abū l-Nashnāsh belongs in the category of untitled articles introduced by songs which is discussed in Chapter 6.
- 5 This is a fairly unusual case of Abū l-Faraj relying almost exclusively on one source; other examples are the articles on Tuwayt, Abū Tammām and al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf discussed below. It is noteworthy that he has added to the poetry the performance indications which al-Ṣūlī does not give.
- 6 Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ṣūlī, *Kitāb al-awraq (Kniga listov)*, ed. and trans. V. I. Belyaev and A. B. Khalidov, St Petersburg 1998, has an extensive section on al-Mu’tazz’s caliphate (§§ 341–406). The *akhbār* included in the *Aghānī* are those of §§ 360, 376, 377, 378, 381, 387 and 388, in that order. The article’s introductory song is given twice by al-Ṣūlī, in §§ 375 and 398. Other anecdotes connected with singers and music are §§ 362, 366 and 380, which mentions a melody by al-Mu’tazz.
- 7 See Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate. A Political History*, London 1981, 91–3 for this incident and 76, 96–8 for ‘Isā’s importance in the early ‘Abbāsīd state.
- 7a *Agh.* IX, 318: *Akhbār al-Mu’tazz fi l-aghānī wa-ma’a l-mughannīn wa-mā jarā hādihā l-majrā* (The reports on al-Mu’tazz in connection with songs, singers and related subjects); X, 41: *Akhbār al-Mu’taḍid fi ṣan’at hādihā l-lahñ wa-ghayrih min al-aghānī dūna akhbārīh fi ghayr dhālika li-annahā kathīratun takhruju min ḥaddi al-kitābi wa-shay’ min akhbārīh ma’a l-mughannīna wa-ghayrihim yaṣluḥu limā hāhunā*. (The reports about al-Mu’taḍid’s composing this melody and other songs, to the exclusion of reports about him in other connexions because they exceed the bounds of this book, but including a selection of information about his contacts with singers and others appropriate to the present context.)
- 8 The poets are his father, mother, brother and son. Al-Kumayt ibn Ma’rūf was a noted poet, judged by some medieval critics superior to his two namesakes (Ibn

Sallām al-Jumāḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā’*, 195, repeated in al-Marzubānī, *Mu‘jam al-shu‘arā’*, 237).

- 9 They are nos. 26 and 27 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyāt*.
- 10 Another unfinished article, that on ‘Abdallāh ibn Muṣ‘ab, has been mentioned earlier (p. 30). See also p. 31 for two cases where it is uncertain whether the article is incomplete or whether part of it has been lost.
- 11 As so often in the *Aghānī*, there is an exception to this. It is the long passage at the beginning of Majnūn’s article with its series of contradictory statements about the poet’s existence, name and tribal affiliation (*Agh.* II, 1–10).
- 12 *EI*², art. “*Ṭhaqif*” (M. Lecker).
- 13 It is his grandfather’s connection with ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib which starts the article on ‘Urwa ibn Udhayna (*Agh.* XVIII, 322–3).
- 14 For his hesitations about this report, see pp. 113–4.
- 15 *Agh.* XXII, 4: “*Dhakartu hādhihi minhā [ay min ash‘ārī Kurzin] li-an ta‘lama i‘rāqahum fi....l-shi‘r*”.
- 16 See pp. 49–54 and 73–85.
- 17 For instance, the articles on the poet of the middle ‘Abbāsīd period ‘Alī ibn al-Jahm (X, 202–34), the early ‘Abbāsīd poets Muḥammad ibn Yasīr (XIV, 16–50) and ‘Alī ibn al-Khalīl (XIV, 173–86), and especially the late Umayyad poet Tuwayt (XXIII, 168–74), which is discussed below.
- 18 For this question see above, p. 35.
- 19 The line, “*In ya‘ish Muṣ‘abun fa-naḥnu bi-khayrin qad atānā min ‘ayshinā mā nurajjī*”, is repeated in XXIV, 15, where it is attributed by the editors (n.3) either to ‘Abdallāh ibn Abī Ma‘qil al-Anṣārī or to Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt.
- 20 Three informants are mentioned for these five *akhbār*.
- 21 This is in addition to the song (s. 1) introducing Ibn Harma’s and Yūnus’s articles (IV, 366).
- 22 Three informants are mentioned for this article. The introductory song (s. 1) is on p. 173. The list of compositions in the article gives only the rhythmic mode and does not name the authors of the lyrics.
- 23 In the first version Ibrāhīm is the narrator throughout. In the second Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī narrates the first part, giving the background information, but later there is an unannounced change to his father. Another version of this confrontation involving Ibn Jāmi’, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī and Muḥammad al-Zaffī is given in V, 205–10. See also Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 180–1, where the incident is discussed.
- 24 Abū l-Faraj draws on two sources for this article, Jaḥḥa al-Barmakī’s book on pandore players, and Abū Ḥashīsha’s own book of reminiscences. The introductory song (s. 1) precedes the article on Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt.
- 25 Not all the songs are introduced by the word “*ṣawt*”, but they all have performance indications.
- 26 Here and subsequently a number referring to a poem indicates the presence of one or more lines from that poem; when a poem is quoted more than once the number of lines given may vary very widely.
- 27 A different version of this story is found in al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-mustaṣā fi amthāl al-‘arab*, Beirut 1397/1977, no. 745.
- 28 Abū l-Faraj has eight informants for this article.
- 29 The version of the first poem in the *Mufaḍḍaliyāt* (no. 30) is only slightly longer. Abū l-Faraj mentions giving the complete text of the second poem (*tamāmuḥā*; *Agh.* III, 107).
- 30 The *Aghānī* states that the girl was a Daylamite, and situates the campaign in north-western Iran: the text gives no evidence for her being Turkish, as stated in the *EI*² article “*A‘shā Hamdān*” (G. von Grunebaum).
- 31 Eleven informants supplied Abū l-Faraj with the material for this article.
- 31a It preserved al-A‘shā’s poetry for posterity, as can be seen from Geyer’s edition of it (*The Diwān of al-A‘shā*, 311–45) for which the *Aghānī* is the main source.

- 32 The indication of settings in this article is less consistent than in most others. In this synopsis I have mentioned only those settings for which the performance indications are given. In addition, Abū l-Faraj promises settings for poems 5 and 13. There is a reference to parts of poems 6, 21 and 24 being set to music, and the heading “*ṣawt*” occurs in them, but no performance indications are given. The heading “*ṣawt*” is also mentioned with poems 15 and 22, and with nos. 27, 28, 3, 29, 30, 31, 33 in the list of poems which have settings. The musical indications may have been omitted by scribes, but Abū l-Faraj may also have intended to supply them later on even though he does not announce that he will do so. Given Waḍḍāḥ’s themes and style of poetry, his popularity with composers is understandable.

The lacunas in the musical information are particularly regrettable because the composers’ names would help to date the poetry. As it is, Blachère’s hypothesis that the poems in a courtly style, especially those on Rawḍa, were composed for Iraqi musicians in the third/ninth century (*Histoire*, 652) is not borne out by the settings whose indications are given; most of the composers come from the Hijaz and are dated to the second/eighth century.
- 33 Seven informants supplied Abū l-Faraj with the material for this article. My numbering of the poems differs from that of R. Souissi, given in his article “Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman. Le personnage et sa légende” (*Arabica* 17 (1970), 258), because he omits a few quotations of Waḍḍāḥ’s poems, ignores those of the other poets and counts two of Waḍḍāḥ’s poems as one.
- 34 See the discussion in Souissi, “Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman”, 290–1; the author prefers the theory put forward in the article that the legend about the poet and the caliph’s wife was developed later by Shu’ūbīs to discredit the Umayyads.

The story of Waḍḍāḥ’s end has acquired folkloric traits, in particular with the motif of the husband taking away his wife’s lover in a chest (Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols, 2nd edn, Bloomington 1966, motif K 1555.0.2).
- 35 As argued by Blachère, who speaks of the heterogeneity of the poetry in Waḍḍāḥ’s article (*Histoire*, 651).
- 36 For this article Abū l-Faraj draws on a single source, Abū l-‘Abbās ibn Thawāba’s record of Tuwayt’s *akhbār* as he heard them from ‘Abdallāh ibn Shabīb. The name appears in the Būlāq edition as Nuwayb, and it is in this form that the poet is referred to in reference works (*GAS* II, 382–3; ‘Umar Farrūkh, *Tārīkh al-adab al-‘arabi*. II, 166–7). “Tuwayt” exists as the name of a clan (*Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. t-w-t). Presumably meaning “little mulberry”, Tuwayt is a nickname, the poet’s name being ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Salūli.
- 37 The performance indications for the five fragments are lacking but the composers of two of the songs are named. Abū l-Faraj drew on two sources for this article.
- 38 This is a rare example of a woman addressing *madiḥ* to important personalities. It is intriguing that Abū l-Faraj reports the *khavar* without any comment.
- 39 Abū l-Faraj drew on six sources for this article.
- 40 *Mā laqinā min jūdi Faḍli bni Yahyā/taraka l-nāsa kullahum shu ‘arā’ā* (*Agh.* XXIII, 20). This is one of the lines Ibn al-Mu‘tazz quotes in his entry on Nuṣayb in the *Ṭabaqāt al-shu ‘arā’ al-muḥdathin*.
- 41 The composer of the melody, al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr, does not have an article in the *Aghānī*.
- 42 Abū l-Faraj mentions ten sources for this article, but one of them, al-Šūlī, dominates. His *Akhbār Abi Tammām* provides thirteen of the twenty-three *akhbār*. Of the others, only 1 and 19 have no parallel in it. Such a dependence on one source is unusual in the articles on famous literary personalities of the ‘Abbāsīd era.
- 43 Abū l-Faraj has taken his material from the chapters entitled “*Fī tafḍīl Abi Tammām*”, “*Akhbār Abi Tammām ma’a Aḥmad ibn Abi Du’ād*”, “*Akhbār Abi Tammām ma’a Khālīd ibn Yazīd*”, “*Akhbār Abi Tammām ma’a l-Ḥasan ibn Rajā’*”, “*Akhbār Abi Tammām ma’a l-Ḥasan ibn Wahb*” and “*Akhbār Abi Tammām ma’a Āl Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn*”.

- 44 Cf. al-Šūlī, *Akhbār Abi Tammām*, 115–17 (= *Agh.* XVI, 389); 121–4 (= 389–90).
- 45 *Agh.* XVI, 390: “*Innahu lam yamut man ruthiya bi-hādhā l-shi’ri aw mithlih.*”
- 46 See below, pp. 256–7, for a discussion of the subject.
- 47 For examples of critical responses see *Agh.* VIII, 353–535, 356–7, 359, 370; of applications of his poetry to other situations pp. 357–8, 364–5, 368; of singers’ responses to it: pp. 361–2; 363, 366; of *akhbār* round one poem: pp. 362–4. Al-‘Abbās appears on pp. 355–6 and 372. The article gives fifteen songs, all but one with lyrics by al-‘Abbās.
- 48 Discussed on pp. 164–5.
- 49 Like the article on Abū Tammām, that on al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf is heavily dependent on al-Šūlī, the source of over three quarters of the *akhbār*. Unfortunately the work of al-Šūlī’s from which Abū l-Faraj presumably quotes, the *Kitāb al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf wa-mukhtār shi’rih* (GAS II, 514) is not extant, so that the manner and degree of his adapting his source cannot be determined.
- 50 Al-Ṭabarī gives her name as Hind bint Zayd ibn Mukharrama al-Anṣāriya (Ta’rīkh II, 146).
- 51 The poem starts: “*Afā Dhū Ḥusā min Fartanā fa-l-fawāri’u / fa-janbā Arikīn fa-l-tilā’u l-dawāfi’ū*” (Of Fartanā Dhū Ḥusā no longer holds traces, nor do the soaring peaks, Arik’s slopes or the swift-flowing torrents); the poem is no. 17 by al-Nābigha in W. Ahlwardt, *The Divans of the six ancient Arabic poets Ennābigha, ‘Antara, Tharafa, Zuhayr, ‘Alqama and Imru’lqais*, London 1870.
- 52 But the way in which the different sources are presented is a case of the *isnād* being used to literary effect, as discussed above pp. 101–3.
- 53 What makes this article so unusual is that it is centered on a statement “Behave like X [here: al-Ḥujayya], who...”. And Ḥujayya is well on the way to becoming a proverbial figure, although he has not lost all ties with a historical context, indicated in the details of the events round his trying to get his wife back.
- 54 The three anecdotes in which Mukhāriq is the protagonist follow on three where Hilāl is depicted as affirming himself, through his physical prowess as a free man, a respected guest, and the upholder of Arab honour. The parallels and differences between these two sequences of *akhbār* are discussed in my “Context and the enhancement of the meaning of *akhbār*”, 357–9.
- 55 Unlike the rest of the *Kitāb al-aghānī*, the middle section is structured around royal composers, not songs. Here, then, it is not songs which introduce the articles but names drawn from the list of musically active caliphs or princes. See further below, p. 263.
- 56 That there is something special about the arrangement here is shown by Abū l-Faraj’s insistence that the article belongs in this particular place (*Agh.* XVI, 250). Cf. the discussion above of his ideas about organising his material, pp. 124–7.
- 57 Although Abū l-Faraj does not give Yawm Bu’āth a separate heading, Ibn Wāṣil evidently felt it deserved one; in his abridgement the *Akhbār Abi Qays ibn al-Aslat* are followed by *Dhikr Yawm Bu’āth mukhtaṣaran* (Tajrid, 1836–37). The modern editors of the *Aghānī* add the title in square brackets (*Agh.* XVII, 118).
- 58 For a discussion of the portrayal of Jabala ibn al-Ayham in the *Aghānī* and other sources see J. Ashtiany Bray, “The Damnation of Ġabala, a *ḥabar* in context” in U. Vermeulen and J.M.F. van Reeth (eds.), *Law, Christianity and Modernism in Islamic Society*, (Proceedings, of the Eighteenth Congress of the UAEI held at the Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven 1996) Leuven 1998, 111–24. In this passage Jabala’s role as patron of music and poets has no theological overtones.
- 58a Abū l-Faraj draws on four, or perhaps five, informants for this article; it is not clear how he comes by the *akhbār* stemming from Ishāq al-Mawṣilī (XX, 332–3).
- 59 For the text and translation of the lyrics, see above, pp. 70–71.
- 60 Abū l-Faraj draws on twelve informants for this article, in addition to an unspecified number of genealogists (*al-nassābūn*).
- 61 “*Kāna yataḥharraqu ‘alā l-Madīna*” (1, 31).

- 62 The woman collapses and dies on hearing the poem, an interesting example of behaviour resembling that of heroes of ‘Udhri love stories when they hear their beloved’s name mentioned.
- 63 Abū l-Faraj has drawn on nine sources for this article. Interestingly, one of the two genres for which ‘Adi was famous, wine poetry, is virtually absent from it, although the other, meditation on the vanity of human passions and the destructive effect of time (cf. *El*², art. “‘Adi ibn Zayd” (F. Gabrieli), and C. H. Becker, “Ubi sunt qui ante nos in mundo fuere”, in idem, *Islamstudien* I, Leipzig 1924, 501–19), is extremely well represented.
- 64 The issue of ‘Adi’s urban style and the critics’ comments on it receive hardly any attention; they are mentioned only in the profile.
- 65 See p. 113.
- 66 Abū l-Faraj’ has drawn on seventeen sources for this article. In fact, as he points out, the final song’s lyrics have been put together from poems by Kuthayyir and Nuṣayb.
- 67 The same tendency to portray Kuthayyir as a ridiculous figure can be observed in the untitled article discussed earlier (pp. 140–42) and is slightly in evidence in the section on him and Khandaq al-Asadi (pp. 170–72).
- 68 Discussed on pp. 152–3 and 153–5 respectively.
- 69 See pp. 160 and 165.
- 70 In the profile Abū l-Faraj rejects this version, stating that the poet went into hiding until al-Ma’mūn died (*Agh*. XX, 14).
- 71 Several passages from this article are translated in R. Hamilton, *Walid and his Friends. An Umayyad Tragedy*, Oxford 1988. On al-Walid’s poetry, see art. “Al-Walid (II) as a poet”, *El*² (R. Jacobi) and the references there.
- 72 This loss of the will to live is all the more striking since an anecdote shortly before (p. 64) portrays him earlier on as foiling an attempt by one of Hishām’s servants to kill him.
- 73 Abū l-Faraj has ten informants for this article.
- 74 The poem in (16) speaks of his material difficulties having turned his hair grey, and asks whether death will overtake him before he has ever more than just enough to cover his basic needs. If it is not simply a poetic image, it suggests an elderly man tired of the struggle to make ends meet.
- 75 The composers’ names given in the performance indications of songs 3 and 4 do not tally with those given in the account of the soirée. This and the variants both for the beginning of the anecdote and later for the circumstances in which Ibn Jāmi’ learned song 14 from a slave girl suggest that the *khavar*, however interesting as a piece of literature, is historically unreliable – an impression strengthened by its portraying Ibn Jāmi’ as arriving in Baghdad during al-Rashid’s caliphate and not knowing a soul, whereas he has already performed before al-Hādī together with Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (*Agh*. VI, 300, 303). For a further discussion of the *khavar*, see Hilary Kilpatrick, “Autobiography and Classical Arabic Literature”, *Journal of Arabic Literature* XXII (1991), 4–5.
- 76 Abū l-Faraj draws on thirteen informants for this article.
- 77 This *khavar* has already been referred to in connection with Abū l-Faraj’s comment about it conveying essential information precisely (pp. 110–11).
- 78 Abū l-Faraj draws on eighteen informants for this article. Much more could be said about its composition. The first seventy-odd pages are crisscrossed by quotations from the same poems; for instance, four lines which were considered the finest examples in their genre recur regularly (a line of *ghazal*: VII, 308, VIII, 6, 39, 42; of *fakhr*: 6, 11, 21, 41; of *madiḥ*: 6, 41, 67; of *hijā’*: 20, 30, 32, 34, 42). Motifs include Jarir’s difficulty in gaining access to rulers, gifts of slave-girls to Jarir and al-Farazdaq, and food being associated with poetry, once when a Hāshimī freedman visits al-Farazdaq to discover his opinion about Jarir and is treated to a meal before he gets an answer (11) and once

when a bedouin describes to ‘Abd al-Malik a particularly succulent preparation of roast wild ass and then quotes Jarir’s four exemplary lines (39–42). Geert Jan van Gelder has translated the first part of this anecdote in his *Of Dishes and Discourse. Classical Arabic Literary Representations of Food* (Richmond 2000, 28–9). He sees the cookery passage as a “gratuitous introduction” to the quotation of Jarir’s poetry, and reads the story in the context of a “contrast between urban luxury and plain Bedouin delights” – which it undoubtedly is. But since the same combination of themes occurs elsewhere in the article, the connection between them is probably more than an arbitrary juxtaposition.

- 79 The term has already been used on p. 150.
- 80 See above, p. 39.
- 81 Each of the three narrative sections has different sources. The first is combined from a number of sources, the second and third have one source each.
- 82 For a critical examination of accounts of the end of the poet’s life, see Irfān Shāhid, “The last days of Imru’ al-Qays: Anatolia” in Issa J. Boullata and Terri DeYoung, *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Literature*, Fayetteville 1997, 207–22. The most obvious example of story-tellers’ elaborations is the introduction of the shirt of Nessus motif.
- 83 A number of motifs identified by Thompson (*Motif-Index of Folk Literature*) correspond to elements in the story or show some parallels with them: quest for a clever woman (H 1381.3.3); clever peasant girl asked riddle by king (H 561.1); bride awarded to man who can answer questions (H 508.2); servant passing himself off as master (K.1969.3); servant taking his master’s place in bed (K 1317.1 – but his plan is foiled).
- 84 There are other examples in the *Aghānī*, for instance al-Manṣūr asking Thumāma ibn al-Walid about his ancestor ‘Urwa ibn al-Ward’s adventures (*Agh.* III, 83–8) – though Thumāma does not know the stories and al-Manṣūr ends up telling them. Three *akhbār* in Ḥammād al-Rāwiyā’s article depict him being summoned by Hishām, al-Walid ibn Yazid and Ja’far ibn Abi Ja’far al-Manṣūr to recite and discuss poetry (VI, 75–80, 81–3). The occasion for the “summarising” *khabar* in Jarir’s article is al-Ḥajjāj summoning Jarir “for conversation” (*li-l-ḥadīth*), though he leads into the subject of Jarir’s lampoons obliquely (VIII, 15).
- 85 Imru’ al-Qays’s encounter with girls bathing at Dārat Juljul, to which he refers in his *Mu’allaqa*, appears in al-Farazdaq’s article, where the Umayyad poet tells it to some girls he comes across cooling off in a pool outside Basra (XXI, 340–3). In this complex and extremely interesting anecdote, al-Farazdaq’s own behaviour is markedly less heroic than that of his pre-Islamic predecessor, and he suffers discomfort accordingly. It is perhaps not surprising that Abū l-Faraj preferred not to include a simple version of the Dārat Juljul incident in Imru’ al-Qays’s article, since he was saving the complex version for later.
- 85a Like Qays ibn Dharih’s article, for which see above p. 127, this one is prefaced with Abū l-Faraj’s announcement that he has ordered the *akhbār* with care (cf. my “*Aḥbār manẓūma*”, 358, n. 14).
- 86 Abū l-Faraj apparently draws on fourteen sources for this article; twice he mentions authorities with whom he had no direct contact, but does not indicate how their information reached him. In the summary I have mentioned the songs but not the other poems, since they play no part in structuring the article.
- 87 See Radhi Dagħfous, *Le Yaman islāmique des origines jusqu’à l’événement des dynasties autonomes (Ier-IIIème S./VIIème-IXème siècle)*, Tunis 1995, 320–62 for a detailed discussion of the *rida* wars in Yaman in which ‘Amr was involved.
- 88 For this he entered the repertoire of popular literature; cf. Marzolph, *Arabia ridens*, no. 203.
- 89 For an evaluation of the reports about Ṭulayḥa ibn Khuwaylid, see *EI*² s.v. (Ella Landau-Tasseron).

- 90 “If something is beyond you leave it.
But go on
to what’s within your power.”
- 91 “I seek to give him gifts, while he seeks to kill me.
Who will stand by you against your friend of Murād?”
This is the text of the *Aghānī* and of ‘Amr’s collected poems (Muṭā‘ al-Ṭarābīshī, *Shi‘r ‘Amr ibn Ma‘dīkarīb*, Damascus 1394/1974, 92). A frequent variant for *ḥibā’ahu* is *ḥay-ātahu*, balancing *qatli*. Cf. al-Ṭarābīshī’s discussion of the text, 88–90.
- 92 For the various traditions around ‘Alī’s assassination and Ibn Muljam’s role, see *EI*², art “Ibn Muldjam, ‘Abd al-Rahmān” (L. Veccia Vaglieri).
- 93 Shortly after this article there is an untitled section describing the Shī‘i Kuthayyir’s visit to Qaṭāmi, Ibn Muljam’s widow, which alludes to his killing ‘Alī (*Agh.* XV, 283–5).
- 94 The second line of the song does not correspond to the text given at the beginning of the article.
- 95 The various accounts are discussed by Kaabi, *Les Tāhirides au Hurāsān et en Iraq*, 146–68, 177–8. A problematic element in the *Aghānī* account is the suggestion that the Shī‘i views of one of the courtiers, Muḥammad ibn Abī l-‘Abbās al-Ṭūsī (whose name is given incorrectly as Muḥammad ibn al-‘Abbās al-Ṣūli) reflected those of Ṭāhir. Like the other accounts, the *Aghānī* portrays Ṭāhir ceasing to mention al-Ma’mūn in the *khuṭba* without specifying whom he replaced him with, and skates over the question of whether al-Ma’mūn, if he had learned that Ṭāhir had thrown off allegiance to the caliph before his death, would have appointed his son Ṭalḥa to succeed him, as he in fact did.
- 96 This understanding of ‘Alī’s death is part of the tradition of redemptive suffering in Shī‘i Islam, exemplified especially in the death of his son al-Ḥusayn and members of his family at Karbala. See Yann Richard, *Shi’ite Islam*, tr. Antonia Nevill, Oxford 1995, 19.
- 97 The image of al-Ma’mūn which emerges here agrees with the portrayal of him in Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfur’s *Kitāb Baghdād* as a king, rather than a caliph. Cf. Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography, The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma’mūn*, Cambridge 2000, 41–8.
- Not only the nature of power but also its portrayal have changed. The exchanges between ‘Amr and ‘Umar are short dialogues, while Ṭāhir’s appointment is the culmination of a process traced in a series of scenes where details of the actors’ thoughts and behaviour are significant.
- 98 Abū l-Faraj has sixteen informants for this article. Only Marwān’s poems have been indicated in the summary.
- 99 This last is pointed out by Abū l-Faraj himself: “so as to know Marwān’s poetic roots” (*Agh.* X, 77).
- 100 Two of the shorter ones figure in the repertoire of jokes in Marzolph, *Arabia ridens*, nos. 425, 426.
- 101 This second part of the *khabar* may be simply a doubling of the first part. But it could also be genuine. In that case Ḥārūn al-Rashid was probably not very serious in his reproach so long after the event, but he may have seen it as a way to spur Marwān on to new poetic efforts.
- 102 This anecdote poses a problem of chronology. Ma’n is described as leaving for the desert through the Ḥarb Gate (*bāb Ḥarb*) of an unnamed city while he is still wanted by the caliph, and this suggests that he has been hiding in Baghdad. But he regains favour by defending the caliph during the rising at Hāshimīya, which was the reason for al-Manṣūr deciding to build a new capital. Unless another Iraqi city had a Ḥarb Gate, either the incident was invented later on by someone who did not notice the anachronism, or the text is corrupt; the word *ḥarb* also occurs in the previous line: “*Kāna qad ablā fī ḥarbi Yazīda bni ‘Umara bni Hubayratin balā’an ḥasanan*”.

- 103 Eight lines from poems 9 and 9b make up poem no. 454 in Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa*, which gives al-Ṣimma as the author. It is the first poem in the section on *naṣīb*. Abu 'Alī al-Qālī, *Amālī*, Cairo 1344/1926, I, 190–1, quotes 11 lines, also naming al-Ṣimma as the poet. But Abū l-Faraj states (*Agh.* VI, 5–6) that the first 2 lines of 9b are correctly attributed to Qays ibn Dhariḥ and are given in his article, while the rest are ascribed either to al-Ṣimma or to Majnūn, in whose article they also figure. In fact the lines do not appear in Qays's article, but it does quote two verses with the same rhyme and metre, possibly from the same poem (IX, 196). Majnūn's article (II, 66, 67) gives five lines of 9b with slight variants and adds two more lines. This cross-reference is only partly accurate.
- 104 Abū l-Faraj has assembled this article from seven sources.
- 105 Majnūn's article (*Agh.* I, 417; II, 1–95) starts with the long and inconclusive discussion about the poet's existence (see above, p. 101), before telling and retelling his unhappy love story in detail. Kuthayyir's love for 'Azza is only one of several themes in his article (VIII, 373–75; IX, 3–39, discussed above). Jamil's article (VIII, 89–154) too is varied in theme, with compositions in other genres, relations with other poets and Jamil's poetry's reception being quite prominent. The pre-Islamic 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ajlān's article (XXII, 236–43) combines elements of *ayyām* narratives with the story of the poet's love for Hind. And in a deviation from the standard 'Udhri model, 'Abdallāh and Hind are married and then forced to divorce because they have no children. Qays and Lubnā are also forcibly separated for the same reason. And Qays ibn Dhariḥ's article (IX, 178–220) stands out for the care with which Abū l-Faraj compiled it (see p. 127 and my "*Aḥbār manẓūma*") The article on 'Urwa ibn Hizām (XXIV, 144–66) conforms most closely to expectations of a standard account of 'Udhri lovers. It is concerned only with the fate of the couple, prevented from marrying by some obstacle (here, the suitor's poverty) put forward by the girl's family, remaining faithful and dying of sorrow.
- 106 The *Aghānī* does not reflect the full variety of al-Ṣimma's poetry, as can be seen from the verse of his referring to an excellent singer in the Bedouin style, quoted in Ibn Qutayba, *Al-shi'r wa-l-shu'arā*, 185.
- 107 His '*ayniya* (poem 9, 9b) opens the chapter on *naṣīb* in Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa*.
- 108 Discussed in my "*Aḥbār manẓūma*".
- 109 For a discussion of them, see Jamel E. Bencheikh, "Les secrétaires poètes et animateurs de cénacles aux II^e et III^e siècles de l'Hégire", *Journal Asiatique* 263 (1975), 265–315.
- 110 For this article Abū l-Faraj draws on eight sources.
- 111 The love affairs Ibrāhīm engages in are very different from those which form the subject of separate articles (see pp. 161–6). They are common knowledge, and friends of the couple play an important part, for instance as mediators and reconcilers. It should be remembered that 'Arib, who was born in 181/797–8 (*Agh.* XXI, 59–60), was much older than Ibrāhīm. His date of birth is not known, but he was old enough to be imprisoned in 240/854. He died while still occupying a government function in 279/893, so he can hardly have been born earlier than 205/820–1.
- 112 Cf. Bencheikh, "Les secrétaires poètes", 290–4. Some other *kuttāb*, such as Ibrāhīm ibn al-'Abbās al-Sūlī and Muḥammad ibn al-Zayyāt, were much better poets.
- 113 But Abū l-Faraj admires some of the verses Ibrāhīm composed in prison (*Agh.* XXII, 159–60).
- 114 Such methods may be discerned in these articles, but they only play a subordinate part.
- 115 Abū l-Faraj draws on fifteen named sources for this article, as well as once quoting an anonymous informant.
- 116 It is for this reason that I prefer not to include this and one or two other episodes in 'Umar's "adventures", where the woman does not consistently reject his advances.
- 117 Nor do I not claim that it is the only, or the best, way to identify the main sections of this important part of the *Aghānī*. For another approach, see Vadet, *L'esprit courtois*, 112–18.

- 118 This is the number of lyrics followed by performance indications. Another eleven fragments of poetry are introduced with the word *ṣawt*, but lack performance indications or a remark suggesting that Abū l-Faraj meant to supply them later on.
- 119 *Dīwān*, no. 146
 “Our neighbours’ tribe will be encamped far off tomorrow
 and in the days thereafter further still”.
 This poem evidently ranks with Imru’ al-Qays’s *Mu‘allaqa* as one of the all-time early Arabic hits.
- 120 It is noteworthy that many of the lyrics in Majnūn’s article only have settings by ‘Abbāsīd composers. As in the case of Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman discussed above, the date at which lyrics were set to music can contribute to discussions of the period to which poetry should be assigned, even if it can throw no light on problems of ascription to one poet rather than another.
- 121 They may, however, be quoted in two adjacent anecdotes, and the performance indications may be given somewhat later.
- 122 Long *akhbār* recounting the start of a subject’s career are also found at the beginning of the articles on Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (*Agh.* V, 155–60), Qalam al-Ṣālihiya (XIII, 347–9), Shāriya (XVI, 4–6), and ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī‘ī (XIX, 221–4).
- 123 Some other articles including very long anecdotes are those on the musicians Ma‘bad al-Yaqtīnī (XIV, 115–20), Muḥammad al-Zaff (XIV, 187–91; discussed above), Abū Ṣadaqa (XIX, 288–99), ‘Aṭīb (XXI, 54–89), ‘Ubayda al-Ṭunbūriya (XXII, 205–10). It would be worth investigating whether especially elaborate narratives arose around ‘Abbāsīd singers.
- 124 This sense of *nā’ūs* = Gk. *ναός* appears to be Nestorian; see Georg Graf, *Verzeichnis arabischer kirchlicher Termini*, 2nd edn, Louvain 1954, 110.
- 125 Here Mukhāriq is explicitly emulating the Umayyad musician Ibn Surayj, who stopped the pilgrims with his singing while they were at Mina; cf. *Agh.* I, 259–64.
- 126 The anecdotes on pp. 341–3 all turn round the same verses, drawn from a poem by Hilāl ibn al-As‘ar al-Māzinī. The same three anecdotes on Mukhāriq’s manumission and acquiring of a *kunya* are given in a different order in Hilāl’s article (III, 70–2); they are discussed in my “Context and the enhancement of the meaning of *alḥbār*”, 358–9.
- 127 “*Yā dawā’a l-majānina laqad raqqaqta ḥattā kidtu aḥsūka fa-law kāna l-ghinā’u ṭa‘āman la-kāna ghinā’uka udman wa-law kāna sharāban la-kāna mā’a l-ḥayāl*”. He expresses a similar sentiment in another anecdote (346–7).
 Abū Ḥashishā’s article discussed above also has references to eating – the singer’s patrons’ enormous appetites and his own death from eating food inappropriate to the weather – but they do not reflect the same close connection between food and music.
- 128 An earlier oblique reference to Mukhāriq’s death occurs in an anecdote which portrays al-Mutawakkil ordering his slaves to learn one of Mukhāriq’s compositions when its author was no longer alive (349–50).
- 129 *El*², art. “Takṣīm” (E. Neubauer). See also the description of a performance of *al-maqām al-‘irāqī* in Habib Hassan Touma, *The Music of the Arabs*, tr. Laurie Schwartz, Portland, Oregon 1996, 60–67. The *maqām* performance combines instrumental and vocal sections.
- 130 See Sawa, *Musical Performance Practice*, 46–71, 91–103 and the explanation of technical terms, in particular *tarjī’*, *tarjīḥ* and *intizā’* in al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad, *Kitāb kamāl adab al-ghinā’*, 80–2 (= al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Kātib, *La perfection des connaissances musicales. Kitāb kamāl adab al-ghinā’*, tr. and comm. Amnon Shiloah, Paris 1972, 124–8). It is noteworthy that al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad explicitly establishes a parallel between music and poetry when he compares the motif of separation (*intizā’*) in a melody to the the transition between *nasīb* and *madiḥ* (p. 82).

- 131 For an analogous relationship between a musical form and literary texts in the European context, see Hans Rudolph Picard, “Die Variation als kompositorisches Prinzip in der Literatur”, in Albert Gier and Gerold Gruber (eds.), *Musik und Literatur. Komparatistische Studien zur Strukturverwandschaft*, Frankfurt 1995, 35–60.

8 CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ARTICLES

- 1 The framework of the *Aghānī*, the lists of songs and royal musicians introducing articles, is discussed below in [Chapter 9](#).
- 2 Settings are found in Ibn Khurdādhbih’s *Kitāb al-malāhī*, several of al-Šūlī’s books, al-Šābushtī’s *Kitāb al-diyārāt*, Ibn Nāqiyā’s *Kitāb al-aghānī al-muḥdatha* quoted in Ibn Faḍlallāh al-‘Umari’s *Masālik al-abṣār fi mamālik al-amṣār*. For the differences between these authors’ methods of indicating settings and the one Abū l-Faraj employs in the *Aghānī*, see my “The transmission of songs in mediaeval Arabic culture”. In his *Al-imā’ al-shawā’ir* and *Adab al-ghurabā’* Abū l-Faraj occasionally mentions settings in the same abbreviated form that al-Šūlī, for instance, does.
- 3 This and the following data about repetitions are based on Guidi’s *Indices*, which follow the Būlāq division into volumes. To track down the lines of poetry I also used the index of half lines in the *Fahāris Kitāb al-aghānī*. Since neither index is complete, the total of repeated lines might be slightly higher.
The fact that the quotations are found in different volumes indicates that they occur in different contexts and are not simply a reflexion of an intensive discussion of a poem in one passage.
- 4 The order of the lines is that given in al-Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad al-Zawzanī’s *Sharḥ al-mu‘allaqāt al-sab’*, Cairo 1382/1967, 4–42.
- 5 See above, p. 216.
- 6 The order of the lines follows that of al-Zawzanī, *Sharḥ al-mu‘allaqāt al-sab’*, 141–59.
- 7 For a discussion of this article on Ibn Surayj and Sukayna see above, pp. 174–5.
- 8 Jarir, *Diwān* 578 (Sawi 386).
- 9 For a discussion of this article, see above, pp. 136–8.
- 10 See above, [Chapter 5](#), pp. 120–1.
- 11 In Guidi’s *Indices* Ishāq’s entry counts close on twelve columns, far longer than any one else’s; the next most frequently mentioned characters are al-Farazdaq (over 9 columns) and Hārūn al-Rashīd (almost 8 columns). It must be pointed out that Guidi underestimates the musical component in the *Aghānī*, when he does not ignore it completely. And the *Indices*, as printed, omit references to Ishāq’s appearances in Būlāq vol. II.
- 12 For example, the articles on Qays ibn al-Ḥudādiya (*Agh.* XIV, 143), al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī (XV, 322), al-Ḥusayn ibn Muṭayr (XVI, 16), Ḥātim al-Ṭā’i (XVII, 362) Jabḥā’ al-Ashja’i (XVIII, 93) and al-Quṭāmi (XXIV, 16).
- 13 That Ishāq had his own style is clear from Abū l-Faraj’s reason for refuting the attribution of a setting to him: “It does not resemble his style of composition” (*lā yushbihu ṣan’atah*, XX, 257).
- 14 See above, p. 39.
- 15 For example, XVII, 159–60 (al-Rashīd) and IX, 300 (al-Wāthiq). Al-Rashīd’s angry reaction to the song alluding to Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn which Ishāq sang has been discussed above (pp. 138–9).
- 16 There are numerous reports of his relations with al-Wāthiq (e.g. IX, 279–80, 286, 298) and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī (e.g. V, 191–2; X, 112, 120, 141–4, which concerns the exchange of letters between them). Ishāq’s only direct contact with ‘Ulayya bint al-Mahdī seems to have been an occasion when she took over one of his compositions,

- passing it off as her own but rewarding him for his silence in the matter (X, 168–70). He admires ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir’s familiarity with the old repertoire (XII, 112).
- 17 One of the few encounters reported between him and composers not at court is the one with Abū Sa’id the *maulā* of Fā’id in Mecca, where Ishāq in vain tries to get the older man to perform a song which the Prophet in a dream forbade him to sing (IV, 330–2). In order to hear the popular and skilled pandore player ‘Ubayda, Ishāq has himself invited incognito to a house where she is to perform. She sings excellently until someone tells her that Ishāq is in the audience, after which she goes to pieces (XXII, 205–7).
- 18 For instance he admires Mutayyam (VII, 297), Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Makkī (XVI, 311), ‘Aqīd (XVIII, 70) and al-Zubayr ibn Daḥmān (XVIII, 300–1). His attitude to Mukhāriq is ambivalent; he criticises him before Hārūn al-Rashid (V, 191–2), and considers him inferior to ‘Allūya as regards faithfulness of execution, but a better performer (XI, 337–8).
- 19 At an informal gathering he has his slave learn a song by Ḥāshim ibn Sulaymān (XV, 253–4). Invited to ‘Abdallāh ibn al-‘Abbās al-Rabī’i’s house, he hears his host sing one of his songs and asks him to repeat it the whole day (XIX, 227–8).
- 20 ‘Amr ibn Bāna, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar and ‘Abdallāh ibn Daḥmān are all supporters of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī and hostile to Ishāq (XV, 269; XXIII, 177; XXIV, 97).
- 21 For Abū l-Faraj’s attitude to this, see p. 48.
- 22 Ishāq’s distaste for letting others learn his compositions is particularly evident in an incident where al-Amin orders him to teach Mukhāriq three songs, but he nonetheless gets a slave-girl to do it (XVIII, 364–5). The same trait is illustrated on an occasion when one of his slave-girls picks up a song as he is composing it, and when he finds out he is furious (XXII, 52–3).
- 23 He and the Kufans attribute the poetry of an introductory song to Ḥujayya, while others think it is by Ismā’il ibn Yasār or his brother Aḥmad (XX, 315). He mistakenly attributes some verses to ‘Antara (XII, 156).
- 24 Ḥammād al-Rāwīya is the scholar most frequently mentioned, with 2½ columns in Guidi’s *Indices*. As is well-known, his scholarly credentials were none too strong.
- 25 He occupies something over two columns in the *Indices*.
- 26 Cf. the discussion of this affair in Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 90–3.
- 27 The only exception are the anecdotes which portray him dealing indulgently, even generously, with Abū Dulāma (e.g. *Agh.* X, 235–8, 257, 259–60). The figure of Abū Dulāma has been subjected to literary elaboration (cf. Hartmut Fähndrich, “Compromising the Caliph”, 36–47; Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* I, 168–9; II, especially no. 86, where the caliph in question is either al-Saffāḥ, al-Manṣūr or al-Mahdī), and it is hard to tell how much the *akhbār* about him and al-Manṣūr reflect reality. But there may be a core of truth in them.
- 28 For the musical training of singers at the ‘Abbasid court, see Neubauer, *Musiker*, 25–6, 41–9.
- 29 No theme is automatically part of an article; even the subject’s death is not always treated, even when the material for it was available to Abū l-Faraj (see the analysis of Abū Tammām’s article above, p. 198. Confronting death is also discussed below, pp. 249–51). But information about singers tends to be fragmentary and may well often have lacked an indication of how they started off.
- 30 “*Kuntu atalaqqā l-ghanam*” (*Agh.* I, 41); for this meaning of *talaqqā* see *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v. l-q-w/y.
- 31 There are several examples in the *Aghānī* of musical talents carrying over from one generation to the next: Yaḥyā al-Makkī and his son Aḥmad; Daḥmān and his sons al-Zubayr and ‘Abdallāh; Shuhda and her daughter ‘Ātika; Zurzūr and his son al-Qāsim. See the genealogical tables of musicians’ families in Neubauer, *Musiker*, 122–37.

- 32 This is to be distinguished from a terse statement of the date of the person's death or a description of the circumstances surrounding it.
- 33 This is the most dramatic version of Ja'far's death; two others are given. Here, as elsewhere in this section, which version (if any) is historically true is irrelevant; the point is that the accounts referred to are illustrations of exemplary behaviour.
- 34 But his son-in-law later claims most of his compositions for himself, as the text adds.
- 35 As the text points out, this was an interreligious graveyard, with the Muslim al-Walid and the Christian Abū Zubayd each being buried in the direction customary in his community.
- 36 For the steps recommended to be taken against musicians, music and musical instruments, see Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, index.
- 37 These *ḥadīths* are found in the article of someone recorded as transmitting them, here Ru'ba ibn al-'Ajjāj and al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abdallāh.
- 38 *La-qaḍ tuftu sab'an qultu lammā qaḍaytuhā/a-la layta ḥādhā lā 'alayyā wa-lā liyā* "I walked round the Ka'ba seven times, and when I had finished, I said to myself: If only this would neither be held against me or counted to my advantage". The lines are ascribed either to Abū Sa'id or to Majnūn.
- 39 The first two lines of the poem, which in the *Aghānī* is anonymous, describe the poet's performing religious rites, while the third expresses the hope that God will incline his beloved's heart to him. (First line: *wa-aṣḥabu bi-l-layli aḥla l-ṭawāfi/wa-arfa 'u min mi'zari l-musbalī*).
- 40 This provides an interesting contrast with the picture of Ibn 'Umar breaking a pandore referred to by Cook (*Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 79. Cook, following Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*, translates *ṭunbūr* as "mandoline", an instrument which differs from the pandore in shape, size and number of strings; cf. *EI*² art. "*ṭunbūr*" (H. G. Farmer)). But Ash'ab was not accompanying himself on an instrument, nor were there any intoxicating drinks around.
- 41 It may be that 'Amir ibn Sharāḥil al-Sha'bi is meant, but the text is not specific.
- 42 This incident, if it reflects 'Isā's attitude to music faithfully, casts an interesting light on al-Manṣūr's decision to name al-Mahdī as his successor. Had he not done so, and 'Isā had become caliph, singing would not have acquired a prominent place at court during his reign, and that might have affected the history of Arabic music.
- 43 Both these anecdotes reflect a confrontation between Hijazi and Iraqi attitudes to singing; the latter seem to have been much more hostile. This regional variation in attitudes to singing is not brought out in Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, so far as I can see.
- 44 The term used is *mutawallī l-sūq*, not the later *muḥtasib*.
- 45 Abū l-Faraj argues in favour of 'Umar's musical activity against those who deny it by quoting reports of him teaching his compositions to Hijazi singers (IX, 251–2). In the compiler's view there is no doubt about the authenticity of these reports or the settings attributed to 'Umar, even if they conflict with the image which developed of him as a God-fearing caliph.
- 46 Such as the effeminate old man in Medina who is incapable of learning the Quran, and whom 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz finally sends away after a beating (VI, 337–8).
- 47 This *khavar* was told directly to Abū l-Faraj by "someone who understands music" – or did he make it up?
- 48 The instances are to be found in Kathrin Müller, "*Und der Kalif lachte, bis er auf den Rücken fiel*". *Ein Beitrag zur Phraseologie und Stilkunde des klassischen Arabisch*, Munich 1993, 281–9, on which this paragraph is based.
- 49 Discussed with reference to the older Near Eastern literary tradition by C. H. Becker, "*Ubi sunt qui ante nos in mundo fuere*", in *Idem, Islamstudien I*, Leipzig 1924, 501–19. Wagner refers to poems where the motif occurs in *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung*, I, 25 note 44, 128 ('Adi's poem); II, 120, 125–6.

- 50 “*Inqāṭa* ‘a”, the term used here, is ambiguous. It can mean either “he had ceased [to sing in public]” or else in a technical sense “his voice had become weak and shaky”. This latter sense is found in al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad, *Kamāl adab al-ghinā’*, 118 (=al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad, *La perfection des connaissances musicales*, 165–6); according to Sawa, however, the equivalents used by Abū l-Faraj are *ḥā’il* and *murta’ish* (Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 176, n.1)
- 51 For the focus on songs and poems, see pp. 176–77, and for articles on songs pp. 131–39.

9 ORDERING THE MATERIAL

- 1 The structural significance of the introductory songs was ignored by the mediaeval abridgers. Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī and Ibn Wāṣil retain them in their abridgements but append them to the article which they introduce in the *Aghānī* with the words: “The poetry set to music with which Abū l-Faraj introduced the information about X is ...”; they omit the performance indications. Ibn Manẓūr’s *Mukhtār al-aghānī* leaves the songs out altogether.
- 2 The earliest editions, the *Būlāq Aghānī* and Brünnow’s 21st volume, print the text consecutively, so the reader is free to decide whether the introductory song belongs with the preceding article or not. In the divisions between volumes *Būlāq* is inconsistent; sometimes it places a song from the Top Hundred at the beginning of a volume, but in the latter part of the text introductory songs and their articles are separated from each other by the break between volumes.
- 3 See pp. 45–6.
- 4 In drawing up the list of the Hundred Songs, I was able to check my results against those of Pieter Elbers in his *doctoraalscriptie*, *Het raamwerk in de honderd beste liederen van Hārūn al-Rashīd* (The framework in the Hundred Best Songs of Hārūn al-Rashīd), Leiden 2000, Appendix 2. I am grateful to Drs Elbers for making his study available to me.
- 5 He passes over the first poet, Ghariḍ, whom he here identifies with al-Samaw’al, observing (III, 116) that he is treated elsewhere in the book; the article on al-Samaw’al ibn Ghariḍ ibn ‘Ādiyā occurs in the section on Jewish poets (XXII, 116–21). But he includes two poems and *akhbār* about Sa’ya ibn al-Ghariḍ, although Sa’ya too appears among the Jewish poets (XXII, 122–6).
- 6 This at least is what his rejection of the poetry’s attribution to both ‘Antara and ‘Abd Qays at the beginning of Ḥāritha’s article (VIII, 383) points to. Closer analysis of the relevant MSS might cast light on this problem.
- 7 By implication, then, Abū l-Faraj is following ‘Alī ibn Yahyā’s version for the main information on this song, even though he does not say so.
- 8 Yāqūt, *Irshād* V, 151.
- 9 An earlier example of a collection of songs is found in Yūnus al-Kātib’s article, where his settings of lyrics about Zaynab are listed (vol. IV).
- 10 Abū l-Faraj’s criticism of ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir’s claim to have used ten melodic modes successively has been referred to above (Chapter 3, p. 113).
- 11 The full line occurs in an anecdote Ishāq al-Mawṣili tells about a meeting with al-Wāthiq (*Agh.* IX, 283).
- 12 This name has already been explained, p. 129 n. 5.
- 13 The article on al-Ḥārith ibn Khālid would appear to break the rule, since he has already been treated in vol. III, but the focus here is on the poetry of the introductory song and on al-Ḥārith’s wife Ḥumayda and her various marriages.
- 14 In al-Mu’taḍid’s case this more elaborate arrangement diverts attention from the fact that Abū l-Faraj provides precious little information about the caliph; he is irritatingly

faithful to his intention only to recount anecdotes about him which are relevant to musical life.

- 15 See above, p. 83–85 for a translation of this passage.
- 16 Al-Šūlī, *Ash‘ār awlād al-khulafā’*, 104–6.
- 17 For Bunān, who was one of those al-Mutawakkil sent into exile for a time, see al-Šūlī, *Kitāb al-awrāq*, § 119, 188, 220, 234, 243, 255, 263; for Abū l-‘Ubayy ibn Ḥamdūn and al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr, see Ibn Faḍlallāh al-‘Umārī, *Masālik al-abṣār* X, 271–72 and 274–75.
- 18 See above, pp. 30–31 for this question.
- 19 This profile is absent from the article in *Agh.* vol. III.
- 20 The authorship of the poetry is not certain, for while Umayya is given as the poet in the *Aghānī* (XVII, 302, where an attribution to al-Nābigha al-Ja’dī is rejected, and 312), Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī names Umayya’s father Abū l-Šalt as the author (*Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā’* 260) while Ibn Hishām names Abū l-Šalt but gives an alternative attribution to Umayya (*Sira*, I, 67).
- 21 The title announcing an article on Muḥammad ibn Umayya and his brother ‘Alī (*Agh.* XII, 145) turns out to need correction, for the article treats only Muḥammad, while ‘Alī ibn Umayya has an article of his own (XXIII, 133–9).
- 22 Blachère, *Histoire*, 289.
- 23 The Yazidi “cluster” can be considered as a development out of the section focussing on the subject’s poetically gifted descendants in some articles on personalities, notably the ones on al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashir and Zuhayr ibn Janāb (*Agh.* XVI, 51–4 and XIX, 27–9).
- 24 See pp. 124–7.
- 25 Abū l-Faraj’s account of the murder, which derives from al-Madā’inī and Abū Mikhnaḥ, is much less elaborate than the one given by Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafī in the *Kitāb al-ghārāt* (quoted by Madelung in *The Succession to Muhammad*, 303–04). Here as elsewhere what is at issue is not the historical accuracy of the *Aghānī* material but the effect the compiler seeks to achieve by it.
- 26 *Agh.* IV, 343–53, discussed above, pp. 156–61.
- 27 The article says nothing about the compensation ‘Īsā was given for surrendering his claim (Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 137). ‘Īsā’s destitution is treated from another point of view in an article in vol. XX. This article focusses on the career and poetry of Abū Nukhayla, an opportunist and a fluent poet in the *rajaz* metre, who became accepted by al-Saffāḥ and the ‘Abbāsids after having been a panegyrist of the Umayyads. Sensing which way the wind was blowing, he composed a poem calling on al-Manṣūr to proclaim al-Mahdī his heir, and the caliph had him recite it at court in ‘Īsā’s presence. ‘Īsā accepted the decision, but he avenged himself on Abū Nukhayla by sending a servant to kill him (*Agh.* XX, 416–22). ‘Īsā’s revenge is relevant to the article on Abū Nukhayla, where it causes the poet’s death; it would have been out of place in the article on ‘Īsā himself, since Abū Nukhayla is only a minor actor in the succession drama.
- 28 Abū Mikhnaḥ is also al-Ṭabarī’s main source for Ḥujr’s death (*Ta’rikh* II, 111–47), but Abū l-Faraj’s version is independent of al-Ṭabarī’s and more concise. It already has something of the hagiographical approach found in later *maqātil* works (cf. Günther, “*Maqātil* Literature”, 209–10).
- 29 Labīd’s main article has occurred earlier (*Agh.* XV, 360–79).
- 30 This incident is discussed in Lawrence I. Conrad, “*Ṭā’ūn* and *wabā’*”. Conceptions of plague and pestilence in early Islam”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25 (1982), 298–9. The first pandemic of plague in the Near East lasted from the sixth to the mid-eighth century AD.
- 31 Labīd seems to have converted to Islam already; *Sharḥ Diwān Labīd ibn Rabī‘a al-‘Āmirī*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, Kuwait 1962, editor’s introd. 26–7. But cf. art. “Labīd b. Rabī‘a”, *EI*² (C. Brockelmann).

- 32 “Su‘ād is gone”; cf. Michael Sells’ translation of the poem in *Journal of Arabic Literature* XXI (1990), 148–52. The lyrics of the article’s introductory song come from the beginning of this poem. This poem is also known as the *Burda*, or *Mantle poem*, because when the Prophet heard it, he gave Ka‘b the cloak he was wearing. The *Aghānī* does not mention this sequel to Ka‘b’s recitation; instead it notes that Ka‘b’s poem contained some unflattering allusions to the Anṣār. Ka‘b’s article falls into two parts, the first on his standing and apprenticeship as a poet and the second on his conversion.
- 33 *Idha mittu fa-dfinnī ilā aṣli karmatin/turawwī ‘izāmī ba‘da mawtī ‘urūquhā*. This line is also quoted *Agh.* XIX, 7 and 10.
- 34 This anecdote is included in Abū Ṣakhr’s article because the youth recites a line from one of his poems. The same anecdote also occurs in the article on Abū Dulaf al-‘Ijlī (*Agh.* VIII, 248–9). It is quoted there because Abū Dulaf took up one of the images al-Nazzām used in his exchange with the boy and worked it into a poem. It seems to have been one of those stories, like the anecdote about the compulsive gambler al-‘Āṣī (for which see pp. 154–5), which Abū l-Faraj thought worth repeating.
- 35 The analysis of this and some other cases of what I consider significant juxtaposition could certainly be worked out further, but space does not permit it here.
- 36 The preface has already been discussed above (pp. 28–9).
- 37 Whether this book ever saw the light is not clear.
- 38 Al-Ṣūlī, *Akhhbār Abi Tammām*, 8. Al-Ṣūlī’s view has its roots in Sassanian culture, where music had an established place at court, as is reflected in the *Kitāb al-tāj* (Pseudo-Ġāhiz, *Le livre de la couronne*. *Kitāb al-tāğ fi ahlāk al-mulūk*, tr. Charles Pellat, Paris 1954, 53–4). But the Sassanian emperors and, in their wake, the first music-loving ‘Abbāsid caliphs, al-Mahdī and al-Rashid, were not composers. Al-Ṣūlī’s inclusion of the knowledge of rhythmic and melodic modes in this “science”, however, makes practical experience of composing very likely.
Al-Ṣūlī was not alone in recognising the importance of music at court. In his short treatise on the arts of the courtier, *Adab al-nadīm*, Kushājīm (d. c. 360/970–1) has a chapter on *adab al-samā’*, “listening to music” (Abū l-Faṭḥ Kushājīm, *Adab al-nadīm*, Bulaq 1298/1881, 19–22). (As this instance shows, *samā’* is not limited to the world of Sufism, but is also encountered in secular texts.)
- 39 The extant ones have been collected and published: *Mu‘allafāt al-Kindī al-mūsīqiya*, ed. and comm. Zakariyā Yūsuf, Baghdad 1962.
- 40 Al-Kindī, “*Risāla fi ajzā’ khabariya fi l-mūsīqi*” in *Mu‘allafāt al-Kindī al-mūsīqiya*, 100–6; tr. Henry George Farmer, “Al-Kindī on the ‘Ethos’ of Rhythm, Colour and Perfume”, *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 16 (1957), 32–7.
- 41 Al-Kindī, “*Kitāb al-muṣawwītāt*”, in *Mu‘allafāt al-Kindī al-mūsīqiya*, 75.
- 42 Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murāj al-dhahab*, II, 46.
- 43 For the dating of the *Rasā’il* see Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā’, *Mensch und Tier vor dem König der Dschinnen*. *Aus den Schriften der Lauteren Brüder von Basra*, tr. with introduction and notes Alma Giese, Hamburg 1990, xx. The translator’s introduction gives a useful survey of research on this text.
- 44 Butrus al-Bustānī (ed.), *Rasā’il ikhwān al-ṣafā’ wa-khillān al-wafā’* (Beirut 1957), I, 183–5; 225–6; tr. Amnon Shiloah, *The Epistle on Music of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* (Tel Aviv 1978), 12–15; 56–7.
- 45 *Rasā’il* 232; *The Epistle* 63.
- 46 *Rasā’il* 205; *The Epistle* 35.
- 47 Al-Ḥasan al-Kātib, *Kamāl adab al-ghinā’*, 23; 38–40 (= *La perfection des connaissances musicales* 47; 69–74). Al-Ḥasan al-Kātib is thought to have lived in the late fourth/tenth or early fifth/eleventh century (*La perfection des connaissances musicales*, translator’s introd. 10–11).

- 48 Al-Kindi is the transmitter of an elegant thumbnail sketch of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Shiṭranjī (*Agh.* XXII, 44). Al-Sarakhsī occurs, for example, V, 342; XII, 283–4; XIV, 48; XIX, 220; XXII, 208.
- 49 Al-Ḥasan al-Kātib, *Kamāl adab al-ghināʾ*, 144 for example, (= *La perfection des connaissances musicales*, 205). In his list of al-Sarakhsī's writings Rosenthal mentions four titles on musical subjects, three connected with theory and one with the practice of singing (Franz Rosenthal, *Aḥmad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Sarakhsī*, New Haven 1943, 125).
- 50 Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 14.
- 51 Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-mūsīqī al-kabīr*, ed. Ghaṭṭās 'Abd al-Malik Khashaba, Cairo 1967, 110 (where he speaks of *al-mamlaka al-'arabiyya*), 116–17, 137.
- 52 Cf. pp. 22, p. 48.
- 53 Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 227, 348–52.
- 54 Jean During, “Les musiques d’Iran et du Moyen-Orient face à l’acculturation occidentale” in Yann Richard (ed.), *Entre l’Iran et l’Occident. Adaptation et assimilation des idées et techniques occidentales en Iran*, Paris 1989, 221.
- 55 See pp. 139, 256–7.

EPILOGUE

- 1 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-muqaddima li-kitāb al-ʿibar*, Cairo n.d., 554.

APPENDIX 1

- 1 This article on al-Ḥāritha ibn Badr is in reprints of the Dār al-Kutub edition, but not in the original edition. The intervening pages do not contain any *Aghānī* text.
- 2 Article on Muslim ibn al-Walid.
- 3 Latter part of the article on Taʾabbāṭa Sharran.
- 4 Latter part of the article on Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt, articles on Abū Ḥashishah, 'Inān, al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb.
- 5 A second article on Marwān al-Aṣghar, after the one in vol. XII.

APPENDIX 2

- 1 An obscure singer, about whom Abū l-Faraj admits to having no information.
- 2 The editors give the title in square brackets in the text because it is found in only two manuscripts. It is inappropriate, for the section consists only of an account of how the Jews settled in Yathrib and two *akhbār* affirming Ghariḍ's authorship of the lines.
- 3 Zayd ibn 'Amr's article ends with very brief treatments of Zuhayr ibn Janāb, Madraj al-Riḥ and Sa'ya ibn Ghariḍ.
- 4 Another virtually unknown singer, as Abū l-Faraj immediately points out.
- 5 The printed text refers to *al-laḥn al-mukhtār* only in the performance indications; MS Or. 2076, fol. 132 r. has the title *Ṣawt min al-mi'a al-mukhtāra*.
- 6 As mentioned above (p. 265), the article has been misnamed, for it deals only with a song of Ṭuways's.
- 7 Another virtually unknown singer, as Abū l-Faraj immediately points out.
- 8 The editors give the title in square brackets in the text because it is found in only two manuscripts.
- 9 The text has *al-ṣarrāf* (the money-changer) but mentions the variant *al-ḍarrāb* (the lutenist).

- 10 Yūnus, too, has a setting for these lines and six other settings of poems Ibn Ruhayma dedicated to Zaynab, known as his “Zaynab songs” (*ḡayāniba*).
- 11 The heading “The war between Bakr and Taghlib” has been added by the editors from p. 35 on.
- 12 Abū l-Faraj does not mention the author of the setting here; the song, with a second line added, is given later introducing Waḍḍāḥ al-Yaman’s article in vol. VI.
- 13 For the sections following this and the following two songs the editors have retained the running title “Information about ‘Abādīl and his origin,” although they are not connected with him.
- 14 A second song follows the one from the Top Hundred.
- 15 An obscure singer from Medina.
- 16 Abū l-Faraj sets out what he knows about this obscure poet in one paragraph.
- 17 The first line of this song has already been quoted in connection with Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt in vol. V.
- 18 The editors have introduced the running title “‘Ātika bint Shuhda and some information about her” for the short subsequent section which treats her, the only singer among the many who composed settings for these lyrics not to have already been the subject of an article.
- 19 A virtually unknown singer, as Abū l-Faraj observes.
- 20 The editors have given the whole of the subsequent short section the title “Information about ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Alqama and Ḥubaysha.”
- 21 The end of the article briefly treats ‘Abd Qays ibn Khufāf al-Burjumī, as the editors note in a running title.
- 22 He was an obscure singer, as Abū l-Faraj points out.
- 23 According to Abū l-Faraj she remained a slave all her life and never became well-known.
- 24 A Medinan singer who is virtually forgotten.
- 25 This song is identical with the one listed in vol. VII. Abū l-Faraj again mentions his failure to find any information about the composer, and remarks that al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī has already been treated.
- 26 Abū l-Faraj subsequently contests ‘Ubaydallāh’s claim that any song can combine all the melodic modes.
- 27 This article has been added in the reprint of the Dār al-Kutub edition; the editors observe that the song introducing it is identical to the first two lines of the song (VIII, 235) which introduces the articles on ‘Antara and ‘Abd Qays. They note that in the MSS which have Ḥāritha’s article it comes between Jamīla’s and Abū Dulaf’s.
- 28 The philological notes and list of settings attached to this song and the rest of the poem are especially extensive.
- 29 The third song in the *ramal* mode is mentioned again *en passant* IX, 283 but not treated anywhere.
- 30 This nickname is given in the original list but not repeated here.
- 31 Most of this article seems to be lost.
- 32 Like C7, C2 is taken from one of al-A’shā’s poems mentioning Hurayra; it has already been treated as “The top”.
- 33 The poem, ‘Antara’s *Mu‘allaqa*, is followed by many settings and lengthy philological notes.
- 34 This and the following two songs are given as alternatives to the ones listed C4, C5 and C6.
- 35 The lyrics of this song, like the two following ones, mention Qutayla.
- 36 The Seven are in fact Eight, though Abū l-Faraj does not point out which is the alternative song. Nos 1, 4, 6 and 7 have already been treated elsewhere.
- 37 The subsequent pages treat the episode giving rise to this poetry and occasions where it was quoted or sung.

- 38 At the end of this section Abū l-Faraj returns to ‘Umar and lists seven songs of his about Su‘ād.
- 39 The title continues: “excluding information about him in other contexts because it is extensive and does not belong in this book, but including some information about him with singers and others which is appropriate here.”
- 40 The discussion of Ibrāhīm’s musical strengths and weaknesses is untitled.
- 41 This running title has been added by the editors.
- 42 The song introduces a short section on ‘Abdallāh ibn Mūsā.
- 43 Abū l-Faraj expresses his admiration for Ibn al-Mu‘tazz in the omitted passage.
- 44 The transition from the section on royal musicians to Abū l-Faraj’s choice of songs is not marked in any way.
- 45 The editors have inserted this running title.
- 46 The editors have inserted this running title.
- 46a This name is given as “Najwa” in the article on Muḥamad and Sallāma in vol. XV.
- 47 The editors have inserted this running title.
- 48 The editors have inserted this running title.
- 49 The editors have given this section the running title “Various accounts”.
- 50 The editors have given this section the running title “Various accounts”.
- 51 The editors have given the information connected with this song the running title “Some information about Ibn Abi ‘Atiq”.
- 52 The editors have inserted this running title.
- 53 This phrase starts the section.
- 54 This and the following three songs are described as belonging to the Top Hundred.
- 55 Sallāma has already been named in the information about the song.
- 56 This section is untitled; the editors have retained the previous running title “Akhbār al-Khansā’...”
- 57 This and the next section are untitled; the editors have retained the previous running title “Mention of Hāshim ibn Sulaymān...”
- 58 This and the next section are untitled; the editors have retained the previous running title “Mention of ‘Amr ibn Bāna.”
- 59 Literally, according to the title, “Mention of the one about whom no information has yet been given nor will it be given later.”
- 60 This title has been added by the editors.
- 61 From pp. 119–27 the editors have added “and the Battle of Bu‘āth” to the running title.
- 62 This title has been added by the editors.
- 63 This title has been added by the editors.
- 64 This title has been added by the editors.
- 65 This title has been added by the editors.
- 66 This title has been expanded by the editors.
- 67 This title has been added by the editors.
- 68 This title seems to have been added by the editors.
- 69 This title seems to have been added by the editors; the subject is the poem of the lyrics.
- 70 This title seems to have been added by the editors.
- 71 This title seems to have been added by the editors.

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