

Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature

First Published in 1996
by Curzon Press
St John's Studios, Church Road, Richmond
Surrey, TW9 2QA

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Typeset in Times by LaserScript Ltd, Mitcham
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ Press (Padstow) Ltd, Pastow, Cornwall

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-7007-0411-6

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CURZON

On Rhyming Endings and Symmetric Phrases in Al-hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*

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0. In the following paper we would like to present some statistical data, accompanied by examples and conclusions based on the analysis of the formal aspects of Badi^c al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*. The text used was basically that of the edition of Shaykh Muḥammad ^cAbduh, the more complete Istanbul edition having been relied on in three passages which were left out by ^cAbduh for moral reasons.¹

"These 'sketches'" – says Régis Blachère about the *maqāmāt* " . . . are made up according to a strict balance; they are of rhymed and rhythmic prose, mixed with verse; the learned, sometimes precious, style constitutes the principal but not the sole concern of the author".² The aim of the present study has only been to provide a starting point for a later analysis of how this 'principal' – formal – concern correlates with the author's interest in shaping the contents of the *Maqāmāt* and how the semantic and thematic material is organized in them.³ Since, to the best of our knowledge, there is no comprehensive linguistic and stylistic analysis and evaluation of al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*, this paper can represent only a first step towards this end in the form of an attempt to portray some of the most striking formal features of the *Maqāmāt* backed by figures.⁴

In the terminology the use of the word *saj^c* has been avoided.⁵ Instead of rhymes or *rawi⁶* the expression 'rhyming ending' is used, while instead of parallel members the term 'symmetric phrases' seemed preferable.⁷ The style of the *maqāmāt* is considered 'balanced' or 'proportional text', where the means of proportioning embrace rhyming endings as well as a kind of pulsing rhythm. This rhythm or harmony is, however, frequently interrupted by 'dissonant' parts, not because the author could not have continued the pulsation as long as he wanted but *first* because he complied with the semantic requirements of his text as a whole, or in other words, the contents of his story, and *second* because a monotonous pulsing would not suit human perception and would give a dull sense.⁸

1. Rhyming endings

The whole text under investigation comprises 20,245 words from the Beirut edition and 696 more taken from the Istanbul edition, giving all together 20,941 words. By word, the written form is meant here. The number of words would be 5,600 more if one-letter words (prepositions and conjunctions) had been counted independently.⁹ This, however, did not seem necessary, because words are used here exclusively as quantitative units for measuring the length of the text or some of its parts and are not to be regarded as qualitative factors.

It is not always possible to define unambiguously and with absolute certainty which endings are to be classified as rhyming, or which phrases are to be counted as symmetric or parallel and which are not. For this reason the numbers of occurrences are always rounded so as not to give a false impression.

The whole text under examination contains 351 lines of verse with all together 2,790 words (=13.3 %). The remainder, here called 'prose-text' may be segmented into about 4,900 phrases, of which a little less than two thirds, about 2,860, are defined by their being rhymed in one way or another, and the rest (about 5,800 words in about 1,680 phrases) do not rhyme. This also means that, while the average number of words in a phrase with rhyming ending is 3.5, this number is greater (3.75) in the case of the non-rhyming phrases. The breaking of the non-rhyming parts into phrases can, of course, only be made on a subjective basis. Here we have considered a phrase as an utterance (or sentence) which can be independently understood. Thus a subordinate clause has not been regarded as such a phrase. Among the non-rhyming phrases, however, there are many stereotype expressions, among other things 524 occurrences of the verb *qāla* and its inflected forms.

The length of non-rhyming (and so, in general, asymmetric) phrases can vary from one word (usually *قال*) to two-three word phrases forming a whole narrative passage.¹⁰

فليس يبيع إلا الأعلق / ثم قرع الباب / ودخلنا الدهليز

But it may be as long as 13 words:¹¹

وهذه الحلقة تراها اشتريتها في سوق الطرائف من عمران
الطرائفي بثلاثة دنانير معزية

The *Ghilāni maqāma* as a whole provides good examples of rhymeless phrases, since less than one fifth of the text has rhyming endings while three fifths are rhymeless (the remaining one fifth being poetry).

1.1 The number of rhyming phrases may extend from two to three or rarely to five. The rhyming endings are in 88% of cases couplets, in about 11% triplets and only one percent are real quadruplets or quintuplets. The triplets are of two types: real triplets, and what may be called semi-triplets. The latter type means that most commonly the first of the three phrases is a preparatory phrase (in both its form and its contents), reflecting only partially the characteristics of the given rhyme. If the second and third members are symmetric (balanced) phrases as well, this first phrase is not, but in that case the rhyming is usually perfect. Accordingly, we suppose here the conscious use of formal devices by the author. In the following we would like to present some examples of what has been described above.

Couplet:¹²

شهدت حتى مصارع العشاق
ومرضت حتى لمرض الأهداق

Ordinary triplet:¹³

عليه باب غير أنه من خليطي ساج
وعاج
مزدوجين أحسن ازدواج

Or:

وهي تدور في الدور
من التنور إلى القدر
ومن القدر إلى التنور

Asymmetric triplet (2+1):¹⁴

كيف حصلتُها
وكم من حيلة احتلتُها
حتى عقدتُها

After the first two parts, there is not only a linguistic and semantic boundary beside the essential coherence of the whole tripartite sentence, but also an alteration of rhyming pattern which preserves only the final element -*hā* in the 3rd part.

Asymmetric triplet with the form 1+2:¹⁵

وقد أخرج من دور آل الفرات
وقت المصادرات
وزمن الفارات

The rhyming is complete, but only the second and third phrases are symmetric.

Asymmetric triplet with the form 1+2:¹⁶

فما استأذن على سمعي
مسافة مقامي
أفصح من كلامي

There is no complete rhyme in the first, only the pronoun ending being identical, while the second and third form a complete rhyming couplet.

Quadruplet (sometimes plus one, forming a quasi-quintuplet):¹⁷

سلوا / الملوك وخزائنُها
والاغلاق ومعادنُها
والامور وبواطنُها

والعلوم ومواطنها

والخطوب ومفالقها

Quadruplet consisting in reality of two couplets, one with perfect, the other with imperfect rhyming:¹⁸

من الذي / ملك أسوارها

وعرف أسرارها

ونهج سمتها

وولج حرتها

Real quintuplet (plus perfect parallelism):¹⁹

سلوا عني / البلاد وحصونها

والجبال وحزونها

والأودية وبطونها

والبحار وعيونها

والخيل ومتونها

The rhyme consonant, the *rawi* is a sonorant (liquid or nasal) sound in about 42% of cases; also, the labial /b/ and the dental /d/ occur more times than the average and their statistical probability would allow. The total number of occurrences of all sonorant sounds in the text is 5,955 (about 30% of all sounds), and, if we extract from this the occurrences of the particles and the inflected forms of the verb *qāla* which cannot in principle occur at the end of a rhyming phrase, we get an even smaller rate (around 20%). That is the probability of their occurring in a rhyme.

The 42% rate of occurrence in a rhyming ending position shows a very ancient trait in the rhyming of the *maqāmāt*, the relic of an age when the most important ending in an (artistic) prose text was a sonorant. It also supports a phonologic theory according to which the sonorants form an independent class within the Arabic sound system (together with the real consonants, real vowels and the glides).²⁰

1.2 The rhymes in al-Hamadhāni's *maqāmāt* have, in a high percentage, very complicated forms, not differing much in this respect from those of the poetic rhyme (*qāfiya*). It is only rarely true that these rhyming endings are nothing more than *rawīs*. In about 35% of the rhymes there is a common long vowel before the *rawi*²¹; in a very large number of cases (in all together 55% of all the rhymes), in addition to the rhyming letter, the whole morphologic pattern is prescribed by the rhyme (this latter, however, partially overlaps with the former category). This trait binds the *maqāma* rhyme with earlier prose where this pattern generally represents the sole connection between the parallel members.²² The most frequent morphologic pattern used is *fa^{cl}* (22%). Here it may be interesting to note that the *fā'ila(tun)* form, once the most frequently used ending form (e.g. in the Koran²³) has lost its special significance in the *maqāmāt* (occurring only in 6% of cases). It is also to be noted that identity in grammatical category of the forms is not always required (e.g. a broken plural may harmonize with a *maṣdar*: *ru'ūs – julūs*; or an *i'rāb* ending with a *binā'* vowel: *qaṣdaka – laka*). A detailed list of statistical data will be omitted here.²⁴

1.3 The so called prose rhymes show two other important similarities to the poetic rhyme. First, unlike the early *saj'*, the *i'rāb* endings are always identical in the rhyming pairs.²⁵ This being such an unequivocal feature of these rhymes (as well as of the *qawāfi shi'riyya*), it can be relied on in deciding, for example, whether four phrases having the same consonantal endings are really a quadruplet or form only two (very similar but essentially different) couplets, because the *i'rāb* endings differ. Hence the correctness of our division may be supported by other, mainly semantic, means. The highly classical nature of these rhyming endings demonstrates the learned and basically written character of the *Maqāmāt*, since it is hardly possible to imagine that these endings would have been pronounced in live recitation.²⁶

Second, in many cases there is what is called in poetry *khurūj*, i.e. a final third person suffixed pronoun (*-hu* or *-hā*) after the rhyme letter, its occurrence rate being 18% in the whole text, though in some (longer) *maqāmāt* it may reach even the 30% mark. Contrary to this, the rate of rhymes consisting only of either a pronoun, a verbal inflection, a nominal

case ending or a *tā' marbūṭa* is very low, no more than 7%.²⁷ It occurs also very rarely that the rhyme consists only of a *rawī*. On the other hand it happens very often with the forms *fa^l*, *fa^{il}*, *af^{āl}* and *fa^{āl}* that not only the *lām*, but also the *ʿayn* may be identical (or a related sound). Otherwise there is at least a *tā' marbūṭa* or a pronoun after the *rawī*.

The following are some examples of the use of related sounds in the rhyming endings:

(i) the *rawī* is *mim*, while the previous consonant is either *lām* or *mim*.²⁸

عليما / رميما

(ii) the *rawī* is *bā'*, and the previous consonant is either *nūn* or *rā'*.²⁹

أعنابا / أترابا

(iii) the *rawī* is *mim*, and the previous consonant is either *nūn* or *mim*.³⁰

المنام / الغمام

1.4 The rhyming in the *Maqāmāt* sometimes allows quite complicated structures not possible in Classical Arabic poetry because of the latter's obligatory monorhymes. For instance, there is a special technique by the help of which parallelism (i.e. symmetry in syntactic form) and rhyming partly run together and partly separate: at the beginning of the twenty-first *maqāma* four phrases are symmetric, but rhyme separately in two pairs.³¹

وسخن ماؤه ليفسل

وهين تاباتة ليحمل

وخيطت أثوابه ليكفن

وحفرت حفرتة ليدفن

All the above phrases contain a passive verb at the beginning and a subjunctive verb at the end. The rhyming endings are similar but not

identical (*lām* and *nūn*). All of this is supported with a small shift in the middle of the phrases, from a masculine to a feminine subject.

In a similar pattern in the same *maqāma* even the rhyme is partly identical having the same pronoun after different *rawīs*.³²

ونسام / قد نشرن شعورهن A

يضربن صدورهن B

وجددن عقودهن C

يلطنن خدودهن D

The rhymes are similar in A & B and C & D, while A is parallel to C and B to D. In other words the whole A plus B couplet is symmetrical in its structure with C plus D, with B and D being *ḥāl* sentences relating to A and C respectively. The overall unity of the four phrases, i.e. two couplets, is secured by the formula of the rhyming endings of the pattern *fu^ūlahunna*.

1.5 The exact repetition of the rhyming ending is not allowable in the *maqāma* genre. There is a quadruplet of the two-plus-two type, for instance, in the *Maqāma maḍiriyya* where there seemingly are complete repetitions of the rhyming words.³³

لا يصلح هذا الإبريق إلا لهذا الطست

ولا يصلح هذا الطست إلا مع هذا الدست

ولا يحسن هذا الدست إلا في هذا البيت

ولا يجمل هذا البيت إلا مع هذا الضيف

Here there are complete repetitions inside the lines. Whether these are to be counted as rhymes or not can be decided not only by knowing that repetition is not used, as a rule, in rhyming endings, but also by the difference in the *iṣrāb* endings which is also not permissible in al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*. Thus the first *al-ṭasti* does not rhyme with the second *al-ṭastu* but it certainly forms a kind of inner rhyme, or better to

say 'echo' together with *al-dastu* and *al-baytu* in the third and fourth phrases. This cannot be called a proper *abab* type of rhyming because it does not occur with enough frequency in the text, but it is rather an auxiliary or supporting rhyme for which there are some other parallel places.

2. Symmetric phrases

2.1 The usual concept of parallel members (called symmetric phrases here) must be supplemented with two important remarks. First, while all the symmetric phrases in the *maqāmāt* possess rhyming endings, there are many phrases supplied with rhymes which are not parallel or symmetric at all. Second, contrary to the usual concept, we restrict here the notion of parallelism to structural or syntactic parallelism. Semantic parallelism is either so vague an idea that it cannot be used for practical (and statistical) purposes, or it always goes along with syntactic balance. It may be noted here that the difference between symmetric and asymmetric structures is very characteristic and easy to detect. Semi- or quasi-parallelism occurs only if the rhyming is also imperfect. Such is the case with the 2+1 and 1+2 triplets mentioned above, where the first or third member may only be regarded as supplementary.³⁴

دعوه	1.
ولا تردعوه	2.
وإن سمعتم له أنيبا	0.
لا تجيبوه	3.

Here there is a contrastive parallelism between an imperative and a prohibition in the first two phrases. The structural symmetry is perfect between the second and the third phrases of the triplet, but the placement of an imperfect rhyming is meant to point to some defect in the triplet. There is an introductory part inside the triplet, between the second and the third members, which is unusual and destroys the perfect harmony. The plural ending and the pronoun, however, are there to call attention to the formal symmetry and semantic connection between the phrases *lā tarda'ūhu* and *lā tujībūhu*.

One could easily say that this analysis seems arbitrary and what we

really have here is a randomly imperfect rhyming which the writer put there because he could not find a better one. Thus the length of the third part has nothing to do with the imperfection of rhyming, but, since throughout the whole text such imperfection of the first or third member of a triplet always occurs together with a correspondent imperfection of the rhyming ending, one feels that this co-occurrence cannot just be an accident.

2.2 On the length of symmetric phrases

According to a widely held view, symmetric (or parallel) phrases may have varying, and even greatly different lengths.³⁵ This view cannot be justified without strong reservations since symmetric phrases are almost always segments of equal or similar length. This is self-evident, since they mostly have a similar syntactic structure and also similar morphological patterns (which means in Arabic identical or nearly identical length). The image of unequal duration may be the consequence of a mental illusion. We all listen to or read a text linearly, and parallelism generally appears to consist of a longer first and a shorter second member, divided by the rhyming ending of the first member. It may come to our mind only later that what seemed to be the first member in reality consists of two parts; an introductory (or transitory) non-rhyming, non-parallel part and a symmetric, rhyming segment. In al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*, a rhyming or symmetric couplet is more frequently interrupted by non-rhyming or at least asymmetric parts than later in al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*.³⁶ These initial portions form part of these interruptions and ensure a kind of rhythm which is strongly connected to the contents of the *maqāma*:³⁷

(حدثنا عيسى بن هشام قال)

كنت وأنا فتى السن // أشد رحلي لكل عماية
وأركض طرفي إلى كل غواية

Here the first phrase seems twice as long as the second. The symmetric couplet, however, begins within the whole verbal phrase *kāna yafālu*, with only the *yafālu* part, the whole previous *jumla ḥāliyya* being only an introduction to the symmetric couplet. If, however, the second member is longer than the first it really means that we have to do with an

unproportionate (but rhyming) couplet. (For this latter see the previous example with *lā tujībūhu*.)

The examples of asymmetric phrases are abundant. Of course their not being parallel syntactically does not exclude the existence of some other type of rhetorical links between the members, e.g. *jinās*.³⁸

الأمر على ما ذُكِرَ / فافعل كما أمرَ

Here there is no semantic parallelism and no complete syntactic parallelism either, although we can find a partial balance between the two subordinate sentences:

ما ذكر ... ما أمر

This is strengthened by the *jinās* between *al-amru* at the beginning of the first phrase and *amara* at the end of the second, marking a kind of coherence between the two phrases.

So, we can say that there are symmetric, partially symmetric and quite asymmetric rhyming phrases.³⁹

A.) Symmetric phrases:⁴⁰

انظر إلى /
الأمم الخالية
والمملوك الفانية
انمحت آثارهم
وبقيت أخبارهم

B.) Partially symmetric phrases:⁴¹

كيف /
انتسفتهم الأيام
وأفناهم الحمام

C.) Asymmetric phrases:⁴²

كم اختلست أيدي المنون
من قرون
بعد قرون

Besides these linear types there are multi-level symmetric structures where a symmetric rhyming couplet (or triplet) grows inside a symmetric construction of a larger scale, not supplied with rhyming endings:⁴³

(فقلنا
من القارع
فقال ...)
وحرُّ //
قاده الضرُّ
والزمن المرُّ
وضيفُ //
وطؤه خفيفُ
وضالته رفيفُ
وجارُ //
يستدعي على /
الجوع
الجيب المرقوع

// وغريبُ //

أوقدت النار على سفره

ونبع العواء على أثره

The four introductory one-word phrases preceding four symmetric couplets here make us feel that there is symmetry and balance of a higher order between different text units.

As has been mentioned before, about two thirds of the prose text features rhyming phrases: 62% of these rhyming phrases (equal to 42% of the whole prose text) constitute strictly parallel phrases. We may extract from the sum of words of the prose text the large number of the occurrences of the quotation word *qāla* – it occurs, as has been stated, 524 times – and also the names of the two protagonists (ʿIsā b. Hishām and Abū al-Fatḥ al-Iskandari) – all together 205 occurrences. The above rate then becomes a little higher, by 3%, to be precise.

To simplify the picture, only three categories have been chosen from among the many different types of full symmetric phrases.

First type: When both members of the parallel couplets (since parallelism is restricted in 90% of cases to couplets) are full sentences, structurally independent from each other. These constitute 28% of all symmetric phrases:⁴⁴

(كنت في بعض بلاد فزارة ... وأنا أهم بالوطن)

فلا الليل يثنيني بوعيده

ولا البعد يلويني ببيده

Even these seemingly complete sentences show, however, that it is quite impossible to excerpt any part of a text without feeling the need to explain things (e.g., word order, use of the *yafālu* form, etc.) in it by referring to the antecedent parts.

Second type: When the only structural difference between the members is a particle or grammatical word at the beginning of the first

phrase, which, however, relates to the second or third phrase as well. Their ratio is 14%. For example:⁴⁵

// فإنكم //

إذا استشعرتموه لم تجمعوا

ومتى ذكرتموه لم تمرحوا

وإن نسيتموه فهو ذاكركم

وإن نتم منه فهو ثائركم

وإن كرهتموه فهو زائركم

Third type: The remaining 58%, that is the largest part of all structurally parallel phrases, are such that the symmetric phrases start after a shorter or longer introductory part. This makes the reader think that the members are of different length.⁴⁶

// وليكن //

ليلي الأمر

يومي النشر

رقير القشر

(كثيف الحشو)

لؤلئي الدهن

كوكبي اللون

One last thing that should be noted here is that the proportion of symmetric structures, the members of which consist only of one word, is very low (2.6%), as compared to al-Ḥariri's *Maqāmāt*, where it is a much more frequent phenomenon.⁴⁷

3. Summary

3.1 The form of al-Hamadhāni's *Maqāmāt* shows a more complicated and, at the same time, more diversified picture than one would think in reading certain simplified definitions given not only by various European and Arab handbooks and encyclopaedias, but also by monographs written by modern Arab authors on al-Hamadhāni.⁴⁸

This complexity means two basic things: First, there are manifold and not at all monotonous patterns of connections between the different types of formal elements (rhyming, parallelism, length of the symmetric phrases, the frequency of their occurrence, and so on) forming a rhythm in the text which underlies the artistic effects of the *Maqāmāt*. Second, the choice and the rhythm of formal elements do not stand on their own, but are strongly linked with the semantic content of the clauses and with the course of the narrative in general.⁴⁹

3.2 As final conclusions, the following main distinctive characteristics seem to merit consideration:

1. On the one hand, the use of a rhyming technique very similar in its complexity to that of the poetic *qāfiya*, and especially its rigid compliance with the rules of *irāb* after the *rawī* points to a form of highly artificial written prose. Therefore one cannot accept the usual European presentation of the parts and phrases of a *maqāma* without vowel endings. On the other hand, some atavistic traits can be detected, as well as reminiscences of an oral literature. The most astonishing of all of these is perhaps the high frequency of the occurrence of liquid and nasal sounds (classified here as members of a so-called sonorant class) as rhyme letters, *rawī*s.
2. The rhyming endings are similar to those of many earlier and later products of the so-called rhyming prose in the extensive use of pronouns and inflectional endings in the rhyming words (not only *-hu* and *-hā*, but also *-ka*, *-kum*, *-ī*, *-nī*, *-an*, *-ūna*, etc.). However, these weak rhyming elements usually do not stand alone, but almost always follow a proper rhyme or at least a *rawī*.

3. As for the use of symmetric phrases the following can be stated:
 - a) At least one third of all the rhyming phrases do not take part in symmetric phrases (i.e., parallelism) in a strict sense.
 - b) It makes no sense to speak about parallel elements of differing length, but only about symmetric couplets or triplets of different length. This means that the members of one balanced pair should be of identical or nearly identical extent, but – contrary to the situation in poetry – there is no special limit set for the length of all such pairs.
 - c) Strictly speaking, parallelism in al-Hamadhāni's *Maqāmāt* means almost exclusively a symmetric arrangement of syntactic devices and structures, even if there may exist traits of parallelism on other linguistic (phonological or semantic) levels too, at one and the same time. That is, if we cannot find a quite complete syntactic parallelism among phrases of the same rhyming endings, we cannot, as a rule, discover there semantic parallelism either. In other words, we may say that parallelism in the *Maqāmāt* means first of all repetition of structure and only then repetition of meanings.

Notes

1. The omitted passages are: the complete 26th *Maqāma Shāmiyya* (333 words); one anecdote from the end of the 31th *Maqāma Ruṣāfiyya* (328 words); and verses 8–13 from the first poem in the 19th *Maqāma Sāsāniyya* (35 words).
2. Blachère 1972:106. Cf. Horst, 1987:221.
3. For a first step towards fulfilling this aim, see Iványi 1993.
4. Even a monograph on al-Hamadhāni's literary activity written in Arabic and published recently, Muṣṭafā al-Shak'a's work deals little with the formal aspects of the *maqāmāt*, devoting only seven of 468 pages to their style. I am grateful to Hilary Kilpatrick for calling to my attention Mahmoud Messadi's *Essai sur le rythme dans la prose rimée en arabe* (Tunis, 1981). Unfortunately it was too late to take Messadi's analysis into consideration in the present article.
5. In this we accept the views of A. F. L. Beeston, who emphasises the difference between the soothsayers' *saj'* and that of the later prose writers. See Beeston 1971, 1983 and 1990. On *saj'* see also Krenkow 1972.
6. As modern Arab writers do when speaking of the *maqāma* rhymes. See, for example, 'Ukkāzi 1992: 'al-tasjīc al-mutawāzi'.
7. Considering the fact, pointed out later in this paper, that parallelism usually means here symmetric syntactic structures.
8. It can even be said that the aforementioned rhythm of the *maqāma* is ensured by this alternation of what may be called 'well-formed' and 'formless' parts.

9. An even greater number, around 38,800, would derive from counting separately everything that ancient Arab grammarians considered independent words (or rather morphemes).
10. The 22nd *al-Maqāma al-Maḍiriyya*, p. 109 (ed. Beirut).
11. *Ibid*, p. 108.
12. The 4th *al-Maqāma al-Sijistāniyya*, p. 21.
13. The 22nd *al-Maqāma al-Maḍiriyya*, p. 117.
14. *Ibid*, p. 109.
15. *Ibid*, p. 111.
16. The 3rd *al-Maqāma al-Balkhiyya*, p. 14.
17. The 4th *al-Maqāma al-Sijistāniyya*, p. 20.
18. *Ibid*, pp. 20–21.
19. *Ibid*, p. 20.
20. This theory has been presented in Iványi 1977 and 1978.
21. It would be a *qāfiya mutarādifa* in poetry.
22. See, for example, the works of al-Tanūkhī or al-Tawḥīdī, or even the *ḥikāyāt* of al-Azdi.
23. For the different patterns in the Koran and the special place occupied by the *fāʿila(tun)* form, see Müller 1969, esp. pp. 13ff.
24. The whole list of figures, including those relating to other, mainly rhetorical features, and the results of comparative research done between al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* and other products of Arabic prose will be published later.
25. Interestingly enough, it occurs occasionally that, as is allowed in poetry, an indefinite nominal case ending may rhyme with a definite one (e.g., *-i/-in*).
26. The *maqāma* being prose not poetry; in *waqf* it would, of course, lose its endings if read aloud.
27. All very common types of rhyming in the prose literature of previous centuries or even in the 1–12th, see e.g. al-Azdi's *ḥikāyāt*.
28. The 26th (or 27th in the Istanbul edition) *al-Maqāma al-Waʿziyya*, p. 131.
29. The 18th *al-Maqāma al-Qazwiniyya*, p. 89.
30. The 10th *al-Maqāma al-Isfahāniyya*, p. 54.
31. The 21st *al-Maqāma al-Mawṣiliyya*, p. 99.
32. The 21st *al-Maqāma al-Mawṣiliyya*, p. 98.
33. The 22nd *al-Maqāma al-Maḍiriyya*, p. 113.
34. The 21st *al-Maqāma al-Mawṣiliyya*, p. 100.
35. Horst (1987:226) cites the following example of what he regards as rhyming and parallelism in al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*. The quotation is published with this segmentation and without *iʿrāb* at the end of the parallel members:

*Fa-la-qad kunnā wa-llābi min abli thamm
wa-ramm
nurgbi ladā ṣ-ṣabāḥ
wa-nuthghi ʿinda r-rawāḥ*
36. Therefore, as Beeston (1990:132) has already emphasized, 'it is the Ḥarīriān *maqāmāt* that have come to be considered as the typical examples of the genre; it is indeed not unknown for literary historians to describe Ḥariri's work as if such description were applicable to all *maqāmāt* including those of Hamadhānī, notwithstanding the differences.' See, for

- example, Brockelmann & Pellat 1991:109 where it is stated that 'In summary, the original *maqāma* appears to be characterised fundamentally by the almost exclusive use of rhymed prose'. This may be right in connection with al-Ḥariri, but certainly not if stated about al-Hamadhānī as we have tried to point out. For a really inadequate characterisation of the form of al-Ḥariri's *Maqāmāt*, see Margoliouth & Pellat 1972, where the most important note is that 'verbal exuberance leads to acrobatics' in his *Maqāmāt*.
37. The 5th *al-Maqāma al-Kūfiyya*, p. 24.
 38. The 21st *al-Maqāma al-Mawṣiliyya*, p. 99.
 39. More specific definitions will be given in the aforementioned forthcoming publication.
 40. The 26th (or 27th) *al-Maqāma al-Waʿziyya*, p. 133.
 41. *Ibid*.
 42. *Ibid*, p. 132.
 43. The 5th *al-Maqāma al-Kūfiyya*, pp. 25–26.
 44. The conjunctions *thumma/fa-ʿawa* – have not been taken into consideration. The example is from the 14th *al-Maqāma al-Fazāriyya*, p. 68.
 45. The 11th *al-Maqāma al-Ahwāziyya*, p. 57.
 46. The 12th *al-Maqāma al-Baghdādiyya*, p. 61.
 47. It must be mentioned, however, that al-Ḥariri made his phrases rhyme more continuously, with less interrupting non rhyming, non parallel segments, so he needed more of this type of simpler material than al-Hamadhānī did.
 48. Cf., for example, al-Shakʿa 1983.
 49. This statement would perhaps be regarded as commonplace speaking about any piece of European literature, but it is not a generally accepted idea in connection with Arabic belle-lettristic prose. Although it is this crucial point which we are most interested in exploring, investigation in this paper has been confined to the first point.

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The Prose Literature of Pre-Islamic Arabia

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In a recent article (The Language of the Qur‘ān, hereafter abbreviated to LQ)¹ I argued that the traditional pious equation that (a) the language of the Qur‘ān is identical with (b) the ‘*arabiyya*’ of early poetry on the one hand and with (c) the dialect of Quraysh, the spoken language of Muḥammad, on the other, is both late – it appears to have become prevalent no earlier than the third/ninth century – and mistaken. Evidence that the equation with (b) cannot be correct was first assembled by Vollers (though his conclusions about it were mistaken);² but even if we stop with the cautious view of Rabin ‘that [the] literary diction [of the Qur‘ān] contains some elements of [the] spoken idiom of the milieu’,³ we are at one remove from the language of poetry. The absence of rhyme and metre also have a considerable effect. On the other hand, the way that the *mufaṣṣirūn* specifically comment on the rare Meccan forms in the Quranic text is enough to invalidate the equation with (c). However, it is clear from the strong reaction of the Meccans that they understood the Qur‘ān even if they rejected its message, and I suggested that this was because there were other registers that were in common use and to which the language of the Qur‘ān has much greater natural affinities. These were the registers of the soothsayer (*kāhin*), the orator (*khaṭīb*) and story-teller (*qāṣṣ*) and also, in Medinan material, that of the written documentary style. Incidentally, in this article I shall talk about both styles and registers, whereas in LQ, in which I was focusing on variations in linguistic levels, I referred largely to registers. This is really a question of emphasis: there is a considerable overlap between style, the way in which material is couched, and register, the level of language at which it is pitched.

The existence of soothsayers, orators and story-tellers is well enough attested; but severe difficulties are caused by the paucity of extant pieces that we may reasonably term *kāhin*- or *khaṭīb*-material, while the