

281364

Mutanabbi

132784

Tradition and Reception in Arabic Literature

Essays dedicated to Andras Hamori

Edited by
Margaret Larkin and Jocelyn Sharlet

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

01 Temmuz 2021

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
Dem. No:	281364
Tas. No:	892.7 TRA.R

2019

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Al-Mutanabbī's Worst Poem: The Lampoon on Dabba¹

Geert Jan van Gelder

Abstract

As a counterweight to Andras Hamori's fine monograph on al-Mutanabbī's panegyrics (traditionally considered his best poems), the present essay deals with a poem that, according to a medieval critic, is among his worst poetry, even though it belongs to his maturity and is indeed one of his last poems: his lampoon on a Bedouin called Dabba ibn Yazīd, composed in 353/964. It is no doubt rather perverse to draw attention to what even the poet himself condemned (he did not like it to be recited to him) and then offer a study and translation of it in honor of a much esteemed colleague, but one can argue that it deserves study because it is there, and because bad poetry and its reception can be just as illuminating about the norms and values of the medieval critics and poets. And one can argue that, in its genre, it is not bad at all.

Many scholars have a habit of returning to the highlights of literary history, to the same poets and poems over and over again. There are countless studies and translations of famous poems such as the *Mu'allaqāt*, especially those of Imru' al-Qays and Labīd, the "Mantle Odes" of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr and al-Būshīrī, to al-Mutanabbī's celebrated odes on Sayf al-Dawla or 'Aḍud al-Dawla, and so on. It is wholly understandable: a good poem attracts attention, which makes it famous, which generates yet more attention, and the fame grows proportionally or exponentially, as does the number of academic publications. It is also helpful to be able to consult existing translations and interpretations, which one can either loyally adopt and accept or boldly refute and reject. I myself often prefer the more untrodden paths and I feel attracted to the less well-known poets or, as a compromise between fame and obscurity, to the neglected poems of a great poet.² Even in the case of al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), criticism is usually limited to a select number of odes and there are still very many of his poems that have hardly appeared in serious scholarship or translation.

Therefore, as a slight counterweight to Andras Hamori's fine monograph on al-Mutanabbī's panegyrics³ (traditionally, and with reason, considered his best poems), I offer him an essay on a poem that not only belongs to the opposite of panegyric but, according to

1 Note on transliteration: in accordance with the prescribed style sheet, the *tā' marbūṭa* has been transliterated as *-a*. However, exceptions had to be made for transliterated verse, where full vowelizing is necessary for correctly presenting the meter and where the *tā' marbūṭa* in rhyme position (as in the poem discussed in this article) counts as *-ah*. For the same reason, to clarify the meter, initial *hamza* has been indicated in verse.

2 See e.g. Van Gelder, "Al-Mutanabbī's Encumbering Trifles".

3 Hamori, *The Composition of Mutanabbī's Panegyrics*.

73-100

Mu‘ammar al-Qadhdhāfi (r. 1969–2011). Miṣrātan politicians and businessmen managed to hold on to their prominent position, despite their earlier connections to the monarchy and a failed coup attempt by a Miṣrātan army officer in 1975. On the other hand, many members of wealthy local families went into exile, after the regime’s nationalisation policies of the 1970s and 1980s had led to the expropriation of their assets. Nevertheless, the town itself, then the capital of the province (*shabīyya*) of Miṣrāta, and its harbour continued to function as a prosperous economic hub, although it was hit by the regime’s nationalisation policies in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 2011, Miṣrāta represented one of the major opposition centres in the uprising that toppled the al-Qadhdhāfi regime. Local leaders, including the Suwayḥīli family and the Miṣrāta militia, have continued to exercise a strong influence on Libyan politics ever since. For example, they occupied Banī Walīd, which had remained loyal to the old regime, in 2012 and, in 2014, took control of the capital, Tripoli, in the so-called military Operation Libya Dawn (*Fajr Lībiyā*).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lisa Anderson, “They defeated us all.” International interests, local politics, and contested sovereignty in Libya, *MEJ* 71/2 (2017), 229–47; Lisa Anderson, The Tripoli Republic, 1918–1922, in George Joffé and K. S. McLachlan (eds.), *Social and economic development of Libya* (Wisbech 1982), 43–65; Federico Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d’altri. La colonizzazione italiana in Libia*, Rome 2011; Muṣṭafā ‘Alī Huwaydī, *al-Jumhūriyya al-Ṭarābulusiyya, jumhūriyyat al-‘Arab al-ūlā. Awwal dirāsa marjīyya fī mawḍū‘ihā*, Tripoli 2000; Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, vol. 1, *Tripoli bel suol d’amore 1860–1922*, vol. 2, *Dal fascismo a Gheddafi*, Milan 2011; Daniela Fabrizio, *Politica e missione. Tripoli e*

Bengasi, Misurata e Derna (1904–1945), *Nuova Rivista Storica* 88/2 (2004), 425–504; ‘Alī Muḥammad Jahān, *al-Ḥayāt al-thaqāfiyya bi-Miṣrāta athnā’a al-ḥukm al-‘Uthmānī al-ihānī 1835–1911m*, Tripoli 2007; Wolfram Lacher, Libya’s local elites and the politics of alliance building, *Mediterranean Politics* 21/1 (2016), 64–85; Tadeusz Lewicki, Miṣrāta, *EL2*; Hanspeter Mattes, Omar al-Muntasser, *Orient* 33/4 (1992), 540–3; Brian McQuinn, History’s warriors. The emergence of revolutionary battalions in Misrata, in Peter Cole and Brian McQuinn (eds.), *The Libyan revolution and its aftermath* (London 2015), 229–56; Muḥammad Zāhī al-Mughayribī, *Ittijāhāt wa-taṭawwūrāt tarkībat al-nukhba al-siyāsiyya fī Lībiyā 1969–1999*, Benghazi n.d.; Sergio Romano, *Giuseppe Volpi. Industria e finanza tra Giolitti e Mussolini*, Milan 1979.

JAKOB KRAIS

al-Mutanabbī

Al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/955), “the man who set himself up as a prophet,” is the commonly used sobriquet of Abū l-Ṭayyib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ju‘fī, a celebrated Arab poet. He was born in Kufa, in modern-day Iraq, in 303/915. His father, said to have been a water carrier, claimed descent from the South Arabian clan Ju‘fī (Ibn al-Anbārī, 296; al-Sam‘ānī, 11:125). The child is said to have attended school with sons of the notables of Kufa (al-Iṣfahānī, 6; ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, 2:347), most of whom likely had Shī‘ī sympathies. The apparent social discrepancy, along with reports that al-Mutanabbī at various times concealed his lineage (Ibn al-‘Adīm, 2:641; al-Badrī, 20) or claimed ‘Alid descent (Ibn al-‘Adīm 2:643; al-Sam‘ānī, 11:123), and the fact that in the many verses that bespeak an outsized ego he never once names any ascendant other than his grandmother, have raised unprovable speculations about his origins

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTA
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMA

01 Temmuz 2021