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Rhetoric, Hybridity, and Performance in Medieval Arabic-Islamic Devotional Poetry: *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya* of Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī

Abstract The premier work of Islamic devotional literature of the post-classical period is undoubtedly the Mantle Ode (*Qaṣīdat al-Burda*) of al-Būṣīrī (d. 694–696/1294–1297), which generated a vast body of derivative works composed in the hope of acquiring the blessing or *baraka* of the poem. Among these was the *badī'iyya*, a praise poem to the Prophet Muḥammad (*madīḥ nabawī*) that is a contrafaction (*mu'āraḍa*) of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* in which each line exhibits a particular rhetorical device. The present paper offers a re-evaluation of the *badī'iyya* as a hybrid devotional performance that combines the science of rhetoric—the essential element of the tenet of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān (*ijāz al-Qur'ān*)—with the art of praise poetry to the Prophet (*madīḥ nabawī*) as a reenactment of the miracle of the Qur'ān and of the *baraka* of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*. It takes as its main example *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya* of Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749 or 750/1348 or 1349) to examine the rhetoric and aesthetics of the *badī'iyya* in light of contemporary ideas of performance and performativity.

Introduction: The Genesis of the *Badī'iyya*

An extraordinary and largely unexplored phenomenon of post-classical or medieval Arabic poetry is the emergence and florescence of the genre of devotional poetry to the Prophet Muḥammad (*madīḥ nabawī*), and within this genre-formation process the unrivalled domination of a single poem, that is, *Al-Kawākib ad-Durriyya fī Madḥ Khayr al-Bariyya* (Pearly Stars in Praise of the Best of All Creation) by a poet from Mamlūk Egypt, Sharaf ad-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd al-Būṣīrī (d. 694–96AH/1294–97CE).¹ Known simply as *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* or *Burdat al-Būṣīrī* (The Mantle Ode or The Mantle of al-Būṣīrī) this 160-line ode, rhymed in the letter *mīm* and in the meter *basīṭ (mustafīlun fā'ilun)* was fully grounded in the classical Arabic court panegyric form (*qaṣīdat al-madḥ*) and, particularly, in the poetic conventions of the High 'Abbāsīd ornate rhetorical style termed *badī'*. Such was the power and popularity of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* that it generated countless poetic progeny of various types throughout the Arab and Islamic world, from the eighth/fourteenth century up to this day. These include many imitations or contrafactions (s. *mu'āraḍa*) that challenge the base-text in a counter-poem using the same rhyme and meter; amplifications, in which original verses are added to those of the base-text (especially *tashṭīr* and *takhmīs*); as well as innumerable commentaries and translations into other Islamicate languages. All of this is in addition to the incessant performances—oral, scriptural, and material (talismans, etc.)—of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* for devotional and talismanic purposes.²

Al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* was also the key ingredient of a newly emergent genre, the *badī'iyya*, first composed and named (it appears) by the celebrated eighth/fourteenth-century Arab poet, Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749 or 750/1348 or 1349).³ The *badī'iyya* is a sub-genre of praise poetry to the Prophet Muḥammad (*madīḥ nabawī*) that (1) takes the form of a contrafaction (*mu'āraḍa*) of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* in that it rhymes in *mīm* and is in

1 For text, translation, and discussion of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 70–150.

2 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 70–71; 85–88; 149. See also my as yet unpublished paper, Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Takhmīs as Verbal Reliquary: Enshrinement, Inscription and Performance in Shams al-Dīn al-Fayyūmī's *Takhmīs al-Burdah*," (Keynote Lecture presented at the 26th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference: "Mutual Perceptions," The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, May 13, 2011).

3 W. P. Heinrichs, "Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1971). The other main contender for the honor of composing the first *badī'iyya* is the blind Andalusian poet, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Jābir al-Andalusī and his *Al-Ḥulla as-Siyarā*. See 'Alī Abū Zayd, *al-Badī'iyyāt fī l-adab al-'arabī: Nash'atuhā—taṭawwuruhā—atharuhā* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1983), 75–76; and esp. the study of this poem and its commentary by Rajā' as-Sayyid al-Jawharī, ed. and intro, *Kitāb Ṭirāz al-ḥulla wa-shifā' al-ghulla li-l-Imām Ja'far Shihāb ad-Dīn . . . al-Gharnāṭī* (Alexandria: Mu'assasat ath-Thaqāfa al-Jāmi'iyya, 1990).

the meter *basīṭ*;⁴ (2) that explicitly sets out to exemplify one particular rhetorical device in each line of the poem. Contrived as this may sound to modern poetic sensibilities, it should be kept in mind that Arabic poetics from the High 'Abbāsīd period onward demanded a style that was dense in rhetorical tropes, and these were both required by and familiar to the educated/critical audience.⁵ The still much-loved *madīḥ nabawī* named *ash-Shuqrāṭīṣīyya*, after its author Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Zakariyyā

- 4 The fullest study and a most valuable resource for further study of the genre of *badī'iyya* is Abū Zayd, *al-Badī'iyyāt*. There is some variation in definition, but this, to my mind, is the strictest and most accurate. Many scholars, although they mention the distinctive features of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, that is, the meter *basīṭ* (- - / - / - -) and the rhyme in the letter "m" that the *badī'iyya* must exhibit, do not explicitly mention al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* (although they must be well aware of the relationship). For an overview and discussion of this issue, see Abū Zayd, *al-Badī'iyyāt*, 40–51 and al-Jawharī, *Kitāb Ṭirāz al-hullā*, 26–34. An attempt to treat the aesthetic issues of the *badī'iyya* is made by Pierre Cachia in his work on 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulī's (d. 1143/1731) *badī'iyya*. See Pierre Cachia, "From Sound to Echo in Late *Badī* Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1988). A valuable study of the history and aesthetics of the *badī'iyya* is Thomas Bauer, "Die *Badī'iyya* des Nāṣif al-Yāziḡī und das Problem der spätosmanischen arabischen Literatur," in *Reflections on Reflections: Near Eastern Writers Reading Literature*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth and Andreas Christian Islebe (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2006). And see Th. Emil Homerin, "Chapter 3: Arabic Religious Poetry, 1200–1800," in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period: Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Volume 6*, ed. Roger Allen and D. S. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For the translations of rhetorical terms and definitions in an-Nābulī's *badī'iyya* and commentary, see Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician or the Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic badī drawn from 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī's Nafaḥāt al-Azhār 'alā Nasamāt al-Ashār, Summarized and systematized by Pierre Cachia* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998).
- As with all genre definitions, there are exceptions to the one I have adopted for the present study: 'Izz ad-Dīn al-Mawṣilī (d. 789/1387) is said to have composed a *badī'iyya* on Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's renowned *madīḥ nabawī* Bānat Su'ād (composed and presented to the Prophet in 9/630; rhymed in *lām*, meter *basīṭ*), see Abū Zayd, *al-Badī'iyyāt*, 79; among Arab Christians *badī'iyyāt* were composed in praise of Christ and the Apostles; Nāṣif al-Yāziḡī (d. 1287/1871), a Maronite Christian and major figure of the Naḥḍa, composed a *badī'iyya*, termed by Thomas Bauer "ecumenical"; that is, as I read it, not a devotional poem at all, but rather, as Bauer points out, it consists of *nasīb* and, instead of the expected *madḥ*, *dhamm ad-dunyā* (blame of the world). See Homerin, "Arabic Religious Poetry," 83–86; Bauer, "Die *Badī'iyya* des Nāṣif al-Yāziḡī," 54–56; 62–66.
- 5 The place of the *badī'iyya* in the development of Arabic rhetorical styles is the subject of a paper on which the present study is built, "From Jāhiliyyah to *Badī'iyyah*: Orality, Literacy, and the Transformations of Rhetoric in Arabic Poetry." Papers of the Orality and Literacy VII Conference, Rice University, 12–14 April, 2008. *Oral Tradition* 25 (2010), accessed June 15, 2018, <http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/25i/stetkevych>

An important contribution to the study of hybridity, intertextuality, and some of the particular stylistic and technical features of the *badī'iyya*, which intersects at some point with the present study, is Bauer, "Die *Badī'iyya* des Nāṣif al-Yāziḡī." For scholarship on 'Ā'isha al-Bā'ūniyya's (d. 923/1517) *badī'iyya*, Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn (The Clear Inspiration in Praise of the Trustworthy [Muḥammad]), see Th. Emil Homerin, "Review of 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyyah, *Sharḥ al-Badī'iyyah al-Musammāh bi-l-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*. Edited by Ridā Rajab; *Badī'iyyat al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*. Edited by Ḥasan Rabābi'ah; *Al-Badī'iyyah wa-Sharḥuhā: al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*. Edited by 'Ādil Kuttāb and 'Abbās Thābit," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 17 (2013).

ash-Shuqrāṭīṣī (al-Maghribī) (d. 496/1073) is laden with and celebrated for its highly ornate rhetoric that is explicitly in imitation of the 'Abbāsīd master-poet of the *badī*-style, Abū Tammām (d. 231–2/845–6).⁶ In this regard, in common rather than technical parlance, any rhetorically ornate *madīḥ nabawī* may be called a *badī'iyya*.

The hybrid nature of the *badī'iyya* as both devotional poem and rhetorical work was not lost on its inventor. On the contrary, Ṣafī ad-Dīn feels compelled in the introduction to his commentary, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*,⁷ to explain both this complex form and its author's complex(ed) motivations. He tells us that he originally intended to compose a prose treatise on the figures of rhetoric and *badī*:

I collected everything that I found in the books of the scholars and added to this other figures that I extracted from the poetry of the ancients, with the intention of composing a book that would cover most of them, since there was no way to cover them all. Then I was afflicted with a severe and protracted illness and it so happened that I saw in a dream a message from the Prophet (the greatest blessings and peace be upon him) demanding that I compose a praise poem to him and promising that I would be cured thereby of my ailment. So I turned from compiling the treatise to composing a *qaṣīda* that gathered the various types of *badī* and was embroidered with the praise of [the Prophet's] glory. Thus, I composed 154 lines in the meter *basīṭ* containing 151 types of devices [. . .] and I made each verse an example illustrating a particular type.⁸

The most striking feature of this anecdote to anyone familiar with the medieval Arabic tradition is that it is a clear reference to, or variation on, the renowned story of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*. A version of that story—which in one form or another is inseparable from al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*—is found in Muḥammad ibn Shākir al-Kutubī's (764/1363) biographical dictionary, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*:

Al-Būṣīrī said: [. . .] Then it happened that I was stricken with hemiplegia that left me half paralyzed, so I thought of composing this *Burda* poem, and I did so. With it I asked for [the Prophet's] intercession with God the Exalted for Him to forgive me, and I recited it over and over again, and wept and prayed and entreated. Then, when I had fallen asleep, I saw the Prophet (peace upon him). He stroked

6 For the text, see Yūsuf ibn Ismā'īl an-Nabhānī, *al-Majmū'a an-Nabhāniyya fī l-madā'iḥ an-nabawiyya*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1996), 3: 150–160.

7 Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya fī 'ulūm al-balāgha wa-maḥāsīn al-badī*, ed. Nasīb Nashāwī (Damascus: Maṭbū'āt Majma' al-Lughā al-'Arabiyya bi-Dimashq, 1982). The editor's introduction is a valuable resource as well, 3–51.

8 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 54–55.

my face with his blessed hand, then threw a mantle over me. When I awoke, I found my health restored.⁹

So intimate was the connection between al-Būṣīrī's poem and the miracle of his recovery, that the sobriquet "Mantle Ode" (*Qaṣīdat al-Burda*) (but also the sobriquet *Qaṣīdat al-Bur'a*, or Poem of the Cure) was conferred upon it and the poem itself was credited with miraculous powers to cure maladies both physical and spiritual. It became widely used in devotional exercises, especially as a means of procuring Prophetic intercession on Judgment Day, more particularly in Ṣūfī devotions to evoke the presence of the Prophet, but also—in full or in select verses believed to possess particular powers (*khaṣā'is*)—in charms, amulets, talismans, and philters of all sorts.¹⁰

It should be noted, however, that al-Būṣīrī's was not the first praise poem to Muḥammad to be called *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, but rather, in its recounting of the dream of the Prophet's mantle the medieval account of the composition of al-Būṣīrī's is usurping and displacing the celebrated *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* by the poet from the age of the Prophet, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. Slow to convert to Islam and having composed invectives against the Prophet, Ka'b, now a hunted man with no kin to defend him, made his way incognito to the Prophet and delivered his celebrated poem of apology and submission, *Bānat Su'ād* (Su'ād Has Departed), whereupon the Prophet, as popular tradition has it, conferred his mantle upon the poet.¹¹

What we are witnessing is not merely devotion to the Prophet Muḥammad, but a long series of poetic competitions and displacements of rivals for both poetic excellence and Prophetic favor, which in the world of *madiḥ nabawī* are the same thing.

At this point I would like to introduce the concept of reading the concordances of stories and the contrafactions of poems in light of ideas of performance and performative theory, and further, to look at performance as a means of both honoring and displacing the work "performed." In the case of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, all the various forms of "reenactment," which I term "performance," aim to coopt or redirect for the new performer the *baraka*, the religious or magical efficacy, of the original poem. In other words, the new poet sees himself in competition with other poets, both past, passing, and to come.

Within the poetics of ritual exchange of poem for prize (*qaṣīda* for *jā'iza*) that I have established in an earlier work on classical and medieval Arabic poetry, the mantles that the Prophet confers on the poets Ka'b and al-Būṣīrī are the reward that the Prophet confers in exchange for the poem. Thus, it recognizes the poem's literary beauty and performative efficacy, which, again, are the same thing. Furthermore, the mantle serves as

9 Muḥammad ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt wa-dh-dhayl 'alayhā*, 4 vols., ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1973–1974), 3: 368–369; and see Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 83.

10 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 70–71; 82–88 and refs.

11 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 33–69.

a sign of acceptance and protection and, in the spiritual-symbolic realm, was understood by Muslims to refer to the Prophet's protection and to his intercession on Judgment Day. Al-Būṣīrī's adoption or cooption of Ka'b's symbolic mantle therefore indicates his (at least) equal status in the Prophet's eyes. In this respect, we need to understand al-Būṣīrī's physical ailment and cure—of which there is no indication in the text of the poem itself—as above all a symbol of spiritual malady and restoration, that is, of salvation.

Returning to Ṣafī ad-Dīn's dream narrative, we find that he "reenacts" that of al-Būṣīrī with distinct changes: in his sequence, the poem does not lead to the dream, but rather in the dream it is the Prophet who provides the inspiration for this new type of poem. We gather that Ṣafī ad-Dīn's ailment is closely associated with some sort of writer's block or anxiety concerning his ambitious rhetorical undertaking, and the cure is not so much physical as it is the solution to the poet's literary rhetorical dilemma.

Ṣafī ad-Dīn's introduction alerts us as well to a field of competition other than the poetical, that is, the field of rhetoric. Much as in praise poetry to the Prophet we find a complex motivation exhibited in the strange tension between devotional piety and literary competition; so too in Arabic-Islamic rhetoric, both religious and literary motives are at work. Between the third/ninth and fifth/eleventh centuries the Islamic doctrine of the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'ān (*ijāz al-Qur'ān*) came to be defined as, above all, its incomparable rhetorical beauty. This was taken to mean that the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'ān was proof of its divine authorship and therefore of Muḥammad's prophethood. Furthermore, it is essential to understanding Ṣafī ad-Dīn's poetic-rhetorical undertaking to realize that the concept of *ijāz al-Qur'ān* is essentially bound up in the idea of contest, challenge, or competition. The word *ijāz* means to render an opponent impotent, to disable him. The idea behind this is a verbal "match" in which the Qur'ān proves "unmatchable." The Qur'ān is the miracle that irrefutably establishes the prophethood of Muḥammad, defeating and dumbfounding all rivals, just as Moses' rod-turned-snake defeated and dumbfounded the magicians of the Pharaoh's court.¹² The miraculous inimitability of the Qur'ān is thus not merely an article of faith but the essence of Islam. In the eyes of the scholars of *ijāz al-Qur'ān*, at least, the Muslim has no true understanding of his/her faith until he/she understands rhetoric and can grasp the inimitable beauty of the Qur'ān; that is, witness the miracle that proves Muḥammad's prophethood and the truth of Islam through the exploration of rhetoric. Ṣafī ad-Dīn states this in the pious invocation that opens his introduction to *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Bad'iyya*: "Praise be to God who made *licit* for us the *magic* of eloquence and made playing with it in the mind [the same as] witnessing

12 See Q 7:103–122 and the discussion of lines 142–143, below.

with the eye. [emphasis mine]"¹³ Following the scholars of *ijāz al-Qur'ān*,¹⁴ he then states:

The science most deserving of precedence and most worthy of being learned and taught, after the knowledge of God Almighty, is the knowledge of the verities of His Noble Speech [the Qur'ān] and the understanding of what He sent down in the Wise Remembrance [the Qur'ān], so that they might be safeguarded from the calamity of doubt and delusion [. . .] And there is no way to [acquire this knowledge] except through the knowledge of the science of rhetoric, including the figures of *badī'*, through which the meaning of the inimitability of the Qur'ān and the veracity of the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace and blessings of God upon him) is known by evidence and proof.¹⁵

In other words, to grasp through the study of rhetoric the unmatched beauty of the Qur'ān is to experience firsthand, to be an "eye-witness" to, the evidentiary miracle of Muḥammad's prophethood. What must be understood in this regard is that in Arabic-Islamic culture the greatest achievement of the Arabs was their poetry—the *qaṣīda* (ode) tradition grounded in the Islamic period canonization of the pre-Islamic poetic tradition. This means, *tout court*, that establishing the rhetorical superiority of the Qur'ān to any human composition meant, above all, its superiority to poetry, with the result that although moral-aesthetic precedence must, for doctrinal reasons, be accorded to examples from the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth of the Prophet, and some of the sayings of the Ṣaḥāba, the vast majority of examples (*shāhida*, pl. *shawāhid*) in rhetorical works and works on *ijāz al-Qur'ān* are lines of poetry. Further, although the use of poetry as *shawāhid* for meaning and usage for Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) was limited to "authentic" materials with a cut-off date of early Umayyad poetry, we find that works on *ijāz al-Qur'ān* derive from more mainstream rhetorical studies and normally contain examples up to the time of the compiler—Umayyad, 'Abbāsīd, and post-'Abbāsīd.

No sooner, however, do we turn the page of Ṣafī ad-Dīn's commentary than we enter the realm of competition with other scholars of rhetoric. In an unabashedly competitive spirit, Ṣafī ad-Dīn presents the number of rhetorical devices mentioned by those he sees as his most esteemed predecessors but also his chief rivals: Yūsuf ibn Abī Bakr as-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) in *Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm*: 29; 'Abd 'Allāh Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 296/908) in *Kitāb al-Badī'*: 17; Qudāma ibn Ja'far (d. 337?/948?) in *Naqd ash-Shi'r* and *Kitāb al-Kharāj*: 30; Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. after 400/1010) in *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣinā'atayn*: 37; Ibn Rashīq

13 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 51.

14 See G. E. von Grunebaum, "Iḍjāz," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

15 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 51–52.

al-Qayrawānī (d. 456 or 463/1063–4 or 1070–1) in *Al-Umda*: 37; Sharaf ad-Dīn at-Tifāshī (d. 652/1253) in his *Kitāb al-Badī'*: 70; and—his most admired and most immediate competition—Zakī ad-Dīn Ibn Abī al-Iṣba' (d. 654/1256) in his *Taḥrīr at-Taḥbīr*: 90.¹⁶ Ṣafī ad-Dīn adds further that his esteemed predecessor Ibn Abī al-Iṣba' claims to have relied on forty books for his rhetorical work, which Ṣafī ad-Dīn lists, whereas he himself has added thirty additional works, for a total of seventy, which he also lists.¹⁷ After recounting his dream, Ṣafī ad-Dīn triumphantly declares that he has a total of 151 types of rhetorical devices, adding—in the interest of full disclosure—that if you count all twelve types of *jinās* (paronomasia, root-play) as one, then the total is 140.¹⁸

It is of note that although he provides detailed information on the works of his scholarly antecedents in the realm of rhetoric, Ṣafī ad-Dīn refers not at all to his poetic predecessor, al-Būṣīrī, sufficing with a mere mention of the meter *basīṭ*. It goes without saying, given the extraordinary extent to which al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* was woven into the texture of popular Muslim devotional life as well as literary life at this period and the following centuries, that any Muslim would recognize from the opening line of *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya* that it is a *mu'araḍa* of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*—not merely in the rhyme in *mīm* and the meter *basīṭ*, but also in the familiar motifs and specific rhyme-words.¹⁹ As mentioned above, with the crystallization of the doctrine of *ijāz al-Qur'ān* around the concept that its miraculous inimitability was above all rhetorical, Arab-Islamic culture put an unequalled premium on the power of rhetoric. For supplicatory panegyric in general (*qaṣīdat al-madh*), whether in the pre-Islamic tribal or Islamic courtly productions, this meant that the most beautiful poem was the most rhetorically powerful—that is, performatively effective—and vice-versa, on both counts. Thus, for the medieval Muslim, al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*—its unique efficacy having been established by the evidentiary miracle of the poet's dream vision and cure (and subsequent miracles attributed to the poem)—was *ipso facto* the most beautiful, poetically accomplished poem.

For successor poets hoping for the Prophet's intercession, or merely for worldly poetic fame, the issue was how to coopt the *baraka* or blessing of the *Burda*. The successor poet's challenge then is to create a poem that simultaneously "is" and "is not" the *Burda*. The *mu'araḍa* form strives to achieve precisely this. In the Arabic, especially in oral recitation and especially for *mu'araḍāt* of the *Burda* (which, it seems to me, cleaves closer to the *Burda* base-text than the *mu'araḍa* genre in general), the rhyme, meter, diction, motifs, and the many, but not always, repeated thematic sections, create a

16 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 52–53, and refs.

17 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 54; 335–346; 347–356.

18 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 54.

19 In this respect it is interesting to see that al-Āthārī al-Mawṣilī (d. 828AH) in the introduction to one of his *badī'iyyāt*, *Badī' al-Badī' fī Madḥ ash-Shafī'*, mentions explicitly that it is a *mu'araḍa* of al-Ḥillī's *mu'araḍa* of [al-Būṣīrī's] *Burda*. See Abū Zayd, *al-Badī'iyyāt*, 87.

virtual identity of sonority and near identity of meaning between the two poems. The poet who wants to thus coopt the *Burda* has to take possession of it as closely as possible, but without producing a mere “recitation” or “imitation.” As a poetic art, a successful *mu‘araḍa* has to be at the same time an “original” work in its own right—the successor poet’s “own” poem.

Şafī ad-Dīn concludes the introduction to his commentary by insisting on the originality of *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī‘iyya* both as a rhetorical handbook and as a poem. As constrained or artificial as his project may seem to the modern reader, Şafī ad-Dīn makes the claim (which post-classical critics find accurate), however curiously phrased, that he was striving for a fluid, limpid style:

And I compelled myself in composing it to avoid constraint and forced language but rather to follow what my soul led me to of delicacy and ease of expression, strength and soundness of meaning.²⁰

Another key element in Şafī ad-Dīn’s sense of accomplishment is that his *badī‘iyya* is a condensed yet comprehensive rhetorical work based on seventy books (which he lists at the end of his commentary) of rhetoric, so that he concludes his introduction as follows:

So, look, o littérateur-critic and wise scholar, at this rich collection that is delightful to the ear, for indeed it is the product of seventy books of which I did not skip a single chapter. So with it you can dispense with the excess stuffing of lengthy books and the arduousness of repetitive speech.²¹

And finally, in what is to us an astounding claim for originality and authenticity, he quotes a famous line by al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/955):

Leave off every voice but my voice, for I
Am the voice that speaks, the others are [mere] echoes.²²

In this sense then, Şafī ad-Dīn’s title *Al-Kāfiya* (the Sufficient) indicates that his *badī‘iyya* provides so sufficient an account of the rhetorical figures that the other seventy books are rendered superfluous. It seems he does not dare make such extravagant poetic claims, at least explicitly, in his prose introduction (but see below, discussion of line 42)—which is of note since his fame is as the foremost poet, not rhetorical scholar, of the eighth/fourteenth century.

But however “contrived” Şafī ad-Dīn’s rhetorical poetic undertaking may appear to modern sensibilities, we should not underestimate the genius

20 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī‘iyya*, 55.

21 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī‘iyya*, 55.

22 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī‘iyya*, 56.

of his complex hybrid project. On the one hand, he has set out his competitive rhetorical goal: to outdo and complete the catalog of rhetorical devices, the understanding of which fulfills the religious obligation of proving and witnessing the evidentiary miracle that proves Muḥammad's prophethood and therefore the Islamic faith. In terms of competition, this entails not only Arabic rhetoric, but the fierce polemical debates among and between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism that flourished in this period, and for which, on the Islamic side, *madīḥ nabawī* (including several praise poems to the Prophet by al-Būṣīrī)²³ was a major site. On the other hand, in choosing to incorporate this rhetorical competition in the form of a *madīḥ nabawī* and in particular one that is a *mu'āraḍa* of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, Ṣafī ad-Dīn has both "upped the ante" of the competitive game/gamble and "trumped" the rhetorical scholars among his competition by "changing the rules of the game" from prose treatise to devotional poem. A further element that surely comes into play is that just as rhetoric is valorized as the preeminent scholarly field, so too has *madīḥ nabawī* by this time become the preeminent genre for poetic composition.

The poetic side of this hybridity to a large degree mirrors the competitive and performance aspects of the rhetorical side. A key element here is that the *mu'āraḍa* is by its very nature—and the etymology of the term—an essentially and explicitly competitive form, in a way that rhetorical treatises are not. In terms of morphology it is the Verbal Noun of a Form III verb (*āraḍa*) that signifies to vie, to compete, to contend for superiority, to emulate, rival, imitate,²⁴ and in its use as a technical poetic term embraces all of these significations. Thus, the competition that is implicit in the rivalry and one-upmanship of the tradition of rhetorical scholarship becomes explicit when Ṣafī ad-Dīn adopts this poetic form. And just as he outperforms the scholars of rhetoric by turning to poetic form, he strives to outdo the poets—specifically al-Būṣīrī, his arch-rival when it comes to *madīḥ nabawī*—by systematically foregrounding his total mastery, not just conceptually but in poetic practice or performance of the totality of rhetorical devices as he himself established them.²⁵ Thus on the poetic side, too, he "ups the ante" and "trumps" his rivals by "changing the rules of the game." Much like a Swiss Army Knife, then, *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya* is "sufficient" or "all-sufficient," performing a full range of tasks necessary for

23 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 81–82.

24 Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (New York: Ungar, 1958), 'r-ḍ.

25 On the practice and theory of *mu'āraḍa* and specifically Aḥmad Shawqī's *Nahj al-Burda*, his contrafaction of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, which was also deeply influenced by the *badī'iyya* tradition, see Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 153–156; 163–233 passim. See also, Akiko Motoyoshi Sumi, "Poetry and Architecture: A Double Imitation in the *Sīniyyah* of Aḥmad Shawqī," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39 (2008); and on various forms and terms of poetic emulation, competition, and imitation in Arabic and Persian poetry, Paul Losensky, "The Allusive Fields of Drunkenness: Three Safavid Mogul Responses to a Lyric by Bābā Fighānī," in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

survival in the rhetorical and poetic jungles of this world and for salvation in the world to come.

Nevertheless, in one respect, *Al-Kāfiya* was not so self-sufficient: the poet had to label each line to indicate which rhetorical device it exemplified. In the ongoing literary competition that *Al-Kāfiya* sparked, however, this insufficiency or deficiency was overcome when 'Izz ad-Dīn al-Mawṣilī (d. 789/1387) took it upon himself to outdo his predecessor by adding the stricture that each line of his *badī'iyya*, entitled *At-Tawaṣṣul bi-l-Badī' ilā t-Tawassul bi-sh-Shafī'* (Achieving through Badī' Supplication to the Intercessor [Muḥammad]), would contain a *tawriya* (pun) on the name of the rhetorical device it exemplified.²⁶

Having examined, at least briefly, the aspects of rhetoric and hybridity in *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, we will now turn to consideration of performance, which is inseparable in this case from the other two. In choosing to compose his rhetorical treatise in the form of a *mu'araḍa* of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, Ṣafī ad-Dīn has devised a literary form that surpasses the rhetorical scholars in poetry and surpasses the poets in rhetorical scholarship. Further, it requires that the scholar-poet demonstrate or perform the efficacy of rhetoric—not by competing with the Qur'ān, which as a point of doctrine is impossible as well as forbidden, but by composing a poem that is performatively successful—that is, that outperforms the competition in rhetorical science, especially that of Ibn Abī al-Iṣba', and in poetry, specifically al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*. Here too, the issue of hybridity born of multiple motives is essential to Ṣafī ad-Dīn's undertaking. On the scholarly side, he aims to establish his knowledge and mastery of more rhetorical devices than any other scholar; in terms of the genre of *madīḥ nabawī*, the purpose is to compose a devotional poem so beautiful that, in return, the Prophet will intercede for the poet on Judgment Day (see lines 41–46, discussed below). Moreover, as a contrafaction of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, *Al-Kāfiya* strives to “outperform” the celebrated master, that is, to co-opt its *baraka* or blessing and to displace and replace it on its devotional pedestal. In this respect, the act of *mu'araḍa* in and of itself demands the comparison and evaluation of the two ritual-poetic “performances” of *madīḥ nabawī*. In essence, then, Ṣafī ad-Dīn's innovation is that he raises the bar and declares that scholarship alone is not sufficient to fully understand the

26 Abū Zayd, *Al-Badī'iyyāt*, 77–79; (the first line of al-Mawṣilī's *At-Tawaṣṣul* given in Abū Zayd is not found in the other sources cited here). See also the discussion in Stetkevych, “From Jāhiliyyah to *Badī'iyyah*,” 225–227. The full text of al-Mawṣilī's *At-Tawaṣṣul* can be found in Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, 'Izz ad-Dīn al-Mawṣilī, et al., *al-Badī'iyyāt al-khams fī madḥ an-nabī wa-ṣ-ṣaḥāba al-kirām* (Cairo-Fajjāla: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1897), 15–22; all its lines are also included in Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī's commentary on his own *badī'iyya*, *Taqdīm Abī Bakr* (The Precedence of Abū Bakr) in which he tries to outdo both Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī and al-Mawṣilī, combining the limpid style of the former with the stricture of punning on the name of the rhetorical device of the latter. See Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥijja [sic] al-Ḥamawī, *Khizānat al-adab wa-ghāyat al-arab*, ed. Ṣalāh ad-Dīn al-Hawwārī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2006). Some later composers of *badī'iyya*, notably Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, followed this stricture, others did not.

rhetorical miracle of the Qur'ān, rather, the proof lies in the "performance" of the devotional poem.

In my earlier work, I adopted the point of view of ritual theory, derived primarily from the disciplines of anthropology and religious studies, as a starting point from which to interpret the form of the classical Arabic *qaṣīda* in terms of rite of passage, seasonal theory, and rituals of exchange. This has extended into performative and performance theory, which I see in terms of my work as broadening the discussion beyond the structure of the text itself to its extra-textual efficacy. Inasmuch as my argument for the ritual structure of poetic texts has always presumed that the text effects or carries out (rather than describes or recounts) a ritual, it sees the classical Arabic poetic tradition as inseparable from performance and performativity.²⁷

In the medieval tradition of *madiḥ nabawī*, it seems to me that concepts of performance and performativity prove particularly useful in interpreting the phenomenon of the poetic progeny of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*—especially in regard to issues of identity, imitation, innovation, and competition. The mimetic aspect of ritual has much to tell us about issues of "identification," which, as Paul Connerton suggests, often takes the form of a "mythic concordance"²⁸ between the original "performance"—in this case al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*—and the "ritual reenactment"—Ṣafī ad-Dīn's *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*—or between the original performer and the ritual reenactor. In other words, to reenact the *Burda*, the new poet must take al-Būṣīrī's place; that is, he must become the "speaker" of the poem—the "lyric I" of the Arabic poetic tradition.

In the case of the *mu'araḍa*, we can understand the strictures of this form through Richard Bauman's terms "framing" or "keying"—the rhyme and meter, together with the rhyme words and diction of the opening lines fall fully into Bauman's concepts of both "framing" and "metacommunicative conventions." Furthermore, given the competitive nature of the *mu'araḍa*, and of the *badī'iyya* in particular, Bauman's attention to the elements of "competence" and "evaluation" comes to the fore.²⁹ Thus, in Ṣafī ad-Dīn's *Al-Kāfiya*, as with all rhetorical-style *madiḥ nabawī*, the mastery of metacommunicative conventions—poetic conventions of rhyme, meter, themes, and diction, but also, and especially, rhetorical devices—constitute the aesthetic criteria for the evaluation of the ritual performance. That is, the poet's poetic—including rhetorical—competence is equated with his moral and spiritual worthiness.

27 See Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), passim; Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), passim; and Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, passim.

28 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 43. See also my use of Connerton's term in Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, chapter 6 and index.

29 Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1977), 15–16; 17–24 passim.

Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya of Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī³⁰

We shall begin our discussion by comparing the opening two lines of Ṣafī ad-Dīn's *Al-Kāfiya* with the first line of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*:

1. *barā'at al-maṭla'* (masterful opening): smooth, clear, and delicate;
jinās murakkab (compound paronomasia/root-play: *s-l-'* plus *n*):
Sal'an . . . sal'an;
jinās muṭlaq (pure paronomasia/root-play: *s-l-m*): *salām . . . Salam*
*in jī'ta **Sal'an** fa-**sal'an** jīrati l-'Alami*
w-aqrā s-salāma 'alā 'urbīn bi-Dhī Salami
 If you come to **Sal'** then **ask about** the neighbors of 'Alam,
 And recite a greeting to the Bedouin of Dhū Salam.
2. *jinās mulfaq* (paronomasia/root-play in which both members are compounded of two words)
fa-qad ḍamintu wujūda d-dam'i min 'adami
*la-hum wa-lam astaṭī' ma'a dhāka **man'a dami***
 I guaranteed/was afflicted with the presence of tears
because of [the loved ones'] **absence**, and yet was not able
 to **prevent my blood** [from being shed].

Al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*³¹

1. *a-min tadhakkuri jīrānin bi-Dhī Salami*
mazajta dam'an jarā min muqlatin bi-dami
 Was it the memory of those you loved at Dhū Salam
 That made you weep until you mixed your tears with blood?

Both poems invoke through classical rhyme, meter, diction and motif, and the rhymed hemistichs of the opening line (*taṣrī'*), the form or genre of a classical Arabic *qaṣīda* with its conventional opening motif of the *nasīb* (erotic prelude), which by this time has been adopted by both Ṣūfī *ghazal* (mystical lyric) and *madīḥ nabawī* (devotional panegyric).³² Ṣafī ad-Dīn's opening line, in its identical rhyme and meter with the *Burda*, echoes and evokes its base text from the very beginning. Further, by opening his poem with two, rather than the conventional one, lines with *taṣrī'*, and repeating al-Būṣīrī's sound play on *dam'* (tears) and *dam* (blood), Ṣafī ad-Dīn reinforces

30 For textual purposes in the present study, I have relied on al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya* and Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Dīwān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir/Dār Bayrūt, 1962), 685–702. In the subsequent text, I refer to line numbers. [I have not been able to procure for this study the newer edition of the *Dīwān*: Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Dīwān*, 3 vols., ed. Muḥammad Ḥuwwar (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-d-Dirāsāt wa-n-Nashr, 2000).]

31 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 244.

32 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 88–94.

the identity of the two poems. The metacommunicative aspects here are essential: the opening line(s) establish through prosodic and motival identity, and partial identity of diction: (1) the generic identity of Ṣafī ad-Dīn's poem as a *qaṣīda*; (2) more specifically in this period, a *madīḥ nabawī*; and (3) most importantly and most precisely, that it is a *mu'āraḍa* of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*. This tells the medieval Muslim all he needs to know in terms of literary expectations and criteria for evaluation and comparison. This, then, takes care of the identity side of the *mu'āraḍa* challenge.

Ṣafī ad-Dīn's double *taṣrī'*—in the first two verses, rather than just the opening verse—alerts us to his aim of outperforming his predecessor. Even without the rhetorical labels that accompany many (though not all)³³ of the manuscript or print forms of the poem and the explanations and definitions offered in the poet's commentary, the sonority of this double *taṣrī'* declares to the ear that Ṣafī ad-Dīn has tried to rhetorically surpass the base-text. Through this novelty he announces, indeed enacts, his innovative one-upmanship. Further, as he notes in his commentary, there are often more rhetorical devices in each line than the one (or more) that he singles out for labelling and explication.³⁴ Line 2, for example, formally exemplifies *jinās mulfaq* (paronomasia/root-play in which both members are made up of two separate words) in *min 'adami* (from non-existence, absence) and *man'a damī* (prevent my blood [from being shed]). But in addition, we can note the *jinās maqlūb* (metathesis) between *dam'* (tears) and *'adam* (absence, non-existence) and the *ṭibāq* (antithesis) first between *wujūd* (existence) and *'adam* (absence, non-existence), and further, perhaps, between *astaṭī'* (be able) and *man'* (prevent). Further, the rhyme words of al-Būṣīrī's line 1 *taṣrī'* are now the final rhyme-words of Ṣafī ad-Dīn's lines 1 and 2, strengthening the identification with the base-text. Finally, we could add (in my reading at least) a *tawriya* (pun, or apparent pun in which the first apparent meaning gives way to the ultimately intended second) on the word *ḍamintu*, which seems to mean at first glance, "to be a surety or guarantee" for tears, but resolves on its other meaning, "to be afflicted (with a chronic illness)"—especially since, according to poetic convention, the poet-lover's unceasing tears turn to blood. This rhetorical density in and of itself signals to the listener/reader what the grounds of competition are.

In sum, the "text" (oral or written) of *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya* tells us through a variety of metacommunicative poetic conventions that it is a *mu'āraḍa* of the *Burda*, a poetic challenge or contest intent on surpassing and displacing al-Būṣīrī's master-text. In this respect Ṣafī ad-Dīn's prose

33 For example, the rhetorical figures are not listed in the text of Ṣafī ad-Dīn's *Badī'iyya* in al-Ḥamawī et al., *al-Badī'iyyāt al-khams*, 33–40. There are two ways of looking at the omission of the names of rhetorical devices in those *badī'iyyāt* that do not include a *tawriya* or pun on the term exemplified in each line: (1) that the devices are so familiar to the readers of this genre that the labels are redundant; and (2) that the poems are read increasingly for devotional rather than rhetorical purposes—although it is the argument of the present study that the rhetorical and devotional are not necessarily distinct or distinguishable.

34 Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 55.

introduction, which likewise serves to “key” or “frame” the text is, in the end, redundant.³⁵

An exhaustive treatment of Saḥī ad-Dīn’s *Al-Kāfiya al-Badīyya* would far exceed the allotted space for the present study, so I will present briefly some observations that support my reading and should prove fruitful in subsequent studies of this poem and other *badīyyāt*.³⁶

In broad thematic terms, *Al-Kāfiya* as *madīḥ nabawī* can be divided as follows:

Lines 1–41: *nasīb*: features the motifs and diction conventional to the amorous prelude of the classical *qaṣīda* and of *madīḥ nabawī*: the weeping disconsolate lover imploring his companion to enquire about his lost beloved and her departed tribe; erotic suffering, sleeplessness; the torments of those that blame him (*ādhil*, pl. *‘udhdhāl*). Ultimately the poet-speaker feels that the beloved and/or her people have failed him and the section ends with his feelings of deception and regret concerning his hopes for profane love and worldly success. In the intertextual context of al-Būṣīrī’s *Burda* (verses 1–28),³⁷ this refers to eschewing worldly poetry and turning instead to praise of the Prophet.

Lines 42–45: form a transitional section between the sentiments of passivity, failure, and despair conveyed by the *nasīb* to the mood of agency, mastery, and hope through the composition of praise to the Prophet. Although brief, this section plays with the diction and motifs of the central *raḥīl* (journey) section of the classical *qaṣīda* and performs the same transitional function. The use of an oath (*qasam*) here should be understood performatively, that is, as a speech act that commits the speaker to a particular course of action.³⁸

42. *al-qasam* (oath)

May noble deeds not dub me “the master of his trade” on
the day of the boast (*fakhār*), and **may piety not fulfill
my oath**

43. *al-isti‘āra* (metaphor)

If I do not urge on the **mounts of determination**, which are
laden with rhymes and **heading for glory** close up,

35 In fact, like the labelling of the rhetorical devices, the introduction is sometimes omitted, as, for example, the text of the poem in al-Ḥamawī et al., *al-Badīyyāt al-khams*, 33.

36 I hope at some future date to complete a full translation and study of Saḥī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī’s *Al-Kāfiya al-Badīyya*.

37 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 92–97.

38 To my mind the clearest exposition of performatives, that is, speech acts, remains J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). For a recent performative reading of a classical Arabic poem, which includes references to recent work on performative theory and Arabic poetry, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, “Performative Poetics in ‘Abbāsīd Poetry: A Re-Reading of Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī’s Rā’iyyah: *Arāka ‘aṣiyya al-damī*,” *Annals of the Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 29 (2013).

44. *murā'āt an-naẓīr* (association—of items related to a particular theme)³⁹
 [These mounts are] **merchants** of words to the **market** of acceptance bringing from the **sea** of ideas the **pearls** of speech,
45. *barā'at at-takhalluṣ* (masterful transition—from previous theme to praise of patron)
 Of every pointed and unpointed word which is adorned by the praise of the best (of all mankind, both) Arab and non-Arab.

What to me is most striking here, in the context of the genre of *madīḥ nabawī*, which, as I have argued elsewhere is overwhelmingly composed for the purpose of gaining the Prophet's intercession on Judgment Day,⁴⁰ is that for Ṣafī ad-Dīn a major motivation appears to be to win the title of "the master of the art/craft" of poetry. This is expressed in his use of the proverbial expression in line 42 *ibn bajdatihā* ("master of his trade"), which means a person intimately acquainted with, skilled in, and fully mastering a matter.⁴¹ The competitive nature of his undertaking is encapsulated in the word *fakhār* (boast), itself an essentially competitive endeavor, and one which might better have been vocalized as *fikhār* (Form III) "boasting match." Tellingly, Ṣafī ad-Dīn's oath involves not so much his salvation in the other world, but his literary fame in this world. The strange thing for the modern reader is that he manages to conflate the two. He seems to consider the composition of *madīḥ nabawī* the ultimate proving-ground of both his poetic skill and moral virtue. The foregrounding of the poet's boast that emerges in this passage of Ṣafī ad-Dīn's *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, as well as the conflation of rhetorical mastery with spiritual salvation, comes to the fore once more toward the closure of the poem (see below, ll. 142–143).

In a charming metaphor (which is labelled as such) the poet styles his "journey" as urging on "mounts/camels of determination" "laden with rhymes" heading for the glory of composing prophetic praise (l. 43). Line 43 employs the well-known conceit of poems as strings of pearls to describe his poetic venture as a trade-caravan bearing priceless pearls to market. The market here, however, is *sūq al-qabūl* (market of acceptance)—that is, the Prophet Muḥammad's acceptance of Ṣafī ad-Dīn's gift (or "merchandise") of praise.

39 For the English, see Cachia, *Handbook*, 48 (no. 73). It is entirely indicative of the transfer from the manuscript to the print tradition, and likewise from a religious to a secular approach to rhetorical knowledge, that Pierre Cachia, *Handbook*, has extracted and translated a handlist of rhetorical figures, definitions, and examples from 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulī's (d. 1143/1731) commentary on his own *badī'iyya*, entitled *Nafaḥāt al-Azhār 'alā Nasamāt al-Ashḥār*, while eliminating and/or dismantling the *badī'iyya* itself that forms the structure—and at least partly the purpose—of the original Arabic work.

40 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 97–106; 148–149; and index.

41 Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, b-d-j.

With line 46 we have arrived squarely in the *madīh* or praise section, which, in conventional terminology, comprises the goal (*gharaḍ*) of the remainder of the poem 46–145). However, the final 100 lines comprise distinct subthemes, which are essential to, and in some cases distinctive of, *madīh nabawī*.

Lines 46–64 are standard fare of prophetic praise, and it seems noteworthy to me that the theme of prophetic intercession, so pronounced and essential to al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* and to the genre of *madīh nabawī* in general, is, as it were, mentioned only in passing in lines 54 and 60. Lines 65–99 comprise the largest thematic subsection of the *madīh*, and it is of note that of the several distinct sub-themes that are developed in what I have termed the Sīra-derived *madīh* sections of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*—the Prophet's birth, his miracles, the Qur'ān, al-Isrā' wa-l-Mī'rāj (Night Journey and Ascension), and Jihād and military campaigns⁴²—only this last is fully developed, and indeed expanded, in *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*. Although there may be several motivations for this, it strikes me that the primary one may be simply rhetorical: Ibn al-Mu'tazz's claims in *Kitāb al-Badī'* notwithstanding, the quintessential *badī'* style, including many distinctive and original features, reached its apex in the great victory odes of the High 'Abbāsīd caliphal and subsequently princely courts.⁴³ The sustained and intensive use of intricate and abstract wordplay, simile, and metaphor as the linguistic correlative of divinely appointed and therefore superhuman caliphal might and right often played out in the theme of military campaigns, battlefields, and sites of plunder.⁴⁴ Thus, for the poet steeped in the rhetoric (*badī'*) of the 'Abbāsīd golden age, the topic of the Prophet's military campaigns offered an ideal site for enacting the poet's verbal might. It is worth noting that the base-text, al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, also exhibits a similar poetics in Part 8: The Messenger's Jihād and Military Campaigns (*an jihād ar-rasūl wa-ghazawātih*, ll. 118–139).⁴⁵

In terms of the poetics of performance, a poetic contest may be at its liveliest and most dramatic when engaging in a military contest: verbal combat enacted as and enacting armed combat. It is also noteworthy that this passage of *Al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya* is entirely "generic" High 'Abbāsīd battle poetry. There is no mention of any of the historical proper names of Muḥammad or other persons, nor of any of the place-names associated with the military campaigns or *maghāzī* of the Prophet. In other words, the passage derives

42 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 90; 106–141.

43 See Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the 'Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), chapter 1; and 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Kitāb al-Badī'*, ed. Ignatius Kratchkovsky (London: Luzac, 1935), passim.

44 See Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām*, chapters 5–9; Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, 152–179; and Stetkevych, "From Jāhiliyyah to *Badī'iyyah*," 214–219.

45 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 132–141 on al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*; also of interest is the cognate (now anti-colonial) passage in defense/praise of *jihād* and the Prophet's military campaigns (ll. 129–141) in the neo-classical poet Aḥmad Shawqī's (d. 1932) famed contrafaction of al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*, *Nahj al-Burda* (The Way of the Mantle); see Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 202–208.

entirely from poetic sources and not from *as-Sira an-Nabawiyya* (Biography of the Prophet) or historical chronicles. In terms of style, it echoes the taut and unrelenting *badī* of Abū Tammām, though less convoluted and with simpler diction, and yet, to my mind, it is denser than the style of al-Buḥturī or al-Mutanabbī. The passage is in the 3rd ms pronoun (“he”) from lines 65–81, referring to the Prophet. An explicit allusion to Ṣafī ad-Dīn’s illustrious ‘Abbāsīd predecessor, Abū Tammām, and his celebrated victory ode to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mu’taṣim bi-Allāh appears in Ṣafī ad-Dīn’s example of *tasjīr* (rhymed phrases—in which the line is divided into four non-parallel parts, with an internal rhyme the same as the end-rhyme):

80. *tasjīr* (internal rhymed phrases)
fa’ālu muntaẓimi l-aḥwāli muqṭaḥimi l-
ahwāli, multazimin, bi-l-Lāhi m/Mu’taṣimi
 The action of one who orders affairs,
 rushes headlong into terrors,
 steadfast, relying on God.

which audibly echoes the much-imitated line from Abū Tammām’s celebrated victory ode to al-Mu’taṣim on the conquest of the Byzantine city of Amorium (Ammūriya) (223/838):

37. *tadbīru m/Mu’taṣimin bi-l-Lāhi muntaẓimi*
li-l-Lāhi murtaqibin fī l-Lāhi murtaghibi
 The direction of one relying on God, avenging for God
 striving and yearning toward God.⁴⁶ [Abū Tammām]

What is curious and noteworthy is that a celebrated line praising an ‘Abbāsīd caliph is serving here as an explicit base-text for a line praising the Prophet Muḥammad. Furthermore, we can add that in less explicit terms the same is true for this military section of Ṣafī ad-Dīn’s *madīḥ nabawī*, as is indeed also the case in al-Būṣīrī’s *Burda*.⁴⁷ We should take this to mean that the High ‘Abbāsīd *badī* style of panegyric has become the “gold standard” for praise—including prophetic praise.

A pivot line about Islam versus Kufr (infidelity, unbelief) (l. 82) achieves the transition from direct praise of the Prophet to the praise of his army. This line serves as a good example of Ṣafī ad-Dīn’s style. While exemplifying what seem to be constrained or constraining rhetorical devices—here *tasmīṭ* (stringing [pearls]: dividing the line into four metrically parallel sections, the first three of which are exhibit *saj’*-rhyme different from the fourth), he uses very simple diction and clear ideas expressed in antithetical pairs (*tibāq*):

46 See the discussion and translation of Abū Tammām’s masterpiece in Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, 152–179; 160.

47 See the text and discussion in Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 132–141.

82. *at-tasmīt* (stringing [pearls])

*fa l-ḥaqqu fī ufuqin, wa sh-shirku fī nafaqin,
wa l-kufru fī faraqin, wa d-dīnu fī ḥarami*

Truth is on the horizon; Polytheism is in a trench;
Disbelief is in terror; Religion is in an inviolate sanctuary.

Lines 83–92 adopt the 3mp pronoun or the singular “each one,” referring to the warriors rather than the Prophet himself, and at line 93 the subject shifts from the warriors themselves to their battle-steeds and the cavalry. Line 98 describes the warriors as frolicking merrily under the shadows of the brown spears, as lions frolic in their lairs. Line 99 serves as a pivot line, achieving a transition first from the warriors back to the Prophet, and from war to peace.

Lines 99–117 bring us back to the 3ms pronoun and to standard motifs of prophetic praise, describing the Prophet’s virtues and miracles. Once again, we find that what sound like contrived devices when defined, result in clear, limpid, semantically concise lines, as in the alliterative effect and doctrinal concision (the status of Muḥammad as the “seal of the prophets”) achieved by the *taqyīd* (restriction) in the letter *mīm*, whereby the letter “M” must appear in every word:

111. *at-taqyīd bi-ḥarf al-mīm* (restriction—to words containing the letter “M”)

*Muḥammadu l-muṣṭafā l-mukhtāru man khutimat
bi-majdihi mursalū r-Raḥmāni li l-umami*

Muḥammad the selected, the chosen one, by whose
glory those whom God sent as Messengers to the nations
were sealed.

Of course, the choice of the letter *mīm*, given its morphological ubiquity (i.e., in addition to having its fair share of the letters of the trilateral roots, *mīm* is a morphological prefix for the *maṣdar mīmī*, the nouns of place and instrument, all the derived active participles, and all of the passive participles) considerably lightens the rhetorical challenge and makes for a light and fluid line.

Ṣafī ad-Dīn introduces the prophets Ibrāhīm (Abraham) (l. 114) and Yūnus (Jonah) (l. 115), to arrive, somewhat indirectly, at Īsā (Jesus) in line 116. This line is notable in that, for his example of *istīāna* (seeking help, borrowing), Ṣafī ad-Dīn chooses a line from al-Būṣīrī’s *Burda* (l. 43), admonishing Muslims not to attribute to Muḥammad what the Christians [falsely] attribute to Jesus—that is, divinity.⁴⁸

48 Ṣafī ad-Dīn’s line is a variant of al-Būṣīrī’s as it occurs in most versions. See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 98; 246.

116. *al-isti'āna* (seeking help; quoting a full line from another poet)
 Leave off [for Muḥammad] the excessive claims
 the Christians make
 for their Messiah; say what you wish and judge proper.

This is the closest Ṣafī ad-Dīn comes, in the text of the poem, to explicitly acknowledging al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*.

Lines 117–131 consist of an extended benediction. With the *taṣliya* of line 117 [invocation of God's blessing upon Muḥammad, traditionally in the formula *ṣallā l-Lāhu 'alayhi wa-sallama* (may God bless him and give him peace)], which is a requisite component to ensure the fulfilment of any Muslim prayer (*du'ā*),⁴⁹ Ṣafī ad-Dīn signals the entry into the concluding and obligatory rituals of the *madīḥ nabawī*. Once again, we find the poet coopting and redirecting the poetic genre and al-Būṣīrī's genre-model, toward his own ends, as, indeed, every "performer" does. First, he extends and constructs the *taṣliya* to clearly convey his Shī'ite sympathies. This may also alert us to the differences between Ṣafī ad-Dīn's motivations and concerns as opposed to al-Būṣīrī's. The great doctrinal and polemical issue for al-Būṣīrī, it seems to me, is an intercommunal one—he is bent upon establishing that Muḥammad is the seal of the Prophets, outranking all others, and that, concomitantly, Islam is the true religion as opposed to the claims of the Christians and Jews. Thus, al-Būṣīrī devotes major sections of his *Burda* to the Prophet's miracles (ll. 72–87); the Qur'ān (ll. 88–104)—an eternal miracle that overshadows the temporary miracles of others; and al-Isrā' wa-l-Mi'rāj (the Night Journey and Ascension) (ll. 105–117), which emphasizes Muḥammad's status as closer to God and higher in rank than the other prophets.⁵⁰ By contrast, Ṣafī ad-Dīn's concerns are more intra-communal. Although his tone is devotional rather than shrilly polemical, he nevertheless clearly presents his case for the precedence of Āl al-Bayt, the family of the Prophet (lines 118–122),⁵¹ before proceeding to the praise of the (other) Companions. Of special significance in this respect are lines 118 on Āl al-Bayt and 124 on the Companions. Line 124, in declaring the Companions/Ṣaḥb identical to Āl al-Bayt *except in* kinship to the Prophet and mention in the Qur'ān, secures the precedence of Āl al-Bayt, even as it ensures that the remaining lines of praise (ll. 125–131) apply equally to Āl al-Bayt and the Ṣaḥāba.

Lines 132–145 comprise the conclusion of the poem as supplicatory ritual and as competitive performance. The benediction (*taṣliya*) of the Prophet in lines 117–131, as mentioned above, is a ritual requisite for a prayer to be granted. Now it is time for the poet's concluding prayer and plea and the poetic discourse therefore shifts to a direct address to the

49 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 146.

50 See Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 117–132.

51 On Ṣafī ad-Dīn's Shī'ite proclivities, see Heinrichs' brief but to-the-point remarks, Heinrichs, "Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī." On the Sunni-Shī'ī rivalries as presented in *bad'iyyāt*, see Stetkevych, "From Jāhiliyyah to *Bad'iyyah*," 226.

Prophet directly in the 2nd person, “O Seal of the Prophets,” (l. 132). The concluding passage of the poem is, to my mind, quite extraordinary. Stylistically, it is very simple, powerful, and straightforward in its expression and diction—exemplifying the radical clarity (as opposed to rhetorical or stylistic opacity) that, as I have argued elsewhere,⁵² characterizes the “ritual core” of the *qaṣīda*: the passages in which the poet-suppliant pleads for, negotiates, and/or demands the fulfilling of the obligation that the “gift” of the praise poem places on the patron—the Prophet—for a counter-gift—the Prophet’s intercession on Judgment Day. It is noteworthy that whereas the stories of the donation of the Prophet’s mantle of Ka’b ibn Zuhayr’s *Bānat Su’ād* and the dream of al-Būṣīrī’s *Burda* are prose narratives external to the text of the poem, Ṣafī ad-Dīn has incorporated his dream of the Prophet into the ritual core of his poem. He names the Prophet as having initiated the ritual transaction of praise poem for intercession, and now he calls on the Prophet to fulfill his promise. Further, the poet declares that this “prior agreement” with the Prophet is a distinction that has been conferred upon no other poet before him. With this claim, Ṣafī ad-Dīn is making a transition from one classical Arabic *gharaḍ* (genre) to another, that is, from *madḥ* (praise) to *fakhr* (boast).

133. *al-muzāwaja* (pairing)

When I am afraid on Resurrection Day, but have praised him,
I will escape [hellfire] and my praise for him will be my refuge.

134. *ḥusn al-bayān* (clarity of expression)

In my dream, you made me a promise, in which I placed my trust,
Requiring that my praise for you be rhymed.

135. *as-suhūla* (ease of expression)

So I said: This is a guarantee that I have received beforehand,
One that no man before me has ever received.

140. *al-musāwāh* (equivalence of meaning and expression)

And I have praised you by [a poem] in which *badī’* has
reached perfection
With elegance in both opening and closure.

What is so extraordinary about Ṣafī ad-Dīn’s poem is that his hybrid or multiple motivations are not repressed in his supplicatory closure, rather the irresistible urge to competition, to boast—the Arabic genre or *gharaḍ* of *fakhr*—bursts forth in the closing lines as he pronounces his poem his “rod” or “staff”—identifying it with the “rod” of Moses by which he defeated the Pharaoh’s magicians. In what I consider the greatest rhetorical feat of the poem, Ṣafī ad-Dīn, purporting to exemplify the device of *iqtibās* (quotation,

52 See Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, “Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Redemption: *Mufaḍḍaliyyah* 119 of ‘Alqamah and *Bānat Su’ād* of Ka’b ibn Zuhayr,” in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 12–14; 33–37; Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes*, 141–143 and index.

esp. from the Qurʾān), appropriates for himself the words of Moses (l. 142) from Q 20:17–20: [God asked] “What is that in your right hand, Moses?” He replied, “**It is my rod: I lean on it and knock down leaves to feed my flocks and have many other uses for it.**” [God] said, “Throw it, Moses!” He threw it and behold, it was a writhing snake. Then, exemplifying *talmīh* (allusion), Ṣafī ad-Dīn uses particular words or phrases from Q 7:109–126, esp. 7:116–117: the Pharaoh’s magicians . . . produced mighty **magic**. We [God] inspired Moses, “Cast your rod!” and behold! it **swallowed up** their falsehood. The effect of this is to recast the Qurʾānic magic contest between Moses and Pharaoh’s magicians as a poetic contest between Ṣafī al-Dīn and his rival poets.

142. *al-iqṭibās* (quotation)

**This is my rod for which I have many uses;
Sometimes I knock down leaves with it to feed my flocks.**

143. *at-talmīh* (allusion—through a word or two to a proverb, story, the Qurʾān, etc.)

If I throw it, it will swallow up all that they have made,
when the **magic** of their words is brought to me.

That is, Ṣafī ad-Dīn has transformed the *sihr* (magic or sorcery) of Pharaoh’s magicians into the *sihr ḥalāl* (licit magic) of eloquence/poetry, and the “magicians” into his rival poets. In terms of reenactment and performance, Ṣafī ad-Dīn is playing a complex rhetorical game of multiple shiftings with his mythic and textual concordances, referents of key terms, and speakers. The Qurʾān is understood to be the speech of God, but in Q 20:17 it “quotes” Moses. Ṣafī ad-Dīn then appropriates Moses’ words as his own in his “quotation.” In this respect, he is claiming for himself a Prophetic miracle, the God-given miracle of Moses’ rod and, in a further textual and mythic concordance, this miracle is the analog of Muḥammad’s miracle of the Qurʾān. Thus, rhetorically speaking, our poet is at most one step away from claiming prophethood. His identification with Muḥammad is strengthened by transforming the *sihr* of the Pharaoh’s magicians into the “licit magic” of speech and poetry, which, in the Islamic context brings us once more to the linguistic miracle of the Qurʾān and the poets as the foremost challengers of Muḥammad. The reader may at first be shocked to hear the poet invoking for himself a Qurʾānic prophetic miracle—Moses’ rod—especially in a poem addressed ostensibly to the Prophet himself. For, in the catalog of Qurʾānic miracles and especially in the discourse of *ijāz al-Qurʾān*, Moses’s rod is analogous to Muḥammad’s Qurʾān. At this point, however, we might refer once more to Ṣafī ad-Dīn’s opening invocation to his *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badīʿiyya*: “Praise be to God who made *licit* for us the *magic* of eloquence and made playing with it in the mind [the same as] witnessing [the miracle of the Prophet] with the eye.” In this respect, then, Ṣafī ad-Dīn has pulled off a final rhetorical feat: he has (magically/rhetorically) transformed a seemingly doctrinally scandalous claim to

prophecy into the ultimate witnessing of the prophethood of Muḥammad and the truth of Islam.

Quite wisely, and in accord with the supplicatory conventions of both *qaṣīdat al-madh* and *madīḥ nabawi*, Ṣafī ad-Dīn concludes in a tone of self-abasement and humility. This he accomplishes with lines that are reminiscent of the closure of the celebrated poem of excuse or apology (*i'tidhāriyya*) of the pre-Islamic master-poet an-Nābigha adh-Dhubyānī to the Lakhmid king, an-Nu'mān ibn al-Mundhir:⁵³

49. This is my praise, if it sounds good to you
I have alluded—May you disdain all curses!—to no gift.

50. This is my apology, if it has availed me nothing
Then its author is indeed down on his luck!

Thus, Ṣafī ad-Dīn concludes:

144. *ar-rujū'* (retraction, correction)
Within my shortcomings, I have made [this poem]⁵⁴ long,
and made it my excuse

—**No! surely my excuse could not stand!**

145. *barā'at al-khitām* (masterful closure)
If I meet with good fortune, then my praise for you is
the reason;
If I meet with misfortune, my own sin is the cause of
my affliction.

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53 See Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, chapter 1, esp. 24–25, 42.

54 I am unsure of the translation of this line, but certainly the editor's note claiming that the pronoun refers to *ma'ārib* (uses; two lines back) makes no sense. See al-Hillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Badī'iyya*, 331, n. 1. I take it rather to refer (grammatically) to the "rod" and therefore (metaphorically) to the poem itself.

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