

Andrea Maria Negri 

University of Bologna, Italy | andreamaria.negri2@unibo.it

The Narration of the *maqāmāt*: A Reading of 'Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā 'Abbūd's *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya* (1715) through Propp

Abstract This article conducts a reading of 'Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā 'Abbūd al-'Alawī's *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya* (1715), employing Vladimir Propp's model of narrative functions. Although Proppian functions have frequently been harnessed to deconstruct essential components and plot architecture within the *maqāma* genre, the article emphasises the intrinsic limitations of this approach, especially when the focus is restricted to the analysis of isolated units rather than the entire collection. In accordance with various literary analyses, this research interprets the *maqāma* as a genre that orchestrates individual narrative units to synthesise a more expansive, novel-like overarching narrative. Within this intricate framework, the text accentuates the interconnected events between the narrator and the trickster. The emphasis lies on the multifaceted transformation experienced by both characters: the first encountering and engaging with the world's complexity, and the second undergoing a progressive moral conversion, culminating in his eventual demise. In the process, the article posits that the inherent quality of the *maqāma* of Bā 'Abbūd, inspired by the models of al-Ḥarīrī, shows the flexibility of the genre. Within the predictability of its narratives, the *maqāma* is a genre able to become a vessel for diverse thematic discourses that the author seeks to convey.

Keywords *maqāma*, *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya*, functions of the *maqāmāt*, Vladimir Propp

1 Introduction

The *maqāma* hails from gatherings, from assembly spots where people stand, known as '*al-maḡlis wa-l-maqāmāt al-nās muḡālasātihim*' (ʿAwḍ 1979: 7; Ḥasan 1998: 12). It is a genre in Arabic literature, unique and without parallel, standing alone in the literary landscape. Narratives resemble one another, characterised by archetypal narration, known as the 'typical *maqāma*' (Stewart 2006: 147) or 'standard *maqāma*' (James 1974: 306). Repetition runs through it. The genre is recursive, infinite, unending similar to serialised cartoons, such as Mickey and Donald (Schip-



pers 2002: 305), with repeated character motifs, recurring elements, a loose plot ‘*al-qīṣṣa dāt al-ḥikba al-mufakkaka*’ (‘Awḍ 1979: 57).¹ Repetition is coded, found in representations of performances like storytelling events (Wacks 2007: 44).² Abdelfattah Kilito emphasises it, a series of semblances, refractions (Kilito 2020: 4). The recognition is seen by Alexander Elison as repetitive in terms of the obsessive presence and re-emergence of the protagonist (Elinson 2005: 3). This ‘poetics of repetition’ is vital in education, in teaching (Neuwirth 2005: 23; Beeston 1971: 1), and in children’s literature, clarifying the structure, aiding memory (Gannon 1987: 2).³ The *maqāma* is both simple and complex, repetitive and varied, echoing the places where people stand and gather. It is a genre of multiplicity and unity, high literature and popular storytelling, teaching and learning.

This perceived predictable sequence of events has been the object studies of scholars that through the classical lens formalist and structural approaches have sought to pinpoint the morphology of the story of the *maqāma*. In their research, Kilito (1983: 48), Mahmud Tarchouna (1982: 289), James T. Monroe (1983: 23), and Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 45) have identified trends within the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamādānī and al-Ḥarīrī aiming to pinpoint a structure valid for all their stories. However, their objective was arguably not to provide a comprehensive

¹ Several scholars have underscored the distinctive quality of the *maqāma* as a literary genre that aimed to legitimise fictional narratives imbued with realistic characteristics, as not seen as legitimate as engaging in a form of creative dissemblance or intentional fabrication. The *maqāma* stood in a place in literature where fiction had no legitimation (Bakr 1998: 8). This is also argued by Rina Drory, it gave fiction its place in Arabic culture (Drory 2000: 9) that engages with the semiotic frameworks of Itamar Even-Zohar’s Polysystem Theory. Her argument is that the genre was needed to carve out a space for itself within the cultural system where it originated, navigating literary and social norms to achieve acceptance and legitimacy (Drory 2000: 6). This nuanced characteristic endures in its literary structure, crafting a complex interplay between realism—especially in the use of *ʿisnād*—and renunciation of objective truth. The *maqāma* is seen synthesises the implicit narrative techniques found in the *ḥadīṭ* literature with the episodic fictiveness reminiscent of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (Wacks 2007: 55; Goodman 1988: 27). The convergence of fact and fiction within the *maqāma* genre contributes to its scholarly perception as a satirical reflection of *ḥadīṭ* literature. This view has been proposed and supported by scholars such as Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 46) and David Wacks (2007: 46–47) especially in relation with the use of the *ʿisnād*.

² Edmond Saussey emphasises this aspect too. The *maqāma* stands in two worlds: a high literary category, that yet reflects the literary psychology of popular storytelling. In his reading, the *maqāma* is both, together, interwoven in its essence: ‘[l]’art des *maqāmat*, art très raffiné, mais procédant exactement de la même psychologie littéraire que les contes populaires’ (Saussey 1932: 162).

³ In this context, Philip F. Kennedy emphasises the pedagogical aim of the *maqāma*, particularly in the recognition or anagnorisis scene: ‘these are close in nature to the *maqāmāt* in the cast of players they contain but their recognition scenes, albeit set in ambiguous anecdotes, are edifying rather than dispiriting’ (Kennedy 2016: 221).

analysis of all the major variations within the collections. Hämeen-Anttila⁴ and Kilito's⁵ outlines are more specific as they delve into events that are not commonly found in most narratives. In contrast, Tarchouna's scheme⁶ is more general and therefore able to account for various types of narration without specifying the variations within some of their functions. The only scheme that aims to account for major events in the genre is Devin Stewart's (147),⁷ which is more detailed but may not represent the majority of the *maqāmāt*.

The proposed patterns, assuming an ideal plot for the *maqāma*, one that might condense all major variations. Yet, this thinking is challenged. The limit is perhaps applying the method of Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp, that was aimed at folk tales, as narrative units that stand by themselves as independent narrations (Murphy 2015: 39), without considering that the *maqāma* is intrinsically different. It does not stand alone. It is not an isolated narration. It's a collection, a series, stories assembled, layered, connected. Plot and characterization are intertwined between the units, merging together, even not in a straightforward chain of events. This interrelation among the apparent units of the stories, Kilito (1983: 226) speaks of the macro level of the narration, a thematic layer that becomes apparent throughout the unfolding stories. This concept is further corroborated by Katia Zakharia.

Ce recueil inépuisable est non seulement une collection (dont chaque *maqāma* est une pièce) mais également une structure (dont chaque *maqāma* est un élément organisateur). Il est certain, les lecteurs d'al-Ḥarīrī ne s'y sont pas trompés, que ces Séances se caractérisent par « l'absence d'une logique assurée entre les événements ».⁸ C'est bien pour cette raison qu'il convient de chercher à dégager ce qui, sans être événementiel, organise le texte et trace le chemin d'Abū Zayd. (Zakharia 1987: 276)

⁴ 1. *ʾIsnād*; 2. General introduction; – Link; 3. Episode; 4. Recognition scene (anagnorisis); 5. Envoi; 6. Finale, see Hämeen-Anttila (2002: 152).

⁵ 1. Arrival of the transmitter in a city; 2. Encounter of the transmitter with the disguised rogue/rhetorician; 3. Literary display by the latter; 4. Rewarding of the rogue by the transmitter; 5. Recognition of the rogue's true identity; 6. Reproaches of the transmitter; 7. Justification by the rogue; 8. Parting of the two, see Kilito (1983: 48) quoted in Monroe (1983: 21).

⁶ 1. Assemblée; 2. Arrivée incognito; 3. Fourbe; 4. Reconnaissance; 5. Justification, see Tarchouna (1982: 289).

⁷ 1. The transmitter arrives in a city; 2. Formation of an assembly or gathering for learned discussion; 3. The protagonist enters the assembly; 4. The protagonist undertakes an eloquent performance; 5. Rewarding of the protagonist by the transmitter or other character; 6. The protagonist leaves assembly, which breaks up; 7. The transmitter realises the protagonist's true identity; 8. The transmitter follows the protagonist; 9. The transmitter accosts or reproaches the protagonist; 10. Justification by the protagonist; 11. Parting of the two; 12. Departure of the transmitter from the city (implicit), see Stewart (2006: 147).

⁸ Kilito 1983: 232.

Similarly, David Roxburgh underscores the notion that ‘the *maqāma* was an aggregate of parts whose coherence, if any,⁹ lay not in sequence but in theme: the individual *maqāmas* were interrelated more paradigmatically than syntagmatically’ (Roxburgh 2013: 191). In light of this, it may be posited that the endeavour of delineating a morphology of the *maqāma* should transcend mere identification of the functions within a singular *maqāma*. The title of collections of *maqāmāt* in Arabic literature is always plural, arguably underlining this multiplicity. An ideal *maqāma* model, if it exists, should extend to encompass variations at both the level of individual units and the overarching assembly of *maqāmāt*.

In this context the article examines ‘Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā ‘Abbūd al-‘Alawī’s *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya* (‘The Indian Assemblies’), completed in 1128/1716, employing Vladimir Propp’s theoretical concepts of functions and spheres of action. These notions are applied to provide a structured reading of the text, aiming to uncover the underlying narrative mechanisms and thematic complexities present within it. The aim of this analysis is to craft a morphology, which Propp (1968: 19) describes as ‘a description of the tale in terms of its constituent parts and the relationship of these parts to each other and the whole’. Although formalist methodologies are frequently regarded as outdated, due in part to their propensity to reduce narratives into formulaic patterns (Dogra 2017: 416), the inherent complexity of the *maqāma* genre, marked by its multifaceted and repetitive character, positions it as an apt subject for an analytical dissection aimed at unravelling and schematizing its intricate plot design (Harris 2008; Wright 2001). This complexity invites a deeper exploration that transcends traditional interpretive constraints, potentially offering new insights into the genre’s distinctive literary structure and thematic richness. This dissection is aimed to contribute to a more profound comprehension of how Bā ‘Abbūd creatively reconfigures and reinterprets the *maqāma* genre.

‘Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā ‘Abbūd¹⁰ is a relatively understudied figure, with sparse available biographical information. It is mentioned that he departed Yemen in the late 17th century, venturing to India in pursuit of more promising opportunities (al-Ḥibṣī 1999: 7)—a frequent trajectory among the Hadhrami diaspora (Ho

⁹ Tarchouna (1982: 289) supports this view of the absence of link between the narration ‘le lien entre ces récits est trop lâche pour qu’on puisse trouver une certaine unité’, and similarly, Šawqī Ḍayf (1973: 37) underscores the autonomy of each text, emphasising that no connections tie them together.

¹⁰ Among the studies on the *maqāmāt* of ‘Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā ‘Abbūd see: Ḥarrām (2016), the introduction of the critical edition of al-Ḥibṣī (1999), Saitta (2014a), and Negri (2012; 2022). For a recollection of the manuscripts of this *maqāmāt* see the two articles of Saitta (2014b; 2014c). A lithography of *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya* has been published with a Persian title *Maqāmāt-i hindī* in India (Bā ‘Abbūd 1848).

2006: 9). There remains uncertainty as to whether he ever revisited Yemen, implying the possibility of his lifetime settlement in India. During his stay in India, Bā 'Abbūd authored a compendium of short narratives entitled *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya*. His endeavour was aimed at distilling the lexicon and syntax of the classical *maqāmāt* genre, with a specific focus on the works of 'Aḥmad al-Qāsim b. 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī (446/1054–516/1122), Ibn al-Ṣayqal al-Ġazarī (751/1359–833/1429), and al-Zamaḥṣārī's (467/1074–538/1143) *al-Nawābiḡ* (Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 9). The author explicitly expressed the intention to render the genre more accessible to readers lacking the requisite erudition to engage with the challenging works of al-Ḥarīrī and al-Ġazarī. Consequently, the author embarked on a process of language simplification, all the while preserving the original structural integrity of the narration. This strategic adaptation aimed to broaden the audience of the *maqāma* without diluting its complex narrative form. Although Bā 'Abbūd's collection draws from the classical genre, founded by al-Hamaḍānī (358/969–398/1007), his oeuvre nevertheless mirrors a common trend of the 18th century in the genre, reflecting a propensity towards innovation and reinterpretation of its forms, as emphasised by Hämeen-Anttila (2012: 7). The choice of Indian subcontinent cities as the backdrop for this collection is an innovative departure from the usual Arab settings of other *maqāmāt* (Kilito 1983: 22). The narrative recounts the experiences of a wayfarer negotiating unfamiliar cultures and landscapes, blending in reflections on reformist religious views, adaptations of al-Ḥarīrī's and Ibn al-Ṣayqal al-Ġazarī's *maqāmāt*, and the insights of Yemenis residing in India. The *maqāmāt* of Bā 'Abbūd merge themes of travel writing with classical tropes of the *maqāma*.

2 One *maqāma* multiple plots

Propp defines a function as 'an act of character' that holds significance for the advancement of the narrative, requiring repetition to gain status as a function (Propp 1968: 21). These functions serve as the foundational elements of a narrative genre and are described as 'forms transferred from tales of other classes (anecdotes, legends, etc.)' (Propp 1968: 64). In addition, the interactions between these functions are regulated by a set of rules, ensuring that no function can negate another within the genre (Dogra 2017: 414). Propp also emphasises that the chronological arrangement of functions must be preserved, although some may be omitted (Propp 1968: 71). The characters' actions within a narrative correspond to discrete spheres of action, leading to the potential intertwining of storylines. Propp further elucidates that these spheres may converge, as evidenced in the interrelated actions of the villain, hero, or giver (Dogra 2017: 415).

At the core of the functions of the *maqāmāt* of Bā 'Abbūd are two central characters: the narrator and the protagonist. The narrator occupies a central role within the narrative, not merely as an external voice but as a character as an essential part of the development of the events of the story, functioning both as

a key participant in the unfolding action and as the focal nexus through which the plot is articulated. This character's intrinsic nature drives them to journey and explore various spaces. Conversely, the protagonist is portrayed as a more enigmatic figure, whom readers are invited to interpret. This character's intermittent appearances across cities are marked by acts of both deceit and benevolence, reflecting an attempt to guide others towards virtue. The third axis of actions is represented by the people, a category left deliberately vague by the omission of specific names or identities. This general grouping, encompassing individuals such as a boy or an elderly person, often serves roles that include being deceived or providing the narrator with sought-after information. This threefold structure of characters, in turn, contributes to the rich complexity and interpretive depth of the narrative.

A formulation of the functions of the collection of Bā 'Abbūd could be as follows:

A Initial situation

(A-1) The narrator hears news about a city.

(A-2) The narrator decides to go there.

(A-3) The group of travellers endure difficulties on the route.

B Apparent resolution

(B-1) The group reaches the city.

(B-2) The narrator and his companions encounter more difficulties in the city.

(B-3) The narrator finds a helper who gives him some material relief.

C Villainy

(C-1) Trickery: The helper deceives his victims in order to take possession of their belongings.

(C-1a) Beggar: An old man comes to a gathering of people and asks them for alms. He then steals from them.

(C-1b) Paretic: The protagonist comes to a mosque and gives a sermon. The people give him alms, but he turns out to be a fraud who steals from them.

(C-1c) Philological: Eloquent people and men of letters gather. An old man comes and resolves a literary quarrel. However, he later steals from them.

(C-1d) Judicial: An old man brings his son to an arbiter to denounce the theft of a poem. They recite poems in front of the judge, but the old man turns out to be a fraud who steals from them.

(C-1e) Marriage: The people gather for a marriage feast, and the groom steals from the bride and takes her wealth.

(C-2) Apocalypse: Occurrence of a natural cataclysm.

(C-2a) Eschaton: The people believe that the end of the world is near and go to a hermit for salvation. The hermit takes advantage of their credulity.

(C-3) Not categorizable.

D Return

- (D-1) The protagonist leaves the group with the stolen items.
- (D-2) The narrator follows the protagonist.
- (D-3) The narrator confronts the protagonist.
- (D-4) The narrator uncovers the hero's identity (anagnorisis).
- (D-5) The narrator criticises the protagonist.
- (D-6) The protagonist curses the narrator.
- (D-7) The protagonist justifies himself.
- (D-8) The two separate.
- (D-9) The narrator comments on the marvel of his experience.
- (D-10) Final equilibrium: the narrator re-joins his companions.

I Functions that build the macro-plot of the collection

- (I-1) The protagonist demonstrates to be a valuable litterateur.
- (I-2) The protagonist fails to gain enough money for the lack of patrons.
- (I-3) The protagonist starts begging.
- (I-3) Few people give him alms.
- (I-4) The protagonist begins to lie to get more money and to steal through his rogues.
- (I-5) The protagonist repents.
- (I-6) The protagonist gives a spiritual testament.
- (I-7) The protagonist dies.

2.1 Initial situation

2.1.1 The travel towards *maḥāsin*

Al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya is a narrative that originates from an allure, stimulated by tales and expressions extolling the beauty of India. This desire is sparked in the *maḡlis*, a social setting where cultivated individuals gather to reflect, share, and converse. Within these gatherings, the narrator reveals his compulsion towards a particular objective, incited by whispers and intuitions of something greater. This motif underlies almost every *maqāma*, influencing the narrator's decision to embark on a journey. Frequently, it is the allure of a city, the reputation of its people, the splendour of gardens, cultural landmarks, or majestic monuments that beckon the narrator. The pursuit of beauty, as a central theme in the narrative, manifests through various passages, with the journey acting as an emblematic and pivotal element within the broader storyline.

سمرت مع بعض الإخوان فتذاكرنا محاسن البلدان فقالوا قد شاع وذاع ومألاً الأسماع أن أرض الهند جمعت
جميع المحاسن الدنيوية وفيها من الراحة ما يُعين على المطالب الأخروية فاشتقت إليها اشتياق الصّادي إلى
الزلال والمهجور إلى الوصال والحزين إلى الفرح والعديم إلى المنح وبقيت أفكر في الحيلة التي تُوصل إليها

وترميني بأيّ وجه عليها فقبل لي إن أهل هذه المدينة يريدون أن يبعثوا إليها سفينة فاتخذت الأهبة وتَهَيَّأت
لركوب مَرْكَبِ الْعُزْبَةِ وتَوَكَّلْتُ على مالك الملك وَرَكِبْتُ في ذلك الْفُلُكْ
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 25)

One night, while chatting with some brothers, we reminisced about the beauties of various regions. They said that these beauties were scattered and lost, and it has filled the ears that the land of India has gathered together the beauties of the world, and that there is a tranquillity within it that aids in otherworldly quests. We were filled with desires to reach this land, much like a thirsty person longing for pure water, or an expatriate yearns for union, or the sad crave happiness, or the poor seek a gift. I remained pondering the means to get there and to throw me there in any way. Then I was told that the people of this city intended to send a ship there. I took up the arms and prepared myself to board this ship of estrangement. I entrusted myself to the Owner of all things and I embarked upon that vessel.

And similarly:

ضَمَنِي السَّمر مع جماعة في ليالي القمر فتذاكرنا محاسن السفر وما فيه من الرِّيح والظفر ببلوغ المَآرِبِ والوِطَر ونحن على الفرش عدد حملة العرش فقال واحد نسير إلى بنكاه وقال الثاني بل إلى برناله وقال الثالث بل إلى أكره وقال الرابع بل إلى متره وقال الخامس بل إلى امتيازكر وقال السادس بل إلى إكليسر وقال السابع بل إلى تنيسر لأن بها العسكر وبه أخلاط الرَّمَر فقالوا إنه كالمحشر بل هو أدهى وأمر ثم رَدَّوا الكلام إلَيّ فتفاهم الأمر عليّ وقلت لهم ما خاب من استشار ولا ندم من استخار فقالوا ذاك إليك وقد اعتمدنا في أمرنا عليك فأقبلت على الخيرة فلم تزدني إلَّا حيرة وكنت سمعت برجل ذي حمية وغيره له مع الله سريرة فقصدت جنبه وقبلت رحابه وأخبرته الخبر وشاورته في المسير إلى العسكر
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 79)

During moonlit nights, I found myself drawn to engaging in night talks with a group. Together, we reminisced about the beauties of travel and the success in reaching goals and fulfilling needs. We were on the carpet of a number of high officials of the throne. One said, 'Let us go to Bengal.' The second said, 'Rather to Barnālah.' The third said, 'Instead to Agra.' The fourth said, 'Instead to Matrah.' The fifth said, 'Rather to Imtiyāz Kar.' The sixth said, 'Rather to Iklisir.' The seventh said, 'Rather to Tanisir, since there in the army and in it is a mixture of groups.' So, they said, 'The matter is yours, we have already entrusted our affairs to him.' So, I accepted the choice, and it did not augment if not perplexity. I had heard of a man of modesty and poverty who had a secret with God. I turned to him, kissed the ground before him, and informed him of the news, seeking his advice about going to the army.

The exploration and discourse concerning the beauties of the world resonate persistently throughout the narrative, unveiling itself as a central thematic element.

In another instance, the journey is directed towards encountering an individual renowned for his scholarly insight or for delivering a sermon, or to partake

in a gathering of eminent scholars and erudite individuals. The intention is to absorb their wisdom and knowledge and hear their poetic expressions.

سمعتُ بأن في أحمد آباد رجلاً له في الحديث اليد الطولى وقد شهر بعُلُوّ الإسناد فجبت إليها الفياقي والمهامه وقطعت في يومي ما يقطعه المسافر في عامه
(Bā ʿAbbūd 1999: 104)

I heard that near ʿAḥmad ʿĀbād, there was a man with profound knowledge of the *ḥadīṭ* and renowned for the elevation of the *ʿisnād*. Therefore, I crossed deserts and wastelands, covering in one day what a traveller might traverse in a year.

The quest for knowledge guides al-Nāṣir b. al-Fattāḥ, always on the search. The narrator frequents assemblies, rulers with scholars, courts to hear judges, the wisdom of litigants. Knowledge is the constant goal, part of what is deemed beautiful by the narrator, worth visiting.

2.1.2 The travel for alms

Moreover, at the inception of the narrative, the narrator is portrayed as embarking on a journey, either compelled by impoverishment or necessitated by adverse circumstances for survival. In some instances, the journey itself becomes a means of alleviation from his condition of destitution, as he seeks sustenance and support from fellow travellers. This dynamic is illustrated in the following excerpt:

رأيت جماعة من السند آمين قرية سهرند فسرت بمسيرهم رغبة في ميرهم فأدخلوني محل الوسطة من القلادة وأفادوني الحُسنى وزيادة وحين قربنا من القرية وتحققناها بلا مربة
(Bā ʿAbbūd 1999: 73)

I saw a group of Sind while aiming to go to the village of Sirhind so I went with them wishing for their support and they let me into the place of the centre of the necklace and they provided me with good deeds and abundance. When we approached the village, we realised it without a doubt.

This particular narrative function is manifested in the first *maqāma*, when *ṣayḥ* ʿAbū al-Zafar al-Hindī, upon observing the poverty of al-Nāṣir b. Fattāḥ, takes the decision to help him:

فقال بعد أن سمع قِصَّتِي وسَفَرَتِي وأسبابها قَوْض خيامك عن أرض تُهَان بِهَا فَقُلْتُ إن حالي لضَرِير ولا أملك من الدَّرهم إلا نصفه الأخير ففكر ساعة بعد أن أكثر التَبَهُّل والضَّراعة ثم قام وقال سِرِّ بِسَيِّرِي أُسْهِمَكَ فِي مَبِيرِي فبَسَرْتُ بِسَيْرِهِ الْحَدِيث وهو يحدثني بأحسن الحديث
(Bā ʿAbbūd 1999: 27)

He said after he heard my story and my journey and its causes, 'remove your tent from the land where you are humbled.' I said then 'my condition is of necessity I have no dirham but half of it.' So he thought for an hour after which there were plenty of imprecations and resignation. He then got up and said, 'Come with me, I'll give you part of my supplies.' I therefore went with his rapid pace, and he spoke to me with the most beautiful speech.

In other instances, the journey's impetus lies in poverty, driven by dire circumstances. This motivation is intrinsically connected to a form of flight, one not necessarily directed towards a well-defined objective but rather pursued in search of relief. An example of this dynamic can be found in the following passage:

اجتزت بأحمد نكر في أيام غلبة السُّموم والحر وغلب عليَّ الظمُّ حتى حُشِيتُ الهلاك والعمى
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 30)

I passed through 'Aḥmad Nakr on days when the wind of Simun and heat exceeded, and I was very thirsty and feared death and blindness.

In another case a famine:

أجذب الهند سنة من السنين حتى باع النَّاسُ البنات والبنين وشروا الميتة بالدُّرِّ الثَّمِينِ فَتَدَرَّعَتْ دِرْعَ المِهَابَةِ
والوقار وشمرت للزَّحِيلِ والسَّفَارِ
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 51)

India dried up one year of the years to the point that people sold their daughters and sons and bought animal carcasses with precious gems. I thus armed myself with composure and calmness and prepared myself for the departure and the journey.

2.2 Apparent resolution after a troubled travel

This enduring condition of journeying presents a departure from Propp's theoretical framework, as the narrator-protagonist is not summoned to set forth on a journey or adventure but is already engaged in the act of travelling. In this context, the travel itself seems to be construed as a normative state, while residing in a fixed location constitutes an exceptional circumstance. This exceptionality is always temporary and never evolves into a permanent condition. The act of dwelling in a place can be interpreted as the exceptional event within the *maqāma*, symbolising a pause for observation amidst continuous and indeterminate wandering. This function appears to serve as the motivational underpin-

ning of the journey's central role within the narratives, as both the narrator and the protagonist are engaged in perpetual travel. The primary locus of the initial scenario in these stories is the function of the journey itself. Such a journey is not depicted as an extraordinary or definitive phase of the character's existence; rather, it emerges as a habitual state. Conversely, the act of residing within a specific space is portrayed as an anomalous circumstance, a sort of exception to the character's usual life.

Al-Nāṣir b. Fattāḥ recounts before coming to a city his arduous journeying experience emphasising the tribulations he endured. An example can be found in the following passage:

لم أزل أجوب البحر والبر وأكابد البرد والحر أنضو مطايا السفر حتى ولجْتُ مدينة سكر
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 39)

I continued to travel sea and land suffering from frost and heat. The mounts of the journey were exhausted until I repaired to the city of Sukr.

These challenges are contextualised within the hope of resolving the narrator's initial difficult circumstances, a hope that appears attainable once the goal of reaching the city and extricating himself from the traveller's tribulations is achieved. The narrator is depicted as content with his situation and able to enjoy his life in the city. However, it is crucial to recognize that this condition is ephemeral and momentary, serving as a fleeting respite within the broader narrative trajectory.

وحين خِفْنَا على ذهاب النَّفوس لاح لنا بندر سورت المحروس فنزلنا إلى تلك الأرض المونسة والبلد التي على
المحاسن مؤسسة فصغر الخُبْر الخبر ولم يسمع السَّمْع بأحسن مما رأى البصر واقتبسنا أنوارها القابوسية
واغترفنا من بحارها القاموسية واستمطرنا سحائبها العيدروسية ومكثت بها مُدَّة وأنا في أنس بعد تلك الشدَّة
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 25)

When we feared the departure of souls, the well-protected port of Surat appeared to us, and we therefore descended into that friendly land in a region founded on beauties. Experience outshone the tales we had heard; the eye beheld sights more beautiful than the ear had heard of. Therefore, we absorbed its brilliant lights and touched its abysmal seas. We asked for rain from the clouds of the al-ʿAydārūs. I stayed there for a while and was delighted after that distress.

Similarly, in this passage al-Nāṣir finds relief from his travel reaching a city:

وصف لي بيجافور شيخ خبير بتجربة الأمور فتسَمَّت سنام الغربية وتَأَبَّطت وتنجَّدت هراوة وقزبة ووصلت
إليها بعد الكد والنكد وقد انصممت مني عُرى الجَلْد وقصَّدت إلى آثارها واجتمعت بأخبارها ورأيتها جَنَّة
ذات أنهار وأشجار وجَنَّة بقي البؤس والعار لم يجد أبو مرة سبباً إلى دخولها فضلاً عن سَكَّانها وحلولها ثم

خرجت إلى متزّهاتها فحدّثني عن الخلد ولذّاتها ومكثت بها زمناً وأنا في عيش رغيد وظلّ مديد وسعد
يتجدّد ويزيد
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 35)

Bijapur was described to me by a *ṣayḥ* expert in the experience of things, so I got on the hump of estrangement. I threw the garment from his right hand over his left shoulder and lifted his cane and canteen. I arrived there after fatigue and hardness and the reins of my patience had broken. I looked at her vestiges and met with her nobles and saw her as a garden with rivers and trees and an armour that purifies from misery and shame. 'Abū Murra [the devil] had never found reason to enter it by virtue of its inhabitants and residents. Then I went out to its pleasant places, and they told me of paradise and its joys, and I stayed there for a period of time living opulently with solid protection and a happiness that is renewed and increases.

This temporary state of contentment is nevertheless swiftly negated. The anticipated benefits or favourable conditions al-Nāṣir expects to encounter in the city are either absent or prove to be mere illusions. Consequently, the narrator finds himself back at his original predicament, having journeyed to alleviate his problems, only to arrive at his destination in the very same situation he sought to escape from, now exacerbated by poverty and fatigue from the journey. An example of this recurring narrative pattern can be found in the following passage:

ولم أزل مرخياً للرّمَام إلى أن لاحت لي الخيام فسررت بقدومي عليها ووصولي إليها ثم تأملتُها بعد أن دخلتها
فإذا بيوتها أقفاص وحيطانها أخصاص أكثر سكانها نزائل وأخيرها قلائل ولم أبرح صابراً على الأذى مغضياً
على القَدَى
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 26)

I continued to let go of the reins until curtains appeared. They rejoiced in my presence and my arrival. Then, after I entered it, I observed it, behold: its houses were huts and barracks, among its inhabitants the poor were the majority and the nobles of them were the minority. I continued to bear the pain and to tolerate injustice.

Almost abruptly, al-Nāṣir becomes cognizant of the gravity of his impoverished condition and the urgency of his needs. Within this context of destitution, he implicitly seeks out individuals both for alms and to engage in their lofty discourses. It is within this particular framework of need and intellectual pursuit that he encounters the protagonist, as elucidated in the following situation:

وحين ضَمَنِي سَوْقَهَا وظهر لي فُسُوقُهَا ضاق لذلك دَرْعِي وندمت ندامة الكسبي وصرت من أحرص الحراس
على التماس الخلاص وظَفَقْتُ أفكر في النِّفَقَة
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 51)

When I was contained by its market his moral corruption appeared to me and my arm became short. I repented as al-Kas'ī and I became the most desirous of purity and I began to think about expenses.

In this contest often emerges the figure of an elderly man who appears to fulfil the role of a helper of the narrator. However, as the narrative unfolds, he reveals himself to be a trickster, his ostensible helpfulness giving way to deception.

2.3 Villainy

This encounter with this individual unfolds the episode within the narration. Here are the variations at the level of story:

- *The philological trickery I* is one common form of deception and in the story is based on poetry and linguistic expertise, as seen in various *maqāmāt* (13th, 16th, 20th, 23rd, 29th, 31st, 34th, 36th, 44th, 48th, 49th). The story often begins with an old and poor man entering a gathering of individuals discussing poetry. After a dispute arises, the poor man demonstrates his intelligence by resolving the argument and then recites some poems to solicit alms, which the assembly readily gives out of respect for his knowledge and circumstances.
- *The philological trickery II* showcases instances of poem theft between a father and son which are brought before a judge or governor (*wālī*) for resolution (4th, 7th, 19th). The father, who serves as the villain in disguise, accuses the son of claiming authorship of his poems after making minor modifications. The judge requests both the old man and son to recite the poem in question but finds himself unable to reach a verdict. In an effort to defer the decision, he attempts to postpone it to a later date. However, after being persuaded by the father to do justice on the same day, the judge reluctantly assesses the poetic abilities of both parties. Upon realising that both father and son possess exceptional poetry skills, the judge concludes that there was no need for either of them to steal from the other. Despite not being able to prove the son's innocence, he is afraid of tarnishing his reputation as an experienced judge if he pronounces an unjust verdict. As a result, he opts to provide them with a substantial sum of money to resolve their dispute privately. In reality, the theft of poetry never occurred.
- *The charlatan sermonist*, which includes the 3rd, 6th, 26th, 35th, 42nd, and 50th *maqāmāt*, it depicts a scenario where the narrator enters a mosque on a Friday during the *ẓuhr* prayer and observes an elderly man in shabby attire preaching from the pulpit, after which he leaves the mosque having collected alms. In these *maqāmāt*, it is often challenging to determine if any deception is taking place. In one narration, the preacher makes it evident

that he is seeking a specific donation through his sermon, as if his primary objective were to receive alms rather than to impart teachings. Despite this, the deception is implicit as the preacher fails to disclose his identity in order to obtain the alms. Consequently, in all these stories, al-Nāṣir follows the preacher, but the latter manages to evade him.

- *The trick of the Apocalypse*, such as the 9th, 15th, and 21st *maqāmāt*, presents apocalyptic scenarios. Within these narrations, the narrator observes various unpleasant natural disasters, such as hail, floods, lightning, and thunderbolts, which are interpreted as signs of God's wrath. The narrator connects the deviation of certain inhabitants of the subcontinent to these events and, as a result, seeks refuge in a hermitage along with a group of people. Upon arrival, the crowd implores the hermit to intercede with God to halt the rain. The hermit prays before the public, and soon after, the rain ceases, prompting them to praise his service. However, it is eventually revealed that the hermit is an imposter who exploited their credulity.
- *Charlatan begging*: the act of begging is a ubiquitous theme in every *maqāma*. Several narrations depict the protagonist engaging in the simple act of begging for money, as seen in the 1st, 2nd, 10th, 11th, 12th, 18th, 24th, 30th, 32nd, and 41st *maqāmāt*. During an assembly, an elderly individual recounts his impoverished state through the use of aulic language. The assembled characters then offer assistance in any way they can. A recurring tactic employed by the protagonists while begging for alms is to describe their destitute state, coupled with false pretences, such as needing money to bury a lost child or to avoid a divorce.
- *Wedding plot*: one of the central themes of the *maqāmāt* involves the narrator seeking to alleviate their poverty by infiltrating a wedding celebration, as depicted in the 22nd and 39th *maqāmāt*. In the narrative, the narrator recounts the arrival of the bride and groom in a crowded house filled with guests. Following a brief ceremony, the wedding contract is signed in private. The narrator provides a brief account of the ensuing feast. However, several days after the marriage, the groom disappears, revealing that the marriage was merely a scheme to abscond with both the gifts and the bride.
- *Uncategorized trickeries*: a significant number of narratives in the *maqāmāt* collection defy categorization, including the 5th, 8th, 14th, 17th, 25th, 27th, 28th, 33rd, 37th, 38th, 40th, 43rd, 45th, 46th, and 47th *maqāmāt*. These narratives appear to be adapted from *ḥabar* forms of anecdotes and lack comparable stories within the collection. In these narratives, the traditional functions of the *maqāma* are suspended, allowing for the telling of extraordinary and inexplicable unique events. Despite being unconventional, some narratives within this subset are

not intended to deceive. Instead, they showcase the protagonist's admirable actions, such as rescuing a woman from being burned alive after her husband's death or converting Indian women to a new faith. Other *maqāmāt* provide descriptions of prominent Indian spaces and personalities, such as the commemoration of the last Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's death or the recounting of significant political events in India. Some of the *maqāmāt* within this group are dedicated to critiquing the religious practices of Muslims in India, indicating the broader societal concerns that are often addressed within these narratives.

2.4 Return

The trickster 'Abū al-Ẓafar al-Hindī employs disguises as a means of deception and fraud. His approach involves assuming an appearance and dressing in clothes that create the impression of extreme poverty, most commonly portraying himself as an old beggar throughout the majority of the *maqāmāt* (*maqāma* 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 46, 48, 49, and 50). He also employs disguises that allow him to present himself as a young man (*maqāma* 12, 23) and a black man (*maqāma* 22, 39). Additionally, 'Abū al-Ẓafar al-Hindī seeks to gain credit and recognition by dressing in professional clothes that correspond to various roles, such as an interpreter (*maqāma* 17), a doctor (*maqāma* 20), a courtier (*maqāma* 25, 33), a wealthy man (*maqāma* 37), a merchant (*maqāma* 8, 27, 29, 39), a prince (*maqāma* 9, 14, 47), a jailer (*maqāma* 25), a prisoner (*maqāma* 25, 44, 45), a Muslim hermit (*maqāma* 5), a servant (*maqāma* 30), a Muslim sermonist (*maqāma* 3, 26, 42), and a Hindu priest (*maqāma* 37). For this reason, the protagonist remains unrecognised at the outset of the narrative, with recognition only arriving at its conclusion.

The *maqāmāt* exhibit a cyclical or circular narrative structure wherein the conclusion often mirrors the beginning (Monroe 2002: 55). In this way, each individual narrative seems to terminate at the very point from which it originated. In every episode where the protagonist deceives the masses, he manages to evade capture, vanishing before his deceit can be exposed. The narrator often succeeds in trailing the protagonist, occasionally intercepting him *en route*. Al-Nāṣir, still oblivious to the true identity of this figure, articulates his intent to uncover it. This pattern manifests itself as early as the second *maqāma*, where, after dispensing money to the impoverished man, al-Nāṣir continues to follow him:

وَعَنِّي لِي أَنْ أَتْبِعَهُ فَسَمِعْتَهُ يَقُولُ لَهَا أَمَا قُلْتُ لَكَ أَنَّ الرِّيحَ فِي الدِّهَاءِ وَلَوْ لَمْ نَفْعَلْ فَعَلِ الْأَوْبَاشِ بَتْنَا مِنَ الْجُوعِ
أَوْحَاشَ فَتَقَدَّمَتْ أَمَامَهُ وَكَشَفَتْ لثَامَهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ أَبُو الظُّفَرِ السَّاحِرِ الْمَعْدُودِ مِنَ الْمَسَاخِرِ

(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 31)

It occurred to me to follow him, so I heard him say to her: 'Did not I tell you that profit is in cunning? If we did not do as the villains do, we would become like beasts from hunger.' So, I went before him and uncovered his veil. Behold, it was 'Abū al-Zāfar the enchanter reckoned for his masquerades.

Similarly:

فأخذ الشيخ بيده وخرجا من عنده ومشيتُ على أثرهما لأصطلي بنارهما أو أقتبس من نورهما فأدركته
بالباب النجدي فإذا هو أبو الظفر الهندي المشهور بالفضائح والعيب
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 41)

The sheikh took [the money], and they went out before him. I followed in their footsteps, hoping to tame their fire or absorb some of their light. I overtook him at the gate of Nağd and behold! It was 'Abū al-Zāfar the Indian, famous for his shameful acts and ignominy.

Similarly:

ثم إنه ودّعهم أحسن توديع بعد أن أحسنوا له التّشيع وقَفَوْتُ أثره لأعلم خبره فلما وصل المفازة رَكَزَ بها
عُكَّازَه وكشف قناع الخزي عن وجهه ورأسه وظهر ما سَتَرَه بلبّسه ولَبَّاسَه فإذا هو أبو الظفر الهندي المشهور
المعروف بالفسق والفجور
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 52)

Then—after he had greeted them with the most beautiful greeting, and after they had made his farewell pleasant—I followed in his footsteps to get news of him. When he then came to the wilderness, he thrust the staff into the ground and uncovered his face and head the veil of shame. What had been covered by her ambiguity and his clothes appeared. Behold: he was the famous 'Abū al-Zāfar the Indian known for his irreverence and his depravity.

At times, the pursuit proves unsuccessful, as the narrator fails to reach 'Abū al-Zāfar. An instance of this occurs in a specific episode where al-Nāṣir's search for him proves futile, resulting in aimless wandering without success. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

ولم أزل أذرع الأرض وأجوب بين رفع وخفض ولم أطلع له على خبر ولا عين ولا أثر ومكثت سبعة أيام
على الشّراب دون الطعام وفي اليوم الثامن سئمت الحياة من الجوع واللّغوب وآن من الشمس الغروب
ثم طلع عليّ رجل من الهنود وقال أراك تمشي في مَهْمَه لا يسلكه إلا الأسود فقلت إني أمشي وراء رجل
خداع ذهب علينا بخيل ومتاع فقال سحقا لعقلك النّاقص وحظك النّاقص تخطو خطو الحمام وتروم
إدراك من يَزْعَى مع النّعام فأني منذ ثلاث ليال رأيت الخيل والمال في يد أبي الظفر الهندي فهوّن عليك
فتعبك لا يجدي
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 75)

I continued to cross the land and cross the hills and valleys and found no news of him, sight or trace. I stayed seven days drinking without eating and on the eighth day I was disgusted with life for hunger and extreme fatigue. The time came for the sun to go down and a man of the Indians found me and said 'I see you going into deserts that no one crosses except for lions.' I said then 'I go after a trickster man who stole my mounts and possessions.' He said then 'Put aside your deficient mind and your receding fortune; you walk with pigeon steps and aim to reach the one who grazes the ostriches. Three nights ago, I saw the mounts and the wealth in the hands of 'Abū al-Zafar the Indian. Do not worry about it; your fatigue is in vain.'

In numerous stories, the narrator refrains from pursuing the search, acknowledging the likelihood of its futility. Instead, he restricts himself to enquiring among those present for information regarding the man, eventually discovering that he is 'Abū al-Zafar.

فخرجت إلى الباب لأسأل عنه الحجاب فقالوا هو خطيب المدينة ولا نراه إلا يوم الزينة فقلت لهم قد وقفت على حسبه فأخبروني بنسبه فقالوا هو أبو الظفر المعروف بالفضائح وارتكاب القبايح فندمت على سَفَرِي وخُسْرَانِ صَفَّقَتِي ورجعتُ إلى مكاني متجلبباً بأثواب أحزاني
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 36)

So, I went out the door to ask the courtiers about him. They said, 'He is the orator of the city, but we shall not see him except on the day of adornment.' I then said to him, 'I stopped for him, inform me about him.' They said, 'He is 'Abū al-Zafar the Indian, the one known for his ignominies and impostures.' I then regretted my trip and the losses on my account. I returned to my seat wrapped in the robes of my sadness.

The identification of the protagonist, or the anagnorisis, when it does not occur through recognition by others or deduction by the narrator, transpires when al-Nāṣir encounters the protagonist directly. In such moments, the narrator uncovers the true identity of the character, leading to a critical examination where he censures and reproaches the protagonist for his actions.

فقلت له قاتلك الله من ماكر ولا أبقاك إلى بأكّر فقال دع المرأ ولا تسأل عمّا جرى ففارقته وهو بالمال قرير العين وأنا بالإفلاس أضيق من بياض الميم والعين وحلفت أن لا أدخل بين متشاجرين ولا أفك بين متخاصمين
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 32)

I said to him, 'God kill you for deceit and keep you alive until shortly.' He then replied: 'Cease the controversy and do not ask about what happened.'

Consequently, the protagonist, 'Abū al-Zafar al-Hindī, seeks to rationalise his actions, maintaining that his unethical behaviour was a byproduct of extreme pov-

erty and a lack of legitimate means to earn a living. Within the narrative, he is depicted as a character who, despite possessing notable skills as a *kātib* and poet, finds himself compelled to resort to dishonest practices to sustain himself. Though he argues that begging was his sole recourse, it yields insufficient income, leaving him in a continuous struggle to make ends meet. This creates a seeming contradiction in his character, as his literary talents could secure him a patron who might remunerate him for his work. Yet, he chooses instead to flee after pilfering from rulers, squandering his wealth, and reverting to his impoverished state. The underlying justification for this paradoxical behaviour is elaborated as follows:

فقال يا كثير السَّفاه لا ومن أحل حُمَر السَّفاه ما أتوب عن الخمر حتى أوسد في القبر وما لبست لباس الطاعة
إلا لسد باب المجاعة ثم إنه أنشد بعد ما تنفَسَ وتنهَّد
لبست لباس الحلم والزهد والتقوى لكشف قناع الفقر والبؤس والألأوا
فقلت فكنت بمكري كلما رمت من منى وصدت أسود الغاب باللبس والشكوى
فمن لم يعامل بالخداع يثُمُت به ومن لم يعيش بالمكر عاش أcha بلوى
وقد مات من يخفي مضاضة خطبه وقد عاش ذو قلب جسر أcha النجوى
فاستعذت بالله من الفقر والغم وفارقته مفارقة السن للفم
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 53)

He replied, 'Oh, what folly! No—by Him who allowed the red of the lips—I will not regret the wine until I am laid down in a pit. I have not donned the garments of obedience except to bar the door to hunger.' Then he said, after having inhaled and exhaled:

I put on the robes of meekness, fear of God and devotion
To remove the veil of poverty, misery and tribulation
I got, and was with my cunning, everything I wanted.
I have hunted the lions of the forest with ambiguity and complaint.
And whoever has not used deception perishes by deceit.
Whoever has not lived on cunning has lived as a brother of torment.
He who feared the misfortune of his business is dead,
who had an impertinent heart brother of salvation lived.
I sought refuge in God from poverty and distress. So, I separated from him as one separates the tooth from the mouth.

Similarly:

فقال ومن بتقديره اليسرة والعسرة لو سألتكم بالصدق لم تعطوني كسرة ولو طلبتكم بالمحبة لم تنطوني
من زادكم حبة ولولا هذه الحيلة ما بلغت الأمل فأجمل في الطلب يحسن لك المنقلب وهذه الدنيا الغرور
لا تحصل إلا بالزور وإن أردت السعادة لا تصدق إلا في كلمتي الشهادة ومن قبل النصيحة سلم من الوقوع
في الفضيحة وملاكم لي على هذا الحال خير من رجوعي خائب الآمال ولو قدرت على قوت اليوم ما وقفت
على القوم
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 75)

He said, 'In the name of Him who holds the power of ease and difficulty. If I had asked you sincerely, you would not have given even a tiny part; and if I had asked you with affection, those of you who abound in love would not have given anything to me. Were it not for these stratagems, I would not have achieved my hopes. The most beautiful of the requests is the one that beautifies you in return. This is the deceitful world, one does not succeed except by cheating. If you want happiness, do not be sincere except for the two words of the profession of faith and as an advice save yourself from shame. Your blame for me in this condition is better than returning with shattered hopes. If I could have obtained food today, I would not have stopped at the folks.'

This narrative element serves the function of rehabilitating the protagonist,¹¹ who, in a certain sense, undergoes a transformation into a positive character. Al-Nāṣir's perspective shifts progressively; each time he separates from the protagonist, he recounts his wrongful deeds but also acknowledges an increasing fascination with his character. This duality is evidenced in the following passage where the narrator affirms to forgive him and understand his action:

فَعَذَّرْتُهُ بَعْدَ أَنْ عَذَّلْتُهُ وَشَكَرْتُ فِعْلَهُ بَعْدَ أَنْ عَنَّفْتُهُ وَرَجَعْتُ إِلَى أَصْحَابِي وَالْعَجَبُ حَشُو إِهَابِي
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 75)

I forgave him after I had criticised him. I thanked him for his action after I abused him. I returned to my companions. Amazement had padded my skin.

This process is arguably the plot line of the macro story of the *maqāma* as the presence of functions of individual *maqāma* that cannot be limited to a singular narrative unit and must be contextualised within a recurring series across the entire collection, effectively constituting the full collection as a singular narrative entity. In this broader framework, the *maqāma* collection, as elucidated by Kilito (2014: 137), presents a series of narratives delineating a transformation in the main character's life, culminating in his death. On several occasions, the protagonist is portrayed expressing remorse over his actions. The author does not give a full *maqāma* to the spiritual testament of the main character, as in al-Ḥarīrī's works. Instead, there is a hint of the narrator being guided from 'Abū

¹¹ The figure of the trickster can be situated within the *ṣu'lūk* brigand-poet tradition as one who lives outside of social norms but maintains direct contact with society, and this characterization also applies to the protagonists of the *maqāma* who choose to live on the margins of society (Elinson 2005: 16). Numerous studies have analysed the traits of the trickster, particularly Zakharia (2000), who highlight his subversiveness, as an individual who seeks to master the human condition rather than be mastered by it (Goodman 1988: 28) where the moral function of the *maqāmāt* passes through an immoral protagonist.

Zayd al-Sarūjī to learn his art, a possible passing of the torch. In their talks, the main character teaches about the ethics of stealing. It is a code, something like what an Arab Robin Hood might live by. He leaves him a message:

ولما فتحتها وجدت فيها قد علّمتك جهدي وأنا أبو الظفر الهندي وإياك أن تؤذي ضعيفاً أو عالماً وإذا بليت
بظالم كن ظالماً وانصر أخاك ظالماً أو مظلوماً وادخل الأنس على من رأيتَه مهموماً فعند ذلك بكيت بكاء
أضرّ بالبصر وكل شيء بقضاء وقدر
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 255)

And when I opened it, I found [written] in it 'I have taught you my study and I am
'Abū al-Zafar the Indian. Beware of harming the weak or the wise. If you have suffered an injustice, be unjust. Save your brother, be him unjust or suffer injustice. Offer friendship to those you have seen displaying sadness.' At that moment I cried the most harmful cry for the sight. Everything is decreed and established.

Or similarly:

فقال أطعمتك يد شبعاء جاعت ولا أطعمتك يد جوعاء جادت ودع الأباطيل واسمع ما قيل
سل الخير أهل الخير قدماً ولا تسئل فتي ذاق طعم الخير منذ قريب
(Bā 'Abbūd 1999: 310)

And he said, 'May the hand of the satiated people that have become hungry feed you, not the hand of the unsatiated people who have become fine. Abandon the legends and listen to what has been said.

Ask for benefit from the people of the abundance that is old and do not ask
to a boy who savours the taste of abundance since a short time.

The search for redemption ultimately reaches its pinnacle in the poignant scene of the protagonist's deathbed. Here, they manifest profound remorse and impart life wisdom through the medium of poetry. This climactic moment not only confers upon the story a distinct and complete narrative arc but also serves to imbue it with an implicit moral lesson.

2.5 The traits of al-Nāṣir b. al-Fattāḥ

The character of al-Nāṣir b. al Fattāḥ conforms to the classical tradition of the *maqāma*. Unlike the portrayal of characters in classical works who suffer from extreme poverty or starvation, al-Nāṣir is primarily focused on securing his survival by seeking financial support, alms, and food from companions, often those who are wealthy. However, he also has a deep passion for knowledge and the arts, which drives him to travel long distances to attend cultural events such as public speeches, poetry readings, and wise discussions. This pursuit often results

in him returning to a state of poverty, and the cycle continues. Al-Nāṣir's love for literature and art is not for recognition as a literary talent, but rather to experience the various forms of cultural expression. Though he begs for support, it does not fully alleviate his financial difficulties. His eagerness to seek out and listen to famous scholars highlights his contemplative and ecstatic nature, as he himself is a poet. The narrator's aesthetic aspirations lead him to attend various rhetorical productions indiscriminately.

The narrator's journey is characterised by a sense of fear and a reserved personality. Despite experiencing various forms of deceit, such as false promises of aid from the old Indian 'Abū al-Zafar in the first *maqāma* or the theft of a poem in another, the narrator refrains from taking legal action or making public accusations out of a perceived fear of being disbelieved. This fear is exemplified in the eighth *maqāma*, where the narrator is beaten, imprisoned, and coerced into signing documents after being robbed of all his possessions. Despite the injustice done to him, he only curses the perpetrator but does not report him to the authorities. The narrator's reluctance to intervene or voice his opinions in assemblies is a reflection of his submissive and cautious demeanour, taken to an extreme in the twenty-first *maqāma* where he witnesses a group of people prostrating themselves at the feet of a Sufi saint and remains silent despite his apparent discomfort. The saint's intervention ultimately convinces the narrator that the prostrations were not just to the saint but also towards Mecca and the sacred al-Ka'ba. These traits highlight the narrator's naivety and vulnerability, placing him at the mercy of events. Overall, the narrator's journey portrays him as a passive observer rather than an active participant in the events surrounding him. His fear of being disbelieved and reluctance to speak out suggest a lack of confidence in his own abilities and a reliance on external factors to shape his experiences. This passivity is particularly evident in his encounters with deceit and injustice, where he appears more concerned with avoiding conflict than seeking justice. These traits contribute to the narrator's overall vulnerability and highlight the precarious nature of his journey.

Moreover, the narrator exhibits a profound apprehension towards the day of judgement. This tendency towards caution is manifested in an excessive degree of gullibility. The narrator avoids encounters with corruption out of fear of becoming contaminated and losing his sanctity. Upon discovering the protagonist's immoral behaviour, he swiftly distances himself from them. As he witnesses the corruption in various cities but lacks the means to leave, he portrays himself as being in a state of immense suffering. It is the religious fear that prompts the narrator to interpret natural disasters, famines, and floods as acts of divine retribution. He expresses concern that God may mistakenly punish him alongside the corrupt inhabitants of the subcontinent. This fear also leads the narrator to be extremely prudent in avoiding any sinful actions. There is an element of self-interest in the narrator's pursuit of salvation, as he refrains from

attempting to rectify the behaviour of the protagonist or any other individuals in the subcontinent.

The narrator's excessive caution is also exemplified in his reluctance to take legal action against those who have wronged him. This reticence is rooted in a fear of not being believed and the consequences of confronting those who have committed injustices. This fear is highlighted in the eighth *maqāma*, where the narrator is beaten, imprisoned, and forced to sign documents after being robbed of all his possessions. Despite the injustice done to him, he only curses the perpetrator but does not report him to the authorities. The narrator's reluctance to intervene or voice his opinions in assemblies is a reflection of his submissive and cautious demeanour. This is taken to an extreme in the twenty-first *maqāma*, where he witnesses a group of people prostrating themselves at the feet of a Sufi saint and remains silent, despite his apparent discomfort. The saint's intervention ultimately convinces the narrator that the prostrations were not just to the saint but the trickster. These traits serve to further highlight the narrator's naivety and vulnerability, placing him at the mercy of events.

3 Conclusions

Within the *maqāma*, characters, themes, humorous anecdotes, and moral lessons are intricately interwoven. The interplay between al-Nasir b. al-Fattāḥ and 'Abū al-Ẓafar al-Hindī, as arguably both heroes of the narrative, creates a dynamic tension between their respective roles and attributes. The blurred lines between hero and villain elevate the narrative's complexity and psychological depth, as in the classical genre, the portrayal of virtue and corruption create an environment where traditional roles are challenged. The hero villain's transformation, the narrator's failure as a hero, and the oscillation between the ethical and immoral all contribute to a sophisticated narrative structure. The characters are neither wholly good nor wholly bad but reside in a moral grey area that reflects the complexities of the character. In this contest the prominence of the journey motif, both literal and metaphorical, serves as a unifying element that connects the individual stories and characters. Each journey implicitly contributes to the growth and transformation of the characters, mirroring their reflection and experience that are central to the narrative. The protagonist's shift from villain to hero is paralleled by the narrator's journey from idealism to realism.

A formalist method that seeks to define and predict the plot of the *maqāma* falls short in creating a model that could always predict the twist of the narration of Bā 'Abbūd's work, and possibly any *maqāma* work. The stories vary greatly, their unpredictability lending a suspense to each narrative. The text is not uniform; variations are the rule, not the exception. As can be seen the functions of the *maqāma* cannot be reduced to just one; there are distinct differences within the major plot lines that show how the *maqāma* was rather a loose plot that ar-

guably evolved through its repetitions and re-enacting. Many *maqāmāt* remain uncategorized and, arguably, defy categorization. It can be posited that this approach serves as a valuable means to elucidate and interpret specific sections of the intricate plot within the *maqāma* genre, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of its complex narrative structure.

In the pre-modern Arabic *maqāma* literature, Bā 'Abbūd's work is a clear attempt to breathe new life into the classical genre. This intent follows the innovative contributions of Ibn al-Ṣayqal al-Ġazarī and al-Saraqūṣṭī (d. 538/1143), and notably introduces the fresh theme of travel to India. Unlike figures such as al-Zam-ahṣārī, Ibn al-Ġawzī (510/1116–597/1201), and al-Suyūṭī (849/1445–911/1505), who recast the *maqāma* to articulate religious, scholarly and literary tropes, retaining only the 'isnād of the classical form, Bā 'Abbūd deliberately digs deep into the original narrative essence of the *maqāma*. His *maqāma* is acutely conscious of the complexities found in al-Ḥarīrī and Ibn Ṣayqal al-Ġazarī's works. His ambition is not that of arguably simplifying the plot of the *maqāma* as arguably pursued by Nāṣif al-Yāziġī's (1800–1872) *Maġma' al-baḥrayn*. Bā 'Abbūd's *maqāma* instead aligns closely with the classical form while innovating from within, bringing new life to a revered tradition. Bā 'Abbūd's writing adheres to tradition, using the open narrative structure inherent to the genre, facilitating the construction of free and imaginative narratives. Bā 'Abbūd re-enact the predictability of the *maqāma*, which far from a limitation, serves as a key to its poetics, setting an expectation, a framework to deal new themes and discourses. The *maqāma* shows its flexibility. While honouring and interpreting the classical *maqāma*, as seen in the works of al-Ḥarīrī and al-Hamaḍānī the author has the liberty to weave various stories and perspectives, aligned with personal interests. *Al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya* shows the *maqāma*'s adaptability, its openness to innovation and creative reinterpretation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ORCID

Andrea Maria Negri  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4579-9445>

Bibliography

- 'Abbās, Ḥasan. 1998. *Naṣa'at al-maqāma fī al-'adab al-'arabī*. Al-Qāhira: Dār al-Ma'ārif.
- 'Awd, Yūsif Nūr. 1979. *Fann al-maqāmāt bayna al-mašriq wa-l-maġrib*. Bayrūt: Dār al-Qalam.
- Bā 'Abbūd, 'Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin. 1848. *Maqāmāt-i hindī*. Dilhī: Maṭba'at al-'Ulūm.
- Bā 'Abbūd, 'Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin. 1999. *Al-Maqāmāt al-naẓariyya*. Edited by 'Abd 'Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibšī. 'Abū Ḍabī: Al-Maġma' al-Ṭaqāfī.

- Ḍayf, Ṣawqī. 1973. *Al-Maqāma*. Al-Qāhira: Dār al-Ma‘ārif.
- Dogra, Sapna. 2017. ‘The Thirty-One Functions in Vladimir Propp’s Morphology of the Folktale: An Outline and Recent Trends in the Applicability of the Proppian Taxonomic Model’. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 9 (2): 410–419.
- Drory, Rina. 2000. *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and Its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture*. Leiden: Brill.
- Elinson, Alexander E. 2005. ‘Tears Shed over the Poetic Past: The Prosification of *rithā’ al-mudun* in al-Saraqustī’s *Maqāma Qayrawāniyya*’. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 36 (1): 1–27.
- Gannon, Susan R. 1987. ‘One More Time: Approaches to Repetition in Children’s Literature’. *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 12 (1): 2–5.
- Goodman, L. E. 1988. ‘Hamadhānī, Schadenfreude, and Salvation through Sin’. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 19 (1): 27–39.
- Hämeen-Anttila, Jaakko. 2002. *Maqama: A History of a Genre*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Hämeen-Anttila, Jaakko. 2012. ‘An Old-Fashioned Genre—Maqāma in the 18th Century’. *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 65 (2): 5–12.
- Ḥarrām, ‘Anīs ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. 2016. ‘Al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya: Dirāsa taḥliliyya’. *Al-Dībal* 1 (1): 127–137.
- al-Ḥibṣī, ‘Abd ‘Allāh Muḥammad, ed. 1999. ‘Introduction’. In *Al-Maqāmāt al-naẓariyya*, by ‘Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā ‘Abbūd. ‘Abū Ḍabī: Al-Maḡma‘ al-Taqāfī.
- Ho, Engseng. 2006. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*. The California World History Library 3. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- James, David. 1974. ‘Space-Forms in the Work of the Baghdad Maqāmāt Illustrators, 1225–58’. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37 (2): 305–320.
- Kennedy, Philip F. 2016. *Recognition in the Arabic Narrative Tradition: Discovery, Deliverance and Delusion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kilito, Abdelfattah. 1983. *Les Séances : récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhānī et Ḥarīrī*. Paris: Sindbad.
- Kilito, Abdelfattah. 2020. ‘Foreword: In Praise of Pretense’. In *Impostures by al-Ḥarīrī*, translated by Michael Cooperson, 4–9. New York: New York University Press.
- Monroe, James T. 1983. *The Art of Baḍī‘ az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*. Beirut: The American University of Beirut Press.
- Murphy, Terence Patrick. 2015. *The Fairytale and Plot Structure*. Houndmills: Palgrave.
- Negri, Andrea Maria. 2012. ‘Le Maqāmāt Indiane di Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā ‘Abbūd al-‘Alawī’. MA dissertation, Venice: University Ca’ Foscari.
- Negri, Andrea Maria. 2022. ‘Representations of Death in *al-Maqāmāt al-Hindiyya*’. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 42: 39–57.
- Neuwirth, Angelika. 2005. ‘Woman’s Wit and Juridical Discourse. A “Forensic maqāma” by the Classical Arabic Scholar al-Ḥarīrī’. *Figurationen* 1 (5): 23–37.
- Propp, Vladimir. 1968. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Roxburgh, David J. 2013. ‘In Pursuit of Shadows: Al-Hariri’s Maqāmāt’. *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World* 30: 171–212.
- Saitta, Gianluca. 2014a. ‘Le genre séance au Yémen entre tradition et innovation : les Maqāmāt hindiyya d’Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā ‘Abbūd al-‘Alawī (XVIII^e siècle)’. *Arabian Humanities* 3. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cy.2710>.
- Saitta, Gianluca. 2014b. ‘Notices de manuscrits de maqāmāt yéménites de la période post-classique, 1^{ère} partie’. *Chroniques du Manuscrit au Yémen* 17. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cmy.2054>.

- Saitta, Gianluca. 2014c. ‘Notices de manuscrits de *maqāmāt yéménites* de la période post-classique, 2^e partie’. *Chroniques du Manuscrit au Yémen* 18. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cmy.2092>.
- Saussey, E. 1932. ‘Ibrāhīm al-Māzīnī et son “Roman d’Ibrāhīm”’. *Bulletin d’études orientales* 2 (2): 145–177.
- Schippers, Arie. 2002. ‘The Hebrew *maqama*’. In *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, edited by Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, 302–327. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Stewart, Devin. 2006. ‘The Maqāma’. In *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, edited by Roger Allen and D. S. Richards, 145–158. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tarchouna, Mahmoud. 1982. *Les marginaux dans les récits picaresques arabes et espagnols*. Tunis: Université de Tunis.
- Wacks, David A. 2007. *Framing Iberia: Maqamat and Frametale Narratives in Medieval Spain*. Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World 33. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Zakharia, Katia. 1987. ‘Les références coraniques dans les *Maqāmāt* d’al-Ḥariri : Éléments d’une Lecture Sémiologique’. *Arabica* 34 (3): 275–286.
- Zakharia, Katia. 2000. *Abū Zayd al-Sarūḡī, imposteur et mystique: relire les Maqāmāt d’al-Ḥariri*. Damas: Institut français d’études arabes de Damas.

Appendix: Synopses of *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya*

1 The *maqāma* of Sūrat

Al-Nāṣir b. al-Fattāḥ was in Yemen when he heard of the good things in India and started to desire to go there. He learned that a ship was being prepared to go there, so he boarded it. The journey was hard and difficult, and al-Nāṣir feared for his life, but he eventually arrived and disembarked at the port of Surat. There he was amazed by the splendour of India and found that his experience was far better than what he had been led to believe about the subcontinent. He then saw a garden and approached a guard who was watching its entrance. The guard informed him that this garden was just a small part of the grandiose gardens and palaces of India. Al-Nāṣir then continued further into the territory and saw houses in the distance. However, when he arrived, he was surprised to find that there were shacks and their inhabitants were extremely poor. He regretted to a certain extent that he had come to India but had no way of finding a solution as he had no money. A bent and decrepit old man appears, and al-Nāṣir tells him of his condition of need. The old man proposes that he follow him and promises to give him part of his earnings. They travel together, and the elder speaks eloquently along the way. They arrive at a high castle, where the old man asks to speak with the minister, claiming to al-Nāṣir's surprise that they have brought him a genius of poetry from Yemen. Al-Nāṣir realises that the old man is lying but does not intervene. The courtiers give him money and a robe of honour. The old man gives him money to give to a courtier and asks him to wait for him at a city gate, where he will bring him more money and a robe of honour. Al-Nāṣir waits, but the old man disappears. He asks about him but receives no answer until a boy appears and tells him that the old man is not from the area and his name is 'Abū al-Ẓafar. Al-Nāṣir understands that he was scammed and feels sorry for himself.

2 The *maqāma* of 'Aḥmad Nakar

Al-Nāṣir, who was travelling, had run out of water and was on a road dying of thirst when a woman passing by appeared. He asked her for water, and she kindly gave him some. While he was drinking and recovering, a man appeared and aggressively grabbed the woman by her hair. Al-Nāṣir intervened and asked what was happening. The man claimed to be the woman's husband and said he had the right to treat her like that. The woman agreed but said their marriage was not going well because her husband did not provide enough money for their expenses, making their life miserable. The husband complained that he could not do anything about their financial situation. She asked him to divorce her and allow her to go back to

her family. Feeling pity for the couple, al-Nāṣir gave them some money and asked them to make peace. The couple left, but al-Nāṣir followed them to make sure nothing else happened. He overheard them revealing that the whole scene was a setup to get money from him. Al-Nāṣir confronted the man, who admitted that he did it because he was desperate and had no other way to survive. Al-Nāṣir realised that the man was 'Abū al-Ẓafar and left, feeling disappointed.

3 The *maqāma* of Bīḡāfūr

Al-Nāṣir was with a group of people when he heard about a famous preacher, so he went to the mosque and sat in the front row. The preacher appeared and began to address the audience, reminding them of the coming of the day of judgement. Everyone was moved by his words and gave him abundant donations. Al-Nāṣir followed the preacher, and after meeting him was told to wait for him in a certain place, but he then disappeared. Al-Nāṣir asked who the preacher was and found out that it was 'Abū al-Ẓafar, realising that he had been deceived. So he continued on his journey, and affirmed that he was amazed by the preacher's beautiful words.

4 The *maqāma* of Sukr

Al-Nāṣir travels a long way and finally arrives at the city of Sukr, but he does not draw good omens from its name and has a bad disposition towards the city. He goes to the judge's office and sees many people arriving. An old man arrives with a boy, complaining to the judge that the boy has plagiarised some of his compositions. The elder says that such behaviour is extremely serious after all the time he had dedicated to educating him. The old man recites the offending verses, and the judge interrogates the boy, who claims he created them for personal inspiration and did not copy them. The judge tests the two to see if they are both poets by asking them to recite two specific compositions. Both show that they are talented poets, so the judge does not know what to do to resolve the matter. He proposes that they reconcile, but the elder insists that conciliation without justice is not appropriate as he is convinced of the boy's bad faith. The judge is unable to issue a sentence and tries to buy time, then pressed by the old man gives them a thousand dinars, and he asks them to find a conciliation on their own. Al-Nāṣir follows them and at the Najd gate of the city, he discovers that it was 'Abū al-Ẓafar with his son, who amaze him with their poetic prowess, and so he leaves them.

5 The *maqāma* of 'Ahsan 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir recounts that he was in an extremely difficult condition, as by becoming the companion of a lion cub, a metaphor for a ruler or powerful person, his condition was reversed, and he found himself in extreme poverty. He was then told

that if he devoted himself to a saint buried in 'Aḥsan 'Abād, perhaps his condition would improve, and his wishes would be fulfilled. Al-Nāṣir made a vow, and his condition actually improved. So, he went to the tomb of the saint and found a group of people who had made a pilgrimage to the place on the anniversary of his birth. Al-Nāṣir witnessed people from various social strata coming to pay their respects. Finally, a person who looked almost like a king arrived, and al-Nāṣir kissed his hand. In that instant, however, he saw people prostrating themselves to him and was appalled by what he saw as something exaggerated. The saint noticed this and told him that the prostration was not directed towards him, but towards Mecca, and that there was nothing to reproach. The group was then invited to the saint's house and his family. They all went to his house and were offered sumptuous dishes to eat, while their possessions were placed in another house. But the man who looked like a king took everything and disappeared into the night. Al-Nāṣir followed him and criticised him, but the man justified himself, saying that he had no other options due to the difficult times. Al-Nāṣir then returned to the group.

6 The *maqāma* of Ḥaydar 'Ābād

India was struck by a severe famine that lasted for a year, prompting al-Nāṣir to embark on a long journey to Ḥaydar 'Ābād, which he eventually reputed to be a centre of vice and corruption. Upon arriving, he immediately regretted his decision to come. However, he soon encountered an old man speaking, and upon asking about him, he was informed that the man was a madman. Curious, al-Nāṣir listened to the old man's spontaneous sermon, in which he urged the audience to repent and focus on the day of judgement rather than worldly wealth. The people asked for more explanations, and the old man shared his life story, explaining that he was once rich but had fallen into ruin and was now a foreigner with nothing. Moved by his words, the people gave him donations, and the old man prayed for them, interceding on behalf of the Prophet. Later, al-Nāṣir followed the old man into the desert, and the man revealed the true face of 'Abū al-Ẓafar, whom al-Nāṣir criticised for lying. 'Abū al-Ẓafar justified himself, saying that he had to lie to receive alms. Al-Nāṣir parted ways with him and affirmed that he had been pleased with his eloquence.

7 The *maqāma* of 'Arnak 'Ābād

The Bedouins' invasion of the valleys forces the nomads to seek refuge in the city of 'Arnak 'Ābād. Al-Nāṣir is among them and is now in extreme poverty, with no money. One day, a thief breaks into his house and grabs him by the shirt, but he does not know where to take him since he has no money. Meanwhile, he sees an old man threatening a boy to return his money, but the boy claims he no longer has it. The old man takes the boy to the city's governor, complaining about his situation.

The governor falls in love with the boy, who says he wants to return the money but needs time. The governor asks the old man to give the boy more time, but the old man refuses. The governor proposes to punish the boy by making him sleep with the armies at night, but the old man declines. The governor fears that the old man may take revenge on the boy, so he proposes to repay him and put the boy in the service of his army. The old man agrees and leaves. Al-Nāṣir follows him and sees him entering his home. Shortly after, the boy arrives and turns out to be the old man's son. Al-Nāṣir criticises him and leaves. When he goes to the governor, he finds him consumed by a passionate love for the boy. Al-Nāṣir advises the governor to draw lessons from the event and seek forgiveness from God.

8 The *maqāma* of Burhānbūr

Al-Nāṣir had an indication for a trade and that he had accumulated an exorbitant amount of goods to sell that could hardly be transported by a thousand camels. At the time of the caravan's departure, however, a man came to him urging him to postpone the journey to the next day as the stars indicated misfortune and bad omens. After a debate between the two, the man persuades him to delay the journey. The next day, the caravan enters through a castle door, but when al-Nāṣir arrives, the door closes, and he is not allowed to enter on the pretext that his camels have not entered the place. The owner of the castle invites his guards to let al-Nāṣir enter to verify himself, but once he enters, the dogs are incited against him, and he is imprisoned. After some time, seeing his great suffering, al-Nāṣir desires death. The lord of the castle proposes to free him on the condition that he writes a document that has the stamp of the judge and the *wālī* affixed, stating that there is no dispute between the two regarding the disappearance of his camels and possessions. Al-Nāṣir accepts the offer. He proceeds to a dome where he finds a dying man giving delirious speeches. Al-Nāṣir approaches him, and after urging the man to fear the day of judgement, the man apologises to him. Al-Nāṣir asks him why, and the old man claims that he convinced al-Nāṣir to delay his departure and that the castle was leased, and the guards were his own. An astonished al-Nāṣir refuses to forgive him and tells him that forgiveness can only be obtained if he returns his belongings or if he asks his family to pay him a monthly amount. The old man insists that forgiveness comes only from God and that it cannot be bought. Al-Nāṣir asks those present who the old man is and is informed that he is 'Abū al-Zafar. Al-Nāṣir repents upon hearing this. The old man then leaves as if his being at the end of his life were a simulation. Al-Nāṣir regrets the event.

9 The *maqāma* of Lāhūr

Al-Nāṣir travels to Lahore and takes a rest under a tree with the Indian soldiers he is travelling with. Suddenly, a strong tremor is felt in the village and people

start shouting. Amidst the cries, al-Nāṣir hears someone say that the sultan of the country has died, and his sons are preparing for war. The eldest son, with the help of the minister, conspired to kill his brothers and imprisoned the women and children, taking all their wealth. The man has claimed the throne. Al-Nāṣir follows this man and discovers that he is a sharif. He meets with him and seeks advice on what to do in his condition of poverty. The man advises him to enlist in the army and accumulate wealth. Al-Nāṣir leaves but returns later to ask the man's name, and he is revealed to be 'Abū al-Ẓafar, as mentioned in a poem.

10 The *maqāma* of Sihrand

Al-Nāṣir was travelling with a group from Sihrand who donated to him, and they stopped under a tree to rest. Later, they were joined by a man who delighted them with poetry and sophisticated prose. After a while, the man became sad, started crying and saying, 'We belong to God, and to Him, we shall return.' The group asked him the reason for his sadness, and he informed them that he had spent his life educating a boy in the hope that he could help him in his old age. However, once the boy reached the pinnacle of his education, he died, and the man had no money to give him a proper burial. The group was moved by his story and gave him abundant gifts. The man then left, but al-Nāṣir followed him. In the desert, the man saw al-Nāṣir and asked him why he was following him. Al-Nāṣir replied that he wanted to help him bury his dead. The man lowered his pants and revealed that his penis was the dead man that he would have liked to bury in the body of a woman that he would marry with the money obtained from the group. Al-Nāṣir criticised him, but the man justified himself by advising al-Nāṣir to do the same, as there was no alternative in making wealth in the world. They then parted ways.

11 The *maqāma* of Tanīsir

Al-Nāṣir is in the company of a group of people when they discuss where to travel, and eventually, they decide to go to Tanīsir. While there, the narrator meets an elderly man and enquires about the life of the military. The old man describes the military's life as gruelling and exhausting. Al-Nāṣir asks to be excused from providing the group with a road, but they insist on him guiding them. Suddenly, the weather changes and a storm forces the group to seek shelter at a nearby shrine. The group is invited to return to the military by a saint at the shrine. Al-Nāṣir learns that the saint is 'Abū al-Ẓafar and curses him before leaving.

12 The *maqāma* of Karnāl

Al-Nāṣir is with a group of people who complain about the lack of a patron. A boy claims to know of a generous patron, and the group follows him to

Karnāl. They are hosted in a mosque overnight, but their guide disappears in the night taking with him all their belongings. Al-Nāṣir tries to track down the guide but is told by an elder that it is futile as 'Abū al-Ẓafar had already been there and left.

13 The *maqāma* of Šāhaḡān 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir recounts a time in India when there was a severe famine. People were selling their children out of necessity to survive. Al-Nāṣir passes through a place where he listens to literary speeches made during intoxication. A heated debate about poetry ensues, but an elder intervenes and resolves the dispute by providing an exhaustive list of the authorities in the canons of Arabic poetry. Al-Nāṣir asks him who he was, and he sends him to ask a man passing by. He is said that the elder is 'Abū al-Ẓafar, a Brahmin, but when he tries to return, 'Abū al-Ẓafar is already gone.

14 The *maqāma* of 'Akbar 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir tells the story of 'Akbar 'Ābād which was ruled by two rulers who fought like madmen. Their armies consisted of foreigners. The presence of many soldiers had made the economic condition of the people difficult. The final battle takes place, and while one of the two kings tries to reach his woman, he is killed as punishment for his faction. Al-Nāṣir, therefore, says that being poor, he goes to ask for charity. He finds a handsome and learned man travelling with servants who precede him. Although poor, he had a sum of dinars in his tattered clothes. Once al-Nāṣir went to wash himself in a basin, he took off the clothes with the money. When he returned, he did not find either the clothes or the money or the people. He tries to catch up with him, but in vain, and is invited to be patient and informed that it was 'Abū al-Ẓafar.

15 The *maqāma* of Bānī Bat

Al-Nāṣir says he is in Pānī Pat and meets an old man and asks about the people of the town. Here he learns that a tax collector had been sent to them, and they responded by throwing stones at him. The collector cursed them, wishing for their destruction and all kinds of divine afflictions. His requests were realised, as a powerful downpour fell on the town that night. The people, therefore, sought a hermitage to ask for intercession with God. Here, the saint prays for them by raising his hands, but in reality, the prayer is not for their salvation, but for God to continue punishing them. Additional calamities fall on the town due to his prayers. The people rebel against the saint. Al-Nāṣir discovers that he is 'Abū al-Ẓafar.

16 The *maqāma* of 'Aḥmad 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir goes to a man known to be an expert in *ḥadīṭ* and finds an assembly debating poetry. An old man in rags advances to present his argument in the discourse. Initially, he is not considered as poor. Once he proves his worth, the people listen to him carefully in the assembly. The man initially delivers a parenetic composition. He laments his poverty, and numerous donations are given to him. The old man then takes leave, apparently to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Al-Nāṣir is informed that he is 'Abū al-Zafar.

17 The *maqāma* of Murād 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir relates that one year there was a great famine that caused a lot of problems for people's lives. Even though al-Nāṣir had some assets at that time, he pawned all his possessions and sold his jewels to give his people their due sums. He went to Murād 'Ābād and found a group of foreigners defined as patricians who dealt with the linen trade. None of them spoke any language other than Arabic, so they needed an interpreter for their business, and they found a young boy for this purpose. When they entered the city, he rented a house for them. The boy then advised them that their possessions could be in danger due to the presence of a group of bandits who had clashed with the governor. He suggested they leave their money with a banker, and they agreed. After two weeks, he claimed that the banker had been killed and gone bankrupt. The group forgave him. After a year of the group residing in the city, the boy came with a great deal of money, claiming that he had borrowed the money for them. However, the loan was not genuine, as it was from a group of Indians who had lent the money to the governor for repayment. The boy asked for an extension to return the money, and after some time, where the boy had often been up at night, he disappeared with the money. He told the group that he would come back for them, but he really did not mean to come back. The group realised that the imposter was 'Abū al-Zafar.

18 The *maqāma* of Banāris

Al-Nāṣir travelled with Persians to the city of Banāris and found favourable vegetation and took up residence there. A man arrived and advised him to go to another place, claiming it was much better than the current one. Al-Nāṣir sold all his possessions and followed him, hiding the money in part of his clothes. The man delighted al-Nāṣir with his talks on literature. But when he reached his destination, a group of thieves robbed him. The traveller turned out to be their accomplice, and they left him naked without even clothing. Al-Nāṣir, invited to flee, discovered that the man was 'Abū al-Zafar.

19 The *maqāma* of Ġawnbūr

Al-Nāṣir is travelling with a group from Mandasūr and once they arrive in the city, the group goes to reside in the *madrasa*, while he goes to the emir's house to present his panegyric poem and obtain donations. However, when he arrives, he hears someone else present his poem after having taken away a part of it. The emir gives him a robe of honour and a beautiful slave, but at that moment, a boy rises to claim the verses as his own and recites them in full to prove the theft. The governor does not initially care about the matter, but the old man presses for justice with a poem. The boy rejects the accusations and composes another poem, which the governor does not allow to be recited in full. To reconcile the two parties, he gives them both generous donations. Al-Nāṣir comes out desolate as his composition had been abundantly repaid, while he had not received anything. He goes back to the *madrasa* and finds the old man and the boy with rich gifts and clothes. Upon closer inspection, he identifies them as people from the group he had travelled with to Ġawnbūr. He asks about them and discovers that the old man is 'Abū al-Ẓafar and the boy is his son.

20 The *maqāma* of Multān

Al-Nāṣir wishes to lose weight, so he consults numerous doctors, and finally, he reaches a doctor from Multān. He attends a poetic assembly recommended by the doctor, where he finds no verses written on the wall complaining about the patron's stinginess, except for a text signed by 'Abū al-Ẓafar.

21 The *maqāma* of 'Azmīr

Al-Nāṣir is with a group visiting the dream of 'Azmīr when they find themselves flooded by a torrent, so they take refuge in Christian houses. They find a group arguing with their emir, and al-Nāṣir follows them. Here he hears a man complaining about being a foreigner who composes beautiful poems. The man notices him and asks for his name, and al-Nāṣir tells him. The man, whose name is 'Abū al-Ẓafar the Indian, asks him to follow him but not to make any question. They go to the house of a treasury official, where they discuss literature. The rich official asks 'Abū al-Ẓafar to be his guest, and al-Nāṣir stays at the house enjoying his wealth until it is time to part ways. One goes west, and the other goes east.

22 The *maqāma* of Kašmīr

Al-Nāṣir declares that he attended the wedding party of Kashmir's governor with many other people. During the gathering, the party was presented as extremely rich with luxurious gold and silver plates and crystal glasses. In the centre of

the room, there were two extremely handsome boys who were introduced as the bride's brothers, implying that the bride had to be very beautiful like them. Al-Nāṣir eagerly enquired about the husband, and soon the husband appeared. His ugliness was evident with dark skin, a pinched nose, squinting eyes, impolite manners, and unkempt hair. The man was invited by the judge to preach a sermon if he wanted to be married, and he did so. In his speech, he claimed to be 'Abū al-Ẓafar and stated that he was granted in marriage for a dowry of fifty thousand dinars. However, screams and commotion could be heard at night, and rumours circulated that 'Abū al-Ẓafar had taken his wife's possessions and left. An expert in genealogy was asked about 'Abū al-Ẓafar, and he warned that he might be one of the infamous 'Abū al-Ẓafars known for their misdeeds. 'Abū al-Ẓafar eventually returned, and everyone calmed down. He was questioned about his sudden departure, and he informed them that his wife had demanded immoral acts from him on their wedding night. She had made him mount a saddle on his back and wanted him to carry her naked from one door to another. He did not want to return, but his love for her had led him to forgive her. The episode seemed to have resolved for the best, but after three days, 'Abū al-Ẓafar took his wife, money, possessions, and all valuable things and disappeared. The family was devastated by the event.

23 The *maqāma* of Bankāl

Al-Nāṣir went to Bengal and found a group of emirs dedicated to wine and listening to poetry at night. The butler mistakenly poured him wine without authorization from the group, and they continued to recite poetry and entertain him all night. The group dissolved in the morning. Al-Nāṣir then presented himself to one of the men as a foreigner to get some alms, and the man took him in and revealed himself to be 'Abū al-Ẓafar. However, early in the morning, when al-Nāṣir was getting ready to pray, he was kicked out of the house. When he asked where the owner was, he was informed that he did not know, but it was the sultan's ruling to close the house before prayer.

24 The *maqāma* of Fitn

Al-Nāṣir heard that the sultan was holding a public audience and decided to attend. While there, he heard a man cite a certain 'Abū Ṭabla as an example of a good and great ruler. Intrigued, al-Nāṣir followed the man to the sultan's seat where he was confronted by the sultan himself. The sultan was unhappy that the man had presented examples of other great rulers instead of himself. The man defended his actions by praising the greatness of 'Abū Ṭabla. The sultan was puzzled by the man's comments, as many inhabitants of his kingdom had migrated. The man justified the migrations as being due to trade or because of bad deeds.

The sultan became curious about 'Abū Ṭabla and sent the man on an embassy to meet him with rich gifts. However, on the way, they were stopped by bandits who stole all the gifts and treasures. The man then wrote to the king, and he answered by sending the same gifts again. This time, upon reaching Malibār, the man kept the gifts for himself. Al-Nāṣir later found out that the man was 'Abū al-Zafar, an Indian.

25 The *maqāma* of Quwāliyr

Al-Nāṣir recounts that he passed through the stronghold of Gwalior and was greatly impressed. Eager to see his inner self, he gives money to some of the *wālī*'s servants and obtains the prison clerk's robe. He enters like this and sees imprisoned people with long hair and nails like dead people. As he passes, he sees a man who had recently been imprisoned lowering his face in shame as he passes. Al-Nāṣir raises his face and finds him speaking an extremely refined language. Al-Nāṣir spends a lot of time in his company and asks him the cause of his imprisonment. The man declares that he was there because, in the court of a caliph, one of his wives had written that she feared the end of her comfortable life as the caliph was apparently sterile and not being able to have children, he would have repudiated her. The man advised her to look for a man who had similar features to those of the caliph and to have a child with him, to which she declared that she had thought of him. The woman began to come to him secretly at night. One of her servants, who always came with her, falls in love with the man. But this was rejected by the man. So, for revenge, she informed the caliph, who had his wife crucified and the man beaten. She wanted to have him killed, but the 'ulamā' only allowed him to be imprisoned. The man, therefore, asks al-Nāṣir to take responsibility for him in prison. Al-Nāṣir agrees, and so at night, he gets himself released and, in the morning, he gets himself imprisoned again, and they remain like this for several months. Once, however, al-Nāṣir, who had been up for many nights, falls asleep. Thus, the man chains him instead. During the day, al-Nāṣir covers himself with his dress so as not to be seen. During the desperate night, he recites verses from the surah of Hūd, and miraculously, the baraka of this surah breaks the chains, and he escapes.

26 The *maqāma* of Şaranğ

Al-Nāṣir travels to Şaranğ in search of lemons. Upon arriving, he discovers that the 'ulamā', or religious scholars, have become corrupt in the company of the rulers. He decides to leave and convinces his companions to do the same. However, as they are leaving the city, they learn that an important preacher has just entered. Al-Nāṣir leaves his companions and returns to the city to hear the sermon. In the mosque, an elderly man ascends the pulpit and delivers a brief

sermon reminding people of the imminence of doomsday and to do good deeds to prepare for death. He emphasises that the world is a place of falsehood and corruption. At the end of the sermon, the people are all in tears. Al-Nāṣir approaches the preacher, who says to be 'Abū al-Ẓafar, and then returns to his companions, leaving the city.

27 The *maqāma* of Barāh

Al-Nāṣir travels with a group to Barāh, where they are well received by its inhabitants, many of whom are Sayyids. However, there is a group of people who trace their origins to the Banū 'Ummyya and show hatred for Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. They have amassed a great deal of wealth and are corrupt. A man from the Punjab comes to the city to sell muslin and fine clothes. He recites a poem to the emir, criticising him for not dealing with this corrupt group. The emir is moved by the poem and prepares the army to attack them. They clash violently, resulting in the deaths of their men and the imprisonment of their women and children. The Sayyids then make a feast and share it with everyone, especially the man from the Punjab. The man composes a didactic poem, and the Sayyids give him gifts and many dinars of the Ṣultān Muḥammad Kām Baḥš's mint. Al-Nāṣir investigates and learns that the man is 'Abū al-Ẓafar the Indian.

28 The *maqāma* of Šams 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir travels on a donkey to Šams 'Ābād, and along the way, he meets a wealthy man who invites him to take part of his wealth. The man takes al-Nāṣir to a governor who is looking for a poet and a secretary. The man presents a boy as the best poet, and after the governor confirms that he is indeed talented, the boy is hired as a salaried worker. The governor then asks the man to find a capable secretary, and they have food from his court while they wait. The next day, the man returns with his son, who has changed his clothes and dyed his beard, claiming to be a capable secretary. The boy proves to be erudite and is hired as a secretary. However, the governor later complains that the man's poet son did not show up. The man explains that his son was tired and stayed asleep. Later, the man and his son quarrel, and they go to the governor to resolve their dispute. The son complains that his father had become mean to him after his education had come to fruition and demanded to live at his expense. The father complains to the governor that the son is not generous with a poem with obscene allusions. The governor scolds the son for his obscene poem and gives him a thousand dinars to reconcile with his father. The next morning, both the man and his son disappear, and al-Nāṣir realises that they were 'Abū al-Ẓafar. Fearing that the governor will be angry with him for being in their company, al-Nāṣir runs away from the court.

29 The *maqāma* of Narūl

Al-Nāṣir is on his way to Narūl to buy iron, but he only finds small blacksmiths. He passes among the beggars and finds literates there and talks to them about poetry and literature. When he takes his leave, he finds an elder giving advice to his son about behaving at court, particularly about avoiding speaking more than necessary. While listening, al-Nāṣir hears about money that was to be given to courtiers by iron merchants. He approaches the man and asks to be part of the deception hatched against the *wālī*. The man accepts as long as he is extremely obedient. Al-Nāṣir gives him what he possesses, and they go to the *wālī*. Here, when questioned about the reason for his coming, the man informs him that he is fleeing from a group of infidels in the mountains. The *wālī* looks at the boy and appreciates his great erudition and asks the man to leave his son with him to educate his children and serve him. The man claims that he is very prepared but also has flaws, and through a poem, he refers to being passionate about the *wālī* and falling in love with him exaggeratedly. Many riches and gifts are given to the man. The man stays up late talking to his son. In the morning he and the son were gone, al-Nāṣir finds only a message in which it was written that he was ʿAbū al-Zafar.

30 The *maqāma* of ʿAllāh ʿĀbād

Al-Nāṣir visits the governor of ʿAllāh ʿĀbād, who is questioning a traveller for information. The traveller describes various places he has visited, such as Egypt for its scholarships, Yemen for the purity of its people's hearts and refinement in dress and food, Iran for austerity and harshness, Samāwa for handicrafts and decorations, Zayr ʿĀbād and China for scientific research, and Iraq. However, he states that no country is comparable to the one between the two valleys of al-ʿAydid and al-Nāʿir, which is distinguished by devotion and virtue. The governor asks how much time he stayed there, and the traveller replies that his stay was only four nights. The governor asks if he has brought anything from this place, and the traveller presents a rag washed in its waters, which he had placed in the shadow of the sanctuary of al-Farīṭ. He declares, however, that he does not want to part with it for any reason. The governor persuades him to sell the rag for a thousand dinars and puts him to live near him. As the traveller was looking for a servant, al-Nāṣir introduces himself and remains at his service for a year. He overhears the traveller talking to the governor one evening, and the traveller tells him that he has been travelling for ten years without meeting his family. The governor marvels at the young age of the traveller despite his extremely old appearance. The traveller then reveals that he had fallen in love with a woman and spent a huge amount of money on her, only to find her with a peasant kissing her on the cheek and tickling her hands. The trauma of betrayal turned his hair

white. The traveller delivers a poem summarising this event, and the ruler gives him several gifts. At this moment, al-Nāṣir notices 'Abū al-Ẓafar's ring and flees from the house.

31 The *maqāma* of Wāḡīn

On the day of 'Āṣūrā', al-Nāṣir is in the presence of the *wālī* of Wāḡīn, who was mourning the death of Ḥusayn and crying. A man who, however, apparently opposes Shiism, is criticised for appearing at court in this situation. He justifies himself by presenting his gift of the Persian saviour, and this gift is appreciated. The *wālī*, who apparently knows him, asks the reason for his return. He asks his son to speak, and the son writes a poem in which he complains about the hardships suffered during the journey. In recounting his miseries, he had soaked the carpet with tears. The *wālī* asks to trade poems with his son. Here, the two begin a long and seemingly meaningless dialogue, showing their erudition. Then they present several poems in which they complain about the difficulties of the life of a man of letters. Hence, the *wālī*, moved by compassion, integrated him into his circle of intellectual interlocutors and dining companions, while additionally entrusting him with the oversight of mosques, hospices, and *madrasas*. However, not appreciating the speeches that were made in the *madrasa*, he wrote a critical poem and sent it to the governor through a child. The *wālī*, after reading the angry poem, summons the man. However, the latter had left, leaving a note on the door saying he was 'Abū al-Ẓafar.

32 The *maqāma* of Daqlūr

Al-Nāṣir hears about the beautiful women of Daqlūr and travels there, where he meets an extremely eloquent man and befriends him. They live in pleasure, enjoying his eloquence, and go to a high country where they find the houses empty, the winds howling, and the dogs howling. An old woman in a doorway mourns the death of her lords and affirms that death was the work of God. The old man then takes a coal and writes a long poem on the city gate, summarising the event and warning whoever comes. The old man urges al-Nāṣir to leave, but he objects and claims to be 'Abū al-Ẓafar.

33 The *maqāma* of 'Adūn

Al-Nāṣir travels to Adoni to see its beauty and sees the gold-covered mosque. While he is there, foreign troops enter the territory, and the emir of the country gathers his soldiers and sends troops to the village, but each troop is defeated. The foreigner is then tested by his love for an Indian woman and is unable to fight and plot. People take advantage of his weakness and bring him alive in chains to the emir. Consumed by passion and pale, he recognizes his faults and that if it

had not been for this passion, he would have won. The emir takes pity and has the Indian woman come, and they get married. In the marriage contract, the man introduces himself as 'Abū al-Ẓafar the Indian and declares that he only brings words as a dowry. Al-Nāṣir leaves.

34 The *maqāma* of Kanūr

Al-Nāṣir goes to the court of Kanūr and becomes a companion of the *wālī*. In a literary assembly, a man in poor clothes speaks, and the emir initially rejects him, but the man proves to be eloquent and criticises him for judging him by his appearance. The man presents a long poem, and the *wālī* embraces him and apologises. The emir declares that the assembly should last for eight days, and no one is allowed to enter. On the eighth day, the man becomes part of the administration of the kingdom and is sent to a place with great armaments and money. He has the money put inside a ship and fires the men of the emir, declaring himself to be 'Abū al-Ẓafar. The officials return to the Emir and inform him of his escape.

35 The *maqāma* of Ẓafar 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir declares that he went to Ẓafar 'Ābād when the locusts had eaten the crops. He rents a house there but finds them all to be ugly. So, he goes to the mosque and sees an old man reciting poetry. He asks him several questions, and while he's praying, he sees a boy who has not joined in the prayer. The man criticises the boy, but he declares himself to be an opponent of al-Nāṣir's doctrine, saying he's in favour of the Prophet and of the fatwas and sincerity. The old man criticises him, inviting him to follow the example of the prophet, and the boy repents and cries. The speech then turns to various issues, including India and its subdivisions, the types of people, and things that can be found in the subcontinent, especially women. Before leaving, the man had written on an onion or garlic peel that he was 'Abū al-Ẓafar.

36 The *maqāma* of Kanbāya

Al-Nāṣir declares that he went to the port (*bandar*) Kanbāya and saw several people gathering there. He joined the assemblies of his emir while drinking alcohol in the morning and in the evening. Here, a man seated near the last and the emir asks who he was. The man replies that he is a traveller and that he has suffered many difficulties in his travels. He claims to have a woman, but economic difficulties had forced him to part from her. Having fallen into poverty, he had the appearance of a shepherd. Then he complained about his condition of poverty and suffering and the distance from his beloved. The emir offers him one of his women and a lot of money to lift himself up, but the man refuses for the love of his wife. He reaffirms

his condition through his poetry, and the emir takes pity on him and gives him many gifts so that he could embark on his journey to his wife. Al-Nāṣir asks who he was, and the man tells him he is 'Abū al-Zafar, and they part ways.

37 The *maqāma* of Yaranakr

Al-Nāṣir was with a group of women on the roof of his house, listening to music, when a man knocked on his door in the middle of the night. Al-Nāṣir went out to see who it was and found out that the man was a foreigner. Feeling sorry for him, al-Nāṣir offered him food and ate with him, even though he had already eaten. They placed a tent between themselves, and the women and al-Nāṣir ordered the women to sing and play music. They discussed singing and enjoyed music until they fell asleep. The next day, the man left. Al-Nāṣir followed the man to Barankar, where he had heard there were beautiful women. Their plan was to go to a basin where these women would necessarily have to wash and enjoy their view. However, when they arrived in the evening, the man shaved off his beard. Al-Nāṣir spied on the man and saw that he had put on a Hinduist rosary, a waistband, and a yellow cloth on his head. He spoke to the women in the language of the Brahmins and put a red dot on their foreheads and incited them to kneel. In the middle of the night, al-Nāṣir approached the man, criticising his apparent conversion. The man invited al-Nāṣir to come back the next morning to understand and rejoice. Early the next morning, he went out with al-Nāṣir and proclaimed to the women that the religion they believed in was not propitious for the Day of Judgment and asked them to convert to Islam. All the women then professed their faith. A passer-by praised the man, addressing him as 'Abū al-Zafar. 'Abū al-Zafar then left.

38 The *maqāma* of Rasūl Nakr

Al-Nāṣir travels with an elder of the militia to the fort of Rasūl Nakr, where he finds two factions, one Sunni and the other Imanite. The elder, tired of being celibate, asks about the possibility of finding a wife. He is informed that Sunnis do not marry foreigners, even if they are literate. So, the elder goes to the Imanites and enquires about temporary marriage. The man learns about the procedure and stipulates a marriage contract in which the exchange that must be obtained from the contract is ironically underlined. The man writes the contract declaring himself the vilest of men, 'Abū al-Zafar. Al-Nāṣir then leaves him.

39 The *maqāma* of Burūḡ

Al-Nāṣir rides a lame nag intending to sell it to Burūḡ. Upon arriving, he finds a great commotion of people and learns that the daughter of the chief merchant is getting married to a great 'ālim. Al-Nāṣir is invited to the wedding and is given

lavish meals. Then, a man shows up and asks for an ironic dowry of lots of smoke and mosquito and fly wings. Al-Nāṣir is allowed to spend the night in the house of the newlyweds as he was a foreigner. From where he was, he watches the couple's night, during which the woman instructs him on Indian sexual positions. After the night, he leaves, not intending to return. Later, when he goes to their house, he learns that the man was 'Abū al-Ẓafar and had disappeared.

40 The *maqāma* of Barilā

Al-Nāṣir gets drunk one evening and wanders to the city of Barilā. Here, he goes to listen to music at the governor's court, and there he assists a man with worn clothes coming forward but is initially rejected. However, after demonstrating his great erudition and poetic ability, he is appreciated and considered. The emir is then removed, and his property confiscated. The emir discovers that the cause of his misfortunes is the 'Abū al-Ẓafar the Indian. They advise bribing 'Abū al-Ẓafar with a thousand dinars, which are presented to him with verses, and then 'Abū al-Ẓafar disappears.

41 The *maqāma* of Matar

Al-Nāṣir went to the mosque when he was in great trouble and saw a group of people wearing wool. A man came to him and offered to help him get out of his difficult situation. Al-Nāṣir accepted the offer and that night, the man tied a candle to a tortoise and brought it into a house using a rope. They peered through a hole in the door and saw a room filled with wealth and clothes. Al-Nāṣir went inside and stole everything that he saw. They used the stolen wealth for a while until they feared they would run out of money. Later, the man saw an emir with a large chest of money and asked al-Nāṣir to stay in a particular place while he stole the money. After three days, the man returned with sacks of gold that he could barely carry. He told al-Nāṣir that he had managed to get hired among the guards protecting the chest, and when they slept at night, he had buried the chest and stolen the money. When the emir realised that the chest was missing, he angrily questioned everyone but could not find it. The man dug up the chest after everyone had left and took the money. Al-Nāṣir and the man stayed together for a while, and the man eventually sent al-Nāṣir to buy some cucumbers, giving him a dinar. When al-Nāṣir returned, he found a note with a seal. When he opened it, he found out that the man was 'Abū al-Ẓafar and that he had taught him his art but not to steal from the weak and wise, but only from the oppressor and to help those in need.

42 The *maqāma* of Rāzfūr

Al-Nāṣir was with a group of Manqalūr on the island of Rāzfūr, and they stopped at the house of a drum's seller. When they arrived, he gave the seller a sum of money and agreed to help him. Then, a black man approached them and addressed the seller as 'Abū al-Ẓafar. 'Abū al-Ẓafar lamented that he had been careless in his life and regretted it. The black man asked him about his experiences in India, and 'Abū al-Ẓafar presented a long list of both pleasant and unpleasant things he had seen there. The black man then asked 'Abū al-Ẓafar for some advice, and he advised him to be careful and to fear death and to fear the day of judgement.

43 The *maqāma* of Barār

Al-Nāṣir enters Barār after an important Indian man had died there. His people had arranged for him to be burned together with his still-living wife. As everything was ready for the stake, a man on horseback arrived and took the woman away. People tried to reach her but failed, and the corpse was left unattended and torn apart by wild beasts. Al-Nāṣir travels for twelve years until he sees a group of people running towards a nearby city and follows them. Inside the city, he sees a shabbily dressed man surrounded by his five children who calls him by name. The man turns out to be 'Abū al-Ẓafar, and he informs al-Nāṣir that the children are his, born to the woman who was saved from the stake. 'Abū al-Ẓafar invites al-Nāṣir to his home, where his wife has prepared a meal. Al-Nāṣir talks to the woman and finds her beautiful and eloquent, and he discovers that she had converted to Islam. Al-Nāṣir stays at their home for a few days, treated well by 'Abū al-Ẓafar and his wife, and then leaves, with no doubts about the truth of the story.

44 The *maqāma* of Nāqinah

Al-Nāṣir desired to visit Nāqinah but the journey was arduous. When he finally arrived, he toured the area before entering the palace of the ruler, where he discovered people dancing and singing. A stunning young woman caught his eye, and al-Nāṣir fell in love with her. He wondered how he could meet her again. Soon after, some locals informed the governor that they had found a man badly beaten and left in a ditch. The governor ordered him to be treated, and when he had recovered, he was taken to see the governor. The man agreed to tell the governor what happened only if he was not punished for it. The governor agreed to this condition. The man revealed that he knew of a group that gathered in the nights of *al-ḡadīr* at the house of their leader. The group mingled together in what seemed to be an orgy in the night, with no precautions taken against incestuous relationships. The man had joined in, but when it came time to choose a partner,

in the darkness he accidentally chose an elderly woman and thus left her to pick another one. The old woman understood that he was not part of their group. She shouted and alarmed the group which beat him and threw him into a manure heap, nearly killing him. Upon hearing this, al-Nāṣir declared that he no longer wanted to visit the city.

45 The *maqāma* of Kaliyān

Al-Nāṣir declares that he is in need and decides to go to Kaliyān, which has the reputation of having a generous emir. As he approaches the city, he comes across a man in shackles who asks for his help. Al-Nāṣir is initially hesitant, fearing that he might anger the person who had put the shackles on the man. However, he is reassured that the person responsible for the shackles is no longer around, so he decides to free the man. The man then offers to accompany al-Nāṣir to the emir of Kaliyān, claiming to be a friend of his and saying that he can help him. The man also tells al-Nāṣir that people in India often fail to recognize truly talented individuals, and he intends to present him as a great scholar. When they reach the emir, he recognizes the man as a friend and listens to his presentation of al-Nāṣir as an extremely erudite individual who excels in all branches of science, including grammar, literature, and astronomy. The emir is impressed by al-Nāṣir's knowledge and does not notice that he is not particularly excellent in these fields. He thanks the man, whom he calls 'Abū al-Ẓafar and raises him to a higher position in his court. The emir then gives al-Nāṣir a large sum of money, enough to sustain him for the rest of his life. Al-Nāṣir affirms that he spent all the money on the adversities he faced in his life.

46 The *maqāma* of Muršid 'Ābād

Al-Nāṣir affirms to have witnessed rare events in India that were worth writing about in gold ink. He recounted that once he was travelling with two men who had a dog that had a silver collar. Unfortunately, the dog fell ill and died. The son was heartbroken and did not want to discard the dog's body at the market. So, the father proposed a plan to make wealth from the dog's death. They put the dog's carcass in a box and covered it. Then they took it to the market and began to cry loudly. People gathered around the box, thinking it was the body of a saint, and began to pray. Emirs and rulers arrived, and the crowd grew so large that a dome was built on the spot for the 'saint's' burial. People came from far and wide to offer gifts and ask for intercession, and their wishes were often granted. Al-Nāṣir stayed with them for two years before leaving to visit his wife and children. Ten years later, he returned to find the place deserted. He learned that 'Abū al-Ẓafar and his son had quarrelled over the division of the alms and revealed that a dog was buried in the tomb. A man had heard their discourse and informed the

Judge. The judge and the *wālī* ordered the place destroyed and had the two men tortured and chained. After a while, the two men managed to escape from prison.

47 The *maqāma* of Haqlī Bandar

Al-Nāṣir says to have travelled with merchants to Haqlī Bandar, where he saw a man marching ahead of him with trumpets, accompanied by about a hundred notables on foot. When he asks, he learns that the man is Bīrzādah, who people venerate as a deity, kissing the ground where he passes and exaggerating in their praise. People accepted his religious claims as legitimate, even when they were not. Al-Nāṣir leaves, but later, Bīrzādah returns and takes their children prisoner, robbing their houses. Al-Nāṣir is astonished by what he sees and learns from a man that things could be worse. The man hesitates to share more out of fear of being reported to a housekeeper, but al-Nāṣir reassures him. The man then shares that in his group, people dress in *ḥirqa* habit, with men dressing in public and women in private. When they come in to change, Bīrzādah hangs up some trousers and asks the women to lower the trousers. If they comply, he has intercourse with them. If they show fear or impatience, he claims he meant to lower the trousers that were hanging, and he also uses this trick with boys. Al-Nāṣir investigates and discovers that the man is 'Abū al-Ẓafar. Al-Nāṣir then leaves.

48 The *maqāma* of Ğunnīr

Al-Nāṣir is with a group of Malīr who go to Ğunnīr. When they arrive, they find the governor intent on talking to a man who asks him to bring his son to the court of the palace so that he could investigate matters relating to literature with him. The boy comes to court and is examined with several questions of literature and jurisprudence, answering in poetry. The emir is convinced of his distinction. Thus begins a literary assembly where people drink and compose poetry and joke with the butler. Eventually, the boy is revealed to be the son of 'Abū al-Ẓafar the Indian. Al-Nāṣir leaves.

49 The *maqāma* of al-Sanqamar

Al-Nāṣir is travelling with a group of notables on a particularly tiring journey. A Persian ruler appears, and al-Nāṣir visits his tent. The ruler expresses sadness at being far from his birthplace and a doctor advises him to find relief watching nature, water and beautiful faces. The Persian comments that India abounds in beautiful landscapes and nature but lacks beautiful faces. He learns of a nearby dome crowded with people and goes there hoping to meet beautiful faces and good spirits but is disappointed. A man named 'Abū al-Ẓafar entertains him with poetry and summarises his condition in a poem. The ruler gives him a large sum

of money. The ruler later learns that the enemy has blocked his way back and is saddened. They discuss what to do in poetry and then decide to attack the enemy. They attack and they miraculously overcome the enemy. The ruler acknowledges that 'Abū al-Ẓafar's advice was right and gives him further gifts. Al-Nāṣir leaves, emphasising that the victory happened by divine grace as he caused hail to fall on the earth.

50 The *maqāma* of Siyālkūt

Al-Nāṣir hears that 'Abū al-Ẓafar is dying and visits him finding him in the company of doctors and men of letters. 'Abū al-Ẓafar spends his last breaths urging the group to repentance and to fear the day of judgement and death. He advises being ethical in stealing and begging and utters various poems taking his leave with his family and al-Nāṣir before passing away. Al-Nāṣir claims that this is the last thing he saw and learned from 'Abū al-Ẓafar and concludes the writing by blessing the Prophet and his followers.