

ANIMAL DESCRIPTION IN THE POETRY OF IBN HAFĀĜA

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Everyone who occupies himself with the *Dīwān* of the Andalusian poet Ibn Hafāĝa will be confronted sooner or later with his animal descriptions. If we look at the index of his *Dīwān* compiled by Muṣṭafā Ġāzī, we see how frequently the horse in particular is described by Ibn Hafāĝa, whereas among birds the dove description is one of the poet's favorites¹. Other animal descriptions which occur in his *Dīwān* are those of camels, dogs, and wolfs². His horse descriptions belong to the themes of bravery, dove descriptions belong to garden and nature poetry, wolf descriptions or descriptions of the desert by night to the realm of the *raḥīl*. Other orientalists such as Henri Pérès³ and more recently Manfred Ullmann⁴ have devoted attention to animal descriptions by Ibn Hafāĝa and translated small portions of his poetry.

The reason, however, that I have occupied myself with a poem of Ibn Hafāĝa in which animal descriptions are prominent, is that I wanted to make a brief analysis of the structure of *qaṣīdas* by Ibn Hafāĝa and

¹ See Ibn Hafāĝa, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Sayyid Muṣṭafā Ġāzī, Alexandria 1960, nos. 67 (p. 114), 73 (p. 123), 157 (p. 211), 158 (p. 211-212). (horses) and nos. 65 (line 11; p. 113), 74 (line 13; p. 125), 78 (line 1; p. 128), 82 (line 3; p. 132), 99 (line 9; p. 143), 105 (line 5; p. 148), 235 (lines 1 sqq.; pp. 289-290) (doves). Ġāzī lists all the *qaṣīdas* with horses (p. 407) and doves (p. 408) [Numbers and pages of Ibn Hafāĝa's quoted in the following are referring to this edition].

² See Ibn Hafāĝa, *Dīwān*, listed on p. 407.

³ See Henri Pérès, *La poésie andalouse en arabe classique au XI^{ème} siècle*, Paris 1953, pp. 235 sqq.

⁴ See Manfred Ullmann, *Das Gespräch mit dem Wolf*, München (Akad. v. Wissenschaften & Beck Verlag) 1981, pp. 132-133. Translation of no. 134 (p. 180).

others, especially with regard to the succession of the different themes⁵. Ibn Hafāḡa's poem no. 2 was one of the poems which struck me because of their thematic sequence. Its structure looked at first sight like that of most of Dū r-Rumma's poems, with the difference that his animal descriptions are developments of the camel description: the camel's speed is compared with the speed of other animals⁶. The structure of Ibn Hafāḡa's poem no. 2 also resembles the structure of many poems by al-Buḡturī, which often are preceded by visions of the beloved and contain passages in which the poet is surrounded by *fitya* (youthful people) such as the *fitya* of the Nāḡiyya family in al-Buḡturī's poem no. 903⁷.

Poem no. 2 (*Dīwān* p. 33), a laudatory poem on Abū Yaḡyā, begins with a *nasīb* in which there is also an appearance of the poet's beloved in a dream (*tayf al-ḡayāl*). There is also a description of the night (lines 1-12). Then a visit to a garden in the morning is described (lines 13-18); this brings the poet into the company of young men (*fitya*; lines 19-35). Then follows a description of these young men on horses while hunting. Animals which are hunted are described, such as a fox (*rawwāḡ*) and apparently an ostrich (*tayyār*; lines 40-43).

Then follows the transition to the laudatory passage (line 44-90): if the animals had asked help from Abū Yaḡyā, then he would have helped them. In the final passage the poet asks his maecenas for a gift in return for his poetry and poetry in general (line 90-99).

⁵ See Arie Schippers, *Arabic Tradition and Hebrew Innovation. Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry*, Amsterdam (Institute for Modern Near Eastern Studies) 1988, pp. 104-118 esp. p. 109.

⁶ See e.g. Dū r-Rumma, *Dīwān*, ed. Carlile Henry Hayes Macartney, Cambridge 1919, no. 1: lines 40-66 (wild donkey; pp. 10-16) and 67-106 (wild bull; pp. 17-27); no. 68: lines 32-63 (wild donkey; pp. 529-538); ed. 'Abdalqaddūs Abū Šāliḡ, Damascus 1392/1972, no. 1: lines 35 sqq. (Vol. I, pp. 50 sqq); no. 14: lines 32 sqq. (Vol. I, p. 518 sqq.).

⁷ See al-Buḡturī, *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥasan Kāmīl al-Šayrafī, Cairo (Daḡā'ir al-ʿarab) 1963-78 [I-IV], no. 903 [IV, pp. 2375-2382].

We will quote some of the more interesting passages from this *qaṣīda* and, where necessary, refer to the animal descriptions of *Dū r-Rumma* and passages quoted by al-Ġāhiz in his *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*.

The poet begins the poem by combining several love motifs: the *tayf* or phantasm comes to visit him at night, when the morning already announces itself; the motif is combined with the description of the poet's burning love, because the phantasm is portrayed as a night guest who drinks the water of the lover's weeping and avails himself of the fire of his burning pain. But by means of this visit he quenches his lover's thirst. But because of the pangs of love, the lover is clothed in emaciation, which means he is stripped, he has become transparent, he has become invisible because of this extreme emaciation.

In the meantime it has become morning, which gives the poet the opportunity to describe the heavens, beginning at line 8. Various personifications and comparisons occur in this passage: the night whose clothes become wet in the morning; clothed with the galaxy, it is compared with a monk wearing a *zunnār* turning and tossing in his bed; lightning and rain or tears go together.

In the morning the winds are looked for as messengers at the places where the rainstars and the lights are setting. The rain is introduced as a tearful glance of one looking at the lightning coming from the Najd. In this way the poet links this passage with the introductory passage with its love motif.

Thereupon the morning inspires the poet to describe a garden. This passage is well-known and often quoted in anthologies. In this description the central verb is not introduced until several lines after the mention of the object. This is perhaps a pre-Islamic or early Islamic feature which we find in the poetry of *Dū r-Rumma*. In *Dū r-Rumma* we find many times the phrase 'many a desert' (*ḥarq*) followed after a few lines by 'I have traversed'⁸. In the meantime the poet describes the

⁸ See e.g. *Dū r-Rumma*, *Dīwān*, ed. Macartney, no. 46: line 26 sqq. (p. 347 sqq.) no. 41: line 32 (p. 318); ed. 'Abdalqaddūs Abū Ṣāliḥ, no. 23; lines 26 sqq. (Vol. II, pp. 732 sqq.); no. 36: line 31 (Vol. II, 1131).

desert. This device is reversed by Ibn Ḥafāḡa in another poem, no. 81, where the poet says: 'In many such a night I undertook a journey' and the phrase 'through a desert' some lines later. In poem no. 2 the desert description has been replaced by a garden description.

The garden description begins with the object 'many a place where a cloud drags its train (*wa-maḡarri ḡayli ḡamāmatin*)' followed three lines later by the verb 'I visited in the early morning (*bākartubu*)'. The garden description itself contains a number of personifications such as the rivers who have their shoulders clothed in embroidered garments produced by the rain; the branches, which bend their necks; and the white blossoms which are mouths; the wind slapping the buttocks of the hills and kissing the faces of the flowers; the doves acting as preachers on the branches of the trees.

- 13) And to many a place where a cloud drags its train, the shoulders of the rivers clothe themselves in embroideries of bubbles,
- 14) The shadows of the [thick] wood wave [their] forelocks, the swail of the stream quivers [its] buttocks,
- 15) The branch bends its long neck, which the mouths of the white blossom have kissed.
- 16) I came in the morning while the cloud is a piece of ambergris blazing, the lightning is the burning of a fire.
- 17) And the wind slaps the buttocks of the hills in play, and kisses the faces of the flowers.
- 18) While on the pulpits of the trees the eloquent preachers are the birds.

The next passage contains hunting motifs. The poet is accompanied by young men (*fiṭya*), who make an expedition with him. The brightness of young men is contrasted with the darkness of the night and the dust cloud of battle: they are moons and their anger sparks. Their high hopes are described.

- 19) Amidst young people who have dispelled the cloud of dust at night and frequently display [faces like] moons.
- 20) The darkness assaults them with smoke and the flint of [their] anger causes sparks of fire to fly from them.

21) I saw their ambition as lofty mountains and their beneficence as overflowing seas.

They chase the quarry with so called *qayd tarīda*, which expression reminds us of the pre-Islamic expression *qayd al-awābid*, translated by Lane as 'the light or active horse which overtakes the wild animals and which they can hardly or never escape'⁹. But here apparently birds of prey are meant, noisy of wing, and red painted of claws. The birds have golden eyes and are wrapped in variegated garments.

26) They chase the quarry each with something that fetters the tracked beasts, noisy of wing and red painted of claws;

27) Its sides are wrapped in a newly made variegated garment, and its eyelids anointed with pure gold;

28) By which he aims at a distant hope so that it bends the painted claw and beak which are like the letter *rā'*.

Its claws and beak are coloured red, I think, because of the blood of its prey. Apparently, dogs are also assisting at the hunting party. They are introduced in line 29. They are trained to the chase and hungry and wide ranging. I quote:

29) And each with something that is wide ranging and open jawed and small eyed, hungry [thin, folded up of intestines], adorned by the wearing of a collar, trained to the chase;

30) Showing the teeth in smiling like the blade of a sword and walking as if on brandished spears;

31) Asking hospitality from the traces of the quarry on the stones while the night wrapped itself in a cloak of pitch [tar];

The next animal which is described, a *rawwāġ*, is apparently a fox, although Ġāzī thinks perhaps it could be a hare or a rabbit¹⁰. The fox

⁹ See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, London 1863, p. 5 [s.v. *ābid*]; see Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo (*Ḍahā'ir al-ʿArab*) 1969, no. 1 (*muʿallaqa*): line 49 (p. 19); Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets*, Greifswald 1970, no 48, line 47 (p. 148).

¹⁰ I deduce Ġāzī's interpretation from the index of his edition of Ibn Ḥafāġa's *Dīwān*, pp. 407, 408.

is described *atlas al-atmār* 'grey as worn out clothes', an expression borrowed from a poem by Dū r-Rumma used by him for a hunter in a *bā'iyya*¹¹. The fox is running away, jinking to right and left: it is like a ball thrown by one desert to another.

- 36) How many a *rawwāg*, white spots on the side, sharp of ears and grey as old garments;
- 37) Running cautiously and gathering his stretched body, while speeding down so that it is curved like a bracelet.
- 38) Pushing himself to the limit; going quickly; deceitfully deviating from the track – he nearly escapes the hands of Fate.
- 39) Doubling back, while fear of perdition throws it like a ball which hands of bare deserts toss one to another.

The next creature that runs away is apparently a bird, I would say an ostrich, because its eggs are not laid in nests¹². It is portrayed with a neighbour flying behind it which Pérès claims to be its tail¹³.

- 40) And many an ostrich running lightly, departing with a neighbour flying behind it;
- 41) Whose stride is short; swaggering like a girl dragging the train of her garment.
- 42) Painted of beak, you would think that it had sipped, from thirst, a cup of wine;
- 43) The places where they lay their eggs are not constant from fear of a night of distress or a day of perdition;

¹¹ See also al-Ġāhiz, *Kitāb al-hayawān*, ed. 'Abdassalām Muḥammad Hārūn, Cairo 1965², IV, p. 438. The line of Dū r-Rumma is to be found in his *Dīwān*, ed. Macartney, no. 1: line 93; ed. 'Abdalqaddūs Abū Šāliḥ, Vol. I, no. 1: line 88 (p. 100).

¹² Apparently Ġāzī thinks here a partridge or bird is meant although the word *udhiyy* usually refers to ostriches (see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 857 ['The place of the laying of eggs and of the hatching thereof, of the ostrich, in the sand']).

¹³ See Henri Pérès, *Poésie andalouse*, pp. 245-246: 'Souvent une [autruche] rapide (*tayyār*) et légère a couru en levant (*šalā*) la queue qui lui sert de compagnon véloce derrière elle'. Henri Pérès says also: 'Ibn Ḥafāḡa est le seul à décrire l'autruche; il n'est pas impossible qu'il en ait vu en Espagne même'. See also: an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, Cairo 1923-1949, Vol. IX, pp. 340-341. The poet probably refers to Arabian ostriches.

Then follows the transition to the laudatory passage. The animals would have been safe, if protected by the poet's addressee.

- 44) And if either of them had sought refuge with Abū Yaḥyā, then he would have rendered it secure with a most glorious [powerful] protection.
- 45) It would be sacrosanct, without having fear for an injustice taking place, if a fugitive beast put itself under his protection,
- 46) The winds stand still at his side out of fear [veneration]; and the sea of the tremendous army drinks its fill;
- 47) And the gazelle of the sand hill takes its rest in safety guaranteed by him, in the very mouth of the den of the roaring lion.
- 48) The Divine Decree serves his will and it is as if his hands grasp the bridles of Fate.

al-Ġāḥiẓ¹⁴ mentions that in an elegy hounds are killing wild cows; in a laudatory poem however, camels are compared with wild cows. In which case the dogs are usually killed. The remark of al-Ġāḥiẓ is confirmed by elegiac poetry of Abū Du'ayb¹⁵ and the laudatory poetry of Dū r-Rumma¹⁶. In this laudatory poem by Ibn Hafāġa the end of the hunting party is not described, but the poet makes a skillful connection with the description of the powerfulness of the Maecenas, to whom even the Divine Decree is subservient.

In the succession of themes within Ibn Hafāġa's *qaṣīda* analogies are to be found with the structure of al-Buḥturī's *qaṣīdas*.

¹⁴ al-Ġāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, II, p. 20; G.H.J. van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*, Leiden (E. J. Brill) 1982, p. 41; Yūsuf Hulayf, *Dū r-Rumma, šā'ir al-ḥubb wa-ṣ-ṣaḥrā'*, Cairo (Dār al-Ma'ārif) 1970, p. 177 note 1.

¹⁵ Cf. Abū Du'ayb in the *Dīwān al-budaliyyīn*, Cairo 1965, Vol. I, pp. 1 sqq/ [= *Mufaddaliyyāt* no. 126: lines 37-45].

¹⁶ Cf. Dū r-Rumma, *Dīwān*, ed. Macartney, no. 1: lines 40-66 (wild donkey; pp. 10-16) and 67-106 (wild bull; pp. 17-27); no. 68: lines 32-63 (wild donkey; pp. 529-538); ed. 'Abdalqaddūs Abū Šāliḥ, Vol. I, no. 1: lines 35 sqq. (pp. 50 sqq); no. 14: lines 32 sqq. (p. 518 sqq.).

Moreover, the poet Ibn Hafāḡa deliberately used ancient concepts from hunting description by Dū r-Rumma; but he made some innovations. He replaces the desert description with a garden description. In Ibn Hafāḡa's poetry the hunt is not a part of the comparison of the speed of the animals with his camel, but it is a celebration of travel amidst his *fiṭya*, or young companions.

The innovation here is perhaps that the outcome of the hunting party remains suspended, whereas the hunting party itself serves as a *raḥīl*, which does not consist of a camel description, but of the hunting party itself.

APPENDIX

Quotations from the Arabic text from Gāzī's edition of Ibn Hafāḡa's *Dīwān*, no. 2 (pp. 33 sqq.).

lines 13-18

وَشَى الْحَبَابِ مَعَاطِفَ الْأَنْهَارِ
وَأَرْجَى رِدْفًا مَائِحَ النَّيَّارِ
قَدْ قَبَّلْتَهُ مَبَاسِمَ النُّوَارِ
مَشْبُوبَةَ الْبَرْقِ لَفْحَةَ نَارِ
لَعِبًا وَتَلْتِيمَ أَوْجِهِ الْأَزْهَارِ
خُطْبَاءَ مَفْصِحَةٍ مِنَ الْأَطْيَارِ
وَلَرُبَّمَا سَفَرُوا عَنِ الْأَقْمَارِ
زَنْدَ الْحَفِيفَةِ مِنْهُمْ بِشَرَارِ
إِشْرَافِ أَطْوَارِ وَفَيْضِ بَحَارِ

وَمَجْرَ ذَيْلِ غَمَامَةٍ لَيْسَتْ بِهِ
خَفَقَتْ ظِلَالُ الْأَيْكِ فِيهِ ذَوَائِبُ
وَلَوَى الْقَضِيبُ هُنَاكَ جِيدًا أَتْلَعَا
بَاكَرْتَهُ وَالغَيْمُ قِطْعَةً عَنَبَرِ
وَالرَّيْحُ تَلَطَّمَ فِيهِ أَرْدَافَ الرَّبِيِّ
وَمَنْابِرَ الْأَشْجَارِ قَدْ قَامَتْ بِهَا
فِي فَيْتَةٍ جَنَّبُوا الْعَجَاجَةَ لَيْلَةً
ثَارَ الْقَتَامُ بِهِمْ دُخَانًا وَأَرْتَمَى
شَاهَدَتْ مِنْ هِمَاتِهِمْ وَهَبَاتِهِمْ

lines 26-31

زَجَلِ الْجَنَاحِ مَوْرِدِ الْأَظْفَارِ
 مَكْحُولَةٍ أَجْفَانُهُ بِنَضَارِ
 مَخْضُوبِ رَأْيِ الظُّفْرِ وَالْمِنْقَارِ
 طَاوِي الْحَشَى حَلِي الْمَقْلَدِ ضَارِ
 يَمْشِي عَلَى مِثْلِ الْقِنَى الْخَطَّارِ
 وَاللَّيْلِ مُشْتَمِلٌ بِشَمْلَةِ قَارِ

طَرَدَ الْقَنِيصَ بِكُلِّ قَيْدٍ طَرِيدَةٍ
 مَلْتَمِئَةً أَعْطَافَهُ بِحَبِيرَةٍ
 يَرْمِي بِهِ الْأَمْلُ الْقَصِي فَيَنْقِنِي
 وَيَكُلُّ نَائِي الشَّأْوِ أَشْدَقَ أَخْزَرِ
 يَفْتَرُّ عَنِ مِثْلِ النُّصَالِ وَإِنَّمَا
 مُسْتَقْرِبًا أَثَرُ الْقَنِيصِ عَلَى الصَّفَا

lines 36-48

ذَلِقِ الْمَسَامِعِ أَطْلَسِ الْأَطْمَارِ
 يَهْوَى فَيَنْعَطِفُ انْعِطَافِ سِوَارِ
 فَيَكَادُ يَفْلِتُ أَيْدِي الْأَقْدَارِ
 كُرَّةَ تَهَادَاهَا أَكْفُ قِفَارِ
 فَشَلَا بِجَارِ خَلْفَهُ طَيَّارِ
 مَشَى الْفَتَاةِ تَجْرُ فَضْلُ إِزَارِ
 كَرَعَتْ عَلَى ظَمَأٍ بِكَأْسِ عِقَارِ
 مِنْ لَيْلٍ وَيَلُّ أَوْ نَهَارِ بَوَارِ
 يَحْيَى لَا مَنَهَا أَعَزَّ جِوَارِ
 لَمْ يَخْشَ مِنْ جَوْرِ هُنَالِكَ جَارِ
 وَيَعْبُ بِحَرِّ الْعَسْكَرِ الْجَرَّارِ
 فِي جِحْرِ خَيْسِ الضَّيْغَمِ الزَّارِ
 مَلَكَتْ يَدَاهُ أَعْيَنَةُ الْأَقْدَارِ

فَلَرَبُّ رَوَاحِ هُنَالِكَ أَنْبَطِ
 يَجْرِي عَلَى حَذَرٍ فَيَجْمَعُ بَسْطَهُ
 مُمْتَدَّ حَبْلِ الشَّأْوِ يَعْسِلُ رَائِغًا
 مُتَرَدِّدًا يَرْمِي بِهِ خَوْفَ الرَّدَى
 وَلَرَبُّ طَيَّارٍ خَفِيفٍ قَدْ جَرَى
 مِنْ كُلِّ قَاصِرَةٍ الْخَطَى مُخْتَالَةٍ
 مَخْضُوبَةِ الْمِنْقَارِ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّهَا
 لَا تَسْتَقِرُّ بِهَا الْأَدْحَى خَشِينَةٍ
 وَلَوْ اسْتَجَارَتْ مِنْهُمَا بِحِمَى أَبِي
 حَرَمٍ إِذَا اشْتَمَلَ الطَّرِيدُ بَظْلَهُ
 تَقِفُ الرِّيَّاحُ بِجَانِبَيْهِ هَيْبَةً
 وَيَقْبِلُ مِنْ أَمْنٍ بِهِ ظَبْيُ النَّقَى
 خَدَمَ الْقَضَاءِ مُرَادَهُ فَكَأَنَّمَا