

Poetics

With al-Ġurġānī, we move to aesthetics. Like ar-Rāġib, Ibn Fūrak, and Ibn Sinā, he used the words *ma'nā* and *ḥaqīqah* to explain how human minds work. But he was asking a different question: What is it that makes language beautiful? His answer depended on, developed, and deployed a theory of how language and the mind interact. This theory was constructed with the lexicon, grammar, and syntax, and all three were made up of *ma'ānī*. Lexical accuracy pointed at *ma'ānī*, grammar structured *ma'ānī* in sentences, and syntax manipulated the *ma'ānī* of those sentences. Lexicographers, theologians, and logicians all wanted to align *ma'ānī* to truth, whether the truths of reason, of the world, or of God. But the poets al-Ġurġānī was interested in wanted to manipulate *ma'ānī*—mental contents—in order to create affect and make audiences feel and understand beauty.

Al-Ġurġānī did not write hermeneutics. He was concerned with how poetry worked, not what it meant. His poetics did not touch on questions of genre, mimesis, or the biographies of poets. He was not concerned with matters related to audience or culture. Instead, he wrote what we may call a linguistic, stylistic, and formalist criticism, in which he used the Arabic conceptual vocabulary of mental content to explain the processes at work. This vocabulary, the same vocabulary that we have read in lexicography, theology, and logic, enabled him to provide a map of the mechanisms with which humans create meaning. He was devoted to providing a literary theory that would explain why one could put a finger on a great line of poetry and say, “This is it!”¹

1. وذلك ما إذا أنشدته وَصَعَّتْ فِيهِ الْيَدَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ فَقَلْتُ هَذَا هَذَا. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 88.13–14).

According to al-Ġurġānī, the poetic mechanisms that create affect are fundamentally grammatical and syntactical. Poets put words together in patterns that impact the minds of the audience. These patterns consist of mental contents, and the mental contents change and develop across the time it takes the audience to move through and come to terms with a sentence. This is where al-Ġurġānī locates affect, in *ma'ānī an-naḥw* (“the mental contents of grammar”), the interactions of which constitute *naẓm* (“syntax”). I return to the translation of both terms below. The lexicographers’ model of stable reference is given a dynamic and creative energy. Vocal forms no longer simply refer to mental contents; they are rather threaded into patterns of vocal form that generate patterns of mental content. The idea of a one-to-one correspondence between a vocal form and a mental content, already under pressure from lexical homonymy in ar-Rāġib, theological reason in Ibn Fūrak, and lexical homonymy again in Ibn Sīnā, was no longer tenable. Al-Ġurġānī recognized that while the arrangements of mental content in our heads are catalyzed by and potentially recaptured in arrangements of vocal form, they have their own cognitive and logical dynamics. Poetry makes the architecture of mental content in our heads shift and change. The ties that had connected a mental content to a vocal form when it was spoken or written can break in the mind of the audience. This means that the accuracy (*ḥaqīqah*) established by the lexicographers with their iterative management of lexical precedent, an epistemological standard that underpinned both Ibn Fūrak’s theology and Ibn Sīnā’s logic, became in the work of al-Ġurġānī something quite different.

Al-Ġurġānī’s poetics was concerned with affect on the level of the sentence or the clause. Individual words can have grammatical and syntactical functions (the mental contents of grammar), but only combinations of words constitute syntax or produce images. In sentences and clauses, accuracy is both a foundation for departures of single words from the lexicon (*maġāz*) and something that can help create and sustain the poetic image itself. In the poetic image as al-Ġurġānī sees it, accuracy still works to anchor the imagination, but it now has no curatable root in the lexicon. The theological and logical concern with extramental reality is no longer relevant. Within the triad of language, mind, and reality, poetry is concerned only with language and mind. There is an epistemological shift: poetry takes the lexicon up with it into the image, changing it along the way but rarely giving those changes a permanence that could survive the descent. Those moments when the lexicographers’ lexicon changes to accommodate a new mental content achieved by metaphor, when the lexicon expands to include what will become a dead metaphor, are usually the products of simpler, syntactically shorter metaphors based on transfer. In the example that al-Ġurġānī used over and over again, the single word “lion” can come to be another lexically sanctioned way of saying “brave man.” But the images he was interested in were of another order altogether:

*As if the lightning was a Quran
in its reader's hand
closing and opening.*

This powerful image is taken from a poem written in praise of a politically successful caliph by his cousin, the literary critic and poet Ibn al-Mu‘tazz (861–908), who would himself become caliph for a single day before being deposed and executed.² The poet is comparing the caliph to lightning that illuminates the sky. Al-Ġurġānī had already cited another line, from later in the poem, as part of a separate piece of criticism nearly a hundred pages earlier in the *Asrār*:³

*Everything comes together for us
in a leader who kills parsimony
and gives life to largesse.*

These two images are each constructed across the space of a single Arabic line, just like all the images in this thirty-line poem with its regularly metered pairs of eleven-syllable hemistichs rhyming *āḥā-āḥā*, *B-āḥā*, *C-āḥā*, *D-āḥā*, and so on (I have altered the lineation and abandoned the rhyme in my translation). Al-Ġurġānī did not write about meter or rhyme. Nor was he interested in the irony of the poet's death or in the commentary on power and religion in these images. That was the subject matter of *adab*.

What al-Ġurġānī cared about—and in this he typifies Classical Arabic literary criticism—was the mechanism by which the two images, each taken on its own, produced affect. Nothing could be more different than a Quran and lightning, but at the same time nothing could be more similar, he thought, than a reader opening and closing a Quran, and watching lightning flash on and off. This combination of intense similarity with intense difference produces affect, and to achieve it the poet focused on the shape that he wanted the audience to see expand and then immediately contract.⁴ Al-Ġurġānī cared about the formal mechanisms that manipulate the cognitive processes of the audience. He wanted to give a formal account of each and every mechanism that did this. He used the other image, of

2. وَكَأَنَّ الْبُرْقَ مُصْحَفٌ قَارٍ | فَأَنْطَبَاقًا مَرَّةً وَأَنْفِتَاحًا. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 140.6), Ibn al-Mu‘tazz (1961, 141.6), Lewin (2012).

3. جُمِعَ الْحَقُّ لَنَا فِي إِمَامٍ | قَتَلَ الْبُهْلَ وَأَحْيَى السَّمَاحَا. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 50.14), Ibn al-Mu‘tazz (1961, 141.18).

4. لم يُنظَر [ابنُ المعتز] من جميع أوصاف البرق ومعانيه إلا إلى الهيئة التي تجدها العين له من انبساط يعقبه انقباض . . . فأصاب ذلك فيما يفعله القارئ من الحركة الخاصة في المصحف إذا جعل يفتحه مرةً ويُطبقه أخرى ولم يكن إعجابٌ هذا التشبيه لك وإيناسه إياك لأنَّ الشبيبين مختلفان في الجنس أشدَّ الاختلافِ فقط بل لأنَّ حصلَ بإزاء الاختلاف اتفاقاً كأحسن ما يكون وأتمه فبمجموع الأمرين شدةً ائتلافٍ في شدةً اختلافٍ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 140.8–14).

the leader killing parsimony, to demonstrate how a metaphor might be dependent on the objects of any transitive verbs involved. It is only the object of such a verb that leads us to classify the verb as “borrowed.” The verb “kills” is a metaphor only because its object is parsimony; if enemies were being killed there would be no metaphor.⁵ A logical grammar of predicative combination creates the image.

WHAT IS GOOD *MA' NĀ*?

Poetics in Arabic asked the question, What makes for good *ma' nā*? The place to start looking for the answer is the two most important books of Arabic poetics: al-Ġurġānī's *Asrār al-Balāġah* and *Dalā'il al-I'ğāz*. I do not think this judgment is hyperbole. (See the *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 5:1–2, a special issue devoted to al-Ġurġānī.) He knew that when people spoke they could do more than just refer to mental content; they could choose to create beauty. People made a choice when they spoke, a choice to make their words not just correct, but better crafted. Not just fact, but art. Not just grammar, but beauty. Al-Ġurġānī wanted to explain why some literature was better than other literature. He was always looking for that something extra that gave language an aesthetic edge. (The Arabic word he used for this something extra was *mazīyah*, a distinguishing virtue, terminology already in use with 'Abd al-Ġabbār.)⁶ Unlike Ibn Fūrak's, ar-Rāġib's, and Ibn Sīnā's, al-Ġurġānī's theory was first and foremost aesthetic. His aesthetics then required that he develop an account of what language was and how language worked. *Ma' nā* was the heart of that account.

What was the literature of which he was a critic? In the Arabic eleventh century, al-Ġurġānī's concern was not quite what the word “literature” refers to today. But it was the same human and divine canon that we have already encountered, consisting of poetry, the Quran, and short selections of eloquent prose. Pre-Islamic Arabs had produced poetry that was still a reference point for al-Ġurġānī nearly five hundred years later. God had revealed a Quran that had not only changed the course of history but remained a literary event. The four Islamic centuries that preceded al-Ġurġānī had seen the canon of Arabic poetry massively expanded and developed, along with a host of innovations in subject matter and form. Increasingly, in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, this development and expansion was accompanied by a lively critical discourse that argued about matters of style and the relative merits of parts of the canon. Unsurprisingly, given the degree of technical complexity with which we have become accustomed in

5. فَقَتَلَ وَأَحْيَىٰ إِنَّمَا صَارَا مُسْتَعَارَيْنِ بَأْنَ عُدِّيَا إِلَى الْبُخْلِ وَالسَّمَاكِ وَلَوْ قَالَ قَتَلَ الْأَعْدَاءَ وَأَحْيَىٰ لَمْ يَكُنْ قَتَلَ

استعارةً بوجه ولم يكن أحْيَى استعارةً على هذا الوجه. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 51.1–3).

6. مَزِيَّة. Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār (1965–74, 16:199.10, 14).

the previous chapters, this critical practice was decisively theoretical. Perhaps the most famous poet, Abū Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), reportedly said of the theorist Ibn Ğinnī, “he knows more about my poetry than I do.”⁷ Classical Arabic literary criticism has been the subject of sustained scholarly attention. (See in particular the encyclopedia edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, Abu Deeb’s entry in *Abbasid Belles Lettres*, Wen-Chin Ouyang’s monograph, and Ḥalafallāh’s brief review.)⁸ This was a criticism oriented toward the single line of poetry, and in the poetry itself enjambment was rare. Aesthetic judgment came at the end of the line. (The value placed on the structural unity of complete poems has been debated by van Gelder, Andras Hamori, and more recently Raymond Farrin.)⁹ By the eleventh century this was the established critical practice, and it had a symbiotic relationship with the art itself: poets and critics were in the same places, taking part in the same conversations. This literature shared its patronage and performance spaces with its own criticism. Poetry and criticism shared a commitment to the image and to the line, as well as a deep involvement with the formal complexity of both. But poetry did more than just develop intricate single images in series: it spoke to power and to social reality about fate, money, beauty, love, and loss. These subjects and more were integral to the engagement with poetry that took place outside literary criticism in the prosimetrical genre of *adab*: books about how to live and what life meant, characterized by an iterative approach to truth and a multiplication of narratives.

Just as poetry’s remit expanded beyond that of its formal criticism to the world of meaning interrogated in *adab*, literary criticism had a scope that extended beyond poetry to revelation. One of its most important critical and theoretical conversations was an argument about the relative aesthetic merits of the sacred Quran and profane poetry. Quranic language was fundamental to al-Ġurġānī’s project; it was an example of how language could be beautiful. Virtually no one was prepared to say that poetry was better than the Quran, and the Quran clearly differentiated itself from poetry,¹⁰ but there was an argument about whether or not one could theorize the Quran as a literary text in such a way as to demonstrate its superiority. (Geert Jan van Gelder has drawn my attention to the extreme example of Abū al-‘Ātāhiyah [d. ca. 825], a canonical poet with “unorthodox religious beliefs” who was said to have claimed he had

7. ابنُ جِنِّي أَعْرَفُ بِشِعْرِي مَنِّي. Ibn Ğinnī (2004, 1:469), al-Yamānī (1986, 200).

8. Abu Deeb (1990), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (1998), Ḥalafallāh (1944, 48f), Ouyang (1997).

9. Farrin (2011), Hamori (1974), van Gelder (1982). Cf. Sharlet (2015).

10. See statements at Quran 21:5 (al-Anbiyā’), 26:224 (aṣ-Ṣu‘arā’), 36:69 (Yā Sīn), 37:36 (aṣ-Ṣāffāt), 52:30 (aṭ-Ṭūr), and 69:41 (al-Ḥāqqah).

written a poem better than a Quranic *sūrah* [chapter].)¹¹ As ar-Rāḡib and many others had done before him,¹² al-Ġurġānī leapt into this argument, committed to making his theories work in such a way as to explain both why poetry was good and why the Quranic text could not be replicated by humans. This would require two slightly different versions of the same argument and so generated both the *Asrār* and the *Dalā' il*. This debate about Quranic inimitability framed and fueled al-Ġurġānī's literary-critical work but did not define or constitute it. The Quran was just one more reason why the question *How does literary language work?* needed to be answered.

“To make an aesthetic judgment is to stake one's authority on nothing but one's own experience: when we declare that something is beautiful we have nothing but our own judgment to go on. While we may spontaneously feel that others simply *must* see what we see, we can't ground the claim in anything more tangible than our own judgment. . . . This feels risky.”¹³ Toril Moi identifies a genealogy for this risk of aesthetic subjectivity that goes back to Kant. But she could just as easily have gone back to Classical Arabic, where critics worked to give accounts of poetry that strove to avoid a collapse into the subjectivity of personal experience. In a passage quoted in full by ar-Rāḡib, the literary critic al-Qāḏī Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ġurġānī (d. 1002) explained great eloquence as what one cannot explain, for which one cannot give a reason.¹⁴ An epistemological risk of this kind is different from the one we have encountered in previous chapters, when secondary scholarship (also in the long shadow of Kant) feared a collapse into linguistic relativism. Here, the risk for theory is that all one is left with is the plaintive question *Can you see what I see?*¹⁵ Reading Ibn Fūrak and Ibn Sīnā has shown us that the epistemological risk of linguistic relativism was not necessarily a problem should one choose to share their conceptual vocabulary of mental content. But here, in a chapter on poetics, the differences between our European and Anglophone present and the Arabic eleventh century are less evident. The experience of the beauty of poetry and the question of taste in art put us and al-Ġurġānī (both 'Abd al-Qāhir and Abū al-Ḥasan!) in the same place. They asked exactly the same question as Moi. There is, says 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī, some poetry whose quality you know

11. Quran 78 (an-Nabā'). Abū Faraġ al-Iṣfahānī (1964–74, 4:34.8–9), Creswell (2009).

12. Key (2010).

13. Moi (2017, 313). Cf. Kant (1987, ##32, 33, 145–49).

14. . . . ثم لا تعلم وإن قايست واعتبرت ونظرت وفكرت لهذه المزية سبباً ولما خُصت مقتضياً . . . Al-Qāḏī al-Ġurġānī (1966, 412.7–8). Cf. ar-Rāḡib (ca. 14th C., fol. 38b.4–5). See also chapter 1 note 15 above and al-Andalusī (1987, 192.3–4).

15. Cavell (2002, 93), Moi (2017, 326).

when you hear it, even if you don't know the poet: "It is as if you can put your hand on it and say, 'This is it!'"¹⁶

When he explained the cognitive and affective mechanisms at work in poetry, al-Ġurġānī was working in an established tradition of Arabic literary criticism that, unlike the philosophical tradition, was uninvolved with the Greek past. He did not use Aristotle's *Rhetoric* or *Poetics*. This was also an Arabic tradition unconnected to a European future. The Latinate rhetoric of commentaries on Cicero and Horace made no use of Arabic, and although Latin rhetoric shared with Arabic a connection to grammar, it did so in a very different way: Latin grammar and rhetoric was about language pedagogy (see the remarks of Hermannus Alemannus in Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter's translation),¹⁷ whereas Arabic grammar and poetics was about theoretical accounts of cognition. It was therefore through Ibn Sīnā's Arabic logic that al-Ġurġānī would use the Greeks, at several degrees of remove and in translation.

Scholars working in Arabic were of course not ignorant of the ancient Greek and late-antique discussions of literature. Maria Mavroudi has shown that Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* were translated into Syriac in the ninth century and that Ḥunayn, the translator of Aristotle whom we have already met, recited Homer in Baghdad.¹⁸ Furthermore, philhellenic Arabic philosophers did write commentaries on Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, but they either kept them separate from the autochthonous Arabic tradition (Ibn Sīnā) or in a very few cases outside the eleventh century attempted combining the two traditions (al-Fārābī in the tenth century and Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭāġannī, on whom see Heinrichs, in the thirteenth, while Ibn Rušd's twelfth-century synthesis would arguably have more impact in Latin than in Arabic).¹⁹ Deborah Black has shown how a commitment to the *Organon* curriculum shaped philhellenic Arabic philosophy's dealings with Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*; Wolfhart Heinrichs and others have discussed Ibn Sīnā's and al-Fārābī's uses of the Aristotelian syllogism to discuss poetry, and Uwe Vagelpohl has analyzed the reception of the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*.²⁰ M.C. Lyons's edition has shown the limitations of the Arabic translation of the *Rhetoric*,²¹ and Abu Deeb (cf. Ḥalafallāh)²² devoted an entire chapter to successfully demonstrating how al-Ġurġānī's work did not connect with the *Poetics*.²³

16. See note 1 above.

17. Copeland and Sluiter (2012, 739).

18. Mavroudi (2015, 324–25).

19. Aouad (2009), Aristotle (1953), Copeland and Sluiter (2012, 735), Heinrichs (1969).

20. Black (1990), Heinrichs (2008); Vagelpohl (2008), (2015).

21. Aristotle (1982), Wansborough (1984).

22. Ḥalafallāh (1944, 67f).

23. Abu Deeb (1979, 303–22). Cf. Larkin (1995, 146–50).

Ignorance was not the problem, but the disconnect survived. The Greek and Arabic aesthetic traditions had different epistemological structures and different cultural assumptions about the forms and genres of art itself. There was no prestige genre of formal dramatic tragedy in Classical Arabic. There was nothing equivalent to *adab* in ancient Greek. Al-Ġurġānī and his peers did not think that an answer could be found in theories of genre, culture, or mimesis to the question *How can we explain what poetry does to us?* Ṭaha Ḥusayn has suggested that the source of influence for Classical Arabic literary criticism was “Aristotle’s general ideas and methodology” via Ibn Sīnā,²⁴ but here I would like to be more specific. I argue that al-Ġurġānī found resources in theories of cognition, and the place to look for an account of cognition in the eleventh century was Arabic logic. The machinery to ground an account of cognition in a set of assumptions about how language worked already existed in Arabic grammar and lexicography. This was al-Ġurġānī’s poetics: a theory of literature that bypassed genre and culture to rely instead on grammar and then follow logic out into the imaginary.

Al-Ġurġānī’s poetics was a project that shaped the subsequent millennium of work on Arabic literature, and it has not gone unnoticed in Arabist secondary scholarship. (For a brief review, see Harb and Key)²⁵ On the one hand, for scholars trained in Arabic-speaking institutions, al-Ġurġānī’s work has proved important beyond all others for the production of conceptual vocabularies that combine eleventh-century Arabic theory with twentieth-century European theory. I am thinking in particular of Ahmed Moutaouakil, who wrote his highly functional synthesis of al-Ġurġānī and Saussure in French.²⁶ Another example, from the field of theology, is Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd’s engagement with Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) and Western semiotics (Thomas Hildebrandt).²⁷ As for scholars trained in European and Anglophone institutions, they work in a frame created by the absence of connection between literary criticism in Greek, Arabic, and Latin. Abu Deeb is absolutely clear that his book is motivated by a profound sense of shock at the scale and depth of the connections between al-Ġurġānī’s theory and twentieth-century Anglophone literary theory. (He was also following the connections that Ḥalafallāh had made with European theories of affect in 1944.)²⁸ Abu Deeb wrote to effect a connection, and to develop a new critical tool that combined al-Ġurġānī’s theory with those of T. S. Eliot and others, precisely because the object of study was the

24. Quoted in Ḥalafallāh (1944, 20, 76f).

25. Harb and Key (forthcoming).

26. Moutaouakil (1982).

27. Abū Zayd (2005), Hildebrandt (2007, 501f).

28. Ḥalafallāh (1944, 42f).

same: poetry. Al-Ġurġānī “is aware of the various types of images, sensuous, non-sensuous, visual and non-visual, which have been studied in modern criticism.”²⁹

In *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, published at the same time as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Abu Deeb wrote: “It is altogether unfortunate that European writers ignore the achievement of other cultures in many areas and thus find themselves ‘discovering’ principles . . . already discovered and developed to an amazing degree of sophistication in these other cultures.” Furthermore, al-Ġurġānī's theory had to be used not just because it was first but because it still worked: “the first genuinely structuralist analysis of imagery I know of and its value goes far beyond the historical.” Al-Ġurġānī's “achievement . . . precedes by nine centuries the work of Croce, Bradely, Wimsatt, Richards, and Beardsley, who are among the most outstanding critics of our era.”³⁰ Writing from a department of comparative literature in 2017, what is so frightening about Abu Deeb's project is that he was right and that the project failed. Benedetto Croce (d. 1952), A. C. Bradely (d. 1935), William Kurtz Wimsatt (d. 1975), I. A. Richards (d. 1979), and Monroe Beardsley (d. 1985) may no longer quite be of my era (which began in 1979), but in any case al-Ġurġānī's name and the translations of the *Asrār* and *Dalā' il* into German and French, respectively,³¹ are not to be found alongside them in the syllabi and bibliographies of Anglophone literary criticism. Time has exposed the risk Abu Deeb took: his book links al-Ġurġānī so effectively with mid-twentieth-century Anglophone literary theory that in the early twenty-first century al-Ġurġānī appears doubly dated.

SELF-CONSCIOUSLY THEORETICAL ANSWERS IN MONOGRAPHS

Al-Ġurġānī's literary theory was written in a style consistent with its theoretical content. As he wrote the *Asrār* and *Dalā' il*, he circled around the most important questions, returning to them over and over again, trying out new phraseology for the theoretical arguments he was trying to make and, in the later parts of the *Dalā' il*, testing his new terminology on his audience. (His most oft-quoted theoretical statements tend to come from the final sections of each monograph.) This was how he thought that theory itself should work. There was not a single, fixed model that could enable the sort of taxonomy of rhetorical figures that scholars like ar-Rāġib found so attractive. Instead, there were principles and zones that anchored meaning and enabled its analysis. These principles and zones supported

29. Abu Deeb (1979, 13, 96).

30. Abu Deeb (1979, 32, 58, 81).

31. Al-Ġurġānī (1959a), (2006).

dynamics that could coexist or overlap and could be described in multiple ways with or without examples. It was a different way of doing literary criticism, discursive and formalist rather than taxonomical. Al-Ġurġānī's narrative voice circled and looped over a complex literary landscape populated by language users and marked by moments of special significance such as the Quran or a great metaphor.

Al-Ġurġānī's criticism was self-consciously theoretical. It was a poetics that claimed universal applicability across the languages spoken by its author. (See my separate article on al-Ġurġānī and translation theory.)³² It was also a poetics that deliberately provided principles that were intended to be applied across the canon by other scholars. Its author therefore took great care with his terminology. Al-Ġurġānī knew that one's choice of terms is fundamental to the prospects for one's theory. He was very aware of the different stages of technical terminology and their relationship to ordinary language. Throughout his work we can see this commitment to the curation of terminology in the face of pressure from ordinary language. When making the argument that syntax was a matter of organizing mental content rather than vocal form, he made it clear that he was working against a folk theory of language that tended to associate the act of making syntactical connections with vocal forms rather than mental contents.³³ When making his argument about the correct understanding of metaphor, he was aware that he was working against a popular and problematic tendency to talk about metaphor as a simple transfer.³⁴ When making his argument about the way a specific arrangement of mental content could take on a form, he made it expressly clear that there was a preexisting scholarly consensus on the use of the word *ṣūrah* ("form," "image"; see below) and that he should not be constrained by that established terminology.³⁵

Al-Ġurġānī's extant works are either grammar or literary criticism. His grammar works are structured conventionally, whether as long and detailed line-by-line commentaries with a short dedicatory or an explanatory preface³⁶ or as concise pedagogical tools.³⁷ But when it came to literary theory he wrote differently and

32. Key forthcoming in the *Journal of Abbasid Studies*.

33. ومما يُلبس على الناظر في هذا الموضوع ويُغَلِّطُه أنه يَسْتَبْعِد أن يُقال هذا كلامٌ قد نُظِمَتْ معانيه فالعُرفُ . كأنه لم يجري بذلك . Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 53.3-4).

34. ومن شأن ما غمضَ من المعاني ولطفَ أن يصعب تصويره على الوجه الذي هو عليه لعامة الناس فيقع . لذلك في العبارات التي يُعبّر بها عنه ما يُوهِم الخطأ وإطلاقهم في الاستعارة أنها نقلٌ للعبارة عمّا وُضِعَتْ له من ذلك . Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 435.1-4).

35. وليس العبارة عن ذلك بالصورة شيئاً نحن ابتدأناه فُبَيِّنْه مُنْكَرٌ بل هو مستعملٌ مشهورٌ في كلام العلماء . Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 508.13-14).

36. Al-Ġurġānī (1982), (2007).

37. Al-Ġurġānī (196-), (1987), (1988), (1990).

was conscious of doing so. The *Asrār* and the *Dalā' il* are two substantial monographs, most probably written in that order, of around 80,000 and 130,000 words, respectively. The *Dalā' il* in Muḥammad Šākir's 1984 edition includes a separate epistle on Quranic inimitability.³⁸ Šākir's inclusion of this epistle is in accordance with his base manuscript, dated 1177 (Hüseyin Çelebi 913 at the İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi in Bursa, Turkey).³⁹ The inclusion of the twelve-thousand-word epistle after the end of the *Dalā' il* makes sense to readers of the printed edition today just as it did to readers of the manuscript in the twelfth century: it is consistent with the structure of the work itself. Al-Ğurğānī's monograph ends formally on page 478 of Šākir's edition but is immediately followed by a series of attachments and short epistles found in Hüseyin Çelebi 913. (Šākir [1984], Rašīd Riḍā [1952], and Muḥammad aš-Šinqīṭī [1978] each placed the last of these, "Introduction to the *Dalā' il*," at the beginning of his printed edition.)⁴⁰ Šākir's reasonable suggestion (following a note on the manuscript itself)⁴¹ is that these extras were transcribed from separate notes in al-Ğurğānī's hand after his death, but whatever the case, we know from remarks within them that al-Ğurğānī saw them as part of a single literary-critical project. At the start of one such attachment, on page 525, the author directly addresses "the reader of our book" and writes that such a reader should by this stage be comfortable with his account of creative syntax, but nevertheless goes on, in order to "truly, honestly, make sure that the reader is not troubled by exhaustion,"⁴² to write another ten pages of clarification. Scholars today can only dream of being afforded such space or the sort of reader whose fatigue is decreased by more reading!

What is the significance of this manuscript history, and of the fact that both the *Asrār* and the *Dalā' il* roam so discursively that the latter can expand for more than a hundred pages after it ends without that affecting its structural integrity? Thankfully, al-Ğurğānī provides the answer himself. Half of his answer is explicit; half, implicit. The implicit half has been identified by Larkin, Šākir, and others: it is the scholarly context of an eleventh century in which al-Ğurğānī was engaged in argument, polemic, and theoretical debate with scholars in literary theory and theology. The later sections of the *Dalā' il* are most often couched in terms that make it clear that the author was responding to specific criticisms of his basic ideas about syntax, Quranic inimitability, and the way that language works. Al-Ğurğānī

38. Al-Ğurğānī (1959b), (1992a, introd. *lām.* 1–2), (1992b).

39. Al-Ğurğānī (1172/77, fol. 180b).

40. Al-Ğurğānī (1172/77, fol. 181a–183b), (1952, 13–20), (1978, 2–8).

41. Al-Ğurğānī (1172/77, fol. 176b.1).

42. رَجُونَا ... رُغْبَةً صَادِقَةً تَدْفَعُ عَنْكَ السَّأْمَ وَأُرِيحِيَّةً يَخْفُتْ مَعَهَا عَلَيْكَ تَغَبُّ الْفِكْرِ وَكَدَّ النَّظْرِ. Al-Ğurğānī (1992a, 525.12–526.1).

was constantly trying out new ways of describing and explaining his theories in order to persuade his audience that he was right.

Al-Ġurġānī was working with words in order to communicate ideas about words. Faced with this universal scholarly problem, he laid out a defense of theory and a critique of taxonomy. Instead of the innumerable subdivisions required to taxonomize a topic such as comparison (*tašbih*) in poetry, he wrote that he aimed to provide an indication or a pointer, a gesture, the form of which would be sufficient to inform readers. He would also provide counterexamples, because things get clearer alongside their opposites.⁴³ Literary theory had often tended, before al-Ġurġānī, to function through the use of examples. Each separate rhetorical figure was therefore encapsulated and understood in terms of a representative line of poetry. But al-Ġurġānī aimed to establish the formal principles of poetics that validated these examples.

Let us take an example to see how he did this. As part of his long discussion of metaphor in the *Asrār*, he defined one subset of metaphor as being that in which the operative comparison is between forms, composed of mental content, that are reasoned out by the audience. (I will return to his idea of “form,” *ṣūrah*, below.)⁴⁴ These were the best kind of metaphor, because the term of comparison was not accessed through its membership in a certain class, nor by some natural critical instinct of the audience, nor by some form already existing in an audience member’s psyche.⁴⁵ Instead, “the pattern of this . . . principle of metaphor is that it takes a point of comparison between two reasoned things. The paradigmatic and most widely applicable example of this is a comparison that goes from [1] something’s existence to its nonexistence or [2] from something’s nonexistence to its existence. As for [1], the underlying mental content here is that when a thing loses those specific mental contents by which it comes to have measure and reference, its actual existence becomes a nonexistence.”⁴⁶ This is a deliberately logical and abstract account (Ritter

43. ولا يمكن الانتصافُ منه [التشبيه المفيد] إلا بفصولٍ جمّةٍ وقسميّةٍ بعدَ قسمةٍ وأنا أرى أن أقتصر الآن على إشارة تُعرّف صورته على الجملة بقدر ما تراه وقد قابل خلافه الذي هو غير المفيد فيتمّ تصوُّرك للغرض على إشارته. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 31.12–15). والمراد فإنّ الأشياء تُرداد بياناً بالأضداد

44. See notes 75–77 below.

45. وهذا كما تعلم شبيهٌ لست تحصل منه على جنسٍ ولا على طبيعةٍ وغريزةٍ ولا على هيئةٍ وصورةٍ تدخل في الخلقة وإنما هو صورة عقلية واعلم أنّ هذا الضرب هو المنزلة التي تبلغ عندها الاستعارة غاية شرفها. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 60.14–17).

46. مثال الأصل الثالث وهو أخذ الشبه من المعقول للمعقول أول ذلك وأعمّه تشبيه الوجود من الشيء مرة بالعدم والعدم مرة بالوجود أما الأول فعلى معنى أنه لما قلّ في المعاني التي بها يظهر للشيء قدرٌ وبصير له ذكرٌ صار وجوده كلاً ووجود. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 67.8–11).

calls it “complicated logical analysis”),⁴⁷ and there are two more pages of theory before al-Ġurġānī provides some lines of poetry, which include:⁴⁸

*I cannot stop leaning in
to embrace the memories of days past; they give me
something more fragile than nothingness.*

The poet, Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ibn Nubātah (fl. ca. 950), is justifying his reminiscences of youth with a deliberate lack of conviction. These memories offer him comfort so gossamer-thin that a nonexistent thing in a state of nonexistence would be thicker.

Al-Ġurġānī’s logical and abstract literary-critical framework enables us to see that on reading or hearing this line the audience has no choice but to reason through its counterintuitive and hypothetical impossibility in order to posit for a moment a new form not encountered before in nature or science. This reasoned form gives the line its meaning.⁴⁹ It is a form composed of mental contents: “something thinner than a nonexistent thing in a state of nonexistence.” This is not an intervention in language that can be preserved in the lexicon; it is a moment of creation that produces affect through reason.

Al-Ġurġānī wanted to lay out a theoretical structure with a technical vocabulary that could inform critical engagement with poetry. His abstract explanation of the comparison that goes from nonexistence to existence reads: “It works according to the following mental content: the thing ceasing to exist had existed and was then lost and vanished. But when it leaves behind beautiful traces, they give life to its memory and make permanent its name among the people; it therefore becomes as if it existed.”⁵⁰ This is self-evidently a theory designed to encompass the *aṭlāl*, that most famous of tropes in pre-Islamic poetry in which the poet mourns his beloved’s departure at the remains of her encampment. At the very beginning of the *Asrār*, al-Ġurġānī had quoted the canonical example of this trope, the opening line of Imru’ al-Qays’ *Mu’allaqah*: “Stop! Let us weep . . .”⁵¹ There he had asked rhetorically whether the line depended on its word order (of course it does!), and here he gives a literary-critical account based on rational conceptions of existence and nonexistence that enables him to identify

47. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 16).

48. مَا زِلْتُ أَعْطِفُ أَيَّامِي فَمَنْحِي | نَيْلًا أَدَقَّ مِنَ الْمَعْدُومِ فِي الْعَدَمِي. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 69.14), at-Ta’ālibī (1983, 455.11).

49. . . . وَإِنَّمَا هُوَ صُورَةٌ عَقْلِيَّةٌ . . . Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 60.16).

50. وَأَمَّا الثَّانِي فَعَلَى مَعْنَى أَنَّ الْفَانِي كَانَ مَوْجُودًا ثُمَّ فُقِدَ وَعُدِمَ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ لَمَّا خَلَفَ آثَارًا جَمِيلَةً نُحِيِّي ذِكْرَهُ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 67.12–13).

51. فَمَّا نَبَّكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِي حَبِيْبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ | . Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 3.13).

the dynamic architecture of mental content that produces its affect: a thing that does not exist is being reasoned into existence. Rhetorical figures are no longer taxonomized according to their exemplars, but rather they are organized and read according to rational and abstract theories about the forms that mental content can take.

This was a theory contained in a long monograph that needed to be read. This discussion of the reasoned metaphor stretches over more than twenty pages in Helmut Ritter's edition. Al-Ġurġānī knew what he was doing. In an age of chapters, subchapters, and increasing concern for pedagogical practicality, he was writing books that needed to be read from start to finish. In the *Dalā'il* he said so, and this is where we find his explicit authorial statement of monograph structure: "The only way to know whether this is all correct is to allow my statement to be complete and to reach the end of what I have put together for you."⁵² It is not a book that the author can summarize at the beginning; it is a process that will complete al-Ġurġānī's account of how language works and what makes it good: "I am not prepared to tell you, here at the beginning, what will happen at the end of this book, or to name for you the chapters that I intend to compose if God allows me. I do not want you to know what will happen before it does. Know instead that there are chapters that will follow each other, and that this is the first."⁵³ It is a radical statement, but one that matches al-Ġurġānī's work. It is an ethics of reading applied to an entire monograph.

It was complemented by an ethics of reading that worked on the level of syntax, centered on the process of building up mental-content connections across a sentence or a clause, where a poet could manipulate grammar and syntax in order to set the audience up for the maximum impact (Abu Deeb).⁵⁴ This was an ethics of reading in which the literature came in small evocative snatches of a few lines or less. Al-Ġurġānī thought *his* readers should work their way productively and iteratively through his long monographs, but although he had the theory to deal with the whole long Classical Arabic poem, he usually chose to work on a smaller scale. (Cf. van Gelder, Larkin, and Abu Deeb on analysis that does stretch through a poem.)⁵⁵ It is tempting to suggest that al-Ġurġānī worked this way because he thought theory of the complex sort that he was writing had a discursive struc-

52. واعلم أنه لا سبيل إلى أن تعرف صحة هذه الجملة حتى يبلغ القول غاية وينتهي إلى آخره ما أردت. جمعه لك. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 38.4–5).

53. وليس يتأتى لي أن أعلمك من أول الأمر في ذلك آخره وأن أسمي لك الفصول التي في نيتي أن أحررها بمشيئة الله عز وجل حتى تكون على علم بها قبل مودها عليك فاعمل على أن ها هنا فصلاً يجيء بعضها في بعض وهذا أولها. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 42.9–12).

54. Abu Deeb (1979, 255).

55. Abu Deeb (1979, 100–102), al-Ġurġānī (1954, 30.12f), Larkin (1995, 126), van Gelder (1982, 136).

ture that a reader could maintain across hundreds of pages but that *literature*—art, beauty, and poetry functioned in the listener’s head at the moment of audition. Long poems might well have unities, but the aesthetic impact he was interested in came in a few seconds.

Let me now briefly sketch out the contents of the *Asrār* and *Dalā’ il*. My suggestion, *pace* Ritter and via Heinrichs,⁵⁶ is that although there is no clear evidence as to which book was written first, the *Dalā’ il* feels like a final, conclusive review, one that assumes the argument of the *Asrār* is already proved. Whatever the case, they are very different books when it comes to subject matter. Al-Ġurġānī wrote one book on metaphor (the *Asrār*) and one book on syntax (the *Dalā’ il*). *Ex nihilo*, the *Asrār* revolutionized Arabic poetics, and then the *Dalā’ il* engaged with debates in both theology and poetics. Both books primarily deal with the Quran and poetry (the *Asrār* with slightly more poetry, the *Dalā’ il* with slightly more Quran; see Khalfallah’s tabulations),⁵⁷ and both state that their conclusions apply equally to prose. Al-Ġurġānī’s opening argument in the *Asrār* was that everyone knew that great poetry was good, but no one had been able to effectively theorize why the canon was the canon. Literary theory, faced with vocal forms and mental content, had lazily attributed aesthetic quality to the vocal forms and forgotten that metaphors are only ever constructed in and understood by the mind with mental contents. This was why al-Ġurġānī had to reexamine the most basic concepts (Abu Deeb)⁵⁸ of Arabic language about language: vocal form and mental content. He had to say anew what language was in order to explain how it worked. Writing within the iterative structure he had set for himself, he also needed to say what language was over and over again. This is why, I think, scholars in both the madrasa and the twenty-first-century academy have sometimes identified inconsistencies in his position on vocal form and mental content. But as Lara Harb notes, these inconsistencies appear when excerpts from his work are “read out of context.”⁵⁹ Taken as a whole, al-Ġurġānī’s argument is clear: an exclusive binary of vocal form and mental content is insufficient for literary criticism, and when critics focus myopically on either category, they are mistaken.

In order to prove that a critical focus on vocal forms was a failure of literary criticism, al-Ġurġānī started the *Asrār* with an analysis of wordplay and paronomasia, poetic techniques that would appear on their face to be entirely about vocal forms rather than mental content. Al-Ġurġānī showed how wordplay was in fact entirely dependent on the cognitive responses of audiences, and then after a good

56. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, introd. 6), Heinrichs (1991/92, 276 n. 54).

57. Khalfallah (2014, 311–21).

58. Abu Deeb (1990, 380).

59. Harb (2013, 192–96), (2015, 304).

twenty pages he started the book proper with an exhaustive analysis of metaphor. This analysis of the loan metaphor is the core of his argument, bookended with a discussion of lexical accuracy and going beyond the lexicon. The *Dalā' il* opens with a defense of grammar and a defense of poetry. Both are key to understanding the literary status of the Quran. Al-Ġurġānī then came back to the pairing of vocal form and mental content with a slightly different angle from that taken in the *Asrār*, because now he wanted to explain his theory of syntax. Creative and subtle syntax, the positioning of words in a sentence, negation and predication, connections and appositions all were ways in which vocal form reflected and catalyzed mental content.

His word for these techniques was *naẓm*, the same word used for stringing pearls on a thread. This was the subject matter of the *Dalā' il*: “the way a sentence is constructed in light of the syntactical relationships between its words.”⁶⁰ I use the word “syntax” in English. Al-Ġurġānī used the word *naẓm* and saw it as constituted by *ma' ānī an-naḥw*, the mental contents of grammar.⁶¹ It must be noted here that the discipline of grammar, *naḥw*, itself contained two subdisciplines: *naḥw* and *ṣarf*, which are usually translated as “syntax and morphology” (just as in English, the discipline of grammar contains syntax and morphology.) This puts some pressure on my translation of *naẓm* as “syntax,” because “syntax” is also a subdiscipline of grammar. *Naḥw* was the science of how words connected to each other; *ṣarf* was the science of how individual words were formed, and *naḥw* was also the word for both these sciences taken together as a scholarly discipline. But *naẓm* was something bigger, a space in which there was the potential for beauty and affect, whereas in *naḥw* there was only right and wrong. In the *Asrār* and *Dalā' il*, al-Ġurġānī was not interested in whether combinations of words were grammatically correct but rather in how a poet could manipulate their correct mental contents in a dynamic syntactical pattern. The English word “syntax” is not a perfect translation for this creative process, but it has the advantages of familiarity and concision, serving as well to locate the action exactly where al-Ġurġānī located it: in the formal combinations of words. As Baalbaki has observed, there is in Arabic a “self-explanatory” “kinship” between the study of grammar and eloquence (*naḥw* and *balāġah*): they are both concerned with syntax. But whereas grammarians tended to be concerned with the syntactical operation of case markers, scholars working on eloquence focused more on the impact created by syntactical variation.⁶² It is this latter understanding of the importance of word choice

60. The quotation is a definition of *naẓm*: Harb (2015, 305).

61. *وكَلَّمَهُ مِنْ مَعَانِي النُّحُو كَمَا تَرَى وَهَكَذَا السَّبِيلُ أَبَدًا فِي كُلِّ حُسْنٍ وَمَرْيَةٍ رَأَيْتَهُمَا قَدْ نَسَبَا إِلَى النِّظْمِ.*
Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 86.18–20).

62. Baalbaki (1983, 8–9).

and combination that al-Ġurġānī sought to capture with his concept of *naẓm* and that I engage with under the heading “syntax.”

POETICS FROM AXES TO ZONES (AQṬĀB AND AQṬĀR)

Al-Ġurġānī’s eleventh-century theory was not a madrasa-ready pedagogical tool. It did not have a clear taxonomical structure, and it consciously required the reader to work through two long monographs on metaphor and syntax, developing along the way an understanding of how language worked and what made some of it beautiful. On this journey, the reader would meet the core dynamics of al-Ġurġānī’s poetics over and over again. Comparison, analogy, and metaphor were “axes around which mental content revolved” and “zones that encompassed mental contents according to the perspective of each.” They could not be encapsulated or enumerated in a taxonomy of representative examples.⁶³ They overlapped in dynamic ways that cannot be clearly mapped.

This is the problem for scholarship on al-Ġurġānī’s poetics: his program for how theory should be written and read does not make the task of the secondary analyst easy. The work of Abu Deeb, Harb, Khalfallah, Larkin, and myself demonstrates that in the twentieth or twenty-first century one has no option when writing about the *Asrār* and *Dalā’il* but to do exactly what Arabic scholars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did: develop one’s own theoretical scheme and fit al-Ġurġānī into it. For the creators of the madrasa textbooks, those schemas tended to be primarily taxonomical. For more recent European and Anglophone academics, these schemas have tended to be thematic (subjective poetics, theological reasoning, wonder, signification, or translation theory). My own attempts in this chapter focus on the most fundamental building blocks of al-Ġurġānī’s conceptual vocabulary, *ma’ nā* and *ḥaqīqah*, and so look to Arabic grammar and philhellenic logic for poetic potential. I have tried to validate and explain al-Ġurġānī’s own claim that syntax was the “pursuit of the mental contents of grammar” and that it was the heart of poetics.⁶⁴

Let us orient ourselves a little further in al-Ġurġānī’s poetics. Metaphor (*isti’ārah*) was one of the three axes of his theory and the primary subject of the *Asrār*. It always involved comparison (*tašbīh*, another axis), and it could include analogy (*tamṭīl*, a third axis). The basic meaning of the Arabic word for metaphor is “borrowing” and this refers to the rough idea that a characteristic

القول على التشبيه والتمثيل والاستعارة فإن هذه أصول . . . وكأنها أقطابٌ تدور عليها المعاني في 63. متصرفاتها وأقطارٌ تحيط بها من جهاتها ولا يقنع طالبُ التحقيق أن يقتصر فيها على أمثلة تُذكر ونظائر تُعدّ.

Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 26.6,8–10).

64. تَوَحَّى معاني النحو. For example, al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 84.12–13, 361.1–2).

is borrowed from the source and given to the target. (*Isti'ārah* can be translated more precisely as “loan metaphor.”)⁶⁵ Al-Ġurġānī’s book-length treatment of metaphor is substantially more complex, and this is not the place to review it. Abu Deeb has already done an excellent job. He defines al-Ġurġānī’s *isti'ārah* for an Anglophone audience as “metaphor, but more exactly a type of metaphor based only on similarity or analogy.”⁶⁶ Al-Ġurġānī himself defined metaphor in terms with which are already very familiar: “Metaphor, taken as a whole, is when a vocal form has an original lexical placement that is known and can be indicated by evidentiary precedent. Someone, whether poet or not, then uses that vocal form somewhere other than in that original lexical place. This person transfers the vocal form to a new place in a move that is not strictly necessary.”⁶⁷ Metaphor comes from a free choice to use a word outside of precedent. And the result of metaphor is new mental content, a new poetic end or object, that would not exist were it not for the metaphor.⁶⁸ It is worth noting that in English poetics we tend to pair metaphor, by way of contrast, with metonymy. This is not the case in Arabic: metaphor (*isti'ārah*) is not part of a contrast pair with metonymy (*kināyah*), nor is Arabic metonymy understood in the same way as English metonymy (Harb).⁶⁹ Arabic metonymy is, however, given serious attention in the *Dalā'il*,⁷⁰ where the standard example is “long of the sword strap” to describe a tall man. Al-Ġurġānī defines metonymy as “when the speaker intends to affirm a certain mental content but does not speak of that mental content using the vocal form placed for it in the lexicon. Rather, the speaker comes to another mental content that follows or succeeds the first mental content in the sphere of existence.”⁷¹ When you think of a long sword strap, you think of the tall man who must wear it.

The most famous subdivision of metaphor (*isti'ārah*) is make-believe (*tahyīl*). Al-Ġurġānī’s development of this concept has received substantial attention from

65. Heinrichs (1977).

66. Abu Deeb (1979, ix).

67. اعلم أنّ الاستعارة في الجملة أنّ يكون للفظ أصل في الوضع اللغويّ معروفٌ تدلّ الشواهدُ على أنه. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 29.1–3). اختصّ به حين وُضِعَ ثمّ يستعمله الشاعرُ أو غير الشاعر في غير ذلك الأصل وينقله إليه نقلاً غير لازم

وأما المفيدُ فقد بان لك باستعارته فائدةٌ ومعنى من المعاني وغرضٌ من الأغراض لو لا مكان تلك. 68. الاستعارة لم يحصل لك. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 31.9–10).

69. Harb (2013, n. 643), (2015, n. 5).

70. Abu Deeb (1979, 164).

71. والمرادُ بالكناية هاهنا أنّ يُريد المتكلّم إثبات معنى من المعاني فلا يذكره باللفظ الموضوع له في اللغة ولكن يجيء إلى معنى هو تاليه وردّفه في الوجود فيوميّ به إليه ويجعله دليلاً عليه مثلاً ذلك قولهم هو طويلٌ

البيجاد يريدون طويل القامة. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 66.5–8).

scholars, most notably in the remarkable volume of essays and translations edited by Geert Jan van Gelder and Marlé Hammond.⁷² Make-believe is about combinations of imagery, and in the process of combining images the poet completely destabilizes the usual relationships of predication and the usual connections between vocal forms and groups of mental content. Make-believe has to start in sensory reality but then escape it.⁷³ The audience needs to get on board with the process, but the aesthetic rewards are substantial.⁷⁴ New forms of combined and interacting mental content are produced: new poetic images. Al-Ġurġānī's technical phrase for these new images was *ṣūrat al-ma' nā*, a new terminological label for the form taken by a certain syntactical combination of mental contents, described by Harb as "the final image in which a meaning is articulated."⁷⁵

There was a precedent for understanding a reasoned set of mental contents as a "form" (*ṣūrah*), and it is to be found in logic, where Ibn Sīnā used the phrase "form of composition" (*ṣūrat at-ta' lif*) for the form that a logical statement takes in the mind,⁷⁶ and al-Fārābī had used *ṣūrah* for the form in which a logical statement combined subject, predicate, and copula.⁷⁷ Both thought that logical statements created fixed and functional patterns of reasoned mental contents. These patterns were in the mind, and they produced logical conclusions. Al-Ġurġānī then used *ṣūrah* for the final form taken by a set of mental contents in the minds of audience members when they had finished listening to (or reading) and thinking about a single image.

Logic also provided al-Ġurġānī with a tool to explain how make-believe comparisons differed from other comparison, and this tool was conversion ('*aks*). A simple comparison could be easily converted: "Zayd is a lion" can be converted into "a lion is Zayd" without changing the mental content. But a comparison between a person's manners and musk in which the point of comparison is their shared pleasantness cannot so easily be converted. One can say, "he has manners like musk," but one cannot say "this musk is like his manners" without entering the zone of make-believe.⁷⁸ It is only in the zone of make-believe that musk could be imagined to have manners. The musk changes from being an animal secretion with a sweet scent (in "he has manners like musk") to being a make-believe person

72. van Gelder and Hammond (2008).

73. كيف ولو لا سبق المعرفة من طريق الحس . . . Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 218.1).

74. Abu Deeb (1979, 157f), Harb (2013, 159f).

75. Abu Deeb (1979, 52f); Harb (2013, 196f), (2015, 306–7); Larkin (1995, 110f).

76. يُفيدك أن يحدث في الذهن صورة هذا التأليف. See chapter 6 note 162.

77. Al-Fārābī (1986a, 90.8), Zimmermann (1981, comm. 22.18, 171.15).

78. فكما لا يصح أن يعكس فيشبهه . . . كذلك لا يصح أن تقول هذا مسك كخلفي فلان إلا على ما قدّم من التخيل. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 217.16–18).

who behaves sweetly (in “this musk is like his manners.”) For al-Ġurġānī, it is the logical mechanism of conversion that helps us see this.

Al-Ġurġānī’s poetics depended on these logical mechanisms because it was reason, not words, that created truth. It was impossible for a rational judgment to be dependent on a linguistic formulation, because the lexicon was only signs and marks that have no mental content until they are used to indicate something.⁷⁹ As Khalfallah has observed, “dans toutes les occurrences où l’auteur parle du ‘*aql* ou de *ma’qūl*, il fait en réalité référence au sens que l’intellect perçoit à travers l’évocation du mot.”⁸⁰ And the conceptual vocabulary for mapping these rational processes came from logic. It did not come from theology, where the only conceptual resources al-Ġurġānī would have had were remarks such as ‘Abd al-Ġabbār’s that “language that goes beyond the lexicon may be more eloquent because it is like reasoning with the lexicon; most likely, however, it is more eloquent because it makes additions to lexical precedent.”⁸¹ ‘Abd al-Ġabbār did not recognize, as al-Ġurġānī did, the centrality of the cognitive process and of mental content therein (as noted by Larkin and, in an engaging brief survey from outside the Arabist field, Michiel Leezenberg).⁸² This is one of the moments—of which there are many (see Larkin)⁸³—in which it seems very much as if al-Ġurġānī was reacting to Mu‘tazilī theories that, although they identified syntax as important, had failed to provide any account of how language users made connections between vocal form and mental content. “Makes additions to lexical precedent” was simply not a sufficient explanation for al-Ġurġānī. In ‘Abd al-Ġabbār’s epistemology we read of vocal forms that can sound nicer than others, and mental contents that can be more elevated than others. But he thought that there could be no aesthetic quality in mental content because an ugly-sounding word could indicate a pure and beautiful idea; beauty could therefore reside only in vocal form.⁸⁴ Al-Ġurġānī disagreed.

79. أَنْ كُلِّ حُكْمٍ يَجِبُ فِي الْعَقْلِ وَجُوباً حَتَّى لَا يَجُوزَ خِلَافُهُ فِإِضَافَتُهُ إِلَى دَلَالَةِ اللَّغَةِ وَجَعَلَهُ مَشْرُوطاً فِيهَا مُحَالٌ لِأَنَّ اللَّغَةَ تَجْرِي مَجْرَى الْعَلَامَاتِ وَالسِّمَاتِ وَلَا مَعْنَى لِلْعَلَامَةِ وَالسِّمَةِ حَتَّى يَحْتَمِلَ الشَّيْءُ مَا جُعِلَتْ وَأَنْ يُقَالَ مَا ضَرَبَ زَيْدٌ وَقَدْ كَانَ مِنْهُ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 347.18–21, 348.6–7). وَالْعَلَامَةُ دَلِيلٌ عَلَيْهِ وَخِلَافَهُ. ضَرَبْتُ يُوجِبُ عَلَى أَصْلِهِمْ إِخْلَاءَ اللَّفْظِ مِنْ مَعْنَاهِ الَّذِي وُضِعَ لِيَدُلَّ عَلَيْهِ وَذَلِكَ مَا لَا يُشَكُّ فِي فِسَادِهِ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 532.7–9).

80. “Whenever the author speaks of ‘*aql* or *ma’qūl*, he is actually referring to the sense in which the intellect looks into the evocation of the word”: Khalfallah (2014, 34).

81. بَلْ رُبَّمَا كَانَ الْمَجَازُ أَدْخَلَ فِي الْفِصَاحَةِ لِأَنَّهُ كَالِاسْتِدْلَالِ فِي اللَّغَةِ وَالْغَالِبُ أَنَّهُ يَزِيدُ عَلَى الْمَوَاضِعِ السَّابِقَةِ. Larkin (1995, 74), al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Ġabbār (1965–74, 16:200.15–16).

82. Larkin (1995, 65–66), Leezenberg (2001, 47–48).

83. Larkin (1995, 55–56).

84. وَلِذَلِكَ نَجِدُ الْمَعْبَرِينَ عَنِ الْمَعْنَى الْوَاحِدِ يَكُونُ أَحَدُهُمَا أَفْصَحَ مِنَ الْآخَرِ وَالْمَعْنَى مُتَّفِقٌ وَقَدْ يَكُونُ أَحَدُ

SYNTAX TIME

Lexicography claimed to be static, and although the dictionaries themselves were constantly and iteratively being developed, the new lexical placements they documented claimed permanence. But in poetics, the movement of mental content was the core of the theory. Al-Ġurġānī's poetics was a theory of syntax, and it is in the very nature of syntax that the language user moves along the sentence as a series of discrete steps, with their cognitive processes changing along the way. This meant that the passage of time, and the interface of time with mental content, was one of al-Ġurġānī's central dynamics.

He wrote:⁸⁵ "If you want to define analogy, even though there is very little need to do so. If you want to be able to identify it without pausing, then consider what al-Buḥturī said:"⁸⁶

*Coming close to the hands of those who seek favor
but remote. A liberality beyond every rival
above everyone else in the game.
Immoderately high like the moon
his light the good fortune of companionship
for a band of night travelers.*

This was written by al-Buḥturī (d. 987) in praise of his patron. Think, says al-Ġurġānī, "think of the state you are in, and the state of the mental content that is with you when you are in the first line ["Coming close to the hands of those who seek favor . . ."], heedless of the second line ["Immoderately high like the moon . . ."]. You have not contemplated how the second line will rescue the first line, nor how it will provide an analogy for the first line. The analogy will concern something that a person's eyes dictate to them, something to which a person's sight leads them. Then, when you have grasped the analogy and considered its two parts, compare the two states you have been in. You will see the distance you have traveled and how much more firmly the mental content you have is fixed after the second line. . . . You will then grant me the truth of my analysis."⁸⁷

المعنيين أَحْسَنَ وَأَعْرَفَ والمعبرُ عنه في الفصاحة أَدْوَنُ فهو مما لا بدَّ من اعتباره وإن كانت المزية تُظهر بغيره
المعنيين أَحْسَنَ وَأَعْرَفَ والمعبرُ عنه في الفصاحة أَدْوَنُ فهو مما لا بدَّ من اعتباره وإن كانت المزية تُظهر بغيره
على أَنْ نَعْلَمَ أَنَّ المعاني لا يقع فيها تَرَايُدُ. Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār (1965-74, 16:199.15-18).

وإن أردتَ أَنْ تعرفَ ذلكَ وإن كان تَقَلَّ الحاجةُ فيه إلى التعريفِ وَتُسْتَعْنَى في الوقوفِ عليه عن التوقيفِ 85.
فانظرْ إلى نحوِ قولِ البحرِتي Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 102.18-19).

دَانَ عَلَيَّ أَيُّدِي الْعَفَاةِ وَشَاسِعِ | عَن كُلِّ نَدٍّ فِي النَّدَى [فِي الْعَلَا (الصيرفي)] وَضَرْبِ
كَالْبُدْرِ أَقْرَطَ فِي الْعُلُوِّ وَضَوْءُهُ | لِلْعُصْبَةِ السَّارِينَ جِدَّ قَرِيبِ

Al-Buḥturī (1963-, 248-49 lines 27-28), al-Ġurġānī (1954, 103.1-2).

وفكَّرَ في حالِكِ وحالِ المعنى معكِ وَأَنْتَ في البيتِ الأوَّلِ لم تنتبهِ إلى الثاني ولم تتبدَّرْ نصرتهِ إياه 87.
وتمثِّلُه له فيما يُملي على الإنسان عيناه ويؤدِّي إليه ناظره ثم قسهما على الحال وقد وقفتَ عليه وتأمَّلتَ طرفيه

In order to understand the power of analogy, al-Ġurġānī wants you to travel through syntax time and notice how different you feel after the journey. The first line in Arabic is, “Coming close to the hands of those who seek favor. . . . above everyone else in the game.” On hearing this line (which the lineation of my translation has turned into three lines), you grasp that the patron is aloof and more generous than his peers, but that is all you grasp. Then you hear the second line: “Immoderately high like the moon . . . for a band of night travelers.” This is an analogy, a *tamīl*. (The Arabic term literally means “the making of an example.”) It is a sensory analogy; you imagine looking up at the moon in the sky, and suddenly the patron’s aloof generosity has new dimensions: he shines, and the light he provides guides those beneath. By the end of the second line, at the end of the analogy, you have a great deal more to think about.

Time also controlled ambiguity. In the American twentieth century, John Ransom (d. 1974) famously wrote that ambiguity arises when two different readings are possible, or when there is a certain diffuseness in the reference.⁸⁸ Classical Arabic poetics, with a technique based around the movement of mental contents that was more mechanical than New Criticism, dealt with ambiguity through the relationship between vocal form and mental content. Ar-Rāġib had stated in his poetics that one could intend two different mental contents with a single vocal form. In Rabī‘ah b. Maqrūm’s (d. ca. 672) line:

*Water, its supply tainted, deserted.
The wild beasts dig at its edges.*

the vocal form “water” indicated both a liquid and a place.⁸⁹ Ar-Rāġib’s lexicographical framework did not include a consideration of the syntax time that passed as the audience read or heard this poem, and he implied that the vocal form indicated two mental contents at the same time.

However, when al-Ġurġānī discussed a similar phenomenon in the *Dalā’il*, he wrote that an indefinite noun, when found at the start of a phrase, could frame the audience’s response by telling them that what followed would fall into a certain class of thing. So if one heard: “only evil makes a fanged animal snarl,” one would be alerted upon hearing “evil” to the fact that speaker intended to talk about something, not yet precisely defined, that was not good.⁹⁰ The use of a definite article here

فإنك تعلم بعد ما بين حالتيك وشدة تفاوتهما في تمكّن المعنى لديك . . . وتحكم لي بالصدق فيما قلت.
Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 103.3–7).

88. Ransom (1979, 102, 111).

89. وَمَاءِ آجِنِ الْجَمَّاتِ فَفَرٍ | تَعَمَّمِ فِي جَوَانِهِ السَّبَاعُ. Ar-Rāġib (ca. 14th C., fol. 4a.4). Cf. translations: Key (2012, 115), Lane (1863–93, ‘-q-m).

90. واعلم أنا لم تُرد بما قلناه من أنه إنما حسنّ الابتداء بالنكرة في قولهم شرُّ أهرّ ذا ناب لأنه أريد به .

would have produced different, albeit equally inauspicious, mental content: “only the evil . . .” But, wrote al-Ġurġānī, one could also use an indefinite noun in a situation where the intent was not to frame what followed as belonging to a certain class of things. If you say, “Did a man come, or two men?” then the mental content that you intend with “a man” is not the class of men. With “evil,” the indefinite vocal form leads the audience to consider a class of evil things. But with “a man,” the indefinite vocal form leads the audience to consider a single undefined man. As al-Ġurġānī put it: “The vocal form can indicate two matters, and then the intent can determine one of them and exclude the other. The excluded matter, because it is not part of the intent, becomes as if it is no longer part of the indication of the vocal form.”⁹¹

Grammar provides options, and speakers choose between them. Syntax has rules. Although a vocal form can be potentially ambiguous, when the mind of the audience comes to the end of the sentence, there is no space for ambiguity or diffusion. The gap between the potential ambiguity and the eventual certainty is a gap in time. Time was what al-Ġurġānī’s theory of creative syntax exploited. He disagreed with ar-Rāġib about the possibility of two mental contents being in play at the same time. Whereas ar-Rāġib used a model of static and paradigmatically lexical connections between vocal form and mental content, al-Ġurġānī’s model of creative syntax enabled the poet to negotiate ambiguity as the sentence developed.

Arabic grammar had an established discourse about elision, the functions it performed, and the contexts in which it occurred. But al-Ġurġānī connected elision to poetic affect. He knew that this was a theoretical intervention, writing that a serious reader of his monograph would come to see that when “I emphasize and elevate elision to a position where it is almost magic and overwhelms the mind, the situation is in fact as I say it is.”⁹² It was an intervention that, as Baalbaki has shown, consciously expanded grammar into aesthetics.⁹³ One particular short section on elision in the *Dalā’il* starts with a deliberate irony of presentation. With a rhetorical flourish, al-Ġurġānī wrote that this section was only for those who were really interested in the minutiae of poetics and motivated to discover how reason works. Such people, his desired audience, “do not

الجنسُ أن معنى شرٍّ والشرُّ سواءٌ وإنما أَرَدْنَا أَنَّ الغرض من الكلام أن نُبيِّنَ أَنَّ الذي أَهْرَذا الناب هو من جنس الشرِّ لا جنس الخير. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 143.9, 144.6–14). Cf. Sibawayh (1966, 1:329.9–10).

91. وعكسُ هذا أنك إذا قلت أرجلٌ أتاكَ أم رجلانِ كان القصدُ منك إلى كونه واحداً دون كونه رجلاً. فاعرفُ ذلك أصلاً وهو أنه قد يكون في اللفظ دليلٌ على أمرين ثم يقع القصدُ إلى أحدهما دون الآخر فيصير ذلك الآخر بأن لم يدخل في القصد كأنه لم يدخل في دلالة اللفظ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 144.16–145.2).

92. أن الذي قلتُ في شأنِ الحذف وفي تفخيمِ أمره والتنويه بذكره وأن مأخذه مأخذٌ يُشبهه السحرُ ويُبهر. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 7–171, 5).

93. Baalbaki (1983, 16).

race to the first thing that occurs to their minds.”⁹⁴ For theory requires a slower reading process. But the theory that he is talking about in this section is about the aesthetic impact of the first thing that occurs to one’s mind! Al-Ġurġānī had an ethics of reading for theory and criticism that valorized slow, iterative process through long books, yet here that criticism is an ethics of reading sentences that values the speed with which images present themselves. (On that speed, see Harb and Abu Deeb.)⁹⁵ In this section, al-Ġurġānī took the following image from al-Buḥturī:⁹⁶

*How often you defend me from
the burden of each new event
intensity of days that cut
to the bone.*

and focused on the phrase “cut to the bone.” He wrote that in the elision of “flesh” (“cut [the flesh] to the bone,” the phrase not having in Arabic quite the ubiquity it has now in English) there was a “wonderful and glorious something extra.”⁹⁷

The impact of elision came from the steps of reasoned imagination that the listener no longer had to take. If the poet had included the flesh and written, “intensity of days that cut the flesh to the bone,” then the audience would have imagined, after hearing the word “flesh” and before hearing the words “cut to the bone,” that the cutting of flesh in question was a matter of flesh wounds, or skinning, or some other way in which flesh can be cut. Then when they heard the words “to the bone,” they would have realized what type of cutting was intended. But the power of elision in this case was to “free the listener from that imagination, to make the mental content occur at the first moment and to allow the listener to conceive in his soul from the very beginning that that cut went through the flesh and nothing stopped it until it reached the bone.”⁹⁸ This was the best kind of conception for al-Ġurġānī, imagery that was in the soul and more eloquent than if it had been indicated by vocal form, and yet imagery that relied entirely on syntax creating meaning in time. His literary criticism took Ibn Sīnā’s logical vocabulary of mental contents conceived in the soul and turned that vocabulary to the diagnosis of affect across the time it took to read a sentence.

94. لِمَنْ نَظَرَ نَظَرَ الْمُثَبِّتِ . . . وَلَا يَعْدُو الَّذِي يَقَعُ فِي أَوَّلِ الْخَاطِرِ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 171.1–5).

95. Abu Deeb (1979, 255), Harb (2013, 99f).

96. وَكَمْ ذُدَّتْ عَنِّي مِنْ تَحَامُلِ حَادِثٍ | وَسَوْرَةَ أَيَّامٍ حَزَنَ إِلَى الْعَظْمِ. Al-Buḥturī (1963–), (2018, l. 43).

97. أَنَّ فِي مَجِيئِهِ بِهِ مَحْذُوفاً وَإِسْقَاطَهُ لَهُ مِنَ النُّطْقِ وَتَرْكِهِ فِي الضَّمِيرِ مَزِيَّةً عَجِيبَةً وَفَائِدَةً جَلِيلَةً. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 171.14–15).

98. لِيُبَيِّرَ السَّمَاعَ مِنْ هَذَا الْوَهْمِ وَيَجْعَلَهُ بَحِيثَ يَقَعِ الْمَعْنَى مِنْهُ فِي أَنْفِ الْفَهْمِ وَيَتَصَوَّرُ فِي نَفْسِهِ مِنْ أَوَّلِ الْعَظْمِ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ الْحِظَّ مَضَى فِي اللَّحْمِ حَتَّى لَمْ يَرِدْهُ إِلَّا الْعَظْمَ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 172.6–8).

LEXICAL ACCURACY (ḤAQĪQAḤ)

Lexical accuracy was a fundamental aspect of language that the critic could identify regardless of whether the techniques in play were classed as comparison, analogy, metaphor, make-believe, or metonymy. Lexical accuracy was central to al-Ġurġānī's project. But how did he think of the lexicon? He certainly knew the lexicographers, remarking that when the authors of dictionaries (such as Abū al-'Abbās ʿAlāʾ, d. 904) gave their books titles such as *The Eloquent* (*al-Faṣīḥ*), the eloquence to which they were referring was only a matter of precedent and adherence to morphological and lexical rules.⁹⁹ Al-Ġurġānī thought that while the lexicon was the structural foundation for language use, it was not the source of aesthetic value or creativity; beauty came from syntax and from metaphor.¹⁰⁰

Al-Ġurġānī moved away from previous theories of Arabic poetics grounded in the lexicon. They had assumed words could have more meaning when used in poetry, that when vocal forms were in poetic images they could suddenly start referring to more mental content than usual. This had tended to be the assumption behind the valorization of concision by ar-Rāġib and others.¹⁰¹ Al-Ġurġānī, on the other hand, wrote at the end of the *Dalāʾil* that the collections of mental content entrusted to each vocal form never change beyond the lexical placement intended by the language giver. He too was discussing the aesthetic value of concision, but he wanted to clarify that eloquent concision that communicated "a lot of mental content with a little vocal form" did not change the actual lexical-placement connections between vocal forms and collections of mental content. In al-Ġurġānī's theory, via a purely cognitive process, the initial mental content that resulted from a vocal form could connect to other, subsequent, mental contents and create a poetic image without altering any original lexical connections.¹⁰² What made al-Ġurġānī's theory different was that it turned a static, lexicographical model into a dynamic, syntactical one. Rather than words having more meaning when poets put them into images, the words kept their meanings, and it was the syntax that created new forms of meaning in the audience's mind. Rather than poetry break-

99. ورأوا أبا العباس نَعَلَبَ قد سَمَّى كتابه الفصيحَ مع أنه لم يَذكر فيه إلا اللَغة والألفاظ المفردة . . . ولم يَعلم أنَّ المعاني في وُصف الألفاظ المفردة بالفصاحة أنها في اللَغة أثبَتُ وفي استعمال الفصحاء أكثرُ أو المُودعة في الألفاظ لا تَتغيَّر على الجملة عمَّا أَراده واضِعُ اللَغة وإذا ثَبَت ذلك ظَهَر منه أنه لا معنى لقولنا كَثرة المعاني. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 458.13–459.1). Partial translation: Khalfallah (2014, 36).

100. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 250.9–13).

101. Key (2012, 182f, 185), ar-Rāġib (ca. 14th C., fol. 5bf).

102. وهو أنَّ العاقل إذا نظَرَ عَلِمَ عَلِمَ ضرورةً أنه لا سبيل له إلى أن يُكثِر معاني الألفاظ أو يُقلِّلها لأنَّ المعاني المُودعة في الألفاظ لا تَتغيَّر على الجملة عمَّا أَراده واضِعُ اللَغة وإذا ثَبَت ذلك ظَهَر منه أنه لا معنى لقولنا كَثرة المعاني مع قِلَّة اللفظ غير أنَّ المتكلم يَوصِلُ بدلالة المعنى على المعنى إلى فوائد. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 464.2–6).

ing down lexical accuracy, poets instead used syntax to create images that combined lexical accuracy with imaginative predications.

Al-Ġurġānī held that critics could recognize beauty in literature only when they understood the mechanisms by which it moved in relation to language's lexical foundations. (Stefan Sperl would reach the same conclusion as al-Ġurġānī many centuries later, writing of "the creation of concord or discord between signifier and signified" as the defining characteristic of what he called the "mannerism" of the ninth-century poets such as Abū Tammām.)¹⁰³ The primary structure governing language in the lexicon was, as we have already seen, the distinction between lexical accuracy (*ḥaqīqah*) and language that went beyond the lexicon (*maġāz*). In order to explain how poetic imagery could be both unreal and lexically accurate, al-Ġurġānī made a distinction between lexical accuracy as it applied to single words and lexical accuracy as it applied to sentences or clauses. (See Heinrichs, who is keen to make a distinction between aesthetic and theological disciplines, a distinction that I am comfortable allowing to collapse.)¹⁰⁴ In sentences, lexical accuracy was a matter of predication: was A really B? (The single-lexeme verb was included with sentences because in Arabic it contained a pronoun and therefore an affirmation: "He did.")¹⁰⁵ When it came to single words, al-Ġurġānī had his own account of lexical placement. Every word used according to its original placement was lexically accurate if the connection between vocal form and mental content was direct and simple. In an aside that can have been intended only for his Mu'tazili interlocutors, al-Ġurġānī added that you could, if you wanted, call that lexical placement "the process of lexical placement,"¹⁰⁶ which was the term used by 'Abd al-Ġabbār, among others, to claim that language was constantly being created by human lexical placement rather than having been created all at one time by God.¹⁰⁷ In any case—and here he adopted the same tone as Ibn Sīnā—it doesn't matter whether one thinks that language was imposed in a divine act of placement or that it had developed iteratively according to shared convention from the earliest Arabic tribal dialects to the present day. In either case, the same definition of lexical accuracy applies.¹⁰⁸ It is a matter of how one uses words.

103. Sperl (1989, 180).

104. Heinrichs (1991/92, 278).

105. وأما فَعَلَ فلم تَنْقُلْهُ عن المَوْضِعِ الَّذِي وَضَعْتَهُ اللُّغَةُ لِأَنَّهُ كَمَا مَضَى مَوْضِعٌ لِإِثْبَاتِ الْفِعْلِ لِلشَّيْءِ فِي زَمَانٍ مَاضٍ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 378.20–379.1).

106. كُلُّ كَلِمَةٍ أُرِيدَ بِهَا مَا وَقَعَتْ لَهُ فِي وَضْعٍ وَاضِعٍ وَإِنْ شِئْتَ قَلْتَ فِي مَوْضِعَةٍ وَقُرْعاً لَا تَسْتَنْدُ فِيهِ إِلَى غَيْرِهِ فِيهِ حَقِيقَةٌ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 324.8–10).

107. Peters (1976, 304–5, 386–87), al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār (1965–74, 16:199).

108. وهذه عِبْرَةٌ تَنْتَظِمُ الْوَضْعَ الْأَوَّلَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ عَنْهُ كَلِغَةِ تَحَدَّثُ فِي قَبِيلَةٍ مِنَ الْعَرَبِ أَوْ فِي جَمِيعِ الْعَرَبِ وَأَوْ فِي جَمِيعِ النَّاسِ مِثْلًا أَوْ تُحَدَّثُ الْيَوْمَ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 324.10–12).

Lexical accuracy was a quality that all words could have, right down to simple particles of comparison such as “like.” If you say “Zayd is like a lion,” then you are using “like” with lexical accuracy; comparison is a mental content like any other, and it is connected by precedent to the vocal form “like.”¹⁰⁹ Conversely, if you use “the hand” for “the blessing” because humans have tended to use their hands to give blessings, then the word can be judged to be beyond the lexicon. (This is a reference to the exegetical discussion about God’s hands in the Quran and anthropomorphism.)¹¹⁰ But even here the original lexical placement is still in play: without some maintenance of reference to the human appendage the metaphorical usage makes no sense.¹¹¹

Think, said al-Ġurġānī, about how you use the word “lion” to refer to the wild beast. “You will see how your statement fulfills all its own requirements. This is because your intent was that to which you know the word ‘lion’ connects according to lexical placement. You are also aware that this connection does not rely on anything other than the wild beast. You are not forced by some potential confusion or the memory of some concept to conceive of an additional principle that could lead you to the wild beast.”¹¹² This is al-Ġurġānī’s lexically accurate account, and its definition contains the seeds of his entire critical project. “Lexical accuracy” is the name for the connection between vocal form and mental content that you make when you are simply following the precedent of other language users. All language users, wherever they are, can be placers of the lexicon according to al-Ġurġānī; he says that this is why he deliberately kept the nouns in his definition of lexical accuracy indefinite (“a placement by a placer”).¹¹³ This direct connection between vocal form

109. لأن التشبيه معنى من المعاني وله حروف واسماء تدل عليه فإذا صرح بذكر ما هو موضوع للدلالة 109. عليه كان الكلام حقيقة كالحكم في سائر المعاني فاعرفه Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 222.4–5).

110. Quran 3:26, 3:73 (Āl ‘Imrān), 5:64 (al-Mā’idah), 23:88 (al-Mu’minūn), 36:83 (Yā Sīn), 48:10 (al-Fath), 57:29 (al-Ĥadid), 67:1 (al-Mulk). Cf. ar-Rāġib (1992, 889/2.6f).

111. وهو أن يقع نقله على وجه لا يعرَى معه من ملاحظة الأصل ومعنى الملاحظة أن الاسم يقع لما تقول إنه مجازٌ فيه بسبب بينه وبين الذين تجعله حقيقةً فيه نحو أن اليد تقع للنعمة وأصلها الجارحة لأجل أن الاعتبار اللغوية تتبع أحوال المخلوقين وعاداتهم وما يقتضيه ظاهر البنية وموضوع الجيلة ومن شأن النعمة أن تصدر عن اليد ومنها تصل إلى المقصود بها وفي ذكر اليد إشارة إلى مصدر تلك النعمة الواصلة إلى المقصود بها والموهوبة هي منه Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 365.6–12; cf. 325.19f).

112. فانظر إلى قولك الأسد تُريد به السبع فإنك تراه يؤدّي جميع شرائطه لأنك قد أردت به ما تعلم أنه وقع له في وضع واضع اللغة وكذلك تعلم أنه غير مستند في هذا الوقوع إلى شيء غير السبع أي لا يحتاج أن يُتصور له أصل أداه إلى السبع من أجل التباس بينهما وملاحظة Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 325.7–11).

113. وهذا الحكم إذا كانت الكلمة حادثة ولو وضعت اليوم متى كان وضعها كذلك وكذلك الأعلام وذلك أني قلت ما وقعت له في وضع واضع أو موضوعة على التذكير ولم أقل في وضع الواضع الذي ابتداء اللغة أو في المواضع اللغوية. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 325.11–14).

and mental content, enabled by precedent, can be recognized by the absence of any need to rely on any other cognitive component. As soon as some memory of the speech act's context, or some commitment to reading metaphorically, or some surface lack of clarity intervenes, the direct link is broken, and the audience starts trying to connect the lexically accurate mental content to some other mental content in order for the speech act to make sense. The resultant mental gymnastics, which can be very simple or tremendously complex, are what make language beautiful.

But the lexicon was always present, anchoring the aesthetically pleasing loops of mental content. The lexicon was, for al-Ġurġānī, the naming precedent of the speech community, constantly in development. It, was communal habit that governed the success or failure of metaphor, not divine precedent. So although the prophet Muḥammad had compared the believer to a date palm (for its firm roots, etc.), one cannot simply say "I saw a date palm" and have it mean that you saw a believer. Al-Ġurġānī borrows a phrase from Sibawayh here: this mistake would make you "a riddler who has abandoned the sort of speech that goes straight to people's hearts." (Sibawayh had been talking about declensions of case and elided verbs, whereas al-Ġurġānī was talking about metaphor, but the invective proved attractive.)¹¹⁴

How did al-Ġurġānī conceive of this lexicon's functioning? If there was no divine moment of original lexical placement, and no sociocultural curation by an elite class of lexicographers, what was the accurate mental content delineated by an act of lexical placement? In the *Asrār*, al-Ġurġānī provided an answer through an analogy to changes of costume. He was explaining how metaphors always had an underlying comparison, even in the absence of a particle such as "like" or "as," and this explanation relied on the concept of accuracy.¹¹⁵ The single noun, he wrote, is a shape that indicates the class of a thing. It is like the clothing of kings, or of market folk. You can take off those clothes, remove every indication that a person belongs to the market or the monarchy, and then dress each in the clothes of the other, leaving the audience unable to perceive the change without external corroboration. If you do this, then you have borrowed the shape and clothes of market folk or kings, and done so "accurately."¹¹⁶ If, however, you do not completely denude the person of every single mental content that indicates their status, and some indication remains that the person is in fact a king or from the market, then you have not accurately borrowed the clothes or the shape of the noun. The metaphor depends on the accuracy: all the clothes have to change in order for the audience to be forced to look outside the syntax; this is how metaphors work. There is also a

114. إنَّ مَنْ رامَ بِمِثْلِ هَذَا كَانَ كَمَا قَالَ صَاحِبُ الْكِتَابِ مُلْغَرًا تَارِكًا لِكَلَامِ النَّاسِ الَّذِي يَسْبِقُ إِلَى أَفْئِدَتِهِمْ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 227.4–5), Sibawayh (1966, 1:308.7).

115. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 300.5–301.2).

116. كُنْتَ قَدْ أَعْرَضْتَهُ هَيْئَةَ الْمَلِكِ وَزَيَّيْتَهُ عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 300.9–10).

uses a vocal form and intends mental content not its own.¹¹⁹ And the choice to be lexically accurate or go beyond the lexicon was the speaker's; a factually or empirically incorrect statement could still be "accurate for the person who said it."¹²⁰ Al-Ġurġānī wrote that going beyond the lexicon was a broad category that encompassed metaphor, metonymy, and analogy,¹²¹ and this had naturally led critics to associate it with aesthetic quality: "always more eloquent than lexical accuracy."¹²² But the situation was not that simple. (See Heinrichs.)¹²³ "It has been our custom to say about the difference between lexical accuracy and going beyond the lexicon the following: lexical accuracy is when the vocal form keeps to its place in the lexicon, and going beyond is when it ceases to be in that place and is used somewhere other than its lexical placement."¹²⁴ But what happens is in fact the complete opposite. When we call a brave man a lion, we have not completely moved the vocal form "lion" away from its lexical meaning; what we have done is claim that the man is included in the mental content of "lion." The metaphor is in the predication, not in the word itself. The vocal form "lion" still means "lion," because it is clearly invalid to imagine that the speaker of the phrase "he is a lion" meant only and exactly "he is brave." There must be more to what the speaker meant than simply "he is brave."¹²⁵

Al-Ġurġānī had abandoned the established consensus that lexical accuracy was a stable category of reference and that going beyond the lexicon was constituted by any and all deviations from that category. Instead, lexical accuracy was a zone or principle that anchored and caused affect. It was not a hermetically sealed category. When we say "the man is a lion," the lexically accurate mental content of that fearsome beast is still in play. (Cf. Heinrichs.)¹²⁶ What anchors the metaphor

119. ذَكَرَتِ الْكَلِمَةَ وَأَنْتَ لَا تُرِيدُ مَعْنَاهَا. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 293.4).

120. الَّذِي [أَطْلَقَهُ بِجَهْلِهِ وَعَمَاهُ . . . لَا يُوصَفُ بِالْمَجَازِ وَلَكِنْ يُقَالُ عِنْدَ قَائِلِهِ أَنَّهُ حَقِيقَةٌ وَهُوَ كَذِبٌ] (وَبَاطِلٌ). Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 356.1-3).

121. هَذِهِ الْمَعْنَايُ الَّتِي هِيَ الْاسْتِعَارَةُ وَالْكِتَابَةُ وَالتَّمثِيلُ وَسَائِرُ ضُرُوبِ الْمَجَازِ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 393.6-7).

122. إِنَّهُ أَبْلَغُ مِنَ الْحَقِيقَةِ . . . يَكُونُ أَوْلَى مِنَ الْحَقِيقَةِ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 367.12, 427.3-4).

123. Heinrichs (2016, 252-57).

124. وَذَلِكَ أَنَّ الْعَادَةَ قَدْ جَرَتْ بِأَنْ يُقَالَ فِي الْفَرْقِ بَيْنَ الْحَقِيقَةِ وَالْمَجَازِ إِنَّ الْحَقِيقَةَ أَنْ يُقَرَّرَ اللَّفْظُ عَلَى أَصْلِهِ فِي اللَّغَةِ وَالْمَجَازُ أَنْ يُرَالِ عَنْ مَوْضِعِهِ وَيُسْتَعْمَلُ فِي غَيْرِ مَا وُضِعَ لَهُ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 366.13-15).

125. فَإِنَّ الْأَمْرَ بَعْدَ عَلَى خِلافِهِ وَذَلِكَ أَنَا إِذَا حَقَّقْنَا لَمْ نَجِدْ لَفْظَ أَسَدٍ قَدْ اسْتَعْمِلَ عَلَى الْقَطْعِ وَالبَيْتِ فِي غَيْرِ مَا وُضِعَ لَهُ . . . فَالْتَجَوُّزُ فِي أَنْ ادَّعَيْتَ لِلرَّجُلِ أَنَّهُ فِي مَعْنَى الْأَسَدِ . . . وَهَذَا إِنَّ أَنْتَ حَصَلْتَ [فَهُوَ] تَجَوُّزٌ مِنْكَ فِي مَعْنَى اللَّفْظِ لَا اللَّفْظِ وَإِنَّمَا يَكُونُ اللَّفْظُ مُرَالاً بِالْحَقِيقَةِ عَنْ مَوْضِعِهِ وَمَنْقُولاً عَمَّا وُضِعَ لَهُ أَنْ لَوْ كُنْتَ تَجِدَ عَاقِلًا يَقُولُ هُوَ أَسَدٌ وَهُوَ لَا يُضَيِّرُ فِي نَفْسِهِ تَشْبِيهًا لَهُ بِالْأَسَدِ وَلَا يُرِيدُ إِلَّا مَا يَرِيدُهُ إِذَا قَالَ هُوَ شَجَاعٌ وَذَلِكَ مَا لَا يُشَكُّ فِي بَطْلَانِهِ. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 367.2-10).

126. Heinrichs (1991/92, 280).

is the bundle of accurate mental contents for “lion,” which includes the strength and fearlessness of the animal.¹²⁷ This new way of looking at the categories of lexical accuracy and going beyond the lexicon meant that al-Ġurġānī could no longer sustain the taxonomical clarity that had led ar-Rāġib to say that any elision or abbreviation was a departure from the lexicon. Such extraneous alterations in the vocal forms had no significance for al-Ġurġānī; they did not involve the intent to communicate extra mental content. (See Heinrichs.)¹²⁸ What interested al-Ġurġānī was images. Images are sentences or clauses, predications or affirmations in which the poet claims that something is something else: he is a lion, or she is a gazelle. On the level of the sentence, there is no lexical accuracy, because the person in question is not actually a lion or a gazelle. But on the level of the individual word, there is lexical accuracy, because the poet intends the whole bundle of mental contents that precedent has connected to the vocal form “lion” or “gazelle” to be in play. Lexical accuracy therefore helps explain why images create more affect than factual statements: it is the combination of loss of accuracy on the sentence level with maintenance of accuracy on the word level that makes “he is a lion” more beautiful than “he is brave.”

Al-Ġurġānī used the standard example of “he is a lion” to establish his theory of lexical accuracy, predication, and metaphor. But the goal of this theory was not to explain such commonplace statements. The target of his criticism was the most famous and complex images of Classical Arabic poetry. Let us take the toolbox we have assembled in the paragraphs above and turn to the make-believe metaphor and a subdivision thereof in which the poet pretends that neither metaphor nor any points of actual comparison are relevant any longer. The poem is now functioning in a wholly imaginary but still lexically accurate sphere. When Abū Tammām (d. 845) wrote in an elegy for a general that:¹²⁹

*He rose so high
that the ignorant thought
he had work to do
in the sky,*

he was pretending to forget the underlying comparison of physical ascent with increased social status and was instead constructing a new comparison in the

127. أنه في معنى الأسد وأنه كأنه هو في قوة قلبه وشدة بطشه وفي أن الخوف لا يخامره والذعر لا يعارض له. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 367.5–6).

128. وذلك أن حقيقة الزيادة في الكلمة أن تعرى من معناها وتذكر ولا فائدة لها سوى الصلة ويكون سقوطها وثبوتها سواء ومحال أن يكون ذلك مجاز لأن المجاز أن يراد بالكلمة غير ما وضعت له في الأصل. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 384.11–14), Heinrichs (1991/92, 278).

129. وَيَصْعَدُ حَتَّى يُظَنُّ الْجُهُولُ | بِأَنَّ لَهُ حَاجَةً فِي السَّمَاءِ. Abū Tammām and at-Tabrizī (1994, 2:200.58), al-Ġurġānī (1954, 279.6).

sphere of make-believe. Without the pretending-to-forget, the image has no impact.¹³⁰ This process revolved, for al-Ġurġānī, around the wonder experienced by the audience. (This wonder is also the starting point for Harb's analyses.)¹³¹ What is interesting for our purposes here is the role that lexical accuracy played in his theory.

Al-Ġurġānī was dealing at this point in the *Dalā'il* with a phrase from a poem by al-Farazdaq:¹³²

My forefather is the more praiseworthy of the two heavy rains.

The critic first identified the absence of an explicit comparison made between the bountiful behavior of the poet's forefather and the bountiful impact of the rain, as if "it was not even in the poet's mind that the phrase went beyond the lexicon."¹³³ The poet also appears to assume that the similarity of forefather and bounteous rain is well established and well known. Then, al-Ġurġānī notes that the specific grammatical structure of the phrase in Arabic forces the audience to imagine two rains together, one of which *is* the forefather. The Arabic syntax makes it very difficult for the audience to think of the forefather and the rain as two separate things. (A phrase such as "he is comparable to the rain" would allow this, and thereby create less wonder.) It is exactly because it is difficult to get out of the image and back to the real world of comparison that this kind of poetry has aesthetic value. What matters to al-Ġurġānī is that "departure from the lexicon is joined with lexical accuracy in the compact of the dual form of the noun."¹³⁴ Arabic nouns can have singular, dual, or plural forms. In this case, "two rains" is a single lexeme, *ġaylāni*, in which al-Ġurġānī locates a lexically accurate rain, a rain that goes beyond the lexicon, and the poetic affect itself. Next, al-Ġurġānī turned to an image from al-Buḥturī that praised a patron's lion-hunting ability:

You are the two hardest-fighting lions
I have ever seen at war.

The patron becomes a lion in the image (beyond the lexicon) while the lion he is fighting remains a lion (lexically accurate).¹³⁵

130. ومثاله استعارتهم العلو لزيادة الرجل على غيره في الفضل والقدر والسلطان ثم وضعهم الكلام وضع 130. من يذكر علواً من طريق المكان ألا ترى إلى قول أبي تمام ويصعد حتى يظن الجهول بأن له حاجة في السماء . . . فلو لا قصده أن يُنسى التشبيه ويرفعه بجهده . . . كما كان لهذا الكلام وجه Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 279.3–8). Cf. translation in van Gelder and Hammond (2008, 57).

131. ومدار هذا النوع في الغالب على التعجب Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 281.11), Harb (2013, 159f, 169f).

132. . . . أبي أحمد الغنّين Al-Farazdaq (1987, 329.12), al-Ġurġānī (1954, 293.13).

133. . . . ومَن لا يخطر بباله أنه مجاز فيه ومتناول له Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 293.15–16).

134. أن يُضَمَّ المجاز إلى الحقيقة في عقد التثنية Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 295.11). Translation of this passage: van Gelder and Hammond (2008, 67–69).

135. فلم أرَ ضرغامين أصدق منكما | عزاكاً . . . لأن أحد الضرغامين حقيقة والآخر مجاز Al-Buḥturī

In these three examples (rising in the sky, the two rains, and the two lions) we can see the framework provided by grammatical structures in syntax for the cognitive process catalyzed by poetry; al-Ġurġānī located the power of the image of the two rains *in* the Arabic declension of a noun as dual. We can also see his understanding of lexical accuracy as a dynamic category: these are make-believe images far removed from reality; no one actually fought with any lions or became a downpour, and yet the epistemological category of lexical accuracy remains in play. It anchors al-Ġurġānī's analyses. A make-believe situation can itself be read as containing accurate accounts; the poet creates a new accuracy when he makes a man into a lion that actually fights another lion. This is not accuracy as Ibn Sīnā or Ibn Fūrak understood it. It is closest to the accuracy of ar-Rāġib, but whereas the lexicographer ar-Rāġib had such a static understanding of lexical connections that he had to categorize all poetic action (and dialect) as going beyond the lexicon, al-Ġurġānī's sense of lexical accuracy as dynamic allowed him to explain how images can be both true and false.

SYNTAX (NAẒM)

Syntax was the base structure of language in which the axes and zones of poetic technique played out. Syntax was also al-Ġurġānī's central resolution for the problem of how the Quran is inimitably eloquent. This diagnosis enabled him to complete the work of the *Asrār* and in the *Dalā'il* extend his account of beauty in language to cover everything about words and how they relate to each other: all the quality he located in poetry and eloquent prose came from combinations of words. (See Antonella Gherseti.)¹³⁶

When God said in the Quran that "those who fear God are the scholars," his specific intent could not be recovered by a paraphrase that altered the syntax. "The scholars fear God" does not have the same mental content.¹³⁷ Our minds react differently to the two phrases, and our disparate reactions can be traced through the time it takes to hear or read the sentence. During this time, there is more happening in the syntax than simply word order and grammatical particles. Syntax *requires* the inclusion of metaphor, metonymy, and analogy to achieve its aesthetic goal.¹³⁸ But at the same time syntax, as a zone of analysis, remained "the pursuit

(1963-, 1:200 l. 43), al-Ġurġānī (1954, 295.13–14), van Gelder and Hammond (2008, 68).

136. Gherseti (2011, 97f).

137. ولو أُخِّرَ ذِكْرُ اسْمِ اللَّهِ وَقُدِّمَ الْعِلْمَاءُ فَقِيلَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى الْعِلْمَاءُ اللَّهَ لَأَصَارَ الْمَعْنَى عَلَى ضَيْدٍ مَا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ. Quran 35:28 (Fātir). Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 338.3–339.6).

138. ذَلِكَ يَقْتَضِي دُخُولَ الاسْتِعَارَةِ وَنَظَائِرِهَا فِيمَا هُوَ مُعْجِزٌ وَذَلِكَ لِأَنَّ هَذِهِ الْمَعَانِي الَّتِي هِيَ الاسْتِعَارَةُ وَالْكِنَايَةُ وَالتَّمثِيلُ وَسَائِرُ ضُرُوبِ الْمَجَازِ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا مِنْ مَقْتَضِيَّاتِ النِّظْمِ وَعَنْهُ يُحَدَّثُ وَبِهِ يَكُونُ

of the mental contents of grammar.” Al-Ġurġānī’s poetics in the *Asrār* and *Dalā’ il* was a study of the aesthetic functions of those mental contents. (He dealt with their strictly grammatical functions elsewhere; see Versteegh.)¹³⁹

In his section in the *Dalā’ il* on predication, al-Ġurġānī dealt with the definite article (“the”) and the different ways in which it can deliver the mental content of prior knowledge, completeness, or paradigmatic nature. This productive variation is called by al-Ġurġānī the “ineffable magic of clarity.”¹⁴⁰ He did not use grammar as just a source of epistemological frameworks to explain metaphor and comparison; he invested grammatical categories with aesthetic value. He located beauty in the definite article. There was no more powerful instantiation of the definite article, al-Ġurġānī wrote, than the pronoun that in Arabic introduces the definite relative clause (“which/who”). It impacts on imagination. Al-Ġurġānī started off with two lines of poetry that at the time of the *Dalā’ il* were around 450 and 300 years old, respectively. The first was from Ḥuġġayah b. al-Muḍarrab (fl. ca. seventh century):¹⁴¹

*It is your brother who will answer your call when misfortune strikes;
if you are angry he will be angry,
angry with the sword.*

The second was from Baššār b. Burd (d. 784):¹⁴²

*It is your brother who if you doubt him will say
‘I must have given cause to doubt.’
If you then criticize him
he will accept it.*

Al-Ġurġānī’s analysis of these verses focused on the imaginary estimations in the audience’s mind. Just as the definite article could make the listener imagine the paradigmatic instance of a class and then subsequently realize that the person being described was one such paradigm, so in these two quotations the relative pronoun “who” makes the listener estimate a person who could behave as the poets describe. Such a person then appears in the audience’s mind without them actually knowing such a person. This is how the poet teaches the listener to

(1992a, 393.5–8).

139. Al-Ġurġānī (1982, 1:391), Versteegh (1992, 126).

140. من سحر البيان الذي تقصّر العبارة عن تأديته حقه. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 184.8).

141. أخوك الذي إن تدعهُ لملممة | يُجيبك وإن تعصّب إلى السيف يعصّب. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 184.16), al-Marzūqī and Abū Tammām (1991, 1177).

142. أخوك الذي إن ربته قال إنما | أربنت وإن عاتبته لأن جابته. Baššār b. Burd (1976, 1:326.1), al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 185.2).

connect this ideal imagined person with the brother they may actually know.¹⁴³ Poetry creates imagined images in the minds of the audience, and the epistemological structure that brought al-Ġurġānī to this conclusion was grammar. It was a structure he reified and with which he was constantly in dialogue. (See Baalbaki on this same topic of the relative pronoun.)¹⁴⁴

Grammar provided al-Ġurġānī with epistemological structures and a conceptual vocabulary to describe the impact that language had, across syntax time, on the mind of a speaker. (This was itself an intervention in grammatical theory, as Ghersetti and Baalbaki have shown.)¹⁴⁵ It was al-Ġurġānī's answer to the question, Why do certain images affect us so much? The achievement of his literary-critical project was to explain how the simple, logical mechanics of grammar manipulate our mental contents in a process that develops across the time it takes a listener to hear and fully apprehend an image. In poetry, words affect us in series, and grammar is the only way to explain this effect.

Let us end this section with one of al-Ġurġānī's examples of superlative syntax in poetry. These three lines are from a poem by Ibrāhīm b. al-ʿAbbās aṣ-Ṣūlī (d. 861), praising his employer in the caliphal bureaucracy, vizier to three successive caliphs and patron of translations from Greek, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik az-Zayyāt (d. 847).¹⁴⁶ These lines are all that has been preserved from the poem:¹⁴⁷

*Should an epoch fade, a master be disavowed,
enemies take power, and a protector be absent,
My home would be outside Ahwaz
on high ground.
But measures have passed, and matters have occurred.
And I hope after this,
Muhammad,
for the best that a brother and a vizier can expect.*

143. فهذا ونحوها على أنك قدّرت إنساناً هذه صفته وهذا شأنه وأحلّت السامع على من يعين في الوهم دون أن يكون قد عرّف رجلاً بهذه الصفة فأعلمته أن المستحقّ لاسم الإخوة هو ذلك الذي عرفه حتى كأنك قلت أخوك زيد الذي عرفت أنك إن تدعه لملمة يُحبك. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 185.3–6).

144. Baalbaki (1983, 11).

145. Baalbaki (1983), Ghersetti (2011, 102).

146. Gutas (1998, 130–31).

147. فَلَوْ إِذْ نَبَا دَهْرٌ وَأُنْكِرَ صَاحِبٌ | وَسَلَطَ أَعْدَاءُ وَعَابَ نَصِيرُ
تَكُونُ عَنِ الْأَهْوَاذِ دَارِي بِنَجْوَةٍ | وَلَكِنْ مَقَادِيرٌ جَرَتْ وَأُمُورُ
وَإِنِّي لِأَرْجُو بَعْدَ هَذَا مُحَمَّدًا | لِأَفْضَلِ مَا يُرْحَى أَخٌ وَوَزِيرُ

Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 86.7–11). Cf. with ms. variants aṣ-Ṣūlī (1937, 132).

Al-Ġurġānī located the beauty in four syntactic moves: (1) the poet's decision to place the temporal adverbial element "should (an epoch fade)" before the verb that governs it: "(my home) would be." (2) The decision to fully conjugate that verb, "be." (3) The decision to make "an epoch," "a master," "enemies," and "a protector" indefinite. (4) The use of the passive "a master be disavowed" instead of an active "I disavowed a master." Al-Ġurġānī wrote that these four moves created the beauty and that they were all "the mental content of grammar, as you can see."¹⁴⁸

If we unpack these moves using his methodology, we see that starting with the adverbial element (1) creates dramatic tension throughout the first line, a sense of as-yet-unexplained high stakes that would be absent if the poet had written "my home would be outside Ahwaz on high ground should an epoch fade." Then (2), the rules of Arabic grammar would have permitted the poet to use an invariable perfect verb "to be" in the second line. Such an invariable verb would have placed the being of the house in the same tense and aspect as the fading, disavowing, taking power and being absent of the first line. As it is, however, the feminine imperfect verb chosen both tells the reader to expect a grammatically feminine subject (which turns out to be the house), and places the presence of the house in an imperfect tense, which denotes continuing action. It is as if we switch from an epic hypothetical ("should an epoch fade") to the reality of a domestic present ("my home would be"). The string of indefinite nouns at the beginning of the quotation (3) has the same effect that al-Ġurġānī discussed above with "an evil."¹⁴⁹ The audience is free to consider all kinds of epochs, masters, enemies, and protectors, right up until the appearance of the patron ("Muḥammad"). By the time we arrive at the end of the quotation (or perhaps earlier, if we had access to the whole poem), we know that the poet is talking about his relationship with his own employer and patron. But by using the passive voice ("to be disavowed") instead of making it clear that he would be doing the disavowing (4—which is al-Ġurġānī's reading), the poet maintains the universal and hypothetical voice of the first line. The passive voice keeps the direction of rejection imprecise: the master could be himself reviled by the caliph, or the master could be rejected by his own poet. Syntax works to deliver all these effects.

148. إنما كان من أجل تقديمه الظرف الذي هو إذ نبا على عامله الذي هو تكون وأن لم يقل فلو تكون
عن الأهواز داري بنجوة إذ نبا دهر ثم أن قال تكون ولم يقل كان ثم أن نكر الدهر ولم يقل فلو إذ نبا الدهر ثم
أن ساق هذا التنكير في جميع ما أتى به من بعد ثم أن قال وأنكر صاحب ولم يقل وأنكرت صاحباً لا ترى في
البيتين الأولين شيئاً غير الذي عددته لك تجعله حسناً في النظم وكله من معاني النحو كما ترى
(1992a, 86.12–20).

149. See note 90 above.

LOGIC AND GRAMMAR

Al-Ġurġānī wrote at the beginning of the *Asrār* that it was impossible to imagine metaphor being a cognitive process unique to the Arabs. To think such a thing would be equivalent to believing that only Arabic could produce speech from two nouns put together, or a noun and a verb, or that only Arabic could maintain a variety of means of predication.¹⁵⁰ The fact of the matter was that universal rules existed, and one could produce a formal definition about a linguistic matter that would apply in any language. The example al-Ġurġānī gave later on in the *Asrār* for such a rule was “The predicate is what can be true or false,” and then he went on to make the following passionate complaint: “There are many rules such as these, and this is just one of the issues that people forget and that confuses them to such an extent that they think that this discipline of knowledge has no rational laws and that its *quaestiones* resemble the lexicon in that they are conventional and can be imagined, transferred, or exchanged. Their error in this point has become atrocious, and this is not the place to speak about it further.”¹⁵¹ What al-Ġurġānī was saying is that grammar is a linguistic discipline but that it is logical, and its logic can be universal. He thought that seeing the predicate as a place for truth conditions was a grammatical way of thinking. Like Ibn Sīnā, al-Ġurġānī had no time for the idea that grammar was for the Arabs and logic for universally rational philhellenic philosophers. But unlike Ibn Sīnā, al-Ġurġānī’s logic was a logic of grammar; it was logic as grammar, and grammar as logic.

This collapse of grammar into logic and vice versa appears problematic from our twenty-first-century perspective. It would also have been a problem for Ibn Sīnā, whose Aristotelian heritage gave him a disciplinary incentive to separate logic from other sciences. Ibn Sīnā would probably have agreed with Quine that “logic chases truth up the tree of grammar.”¹⁵² But for al-Ġurġānī, a grammarian writing language theory after Ibn Sīnā, there was no such problem. A very short detour into Quine may be useful here, because although he was writing in the post-Fregean twentieth century, Quine was clear, like Ibn Sīnā, that logic needed to chase grammar up the tree in order to succeed. Quine’s statement that “logic

إلى طريقةٍ في المعقولات لا يعرفها غيرُ العربِ أولم يتفق لِمَن سِوَاهِم لَأَنَّ ذَلِكَ بِمَنْزِلَةٍ أَنْ تَقُولَ أَنَّ 150. تركيب الكلام من الاسمِين أو من الفعلِ والاسمِ يَخْتَصُّ بِلُغَةِ الْعَرَبِ وَذَلِكَ مِمَّا لَا يُخْفَى فَسَادُهُ Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 33.3–6); cf. Key forthcoming in the *Journal of Abbasid Studies*.

أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّ حَدِّكَ الْخَيْرِ بَأَنَّهُ مَا احْتَمَلَ الصِّدْقَ وَالْكَذِبَ مِمَّا لَا يَخْصُ لِسَانًا دُونَ لِسَانٍ وَنَظَائِرُ ذَلِكَ 151. كَثِيرَةٌ وَهُوَ أَحَدُ مَا غَفَلَ عَنْهُ النَّاسُ وَدَخَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ اللَّبْسُ فِيهِ حَتَّى ظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ لِهَذَا الْعِلْمِ قَوَائِمٌ عَقْلِيَّةٌ وَأَنَّ مَسَائِلَهُ مُشَبَّهَةٌ بِاللُّغَةِ فِي كَوْنِهَا اصْطِلَاحًا يُتَوَهَّمُ عَلَيْهِ النِّقْلُ وَالتَّبْدِيلُ لَقَدْ فَحَّشَ غَلَطُهُمْ فِيهِ وَلَيْسَ هَذَا مَوْضِعَ الْقَوْلِ فِي ذَلِكَ. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 325.2–6).

152. Quine (1986, 35).

explores the truth conditions of sentences in the light of how the sentences are grammatically constructed” could have come from Ibn Sīnā; “in the light of” was what Ibn Sīnā meant by the “patterns” of vocal forms that carried over into and affected mental contents.¹⁵³ But al-Ġurġānī went further than either Ibn Sīnā or Quine with his assumption that logic was grammar and grammar was logic.

The best way to parse the three scholars’ attitudes is to focus on the extent to which each was concerned with the extramental world. The truth that Quine’s logic (like Gottlob Frege’s) cared about was a truth of things out there in the world. But the truth that al-Ġurġānī cared about was cognitive: it was a truth of mental content that could, in rules such as the one above about the predicate, be universal. This was also, I think, Ibn Sīnā’s ultimate concern: his logic was about how the mind worked and about creating new knowledge, not about predicting how the world was. (Other parts of his philosophy did do that, of course.) Looking at it this way makes Ibn Sīnā and al-Ġurġānī appear similar, and different from Quine. Eleventh-century Arabic was committed to, and used *ma’ nā* for, logical analyses of cognition. Ibn Sīnā and al-Ġurġānī shared an acceptance of the centrality of language to those logical analyses. Ibn Sīnā thought that a central epistemological principle such as “predication has truth value” was logic. Al-Ġurġānī thought that the same principle was grammar. But they were the same thing.

THE GRAMMAR OF METAPHOR AND COMPARISON (*ISTI ‘ĀRAH* VS. *TAŠBĪH*)

Al-Ġurġānī, a grammarian by trade and repute, made grammar the fundamental explanatory realm of his theory. Syntax was grammar (Larkin).¹⁵⁴ And the central dynamic of grammar was the act of predication (Abu Deeb, Khalfallah).¹⁵⁵ In fact, all knowledge was grammatical predication, and that predication was either affirmation or negation.¹⁵⁶ (On “affirmation,” see Harb.)¹⁵⁷ All lexically accurate language revolved around affirmation and negation: “Don’t you see that predication is the first mental content of speech, the most fundamental, and that upon

153. See chapter 6 note 76.

154. *إعلم أنّ ليس النظم إلا أنّ تضع كلامك الوضع الذي يقتضيه علم النحو وتعمل على قوانينه وأصوله*. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 81.6–7). Cf. translation in Larkin (1995, 65–66).

155. Abu Deeb (1979, 29), Khalfallah (2014, 69f).

156. *فاعلم أنّ معاني الكلام كلّها معانٍ لا تُتصوّر إلا فيما بين شيئين والأصل والأوّل هو الخبر . . . [و]*. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 541.5–8). *لأنّه ينقسم إلى إثبات ونفي*

157. *العلم بالإثبات والنفي وسائر معاني الكلام في غرائز النفوس ولم تُوضّع أمثلة الأفعال لتعلم هذه المعاني*. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 561.2). Translation: Larkin (1995, 58). Harb (2013, 190f).

which all the other mental contents rely and around which they are organized?”¹⁵⁸ This meant that what happened in the human brain was, for al-Ġurġānī, grammar. Grammar did two things: it set up a series of mutually interacting mental contents in the mind, and it was the logical structure according to which the reason could predicate (A is B; x is y). Grammar was inevitably mental rather than extramental (How could grammar be outside the mind?), and it was also inevitably a language (and a natural language, at that). The language of thought was grammatical. One of the most important consequences of this epistemological structure was that al-Ġurġānī, influenced no doubt by the long-established Arabic grammatical tradition of positing semantic reconstructions to explain the case of nouns and verbs (so “dogs!” is in the accusative case because there is an implied imperative: “[Release the] dogs!”),¹⁵⁹ conceived of the language of thought as including mental contents not explicitly instantiated in vocal form. If one said, “good” in reply to the question “How is Zayd?” one would inevitably be predicating that “good” of another piece of mental content impressed alongside it in one’s mind: “[Zayd is] good.”¹⁶⁰ The scale of al-Ġurġānī’s ambition for grammar feels very much like the scale of Ibn Sīnā’s ambition for logic. Mental contents were what mattered, and they did not simply reflect vocal forms.

But the question that al-Ġurġānī was asking was: How do vocal forms and mental contents combine to create affect? He knew that the answer could not simply be grammar: there was no extra quality without craft.¹⁶¹ But he was looking to grammar, and to the way that grammar must inevitably be a matter of syntax, to explain how affect was created. In the *Asrār*, he offered a way to look at the difference between the broad function of comparison and the specific construction of metaphor. He wanted to explain how there were two different processes behind “Zayd is a lion” (a comparison) and “I saw a lion” (a metaphor if one is describing Zayd).¹⁶² He wrote that when you decide whether or not a noun is a metaphor, you are deciding whether or not it is a predicate. Al-Ġurġānī was not doing grammar here, he was using grammar as an epistemological resource. When he dealt with the actual grammar of predication in his long work on syntax, he explained

158. ألا ترى أنّ الخير أولُ معاني الكلام وأقدمُها والذي تستند سائر المعاني إليه وتترتب عليه. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 338.11–12).

159. وذلك إذا حَقَّق الأمرُ كان كلاماً بتقدير الفعل المضمَر الذي هو . . . دليلٌ عليه وعلى قيام معناه في النفس. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 8.2–4).

160. فانظر إذا قيل لك كيف زيدٌ فقلتُ صالحٌ هل يكون لقولك صالحٌ أثرٌ في نفسك من دون أن تُريد. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 527.13–14). هو صالح

161. لا فضيلةٌ حتى ترى في الأمر مَصْنَعاً. Al-Ġurġānī (1992a) 98.2–3). Cf. translation in Larkin (1995, 58).

162. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 302.3–304.3).

why and how predicates and their attributes had certain case markings.¹⁶³ Here in the *Asrār*, a work on metaphor, he was using the relationships that grammar had established between subjects and predicates to lay out a logical account of how reference (the way that vocal forms indicated mental contents) worked in metaphor and in comparison. Ibn Sīnā, of course, had used Aristotelian logic to do the same job, but Arabic grammar had more traction for al-Ġurġānī. (It is, however, harder to write about in English, as the following passages will show!) Al-Ġurġānī identified his theory with grammar. He devoted the first two hundred pages of the *Dalā'il* to grammar, and grammar was his epistemological sphere of choice throughout both the *Dalā'il* and the *Asrār*. My use of Quine above was intended to frame these accounts of how the linguistic structures behind metaphor are logical, but logical through grammar. Al-Ġurġānī had a grammatical logic, one far removed from our own English conceptual vocabularies, but we know he intended it to be universal.

In the *Asrār*, al-Ġurġānī was making a distinction between metaphor and comparison based on predicates. Predicates either could be the objects of a verb (for example, “I am *a man*” or “I know *that man*”) or they could be words functioning as predicates in what the Arabic grammarians called a “circumstantial construction,” wherein something is added to the predicate (for example, “I brandished a sword *that was cutting through the enemy*”).¹⁶⁴ Comparisons also have predication; if you say “Zayd is a lion,” you make the source (lion) a predicate of the target (Zayd). When a noun is predicated of something, this happens in one of two ways: it is either an affirmation of a description derived from the predicated action (e.g., the departure in the statement “Zayd is departing”) or it is an affirmation that something belongs to a class (e.g., “this is a man”). The comparison “Zayd is a lion” is of the latter type, but the class of “lion” is not accurately affirmed of Zayd; all that is being affirmed is a similarity to a class. This is the grammatical background for the theoretical statement that al-Ġurġānī wanted to make: in the case of “Zayd is a lion,” we have brought the noun in order to create a comparison with it right now, and we fix it in this new place and make it part of the space of affirmation.¹⁶⁵ So al-Ġurġānī defines comparison as the grammatical process of pulling a noun into the space where predicates affirm. Comparisons are when vocal forms indicate

163. Al-Ġurġānī (1982, 1:255f).

164. وهو أنّ الحالة التي يختلف في الاسم إذا وقع فيها أيسمى استعارة أم لا يُسمى هي الحالة التي يكون الاسم فيها خير مبتدأ أو مُنزلاً منزله أعني أنّ يكون خير كان أو مفعولاً ثانياً لباب علمت لأن هذه الأبواب كلها أصلها مبتدأ وخير أو يكون حالاً لأنّ الحال عندهم زيادة في الخبر فحكمها حكم الخبر. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 302.4–8).

165. فقد اجتلبنا الاسم لثخيث به التشبيه الآن ونقرره ونُدخله في حيز الحصول والثبوت. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 302.1–2).

bundles of mental contents, and one piece of mental content is affirmed as belonging to both vocal forms. The poet makes this affirmation, and the audience reasons it. The grammatical structure in which this takes place is predication.

In metaphors, the grammatical structure of predication is still present, but the metaphor itself does not either predicate or affirm. It simply assumes that predication has occurred somewhere offstage in the speaker's soul and proceeds on that basis. The critical relationship is still between vocal form and mental content. In the metaphor "a gazelle sang to us," the vocal form "gazelle," while actually engaged in predicating and affirming something else (that the gazelle *is singing*), tries to take hold of the intended target (a beautiful woman) and claim that she is a member of the class of gazelles, that class for which "gazelle" was first lexically placed.¹⁶⁶ The audience realizes that the predication "she is a gazelle" must have taken place offstage. Metaphor is different from comparison because of this different relationship to predication. In a metaphor, wrote al-Ġurġānī, "The noun is not brought to affirm mental content for something, nor are the words lexically placed for that reason. Both those things require a subject with a noun as its predicate."¹⁶⁷ But in al-Ġurġānī's metaphor, what is being affirmed can be the agent of a verb, or the object of a verb, or an annexing noun, or another subject. "In all these cases, you speak in order to affirm something other than the mental content of the noun in question."¹⁶⁸

This is a critical moment for al-Ġurġānī, or at the very least a revealing moment for our analyses of him. What makes a metaphor different from a comparison is not some relationship with or deviation from the lexicon. (We have already seen how lexical accuracy is a quality that can persist in metaphor and provide it with impact.) Neither are metaphors different from comparisons because of some relationship or lack thereof to extramental reality and the real world outside language. What makes a metaphor different from a comparison is a variance in how vocal forms are used to indicate mental content. This is a variance that is mapped by grammatical structures. The combination of subject and predicate (x is y) is a decision to affirm the mental content of a noun, whether with lexical accuracy (Zayd is a man) or by going beyond the lexicon in a comparison (Zayd is a lion). Metaphor is different: it is what happens when you say "a lion approached me" or "I passed

166. وإذا كان كذلك بَانَ أَنَّ الاسمَ في قولك زيدٌ أسدٌ مقصودٌ به إيقاعُ التشبيه في الحال وإيقاؤه وأما في قولك غنَّتْ لنا ظليَّةٌ وسلَّلْتُ سيفاً على العُدُوِّ فوُضِعَ الاسمُ هكذا انتهازاً واقتضاباً على المقصودِ وأدعَاءٌ أنه من الجنس الذي وُضِعَ له الاسمُ في أصل اللغة. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 303.19–304.3).

167. فهي حالةٌ إذا وقع الاسمُ فيها لم يكن الاسمُ مجتلياً لإثبات معناه للشيء ولا الكلامُ موضوعاً لذلك. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 303.5–7).

168. فأما إذا لم يكن كذلك وكان مبتدأً بنفسه أو فاعلاً أو مفعولاً أو مُضَافاً إليه فأنْتَ واضعٌ كلامك لإثبات. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 303.7–9).

by a lion.” In these cases what you are affirming is the approach or the passing by. You are not affirming the mental-content bundle of the lion, because the lion is the agent of the verb (in the first case) and the indirect object of the verb (in the second).¹⁶⁹ It is the same when you say “a gazelle sang to us” and intend a woman singing; you are not using the noun “gazelle” to affirm the very comparison that you intend. (“Gazelle” is not your predicate.) You do not even mention the target of the metaphor. (Cf. Abu Deeb.)¹⁷⁰ Your metaphorical language forces the audience to go back to the hidden state of your soul.¹⁷¹

ESSENCE

Essence is a slightly different technical concept in each of the scholarly disciplines dealt with in this book, but in all of them it is an epistemological claim made about an ontological reality. Furthermore, in both logic and grammar essence is a fundamental structuring principle that was always understood in terms of *ma' nā*. When we encountered Ibn Sīnā's work on essence and existence (and what-it-is-ness), we saw how it was enabled by the Arabic conceptual vocabulary of mental content. This also applies to al-Ġurġānī, for whom *ma' nā* was a way to talk about essences and accidents in poetry; how a horse, for example, was essentially a horse and accidentally brown. The connection between the vocal form “horse” and the mental content of horseness was a lexical and accurate connection. But it was also another key to the functioning of metaphor that al-Ġurġānī was trying to explain. Both Larkin and Khalfallah have identified al-Ġurġānī's ease and familiarity with logical relationships at a basic level (causality, argumentation, and division for Khalfallah; “logical parsing of figures” for Larkin).¹⁷² What I would like to do here is ask how the conceptual vocabulary of mental content enabled al-Ġurġānī to conceive of essences themselves before considering how they helped him explain poetry.

Larkin put the basic dynamic well: for al-Ġurġānī nouns “call up the essence” of an entity.¹⁷³ But what vocabulary did al-Ġurġānī use? He said that speakers intend

169. Al-Ġurġānī *فالكلامُ موضوعٌ لإثباتِ الإقبال [أو المجيء أو الرؤية] للأسد لا لإثباتِ معنى الأسد*. (1954, 303. 12–13).

170. Abu Deeb (1979, 152).

171. ثم قلت غنّت لنا ظبيّةٌ وهزرتُ سيفاً صارماً على الأعداء وأنت تعني بالظبية امرأةً وبالسيف رجلاً لم يكن ذكرك للإسمين [ظبيةً وسيفاً] في كلامك هذا لإثباتِ الشبّه المقصود الآن وكيف يُصوّر أنّ تقصيد إلى إثباتِ الشبّه منهما بشيء وأنت لم تذكر شيئاً ينصرف إثباتُ الشبّه إليه وإنما تُثبت الشبّه من طريق الرجوع إلى المتكلم. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 303.15–18).

172. Khalfallah (2014) 238–43, Larkin (1995, 108).

173. Larkin (1995, 107).

mental contents. He then had an account of how those mental contents connect to nouns that was dependent on the lexicon. Bundles of mental content were connected to nouns, and some pieces of mental content in each bundle were more central to a noun than others. The function of the lexicon was to preserve via accurate connections the full set of reference to the whole bundle. Toward the end of the *Asrār*, al-Ġurġānī wrote: suppose that we claim in a metaphor that a man has lionness, to the extent that he deserves the name ‘lion.’ In this we do not go so far as to claim that he has the form and shape of a lion, nor the thick neck nor claws of a lion, nor the rest of the descriptions that are externally apparent to the eye. Although bravery is one of the most specific and firmest fixed descriptions of the lion, the lexicon still placed the name “lion” not with bravery alone but rather with a body, form, shape, teeth, claws, and all the other limbs. If the lexicon had placed the name “lion” for bravery alone, then it would be an attribute, not a name, and everything that is connected to bravery would deserve to be accurately included under “lion.”¹⁷⁴ In such a case, even though our metaphor, “he is a lion,” would not indicate any mental content not already contained under the name “lion” in its original lexical placement, we would still have stripped the name of some of that for which it was placed and made it indicate some of the mental contents that are internal to the lion and its nature, separate from those mental contents that are externally apparent. This change would mean that the name had moved from its original place in the lexicon.¹⁷⁵

What this long paraphrase tells us is that al-Ġurġānī understood the lexicon to be made up of names that indicate sets of mental contents through precedent. He used the word “definition” (*ḥadd*) to refer to this group, but he did not mean the formal logical definition that we met in Ibn Sīnā. Instead, al-Ġurġānī’s definitions were bundles, constellations, sets, or groupings of mental contents. These bundles are lexically accurate if and when they are complete. This accuracy is judged, as we saw above with the analogy of the king and his clothes, with regard to the impact it has on the audience, not the relationship it has to extramental reality. To call the use of a noun “lexically accurate” is to say that it must have been intended to refer to a person like Zayd or a class of thing like lion. The noun in both “Zayd knows” and “the lion knows” is lexically accurate.¹⁷⁶ Lexical accuracy is a commitment to

174. ولو كانت وَضَعْتُهُ [اللغة] لتلك الشجاعة التي تعرفها وحدها لكان صفةً لا اسماً ولـكان كلُّ شيء 174. Al-Ġurġānī يُفضي في شجاعته إلى ذلك الحدِّ مستحجاً للاسم استحقاقاً حقيقياً لا على طريق التشبيه والتأويل (1954, 381.7–9).

175. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 381.1–14).

176. ومعلومٌ [في الحقيقة] أن ما هو كالمنفعة من الاسم أن يُوجب ذكره القصد إلى الشيء في نفسه فإذا قلتَ زيدٌ عَلِمَ أنك أردتَ أن تُخبر عن الشخص المعلوم وإذا قلتَ أسداً عَلِمَ أنك عَلقتَ اللقاء بواحد من هذا الجنس. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 301.9–12).

use a noun to indicate an actual person or a complete bundle of mental contents. Just as in Ibn Fūrak, accuracy is an epistemological value judgment, but here in al-Ġurġānī the intent behind a speech act is being judged, not the truth of a claim about divine ontology.

The reason al-Ġurġānī spent so much time explaining these underlying structures of language is that poets use them to create beauty. “It is their craft,” he wrote, “if they want to increase or decrease the virtue of someone, or to praise or blame them, to attach some of the descriptions in which the persons shares but that are not the lexically accurate reason for the quality in question.”¹⁷⁷ For example, al-Buḥturī wrote:¹⁷⁸

*The whiteness of the falcon is
upon consideration
more truly beautiful
than the black of the crow.*

He was talking about the relative merits of old age (white hair) and youth (black hair). What al-Ġurġānī was interested in was the deliberate focus on descriptions that are not central to the bundle of mental contents to which they belong in the lexicon. (Whiteness is not central to old age in the way that bravery is central to lions.) Whiteness is also not the same as lionness. One can affirm and conceive of an attribute while also knowing that attributes don't have independent extramental existence: “You can't have the existence of blackness [and whiteness] or movement without a place, but blackness [and whiteness] and movement can be known as themselves. The fact of the matter is that the reliance, in existence, of something on something else does not prevent that thing from being known independently.”¹⁷⁹ Ibn Fūrak would have agreed.¹⁸⁰

177. ومن ذلك صنيعهم إذا أراد تفضيل شيء أو نقضه ومدحه أو دأمه فتعلقوا ببعض ما يشاركه في أوصاف . . . على الحقيقة . . . ليست هي سبب الفضيلة . . . Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 246.12–14). Cf. translation in van Gelder and Hammond (2008, 33).

178. وَيَبَاضُ الْبَازِيَّ أَصْدَقُ حُسْنًا | إِنَّ تَأَمَّلْتَ مِنْ سَوَادِ الْغُرَابِ . . . Al-Buḥturī (1963–, 1:84 l. 10), al-Ġurġānī (1954, 247.1), van Gelder and Hammond (2008, 33).

179. إذا ضُمَّ إلى اسم إثبات الضرب لمسمّى ذلك الاسم فهو موضوعٌ ليدلّ على وقوع إثبات منك ووجوده في نفسك وليس في أنّ الإثبات لا يقع إلا متعلقاً بشيئين ما يمنع أن يكون الإثبات معنىً مستقلاً بنفسه معلوماً ومثله أنه لا يصحّ وجود صفةٍ من غير موصوفٍ ثم لا يمنع ذلك أن تكون الصفة في نفسها معلومةً تفسيراً ذلك أنه لا يصحّ وجود سوادٍ وحركةٍ في غير محلٍّ ثم لم يمنع ذلك أن يكونا معلومين في أنفسهما وجملة الأمر أنّ حاجة الشيء في وجوده إلى شيءٍ آخر لا يمنع أن يكون شيئاً مستقلاً بنفسه معلوماً . . . Al-Ġurġānī (1992a, 561.7–15).

180. See chapter 5 note 84 above.

Al-Ġurġānī's poetics relied on an account of basic categories of predication, essence, and attribute that came from theology and from logic (where they were in second position) and were constructed with mental content. Only when literary criticism shared logic's understanding of the difference between "lionness" and "whiteness" and used a vocabulary of logical predication could a literary critic start to describe what poetry did to manipulate those categories and mechanisms in order to affect both our minds and our emotions. Al-Ġurġānī did this work himself: across two monographs he both developed the core conceptual vocabulary he needed from theology and logic, and then used it to describe how poetry was beautiful. When the poet said "he is a lion" (rather than just "he is like a lion"), it was not just a claim of similarity, but a readjustment of the lexical relationship between vocal form and mental content. It was a claim that bravery, the quality being mapped across from source to target, was in fact the dominant quality of the lion *qua* lion; the essence of lionness was no longer the bundle of mental content established by precedent, but now it was bravery and all other qualities were secondary. With this claim established in the image, the bravery could then be mapped across to the person in question, and he could be called a lion without any doubt.¹⁸¹

Al-Ġurġānī had taken essence and attribute from theology and logic and used them to explain the whiteness of al-Buḥturī's falcon and the blackness of his crow in comparison to the bravery of a lion. He had taken static bundles of mental content curated by lexicography and shown how syntax could make them dynamic. He had taken logic's account of how mental contents interacted and shown what could happen when these interactions took place not with the fixed terms of a syllogism but with dynamic bundles of mental content and with make-believe accuracy.

181. Al-Ġurġānī (1954, 231.10–232.2).