بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ

(١) الحمدُ لله الأوّلِ في ديمومتِه، الآخرِ في أزليّتِه، الواحدِ في مُلكه، الفَردِ في سُلطانه، العالي في دُنوّه، القريبِ (٢) في عُلوّه.

وصلَّى الله على محمدٍ وآله (٣)، بشيرِ الرحمة، ومصباحِ الهدى، والمُنقِذِ من الضّلالِ (٤) والعَمى.

(٥) هذا كتابٌ ألّفْناه ليَفْزعَ إليه / المُجْبَرُ (٦) المضطهدُ على اليمين، المُكْرَهُ عليها (٧)،

فيعارضَ بما رَسَمْناه، ويُضمِر خلافَ ما يُظهرُ ليسلمَ من عادية الظالم، ويتخلّص من (١) جنَف (٢) الغاشمِ. وسمّيناه «كتاب (٣) الملاحن» واشتققنا (٤) هذا الاسم من اللغة العربية الفصيحة التي لا يَشُوبُها الكَدَرُ (٥) ولا يستولي عليها التكلّفُ. وما توفيقنا إلا بالله. (م: ٤).

قال أبو بكر محمد بن الحسن بن دريد الأزدي (٦):

معنى قولنا: الملاحن. لأنَّ اللحنَ عند العرب الفِطْنَةُ، ومنه قول النبيّ ﷺ: «لعلّ أحدكم أن يكونَ (٧) ألحنَ بحجته (٨) (من

(*) ما بين المعقوفتين زيادة من م.

(١) أول نسخة الاسكوريال: (ك).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، قال أبو القاسم عبد الرحمن بن إسحاق الزجاجي النحوي قال: أملى علينا أبو بكر محمد بن الحسن بن دريد هذا الكتاب في منزله بمدينة السلام. أول النسخة المغربية:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. صلَّى الله على محمد وآله وسلم تسليمًا.

قال أبو بكر أحمد بن إبراهيم بن شاذان رضي الله عنه:

قرئ في هذا الكتاب وأنا حاضر أسمع في سنة إحدى وعشرين وثلاث مائة على أبي بكر محمد بن الحسين (كذا) بن دريد رحمه الله قال.

(٢) في ب والقريب.

(٣) كلمة (وآله) ساقطة من ك و ب وفي نشرة توربكة: وصلَّى الله على سيدنا نبي الرحمة ومصباح الهدى...

(٤) في ك: الضلالة.

(٥) في ك: قال أبو بكر: هذا...

(٦) في ظ: المجبور؛ وفي ك: المكره.

(٧) عبارة «المكره عليها» ساقطة من ك.

---

(١) ورد في القرآن الكريم: «من موص جنفًا» (البقرة ١٨٢) أي جورًا عن الحق وعدولا. انظر مجاز القرآن ١: ٦٦.

(٢) في ك: حيف وكذلك في نشرة توربكة.

(٣) كلمة «كتاب» ساقطة من ك.

(٤) في ب: واشتققنا له.

(٥) في ك: كدر العي.

(٦) عبارة «محمد بن الحسن بن دريد الأزدي» ساقطة من ك وب ونشرة توربكة.

(٧) عبارة «أن يكون» ساقطة من ك.

(٨) هذا الحديث مما اتفق عليه الشيخان، وروايته كما ورد في صحيح مسلم، كتاب الأقضية، باب الحكم بالظاهر واللحن بالحجة، ... عن أم سلمة قالت: قال رسول الله ﷺ: إنكم تختصمون إليّ ولعل بعضكم أن يكون ألحن بحجته من بعض فأقضي له على نحو مما أسمع منه، فمن قطعت له من حقّ أخيه شيئًا فلا يأخذه، =

بعض)(١)» أي أفطنَ لها، وأغوصَ عليها وذلك أنَّ أصلَ اللحن عند العرب أن تريدَ الشيءَ فتوري(٢) عنه بقولٍ آخر كقولِ العنبريّ الأسيرِ كان(٣) في بكر بن وائل حين سألهم [ب٢] رسولًا إلى قومه. فقالوا(٤): لا ترسل إلا بحضرتنا، لأنهم كانوا(٥) أزمَعوا غزوَ قومه فخافوا أن ينذرَ عليهم. فجيء بعبدٍ أسودَ، فقال له: أتعقلُ؟ قال: نعم، إني لعاقلٌ. قال: ما أراك كذلك(٦). فقال(٧): ما

=فإنما أقطع له به قطعة من النار ٥:١٢٩. وفي صحيح البخاري، كتاب الحيل ١٣١:٤ وقد فسّر قوله (ألحن) بمعنى: أبلغ في حديث تال في الباب نفسه وورد في صحيح مسلم عن أم سلمة أن رسول الله ﷺ سمع جلبة خصم بباب حجرته فخرج إليهم فقال: إنما أنا بشر، وإنه يأتيني الخصم فلعل بعضهم أن يكون أبلغ من بعض، فأحسب أنه صادق فأقضي له، فمن قضيت له بحق مسلم فإنما هي قطعة من النار فليحملها أو يذرها ١٢٩:٥.

وانظر كتاب زاد المسلم ١:٩٦، الحديث ٢٥٦. والموطأ: كتاب الأقضية، باب الترغيب في القضاء بالحق ص٤٤٨ ومسند أحمد ٣٣٢:٢ - ٦: ٢٠٣، ٢٩٠، ٣٠٧، ٣٠٨، ٣٣٠ وأيضًا في سنن ابن ماجة كتاب الأحكام باب أقضية الحاكم لا تحل حرامًا ولا تحرم حلالا ٢:٧٧٤.

(١) زيادة من م وفي نشرة توربكة «العل أحدكم ألحن بحجته من بعض».

(٢) ورى من التورية، قال ابن أبي الإصبع في تحرير التحبير: ٢٦٨ باب التورية ويسمى التوجيه، وهي أن تكون الكلمة تحتمل معنيين، فيستعمل المتكلم أحد احتماليها ويهمل الآخر، ومراده ما أهمله لا ما استعمله.

(٣) كلمة «كان» ساقطة من ب ومن نشرة توربكة.

(٤) في م: فقالوا له.

(٥) في طبعة توربكة: كانوا قد. وما في نسختنا موافق لما في أمالي القالي ٦:١.

(٦) في وك: ما أراك عاقلا.

(٧) كلمة «فقال» ساقطة من ك. وفي ب: قال.

هذا؟ وأشارَ بيده إلى الليْل. فقال: هذا الليل. قال: أراكَ(١) عاقلًا. ثمّ ملأ كفّيه من الرمل وقال(٢): كمْ هذا؟ فقال: لا أدري، وإنّه لكثير. فقال: أيّما أكثرُ النجومُ / أم النيرانُ(٣)؟ فقال: كلُّ كثير [ك٣]. فقال: أبلغْ قوميَ التحيّةَ، وقل لهم ليكرموا فلانًا يعني أسيرًا كان في أيديهم من بكرِ بن وائل(٤) فإنَّ قومَه لي مُكرمون. وقل لهم: إنَّ العَرْفَجَ قد أدبى، وقد شكّت النساء(٥)، وأمُرْهُمْ أن يُعرّوا ناقتيَ الحمراءَ فقد [م:٥] أطالوا ركوبها، وأنْ يركبُوا جَمليَ الأصهبَ بآية ما أكلتُ معكم حَيْسًا. واسألوا الحارثَ عن خبري.

فلمّا أدّى العبدُ الرسالةَ إليهم قالوا: لقد جُنَّ الأعورُ(٦). واللهِ ما نعرفُ له ناقةً حمراءَ، ولا جَمَلًا أصْهَبَ. ثمّ سَرّحوا العبدَ ودَعَوا الحارث(٧) فقصّوا عليه القصّة فقال(٨): قد أنْذَرَكم.

أمّا قولُه «أدْبى العَرْفَجَ» فإنّه(٩) يريدُ أنَّ الرجالَ قد استلأموا(١٠) ولبسوا السلاحَ.

وقوله «شكّتِ النساء»(١١) أي اتّخذت الشِّكاء

(١) في توربكة: ما أراك.

(٢) في ك: فقال.

(٣) في م: أم التراب.

(٤) عبارة (ابن وائل) ساقطة من ك.

(٥) في ب: وإن النساء قد اشتكت.

(٦) في ك: قالوا: جن الأعور.

(٧) في ك: فلما سرحوه، دعوا الحارث.

(٨) في ك: قال.

(٩) في ب: أما قوله: قد أدبى... وفي ظ م و ب (يريد) – وسقطت (فإنه).

(١٠) في الأمالي ٧:١: استلأموا: أي لبسوا الدروع.

(١١) في ب: قد اشتكت النساء.

للسفر(١). قال أبو بكر: الشِّكاء جمع شكوة وأنشد: [من الخفيف].

شَكَتِ الماءَ في الشتاءِ فَقُلْنَا
بَلْ رِدِيه تُوافِقيه سَخِينَا(٢)

وقوله: «الناقة الحمراء» أي ارتحلوا عن الدَّهْناء واركبوا الصمّانَ، وهو(٣) «الجمل [ب٣] الأصهب».

وقوله «بآية(٤) ما أكلتُ معكم حَيْسًا» يريدُ: أخلاطًا من النّاس قد غَزَوْكُم، لأنَّ الحَيْسَ يجمع السمنَ [م:٦] والتمرَ والأقِطَ. فامتثلوا ما قال وعَرَفوا لَحْنَ كلامه.

(١) من هنا إلى آخر البيت «سخينا» ساقط من ك.

(٢) البيت أنشده ابن الأنباري في الأضداد ٦٤ ولم يعزه. وصدره فيه:
(عافت الشرب في الشتاء فقلنا) وأتى به شاهدًا على أن بعض العرب قالت: بردت من الأضداد، يقال: برد الشيء على المعنى المعروف، ويقال: برد الشيء إذا أسخنه ثم أنشد البيت على أن بردِيه بمعنى سخنيه وعلق على ذلك بقوله: فإذا صح هذا القول صلح أن يقال للحار بارد، وأن يقع البرد على الحر إذا فهم المعنى.
قال البلوي في كتابه ألف باء ٢:١٣٧.. ومن صعوبة الجمع بين اللام والراء: أنشد بعض أهل العربية هذا البيت مصحفًا وهو هذا:
عافت الماء في الشتاء فقلنا
بردِيه تصادفيه سخينا
رواه كذا، وفسره على غلطه فقال: معنى بردِيه: سخنيه. قال: وهو من الأضداد، واحتج بالبيت، ولم يتابع على ذلك المعنى وغلط فيه. قال الذي رد عليه: إنما هو: بل ردِيه، من الورود، وأدغم اللام في الراء، كما يقرأ: (بل ران على قلوبهم ما كانوا يكسبون) [المطففين ١٤] ذكر ذلك ثابت رحمه الله.

(٣) في ك: وهو.

(٤) كلمة «بآية» ساقطة من ك ومن نشرة توربكة.

وأخذَ هذا المعنى أيضًا رجلٌ كان أسيرًا في بني تميم، فكتبَ إلى قومه شعرًا(١): [من البسيط].

حُلّوا عَنِ الناقةِ الحمراءِ أرْحُلَكُمْ
والبازِلَ الأصْهَبَ المَعْقُولَ فاصطنِعوا
إنَّ الذئابَ قد اخضرّتْ براثِنُها
والنّاسُ كلّهمْ بكرٌ إذا شبعوا

يريد: والناس(٢) كلّهم(٣) إذا أخصبوا أعداء لكم كبكر ابن وائل(٤) [ظ ٥٧]

وقيل لمعاوية(٥): إنّ عبيدالله بن زيادٍ(٦)

(١) في ب: وهو، وسائر النسخ: هو.

(٢) في ك: إن الناس، وكذلك في طبعة توربكة.

(٣) كلمة «كلهم» ساقطة من ك.

(٤) وانظر القصة والشعر في أمالي القالي عن ابن دريد ١:٦، ٧ وجاء في كتاب معاني الشعر للأشنانداني ص ٦٨، ٦٩ برقم ٤٦: قال ابن دريد؛ وأنشدني – أي الأشنانداني – عن الجرمي لرجل من بني تميم:
خلوا عن الناقة الحمراء واقتعدوا ال
عود الذي في جنابي ظهره وقع
ثم أنشد بعده البيت الثاني. والعود ههنا هو الصمان وهو بلد لبني تميم، أرضه صلبة صعبة الموطئ وشبهه بالجمل العود لتذكير اسمه.
والعود: المسن من الإبل. والوقع: آثار الدبر في ظهر البعير.
وقال البكري في التنبيه ص ١٨: يريد أن الناس إذا شبعوا هاجت أضغانهم وطلبوا الطوائل والترات في أعدائهم فكانوا لهم كبكر بن وائل لبني تميم.
وعبارة ب «يريد أن الناس كلهم أعداء لكم كبكر بن وائل».

(٥) معاوية بن أبي سفيان مؤسس الدولة الأموية في الشام ولد سنة ٢٠ قبل الهجرة وتوفي سنة ٦٠هـ. ودامت له خلافة المسلمين من سنة ٤١هـ حتى وفاته. عن الأعلام.

(٦) عبيدالله بن زياد بن أبيه ولد بالبصرة عام ٢٨هـ. وال فاتح من الشجعان، جبار خطيب. قتل سنة ٦٧هـ. عن الأعلام.

يَلْحن(١). فقال: أَوَليسَ بظريفٍ(٢) ابن أخي يتكلّم(٣) بالفارسيّة؟

فظنَّ معاوية(٣) أنَّ الكلامَ بالفارسية لحنٌ إذا كان مَعْدُولًا عن وجه العربية(٤).

وقال الفزاريّ(٥): [من الخفيف]

وحـديـثٍ ألَـذُّه هــو مِمّـا
يـنعـتُ النـاعِتُـون(٦) يُـوزَنُ وَزْنـا

منطـقٌ صائبٌ وتَـلْـحَـنُ أحيا
نًا وأحلى الحديث ما كان لحنا [ك٤]

يريد أنّها تُعْوِصُ(٧) في حديثها فتنزيلُه عن جهته، فجعل ذلك لحنًا.

فأمّا اللحنُ في العربية فهو راجعٌ إلى هذا، لأنّك إذا قلت: (ضربَ عبدالله زيدْ)، لم يُدرَ أيّهما الضاربُ ولا المضروبُ، فكأنّك قد

(١) كلمة «يلحن» ساقطة من ك.

(٢) في ك: بطريف. وفي ب: أن ابن أخي.

(٣) سقطت «أن» من ك.

(٤) في ك «عن جهة العربية» وكذلك في طبعة توربكة.

(٥) هو مالك بن أسماء بن خارجة بن حصن بن حذيفة بن بدر الفزاري. يكنى أبا الحسن.. وشعره كثير، كان هو وأبوه من أشراف أهل الكوفة. وكان الحجاج متزوجًا بهند بنت أسماء أخت مالك... وكان غزلًا ظريفًا وتقلد خوارزم. عن معجم الشعراء ٢٦٦ - ١٧: ٢٢٧ - الخزانة ٢: ٤٨٥ - الشعر والشعراء: ٦٦٦ البيتان في معجم الشعراء ٢٦٦ وعلق المرزباني عليهما بقوله: أراد ما تلحن به إليه، أي ما أومأت به وورت عن الإفصاح به لئلا يعلمه غيرهما. والبيت الثاني في اللسان (لحن) وفي التهذيب ٥: ٣١. وهما في أمالي القالي ١: ٥ والأغاني ١٧: ٢٣٦ وألف باء ١: ٤٤.

(٦) في ب: (تشتهيه النفوس) وكذلك رواه القالي في الأمالي ١: ٥.

(٧) في طبعة توربكة: تعرض في حديثها.

عَدَلْتَه عن جهته. فإذا أَعْرَبْتَ عن معناك فُهِم عنك. فسمّي اللحن لحنًا لأنّه يخرج على نحوين(٢) وتحته معنيان [ب٤]. وسُمّي الإعرابُ نَحْوًا لأنّ الأصل(٣) في النحو قصدُك(٤) الشيءَ. تقول: نحوتُ كذا وكذا أي قصدته، فالمتكلّم به(٥) ينحو الصواب أي يَقْصِدُه.

قال أبو زيد: لحنَ الرجلُ إذا تكلّم بلغته. وألحنتُ أنا(٦) إذا أفهمته(٧).

فمن الملاحن قولك:

١- والله ما سألتُ فلانًا حاجةً قطّ(٨).

فالحاجَة ضربٌ من الشّجَر له شوك، والجمع حاجٌّ. قال الراجز:

(١) في ب: معناه.

(٢) ف ك: على وجهين.

(٣) في ك: لأن أصل النحو.

(٤) في ك: القصد.

(٥) كلمة «به» ساقطة من ك.

(٦) كلمة (أنا) ساقطة من طبعة توربكة.

(٧) من قوله: قال أبو زيد... الخ.. ساقط من ك.

(٨) قال ابن دريد في الجمهرة ٣: ٢٢١: والحاج جمع حاجة. والحاج نبت له شوك. يقال: مالي قِبَلك حاجة ولا حوجاء ولا حائجة. فجمع حاجة حاجات، وجمع حائجة حوائج، ولا تكون الحوائج جمع حاجة.
وورد في تاج العروس نقلًا عن كتاب النبات لأبي حنيفة أن الحاج مما تدوم خضرته وتذهب عروقه في الأرض مذهبًا بعيدًا ويتداوى بطبيخه، وله ورق دقاق طوال كأنه مساو للشوك في الكثرة. انظر معجم أسماء النباتات: ٣٨ وقد ذكرها الشهابي مقابل Camel - thorn (Aehagi mannifera) وقال: جنبة شاكة من القرنيات تفرز منّا. معجم الشهابي: ١٠٤.

خِلتُ القذى الجائلَ في حِجاجها
من حَسَك التَّلْعَةِ أو مِنْ حَاجها(١)

قال أبو بكر(٢). ويروى: حَجاجها، بالفتح والكسر. وهو العظم الذي يليه الحاجب.

وتقول: والله ما رأيتُ فلانًا قطُّ ولا كلّمته(٣).

فمعنى رأيت فلانًا(٤): ضربت رئته. ومعنى كلّمته: جرحته. قال الشاعر: [من الطويل]

يُفَدّي بأَمَّيْهِ العَرادَةَ بعدما
نَجَا وضواحي جلده لم تكلّم(٥)

العرادة(٦) اسم فرسه، وضواحي الجلد(٧) ما ضحا منه للشمس [أي برز](٨) لم تكلّم: لم تجرّح. وقال أبو بكر(٩): أمّيه(١٠): أمّه

(١) الرجز في أضداد أبي الطيب اللغوي ١: ١٠٧.. وقال أبو عبيدة: التلعة بطن من الوادي متسع، والجمع تلاع. وأنشد الرجز. والقذى: ما يسقط في العين من قش أو غيره فيؤذيها. والحجاج: العظم الذي ينبت عليه الحاجب، وهو يريد العين ههنا. والحسك بمعنى الشوك ههنا. والحاج: ضرب من النبات تقدم ذكره في الحاشية السابقة.

(٢) قال ابن دريد. وقد سقط هذا الشرح من ب و ك وطبعة توربكة.

(٣) قال في الجمهرة ١: ١٧٧. ورأيت الرجل وغيره إذا ضربت رئته فهو مرئيّ مثل مرعيّ. وقال في ٣: ١٦٩: وكلمت الرجل أكلمه كلمًا إذا جرحته فهو مكلوم وكليم، وقوم كلمى مثل جرحى.

(٤) في طبعة توربكة: فمعنى ما رأيته أي ما ضربت رئته.

(٥) لم أقع عليه فيما رجعت إليه من كتب الأدب وكتب الخيل.

(٦) في ب «العرارة» وهو تصحيف.

(٧) في نشرة توربكة: وضواحي جلده.

(٨) زيادة من (م).

(٩) في نشرة توربكة: ويعني بأميه أمه وخالته.

(١٠) هذا مما يستدرك به على كتب «المثنى» فإنها لم تذكر

وخالته(١).

٣- وتقول: والله(٢) ما بَطَنْتُ فلانًا(٣).

أي ما(٤) ضربتُ بطنه. قال الراجز:

إذا ضَرَبْتَ مُوقَرًا فابْطُنْ لَـهْ
فـوقَ قُصَيْرَاه ودون الجُـلَّـهْ(٥)

«الأمين» بمعنى الأم والخالة. وقد قرن بينهما وعلة الجرمي: (الوحشيات ق ١١٢ ص ٧٧).

فِدًى لكما رِجْلَيَّ أمّي وخالتي
غداة الكِلاب إذْ تُحَزُّ الدوابر
نجوت نجاءً لم ير الناس مثله
كأني عقاب عند تَيْمَنَ كاسر

وجاء في كتاب معاني الشعر للأشنانداني ص ١٥١ برقم ١٠٥: أخبرنا ابن دريد قال: وأنشدني أبو عثمان:

يفدي بأميه سراح وينتحي
على مزدهى يهفو وليس بطائر
إذا ما رأى ملسًا ضواحي جلده

يقول: جزاء من حليب وحازر

يصف رجلًا انهزم فدى فرسه بأميه. كأنه يقول: فدتك أمي وخالتي فجعلهما أميه، ويمكن أيضًا أن تكون جدته كما قال الآخر:

نحن ضربنا مخلدًا في هامته
بصارم أوفى على عـلاوتـه
حتى هوى يعثر في حمالته
يا شكل أميه وشكل خالته

والعلاوة: أعلى الرأس والعنق. وسراح اسم فرسه.

(١) عبارة م: ويعني بأميه أمه وخالته. وسقطت العبارة كلها من ك و ب.

(٢) النسخة ك تسقط القسم من صدر كل لحن. ولن نشير إلى هذا مرة أخرى.

(٣) قال في الجمهرة (بطن) ١: ٣١: وبطنت البعير إذا ضربت بطنه.
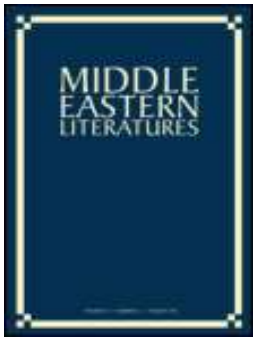
(٤) سقطت «ما» من ك.

(٥) الرجز في الجمهرة ١: ٣١٠ غير منسوب، وفيه: وتحت الجله. وفي اللسان (بطن) «تحت قصيره ودون الجله». قال في اللسان: وبطنه يبطنه بطنًا وبطن له، كلاهما: ضرب بطنه. وضرب فلان بطن له إذا ضرب له تحت البطن، ثم أنشد البيتين=

The Discourse on *Laḥn* in Arabic Philological and Literary Traditions

Amidu Sanni

The Discourse on *Laḥn* in Arabic Philological and Literary Traditions

AMIDU SANNI

Abstract

The Arabic terminological tradition is remarkably unique for the application of a single referential word to a variety of concepts across subjects. One such term is *laḥn*, which, in the sense of a *terminus technicus*, became a familiar topos in philological, jurisprudential, literary, and Qur'ānic discourses. The present study re-examines the referential terrain of the term, taking as its point of departure, Johann Fück's (d. 1974) seminal discussion of it. An entirely new area to which the term came to be applied relates to the aesthetic genres; namely, the poetic and prose forms where particular manipulation of meanings or expressions became interpretable as rhetorical *laḥn*. From Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) down to Ibn Rashīq (d. 456/1063), this study examines the trajectory of the evolution and formalization of the term *laḥn* in the context of allusive tropes established by theorists and literary legislators. The study also demonstrates that, its strong referential attachment to incorrect idiom notwithstanding, the application of the term *laḥn* to other phenomena in the scholarly discourse was all the more remarkable in regard to the literary, theoretical tradition where the elasticity of the terminological convention is once more established.

Introduction

The term *laḥn* and the various concepts to which it refers have been the subject of some stimulating, scholarly investigations in contemporary scholarship. Johann Fück's (d. 1974) pioneering study, in spite of its age, remains a redoubtable point of departure for later efforts among which Manfred Ullmann's studies stand out.[1] In the present

[1]Johann Fück, 'Die Würzel *l-ḥ-n* und ihre Ableitungen', in '*Arabiyya: Untersuchungen zur arabischen Sprach und Stilgeschichte* (Berlin, 1950), pp. 128–35. This title also exists in a French translation as 'La racine *lḥn* et ses dérivés', in '*Arabīya: Recherches sur l'histoire de la langue et du style arabe*, trans. Claude Denizeau (Paris, 1955), pp. 195–205. An Arabic translation is also said to have appeared later, although this was not available to me. Manfred Ullmann, ed. *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache* (Wiesbaden, 1983), Band II, no 2, 377a–392ᵇ, s.v. 'laḥana' (henceforth *WKAS*); and Manfred Ullmann, *Wa-khayru l-ḥadīti mā kāna laḥnan– Beiträge zur Lexikographie des Klassischen Arabisch Nr 1* (München, 1979) (henceforth *Beiträge*).

essay, my intention is to reposition the various significations of the term as identified by both authors and to illustrate other shades of meanings and nuances that either author has not identified or established. A number of evidential examples given by either author to illustrate their discussion will be re-presented in order to refresh the reader's familiarity with them. More significantly, I intend to illustrate the emergence of an entirely different type of *laḥn*, the one I would like to designate as rhetorical *laḥn*. This designation is informed by the observation that our earliest encounter with it with this underlying signification was in the context of the scholarly elaboration of the rhetorical schemata (*schemata verborum*) and tropes of the Arabic aesthetic tradition, especially poetry. From the third/ninth century, scholarly discussions on the aesthetic tradition of the Arabs started to assume a systematic elaboration of some sort, as aspects and features of the various modes of literary expression came to be characterized in specific terms. In religious and propaedeutic subjects there were cross-currents of terminological interface such that the term *laḥn* came to be employed in rhetoric, jurisprudence, and grammar, among others. My particular interest in this essay, however, is to highlight how *laḥn* came to be employed in the domain of rhetorical characterization of figures of speech. It is significant to note that neither Fück nor Ullmann made any conscious attempt at examining the phenomenon of *laḥn* as a rhetorical subject, and this will constitute a major—if not the major—aspect of this study. Nonetheless, I intend to provide additional information on and analysis of other significations of the lemma *laḥn* as discussed by the two principal authorities in their various studies.

Laḥn and its Idioms in Language

Taking Fück and Ullmann as our principal authorities, the word *laḥn* is said to have five semantic significations, namely:[2]

  i. Idiom, speech style, tone. In this sense it also refers to the peculiar manner of speaking by an individual or an ethnic group (French *parler*; German *Redeweise*).[3]
 ii. Perceptiveness, cleverness, or quick witticism.
iii. Veiled or obscure allusion.
 iv. Solecism; that is, incorrect speech. This also entails barbarism and malapropism.[4]
  v. Musical melody, song, or tune.

Drawing on the insights afforded by materials and discourse on the classical period, it is safe to conclude that the original application of *laḥn* was understood in the context of i–iii and that its meaning was generally limited to these ideational spheres. The earliest

---

[2]Ullmann, *Beiträge,* 6. See also, El Said M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdul Haleem, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Quranic Usage* (Leiden/Boston, 2008), p. 838, s. v. 'l-ḥ-n'.

[3]Compare *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new (2nd) ed., 12 vols (Leiden, 1960–2009), v (1986), 605^b–610^a, s.v. '*laḥn al-ʿawāmm*'; xii (2004), 546^b–47^b, s.v. '*laḥn*'.

[4]It may be added here in passing that in the western literary tradition, too, the subject elicited some attention. In what is probably the earliest treatise on the theory of letter writing—namely, *Flores Rhetorici* (Flowers of Rhetoric) completed in 1087 by Alberic of Montecassino (d. 1105)—malapropism is defined as 'improper use of words'; barbarism as 'the serious misuse of one word'; and solecism as 'serious misuse of a group of words'. See J. M. Miller, trans., '*Flores Rhetorici* ' ('Flowers of Rhetoric'), in *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. Joseph M. Miller et al. (Bloomington, IN, 1974), 131–61 (p. 142).

documentary occurrence of the word in the sense of manner of speech is employed in Qur'ān 47:30:

> *Wa-law nashā'u la-araynākahum fa-la-'araftahum bi-sīmāhum wa-la-ta'rifanna-hum fī laḥni l-qawli . . .*

> Had we wished, we would have shown them to you; you would have known them by their marks, but surely you will know them by the manner of their speech . . .

It is also in this sense that it is used by Bishr b. 'Amr, otherwise known as al-Jārūd b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 20/641), in the following:[5]

> *Yā ayyuha l-hātifu fī dujā l-ẓulam*
>   *ahlan wa-sahlan bika min ṭayfin alam(m)*
> *Bayyin – hadāka llāhu – <u>fī laḥni l-kalim</u>*
>   *mani lladhī tad'ū ilayhi taghtanim*

> O disembodied voice that cries aloud in the intensely dark night
>   welcome! O ye phantom that alighted,
> Clarify—May Allah guide you—by your manner of speech,
>   to whom are you calling? Then you will be successful.

For the use of the word in the sense of veiled allusion, the following may be cited:[6]

> *Lahum manṭiqāni yafraqu l-nāsu minhumā*
>   *wa-laḥnāni ma'rūfun wa-ākharu munkarū*

> They have two ways of speaking of which people are afraid
>   and two manners of speech: one is recognisable the other is not.

A statement credited to Prophet Muḥammad in the following report is also to be understood in this sense. As the opposing elements from the Quraysh were preparing for a war against the Muslims, the Prophet Muḥammad sent a group to verify the veracity of this intelligence report with the instruction: *fa-idhā kāna ḥaqqan fa-lḥanū lī laḥnan a'rifuh*[7] ('Should you find that be true, then report back to me in such a discreet way that I will understand').

---

[5]About him, see al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām* (Beirut, 1954), ii, 27. This poetical piece is said to be al-Jārūd's response to an invisible 'ghost' who was inviting him to believe in Muḥammad (without actually mentioning the Prophet by name) as the poet was searching for his lost ass in the wilderness. The 'ghost' later turned out to be the legendary orator Quss b. Sā'ida. See al-Baghdādī, 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar al-, *Khizānat al-adab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 13 vols (Cairo, 1967–1986), ii (1967), 81.

[6]Al-Marzūqī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 4 vols (Cairo, 1951–53), Selection no. 207, verse 5.

[7]Ullmann, *WKAS*, quoting Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1858–60), i, 2.

Laḥn as sounds of non-humans

Drawing on materials from the literary repertoire, it is important to note that the term *laḥn* is also used in reference to sounds made by certain animals and birds; for example, the whining, yelping or barking of the dog, the neighing of the horse, and the cooing of doves and croaking of black crows. These could be illustrated with the following:

- Al-Farazdaq:[8]

  Wa-dāʿin bi-laḥni l-kalbi yadʿū wa-dūnahū
  *   mina l-layli sijfā ẓulmatin wa-ghuyūmuhā*

  Many a caller with the barking [lit. speech] of a dog; while ahead of
  him are curtains and clouds of the night.

- Jaḥdar al-Liṣṣ:[9]

  Fa-kuntu qadi ndamaltu fa-hāja shawqī
  *   bukāʾu ḥamāmatayni tajāwabānī*
  Tajāwabatā bi-laḥnin aʿjamiyyin
  *   ʿalā ghuṣnayni min gharabin wa-bānī*

  I had been healed, so my passion became roused
  by the crying of two doves exchanging cries
  They answered each other in a foreign speech
  from the top of the branches of weeping willow and moringa.

- Ibn Ḥamdīs (d. 527/1133):[10]

  ʿAlā shadawāti ṭuyūrin fiṣāḥin
  *   ʿalā anna afṣaḥahū aʿjamū*
  Lahunna aʿārīḍu ʿinda l-Khalī-
  *   li muhmalatu l-wazni lā tuʿlamū*
  turajjiʿu fīhā ḍurūba luḥūnin
  *   fa-tuṭribunā wa-hya lā tufhamū*

  On the tunes of birds that speak [Arabic] eloquently,
  though the most eloquent of them are non-Arabs

---

[8]ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī al-Murtaḍā*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols (Cairo, 1954), ii, 115. In the *Dīwān*, *nabḥi* is read in place of *laḥni*, and the second half reads: *ghayāṭilu min dahmaʾa dājin bahīmuhā*. See al-Farazdaq, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, ed. Īliyyā al-Ḥāwī, 2 vols (Beirut, 1983), ii, 473.

[9]Abū Tammām, *Kitāb al-Waḥshiyyāt: al-Ḥamāsa al-ṣughrā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Azīz al-Maymanī (Cairo, 1963), 183; Ismāʿīl b. al-Qāsim Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī, *Amālī*, 2 vols in 1 (Cairo, 1926) i, 285. See also Fück, *ʿArabiyya*, 129.

[10]E. Ditters and H. Motzki (Eds). *Approaches to Arabic Linguistics: Presented to Kees Versteeegh on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday* (Leiden, Boston, 2007), Preface, xiii–xiv, with a slight amendment to the translation.

They use metres that are, by al-Khalīl,
   abandoned [hence] unknown
In them [i.e. the metres] they quaver notes of various melodies
   delighting us although they are unintelligible.

Yet another example of the use of the word in this sense can be illustrated with the following:[11]

> *Wa-hātifayni bi-shajwin baʿda mā sajaʿat*
>   *wurqu l-ḥamāmi bi-tarjīʿin wa-irnānī*
> *Bātā ʿalā ghuṣni bānin fī dhurā fananin*
>   *yuraddidāni **luḥūnan** dhāta alwānī*

And [there were] two cooing ones with grief after dusky-coloured pigeons
   had cooed quavering and plaintive.
Both whiled away the night on the ben-branch among the tops of a leafy twig,
   repeating **notes** of different timbres [lit. colours].

The sound of a bow-string is also covered by the term *laḥn*, as can be illustrated with the following:

- Kāmil al-Thaqafī (a Bedouin):[12]

> *Insānatu l-ḥayyi am udmānatu l-samurī*
>   *bi-l-nihyi raqqaṣahā laḥnun mina l-watarī*

(Is it) a woman belonging to the tribe or a white-brown antelope grazing
near the acacias
   which at the water-hole a sound from the bow-string has made jump?

Whereas the contact of the Arabs with non-Arabs inspired the identification of the term *laḥn* with incorrect speech, as I intend to show later, their contact with the Greek tradition from the early third/ninth century gave the term the additional meaning of a musical melody and tune.[13] An illustration of it in this sense is provided by a line attributed to Ibn Ṭabāṭabā (d. 322/934):[14]

> *Wa-ʿijlatin tashdū bi-alḥānihā*
>   *wa-kānati l-kayyisata l-khādimah*

---

[11]See Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 20 vols (Beirut, 1956), s.v. 'laḥana', 379ᵃ – 383ᵃ (henceforth *Lisān*). The verse is without attribution in al-Qālī, *Amālī*—who incidentally interprets the word *luḥūn* as *lughāt* (tongues/peculiar idioms). For this he was criticized by al-Bakrī. See ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *Simṭ al-laʾālī*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Maymanī, 2 vols (Cairo, 1936), i 21.
[12]Al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab*, i, 97; *WKAS*, 383ᵃ.
[13]Ullmann, *Beiträge*, 24. See also *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1960–2009), xii, 546a–47a. s.v. 'laḥn'; al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, ed. Mahdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī, 8 vols (Baghdad, 1980–85), iii, 230 (henceforth *al-ʿAyn*).
[14]Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣināʿatayn*, ed. Muḥammad Qumayḥa (Beirut, 1984), 170.

> Often I think of a (particular) girl like a young cow, singing its melodies,
>   while she used to be a clever servant girl.

Evidence of the employment of the word in this sense is also provided by Ibn Durayd in his treatment of the lemma, and in this regard it is synonymous with *taghrīd* (singing, e.g., of a bird) and *taṭrīb* (warbling, also of a bird).[15]

Qur'ānic *laḥn*

I have discussed elsewhere in some detail the various shades of meanings and nuances of the term *laḥn* in respect of the scriptural and *ḥadīth* traditions of Islam, and I will not restate them here.[16] Nevertheless, the controversy, if not the acrimony, generated by discussions among medieval authors and scholiasts on the subject has come out to be of far greater intellectual and theological significance than has hitherto been realized, and this I intend to examine in an independent study at a later date, using the insights afforded by al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) as my point of reference. However, it may not be out of place here to highlight another signification of the term that may have escaped the attention of both Fück and Ullmann. This signification, traceable to Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244/858), is in the sense of ordinary meaning, *ma'nā*;[17] Ibn Barrī (d. 582/1187)), the author of the famous marginal notes on al-Jawharī's *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, among other medieval lexicologists, adduces this last signification in the enumeration of the various concepts to which the word refers.[18]

Laḥn as an Intelligence Marker

An early use of the word *laḥn* in the sense of perceptiveness and intelligence can be exemplified with the following by Labīd b. Rabī'a (d. c. 41/661) in his description of a Yemenite slave while writing:[19]

> *Muta'awwidun laḥinun yu'īdu bi-kaffihī*
>   *qalaman 'alā 'usubin dhabulna wa-bānī*

> He is experienced, *intelligent*; he often wields
>   a pen on dry palm stalks and moringa sticks.

Related to this is the use of the word in the sense of being articulate and effective in argumentation, as can be illustrated with the following statement by the Prophet:

---

[15]Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Durayd, *al-Jamhara fī l-lugha* (Hyderabad, 1345), ii, 192, s.v. *'l-ḥ-n'*.

[16]Amidu Sanni, 'Laḥn in the Koran and its Literatures: Issues and Meanings in Textual Analysis and Recitational Discourse', in *Modern Controversies in Qur'ānic Studies*, ed. Mohammad Nekroumi and Jan Meise, Bonner Islamstudien BIS Band 7 (Hamburg: EB Verlag, 2009), forthcoming.

[17]Ya'qūb b. Isḥāq Ibn al-Sikkīt, *Kanz al-ḥuffāẓ fī kitāb Tahdhīb al-alfāẓ -hadhdhabahu al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, ed. Louis Cheikho (Beirut, 1895), 548.

[18]*Lisān*, s.v. 'laḥn' (p. 381ª). For more on Ibn Barrī, see Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 11 vols (Beirut, 1954ff), iv, 200ᵇ.

[19]Labīd b. Rabī'a, *Sharḥ Dīwān Labīd Ibn Rabī'a al-'Āmirī*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Kuwait, 1962), 138; Isḥāq b. Mirār Abū 'Amr al-Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Jīm*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī et al., 4 vols (Cairo, 1974ff), iii, 213ᵇ where '*muta'awwidhun*' is read; al-Qālī, *Amālī*, (Cairo, 1926), i, 5.

'. . . *wa-laʿalla baʿḍakum an yakūna alḥana bi-ḥujjatihi* . . .'[20] ('Perchance one of you might be more articulate in the presentation of his evidence'), where *alḥan* has the same meaning as *ablagh*.[21] A later extrapolation of this signification is found in Qudāma b. Jaʿfar (d. after 320/932). In the 208th chapter/section of his *Jawāhir*, which is headed with the rubric *balāghat al-manṭiq* (linguistic eloquence), the word *laḥinun* is used for someone that is noted for linguistic efficiency within the realm of *balāgha* or *faṣāḥa*.[22]

Laḥn as Variant Idiom

Evidence of the use of the word in the sense of the deviant, peculiar speech style or dialectal form of the language can be illustrated with the following statement, which is credited to caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644): '*taʿallamū l-farāʾiḍa wa l-sunana wa-l-laḥna kamā taʿallamūna l-Qurʾāna*'[23] ('Learn the obligatory aspects of Islam, the Prophetic traditions, and the (variant forms of the Arabic) *language*, as you learn the Qurʾān'). In this wise, the alternate term for it is *lugha*, or *lisān*, as the following verse may illustrate:[24]

> *Wa-qawmun lahum laḥnun siwā laḥni qawminā*
> *wa-shaklun – wa-bayti llāhi – lasnā nushākiluh.*

> A people they are whose language is different from ours;
>   and a physique—I swear by the house of Allah—which is dissimilar to ours.

Laḥn as Solecism

In the foregoing, I have tried to elaborate on the various significations of the lemma *l-ḥ-n-*, as demonstrable from the routine idiom of the Arabs and the literary tradition of the classical period of Islam. Following on the diffusion of Islam into non-Arab territories and the interaction of Arabs with non-Arabs, incorrect idioms in routine speech and in the recitation of the Qurʾān became commonplace. This inspired the first attempt at establishing the rules of Arabic grammar.[25] Moreover, this led to the emergence of a rich corpus of scholarly exertions that came to be identified as the *laḥn al-ʿāmma* literature.

---

[20]*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut, n.d.), '*Kitāb al-aḥkām*', ix, 212 ḥadīth 281; '*Kitāb al-maẓalim*', iii, 381, ḥadīth, 638.

[21]Fück, '*Arabiyya*, 129.

[22]Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, *Jawāhir al-alfāẓ*, ed., Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut, 1979), 312.

[23]*WKAS*, 381[b], quoting al-Qālī, *Kitāb al-Amālī*, i, 5; Muĥammad b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāgha* (Beirut, 1965), 562, s.v. 'laḥana'. For a fuller discussion of this statement by ʿUmar, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v (1986), s.v. 'lugha', especially, 803[b] and 804[b]. A similar idea is understood from a statement by Ubayy b. Kaʿb: '*taʿallamū l-laḥna fī l-Qurʾān kamā taʿallamūnahu*' ('Learn the (various dialects of the Arabic) language from the Qurʾān as you learn (the text of) the Qurʾān itself'). ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿUmar, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Bannā (Cairo, 1981), 26.

[24]*Lisān*, 380[b] s.v. 'laḥana'. It is attributed to a woman from the tribe of Kalb in ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿUmar, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*.

[25]Muḥammad Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, 2nd ed. (Cairo, 1974), 12. For a fuller account of this, see Amidu Sanni, 'Arabic Grammar: an Islamic Philological Science in a New Light', *Islamic Studies* 30, no. 3 (1991): 403–12; Pierre Larcher, 'Les Origins de la grammaire Arabe selon la tradition: distribution, interpretation, discussion', in Ditters and Motzki (eds), *Approaches to Arabic Linguistics*, 113–34.

The oldest in the genre, *mā talḥanu fīhi l-ʿawāmm*, is to be attributed to the grammarian al-Kisāʾī (d. 189/805).[26] Committing linguistic mistakes was not limited to the ordinary folks, as the following anecdote would confirm. The awe-inspiring governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj, had an encounter with ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī (d. 103/721), the leading scholar of Kūfa whom he had asked about his annual stipend by saying '*Kam ʿaṭāʾaka* [instead of *ʿaṭāʾuka*] *fī l-sana*?', to which the scholar responded '*alfayn*' [instead of *alfān*]. As if he was struck by a thunderbolt that such an ungrammatical statement could be made by someone of al-Shaʿbī's status, al-Ḥajjāj repeated the question, this time in the correct form, and his respondent equally replied correctly.[27] From now on, the term *laḥn* almost became exclusive to the phenomenon of incorrect speech, and indeed linguistic mistakes in general,[28] although evidence of imprecision and contrariety of interpretation was all the more profound.

The use of the word *laḥn* in the sense of incorrect speech was a post-Islamic development, as can be established from our discussion so far. The Prophet of Islam is also reported to have proclaimed his immunity from *laḥn* in the sense of incorrect idiom: 'I am from Quraysh, and I grew up among the Banū Saʿd, how then should I commit *laḥn*?!'.[29] The word is reported to have featured twice in this sense in Sībawayhi's (d. 177/793) monumental work on grammar, *al-Kitāb*.[30] Al-Kisāʾī is also known to have equally employed it as the antithesis of *iʿrāb* (correct idiom) while highlighting the significance of the science of *naḥw*.[31] An anecdote related by Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 363/972) illustrates one of the earliest instances of its use with this meaning. ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Masʿada al-Muʿallim (c. 65/685) was rebuked by the poet Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd Allāh for accusing a crow of committing *laḥn* by sounding '*ghāq*' with *sukūn* instead of '*ghāqi*' with *kasra*.[32] Another evidence of the early use of the word in the sense of incorrect expression can be illustrated with the following line by ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa (*c.* 93/712):[33]

---

[26]Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden, 1967ff), viii, 177 (henceforth *GAS*). An edition of the book by Ramaḍān ʿAbd al-Tawwāb was published in Cairo in 1982. Brockelmann discussed the controversy surrounding the authenticity of the attribution and suggested that it was most probably by an author familiar with *K. al-Faṣīḥ* of Thaʿlab. See C. Brockelmann, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der arabischen Sprachwissenschaft', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 13 (1898): 29–46. This view is supported by Nöldeke. See Th. Nöldeke, 'Bemerkungen zu al-Kisāʾī's Schrift über die Sprachfehler des Volkes', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 13 (1898), 111–15.

[27]Asked why he chose to speak incorrectly at first, al-Shaʿbī cited the precedent that was set by the governor: '*laḥana l-amīru fa-laḥantu, fa-lammā aʿraba l-amīru aʿrabtu; wa-mā yaḥsunu an yalḥana l-amīru wa-uʿriba*'. See Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1971), 99. A similar story involving ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān (d. 85/704), the governor of Egypt, and a complainant is given by ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿUmar (d. 349/960). See ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿUmar, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, 29. About al-Shaʿbī, see al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām*, iv, 18–19.

[28]See *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. K. Versteegh, 4 vols, (Leiden, 2006–9), ii, 628a–34a, s.v. '*laḥn*'.

[29]'*Anā min Qurayshin wa-nashaʾtu fī Banī Saʿdin wa-annā fīya l-laḥnu*'. See Stefan Wild 'Arabic avant La Lettre, Divine, Prophetic, and Heroic Arabic', in Ditters and Motzki (eds), *Approaches to Arabic Linguistics*, 206. An inaccurate translation of the statement is given in Claude Gilliot and Pierre Larcher, 'Language and Style of the Qurʾān', in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 6 vols (Leiden, 2001–6), iii (2003), 120, s.v. 'Language and Style of the Qurʾān'.

[30]Gérard Troupeau, *Lexique-Index du Kitāb de Sībawayhi*, editions Klincksiek (Paris, 1976), 188.

[31]ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿUmar, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, 33.

[32]ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo, 1949), 311. About Ibn Masʿada, see al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām*, iv, 279.

[33]Ullmann, *Beiträge*, 19.

Fa-mā stajmalat nafsī ḥadīthan li-ghayrihā
   wa-in kāna laḥnan mā tuḥaddithunā khulfā.'

My soul has never enjoyed anybody's speech other than hers
   although in a faulty idiom is the broken promise which she makes to us.

Moreover, the word *laḥn* as the antithesis of *i'rāb* had become a common parallelism in the poetical expression of the succeeding generations—as demonstrated in a verse by al-Nābigha al-Shaybānī (d. 125/743):[34] '*wa-yu'ribu aqwāmun wa-yalḥanu ma'sharun . . .*' (Some speak with *i'rāb* others commit *laḥn* . . .)(as well as in the prose discourse of the succeeding era; for example, in al-Jāḥiẓ,[35] Ibn Wahb,[36] and Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi[37] among some early authors, as I intend to show later. Moreover, its signification in the sense of fault or error was also extended to non-linguistic spheres. For our purpose, we may cite an illustration from al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144). Where a liquid being poured out of a bowl or a bow or an arrow being released makes an unpleasant sound in the process, such a sound will be characterized in the negative sense of *laḥn*, whereas it will be described as *mu'rib* if the sound was pleasant.[38] A further extension of the use of the parallelism is also found in the art of writing. For instance, Sulaymān b. Wahb (d. 272/884), the renowned scribe, argues that an inappropriate elongation of a ligature is a form of *laḥn* in writing.[39] Interest in errors and infelicities in the written and spoken forms of Arabic that later became formalized in the *taṣḥīf* and *taḥrīf* literature must have started from this era when specific incongruities came to be characterized in specific terms in the emerging terminological repertoire. This is a significant issue that requires an independent inquiry, as it falls outside the scope of the present study.

In essence, the characterization of an incorrect expression as *laḥn*—whether it was made by an aristocrat, a common person, or indeed by an animal—became formalized and dominant in the intellectual discourse of the post-Islamic era. But then other significations of the term were not completely obscured, and evidence of some confusion if not imprecision in interpretation was not altogether lacking, as the following will illustrate.

---

[34] Nābighat Banī Shaybān, *Dīwān Nābighat Banī Shaybān*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm Ya'qūb (Damascus, 1987), 118.

[35] 'Amr b. Baḥr Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 4 vols (Cairo, 1968), i, 145: '*wa-matā sami'ta – ḥafiẓaka Allāhu – bi-nādiratin min kalāmi l-a'rāb, fa-iyyāka an taḥkiyahā illā ma'a i'rābihā . . . fa innaka in ghayyartahā bi-an talḥana fī i'rābihā . . . kharajta min tilka l-ḥikāya.*

[36] [Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib] *Naqd al-nathr*, ed. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-'Abbādī (Beirut, 1982), 143 (attributing it to Qudāma ibn Ja'far). I have used this edition in this study although the complete edition with the right title *al-Burhān fī wujūh al-bayān*, said to have been written after 335/946, is now available in the edition of Aḥmad Maṭlūb and Khadīja al-Ḥadīthī (Baghdad, 1967) and Ḥifnī Muḥammad Sharaf (Cairo, 1969). See *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. J.S. Meisami and P. Starkey, 2 vols (London and New York, 1998) i, 381 s.v. 'Ibn Wahb'.

[37] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Rabbihī, *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn et al., 7 vols (Cairo, 1956), ii, 478, where a chapter is entitled '*Bāb fī l-i'rāb wa-l-laḥn*'.

[38] al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās*, p. 562ᵃ: '*qadḥun* **lāḥinun**: laysa bi-ṣāfī l-ṣawt '*inda l-ifāḍa, wa-qawsun lāḥinatun 'inda l-inbāḍ . . . wa-idhā ṣafā ṣawtuhu qīla* **mu'ribun**'.

[39] '*Al-madd fī l-khaṭṭ fī ghayri mawḍi'ihā laḥnun fī l-khaṭṭ*'. See [Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib] *Naqd al-nathr*, 113.

Laḥn: The Best Form of Expression?

A poem by the Umayyad Mālik b. Asmā' b. Khārija (d. c. 100/718) is placed by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868) under a rubric that indicates his understanding of the use of the word here in the sense of incorrect idiom:[40]

> *A-mughaṭṭan minnī ʿalā basarī li-l-*
> *ḥubbi am anti akmalu l-nāsi ḥusnā*
> *Wa-ḥadīthin aladhdhuhū huwa mimmā*
> *yanʿatu l-nāʿitūna yūzanu waznā*
> *Manṭiqun ṣā'ibun wa-talḥanu aḥyā–*
> *nan wa-aḥlā l-ḥadīthi mā kāna laḥnā*

> Is my eyesight overwhelmingly covered with
>   love? or is it that you are the most perfect of the human beings in beauty?
> Her sweetest of speech which is well measured
>   is better than that described by evaluators (of speech).
> Correct speech (she produces), though she sometimes commits *laḥn*,
>   the best of speech is that which is (marked by) *laḥn*.

The concluding verse of the above illustration is the focus of discussion and dissension among classical authors with regard to the exact signification of *laḥn* as used here. We have already indicated al-Jāḥiẓ's interpretation of it in the sense of an ungrammatical/incorrect idiom, as evidenced by his introduction to these lines. This is probably not out of order, given the parallelism indicated in the first half of the concluding verse; namely correctness (*ṣā'ibun = ṣawāb*) and its antithesis, incorrectness (*laḥn = khaṭa'*). But the earliest interpretation of it is in the sense of obscure and veiled allusion—that is, one referring to a deep meaning rather than a surface meaning—is attributable to al-Layth (d. 180/796).[41] By the time of Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002), however, three different interpretations of the word as used in our illustration had become formalized. According to him, Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215/830) and Ibn al-Aʿrābī (d. 231/846) take the word to mean intelligence and perceptiveness (*al-fiṭna wa-l-fahm*); Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) interprets it as *taʿrīḍ* (indirect use/allusion), while others interpret it as incorrect idiom (*al-khaṭa' fī l-iʿrāb*).[42] The pioneering position of al-Jāḥiẓ in this last view has been highlighted above, and his disciple Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) is also known to have espoused this interpretation.[43] But one

---

[40]The illustration is introduced with '*wa-qad qāla Mālik ibni Asmā' fī 'stimlāḥi l-laḥni min baʿd nisā'ihi*. See al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, i, 147; ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa-l-shuʿarā'* (Beirut, 1984), 530; Muḥammad b. ʿImrān al-Marzubānī, *Muʿjam al-shuʿarā'*, ed. ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj (Cairo, 1960), 266; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī, *al-ʿIqd*, ii, 480; Ismāʿil b. Qāsim al-Qālī, *Kitāb al-Amālī*, i, 7; *Asās*, 562[a], where *wāḍiḥun* is read for *ṣā'ibun*.

[41]*Lisān*, p. 381[a], s.v. 'laḥana': *wa-qāla [al-Layth] ta'wīluhu: wa–khayru l-ḥadīth min mithli hādhihi l-jāriyati mā kāna lā yaʿrifuhu kullu aḥadin; innamā yuʿrafu amruhā fī anḥā'i qawlihā*. About Mālik b. Asmā', see al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām*, vi, 127–8, *GAS*, ii, 331–2; Muḥammad b. ʿImrān al-Marzubānī, *al-Muwashshaḥ*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī (Cairo, 1965), 220.

[42]*Lisān*, 382[b].

[43]See al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, i, 15.

outstanding proponent of this interpretation was Abū l-Ḥusayn Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib (fl. third–fourth/ninth–10th century). Ibn Wahb argues that there is no way the word can be interpreted here in the sense of cleverness, but, rather, only in the sense of incorrect speech, a characteristic that he says is appreciated in girls and young ladies because of their simplicity and lack of sophistication.[44] However, al-Jāḥiẓ is reported to have been faulted by Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī al-Munajjim (d. 300/912), who argued that the word as used here actually means veiled allusion and perceptiveness, in consequence of which al-Jāḥiẓ reviewed his view and identified with the new suggestion.[45] What can be inferred from al-Munajjim's interpretation is that he has collapsed the two senses into one: a veiled allusion that can only be understood by a perceptive mind. Among the proponents of this line of thought, Ibn Durayd, al-Ṣūlī (d. 336/947) and Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 327/939) stand out.[46] That this poetical illustration should generate an intriguing debate in the scholarly discourse should not be surprising; the different interpretations given to the word *laḥn* as used here can reasonably be accommodated by the text and the context.

A prominent anticipation of this confusion over what *laḥn* could mean in a given context is provided by an anecdote involving Muʿāwiya and a delegation from Iraq. He had asked them about Ibn Ziyād (d. 53/673), his governor for the territory, in respect of whom they said: '*ẓarīfun ʿalā [illā] annahu yalḥanu*' ('he is elegant except that he commits *laḥn*'). And to this Muʿāwiya replied: '*fa-dhāka aẓrafu lahu*' ('that is more elegant for him'). According to al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 216/831) the lemma *l-ḥ-n* is used here to mean 'intelligent' (*faṭin*).[47] Although Muʿāwiya is believed to have understood the word in the positive sense, the delegation is reported to have had a contrary understanding; they wanted to portray their governor as someone given to incorrect idiom.[48]

But if the insights provided by al-Jāḥiẓ's pattern of material presentation at another level are anything to go by, it will be reasonable to argue that the term had come to be used almost exclusively in reference to incorrect idiom, even when its other significations had not passed into disuse. In the chapter entitled '*Bāb al-laḥn*' in his *al-Bayān*, the discussion here is essentially about the use of the word in the sense of incorrect or ungrammatical idiom.[49] An interesting dimension introduced into the subject, however, is the suggestion by al-Jāḥiẓ that indulgence in the use of incorrect idioms may not be strong enough to deny a speaker from being characterized as eloquent, '*balīgh*'; for he heads one of his sub-chapters with the title '*Bāb: wa-min al-laḥḥānīn al-bulaghāʾ*'.[50] Ibn Wahb al-Kātib, however, thinks differently; a non-Arab who does not understand the principles of eloquence and one who commits *laḥn* in the sense of incorrect idiom cannot be so characterized.[51]

---

[44][Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib] *Naqd al-nathr*, 144–5.

[45]Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*. See also ʿAbd Allāh al-Rūmī Yāqūt, *Irshād al-ʿarīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, 6 vols (London, 1907ff), vi, 65; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, editor's note.

[46]Although Ullmann would still prefer the original view of al-Jāḥiẓ. See Ullmann, *Beiträge*, 18–19.

[47]Labīd b. Rabīʿa, *Sharḥ Dīwān Labīd*, 139. See the anecdote also in *WKAS*, 377.

[48]Al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab*, xiii, 198. Could the delegation have meant that their governor was not wont to speaking in plain language but rather in an allusive style? In which case, their statement could be regarded as an instance of the rhetorical trope called *taʾkīd al-madḥ bi-mā yushbihu l-dhamm*.

[49]Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ii, 207ff.

[50]Ibid., ii, 220. See also. G. J. H. van Gelder's review of Herbjørn Jenssen's *The Subtleties and Secrets of the Arabic Language: Preliminary Investigations in al-Qazwīnī's Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* (Bergen, 1998), *Edebiyât*, New Series 12, no. 1 (2001): 123–8 (p. 124).

[51][Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib] *Naqd al-nathr*, 77.

Intervention by Ibn Durayd

In his treatment of the lemma *l-ḥ-n*, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d.170/786) highlights rather tersely the emerging predominance of the term in the sense of indirect expression; it is the first definition he gives.[52] But it was from Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) that derives the evidence that the various significations of the term *laḥn* as enumerated in the foregoing were becoming overarching, almost pushing the one signifying incorrect idiom to the background. The term, in the sense of a veiled allusion as can be comprehended by the intelligent—a signification already adumbrated by al-Munajjim—is systematically highlighted by Ibn Durayd in his monumental lexicon, *al-Jamhara*. The first definition of the lemma '*laḥana*', following on the model of al-Khalīl, is given in the sense of allusion.[53] Further evidence of the predominance of this sense over others is provided by our author in the introduction to his *Kitāb al-Malāḥin* where he says:[54]

> ... We name it [i.e. this book] *K. al-Malāḥin*. This title we derive from the eloquent Arabic tongue which was neither affected by confusion, nor overpowered by artificiality (*takalluf*) ... the meaning of the word *al-malāḥin* may be ascertained, because *LAḤN* carries, among [other meanings by] the Arabs the sense of 'intelligence' ... *al-laḥn* **originally** means that you intend something particular, but you express it differently (*bi-qawlin ākhar*).

That the original signification of the term *laḥn* was in the sense of an indirect expression of an idea in a way that elicits the use of intelligence and perceptiveness that borders on riddle-solving is a piece of vital information for which we are beholden to Ibn Durayd. In fact, judging by the definitional illustration with a paraphrased poem that is ultimately attributed to al-Anbārī, one of Ibn Durayd's sources in the *Jamhara*, it would not be wrong to conclude that the word *laḥn* equally had an original meaning that was cognate with *lughz* (riddle).[55] In support may be cited the following verse by al-Ṭirimmāḥ (d. 110/728).[56]

---

[52]*al-ʿAyn*, iii, 229.

[53]Ibn Durayd, *al-Jamhara fī*, ii, 192, s.v. 'l-ḥ-n', *al-laḥn*: 'ṣarfuka al-kalāma ʿan jihatihi ...' It is apposite to remark that even in jurisprudential discourse the term *laḥn* came to be used in the sense of 'implicatures' and 'unstated assumptions', as can be illustrated from Ibn ʿAqīl's (d. 513/1119) *al-Wāḍiḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. See A. Kevin Reinhart, 'Khiṭāb 'Discourse' in the Jurisprudential Theory of Ibn ʿAqīl al-Ḥanbalī', in *Classical Arabic Humanities in their own Terms—Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs on his 65th Birthday*, ed. B. Gruendler (Leiden/Boston, 2008), 166.

[54]Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Durayd, *Kitāb al-Malāḥin*, ed. H. Thorbecke (Heidelberg, 1882), 2: '... anna aṣla l-laḥni an turīda shayʾan fa-tuwarriya ʿanhu bi-qawlin ākhar.' Here Ibn Durayd may also be insinuating at the relationship between *laḥn* and another figure of speech that later became formalized as *tawriya* (double entendre). See the brilliant study by S. A. Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya and Ṣafadī's* Fadd al-Xitām ʿan at-Tawriya wa-ʾl-Istixdām (The Hague and Paris, 1966).

[55]Ibn Durayd, *al-Jamhara*. See also al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās*, 561ᵇ: '... ṣarafahu ʿan mawḍūʿihi ilā l-ilghāz'. Some useful studies on *lughz* include Amidu Sanni, 'From a Wit Tester to a Rhetorical Topos: Riddle in Arabic Poetry and Theory', forthcoming; M. Marayati, Mir ʿAlam and M. H. Tayyan, *Al-Kindi's Treatise on Crypto Analysis: Risāla fī ʾstikhrāj al-muʾammā* (Riyadh: King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, 2002); Marayati Walayah and Mir ʿAlam...., 'Ilm al-taʿmiya wa-ʾstikhrāj al-muʾammā ʿinda l-ʿArab (Damascus, 1986); Khayr al-Dīn Shamsī Pasha, 'al-Alghāz wa-l-aḥājī wa-l-muʿammayāt', *Majallat Majmaʿ al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya bi-Dimashq* 71, no. 4 (1996): 768–816.

[56]al-Ṭirimmāḥ b. al-Ḥakīm, *Dīwān al-Ṭirimmāḥ b. al-Ḥakīm al-Ṭāʾī*, in *The Poems of Ṭufail Ibn ʿAuf al-Ghanawī and Al-Ṭirimmāḥ Ibn al-Ḥakīm al-Ṭāyī*, ed. F. Krenkow (London, 1927), Qaṣīda 47, line 5, p. 164. The translation given by Fück is slightly amended here. See 'Arabiyya, 133.

Wa-addat ilayya l-qawla minhunna zawlatun
   tulāḥinu aw tarnū li-qawli l-mulāḥinī.
A bright girl from amongst them conveyed to me their words [either]
   in riddles or in a way close to that of a riddle maker.

But the form in which the word is used here—namely, *'lāḥana'*—is said to have, however, passed into disuse.[57] This is hardly correct, as some of the entries and illustrations in a number of classical and medieval lexicons have shown. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Ibn Rashīq must have taken the model of analysis introduced by Ibn Durayd as his point of departure in his discussion of allusive tropes in which *laḥn* and *lughz* were to become central themes. This I intend to discuss in some detail in the next section where the credit for articulating the rhetorical significance of the term *laḥn* in the theoretical discourse will be clearly established. That Ibn Rashīq was able to give in full and with due attribution the evidential example that was earlier offered in paraphrase and without attribution by Ibn Durayd further underpins our suggestion of the indebtedness of the former to the latter. The poetical illustration as related by al-Ushnāndāni on the authority of al-Jarmī is given here.[58]

Khallū 'ani l-nāqati l-ḥamrā'a wa-'qta'idū l-
   'awda l-ladhī fī janābay ẓahrihī waqa'ū
Inna l-dhi'āba qadi 'khḍarrat barāthinuhā
   wa-l-nāsu kulluhumū Bakrun idhā shabi'ū

---

[57]Ullmann, *Beiträge*, 5.

[58]Sa'īd b. Hārūn al-Ushnāndānī, *Ma'ānī l-shi'r*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut, 1964), 61–3. Bevan gives the name of the renderer as Nashīb b. Bashāma al-'Anbārī, otherwise called al-A'war. I am, however, inclined to believe that it was Ṭarīf b. Tamīm al-'Anbārī, a poetaster and warrior of the Jāhiliyya period (about whom see al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, iii, 326). The story has it that the poet was a captive among the Banū Sa'd, a hostile tribe that was about to wage a war against his clan. The coded message as sent by the captive to his folkmen reads: 'li-yuḥsinū ilā asīrihim wa-yukrimūhu, fa-innī 'inda qawmin yuḥsinūna ilayya wa-yukrimūnanī; wa-qul lahum: fa-l-yu'arrū jamalī l-aḥmara wa-yarkabū nāqatī l-'aysā'a wa-l-yar'aw ḥājatī fī ubaynī Mālikin. Wa-akhbirhim anna l-'awsaja qad awraqa wa-anna l-nisā'a qadi shtakat wa-l-ya'ṣū Hammāma bna Bashāmata fa-innahū mash'ūmun maḥdūdun wa-l-yuṭī'ū Hudhayla bna l-Akhnasa fa-innahu ḥāzimun maymūnun' ('Let them be nice to their captive and respect him, for I am with a people who are nice to me and who respect me. Ask them to dismount from my red camel and mount my bright-coloured camel. Let them attend to my affair among the dear sons of Mālik. Inform them that the 'awsaj tree has grown leaves and women have prepared waterskins. Let them disobey Hammām b. Bashāma, for he is of ill luck, short-witted; and let them obey Hudhayl b. al-Akhnas, for he is resolute and of good luck'). The captive filled the hand of the slave who was to carry the message to his clan with sand and asked him to look at the sun. The message was to be interpreted by Hudhayl b. al-Akhnas, who decoded the message thus: that the sand signifies the multitude of army, and the sun the imminence of an attack that was as bright as the sunlight. The red camel stands for al-Sammān, a settlement that must be vacated for al-Dahnā', another place for which the bright camel is used. The leaf-growing *'awsaj* tree stands for the fully-armed army of the enemies for whom the women had made water skins *(al-shikā')*. (The wolves with green claws mean soldiers who, having marched through the green groves, got their feet coloured in green.) See A. A. Bevan, *The Naḳā' id of Jarir and al-Farazdaḳ* (Leiden, 1905–7), i, 305–7. There is some confusion as to the precise referents of the red and the bright camel metaphor. Ibn Durayd (in the *Ma'ānī al-shi'r*) and Ibn Rashīq take the red camel for al-Dahnā' and the bright one for al-Sammān; although this is reversed by the former in the *Jamhara*. The Bakr tribe that is mentioned in the second line was the traditional foe of the Tamīm tribe against whom several wars were fought. The whole story in a slightly different version and text is also given in al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, i, 16–17.

> Abandon the red camel and ride the bright, aged camel
>   on the two sides of whose back are marks from frequent sittings
> The claws of wolves have become green; and all people behave
>   like the Bakr (tribe) when satiated.

The literal meaning of this illustration is certainly not intended, as can be established from the extra-textual materials provided in our footnote. The import of the verse can only be understood by recourse to the non-textual facilities that verge on the metalanguage of riddle and symbolism.

In the foregoing, I have tried to elaborate on some of the various significations of the term *laḥn* as exposited by Fück and Ullmann. I have tried, perhaps with some success, to expatiate on some of their analyses that appear elliptical or short on clarity. Such other meanings of the term which they may have ignored or treated with some graceful sidestepping have been brought into a sharper focus in the context of the philological and routine value of the term. In what follows, I intend to examine that aspect of the term that was left out by both, the one belonging in the realm of Arabic theoretical and literary discourse which I would like to designate as rhetorical *laḥn*.

The Rhetorical *laḥn*

As can be established from our discussion so far, *laḥn* had, from the third/ninth century onward, become prominently identified with solecism, malapropism, and inaccurate use of the language in general. From Abū ʿUbayda (d. 207/822) up to Abū Bakr al-Zubaydī (d. 379/989) is a significant list of titles in this regard as provided by Sezgin.[59] Before the close of the second/eighth century, an intriguing parallelism emerged in the characterization of faults that occur in the realm of philology or grammar, and faults associated with the technique of verse-making; namely, those associated with prosody and rhyme. The following, which is attributed to a variety of authors some of whom belong in as early as the second/eighth century, illustrates what is probably the earliest employment of *laḥn* in the context of prosodic faults:[60]

---

[59]Titles on grammatical *laḥn* as derived from *GAS* include: Abū ʿUbayda (d. 207/822), *Mā talḥanu fihi l-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, viii, 69); al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 213/828), *laḥn al-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, viii, 73); Abū Naṣr al-Bāhilī (d. 231/846), *Mā talḥanu fīhi l-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, viii, 88); al-Māzinī (d. 248/869), *Mā yalḥanu fīhi l-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, viii, 92); Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869), *Mā yalḥanu fīhi l-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, viii, 94); Thābit b. Abī Thābit (fl. third/ninth century), *Kitāb laḥn al-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, ix, 315); Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī (d. 289/902), *Kitāb laḥn al-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, ix, 205); Thaʿlab (d. 291/904), *Mā yalḥanu fīhi l-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, viii, 146); Abū Aḥmad al-ʿAskarī (d.382/993), *Mā laḥana fīhi l-khawāṣṣ min al-ʿulamā'* (*GAS*, viii, 181); Abū l-Haytham al-ʿUqaylī (fl. fourth/10th century), *Mā yalḥanu fīhi l-ʿāmma* (*GAS*, viii, 176); Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Zubaydī (d. 379/989); *Laḥn al-ʿawāmm* (*GAS*, viii, 254). Cf. note 4 above. Even in the field of natural sciences, interest in the phenomenon was not altogether lacking. To Galen (c. 200/815) is attributed *Kitāb fī mā yalzam lladhī yalḥanu fī kalāmih* (*GAS*, iii, 137).

[60]For instance, al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutayba attribute it to al-Burdukht (c. 120/727). In al-Marzubānī it is attributed to both Ibn al-Warrāq (d. 225/840) and Ḥammād ʿAjrad (d. 161/177), but al-Thaʿālibī (d. 430/1038) attributes it to one Yazīd b. Ḥarb. See al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ii, 214–15; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa-l-shuʿarā'*, 479; al-Marzubānī, *al-Muwashshaḥ* (Cairo, 1996), 20; ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Sumkarī (Cairo, 1908), 53.

Tatabbaʿta laḥnan fī kalāmi Muraqqishin,
  wa-khalquka mabniyyun ʿalā l-laḥni ajmaʿū
fa-ʿaynāka iqwāʾun wa-anfuka mukfaʾun,
  wa-wajhuka īṭāʾun wa-anta l-muraqqaʿū

You searched strenuously for incorrect usage in Muraqqish's speech,
  though your own physique is wholly built on incorrectness:
Your eyes are [affected by] *iqwāʾ*, your nose by *ikfāʾ*,
  your face by *īṭāʾ*, you are indeed the one with many patches.

A similar tendency can be illustrated with a verse by Ḥakam b. ʿAbdal al-Asadī (d. c. 100/718) in which he accuses a secretary of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān of committing *ikfāʾ* and *laḥn* in his composition,[61] and al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī (d. 173/789) equally inveighs against committing *iqwāʾ* and *laḥn* in poetry.[62]

   I have discussed elsewhere in some detail the aesthetic and technical significance of the prosodic defects that are listed in this illustration, especially in the theoretical locution of theorists, literary legists, and prosodists of the medieval era.[63] What is significant here, however, is the characterization of prosodic defects as *laḥn*, and this is probably the earliest reference in the poetical repertoire of the medieval era. The imprecision in the attribution of the illustration may suggest the popularity, if not the dominance, of the view among verse makers that errors in verse are as awful and reprehensible as errors in language use, for which phenomenon the term *laḥn* had become the standard reference word. So much is obvious.

   An early evidence of the emergence of *laḥn* as a rhetorical concept is traceable to Abū l-Haytham al-ʿUqaylī (fl. fourth/10th century), a chief source to the lexicographer al-Azharī (d. 370/981). Abū l-Haytham argues that the word has the same signification with *ʿunwān* (symbolism/code) and goes on to define it in the context of semiotics as an ideational meaning or 'a sign that is used as an indication to a meaning which can be understood only by recourse to perceptiveness'.[64] Although Thaʿlab (d. 291/904) illustrates what he designates as *laṭāfat al-maʿnā* (subtlety of meaning) with lines that are interpretable as a form of *taʿrīḍ* (allusion) or *īmāʾ*

---

[61]*Layta l-amīra aṭāʿanī fa-shafaytuhū/ min kulli man yukfī l-qaṣīda wa-yalḥanū* ('How I wish the prince followed (my advice) so that I could relieve him (of the pain inflicted)/ by someone who subjects poetry to *ikfāʾ* and *laḥn*'). See ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo, 1965), I, 249; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab*, xiii, 51. The *Dīwān* is said to be available in print, first as an issue of the Iraqi Journal *al-Mawrid* (5, no. 4, edited by Muḥammad Nāyif), and in the edition of ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm ʿAbd al-Muḥsin (Najaf, 1392 AH). Neither was available to me. For more on the poet, see *GAS*, ii, 331.

[62]*Aḥūku wa-lā uqwī wa-lastu bi-lāḥinin / wa-kam qāʾilin li-l-shiʿri yuqwī wa-yalḥanū* ('I compose (poetry) without committing *iqwāʾ* or *laḥn* / many a maker of poetry commits *iqwāʾ* and *laḥn*'). See al-Marzubānī, *al-Muwashshaḥ*, 3.

[63]See the following by Amidu Sanni, 'On *Taḍmīn* (Enjambment) and Structural Coherence in Classical Arabic Poetry', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 52 (1989): 463–6; 'Interpretations in a Theoretical Tradition: On *īṭā*' in Arabic Poetics', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21 (1990): 155–62; 'The Original Sin in Arabic Poetics', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 1 (1992): 9–15; 'A Weak Point in a Strong Chain: On *ikfāʾ*' in Arabic Poetics', *Arabica*, 43 (1996): 361–8; 'Again on *Taḍmīn* in Arabic Theoretical Discourse', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61, no. 1 (1998): 1–19.

[64]*Lisān*, 382ᵇ: '*al-ʿunwānu wa-l-laḥnu wāḥidun, wa-huwa l-ʿalāmah tushīru bihā ilā l-insāni li-yafṭina bihā ilā ghayrihī*'.

(implicit/body language) as opposed to *taṣrīḥ* (direct/unambiguous expression),[65] nowhere did he mention *laḥn* as an item of rhetoric or a value qualifier for the Arabic verse. In his analysis, Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908) highlights *kināya* (periphrasis/ indirect expression) and *taʿrīḍ* in his list of *maḥāsin al-kalām* (schemata verborum/ beauties of discourse) without mentioning *laḥn* as a subtype.[66] Qudāma b. Jaʿfar also talks about *irdāf*,[67] his own coinage for *kināya* without saying anything about rhetorical *laḥn*. Similarly, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā talks about *taʿrīḍ*[68] and the grammatical *laḥn*,[69] both of which should be avoided anyway in composition, but nowhere is the rhetorical *laḥn* listed by him as a trope in stylistics.

Ibn Wahb al-Kātib was the first to give a somewhat systematic and detailed analysis of rhetorical *laḥn*. It may be noted, however, that he was not oblivious of the grammatical *laḥn*; that is, the one signifying linguistic mistake, which he defines as any usage that is contrary to *iʿrāb*.[70] To him, the rhetorical *laḥn* is a type of *kināya* or *taʿrīḍ*; the opposite of *taṣrīḥ*.[71] He was followed in this definition by Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. after 395/1005), who goes on to indicate the similarity between rhetorical *laḥn* and *tawriya*.[72] Prominent contributors to the discourse on rhetorical *laḥn* include Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī (d. 356/967), Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 360/970) and al-Maʿarrī (d. 449/1057).[73] Ibn Wahb goes on to illustrate with examples, some of the motives for rhetorical *laḥn*. These include, *taʿẓīm* (show of respect), *takhfīf* (moderation), *istiḥyāʾ* (diffidence), *buqyā* (reservation), *inṣāf* (equity), and *iḥtirās* (diplomacy).[74] That rhetorical *laḥn* had evolved into a stylistic device strong enough to be listed by Ibn Wahb along with other figures of speech, such as *tashbīh* (simile), *ramz* (symbolism), *waḥy* (non-oral expression), *istiʿāra* (metaphor), *amthāl* (parables), and *lughz* (riddle), is indicative of the importance it had assumed in the scheme of allusive tropes as formalized in the theoretical discourse of the fourth/10th century.[75]

But the final credit for the systematization of the discussion on rhetorical *laḥn* belongs to Ibn Rashīq (d. 456/1063), although the ground for this, as shown from our discussion so far, was prepared by Ibn Wahb. In his enumeration of allusive tropes in literary compositions, Ibn Rashīq lists *laḥn* as a subtype and defines it as a kind of expression whose import—although not expressed in the usual and familiar manner—is comprehended by the addressee. Since the realization of such an import often involves perceptiveness of mind and intelligence, he argues, *al-muḥājāt* had become the alternative reference term for it.[76] As far as the available literature would allow us to

---

[65]Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Thaʿlab, *Qawāʿid al-shiʿr*, ed. Ramaḍān ʿAbd al-Tawwāb (Cairo, 1966), 53–4.

[66]ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Kitāb al-Badīʿ*, ed. I. Kratchkovsky (London, 1935), 64–5.

[67]Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, *Naqd al-shiʿr*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim Khafājī (Beirut, n.d.), 157–9.

[68]See his Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, *ʿIyār al-shiʿr*, ed. ʿAbbās ʿAbd al-Sātir (Beirut, 1982), 34.

[69]Ibid., 20. A useful study on grammatical *laḥn* is Aḥmad Muḥammad Qaddūr, 'Al-ʿArabiyya al-fuṣḥā wa-mushkilat al-Laḥn', *Majallat Majmaʿ al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya bi-Dimashq* 69, no. 1 (1994) 19–90.

[70][Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib] *Naqd al-nathr*, 143.

[71]Ibid., 59: 'wa-ammā l-laḥnu fa-huwa l-taʿrīḍu bi-l-shayʾin min ghayri taṣrīḥin awi-l-kināyatu ʿanhu bi-ghayrihi…'

[72]Al-ʿAskarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣināʿatayn*, 407.

[73]Ullmann, *Beiträge*, 21.

[74][Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib] *Naqd al-nathr*, 59–61.

[75]For additional information on which, see *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, i, 81–3, s.v. 'allusion and intertextuality'; i, 398, s.v. 'ishāra'; ii. 656–62, s.v. 'rhetorical figures'.

[76]Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1963), i, 307–8: 'wa-mina l-ishārāt al-laḥn: wa-huwa kalāmun yaʿrifuhu l-mukhāṭab bi-faḥwāhu wa-in kāna ʿalā ghayrihi wajhih…'

conclude, this is one of the most detailed and explicit definitions of *laḥn* in the context of cognate stylistic tropes as identified and illustrated by literary theorists. I mentioned above the seminal contribution by Ibn Durayd in relating *laḥn* to *lughz* (riddle/puzzle), and Ibn Rashīq's extrapolation from this by citing *muḥājāt* as an alternate or cognate term is quite remarkable.[77] Still more remarkable is the equation between *mufāṭana* and *muḥājāt*; that is, is to engage in a disputation with someone with a view to establishing who is more superior in intelligence.[78] Interestingly, *mulāḥana* is also given as a synonym of the former.[79] So much is obvious about the relationship among all the three terms as indicators of allusive usage that can be unlocked only through the instrumentality of intelligence.

Although *taʿriḍ*, *kināya*, and cognate figures of speech continue to feature in the scholarly discourse of the medieval period—for example, in Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī (d. 466/1073),[80] al-Marghīnānī (fl. fifth/11th century),[81] ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078),[82] ʿAlī b. Aflaḥ (d. 535/1141),[83] Usāma Ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188),[84] and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239),[85] to mention but a few—the rhetorical *laḥn* was treated with genteel abandonment. It may be noted, however, that although Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (d. 584/1198) enumerates, on the basis of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the three constituent elements of poetry as *muḥākāt* (mimesis), *wazn* (metre) and *laḥn* (melody/song), it is very obvious that he was not interested in the last term as a rhetorical concept, or at least did not apply it as a reference to the kind of figurative meaning indicated by rhetorical *laḥn*.[86]

It is difficult to say with any definitive precision why this is so. But we may hazard a conjecture with a brittle assertiveness; the overwhelming prominence of the term *laḥn* in the sense of inaccurate linguistic usage in the examination, of which several works had been authored,[87] may have supplanted or at least reduced the interest in any future consideration of the term as a rhetorical marker. This hypothesis looks attractive although not readily demonstrable, and may require a further investigation. But if the

---

[77]See note 54 above.

[78]See E. W. Lane, *Arabic–English Lexicon* (London and Edinburgh, 1877), 2418, s. v. 'faṭana'.

[79]A statement attributed to ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 102/720) reads ''*ajibtu liman lāḥana l-nāsa kayfa lā yaʿrifu jawāmiʿa l-kalim'*, *ay faṭanahum* ('I wonder at him, who disputes with people in order to prove his superior intelligence; how is it that he does not know [how to employ] concise but comprehensive idioms?'). See Ismāʿīl b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd Ghaffār ʿAṭṭār (Cairo, 1982), vi, 2194, s. v. 'laḥana'. Cf. Lane, *Arabic–English Lexicon*, i, 458, s.v. 'jamaʿa'.

[80]Muḥammad b. Saʿīd Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī, *Sirr al-faṣāḥa*, (Beirut, 1982), 163–6.

[81]*Kitāb al-Maḥāsin fī l-naẓm wa-l-nathr,* in G. J. van Gelder, *Two Arabic Treatises on Stylistics* (Istanbul and Leiden, 1987), fol. 101f.

[82]Naṣr b. al-Ḥasan al-Marghīnānī, *Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz* ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim Khafājī (Cairo, 1979), 110ff.

[83]*Muqaddimat Ibn Aflah*, in Van Gelder, *Two Arabic Treatises*, fol. 25f.

[84]Usāma Ibn Munqidh, *Al-Badīʿ fī naqd al-shiʿr*, ed. Aḥmad Aḥmad Badawī and Ḥāmid ʿAbd al-Majīd (Cairo, 1960), 99–104.

[85]Naṣr Allāh b. Muḥammad Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Mathal al-sāʾir*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥūfī and Badawī Ṭabāna, 4 vols (Cairo, 1959–63), iii, 49–75.

[86]See Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-shiʿr* (Cairo, 1986), p. 57.

[87]Al-Ḥarīrī's (d. 516/1122) *Durrat al-ghawwāṣ* is considered to be the most outstanding extant work in the genre. A comprehensive, chronological listing of works on grammatical *laḥn* is to be found in U. Rizzitano's preface to his analysis of *Tathqīf al-lisān wa-talqīḥ al-jinān* by ʿUmar b. Khalaf (d. 501/1107), otherwise called Ibn Makkī al-Saqī. See *Majallat Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Sharqiyya li-l-Ābāʾ al-Fransiskiyyān bi-l-Qāhira*, 5 (1995) = *Studia et documenta Orientalia, 5, Centro di Studi orientali della Custodia Francescana di Terra Santa* (Cairo, 1956), 27 pp.

insight afforded by Ibn Rashīq is anything to go by, it will be easy to conclude that rhetorical *lahn* started to fizzle out no sooner than it was established. The cognate terms for the trope had become exceedingly popular and eirenic as to commit *lahn* as a rhetorical term into the abyss of intellectual archaeology.[88]

Conclusion

This essay has attempted to examine additional shades of meanings and ideas identified with the term *lahn* in both the philological and rhetorical traditions of the Arabic–Islamic scholarship. In the process, it has also tried to elaborate on some of the significations already exposited in the historic studies by Fück and Ullmann. Although Ibn Durayd was the first to faintly adumbrate what would later be formalized as rhetorical *lahn*, the ultimate credit for imposing some order on the various strands of interpretive materials as were available in the theoretical discourse on allusive tropes belongs to Ibn Rashīq, who was anyway building on the model that was established by Ibn Wahb, albeit without any explicit acknowledgement. It is significant to note that Ibn Rashīq lists *lahn* among other tropes that he discusses under the term *al-ishārāt* (allusions/signposts). But then the success achieved by him appears not to have won any sustainable or lasting admiration, as later discussions in the theoretical discourse appear to have either ignored rhetorical *lahn* or employed cognate terms in its stead for veiled allusion and riddle. In his analysis and illustration of it, Ibn Rashīq says that *muhājāt* had by his time become the popular, alternative reference word for the trope.[89] About this we have said much above. But even in the late medieval period, the two major rhetorical schools—namely, the '*badīʿ* school' for which Ibn Abī l-Iṣbaʿ (d. 564/1256) and Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434) can be taken as key representatives, and the 'scholastic school' for which al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) and al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338) stand out—the term seems to have been treated with genteel abandonment. Even the poet Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349), who set a new trend in the rhetorical discourse and classification with his *badīʿiyya*, does not seem to have found any sub-division that could accommodate rhetorical *lahn*; and the final nail in the coffin seems to have been put by ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) and al-Khūrī Arsānyūs al-Fākhūrī (fl. 19th century). Whatever was responsible for this may also be difficult to establish. Nevertheless, the negative implication of the word as a reference term for faulty and infelicitous linguistic usage with a strong root in intellectual antiquity is certainly too significant to be ignored. After all, Sībawayhi, who started with the study of *hadīth*, had to abandon it in order to pursue a subject of study in which he would not be found to be committing *lahn*.[90] This remarkable attachment of the term to solecism, already adduced for the post-Ibn Rashīq's period, may equally be valid here; the drawback has been too strong for other referents of the term to be

---

[88]Tropes such as *muʿammā*, *muhājāt*, *ramz*, *muʿāyāt* had become interchangeable or alternative reference terms to rhetorical *lahn*, as can be inferred from the following: Qāla al-Khafājī fī *Shifāʾ al-ghalīl*: 'Malāḥinu l-ʿArab alghāzuhā; wa-hiya l-muhājāt li-annahā tuẓhiru l-hijāʾ wa-l-muʿāyāt wa-l-ramz wa-l-muʿammā'. See Ibrāhīm al-Ṭafāyish al-Jazārī, *Dhayl al-malāhin*, in Ibn Durayd, *Kitāb al-malāhin*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭafāyish, (Cairo, 1347 AH), 74.

[89]Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, 308: '*wa-yusammīhi l-nāsu fī waqtinā hādhā l-Muhājāt, li-dalālat al-hijāʾ ʿalayhi*'.

[90]See Ramzi Baalbaki, ed., *The Early Islamic Grammatical Tradition* (Aldershot, 2007), Introduction xiii–xlii (p. xxiv); Muḥammad b. ʿImrān al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas al-mukhtaṣar min al-Muqtabas*, ed. R. Sellheim (Wiesbaden, 1964), 95.

divested of the overwhelming negative signification that belonged in the philological realm. In any case, one thing has been established again in this study, and that is the elasticity of the Arabic terminological tradition that accommodates the characterization of different phenomena in related and unrelated subjects with similar or identical terms. The emergence of rhetorical *laḥn* in the trail of significations which belonged in the realm of philological and Qur'ānic discourses illustrates the cross-currents in the tradition of Arabic–Islamic intellectual culture.

Acknowledgements