

Dual Crisis and Narrative Form in the *Maqāmāt* of Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadḥānī

Mohammed O. Abu-Rahme*

Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Applied Science Private University (ASU), Amman, Jordan

Mohammad A. Al-Taher

Department of English Language and Translation, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Applied Science Private University (ASU), Amman, Jordan

Abstract—This study reexamines the *Maqāmāt* of Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadḥānī as a sophisticated narrative response to the multilayered crises of Abbasid society in the fourth century AH (tenth century CE). Moving beyond formalist readings that limit the *maqāmāh* to linguistic virtuosity or entertainment, the article argues that the genre emerged from a dual crisis: a society marked by political instability, social stratification, economic deprivation, and moral contradiction, and an intellectual author alienated within that reality. Through close textual analysis, the study demonstrates how al-Ḥamadḥānī employs satire, disguise, and narrative indirection to critique systemic injustice without the use of overt polemic. The recurrent figure of the mendicant-intellectual functions as an objective correlative for both societal fragmentation and the writer's own marginalization, revealing a deep tension between creative brilliance and social degradation. Thus, the *maqāmāt* articulate a form of ethical and aesthetic resistance, transforming lived crisis into enduring literary discourse. By situating al-Ḥamadḥānī's work at the intersection of social critique and authorial self-representation, this study highlights the *maqāmāh* as a foundational narrative form that transcends its historical moment and continues to speak to recurring human and intellectual crises.

Index Terms—*maqāmāt*, crisis of the writer, Abbasid society, intellectual marginality, social satire

I. INTRODUCTION

Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadḥānī wrote about the *maqāmāt* genre in its most refined artistic forms, which had an intellectual and humanistic stance. Through this genre, al-Ḥamadḥānī rejects all forces of evil, oppression, and marginalization, and it attempts to restore the authentic image of the conscious intellectual in Arab society through the silent voices embedded in individual consciousness. This study endeavors to revive that image, which carries the values of truth, goodness, and beauty, by creatively drawing one element of narrative art to be symbolic of the reality of human society during the Arab Abbasid period. This vision is then reanimated through a hope-infused outlook aimed at deliverance from the condition to which the intellectual had been reduced, urging the reader to re-understand reality through the narrative significance of the *maqāmāt*, to comprehend the reality of their society, to anticipate the future and destiny, and to engage with pain and hope alike.

The study, attentive to the suggestive power of stories, their human projections, and their moments of creative intensity, answers a set of questions raised by the narrative's intellectual and artistic dimensions. The function question frames the interpretation of the story and guides the formulation of the argument. The first major issue is the "function" question: Why should there be a *maqāmāh* (plural: *maqāmāt*)? What is its importance? What does it do? Essentially, if tomorrow morning you woke up and found out that the *maqāmāh* did not exist in the time period created by its author, or had not been preserved so that we could read it today, would we have lost something important that has been expressed through this type of literature? Is the *maqāmāh* disclosing certain types of truths? How far was al-Ḥamadani separating himself from occasional poetry when he transformed the *maqāmāh* into a general artistic expression valid in all circumstances and at all locations in response to a social crisis that parallels the crisis experienced by society at the moment of the emergence of the *maqāmāh*? Did al-Ḥamadani's transformation represent a generational repetition of the myth of "timeless literature?"

Finally, how did al-Ḥamadḥānī aesthetically depict his views on humanity, and his humanism?

In other words, viewed in terms of function, the *maqāmāh* can be seen as part of a larger family tree of Arabic prose which changes oral- and performance-based practices into extended narrative experimentation, locating the *maqāmāh* as central to, rather than peripheral with respect to classical Arabic literature (Stanton, 2023; Qutbuddin, 2024).

Humans continually seek to live better, to enjoy tranquility, stability and happiness, and to escape a painful reality laden with contradictions and paradoxes. Therefore, literature becomes the most important thing; it takes the reader into a world of ideals. Literature devoted to human concerns enables us to live in a world closer to ideals and to nurture feelings

* Corresponding Author. Email: m_aburahme@asu.edu.jo

of happiness and psychological stability. Such texts can also contain human values that awaken readers' emotions and enliven their perceptions of existence and identity, helping them to understand their own worlds and problems; through textual discourse, they explain the phenomena of despair and frustration and substantiate hope and one's destiny (Abu Rumman et al., 2025). This function complements the larger model-making framework, which views literary production in the face of crisis as a forum for ethical reflection and renewed humanism, especially when social structures threaten dignity and intellectual agency (Chen, 2025; Reitter & Wellmon, 2023).

According to this perspective, literature cultivates a heightened awareness of human existence within the social world, cultivating an awareness of rights and dignity and directly affecting behavior and lifestyle. Literature exposes the ugliness of a reality that encroaches on people's rights and the future, and it fosters hope for liberation from all forms of oppression and humiliation.

The committed intellectual writer is one who reads reality, highlights its problems and concerns, and defends the rights of society's members, embodying higher values in literature. A writer's social responsibility is that they be an advisor or mentor to public opinion regarding goodness, truth, justice, and beauty, that they probe social diseases, and that they guide the light of the pen toward human suffering in contexts where human dignity and freedom are absent. Such literature endures across eras, for it is the literature of humanity and consciousness, from occasional writings that arise from immediate circumstances. Hence, the creative artist reconstitutes reality through unsettling existential questions, hoping to achieve social progress and prosperity (Aburahme et al., 2025).

The committed intellectual writer needed by society is an active agent who adopts a principled stance toward reality and defends that reality. Through aesthetically crafted texts woven with sensitivity, sincerity, nobility of feeling, and depth of imagination and thought, the accomplished artist invites us to reject negative reality and leads the process of enlightenment within society, realizing the ideal of the committed writer as one entrusted with a noble mission in their era.

Therefore, al-Ḥamadhānī's *maqāmāt* were selected for this study and analysis as an exemplar of committed literature addressing the issues and problems of society. The aim is to uncover the realities of al-Ḥamadhānī, his collection of *maqāmāt*, his society, and his time, and to examine core points articulated through the following questions: Was al-Ḥamadhānī's era a time of crisis, considering the fourth-century context and its prevailing political and economic conditions? Or do al-Ḥamadhānī's *maqāmāt* (the individual episodic narratives that form the collection) themselves represent the product of a writer in crisis, shaped by a bitter reality and transformations in social, political, and economic life that became foundational to the new Abbasid society? Finally, was the crisis of the writer the tragedy that gave rise to the *maqāmāt* genre?

This orientation is also supported by studies that treat the *maqāmāt* as a privileged archive of Abbasid social life, since they preserve within their fictional texture scenes of poverty, mobility, urban interaction, and moral ambiguity that illuminate the historical experience of the age (Al-Mazīd, 1997).

The *maqāmāt* composed by al-Ḥamadhānī in the fourth century AH delineated the emergence of the Arabic short story. Fifty *maqāmāt* have survived, and these reveal the social dimensions of Abbasid society at the time and rely on a humorous artistic frame that depicts tricksters in a manner that satirizes a painful reality, one in which the clever protagonist is driven to means unbefitting the status of the intellectual to secure sustenance. This situation represents an advanced intellectual stance, as the writer moves beyond direct criticism of prevailing behaviors and norms, criticism that would otherwise rely on procedural distinctions between virtues and vices, toward satire in its philosophical dimension. In this context, the intellectual writer reacts to an estranging social condition incompatible with human dignity and being, directing the arrows of satire toward it, as exemplified by the Alexandrian hero of the *maqāmāt*, who earns a living through deception, a deceptive craft that serves as a vehicle for satirizing a dark social reality rejected by the consciousness of the creative intellectual striving to guide society toward an ideal state (Alkayid et al., 2024).

We are moving away from seeing Maqamat as simply a literary form (albeit an entertaining one) based on lexical dexterity, didactic intent, or storytelling. Studies by Orfali and Pomerantz (2022), which are both philologically grounded and contextually aware, provide evidence of how the views previously held about the genre's characteristics and uses, were limited to only part of its original use; namely the ways it was used to discuss authorship, the transmission of texts, and intellectual positioning in relation to the dominant culture of the Abbasids. Instead, the question is whether Al-Hamadani's maqamaat reflect the lives of people during his time period and uncover some of its secrets. In addition to the many accomplishments of Arab civilization during that time period, including its intellectual, cultural, and scientific contributions that impacted the world for centuries, can we view the way Al-Hamadani created his own unique voice through his work as an example of how artists relate to society, and in creating a specific identity of Arab literature.

The current research is using an interpretive, qualitative method based on textual interpretation and historical context. Specifically, this research is applying a socio-narratological approach in order to read the *maqāma's* (and their specific structure) not as individual examples of rhetorical excellence (although they are certainly impressive), but as narrative structures, in which voice, disguise, movement, episodic plotlines and performative language serve to illustrate the problems with social reality.

Therefore, the analysis will occur at three different levels: first, at the historical level, in which the political, economic and moral challenges of Abbasid Society during the 4th century are reconstructed; second, at the textual level, in which some of the *maqāma's* are examined from their narrative situation, types of speech acts, irony reversal, etc., as well as

types of disguises used by the narrator; and finally, at the representational level, in which the repeated character of the mendicant-intellectual can be seen as a symbol for both social dislocation and authorial alienation. By focusing on these three levels simultaneously, the researcher is avoiding reducing the *maqāmāt* to mere decorative formality and equally, treating them as entirely transparent historical records. Rather than reducing either of those two extremes, this research focuses on how literary form mediates crisis and transforms lived precariousness into a type of narrative performance and ethical critique based upon the interactions among narrator, protagonist and audience.

II. DISCUSSIONS

A. *The Crisis of al-Ḥamadhānī's Society*

Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadhānī lived in a society that concerned him (358–398 AH). Although the fourth Hijri century is often considered the golden age of Arab civilization, historical accounts reflect a period of social turmoil, instability, and disorder. As Ibn al-Athīr reveals, the decay that pervaded Abbasid society quickly intensified in the form of deaths and widespread corruption. People in Baghdad began eating carrion and cats and dogs; boiling and eating various thorns, which caused illnesses and abdominal swelling; and death was so common that people could not bury the corpses, leaving them to be consumed by dogs. Many people in Baghdad fled to Basra, with many dying along the way, and houses and properties were sold for bread (Ibn al-Athīr, 1997).

On the other hand, the portrayal of the luxurious and lavish lives of caliphs, ministers, and their enclaves is strikingly paradoxical. These groups' drinking and fun continued despite the hardships of many, and historical accounts recount that the minister al-Muhallabī lured companions to his home twice a week to drink, revel, and dance (Al-Tha'ālibī, 1983). To support this excess, the tax system expanded, and the lives of the general population fell into poverty. Incidents of assault, looting, and theft proliferated, famines became frequent, and thieves gained fame and notoriety, spreading fear among the people, who were so scared for their lives that they refrained from sleeping. Houses in Baghdad were abandoned, and owners sought tenants to occupy them in return for rent paid to the occupants themselves (Metz, 1940). This depiction clarifies many of the phenomena and descriptions presented by al-Ḥamadhānī in his *maqāmāt*, which vividly portray the lives of common people.

Al-Ḥamadhānī addresses the lives of people by depicting their livelihoods, markets, gatherings, conversations, morals, and behaviors. The *maqāmāt* function as a theatrical representation of social life in the Arab Abbasid era. Al-Ḥamadhānī fashioned the protagonist of his *maqāmāt*, Abū al-Fath al-Iskandarī, as a model representing various social groups, and he foregrounds the phenomenon of mendicancy (al-kudya) that spread during this period as a consequence of poverty and need. Practitioners of mendicancy traveled across regions and cities, at times earning a living through literary performance and, at other times, deceiving people with tricks and falsehoods. They referred to themselves as Banū Sāsān or the Sāsānians (Al-Shak'a, 1983).

Studies of later *maqāmāh* traditions have demonstrated that trickery, performative deception, and linguistic virtuosity consistently function as social strategies for negotiating marginality within urban settings marked by inequality and precarity rather than as mere narrative ornamentation (Essakouti, 2024; Ghraoui, 2022).

Mendicancy therefore appears to be a correlation of a situation in which individuals abandon principles and values to survive. People employ a variety of strategies to deal with difficult situations. An analysis of comparative historical studies of premodern societies claims that such adaptive strategies are often found during times of political fragmentation, economic inequality, and uneven access to cultural capital, emphasizing the structural nature of these responses not being confined to a single civilization (De Weerd et al., 2022).

It is possible that even the mendicant themselves may reject this condition, as al-Jāhīz narrates about an elderly mendicant who, when he met a novice in the trade, condemns mendicancy as the basest of professions, degrading and diminishing men, and he begs rhetorically whether any mendicant had ever prospered (Al-Bayhaqī, 1991).

Al-Ḥamadhānī's *maqāmāt* are full of mendicant tricks. He understood their stratagems and exposed them to the public, as though addressing society directly: be alert to these mendicants, these are their methods, do not accept them. However, he simultaneously exhibits sympathy toward his protagonist, at times justifying his actions insofar as they awaken people from ignorance. This approach constitutes a form of inverse critique, whereby wrongdoing is enacted within the narrative to alert audiences to deception. Al-Ḥamadhānī employs narrative cunning to criticize familiar social norms and to cultivate a collective consciousness rejecting newly entrenched values that reveal complacency, submission, and acquiescence to a bitter reality imposed by the domination of a wealthy elite enjoying excessive luxury at the expense of the masses, conditions that drove people to deception as a means of survival.

The protagonist is at work in a variety of ways, lying to worshippers in *al-Maqāmāh al-Isfahāniyyah* to keep them away before he speaks; asserting that he can resurrect the dead and prevent floods in *al-Mawṣiliyyah*; and claiming to possess a talisman to protect sailors from drowning in *al-Harziyyah*. Through such episodes, al-Ḥamadhānī masterfully reveals the methods of mendicants and exposes how they win people's trust and secure their livelihood.

In this way, al-Ḥamadhānī vividly portrays fourth-century society, outlining societal classes and revealing many negative aspects of the social fabric. The *maqāmāt* serve as a literary document depicting the social life of the time. The author crafted scenes that reveal the reality of a genuine crisis permeating society, and he distances it from an ideal social order based on reason and respect for human dignity and individual and collective rights.

Some scenes describe how religious preaching was used as a means to deceive in *al-Maqāmah al-Maṭlabiyyah*. Charlatans treated preaching as a trade, attempting to enchant the simple-minded and make money out of them while pretending to be ascetic and holy. ‘Īsā ibn Hishām recounts the episode of a young man who initially seemed quiet and withdrawn but who erupts into eloquence, praising wealth and its possessors, exalting money as the adornment of men and the pinnacle of perfection before warning against deception and asserting that true distinction lies either in noble lineage or elevated knowledge (Al-Ḥamadhānī, 2005).

This episode demonstrates how critique operates narratively. The speaker first establishes trust through pious appearance, then deploys eloquence to manipulate the audience, and finally exposes a value system centered on wealth. Thus, deception is not merely described but structurally enacted, revealing how rhetoric becomes a tool of survival within a fractured society.

The sophistication of this form of lying indicates that those who are deceived so easily by beautiful words and ornate rhetoric show their own naivety. It also shows that there were many who used this kind of technique to overcome the separation that had developed due to the elite's monopoly on luxurious lifestyles. The class struggle that arose when the lower classes revolted against the extravagant lifestyles of ministers and notables ultimately damaged the entire fabric of society. This reality was undoubtedly what caused al-Ḥamadhānī deep concern and compelled him to reveal these corrupted social strata with his condemnation of the exploitation of dishonesty and detestable trickery for achieving whatever goals an individual desires — a veiled message urging people to fight against injustice in all of its various guises.

There were several other moral crises present in al-Ḥamadhānī's society. One of them was the general consumption of wine and excessive drinking. Al-Maqāmah al-Khamriyyah portrays different aspects of society that involve parties centered around consuming wine. In addition, al-Ḥamadhānī critiques the paradoxical nature of someone who presents himself as both virtuous and viciously degenerate. He describes these characteristics through his depiction of some religious leaders whose outward appearance is pious while their inner lives are dissolute (Al-Shak‘a, 1993) — and who will often demonstrate their asceticism publicly but participate in debauchery privately: "At one time I am in the holy place and at another time I am in the tavern; therefore does the rational man act in this era".

This juxtaposition between sanctuary and tavern condenses all moral contradiction into one utterance. Its beauty normalizes duplicity and illustrates how moral collapse can become socially understandable instead of exceptional.

The narrator voice, ‘Īsā ibn Hishām, is then used to express disapproval at the moral contradictions prevalent in society as he seeks refuge in God from such a state and wonders at how sustenance evades those in his condition before he leaves (Al-Ḥamadhānī, 2005). This disapproval is directed at a character whose possession of contradictory traits in a morally reprehensible way justifies such disapproval. If society reflects such contradictions, then logically so too would al-Ḥamadhānī's society have been in a state of crisis.

As can be expected, the question then arises as to whether these crises are particular to al-Ḥamadhānī's society or to any particular era in which such conditions are prevalent. The answer to this question reveals how maqāmāt literature can still be relevant today. Indeed, as readers peruse a maqāmah in contemporary society, there is a sense that the maqāmah expresses their own concerns and struggles in an elegant art form that transcends particular historical periods. This is certainly evidenced in later maqāmāt works by al-Ḥarīrī and beyond as satire and narration continue to express tensions between intellectualism and disempowerment in society throughout history (Bernards, 2023; Cooperson, 2023).

B. *The Crisis of Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Ḥamadhānī*

Al-Ḥamadhānī was the first to write maqāmāt, and he devoted his creative and intellectual potential to searching for structural defects in society and various types of deviations, as well as revealing corruption mechanisms. In this respect, he is like other independent writers and thinkers whose culture and creative potential inspire them to write for society, supporting human causes and lofty values. If we consider the life and epistles of Al-Ḥamadhānī, we can clearly see that he did not work in any official capacity but lived from his writing, using his art to support society and its people (Al-Shak‘a, 1993).

The lives of Abbasid writers and poets show that most of them were on the side of caliphs and rulers, and their social status was determined, to a great extent, by factors other than literary talents. This is why we see such an interest in writing panegyric literature from writers and poets. Amin (2013) described this condition as follows: "Poetry, prose, and art were all tinged with supplications and solicitations. The period was not democratic, nor was it one in which artists lived for themselves and for the people, as is the case today. It was an aristocratic period, in which only aristocrats succeeded, and those who were artists lived at their tables. Literature was, therefore, in praise of such people, in preference to literature inspired by inner psychological urges".

Al-Ḥamadhānī introduced new contours to Arabic literary theory in prose genres through two primary forms: first, epistles, wherein he addresses issues of governance and social problems; and second, the *maqāmah*, which incorporates elements of narrative art in a novel manner. His *maqāmāt* and epistles represent the crises of his society and of writers in his era, articulated through an engaging artistic style and intellectual propositions that interacted with the constraints imposed by contemporary reality.

Recent readings have indicated how al-Ḥamadhānī's *maqāmāt* function as multiple texts, bridging social critique, narrative performance, and authorial self-representation, with an endless discourse of lived experience and intellectual marginalization (Negri, 2024; Alhabian, 2024).

In particular, al-Ḥamadhānī's epistles reveal how he regarded caliphs and judges; how he did not flatter them, and he criticized injustice, fighting for the oppressed and defending them in his writings. In his epistle to a corrupt judge, Abū Bakr al-Ḥīrī, he states that the judge assumed office without knowing its gravity, likening misplaced trust to a burden that would be mountainous and that many would fear to bear but fools carry lightly. He also criticizes a judge who "sits on the Prophet's lap" but who acts unjustly, and he ends his attack on a ruler whose "witnesses" are the whip and the bridle (al-Ḥamadhānī, 1928).

Although al-Ḥamadhānī made a direct condemnation of injustice within the justice system, it would be unfair to assume that this led to improved material conditions for him. His words convey a sense of anger toward an oppressive judge, a cry to the defenseless and against corrupt officials.

Al-Ḥamadhānī was an intellectual of great stature, and given his abilities, he would likely have enjoyed social acclaim and sufficient material wealth for survival. However, the event that ignited an inner revolt against his society and fueled the emergence of the *maqāmāt* as an expression of his resentment toward his age was his forced participation in mendicancy (al-kudya). The situation continued to worsen in Nishapur, where he was residing at the time, and he was forced to practice mendicancy in the streets and markets of the city. In a letter to al-Shaykh al-ʿAmīd, he complains that mendicancy had been imposed upon him even though it was incompatible with his character and status, and he cries for help to remove the stain of shame and poverty, to preserve dignity, and to protect scholarship from degradation (Al-Ḥamadhānī, 1928). This experience helps explain the recurring figure of the mendicant-intellectual in the *maqāmāt*.

This implies that the protagonist is not an autobiography but rather a constructed character, converting his marginalization into art that allows for criticism and detachment.

Al-Ḥamadhānī did not willingly embrace mendicancy, according to this epistle. He was rather forced by circumstance. This is important because it shows al-Ḥamadhānī's sympathy towards his own protagonist in the *maqāmāt*, who was of the same social class as al-Ḥamadhānī. Al-Ḥamadhānī's account is extremely realistic because of his personal experiences and his deep understanding of the psychological burdens and damaging effects of mendicancy.

Al-Ḥamadhānī, in a debate with al-Khwārazmī, acknowledged his mendicancy by saying, "Begging is a blameworthy trait; it is better to be called a craftsman than a beggar or mendicant". He acknowledged that his opponents were more deeply associated with this practice, and he admitted that he himself was a relative novice forced by necessity (al-Ḥamadhānī, 1928). Therefore, one can understand how divided al-Ḥamadhānī was on the issue of mendicancy, having rejected it intellectually and morally because it was a blow to his literary stature and reformist aspirations, but it also subjected him to humiliation and degradation when he was compelled to practice it. Nor did his literary performance bring him any material improvement. As his circumstances worsened, the crisis intensified; he felt a sense of deep inner distaste for the oppressive social order that he could not accept or fully inhabit. He expresses this estrangement in a self-addressed lament, saying that his time and place were not meant for him, that books, pens, and eloquent prose had lost their value (Al-Thaʿālibī, 1983). Another note about his destitution in a later passage has a bitter irony, because although his heart clung to generosity and his hand delighted in giving, these noble qualities found no support in an empty purse, and literature itself could not be eaten nor sold for sustenance (Al-Thaʿālibī, 1983).

Awad (1979) has argued that al-Ḥamadhānī's *maqāmāt* were the products of a genuine crisis that left a deep impression on the author's psyche, as he had little means, he attempted to flatter the dominant regimes, and he suffered hardship and misery.

Through this character, al-Ḥamadhānī criticizes his society, such as people's ignorance, folly, and obsession with trivial matters while neglecting the fundamental issues of freedom and dignity. In this sense, he rebelled against the Abbasid social order of his time.

Al-Ḥamadhānī also exposed the influence of his era on his work by choosing a protagonist who embodies the common archetypes of the age: the mendicant-intellectual, using knowledge, cunning, deception, and trickery for survival. The author made this choice because he was directly shaped by and responding to the dominant social order. He succeeds in his description of such characters by conveying in-depth details, understanding their circumstances and comprehending their virtues and flaws. As Awad (1979) explains, an artist must live among such models to understand their environment and the intimate relationship between the artist and the milieu from which their characters emerge.

A close reading of the *maqāmāt* supports al-Ḥamadhānī's sympathetic attitude toward his protagonist despite his reliance on mendicancy. The hero is deceptive, unprincipled, and mutable, but he is also quick-witted and highly accomplished in the literary arts. Similar to al-Ḥamadhānī himself, there is a deliberate duality of creative genius, intellectual agility, and improvisational mastery versus social humiliation and disgrace. The tension between ethical aspiration and material deprivation mirrors a larger literary pattern in which the ideals of generosity, moral largeness, and intellectual nobility are not even realized by structures (Cho, 2022). From a narratological perspective, such figures are not only satirical types but also structurally necessary agents dramatized in the episodic form of the *maqāmāh* (Negri, 2023). Al-Ḥamadhānī exposed the gullibility of the populace and the stratagems of mendicants in an attempt to forge a new collective consciousness that could contribute to societal reform.

This contradictory duality in the Alexandrian protagonist was probably the product of al-Ḥamadhānī's own crisis and functioned as an outlet for a creator deprived of rights and recognition by the conditions of his time. His anger, rejection, and rebellion are externalized through this character, invested with tremendous creative energy, expressing his lived

tragedy in its most intense form. This human form flourished in the *maqāmāt* tradition and was later adopted by other writers, though under names, forms, and functions that suited their own historical contexts.

In al-Ḥamadhānī's *maqāmāt*, the protagonist aims not for evil but for good by tricking circumstance. This morally troubling strategy highlights the author's own crisis and the larger social dangers that threaten stability and individual rights. Al-Ḥamadhānī's experience has specific psychological and social implications, as seen in al-Maqāmah al-Majā'iyah, wherein 'Īsā ibn Hishām resorts to mendicancy because of the pressures of famine, just like al-Ḥamadhānī's alienation from a culture of hypocrisy and flattery. The account of the year of famine goes like this: "Two states bring no success: a poor man driven by hunger, and a stranger unable to return" (Al-Ḥamadhānī, 2005).

Here, personal hardship is subsumed by a universal statement, transforming the narrative from event to thought and relating individual hardship to structural crisis.

Al-Ḥamadhānī's crisis reaches a climax in his decisive declaration: "I said: May God not give you life, you have revived desires that despair had already extinguished" (Al-Ḥamadhānī, 2005). He concludes his revolt, his frustration towards his society, by stating that despair had destroyed all desires, meaning desire is life. This statement shows Al-Ḥamadhānī's true realization of the fundamental truth: no society can progress or succeed based on the logic of force.

Lastly, *al-Maqāmah al-Ḥarziyyah* is the psychological crisis of deliverance. Anxiety and chaos characterize life as a raging sea where no traveler feels secure. Al-Ḥamadhānī is distracted from reality by the traveler who is on a quest for the answer to his crisis. He is led into fantasy in order to come up with an exceptional remedy for his crisis: a *ḥirz*—a protective charm or verbal safeguard that can save his life from the dangers of the sea: "We asked him what secured him from destruction, and he replied that it was a *ḥirz* that prevents its bearer from drowning" (Al-Ḥamadhānī, 2005). The last *maqāmah* shows the naivety and simplicity of the passengers by narrating how easily they believe the claim by the traveler, representing individual illusions and collective vulnerabilities. This is related to the connection between fear and deception; instability breeds anxiety, which breeds belief.

III. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the *maqāmāt* is a response to the dual crisis of social disintegration and intellectual marginalization. A socio-narratological analysis reveals the mechanisms of satire, disguise, and performance as tools of criticism, converting crisis into art.

The last argument of the study is that the *maqāmah* does not only offer the reader a satirical image, but rather a constructed model of the mendicant-intellectual, the paradoxical synthesis of eloquence and degradation, creativity and moral compromise, personal precariousness as a function of systemic injustice. Through satire, disguise, and performance, al-Ḥamadhānī does not only compose political criticism but asks the reader to exercise greater critical thought and moral judgment. Therefore, the *maqāmāt* represent an aesthetic resistance derived from the constraints placed on the intellectual in an inequitable social order.

In part, the purpose of this article is to view the *maqāmāt* as crisis literature supported by social documentation and a reflexive commentary on authorship itself. The discussion of the relationship between social collapse and writerly alienation extended beyond traditional and stylistic considerations of scholarship to incorporate a wider range of narrative ethics and intellectual history.

Finally, al-Ḥamadhānī's *maqāmāt* have a long-lasting transhistorical resonance. The narratives cover crises, alienation, moral contradiction, and loss of intellectual dignity during times of inequality and instability. In this way, the *maqāmah* is a central character of classical Arabic prose and an ongoing literary dialogue on the role of narrative in confronting social and intellectual disintegration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to their respective universities for the institutional support and academic environment that facilitated the completion of this research.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abu Rumman, R., Dagamseh, M., Haider, A. S., Saed, H., & Sahari, Y. (2025). The metaphorical conceptualization of depression in Arabic blogs written by patients with depressive disorder. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 7(3), 874–889. <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i3.8427>
- [2] Aburahme, M., Al-Hawawsheh, S., Meqdad, S., & Alhroot, M. (2025). The morphological reversion of intensive patterns in the poems of al-Mutanabbī in praise of Sayf al-Dawla al-Ḥamdānī. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 15, 1226–1232. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1504.21>
- [3] Al-Bayhaqī, A. (1991). *Al-mahāsin wa-al-masāwī'* [Pros and cons] (M. A. Ibrāhīm, Ed.). Dar al-Ma'ārif. <https://waqfeya.com/books/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%A6--%D8%AC-1-fb233e484c7f482a8a225ee3e93969ca> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [4] Alhabian, R. (2024). Review of *The Maqāmāt of Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadhānī: Authorship, texts, and contexts* by B. W. Orfali & M. A. Pomerantz. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 55(2–3), 364–369. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1570064x-12341528>

- [5] Al-Ḥamadhānī, B. al-Z. (1928). *Rasā'il Abī al-Faḍl Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadhānī* [Epistles of Abū al-Faḍl Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadhānī]. Al-Jawā'ib Press. <https://library.alistiqlal.edu.ps/book-18136-1600.html> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [6] Al-Ḥamadhānī, B. al-Z. (2005). *Al-maqāmāt* (M. M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Ed., 3rd ed.). Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. <https://archive.org/details/5281pdf> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [7] Alkayid, M., Al-Shara'h, M., & Alkhawaldeh, M. (2024). Scrutinising the moon: Randa Jarrar's "The lunatic's eclipse" under a postmodern lens. *World Journal of English Language*, 14(1), 411–418. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n1p411>
- [8] Al-Mazīd, K. (1997). *Social life in the maqāmāt of the Abbasid era* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Baghdad.
- [9] Al-Shak'a, M. (1983). *Badī' al-Zamān: Pioneer of the Arabic short story and the journalistic article*. 'Ālam al-Kutub. <https://www.noor-book.com/book/review/578382> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [10] Al-Shak'a, M. (1993). *Literature in the procession of civilization: The prose volume*. Egyptian Lebanese Publishing House. <https://www.noor-book.com/book/review/359700> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [11] Al-Tha'ālibī, A. M. (1983). *Yatīmat al-dahr*. Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. <https://shamela.ws/book/6743> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [12] Amin, A. (2013). *Ẓuhr al-Islām* [The zenith of Islam]. Hindawi Foundation. <https://www.hindawi.org/books/74059514/> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [13] Awad, Y. (1979). *The art of the maqāmāt between East and West*. Dar al-Qalam. <https://koha.birzeit.edu/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=100972> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [14] Bernards, M. (2023). Ḥarīrī, Tanūkhī, and Wāqwāq: Introducing this special issue of the *Journal of Abbasid Studies*. *Journal of Abbasid Studies*, 10(2), 139–142. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142371-00802017>
- [15] Chen, J. (2025). Globalizing humanism: A comparative framework for understanding ethical and literary revivals across Eurasia. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 62(1), 1–29. <https://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/159921> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [16] Cho, S. (2022). *Generosity as generality: The poetics of largeness in Renaissance literature*. University of Toronto Press. https://books.google.jo/books/about/Generosity_as_Generality.html?id=EkU30AEACAAJ (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [17] Cooperson, M. (2023). 900 years of trickery: Al-Ḥarīrī from Leiden to Los Angeles. *Journal of Abbasid Studies*, 10(2), 159–183. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142371-00802013>
- [18] De Weerd, H., Mostern, R., Schneewind, S., & Standen, N. (2022). *Global Chinese histories, 250–1650*. University of California Press. <http://routledge.com/Global-Chinese-Histories-250-1650/book-series/GCH> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [19] Essakouti, A. (2024). *Realms of strangers: Readers, language, and trickery in Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*. Reichert Verlag. https://reichert-verlag.de/en/keywords/society_keyword/9783752007930_realms_of_strangers_readers_language_and_trickery_in_maqamat_a_l_hariri-detail (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [20] Ghraoui, G. (2022). Losing the plot in seventeenth-century Istanbul: Satire and sociability in the *Maqāma Rūmiyya*. *Philological Encounters*, 7(3–4), 268–298. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24519197-bja10035>
- [21] Ibn al-Athīr, 'A. (1997). *Al-kāmil fī al-tārīkh* [The complete history] ('U. Tadmurī, Ed.). Dar al-Kitāb al-'Arabī. <https://shamela.ws/book/21712> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [22] Metz, A. (1940). *Islamic civilization in the fourth Hijri century* (5th ed.). Dar al-Kitāb al-'Arabī. https://sites.dlib.nyu.edu/viewer/books/nyu_aco001040/display?lang=ar (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [23] Negri, A. M. (2023). The narration of the maqāmāt: A reading of Abū Bakr b. Muḥsin Bā 'Abbūd's *al-Maqāmāt al-hindiyya* through Propp. *Folia Orientalia*, 60, 89–112. <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/963393> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [24] Negri, A. M. (2024). The maqāmāt as a palimpsest. *Archiv Orientalní*, 92(1), 33–55. <https://doi.org/10.47979/aror.j92.1.33-55>
- [25] Orfali, B. W., & Pomerantz, M. A. (2022). *The Maqāmāt of Badī' al-Zamān al-Ḥamadhānī: Authorship, texts, and contexts*. Reichert Verlag. <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/96848> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)
- [26] Qutbuddin, T. (2024). Is oration literature? Establishing the khutbah of the pre- and early Islamic oral period as the foundational genre of classical Arabic prose. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 55(2–3), 213–237. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1570064x-12341516>
- [27] Reitter, P., & Wellmon, C. (2023). *Permanent crisis: The humanities in a disenchanted age*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jhistrhetoric.26.2.0267>
- [28] Stanton, A. Z. (2023). *The worlding of Arabic literature*. Open Book Publishers. <https://uplopen.com/books/m/10.1515/9781531503246> (Retrieved February 8, 2026)

Mohammed Omar Aburahme is an associate professor at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan. He received his PhD in Arabic language and literature (Linguistics & Syntax) from the University of Jordan in 2020. His main areas of interest include linguistics, grammar and semantics.

Mohammad A. Al-Taher is an associate professor at Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan. He received his PhD in (English-Arabic) Translation from the University of Salford in 2008. His main areas of interest include translating news report and the Noble Quran.