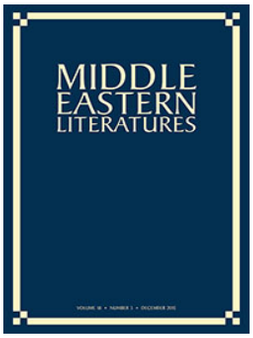

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Form, Content, and the Inimitability of the Qurʾān in ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Works

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Abstract

Classical Arabic literary theory is commonly thought to have given precedence to 'form' (*lafẓ*) over 'content' (*maʿnā*). By looking at the works of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078 or 474/1081), this article seeks to uncover a more complex understanding of how *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* relate to eloquence. I argue that poetic beauty can result from form and/or content, even though the inimitability of the Quran is only attributed to form. I show that 'form' is constituted by sentence construction (*naẓm*) and only certain kinds of literary figures, ones that involve processes of indirect signification. These encompass figurative speech (*majāz*), metaphor (*istiʿāra*), and implied meaning (*kināya*). Simile (*tashbīh*), on the other hand, is distinguished from these literary figures as a declarative kind of statement, which renders it part of content. This opens up the possibility of eloquence resulting from content as well as form and shows that the criteria for *iʿjāz* and poetic excellence are not necessarily one and the same.

Introduction

Lafẓ and *maʿnā* constitute one of the basic frameworks of analysis in classical Arabic literary criticism. *Lafẓ* refers to expression, be it at the level of the utterance, the word, or the sentence, and it could also be understood as 'form'. *Maʿnā* refers to meaning, both at the level of the signification of a single word or the idea expressed by a group of words (i.e. 'content'). The relationship between the two was assessed and discussed from the very beginnings of the Arabic critical tradition. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), for example, evaluates poetic excellence based on the various combinations of good and bad wording and meaning.[1] Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–869) famously declares that 'ideas are strewn on the road' (المعاني مطروحة في الطريق), suggesting that eloquence lies in the way the ideas are expressed and not in the ideas themselves, which are available to everyone for the taking.[2] Widely-quoted statements such as this one by al-Jāḥiẓ support the commonly held conclusion in modern scholarship that classical Arabic criticism gave precedence to *lafẓ* over *maʿnā* (i.e. form over content).[3] While correct to a certain extent, this conclusion conceals a much more complex picture. Whether precedence is

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given to *lafẓ* or *maʿnā* depends on what level of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* is intended (the utterance, the word, or the sentence). Furthermore, it depends on what aspects of poetic speech were being considered and whether they were understood by medieval critics as corresponding to form or content.

The main theorist to advance the discussion of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* in relation to eloquence is ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī. He does so primarily in his work on the inimitability of the Qurʾān, *Dalāʾil iʿjāz al-Qurʾān* (The Signs of the Inimitability of the Qurʾān), but also in his other major work on eloquence entitled *Asrār al-balāgha* (The Secrets of Eloquence). While it is widely acknowledged that al-Jurjānī complicates the relationship between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, modern scholars continue to maintain that *lafẓ*, even with al-Jurjānī, takes precedence.[4] This, I argue, is not perfectly accurate. Part of the problem is that our understanding of the relationship between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* in al-Jurjānī's works has been confused. This confusion is not unmerited. The different levels to which the terms may refer has al-Jurjānī sometimes embracing one in favour of the other in one instance and adopting the opposite position in the next. Keeping track of what the terms mean in a given context requires having a clear picture of their different levels of signification and how they relate to each other. Modern scholars, namely Margaret Larkin and Kamal Abu Deeb, have illuminated some aspects of the terms as used by al-Jurjānī. How these terms map onto the main components of poetic speech remains unclear, however.

What I mean by the 'components of poetic speech' are the main literary units that generally constitute the objects of analysis in classical Arabic criticism. In al-Jurjānī's works, these come to primarily revolve around four elements: (1) Sentence construction (*naẓm*), which is concerned with the arrangement of words in a sentence in light of their syntactical relationships with each other; (2) simile (*tashbīh*), which includes analogy (*tamthīl*); (3) figurative speech (*majāz*), which includes metaphor (*istiʿāra*); and (4) allusion or implication (*kināya*).[5] These four categories become the basic units of what is later formalized as the 'Science of Eloquence' (*ʿilm al-balāgha*) by al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) and al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338).[6] *Naẓm* becomes the main subject matter of *ʿilm al-maʿānī*, the Science of Meaning, one of the three main branches into which they divide the study of eloquence. The remaining elements (*tashbīh*, *majāz*, and *kināya*) form the main pillars of *ʿilm al-bayān*, the Science of Expression, which constitutes the second main branch of the study of eloquence. The third branch, *ʿilm al-badīʿ*, the Science of Rhetorical Figures, deals with the other literary figures that do not form part of the Science of Expression.[7] In this article, I will be concerned with what later forms the basis of the first two branches of the Science of Eloquence, *ʿilm al-maʿānī* and *ʿilm al-bayān*. I will analyse how *naẓm*, *tashbīh*, *majāz*, and *kināya* correspond to *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* (i.e. form and content) in al-Jurjānī's works.

I argue that al-Jurjānī treats sentence construction (*naẓm*), figurative language (*majāz*), including metaphor (*istiʿāra*), and implication (*kināya*) as aspects of form (*lafẓ*). Simile (*tashbīh*), on the other hand, does not belong to form; rather, it is part of poetic content (*maʿnā*). This has several implications. First, simile, a literary device typically regarded as mere embellishment, is seen here as the primary subject-matter of poetry in and of itself. In other words, simile is not treated merely as a device for describing some other subject-matter; rather, the simile is the subject-matter itself. Second, even though *tashbīh*, after al-Jurjānī, comes to constitute one of the pillars of *ʿilm al-bayān*, it does not really belong to the 'science of expression', as I will show. Finally, while the inimitability of the Qurʾān lies in its form, as al-Jurjānī argues, it does not preclude poets from excelling and outdoing each other in areas of content, such as in simile.

This is significant because it establishes two different aspects of poetic beauty, the Qurʾān's inimitability (*iʿjāz*) lying only in one of them. In this respect, *iʿjāz* and poetic excellence are not one and the same thing. The latter is a larger category.

The Different Meanings of *Lafẓ* and *Maʿnā*

Al-Jurjānī devotes much effort in his *Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz*, as Margaret Larkin has shown, to rebutting the Muʿtazilite claim, primarily of al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), that eloquence lies in utterances (*lafẓ*) and their sounds independent of the meanings they denote.[8] Al-Jurjānī grants the sounds of utterances a role in the beauty of speech only insofar as they should not be lowly, out of date, or incomprehensible. Otherwise, speech does not owe its eloquence 'to the ring of its letters or its linguistic appearance, rather to a matter that reaches a person's heart and a benefit the mind ignites from its kindling'.[9] He shows how even those who do make a case for the precedence of *lafẓ* base their arguments—often unbeknownst to them—on utterances as signifiers of meaning and not on their acoustic beauty.[10] Any consideration of eloquence, therefore, requires a consideration of meaning (*maʿnā*).

At the same time, al-Jurjānī completely dismisses the role of *maʿnā* elsewhere, declaring that prioritizing it over *lafẓ* is 'the worst of all diseases'.[11] In this case, he argues that it is the way a meaning is 'crafted' which distinguishes a statement's excellence (i.e. its *lafẓ* or form) and not the meaning itself. Comparing poetry to goldsmithery, he states:

> It is known that the way of speech is [similar to] the way of forming and crafting jewelry, and that the course that the meaning being conveyed takes is [like] the course of the substance on which the forming and shaping takes place, such as silver or gold that is made into a ring or a bracelet. Just as it is inconceivable, if you wanted to inspect the shape of the ring and the quality of its craftsmanship, to [only] look at the silver of which it was moulded or the gold on which this work and craftsmanship was performed, it is inconceivable, if you wanted to know the place of excellence and distinction in speech, to merely look at its meaning. If we were to choose one ring over another because the quality of its silver is better or its gemstone is more precious, this preference would not be based on the ring as a ring. Likewise, if we were to choose one verse of poetry over another because of its meaning, the choice would not be based on a consideration [of the verse] as poetry or speech. This is unequivocal.[12]

In other words, it is not the excellence of meaning in and of itself as 'raw material' that determines the beauty of a particular line of poetry or speech. Rather, it is the way this meaning is shaped and moulded.

Even old, hackneyed, and common ideas, therefore, can still provide the fodder for wonderfully eloquent speech if crafted in the right way. You may hear people mindlessly say something known and common to all and then see that same idea keenly shaped so that 'it becomes unusual in its craft, subtle in its detail, and innovative in its composition'.[13] For example, people may say: 'one's nature does not change' or 'you cannot make a person deviate from what he is naturally inclined to do'. 'As you see', al-Jurjānī states, these are 'commonplace, known, and overused meanings/ideas'.[14] Then look at what al-Mutanabbī says in the following verse:

يُرادُ من القلبِ نِسيانُكُمْ وتأبَى الطِّباعُ على النّاقِلِ

It is hoped of the heart [that it] forgets you
[but] one's nature refuses change[15]

Al-Jurjānī states: 'You see how [the meaning] transformed into a jewel after it had been a [mere] bead, and it became the most wonderful thing after having been nothing'.[16] As a result, al-Jurjānī agrees with al-Jāḥiẓ's famous declaration that 'meanings/ideas are strewn on the road'.[17] That is, it is not the meaning conveyed which distinguishes a statement, but the way this meaning—whatever it may be—is expressed. Eloquence, in this case, lies in *lafẓ*.

Al-Jurjānī therefore sometimes appears to be a proponent of *maʿnā* and other times considers it completely irrelevant and attributes eloquence entirely to *lafẓ*, as we see in the earlier goldsmithery analogy. Larkin regards this 'inconsistency in the use of terminology' as evidence that the *Dalāʾil* must have originally been 'separate groups of lectures that were probably delivered on different occasions, perhaps to distinct groups'.[18] At the same time, however, as Larkin and others have shown, the two terms operate at a variety of levels. Besides discussing and providing more specific definitions of the terms *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, al-Jurjānī tries to clarify some of the various aspects of poetic language by coining new terms such as '*maʿnā al-maʿnā*' (the meaning of meaning) and '*ṣūrat al-maʿnā*' (the image of meaning) and elaborating on old ones, such as '*naẓm*' (sentence construction). While al-Jurjānī might mean different things with the terms *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* in different instances, therefore, it is more likely a result of the lack of specific-enough terminology rather than an 'inconsistency'. Nevertheless, this multitude of meanings of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, and the lack of more specific terms, has been a source of considerable confusion, as al-Jurjānī himself acknowledges.[19]

Kamal Abu Deeb distinguishes three usages of the word '*lafẓ*' in Arabic criticism:

> The first usage indicates the sound-aspect of poetry, with no reference to its meaning. The second usage applies to form, or construction, as opposed to content or the raw material, or subject matter, or ideas, expressed in poetry. (There is also a third meaning which is, of course, the single word as an independent unit.)[20]

More briefly put, the three usages could be summarized as 'sound', 'word combination', and 'word choice', as Heinrichs has described it.[21] As for the term *maʿnā*, besides denoting the direct meaning of a single word, it has the double meaning, as Heinrichs suggests, of the still unarticulated idea (*gharaḍ* or *aṣl al-maʿnā*/the 'raw material' in the earlier goldsmithery analogy) and the final articulated idea.[22] Let me first elaborate on how al-Jurjānī sees these various parts functioning in relation to one another before getting to the trickier question of how they relate to eloquence and poetic beauty.

The Sign, Signifier, and Signified

While Larkin suggests that al-Jurjānī is inconsistent in his use of the terminology of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, she does point out that when applied to individual words his use of the terms remains consistent.[23] In this case, the *lafẓ* refers to 'the combination of sounds of which the word consists' and the *maʿnā* refers to 'the lexical definition of the word'.[24] In other words, *lafẓ* refers to the 'signifier' ($lafẓ_1$ in Figure 1), if we were to borrow terminology from modern semiotics, and *maʿnā* refers to the 'signified' ($maʿnā_1$). This understanding of the term *lafẓ*, however, as merely a 'signifier' is what al-Jurjānī consistently takes issue

with throughout *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, as well as in *Asrār al-balāgha*.[25] He dedicates much of his discussion to debunking the idea that *lafẓ*, in the sense of the acoustics of the word, can have any contribution to eloquence and argues for the impossibility of evaluating the eloquence of a word as a signifier, without considering what it signifies. In this sense, al-Jurjānī is calling for a more precise understanding of *lafẓ*, which is akin to Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of 'sign' (*lafẓ*$_2$).[26] That is, it constitutes a whole that combines both signifier and signified (see Figure 1). The proper meaning of *lafẓ* for al-Jurjānī is therefore not the 'signifier', which is limited to the 'sound-image' of a word, but the 'sign', which incorporates the meaning of the word.

Sign	Signifier (*lafẓ*$_1$)
(*lafẓ*$_2$)	Signified (*maʿnā*$_1$)

Figure 1. Sign, signifier, and signified.

Form and Content

Next, al-Jurjānī brings the discussion from a semiotic level up to a semantic level. Relying on the linguist Émile Benveniste, Paul Ricoeur describes semiotics and semantics as two levels of linguistics: 'The sign is the unit of semiotics while the sentence is the unit of semantics'.[27] In other words, al-Jurjānī moves from the level of the word or sign to the level of discourse or what he calls *naẓm*.[28] *Naẓm*, according to al-Jurjānī, is the way a sentence is constructed in light of the syntactical relationships between its words.[29] He explains that one cannot deem a single word eloquent 'except through a consideration of its place in the sentence construction (*naẓm*), and the appropriateness of its meaning in relation to its neighboring meanings'.[30] This semantic context in which single words lie (i.e. *naẓm*) constitutes the third usage of the term *lafẓ*. It is ultimately *lafẓ* in the sense of discourse or the sentence as a whole (i.e. form), and not the single words, that determines eloquence (*lafẓ*$_3$ in Figure 2). He explains:

> when well-reasoned people say 'it is possible for a single meaning to be expressed by two words (*lafẓayn*), one being eloquent and the other not,' [… what is really intended is that] it is possible for there to be *two phrases* (*ʿibāratān*) expressing the same basic meaning, and for one to [be better than the other].[31]

That is, when one attributes eloquence to '*lafẓ*', as al-Jurjānī clarifies, the intended meaning of *lafẓ* is the phrase as a whole and not the single words. Consequently, the counterpart of *lafẓ* (as phrase) in this case is the overall meaning of the sentence or its content.

It is this usage of the term *lafẓ*, at the level of 'form' and 'content', which al-Jurjānī intends when he states that the 'worst of all diseases' is he who places eloquence in *maʿnā* and not in *lafẓ*.[32] What he means is that it is wrong to attribute eloquence to content rather than form. In this case, *maʿnā* corresponds to the unarticulated idea that the whole sentence proceeds to convey (*maʿnā*$_2$ in Figure 2); that is, the purpose (*gharaḍ*) or original meaning (*aṣl al-maʿnā*). However, al-Jurjānī discusses another level of *maʿnā*, which corresponds to the idea in its final articulated form.

IMAGE of MEANING *Ṣūrat al-maʿnā* (*Maʿnā*$_3$)	FORM: (*Lafẓ*$_3$) Sentence construction (*Naẓm*)
	CONTENT: (*Maʿnā*$_2$) Unarticulated Content, original meaning (*Aṣl al-maʿnā*)

Figure 2. Image of meaning, form, and content.

The 'Image of Meaning' (*Ṣūrat al-maʿnā*)

If the first usage of the terms *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* was at the level of the word (sign, signified, and signifier), and the second at the level of the sentence (form and content), the third level constitutes the final articulated product. Returning to the analogy of goldsmithery, al-Jurjānī explains that the purpose of speech is to convey a single unified meaning that results from the combination of all the words in a sentence:

> The likeness of him who constructs speech is the likeness of him who takes pieces of gold or silver and melts them together until they become one single piece. That is, if you say: 'Zayd hit 'Amr very hard on Friday in order to discipline him,' you gain an understanding (*mafhūm*) from the totality of all these words that forms a single meaning, not several meanings, as some imagine. This is because you did not invoke all these words to express their individual meanings. Rather you invoked them in order to convey aspects of the connections which occur between the verb 'to hit' and what was [associated] with it, and the inferences that result from these connections.[33]

Al-Jurjānī calls this overall understanding that is achieved through the totality of a construction '*ṣūrat al-maʿnā*' (the image of meaning).[34] He explains that while two words (*kalimatān*) may convey the same meaning, two phrases (*kalāmān*) cannot. That is because

> one cannot imagine that the 'image of the meaning' (*ṣūrat al-maʿnā*) of one phrase or verse to be exactly the same as the other, [...] unless one intentionally substitutes each utterance with its synonym without changing the construction or composition.[35]

In this case, there is no comparison in quality to be made, for this kind of transcription of a particular sentence construction onto synonyms is no different from mere 'translation', he explains.[36] While two statements or verses can have the same subject or purpose (*gharaḍ*), therefore, it is impossible for them to have the same shape or image:

> Note that our use of the word '*ṣūra*' (image) is a comparison and analogy (*tamthīl wa-qiyās*) for something we know through our minds with something we see with our eyes. For when we saw that the differences within a [given] species lie in aspects of the image—so that the differentiation of one person

> from another or one horse from another happens through a particularity in the image of one that is absent in the image of the other [even though they belong to the same species]; the same goes for crafts, where the difference between one ring and another or one bracelet and another is in [their image])—we expressed this difference and disparity by saying: 'a meaning/idea has an image (*ṣūra*) in this [statement/verse] that differs from its image in that'.[37]

In other words, two creatures can belong to the same species, yet differ in the particularities of their image. Similarly, two statements could articulate the same general meaning or idea, but differ in the particularities of the way in which they are shaped and moulded (i.e. their image).[38]

An unawareness of this level of meaning—that is, the image of meaning (*maʿnā*$_3$)—al-Jurjānī explains, can lead people to misattribute eloquence to utterances. For if one thinks that there is 'nothing other than *maʿnā* and *lafẓ*', one reasons that if two statements intend the same *maʿnā*, then the difference in degree of eloquence must depend on their distinct uses of *lafẓ*.[39] Meaning in this case would have no role, 'since one would assume that this would [otherwise] lead to a contradiction: having different yet similar meanings at the same time'.[40] How could they be expressing the same idea, yet be different in the meaning they convey at the same time? However, he goes on to explain, this is a superficial understanding. The distinctiveness of a statement is determined neither by its form nor by its content alone. Rather, it depends on a third element, which is the final shape or image in which a certain idea is presented; that is, *ṣūrat al-maʿnā* (the image of meaning). When one evaluates a poetic statement, therefore, one has to consider the final image in which a meaning is articulated and not the original unarticulated meaning itself.

Al-Jurjānī therefore complicates the relationship between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* both at the semiotic level and the semantic one. He argues for a two-sided understanding of *lafẓ* at the level of the word that takes into account both the signifier and the signified, as shown in Figure 1. At the level of the sentence, he proposes the idea of the 'image of meaning', which is also a two-sided understanding of the term *maʿnā*, which combines both form (*lafẓ*$_3$) and content (*maʿnā*$_2$), as shown in Figure 2.

The final 'image of meaning' is the ultimate matter through which eloquence comes into view. As we have seen, if the original meaning is the same, it is the way it is affirmed and conveyed that distinguishes a statement. This articulation is inextricably dependent on *naẓm* or the way the sentence is constructed. Does this mean that eloquence is determined only by *naẓm*?

Indirect Signification (*maʿnā al-maʿnā*)

Al-Jurjānī states that 'eloquent speech (*al-kalām al-faṣīḥ*) is divided into two parts: one in which distinction and beauty is credited to *lafẓ* and one in which it is credited to *naẓm*'.[41] He immediately clarifies that what he means by *lafẓ* in this case is

> *kināya* (allusion, implied meaning), *istiʿāra* (metaphor), and *tamthīl* (analogy) that comes in the form of *istiʿāra*[42] […]; in general, anything that contains figurative speech (*majāz*), broadening (*ittisāʿ*), and a deviation of an utterance from its apparent [meaning].[43]

Consequently, words as signs can contribute to eloquence as well when they signify something other than their immediate, direct, or primary meaning—something al-Jurjānī calls the 'meaning of meaning' (*maʿnā al-maʿnā*).[44]

Nevertheless, everything in speech that is moving and pleasing, such as 'a nice meaning, wise saying, elegance, metaphor, paronomasia', al-Jurjānī explains, is ultimately dependent on the success of *naẓm*.[45] Words, including those with indirect significations such as metaphors and implied meaning, have no significance in and of themselves outside of their placement in a sentence. He explains:

> *Istiʿāra* (metaphor), *kināya* (implied meaning), *tamthīl* (analogy), and the remaining kinds of *majāz* (figurative expressions) all require *naẓm* (to be combined with other words in a sentence). It is because of it and through it that they function, for you cannot imagine any of these [indirect signs] entering speech as single entities without considering their syntactical [context].[46]

Naẓm, therefore, is ultimately the main way in which an idea can be articulated since everything is subject to it. As a result, it is the main factor determining the quality of the resulting 'image' (*ṣūrat al-maʿnā*). Hence, it is also the main factor to which the inimitability of the Qurʾān is attributed, according to al-Jurjānī. However, at the level of the individual words existing in a particular syntactical context, indirect signification through *kināya*, *istiʿāra*, *majāz*, and '*tamthīl* in the form of *istiʿāra*' can also contribute to the quality of the final 'image of meaning'.[47] Let us now understand more specifically what he means by the 'meaning of meaning', which I am interpreting as 'indirect signification'.

Al-Jurjānī states that

> speech is of two types: one that makes you understand the intended meaning through the signification of the utterance itself, such as if you want to report for Zayd, for example, [the act of] going out and you said 'Zayd went out'. […] The other type does not convey the intended meaning through the signification of the word on its own. The utterance, instead, signifies the meaning that the convention of language dictates, and then you discover a secondary signification for that meaning that allows you to arrive at the intended meaning.[48]

It is this second type of speech, which al-Jurjānī calls 'meaning of meaning', that can influence the beauty and eloquence of the final 'image of meaning'. This kind of speech that signifies its meaning indirectly revolves principally around two figures, *kināya* and *majāz* (including metaphor), both of which signify their secondary meaning through some relationship between it and its direct meaning.[49] The first type of speech, on the other hand, simply signifies what linguistic convention has already established as its meaning.

Al-Jurjānī would agree with Saussure's statement that 'the linguistic sign is arbitrary'; that is, that 'the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary'.[50] Saussure illustrates this, arguing that

> the idea of 'sister' is not linked by any inner relationship to the succession of sounds s-ö-r which serves as its signifier in French; that it could be represented

> equally by just any other sequence is proved by differences among languages and by the very existence of different language.[51]

Al-Jurjānī follows a similar line of reasoning when he explains that the word '*rajul*' in Arabic in reference to a man is not a more eloquent signifier than the word '*ādamī*' in Persian, for example.[52] The sign itself, therefore, is determined by the conventions of a language without there being any intrinsic relationship between the signifier and the signified. The sign in and of itself, therefore, does not inherently carry any aesthetic value. That is because its relationship with what it signifies is arbitrarily imposed by the conventions of language. However, this is true only of 'unmotivated' signs.[53]

Signs motivated by some meaningful connection are described in modern semiotics as 'semantically motivated'.[54] This includes figurative speech such as metaphor, symbols, and synecdoche. Al-Jurjānī's concept of the 'meaning of meaning' also involves a 'motivated' kind of signification; one that goes beyond the direct meaning arbitrarily assigned by convention. *Majāz*, al-Jurjānī explains, is 'any word that is intended to signify in its [particular] context something other than what it [conventionally] signifies for there being some relationship between the first [signification] and the second'.[55] This relationship can be one of similarity, in which case it is a metaphor (*istiʿāra*), such as saying 'I saw a lion' to signify a brave person by likening him to a lion. Other kinds of associations may also link two meanings, such as, for example, using the word 'hand' to indicate generosity in the statement 'his hands abound with me' (كثرت أياديه لديّ). The link in this case results from the fact that the hand is what does the 'giving' and not from some similarity between hand and generosity.[56] When you say 'I saw a lion', al-Jurjānī clarifies, 'you want to affirm the quality of lionhood on the man, while you do not intend to affirm, by saying "he bestowed a hand on me (له عندي يد)",[57] some quality of "handhood" to generosity'.[58] *Majāz* is therefore a larger category than *istiʿāra*: 'every *istiʿāra* is a *majāz*, but not every *majāz* is an *istiʿāra*'.[59]

Kināya also entails the use of a word or group of words for the intention of signifying a meaning other than the words' conventional literal signification. In the case of *kināya*, this indirect meaning is reached through something the direct meaning implies and for which it provides evidence. Examples include saying

> 'he is one whose sword's sheath has a long shoulder strap (هو طويل النجاد)' to mean that he is tall; expressing someone's generosity by describing him as 'having abundant ashes under his cauldron (كثير رماد القِدر)', which implies that he provides plentiful food to his guests; and saying 'late sleeper (نؤوم الضُّحى)' of a woman to convey the idea that she is well-off, living in ease and comfort and is being served, not needing to get up early to do chores. All these examples intend a meaning which they do not express directly but arrive at by mentioning another meaning that follows it in existence and is a consequence of it.[60]

What excludes *kināya* from being part of '*majāz*' (i.e. figurative language) is that, while the intended meaning is something the direct meaning implies, the direct or literal meaning is also valid: someone who is tall would indeed have a long shoulder strap for his sword's sheath; if a great amount of food is prepared, the ashes under one's cauldron would indeed abound; and if a woman is living a comfortable life, it would indeed follow that she could afford to sleep-in in the mornings.[61] While the ultimate point is to convey the indirect meanings of tallness, generosity, and affluence, the matters that point to

these characteristics are also true on the literal level even if they are not the primary intention of the poet. In contrast, when one calls someone a lion to indicate his braveness, there is no level where the literal meaning of lion can be true. Consequently, *istiʿāra* is 'figurative' and part of *majāz*, and *kināya* is not.[62]

The distinction between *kināya* and *majāz* is ultimately not as important for their status as 'modes of signification' as what they have in common. Both *kināya* and *majāz* constitute signs that contribute to eloquence at the level of the word (or groups of words) by intending a meaning other than their literal or direct one. Curiously, a plain simile or comparison (*tashbīh*) does not take part in this process of signification.

What about Simile?

Where to draw the line between *tashbīh* and *istiʿāra* is not clear-cut in classical Arabic literary criticism. Given that metaphor depends on the existence of a similarity between the literal meaning of the word and the intended referent, when does a simile cease to be a simile and become a metaphor? Is the particle of comparison the only element that differentiates the two figures? Should a comparison that does not employ a particle of comparison, such as saying 'Zayd is a lion', be considered an *istiʿāra* or a *tashbīh*?

In *Asrār al-balāgha*, al-Jurjānī tries to settle the uncertainty by arguing that whenever the *mushabbah* (primum comparationis) and *mushabbah bihi* (secundum comparationis) are both mentioned, then it is to be considered a *tashbīh*, even if the particle of comparison is not explicitly stated. In an *istiʿāra*, on the other hand, the *mushabbah* is dropped completely and the *mushabbah bihi* stands in its stead.

The point of the statement, in the case of simile, is the very act of relating the existence of a similarity:

> When you say 'Zayd is a lion' or 'I saw him a lion,' you are making the word of the *mushabbah bihi* [i.e. 'lion'] a predicate (*khabar*) for the *mushabbah* [i.e. 'Zayd' or 'him'].[63] A noun, when in the form of a predicate to [a subject], relates something about [the subject] in order to either affirm a characteristic derived from it for that [subject …] or to affirm [its belonging to a particular] category. […] Since it is impossible in our statement 'Zayd is a lion' to be affirming the category [of the lion] to Zayd in reality, [the statement is then meant] to affirm a similarity between him and that category.[64]

In other words, even if a particle of comparison is not employed when both parts of a simile are stated in a sentence, the point of the statement remains to relate a matter of similarity and not equality, since it is obvious or impossible to claim that one is the other.[65] Consequently, the declaration of the similarity is itself the idea that is being conveyed in a comparison.

The similarity in the case of metaphor, on the other hand, ceases to be the point of the statement and is instead taken for granted in order to convey some other matter: 'you construct your speech in order to affirm another matter, other than [the similarity]'.[66] So 'if you were to say "a lion is approaching," the statement is constructed in order to affirm the [act of] approaching for the lion and not to affirm the meaning of "lion"'.[67] He goes on to say that:

> if such is the case and you said 'a gazelle appeared to us' and 'I waved a sharp sword at the enemy'—meaning with 'gazelle' a woman and with 'sword' a man—your mentioning of these two words in your speech is not for affirming this intended similarity in this instance. How could it be imagined to be the case to intend the affirmation of a similarity between them and something else when you haven't mentioned anything before them for there to be a similarity attributed to it?[68]

He goes on to explain:

> If such is the case, it becomes clear that the noun [lion] in your statement 'Zayd is a lion' is intended to declare and affirm the similarity immediately. Whereas in your statements 'a gazelle appeared to us' and 'I drew a sword at the enemy,' the noun was placed as such in order to take advantage of [the similarity] and to succinctly [arrive at] the intended [meaning], by claiming that it is of the same category, for which the noun was originally coined.[69]

The affirmation of similarity being the point of the sentence or not becomes the basis on which al-Jurjānī explains the difference between *istiʿāra* and *tashbīh* in *Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz* as well. He states that equating the *mushabbah* with the *mushabbah bihi* can happen in two ways:

> One, is to bring it [i.e. the *mushabbah*] to the level of the thing [i.e. *mushabbah bihi*], [which] you mention for some aspect that is [already] affirmed to it. So you do not need to work at affirming [the similarity] or urging it on. In this case you drop any mention of the *mushabbah* from sight, not mentioning it in any form whatsoever, as in your statement 'I saw a lion'. The other [way of equating the *mushabbah* and *mushabbah bihi*], is to present it as a matter that requires you to work at affirming it and urging it on. In this case you run the noun of the *mushabbah bihi* as a predicate to the *mushabbah* and you say: 'Zayd is a lion' or 'Zayd is the lion,' or you bring it forth in a way that amounts to this, such as saying: 'If you encounter him, you'll encounter in him a lion' or 'if you encounter him, you will indeed be faced with a lion'. In all this, you are working at affirming his being 'a lion' or 'the lion,' and you construct your speech [for that purpose]. Whereas in the first [case], you are bringing it forth as that which does not necessitate affirming and stating.[70]

In other words, a *tashbīh* is a statement, the point of which is to affirm a likeness of something to something else, while an *istiʿāra* is a sign that replaces another due to (or motivated by) some similarity already established between them.[71] A metaphor thus functions at the level of signification. Simile, on the other hand, is a statement or an idea in and of itself.

This distinction is further affirmed in *Asrār al-balāgha* when al-Jurjānī emphasizes that 'the definition [of an *istiʿāra*] is that there be an origin for a sign (*lafẓ*) from which it is then transferred away'[72] This transferred meaning is by definition not meant literally, but figuratively in the case of metaphor. In other words, it indirectly signifies its intended meaning. In a simile, on the other hand, no such transference takes place of a signifier from its coined meaning. 'If this were not the case', al-Jurjānī goes on to say,

> it would follow that there be no simile in the world that would not be figurative (*majāz*). This is impossible, because simile is [one] meaning of the [many] meanings [at our disposal] (*maʿnā min al-maʿānī*) and has its [own] particles and nouns that signify it.[73]

Metaphor, in other words, functions at the level of signification. Simile, on the other hand, is a meaning in and of itself that is expressed with its own utterances and particles. *Tashbīh* is a designation of a certain kind of idea, therefore, and not of a mode of conveying it. As a result, metaphor remains a kind of '*lafẓ*' that is involved in the process of expressing an idea and signifying it. Simile, instead, belongs to the realm of content that still has to go through a process of articulation.[74]

Later understandings of these figures of speech affirm this interpretation. Authors justify their inclusion of simile in *ʿilm al-bayān* only because it constitutes the basis of *istiʿāra*, and not because it takes part in the process of signification. Al-Sakkākī, for example, defines *ʿilm al-bayān* as the science of 'conveying a single meaning in a variety of ways [resulting in] an increase or decrease in the clarity of signification'.[75] Such a variety in conveying meaning, he goes on to explain, cannot take place at the level of the literal signification of utterances (*al-dalālāt al-waḍʿiyya*), for these by definition correspond to what they signify and, therefore, cannot 'increase or decrease the clarity of signification'. Variation in clarity of signification, instead, takes place at the level of the secondary significations of utterances through implication, association, or some other relationship that can lead the mind from the literal meaning to something else.[76] Al-Sakkākī sums this up as follows:

> If you know that conveying a single meaning in a variety of forms does not take place except through deducible significations (*dalālāt ʿaqliyya*)—which constitute the transfer from one meaning to another because of a relationship between them, as when one necessitates the other in some respect—it becomes clear that *ʿilm al-bayān* is about considering the associations between meanings.[77]

These indirect, secondary meanings, which al-Sakkākī describes as significations deduced through the mind (*dalālāt ʿaqliyya*), correspond to what al-Jurjānī calls '*maʿnā al-maʿnā*'. Just as in al-Jurjānī's system, such indirect signification can take place in two ways, according to al-Sakkākī: *kināya* (allusion or implication) and *majāz* (which more or less corresponds to figurative expression). *Majāz*, in turn, is of two types: *istiʿāra*, which is figurative meaning based on a similarity; and other figurative expressions not based on a relationship of similarity.[78] As one can see, simile is not listed among these various forms of signification. Al-Sakkākī, as well as al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī after him, explains that it is necessary to include *tashbīh* in *ʿilm al-bayān* and to have it precede the discussion of *majāz* only because it forms the basis of *istiʿāra*.[79] The reason for its inclusion, therefore, is not based on its participation in the processes of signification which concern *ʿilm al-bayān*.

We therefore have confirmation that later authors also understood the study of *kināya*, *istiʿāra*, and *majāz* generally speaking as a study of 'relationships between meanings' or 'signification' and that *tashbīh* did not fall into this category. Instead, it was only included in *ʿilm al-bayān* (which we may now call the 'Science of Signification') because it formed the foundation of metaphor.[80] Furthermore, besides the exclusion of *tashbīh* from the processes of signification and designating it as a statement,

al-Jurjānī lists it among the various 'topics' that exist in poetry and the Qurʾān in more than one instance.[81] Other medieval critics often refer to *tashbīh* as one of the 'meanings' that are at the disposal of the poet, as well. Qudāma ibn Jaʿfar (d. 295/906), for example, lists it as one of the topics (*aghrāḍ*) of poetry, along with the standard ones of panegyric, invective, the amatory introduction (*nasīb*), and elegies.[82] Although simile and metaphor are closely related and are often grouped together by modern scholars under the heading of 'imagery', they belong to two different aspects of the poetic process.[83] Simile belongs to content, while metaphor, in terms of its function as an indirect sign, belongs to form.

Form, Content, and the Image of Meaning

If we were to map out the components that constitute form and content based on this discussion, we see that the 'image of meaning' is the result of some idea or content that is then conveyed through the choice of words (which influence the final image only if they denote something beyond their literal meaning) and the way the sentence is constructed (see Figure 3). This content may include simile. Throughout *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, al-Jurjānī insists that inimitability lies only in form, regardless of content. Does this mean content, including simile, has no role in poetic excellence?

A Note on Content (Apparently) Not Being a Determinant of Eloquence

While it might be surprising that al-Jurjānī completely discounts the role of content in eloquence, he has a compelling reason to do so in light of the question of the inimitability of the Qurʾān. He explains:

> Be aware that they have not reached [this degree of sacrilege] in their denial of this opinion were the error in doing so not so great; it leads one to deny inimitability and render the Qurʾān's challenge (to produce a comparable text) invalid without realizing it. That is, if one follows the reasoning to which they adhere in that excellence and distinction lies only in the meaning (i.e. content), in terms of stating a wise saying or a good opinion and producing an unusual idea or a rare simile (*tashbīh*), then one must dismiss everything people have said about articulateness and eloquence, and the question of composition (*naẓm*) and construction (*taʾlīf*). [This] invalidates [the idea] that excellence and distinction lie in *naẓm* and that quality varies in it. If this is so, there ceases to be anything inimitable in speech, and the matter comes down to what the Jews have said and whoever said anything similar to their pronouncements.[84]

In other words, if one attributes the inimitability of the Qurʾān to its content, what the Jews have said in the Torah and the speech of anyone who relates similar ideas would also have to be considered inimitable, which is clearly not the case.[85]

Al-Jurjānī also gives a more literary explanation to the claim that the inimitability of the Qurʾān lies in form and not content. In his discussion of *ʿijāz* in his *Al-Risāla al-shāfiya fi wujūh al-ʿijāz* (The Unequivocal Epistle on the Aspects of Inimitability), al-Jurjānī explains that preference and priority are the result of: 'either an unusual meaning that the poet is the first to unearth, an unlikely metaphor he comes upon, or a style in his composition (*naẓm*) that he invents'.[86] He reaffirms that the Qurʾān's inimitability lies in the

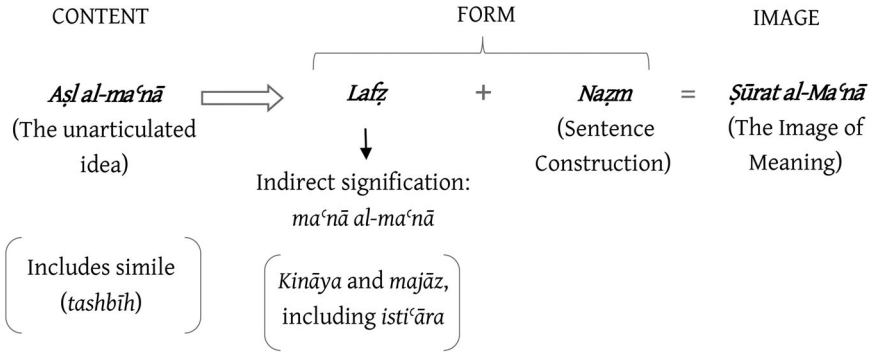

Figure 3. Relationship between form, content, and image.

last, but then he also dedicates a whole chapter to making a distinction between the character of poetic excellence that is due to meaning and that due to 'the word' or 'phrase'.[87]

Al-Jurjānī points out the 'undeniable fact' that a poet could excel in one topic (e.g. panegyric) more than another (e.g. elegies), and 'do in descriptions and similes what he cannot do with other meanings'.[88] While *naẓm* and *lafẓ* have to conform in quality and beauty to the particular meaning that a poet excels in, the reason that a poet is considered to 'excel' lies in the ideas and meanings he discovers and not in the linguistic style.[89] Al-Jurjānī explains:

> If we ponder the case of their giving precedence to a poet in one of the arts, we find that they have done so based on a meaning or idea [and] that [the poet] had uncovered in the meanings of that art what no one else has uncovered and that he elaborated on it in a way no other has [done].[90]

He goes on to say of a verse by Jarīr (d. 110/728) hailed for its unsurpassable beauty in praise that 'there is no doubt' this is the case 'not for its words (*lafẓ*) and sentence construction (*naẓm*), but for its meaning'.[91]

Excellence in meaning (content), therefore, is due to some novel idea that a poet uncovers. A consequence of this is that once a meaning is discovered, it cannot be 'discovered' again:

> if [a meaning] is in a hidden place and someone discovers it and takes it, nothing else remains in that place for others to seek; and if a seashell contains but a single jewel, and someone sets out to crack it open, it would be impossible for him or someone else to extract another jewel from that same seashell.[92]

Form, on the other hand, which involves signs and the way in which they are combined in a sentence, is something general that can shape any meaning. The challenge of the Qurʾān is not to emulate both its form and content. Rather, it is to produce a form that exceeds in distinction that of the Qurʾān, regardless of the content it expresses.[93]

Are the Qurʾān's Similes Not Inimitable?

Al-Jurjānī never says explicitly that *tashbīh* in the Qurʾān is not inimitable, but it is sufficiently implied from the passages quoted. As we have seen, he situates simile in the realm of content, not form. Since the Qurʾān's inimitability lies strictly in its form, *tashbīh* is by implication excluded. In fact, al-Jurjānī discusses *tashbīh* only peripherally in his entire treatise on the inimitability of the Qurʾān. Instead, the focus of *Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz* is consistently on *naẓm* and the kinds of figures that employ indirect signification; that is, *majāz* (including *istiʿāra*) and *kināya*. Moreover, in his discussion of the place of content in eloquence, as we have seen, al-Jurjānī includes *tashbīh* among the topics in which a poet can excel, precisely in order to make the point that inimitability does not lie in matters of content.[94]

In fact, according to Abū Bakr al-Bāqillanī (d. 403/1013), another literary critic who wrote an important treatise on the question of inimitability before al-Jurjānī, a poet can reach such levels of distinction in *tashbīh* that even exceeds what is found in the Qurʾān. He explains:

> If one says that what is found of simile in the Qurʾān is inimitable, one is faced with similes present in poetry that cannot go unnoticed. For you find in the poetry of Ibn al-Muʿtazz wonderful similes that resemble magic. He took a path in this no one else has taken, and attained what no other poet could attain.[95]

In contrast to his exclusion of *tashbīh* from inimitability, al-Bāqillānī, like al-Jurjānī, does include '*istiʿāra* and *bayān*' as aspects of the inimitability of the Qurʾān.[96] While al-Bāqillānī's explanation for the exclusion of simile and the inclusion of metaphor does not reach the same theoretical sophistication as al-Jurjānī, this statement reveals that a distinction between the two figures was already being made before he wrote his *Dalāʾil*.[97]

Conclusion

There are two aspects to eloquence: one dependent on form (*lafẓ*$_3$), and the other on content (*maʿnā*$_2$). The inimitability of the Qurʾān lies in form to the exclusion of content, according to al-Jurjānī. However, this does not mean that distinction in poetry cannot be achieved through content as well (or instead). Form constitutes the processes of expression generally speaking, both at the level of the sign when indirectly signifying its intended meaning (*maʿnā al-maʿnā*) and the sentence (*naẓm*). Content consists of the usual topics of classical Arabic poetry, such as praise and invective, but it also includes simile (*tashbīh*).[98] While simile in the later formalized *ʿilm al-balāgha* is grouped together with *majāz* and *kināya* under the rubric of *ʿilm al-bayān*, it remains distinct from these figures because it does not participate in the process of signification that defines *bayān*. Rather, it is simply a designation for a certain kind of idea that a poet can express (i.e. a certain variety of content). What defines the basis of the inimitability of the Qurʾān, therefore, does not encompass all (or both) aspects of poetic beauty.

The distinction between form and content has implications beyond the question of inimitability. Al-Jurjānī distinguishes between the nature of the poetic beauty resulting from content as opposed to that resulting from form. Excellence in content is the result of unearthing a novel meaning, the possibilities of which are limited and expire

once uncovered. Excellence in form, on the other hand, is the result of the processes of conveying meaning (i.e. the ways of signification and sentence construction) regardless of what that meaning is. If content encompasses *tashbīh*, however, as I have argued, the possibilities for novelty are much greater than if we assume content to simply include the conventional subject matters of poetry. If we expand this to include make-belief imagery (*takhyīl*) as well, as I believe is the case, the possibilities for uncovering new ideas are limited only by one's imagination.[99] This has consequences for our understandings of medieval Arabic aesthetics, which cannot simply be reduced to a matter of 'form'.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa-l-shuʿarāʾ*, 64ff.
2. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, III, 131–132.
3. Heinrichs states, for example, that '[a]lready at the end of the 8th c., a consensus had been reached that poetry was to be judged by its wording, since the meaning was nothing but the material to be shaped'. Heinrichs, 'Arabic Poetics, Classical', 63. For an overview of the treatment of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* in classical Arabic literary criticism, see Kouloughli, "A Propos de *Lafẓ* and *Maʿnā*".
4. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, 255 and '*lafẓ* and *maʿnā*', 462.
5. The translations of all these terms into English are problematic, and for the many of them no consistent translation has been adopted in the field. I therefore adhere to the transliteration of the Arabic terms for the most part so that the specialized reader can keep track of the technical terms being discussed. *Kināya* is often translated in English as 'metonymy'. While some examples of *kināya* might correctly be considered metonymy, the definitions of the two terms are different. Metonymy in English stands for a word or phrase that refers to an object because it represents one of its characteristics or is closely related to it. A typical example includes saying 'Downing Street' to mean the British government. This definition, however, does not incorporate the very specific idea of *kināya*, which requires the relationship between the sign and the referent to be one of consequence. I therefore opt to translate the term as 'implication' or 'allusion'. See my discussion of the term in the following.
6. Al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*; and al-Qazwīnī, *Al-Īḍāḥ fī ʿulūm al-balāgha*.
7. The main literary figures discussed by al-Jurjānī that are later classified under *ʿilm al-badīʿ* are grouped by him under a rubric he calls *takhyīl*, or make-belief imagery. For the sake of brevity and clarity, I will save the discussion of this concept and other *badīʿ* figures for another time.
8. Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*.
9. Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 4. I thank the anonymous reviewer for correcting my understanding of this phrase.
10. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz*, 44–45.
11. Ibid., 251–252.
12. Ibid., 254–255.
13. Ibid., 422–423.
14. Ibid., 423.
15. In other words, the poet's love for the addressee is 'part of his nature' and cannot be changed.
16. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz*, 423.
17. See al-Jurjānī's discussion of this statement in ibid., 255–257.
18. Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, 46.

19. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 481–482. Speaking of al-Jāḥiẓ's use of the terms, Heinrichs also points out that this multitude of meanings has been the source of differences in opinion and misunderstandings (among medieval authors). Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, 70. Abu Deeb also draws attention to the failure of 'modern studies of "words" and "meaning" in Arabic […] to make the distinction between them'. He goes on to say: 'this failure in fact reflects a deeper and more unfortunate failure to distinguish two distinct ways of using the word "*lafẓ*" in this criticism'. Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 50.
20. Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 50.
21. Heinrichs uses this triadic description ('Klang, Fügung, und Wortwahl') for the meanings of the term *lafẓ* in al-Jāḥiẓ's works. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, 70.
22. Ibid., 77.
23. Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, 46.
24. Ibid., 47.
25. For an overview of al-Jurjānī's discussion of *lafẓ* at the level of the individual word and its relationship to eloquence, with reference to the relevant passages, see ibid., 47–50.
26. See Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics*, 59–60; and Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 65–67.
27. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 69. The definitions of the terms 'semiotics' and 'semantics' have a complex history, which at times makes them synonymous and at others makes one a more specific category encompassed by the other. According to Nöth, Benveniste's terminological distinction that I cite here and that Ricoeur adopts 'has not been generally adopted' (Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics*, 105). While this might be true, I find Benveniste's definition of the terms useful to describe the two levels at which al-Jurjānī discusses *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*.
28. In other words, al-Jurjānī proposes a holistic understanding of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* at two different levels: first, he insists on a semiotic approach to the word, understanding it as 'sign' and not purely as signifier, as we have seen; and second, like Ricoeur, he insists on a semantic approach to sign, in which he renders its meaning inextricably linked to the discourse within which it appears. See Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, especially Study #3. For studies on al-Jurjānī's theory of language in light of modern linguistics, see Ghersetti, 'Per una Rilettura'; Sweity, 'Al-Jurjaanii's Theory of *naẓm*'; Ait El Ferrane, *Die Maʿnā-Theorie*; and Khalfallah, *La théorie sémantique*.
29. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 81. Cf. Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, 50–56; and Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 24–47. Note that this concept of *naẓm* is unrelated to the other, more common technical sense of *naẓm*, meaning 'versification' or 'verse' as opposed to *nathr* (prose). See Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, 50–56.
30. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 44.
31. Ibid., 423 (emphasis added).
32. Abu Deeb correctly points out that some modern scholars' limited understanding of the term '*lafẓ*' has led to misinterpretations of al-Jāḥiẓ as attributing eloquence to the mere sounds of utterances, when he is in fact the first to emphasize the importance of composition for eloquence. See Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 60–61.
33. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 412–413.
34. The word '*ṣūra*' can mean 'image, form, [or] shape' (Wensinck and Fahd, 'Ṣūra'). Abu Deeb translates the term '*ṣūrat al-maʿna*' as 'the image of meaning' (*al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 52). Larkin, who takes into account the meaning of the term '*ṣūra*' in *kalām* and philosophy, prefers to render it 'form' or 'shape' (*Theology of Meaning*, 110–111). Thus '*ṣūrat al-maʿnā*' could also be translated as 'the form of meaning' or 'the shape of meaning'. Since the concept refers to the combined result of form and content, an even more accurate translation would be 'the form of content'. Since I want to make a distinction in this article between 'form' and 'content' as separate aspects of poetic language, however, I am adopting Abu Deeb's translation so as to have a term distinct from these two aspects.
35. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 487. He gives an example of a verse by the first/seventh-century poet, al-Ḥuṭayʾa, which is reproduced in exactly the same syntactical form, except with synonyms of the words originally used.
36. Ibid., 259.

37. Ibid., 508.
38. I am reiterating here what Larkin has already explained in greater detail about the concept of '*ṣūrat al-maʿnā*' in Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, 110–119.
39. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 481–482.
40. Ibid., 482.
41. Ibid., 429. Note here that when al-Jurjānī is contrasting *lafẓ* to *naẓm*, he is contrasting it with the next level down of *lafẓ* (*lafẓ*$_2$); that is the sign, as opposed to form (*lafẓ*$_3$), which encompasses *naẓm*.
42. The distinction between a regular analogy and one that 'comes in the form of an *istiʿāra*' is akin to the distinction between simile and *istiʿāra* that I discuss in the following. Briefly put, the metaphorical analogy al-Jurjānī mentions here is one in which the matter being compared (the *mushabbah*) is not mentioned at all and the similarity is taken as a given to make some point other than the similarity itself. What is significant is that it functions 'figuratively' and denotes its meaning *indirectly*, as opposed to a regular analogy, which makes a direct statement of comparison and is not 'figurative'. See ibid., 68–69.
43. Ibid., 430.
44. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 263.
45. Ibid., 85. Also see ibid., 98–105, where he clarifies that eloquence can be the result of *lafẓ* alone, *naẓm* alone, or both. However, ultimately, the beauty of *lafẓ*, even when it indirectly signifies its meaning, usually becomes apparent only through *naẓm*.
46. Ibid., 393.
47. Scholars tend to ignore the place of individual words in al-Jurjānī's discussion of inimitability and attribute it solely to *naẓm*. See, for example, Weisweiler, 'ʿAbdalqāhir al-Curcānī's Werk', 77; and Sweity, 'Al-Jurjaanii's Theory of naẓm,' 128–30.
48. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 262. See Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, chapters 3 and 4, for a more detailed discussion of the various levels of signification in ʿAbd al-Qāhir's works. Also see Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 75–76, for a discussion of this passage in particular.
49. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 66.
50. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 67.
51. Ibid., 67–68.
52. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 44.
53. Saussure describes some kinds of signs that are 'motivated' such as onomatopoeic ones and interjections in *Course in General Linguistics*, 69. Al-Jurjānī, however, does not engage with such signs that are primarily motivated by some acoustic bond between the utterance and its referent.
54. Ullmann, *Semantics*, 91, and Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics*, 118; 130.
55. Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 325.
56. Ibid., 326–327. Al-Jurjānī goes on to discuss a number of other figurative uses of the word hand, emphasizing that context is the only way to know which indirect meaning is intended in *Asrār al-balāgha*, chapter 21. The non-*tashbīh*-based *majāz* is what later becomes known as '*majāz mursal*'. See al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī, *al-Īḍāḥ fī ʿulūm al-balāgha*, 276.
57. Lane translates this as 'I owe him a benefit'. See Supplement s.v. 'يد' in Lane, *Arabic–English Lexicon*. I have kept my translation literal to show the use of the word 'hand'.
58. Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 373.
59. Ibid., 368.
60. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 66.
61. Ibid.
62. This distinction is adopted by later literary scholars, including al-Sakkākī and al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī.
63. Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 302. In the second case, the term lion is technically a second object (*mafʿūl thānī*) and not a predicate (*khabar*) to a subject (*mubtadaʾ*). Nevertheless, al-Jurjānī explains in the preceding paragraph (*Asrār*, 302, chapter 19.8) that what he means by 'predicate' encompasses any noun that behaves like one, including second objects to verbs of the type 'I have known' (*ʿalimtu*) or adverbs.
64. Ibid.

65. This does not mean that there cannot be ambiguous tropes, where the implied particle of comparison is obscured. See al-Jurjānī's discussion of these in ibid., 305–312.
66. Ibid., 303.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., 303–304. Same argument is also in ibid., 221 (chapter 14.3).
70. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 68.
71. Ibid.
72. Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 219–220.
73. Ibid., 222.
74. Al-Jurjānī also lists the 'metaphorical analogy (*tamthīl*)', as we have already seen, among the kinds of words with indirect signification. In this case he makes a distinction between proper analogy that lists the two parts of the comparison and one that drops the *mushabbah* part of the analogy. An example would be saying 'I see you placing one leg forward and one backward (أراك تقدّم رجلا وتؤخّر أخرى)', as opposed to mentioning both parts of the analogy: 'he is in his hesitation like one who is putting one leg forward and one backward'. In the former, the *mushabbah bihi* part of the analogy is applied to the subject directly, replacing the description of the actual behaviour of hesitation. In this case, the phrase 'placing one leg forward and one backward' signifies hesitation indirectly, taking the similarity between the two behaviours as a given. Consequently, the point of the sentence is to affirm something other than the similarity, which in the example is that the addressee's hesitation has been noticed. When both parts of the analogy are stated, on the other hand, the point of the sentence becomes the declaration of the similarity itself. See al-Jurjānī *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 68–69. The '*tamthīl* in the form of an *istiʿāra*' therefore is a kind of *lafẓ*, while the non-figurative *tamthīl* would be—like simile—a designation for a certain kind of idea or content.
75. Al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*, 249.
76. Ibid., 437. See Smyth's detailed explanation of the various levels of signification in 'Canonical Formulation'. An utterance's denotative and connotative levels of signification is a topic discussed and established in philosophy. See, for example, Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, 187.
77. Al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*, 438.
78. Such as the 'hand' example in reference to generosity discussed earlier.
79. Al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*, 439; and al-Qazwīnī, *al-Īḍāḥ*, 216.
80. Several scholars have likened al-Jurjānī's analyses to modern semiotics. See, for example, Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 24–64; and Kermani, *Gott ist Schoen*, 253–284, esp. 264, and n.144.
81. See, for example, al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 257 and '*Al-Risāla al-shāfiya*', 602, where he explicitly lists *tashbīh* among the various topics found in the Quran and that are at the disposal of the poet.
82. Qudāma, *Naqd al-shiʿr*, 91.
83. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, for example, includes *tashbīh* in the category of *maʿnā al-maʿnā* (the meaning of meaning) in *Tarīkh al-naqd al-adabī*, 429. This means he considers its function to be one of 'signification'. It is precisely its declaratory function in contrast to a significatory function that distinguishes *tashbīh* from metaphor and other indirect signs and therefore excludes it from the category of '*maʿnā al-maʿnā*'. Abu Deeb, on the other hand, does recognize that *tashbīh* and the non-*majāzī* type of *tamthīl* are not counted as part of indirect signification (*maʿnā al-maʿnā*). However, he also still treats them as belonging to a single category of 'poetic imagery', which 'depend for their operation on evoking sets of associations and qualities shared between two entities without which the linguistic forms of these figures cannot function. This aspect of these figures means that a process of selection and exclusion identical to the process involved in the other forms of imagery [i.e. *kināya* and *istiʿāra*] must be at work'. In Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory*, 78.
84. Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 257. Note that simile is listed among the *maʿānī* (i.e. part of 'content').

85. Al-Bāqillānī makes this same point in *ʿijāz al-Qurʾān*, 394–395. Also see ʿAbbās's similar understanding of this passage in *Tārīkh al-naqd al-adabī*, 424.
86. Al-Jurjānī, *Al-Risāla al-shāfiya*, 595–596.
87. Ibid., 602–610. Al-Jurjānī always attributes inimitability to *naẓm* and only occasionally mentions *lafẓ* as a contributor. Given that *naẓm* encompasses *lafẓ*, however, and that *lafẓ* takes part in form as well, at least at the level of indirect signification, I believe its inclusion in inimitability is implied even when not always explicitly stated.
88. Ibid., 602. Note that al-Jurjānī lists simile here as an example among the meanings that are at the disposal of the poet, treating it again as 'content'.
89. Ibid., 608.
90. Ibid., 607.
91. Ibid., 608.
92. Ibid., 603.
93. Ibid., 610.
94. Ibid., 602; and al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-ʿijāz*, 257.
95. Al-Bāqillānī, *ʿijāz al-Qurʾān*, 417.
96. Ibid., 430.
97. It is worth noting that the topics al-Jurjānī treats in his treatise on the inimitability of the Qurʾān deal precisely with the matters we have determined constitute 'form' (*naẓm*, *majāz*, *istiʿāra*, and *kināya*), leaving the discussion of comparison (*tashbīh*, including its subcategory of *tamthil*) to form a large part of his book on eloquence in general, *Asrār al-balāgha*.
98. By implication, analogy (*tamthīl*) is also part of 'content'.
99. *Takhyīl* (make-belief imagery) is a rubric that al-Jurjānī uses to describe a variety of literary figures which employ a kind of imaginary premise. They include such figures as 'fantastic etiology' (*ḥusn al-taʿlīl*), among others. He describes the possibilities for *takhyīl* as 'endless' in al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 250–251.

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