



Hikayat Abi al-Qasim: A Literary Banquet (Edinburgh Studies in Classical Arabic Literature)

Emily Selove

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"*Hikayat* Abu al-Qasim, probably written in the 11th century by the otherwise unknown al-Azdi, tells the story of a gate-crasher from Baghdad named Abi al-Qasim, who shows up uninvited at a party in Isfahan. Dressed as a holy man and reciting religious poetry, he soon relaxes his demeanour, and, growing intoxicated on wine, insults the other dinner guests and their Iranian hometown. Widely hailed as a narrative unique in the history of Arabic literature, *Hikayah* also reflects a much larger tradition of banquet texts. Painting a picture of a party-crasher who is at once a holy man and a rogue, he is a figure familiar to those who have studied the ancient cynic tradition or other portrayals of wise fools, tricksters and saints in literatures from the Mediterranean and beyond. This study therefore compares *Hikayah*, a mysterious text surviving in a single manuscript, to other comical banquet texts and party-crashing characters, both from contemporary Arabic literature and from Ancient Greece and Rome."

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