1.1 Many years ago my attention was directed to the poetry of Ibn Khafaja and Andalusian poetry in general by the beautiful verse translations of the German count and orientalist Adolf Friedrich von Schack in his still useful and very readable book Poesie und Kunst der Araber in Spanien und Sicilien. Years later, when I compared his translations with the Arabic text, I found that, in many cases, he had skillfully transformed the originals so as to recast them into convincing German poems. This was, I understood, completely justified, since many of these poems, and I am talking here of Ibn Khafaja in particular, would hardly be understandable, let alone enjoyable, if rendered literally. This again, does not mean, that the poems are bad or not enjoyable in Arabic. On the contrary, they are very enjoyable, but their style, intricate, aphoristic, and often highly artificial, makes them difficult reading even, presumably, for an average Arab reader. Schack showed his mastery as a translator by not only translating the almost untranslatable but also by truly conveying the main features of Andalusian poetry. The great number of friends and admirers whom he already won for it has fully justified the freedom he took in his translations, and richly paid his labours. What then are the particular features of Ibn Khafaja? It is the aim of this paper to give an answer to this question.

1.2 Ibn Khafaja, who was born in 1058 in Alcira and died there at the age of more than 80 years, led the life of a rich private gentleman on his

* This article is a—rather aphoristic and insufficient—amplification of some ideas which I advanced during the first Symposium on classical Arabic poetry held at Cambridge in July 1981.

1 Schack himself was quite aware of his method. In the introduction he says, his translations, though based on diligent study of the originals were intended to be "poetical reproductions", not a literal rendering, which could only produce "monstrosities". "Wenn ich nun, von dieser Überzeugung ausgehend, bei meinen Nachbildungen in Nebensachen bisweilen mit beträchtlicher Freiheit geschaltet habe, so ist es mir vielleicht gerade hierdurch ermöglicht worden, Geist und Sinn des Ganzen desto treuer wiederzugeben." A. F. von Schack's above mentioned book, Berlin 1865, vol. I, p. IX. The motto is from the same volume, p. 179.
inherited tenure. Apart from some more or less venturesome journeys or voyages which inspired a number of his finest poems, he indulged in love and luxury in his gardens, inebriated by beauty which made him "quiver like a twig", as he himself confessed in one of his poems (cf. below). Gardens, flowers, trees, ponds, rivers, and fragrant odours, beautiful slave-girls and slave-boys, mountains, moon and stars are the main ingredients of his mostly short descriptive poems, which are full of charm and atmosphere ("stimmung").

1.3 "In the work of the most outstanding Andalusian poet of the 11th/12th century, Ibn Khafaja, a synthesis of all that Andalusian poetry had achieved so far took shape. The poet elaborated the strongest side of lyrical court poetry, rich imagery. By virtue of his inborn creative imagination he endowed his portraits with an almost material palpability. At the same time, the poet rose to a philosophical level of expression. It is, therefore, not by chance, that the whole later development of Andalusian poetry in classical Arabic language underwent the influence of Ibn Khafaja. This influence was, in fact, consciously noticed by his contemporaries and his successors, who labelled it the "Khafajian style".

These are the introductory lines from the chapter on Ibn Khafaja in a recent Russian booklet on Andalusian poetry. The author, B. Y. Shidfar, devotes a number of pages to "the Gardener" (al-jannān). After having quoted a number of well-chosen verses and pointed to certain peculiarities such as the poet's love for mountains, his loneliness, his quest for eternal beauty in a transient world, he asks: "What then is the peculiarity of the Khafajian style which many Andalusian poets tried to emulate with more or less success?" And he answers: "Basically, his lively, perspicuous images, his picturesque language, the brightness of dyes and the contrast of colours." The answer is not particularly satisfying. It has, however, that kind of vagueness so often to be found in the description of literary phenomena. Though not being well-read enough in Andalusian poetry to give a precise answer to Shidfar's question I shall try to give a rather precise description of some features in Ibn Khafaja's poetry which might help to answer the question.

1.4 Two features are predominant in his poetic descriptions of nature. The one is endowing objects with human characteristics, which I call

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2 Cf. the article Ibn Khafāja by F. de la Granja in the second edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam.
3 Cf. his Diwan, ed. S. M. Ghazi, Alexandria 1960, No. 71,3.
5 Ibid., p. 141.