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Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts

Lale Behzadi, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila (eds.)

University of Bamberg Press

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Preface

The history of Arabic literature presents itself characteristically as a history of names which implicates that the prevalence of authors themselves shapes our perception of literary history.[1] By contrast, however, authors can be very hard to track, often dissolving and hiding amidst other voices, as we will see in this volume. Asking about the author invariably means asking about the preconditions of our research. It also means that concepts of authorship always point to something beyond the author. At the same time we inevitably stumble over the author in a sense every time we try to understand a text.

The questions on authorship that could be asked of pre-modern Arabic texts are manifold and cover a wide range of approaches. As a result of a collaboration between the Universities of Bamberg and Helsinki we discussed some of these questions at an international workshop in Bamberg in 2012, roughly grouping them into the following sections:

(1) the different forms of self-preservation and the staging of authorship, respectively; (2) the various functions an author can adopt, i.e. editor, narrator, commentator, compiler, etc.; (3) the relationship between author and text, i.e. his presence, influence, and intention; (4) the importance of biography with regard to social relations, economic context, patronage, personal situation, etc.; (5) the problem of intellectual property and copyright; (6) the different and often contradicting perspectives an author can provide and the reader can adopt, i.e. the author as an authority, as an individual, as a character, etc.[2]

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1 This goes along with a reduction in complexity we should be aware of. Jannidis et al., "Rede über den Autor an die Gebildeten unter seinen Verächtern," 32 (for bibliographical details, see "introduction").

2 It is rather difficult to produce a comprehensive list of all possible authorial functions. It is also true that there are many different terms and definitions, such as "precursory authorship", "executive authorship", "collaborative authorship", "revisionary authorship" etc., depending on the academic perspective and zeitgeist. Love, *Attributing Authorship*, 32-50 (for bibliographical details, see "introduction").

The contributions in this book show authorial functions in the most varied ways; they provide inspiration and suggestions for new readings and interpretations. This volume therefore constitutes an initial step on the road towards a more profound understanding of authorial concepts in pre-modern Arabic literature and will hopefully encourage further research in this field.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our colleagues who have contributed to this volume. They have been willing to participate in this very inspiring and never-ending scholarly endeavor of critical reading and re-reading of various Arabic textual genres. We wish to thank the Editorial Board of the Bamberger Orientstudien and the Bamberg University Press for accepting this volume in their series. We also thank the Fritz Thyssen Foundation which made this workshop possible. Our special thanks go to our editorial assistant Felix Wiedemann for his strong commitment and valuable support.

Lale Behzadi Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila

Bamberg and Helsinki, November 18, 2015

Introduction: The Concept of Polyphony and the Author's Voice

Lale Behzadi

The idea of investigating concepts of authorship seems fascinating and at the same time outdated, at least for those who are familiar with the theoretical debates of the past decades where every possible idea and opinion with regard to authorial concepts apparently has been uttered and published.[1] Perhaps 'outdated' is not the right word; on the contrary, the author has been re-discovered, especially in medieval studies where contemporary literary theories are applied, albeit reluctantly. At the same time scholars in the field of research on pre-modern texts have expressed some kind of relief that the author has been deconstructed because previously the focus there had been exclusively on the authorial instance.[2] Another re-discovery continues to concern those who work with these texts: the phenomenon that interpretation as such, and especially when it comes to the author, remains an unsolvable problem. It seems that even with the most sophisticated theories and systems we still have to be content with approximation and an ongoing endeavor.[3] Nevertheless, it does remain fascinating for two reasons:

Firstly, the broad range of authorial manifestations in pre-modern Arabic texts remains to be thoroughly investigated. In this volume we focus mostly on prose texts from the 7th to the 13th centuries C.E.; it could be extended, though, until the advent of modernity, i.e. the 18th century. We are convinced that the author as figure, category, and function is not only interesting for Arabic Literary Studies but for Middle Eastern Studies in

1 For an overview on the debate, see for example Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, Jannidis, *Rückkehr des Autors*, or Spoerhase, *Autorschaft und Interpretation* (Chapter 1: Der "Tod" des Autors und seine "Rückkehr" als "Autorfunktion").

2 Wenzel, "Autor und Autorschaft," 1.

3 Rather than looking for an all-time solution, research can identify temporary conditions for plausibility. For authorship as a marker of time and space, see Dannenberg, "Zum Autorkonstrukt und zu einem methodologischen Konzept der Autorintention," 99-102.

general, be it religious studies, history, art history, or other disciplines, especially those which rely on historical texts, documents, or other artifacts.[4] The concept of authorship points towards a certain anthropological constant, namely, who is speaking and to whom.[5]

Our second reason for taking a closer look at the author is based on our assumption that by including Arabic prose into the range of investigated sources the field of theory could be enriched. Furthermore, new perspectives to the discussion can emerge which is, to date, dominated by European and North American medieval and literary studies that focus on texts generated in Europe.

When we try to understand literary history as well as literary historiography, we are confronted by authors all the time. They simply cannot be circumvented. The history of Arabic literature – as any literature – is shaped by authors and their oeuvres. While we can assume that authorship is only one textual function among others, it is striking that this feature in particular is quite dominant, not only with regard to the self-expression of by-gone times but also with regard to our perception of those eras.[6] Since every act of interpretation means to cross borders, the fact that we read texts from historically distant times and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds should not constitute an insurmountable obstacle, on the contrary: without neglecting the conditions in which those texts have been written, we could apply hermeneutic strategies and identify semiotic structures that can claim universal validity (which again is something different from alleged objectivity).

4 See here, for example, the chapters on textual agency in Hirschler, *Muslim Historiography*, 63ff. and 86ff.

5 Referring to Paul de Man, Burke identifies several important aspects, such as intention, authority, biography, accountability, oeuvre, and autobiography. Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 4. As we can see, the scope of authorial functions and aspects can be widened and shifted.

6 The author is, in some way, our hermeneutic tool of providing order in literary studies; Bein, "Zum 'Autor' im mittelalterlichen Literaturbetrieb," 303.

1 The Author as Hermeneutic Category

For the reading of historical texts the term "author" seems indispensable. Even if we decided to dispose of it, its functions and impacts would remain. Therefore it could be helpful to ask which implications the term "author" offers as a hermeneutic category.[7] By trying to understand premodern Arabic texts we traditionally start to reconstruct the knowledge of the author. The name of an author is tantamount to a certain textual world and, vice versa, any textual corpus is mostly linked to a name of an author. With it, we associate a historical person as well as a source of certain ideas and concepts. Anonymous texts are usually difficult to deal with in that they challenge this perception and provoke an almost reactionary, hurried search for the 'real' author. Of course, as medieval studies have pointed out, this desire for reconstruction is justified in some ways. The author, his (rarely her) intention and his biography, gives some indication of his particular political, social, and cultural circumstances and therefore serves as a historical witness. In the course of examining the historical context other aspects of the authorial potential have been neglected such as the epistemic value and the discursive horizons.[8] The theoretical debates of the 20th century have been characterized by a deep mistrust of the author. If we take a closer look at the history of literature, we can find that there is mutual suspicion: the reader nurses it towards the author; and the author maintains it towards the reader, and sometimes towards himself. This displayed mistrust is by no means a purely modern and post-modern phenomenon as we can see in Galen's hermeneutic anecdote on the poet Parthenius, transmitted through Arabic-Latin translations. A short summary goes as follows:

> The poems by Parthenius (d. after 73 B.C.) reach a foreign people while he is still alive. He goes there and encounters two philologists who quarrel about the interpretation of a passage. One understands it as Parthenius wants it to be understood, the other differs from this reading. Parthenius, traveling incognito, tries to convince the latter

7 Since we cannot grasp what an author is, we could focus on the contingency, the variability and the apparitional nature of authorship. Bennett, *The Author*, 118.

8 Foucault, "Was ist ein Autor?," 17f.

> by telling him that he had heard Parthenius explaining the meaning. But the philologist would not accept this line of interpretation. Parthenius, then, is forced to reveal his true identity in order to regain the authority over the interpretation.[9]

Interestingly, it is not clear by the end of the anecdote whether the disclosure of the poet's identity ends the dispute. The problem of misinterpretation or, to be more precise, the fact that a text leaves room for interpretation, appears to have been an issue in Galen's time because he thinks about attaching some guidelines in the interests of avoiding it.[10]

For the author's mistrust towards himself George Campbell in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* presents the following anecdote:

> It is reported of Lopez de Vega, a famous Spanish poet, that the Bishop of Beller, being in Spain, asked him to explain one of his sonnets, which he said he had often read, but never understood. Lopez took up the sonnet, and after reading it several times, frankly acknowledged that he did not understand it himself; a discovery which the poet probably never made before.[11]

The author's mistrust is traditionally reflected in his preface where he outlines the way he wants his book to be understood. The reader equally questions this authority and reads between the lines or weighs whether he can trust the author or not; or he decides to believe him. Either way, a decision has to be made, and the author offers some advice, hoping that the decision is made in favour of his suggestions.

The textual archaeology and the reconstruction practised in the disciplines concerned with historical texts are quite useful aids for grasping

9 Quoted from Spoerhase, *Autorschaft und Interpretation*, 443, Fn 17.

10 Galen, here, enacts the return of the author where the father's authority – over his text-child – remains unsteady among the stepfathers (i.e. further witnesses who give their *testimonium* about the authorship). Spoerhase, *Autorschaft und Interpretation*, 446.

11 Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, in his chapter on "The Nature and Power of Signs," 256. An initial indication was found in Spoerhase, *Autorschaft und Interpretation*, 443, Fn 17. I am grateful to Peter Konerding for his helpful comment.

the contextual conditions of a specific historical setting. Research on authorship, however, can be taken beyond this point. At the beginning of any hermeneutic activity, the author seems to be the key to gaining access to the meaning of his text. One way to overcome this authorial authority would be to see the author not primarily as a biographical figure and a historical personality but rather as an organizational principle, a template which enables us to uncover both the potential and the limitations of a text simultaneously.[12] The authorial undertakings would not so much highlight an individual perspective but rather be seen as a source for hermeneutic options.[13]

2 Manifestations of Voices in Medieval Arabic Prose Texts

The multiplicity of voices is probably not an exclusive characteristic of medieval Arabic prose texts but it is a quite prominent feature of them. In our context, those texts that do not fit the modern definition of literature inasmuch as they are not fiction in the traditional sense are especially interesting. The focus is on *adab* texts in the field of entertaining education, encyclopedic texts, collections, *rasā'il*, *akhbār*, and what could be called literary historiography or historicizing literature. It is this special mixture that we trade under the name of *adab* and that still is so difficult to grasp, not least because there is no real equivalent in European medieval literature.[14] The author often appears in prefaces and epilogues, stating his authorship and ownership of the text and explaining the goal of the book, thanking God and addressing his patron and his intended readership, sometimes outlining the conditions of his writings.

12 Authorship "not as a single essence or non-essence but as a repertoire of practices, techniques and functions – forms of work – whose nature has varied considerably across the centuries and which may well in any given case have been performed by separate individuals." Love, *Attributing Authorship*, 33.

13 With reference to Foucault, Jannidis identifies four rules of the authorial construction: the author as a constant level of values, the author as a field of a terminological and theoretical context, the author as a stylistic unity, and the author as a specific historical moment. Jannidis, "Der nützliche Autor," 355.

14 On fictionality and *adab* literature, see for example Kennedy, *On Fiction and Adab*, and Leder, *Story-telling in non-fictional Arabic literature*.

In those paratexts, he appears to be a familiar speaker, and it is these texts in particular which have already been examined in research.[15] The author, there, often speaks as an individual, as one person with certain qualities and abilities, and quite often with a biographical background which is disclosed in part to the reader. When the actual text starts, the author changes his appearance and his tone. Mostly, he does not transform explicitly into a narrator. The established separation between the author and the narrator which is probably most prevalent in modern and post-modern Western literature does not get us very far here. Although most authors generally portray themselves as if the living person and the authorial instance are the same,[16] it often appears as if the author passes on his authority to other voices.

Authors such as al-Thaʿālibī (*Yatīmat al-dahr*), Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*), Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (*Kitāb al-Aghānī*) and others collect information about individuals and their respective works. In these biographical compendiums, anthologies, and *ṭabaqāt* works, it is worth noting that the authors are not invisible, but not very dominant either. They compile many, sometimes differing, variations of certain accounts, biographical data, and anecdotal material and thus present themselves as conductors of audible, often identifiable, voices. Treatises and essays, although being presented by one author, are composed in a similar way even if the author's voice is more prominent in these genres than in the former. The intellectual entertainment produced by authors such as al-Jāḥiẓ (*Kitāb al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, *Rasā'il*) possesses a higher level of complexity. Here, the author collects a lot of information and narratives, but at the same time gives his personal opinion as well. However, what he passes on as his personal choice from the rich material at his disposal is a carefully arranged panorama of the respective topic and deeply rooted in a choir of distinguished voices.[17] The ef-

15 Among others Freimark, *Das Vorwort als literarische Form in der arabischen Literatur*. Orfali, "The Art of the *Muqaddima*."

16 It could be helpful here to take into consideration Lejeune's "pacte autobiographique", Lejeune, *Der autobiographische Pakt*, 28.

17 It is the author as arraying instance that is at work here. See al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, vol. V, 199.

fect of this composition is a high level of complexity, the author being an agent that works like a medium between the audience and the sheer unmanageable abundance and variety of perspectives from which any given subject can be looked at.[18]

Next to biographical works and essays there are portraits, reports, and memoirs in which allegedly authentic accounts on contemporaries are narrated in elaborated language. An author such as Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī peppers his court stories (*Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa*, *Kitāb Akhlāq al-wazīrayn*) with statements and accounts of others, thus placing the authorial responsibility on many shoulders – that would be one possible impact – or substantiating his own authority and authenticity. Interestingly, the number of audible voices decreases with the level of fictiveness (anecdotes, poetry etc.). We can observe this effect in entertaining narratives such as *maqāmāt*, didactic literature, and anecdotes of all sorts. Verification via authorial witnesses does not seem necessary; nevertheless the multiplicity of voices is existent here, too. Al-Tanūkhī, for example, in his *Kitāb al-Faraj baʿd al-shidda* gives moral advice via entertaining stories which he has assembled from previous collections. He presents divergent accounts of the same topos, yielding to different narrators and acting as member of a chorus of voices. As compiler and editor, however, he is fully in charge and responsible for the arrangement of the stories and also for changes, abbreviations, and additions. While he often seems to vanish as an author between transmitted stories, it is his style of narration and his mode of interference that underlines his existence throughout the text.[19]

3 Polyphony and the Authority of the Author

In nearly all genres of pre-modern Arabic texts, authors are the masters of relativizing the authorial authority, or so it seems. If the author does not appear throughout the text with author's comment or personal

18 James Montgomery has described these authorial directions in detail, see Montgomery, *Al-Jāḥiẓ: In Praise of Books*, for example 73.

19 Özkan, *Narrativität*, 18, 222, 226.

sound (*skaz*),[20] he steps back in line with other authors. Here, we encounter double or multiple hermeneutic layers, multiply hidden authors, and authors in disguise. This 'polyphony' is characterized by a diversity of genres. Different types of prose and verse are mixed and collected from various sources. The references are given by means of empty *isnād*s and similar statements that are used as a stylistic device instead of a reliable verification. It seems as if the audible voice soon passes the baton on to the next person and in doing so, delegates the act of narration to them. Last, but not least, we can find frame structures in varying degrees, contextualizing information, feigned authenticity, antithetic writing etc.

Polyphony, a term borrowed from music theory, when applied here, describes a texture consisting of two or more seemingly independent voices; the important core of the term is that the voices are perceived as independent and equivalent although they are related.[21] There are several questions to be asked as to the nature, the reason, and the effects of this polyphony or 'multi-voicedness' in Arabic literature: Does the author, in his own voice, shy from directness? Is one voice not enough? Does the author need corroboration from others? Is the phenomenon simply a matter of academic name dropping? Could this in turn be interpreted as a sign of underdeveloped individuality? Is this whole act of collecting voices an impact of the *ḥadīth* transmission? Is this 'multi-voicedness' or 'polyphony' (to stay with the musical metaphor) rather a crowd of equal voices, or is there a hierarchy? And if the latter is the case, how is it made evident? Should the author then better be called a conductor of an orchestra rather than just one voice among others within a polyphonic texture? The multi-voicedness phenomenon could also imply that authorial function itself is weak and self-conscious. Perhaps it sheds light on the circumstances of writing, as authors had to make sure, i.e. to assure

20 For the "illusion of improvisation" see Boris Eichenbaum, "Die Illusion des Skaz," 272; although he mostly refers to explicit oral insertions, it could be asked in our texts, too, how this "personal sound" evolves, "Wie Gogols Mantel gemacht ist," 275f.

21 When used in literary theory, the term mostly refers to either multilingualism or to a required unity of the original text and its translation. See Strutz/Zima, *Literarische Polyphonie*.

themselves, that they would not cross a line, being dependent of their patrons, their employers, or their social and academic peer group.

With regard to the emergence of the encyclopedic genre in late medieval and early modern Europe it has been argued that the popularity of the genre has been the result of the plurality of the environment (i.e. the realms of experience).[22] The multiplication of options, living conditions, beliefs etc. has led to the need to organize. We could also call it a prototype of modernity with the result that the loose and rich material had to be sorted and categorized so as to establish order in times of rising complexity.[23] When we look at Arabic *adab* texts, a need to reduce obscurity but without simplifying diversity is evident at first glance. On further examination, however, the order gives way to a new level of complexity where the determinism of a single position is clearly rejected in favour of a polyphony of voices and perspectives. The fact that so many voices are audible circumvents the problem of the unavailability of the author.[24] Again, if we limit our inquiry to asking what the author's motivation might have been to put himself into this array of voices we behave like tutors or guardians of the text. The father of the text is absent; he cannot control inappropriate contextualization.[25] We as philologists therefore treat the text as the Prodigal Son[26] and take the place of the absent father/mother, fulfilling the traditional task of philology: To re-contextualize those texts which have been subject to the process of de-contextualization as a result of the passage of time and an ever-broadening gap between author and reader in terms of culture, religion, language etc. Per-

22 Friedrich, "Weltmetaphorik und Wissensordnung der Frühen Neuzeit," 195.

23 For this tendency to totality, see Biesterfeldt, , "Arabisch-islamische Enzyklopädien: Formen und Funktionen," 47; and Meier, "Enzyklopädischer Ordo und sozialer Gebrauchsraum," 519f.

24 "Genuine problems of interpretation typically arise when and only when the speaker or writer is unavailable for comment." Glock, *Quine and Davidson on Language, Thought and Reality,* 206, quoted from Spoerhase, *Autorschaft und Interpretation*, 439, Fn. 3.

25 With regard to the "placelessness" of the philological object, Spoerhase refers to the discussion on the value of written transmission as given in Plato's *Phaidros*. Spoerhase, *Autorschaft und Interpretation*, 439.

26 Spoerhase, *Autorschaft und Interpretation*, 441.

haps instead of (or in addition to) asking why any author might have shaped his text the way he did, we could also ask what this mode of presentation does, what effects can be identified and, what it causes.

Pre-modern Arabic texts show an astonishing awareness of the fact that the author's authority is a fragile one. However, paradoxically, this lends the author a ubiquitous quality even in passages where he is not to the fore. The act of embedding the author's voice in a polyphonic concert can be understood as an act of self-defense against any possible reproach which could emerge with the claim that the author lacks authority, as additional voices, if carefully chosen, increase the level of authority of both the work and the author. In addition, information, or any act of communication, is valued only when confirmed by a multitude of voices. This reading would strengthen the arguments of those who claim that in medieval times there was no real sense of the individual, that a group or a number of voices always carried more weight than an individual voice. It is, however, rather unlikely that this is the case here, not least because the paratexts show quite a tangible sense of individuality and authority.[27]

One could assume that this system of multiplying the author's voice applies to collections and compilations only and therefore represents a rather specific problem of anthologies and editions. We should, of course, bear in mind the power and the state of development of the respective genre an author has chosen,[28] and the literary and social circles throughout which he roamed, with their interplay of expectations towards a genre (recipients) and expectations towards these expectations (authors). Genres apparently work as syntheses of anticipated expectations in a cultural space that is defined and structured by previous works, conventions, and values.[29] However, a look at other Arabic genres proves that this 'multi-voicedness', combined with a strong performative

27 Referring to Edward Said's statement on textuality, Harold Love sums up as follows: "To identify authorship as a form of human work is to validate individual agency." Love, *Attributing Authorship*, 32.

28 With reference to Friedrich Schleiermacher, see Klausnitzer, "Autorschaft und Gattungswissen," 227-230.

29 Klausnitzer, "Autorschaft und Gattungswissen," 231.

impetus, is a common modus operandi. What the texts seem to convey is an awareness of the unreliability of a single voice. Authors appear as one voice among others, taking part in a polyphonic concert, the outcome of which is uncertain. The text – allegedly – abstains from fixed definitions and final statements.

Nevertheless, perhaps we can deepen our understanding when we turn the argumentation over and look at it from yet another angle: Perhaps these texts challenge the whole concept of originality that is usually inextricably linked to our concept of authorship. Every text, to modify the notion of a father trying to save his prodigal text-child, has different mentors, or at least more than one father.[30] This concept of authorship seems to represent the general concept of a text; as woven fabric of very different threads with no beginning and no end. The texts themselves, however, do not conceal that every text in principle is a hierarchical entity, because it preselects, organizes, and arranges the material at hand.

Authors present themselves as the interface between text and context, embedded as they are in an unlimited number of voices. Perhaps we can go so far as to state that these texts represent the prototype of postmodern concepts of authorship, displaying a high degree of referentiality and self-reflexivity, thus transferring the responsibility to the reader as well as perceiving any text as a hybrid and rhizome-like entity.[31] But, of course, it is also conceivable that we are fooled by a very sophisticated simulation of ambiguity. Regardless of whether or not this is the case, what remains is the insight that the focus on authorship encourages us to approach these texts with fresh perspectives inviting us to follow the enriching path which they afford us.

30 Furthermore, authors themselves deal with their "poetic fatherhood" and "poetic sonship" respectively as has been discussed in English literature. This poetic ancestry is especially revealing in Arabic literature. For this form of "authorial self-fashioning," see Erne's Introduction in Bolens and Erne (eds.), *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship*, 15, and Cooper, "Choosing Poetic Fathers", in the same volume.

31 With reference to Eco's labyrinth metaphor, see Nicol, *Postmodern Fiction*, 48; with reference to Linda Hutcheon, see Nicol, *Postmodern Fiction*, 32.

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A Pre-Modern Anthologist at Work: The Case of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Waṭwāṭ (d. 718/1318)

Antonella Ghersetti

1 Preliminary Remarks: Concept of "Author" and Degrees of Authorship in the Pre-Modern Period

In his seminal work on the Arabic book, Pedersen pointed out that in the pre-modern period, "the author of the Islamic book seldom reveals himself as a person. The purpose of a book is not to express personal feelings or originality [...]. The author picks up from his notes and sets down an item that he finds useful" sometimes – but not always – listing the authorities from whom he has received it.[1] If, on the one hand, this statement highlights the composite character of writing and its peculiar nature in the Islamicate pre-modern world, on the other hand it presupposes a modern concept of authorship where individuality and originality are crucial.

This presupposition is clearly misleading, if mechanically applied to pre-modern literature. The debate about the concept of authorship initiated some four decades ago questioned the monolithic notion of "Author". In the meantime, it also emphasized its inadequacy for comprehending the different degrees of authorship and the diverse kinds of relationships between the person claiming the intellectual responsibility of a text and the text itself. "La mort de l'auteur", the cornerstone of this debate and probably Barthes' most controversial essay, should be taken as a warning to refocus literary analysis on the reader and the text, rather than attempt to escape the author as an individual. If Barthes' provocative statement must be taken very cautiously when dealing with pre-modern literatures,[2] his emphasis on the fact that the text is a tissue of citations could

1 Pedersen, *Arabic Book*, 23.

2 "In what way then could Barthes' Author – dead or alive – be of any interest for medievalists? 'The Death of the Author' asked no questions and gave no answers directly relevant to interpreters of Medieval literature", Greene, "What happened," 206.

be a useful perspective in approaching many pieces of pre-modern Arabic literature, and in particular *adab* anthologies whose compilatory character is self-evident. As a consequence, instead of investigating the existence of "the Author" ("one obvious distinct feature of the Medieval author is that he/she/it is a difficult animal to corner and to describe", says Greene,[3] and we cannot but agree) it is perhaps more fruitful to beat the track proposed by Foucault in « Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur? ». Two of the four directions of research he listed[4] seem to be particularly convenient to our purpose: the relation of appropriation between an author and a text and the position of the author as expressed on his/her own books through prologues or constructed figures.

To have better insights into the concepts of authorship in the pre-modern world we should consider using different theoretical benchmarks, being also careful to "disentangle the issue of the *originality* of material from that of its authorship".[5] The first step is perhaps to recognize the existence of a wider range of authorial positions.[6] For instance, different degrees of authorship were acknowledged and clearly described by Saint Bonaventure, an Italian scholastic theologian and philosopher of the order of the Friars Minor (1217-1274). He distinguished four degrees of interaction with the texts: the copyist (*scriptor*) simply copies somebody else's texts; the compiler (*compilator*) puts together somebody else's texts; the commentator (*commentator*) combines somebody else's texts adding his own texts as commentaries; the author (*auctor*) writes both somebody

3 Greene, "Introduction," 3.

4 Summarized by Greene, "What happened," 207: "(1) the name of the author [...]; (2) the relation of appropriation between an author and a text; (3) the relation of attribution between an author and a corpus of texts constituted as an *opus*; (4) the position of the author as expressed in his or her own books through prologues or constructed figures such as the narrator, the copyist, the singer, or the memorialist, and also the position of the author in various types of discourses."

5 Kennedy, "*Maqāmāt* as a nexus," 198.

6 Greene, "Introduction," 2: "from the inspired creator to the humble scribe, there is a gamut of authorial positions that are capable of sustaining literary excellence and revealing a subject."

else's texts and his own texts, and his own are considered more important than the others'.[7]

> Quadruplex est modus faciendi librum. Aliquis enim scribit aliena, nihil addendo vel mutando; et iste mere dicitur *scriptor*. Aliquis scribit aliena, addendo, sed non de suo; et iste *compilator* dicitur. Aliquis scribit et aliena et sua, sed aliena tamquam principalia, et sua tamquam annexa ad evidentiam; et iste dicitur *commentator* non auctor. Aliquis scribit et sua et aliena, sed sua tamquam principalia, aliena tamquam annexa ad confirmationem; et talis debet dici *auctor*.[8]

Arabic authors of the same period were also well aware of the existence of different degrees of interaction with the texts: Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), for instance, circumscribes his authorial activity stating that he is a compiler (*murattib*) and not an author (*muṣannif*).[9] The contrastive use of these two terms seems to hint at a perceptible difference in the authorial activity: the first term (*murattib*) refers to the activity of putting into proper order, of barely organizing and arranging texts received from somebody else; the second (*muṣannif*) seems to hint at a certain degree of originality, or at least at some personal intervention more important than simply rearranging received texts. This statement is contained in a longer passage of *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* of Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1392) that criticizes Ibn al-Jawzī for his inaccuracy and for

7 The Latin term *auctor*, derives from the verb *augeo* (to augment, to increase). The author (*auctor*) was "the one who augmented" in the sense that "he made something successful, gave something a prosperous future". On this etymology of *auctor* see Bettini, "Alle soglie dell'autorità."

8 Bonaventura, "Commentaria in Sententias Magistri Petri Lombardi," (Quaestio IV), "Proemium" = (Proemium Quaestio IV), in Opera Omnia, vol. 1, 14-15. The distinction is also mentioned by Barthes (*Ancienne rhétorique,* 184-185), who nevertheless does not quote his source. Italics are mine.

9 *Anā murattib wa-lastu bi-musannif*: quoted in Ibn Rajab *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 2, 487. It is always tricky to translate these terms: in this case I translate *murattib* with "compiler", which corresponds exactly to what Saint Bonaventure defines as "compilator", and *muṣannif* with "author" to stress the different degrees of interaction with the text.

his habit of writing books without checking them carefully once they are finished (*fa-yuṣannifu l-kitāba wa-lā yaʿtabiruhu*). The terms Ibn Rajab uses to describe the authorial activity of Ibn al-Jawzī (*taṣānīf, taṣnīf, yuṣannifu*) seem to hint at an activity of abridgement and summarization (*fa-kāna taṣnīfuhu fī funūnin mina l-ʿulūmi bi-manzilati l-ikhtiṣāri min kutubin fī tilka l-ʿulūm*) which, if compared with *tartīb*, implies a higher degree of interaction with the texts and another variety of personal intervention.[10]

A quick glance at dictionaries proves to be of some help in grasping some nuances of the terms employed when we are dealing with the concept of authorship in the arena of Arabic literature in the pre-modern period. Both *Lisān al-ʿarab* of Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311-1312) and *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* of al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415) relate *ṣannafa* to the process of discriminating and singling out or setting apart,[11] while *allafa* is related to the process of combining and putting together or joining.[12] Hence, if *ṣannafa* alludes to the analytical process of separating into categories and differentiating, *allafa* on the contrary points to the synthetic process of combining. The alternate use of the former or the latter in the same text must be taken as a hint at the fact that two different processes are in play in the activity of writing, and especially of writing literary anthologies, the case in point in our essay. Thus, the author's relationship with the texts suggested by these two Arabic terms is not far from that described by Barthes for the Medieval author, who receives and recomposes the texts.[13]

10 Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 2, 487.

11 *LA*: *al-taṣnīfu: tamyīzu l-ashyāʾi baʿḍihā min baʿḍ; ṣannafa al-shayʾa: mayyaza baʿḍahu min baʿḍ; taṣnīfu l-shayʾi: jaʿluhu aṣnāfan* and *QM*: *ṣannafahu taṣnīfan: jaʿalahu aṣnāfan; mayyaza baʿḍahā ʿan baʿḍ.*

12 *LA: allafta bayna shayʾayn taʾlīfan; allafta baynahum taʾlīfan idhā jamaʿta baynahum tafarruq*; *allafta al-shayʾa taʾlīfan idhā waṣalta baʿḍahu bi-baʿḍin wa-minhu taʾlīfu l-kitāb*; *allafta l-shayʾ ay waṣaltahu* and *QM: allafa baynahumā taʾlīfan: awqaʿa l-ulf.*

13 Barthes, *Ancienne rhétorique,* 185: "Ce que par anachronisme nous pourrions appeler l'*écrivain* est donc essentiellement au moyen âge: 1) *un transmetteur* : il reconduit une matière absolue qui est le trésor antique, source d'autorité ; 2) *un combinateur* : il a le droit de « casser » les œuvres passées, par une analyse sans frein, et de les recomposer (la « création », valeur moderne, si l'on en avait eu l'idée au moyen âge, y aurait été

2 Degrees of Authorship in Literary Anthologies

If the Arabic anthologist was both a *muṣannif* and a *mu'allif*, in that both an analytical and a synthetic process were applied, it is perhaps more problematic to specify which kind of interaction with the text was regarded as prevailing. In other words, which degree of authorship he had, or to which one of the categories listed by Saint Bonaventure he could be ascribed. Was he deemed – or did he see himself as – a *commentator* more than an *auctor*, considering that he simply selects and puts together texts received from another authority appending to them his remarks in the guise of subordinate texts? Was he considered – or did he see himself as – a *compilator*, on the basis that he limited himself to picking the best from received texts? In reading the prefaces of Arabic literary anthologies one has the impression that the anthologists had a fairly clear perception of the degree of their personal interaction with the texts, both the ones they received and the ones they produced. Some creative effort was always involved in compilation, as Hilary Kilpatrick has extensively demonstrated in the case of Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-aghānī*.[14] Even in the case where the presence of the anthologist seems strictly limited to the selection and the prologue is quite scanty, a subjective implication cannot be denied. This is the case of one of the most renowned anthologists of the Abbasid era and a model of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ, Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1039), whose texts are mostly intended as bare compilations of fine prose or poetry and whose explicit interventions are limited to extremely brief prologues.[15] The existence of a subjective implication was quite clear to the pre-modern Arabic anthologists: one of them, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022), makes it explicit in the prologue of his *Zahr al-ādāb*, in a passage where he underlines the relevance of the selection process: "I have no other motif of pride in writing this [book] (*ta'līfihi*) than the power of making a fine

désacralisée au profit de la structuration)."

14 Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*.

15 A quick survey of some of his anthologies shows that the prologue (*muqaddima*), where usually the authorial voice is more present, is extremely concise and almost devoid of subjective interventions. On the art of the *muqaddima* in his works see Orfali, "Art of the *muqaddima*."

choice (*ḥusn al-ikhtiyār*): this is a piece of the man's intellect and a sign of his backwardness or of his excellence."[16]

A fruitful approach when investigating the concept of authorship in premodern literature seems hence to shift from the notion of author and authorship to the notion of subject and subjectivity, a direction of research also proposed for European Medieval literature by Michel Zink.[17] In other words, what we could investigate more appropriately is the presence of a person in the text, be it in the form of selection, combination and arrangement of materials, or perceptible linguistic signs. As a matter of fact, every text carries in itself some signs pointing to the author's presence: personal pronouns, adverbs of time and space, verbs conjugation, apostrophes where the verb in the first or second person breaks the impersonal discourse and introduces the enunciator in statements.[18] Depending on the presence or absence of the "authorial function" (in Foucault's words) these can refer to an internal voice (narrator) or to the real enunciator (the author as a person) and thus give birth to a plurality of voices.

In the case of Arabic literary anthologies, mostly based on reported materials (prose and poetry quotations), it is rather easy to tell whether the enunciator corresponds to the historical author (the "real" writer). In this type of works the material, perceptible signs of the presence of the author are fairly reduced, and normally limited to the prologue (*muqaddima*) and the epilogue, if at all present.[19] The prologue is perhaps the part of the work where the authorial voice is more detectable and where the author's presence is more transparent;[20] it also functions as a bridge

16 *Wa-laysa lī fī ta'līfihi mina l-iftikhāri aktharu min ḥusni l-ikhtiyāri wa-khtiyāru l-mar'i qiṭ'atun min ʿaqlihi tadullu ʿalā takhallufihi aw faḍlih*: al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr,* vol. 1, 36.

17 A step in this same direction has also been made for the Islamicate world in later periods: see e.g. Franke, "The Ego of the Mullah."

18 Zumthor, *Essai,* 86-87.

19 On the *muqaddima* see the seminal work by Freimark, *Vorwort*.

20 A case in point is that of *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'*, where the preface contains much more details and individual traces than the rest of the work: "One feels especially lucky to find this candor and detail considering the relative absence of the *adab* author's voice from the actual text of an anthological work such as *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'*" (Thomas,

between the author and the reader, between the real context and the text, and there the author tries to establish a personal relationship with his readers.[21] The *muqaddima* has been highly formalized as a literary form since the 4th/10th c., hence the possibility for the authors to leave a mark of their subjectivity was no doubt very limited.[22] Still, traces of subjectivity can be found. They are highly variable depending on the personality of the author, on his social context and on his purposes. For example, in Ibn Qutayba's (d. 275/889) extensive prologue to *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* the authorial voice is resounding throughout the text, in the form of numerous verbs in the first person, cross-references to his *Adab al-kātib*, expressions of authorial intentions, apostrophes. But this tangible presence of the authorial voice is not so common in other works, where brevity and an impersonal tone are prevailing.[23]

Notwithstanding this general trend, there are some cases where – although Roland Barthes proclaimed the death of the author – the author seems to be alive and well, cases in which the author's voice is clearly perceptible both *in the text* and *behind the text*. One is *Ghurar al-khaṣāʾiṣ al-wāḍiha wa-ʿurar al-naqāʾiḍ al-fāḍiḥa*, the literary anthology written by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ: here the authorial voice seems to be much more present than in other works of the same genre, both in the prologue and throughout the whole text. It often takes the form of explicit linguistic signs like the authorial interventions within the text and the expression of his personal opinions; but it can also be concretized in references to autobiographical events and to his own condition, or in the choice of

Concept, 158).

21 Freimark, *Vorwort*, 58.

22 "In literary Arabic, the introduction did not allow for lengthy autobiographical statements" (Riedel, *Searching*, 99).

23 See e.g. Thomas, *Concept*, 227-228: "Ibn Qutayba writes in a prose bearing the hallmarks of high-minded authority: elaboration, *isnād*s, sustained *sajʿ*, parallelistic syntax, rhetorical devices, and didactic phrasing. This latter includes the frequent use of the royal "we," exhortation of the reader with imperatives such as *wa-ʿlam*, *wa-ʿrif*, and *tafahham al-amrayn wa-fruq bayn al-jinsayn* (1:40). In contrast, al-Rāghib's prose is unadorned and the *sajʿ* sporadic. He does not address the reader, refers to himself mostly in the first person singular, and his preface is brief where Ibn Qutayba's is long."

themes apt to parallelize his personal situation. In the first case, we are dealing with what we call – in Foucault's terms – the *implicit author* i.e. the authorial function, the subject of the grammatical proposition manifesting itself in the text. In the second case, what we have is the *historical author*, the real subject of the utterance, in attendance behind the text. For sake of simplicity we will call the first "author" and the second "writer".

3 The Historical Author: Biographical Data

When questioning the matter of the presence of the author and the signs of his subjectivity in texts, the importance of biographical details (social relations, economic context, patronage, personal situation) cannot be eluded. Hence, before moving to the textual signs of the author and then to the way the writer emerges in his work, it will be convenient to give a brief sketch of the life of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ.[24]

Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī al-Anṣārī al-Kutubī, known as al-Waṭwāṭ,[25] was a man of letters highly appreciated by some of his contemporaries: al-Ṣafadī e.g. counted him among "the great *adīb*s and the intelligent personalities"[26] of his times. Born in 632/1235 in Egypt, where he died in 718/1318, he earned his living as a stationer and bookseller (*warrāq/kutubī*). As a *warrāq* he probably also had "his sense of importance both as a representative of the world of learning and as an independent entrepreneur".[27] But he also had his sense of importance as a writer, something not unusual in the milieu of the *warrāqūn* considering that the roles of the bookseller and the writer often merged.[28] He as-

24 For further biographical details see Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ."

25 GAL G vol. 2, 54-55; S vol. 2, 53-54; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam,* vol. 8, 222; Ziriklī, *Aʿlām* vol. 5, 297.

26 Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān,* vol. 4, 202. All the following biographical data are based on the biography of al-Waṭwāṭ in al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān,* vol. 4, 201-207.

27 Pedersen, *Arabic Book*, 49.

28 Pedersen, *Arabic Book,* 50; see also the comments of Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ," 229: "Le lien entre l'activité du libraire et celle de l'écrivain est clair: le livraire est en quelque sorte la plaque tournante du milieu des lettrés [...] al-Waṭwāṭ est un libraire qui s'intéresse au contenu des livres". Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr,* 26-27 reports an

pired all his life long to be recognized by the cultural élite, but never succeeded, and was regarded with haughtiness by its members. Contemporary poets like Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 710/1310) and Shāfiʿ b. ʿAlī (d. 730/1330) hint at his ophthalmic disease and his state of misery, and some other members of the élite made puns on his name (al-Waṭwāṭ: "the bat").[29] Muḥyī l-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir (d. 692/1292) hated him and constantly belittled the "poor al-Waṭwāṭ",[30] something that al-Waṭwāṭ's biographers take as an open bitter criticism against our author.[31] Nor was al-Waṭwāṭ on better terms with others: Ibn al-Khuwayyī (d. 693/1293), himself a good prose writer,[32] refused to help him to obtain material advantages.[33] When al-Waṭwāṭ tried to obtain a *fatwā* against him and wrote to this purpose to Athīr al-Dīn (the master of al-Ṣafadī, who relates the story), Ibn Dāniyāl and Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir, he collected only refusals. This correspondence became a book, *Fatā al-futuwwa wa-mirʾāt al-muruwwa,*[34] which al-Ṣafadī copied in his *Tadhkira*.

Al-Waṭwāṭ was a gifted prose writer and mastered the art of *inshāʾ*, but had no gift for poetry.[35] In Mamluk society poetry was considered a mark of distinction[36] and the lack of poetic talents could preclude the individual from any access to the intellectual élites. Perhaps partly because of this, al-Waṭwāṭ never succeeded in being admitted into their circles and remained marginalized.[37] Or perhaps his marginalization was due to his

interesting case concerning the *Book of songs* attributed to the father of Ḥammād b. Isḥāq but in fact written by one of his *warrāqūn*.

29 This nickname could derive from his ophthalmic disease or from his intense nocturnal activity (Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ," 244).

30 Al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī,* vol. 2, 17 (267).

31 Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān,* vol. 4, 204.

32 Al-Dhahabī, *ʿIbar*, vol. 3, 380.

33 Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ," 237, puts forward the hypothesis that Ibn al-Khuwayyī commissioned al-Waṭwāṭ the composition of his encyclopaedia *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar*, but withdrew when the work was still unfinished. This would be the reason for al-Waṭwāṭ's bitter disappointment.

34 *Fatā al-futuwwa wa-mirʾāt al-muruwwa* in Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf,* col. 1241 but *ʿAyn al-futuwwa wa-mirʾāt al-murūʾa* in Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar* vol. 3, 386.

35 Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān* vol. 4, 202.

36 Bauer, "Mamluk Literature," 109-110.

37 This hypothesis seems to be held true also by Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ,"

social position: he belonged to that broadened layer of people which possessed disposable income, some education and could neither be considered to belong to the illiterate masses nor to the religious or military élite.[38]

His renown is connected with *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar* (*The joys of ideas and the methods of giving lessons*), an encyclopaedia of natural sciences that had a major influence on later encyclopaedic treatises, including that of al-Nuwayri (d. 733/1333).[39] He also wrote a commentary on Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, and *Ghurar al-khaṣāʾiṣ al-wāḍiha wa-ʿurar al-naqāʾiḍ al-fāḍiḥa* (*The blazes of bright qualities and the shameful things of ignominious defects* or, briefly, *Of vices and virtues*),[40] the literary anthology based on *al-maḥāsin wa-l-masāwī* pattern that we intend to investigate in these pages.

4 Signs of the Author's Voice: Authorial Intentions

What Medieval authors thought they were doing is perceptible in the prologue and other meta-discursive elements that "provide rich material for studying the ways authors define their activity and their role".[41] The most obvious manner of presenting themselves, for Arabic writers, is to put ahead a preamble or an introduction; but anthologists also make an appearance throughout the text shaping it, manipulating the direction of the narration or influencing the reception. Al-Waṭwāṭ is not an exception and the *muqaddima*, similar in length and details to that of Ibn

esp. 243.

38 Egyptian society has generally been portrayed as being split between a small educated élite (*ʿulamāʾ* and military administrators), on the one hand, and the illiterate "masses", on the other. For the early modern period Hanna's *In Praise of Books* works to break down this traditional dichotomy, which seems to be a historical reality even before the early modern period.

39 Samiuddin and Singh, eds., "Encyclopaedic Historiography," 716; Muhanna, *Encyclopaedism*, chapter 4 and passim; Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ," 233 note (the author also puts forward the hypothesis that al-Nuwayrī took some materials from *Ghurar al-khaṣāʾiṣ* without quoting it).

40 "Über Tugenden und Laster" (Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien," 111, n. 2); on this see Ghersetti, "On Mamluk anthologies."

41 Greene, "Introduction," 2.

Qutayba's *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, is scattered with authorial interventions expanding on the purpose and audience of the work.[42] These enlighten the way the author is involved in the making of the text, how he uses and understands his position as an anthologist, and all in all, show a deep consciousness of the kind of activity involved in the process of anthologizing.[43]

The single steps of the authorial implication in the writing process are detailed by means of words referring to the author's agency. Verbs and pronouns in the first person punctuate the pages and effectively emphasize the authorial function: "*fa-innī lammā raʾaytu [...] ḥadānī [...] fī sirrī [...] fī ṣadrī [...] an ajmaʿa [...] wa-ajʿalahu [...] fa-shammartu [...] wa-ḥasartu [...] wa-ʿamadtu [...] fa-talammaḥtu [...] fa-taṣaffaḥtu [...] wa-staftaḥtu [...] wa-stabaḥtu [...] wa-jamaʿtu wa-aẓhartu [...] wa-jaʿaltuhu [...] wa-kasawtuhu [...] wa-abdaʿtuhu fīmā awdaʿtu fīhi [...] wa-jaʿaltuhu [...] wa-jannabtuhu [...] wa-jaʿaltuhu [...]*". Just to give an example of the insistence on the central position of the subject in this passage, a quick reckoning of the grammatical elements gives the following results: in 24 lines (including 4 lines of poetry quotations) there are 19 verbs in the first person and 4 pronouns in the first person.

The density of linguistic signs in this passage, paralleled in the rest of the prologue, is by no means accidental: it aims at giving the impression of a frenetic, passionate intellectual activity. It is worth noticing that the same tones pointing at the enthusiasm of the author for his literary occupations can also be found in the prologue to his encyclopaedia, *Mabāhij al-fikar*.[44] Such a remarkable accumulation of words that function as signs of the author's voice aims at offering a vivid representation of the author at work and of the different steps of his authorial interaction with the received texts and the new text he intends to write. Their

42 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 7-19; the examples quoted below are taken from 7-8.

43 Authorial interventions revealing the writer's way of conceiving his activity can be found in the prologue of al-Waṭwāṭ's other work, *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar* (edition and French translation in Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ," 245-255).

44 See e.g. the third paragraph of the prologue in Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ," 245-7 (Arabic)/246-8 (French).

order also is by no means accidental. First are mentioned the reasons driving him to compose the book, i.e. the diversity of people's dispositions due to differences in their temperament (*lammā raʾaytu [...]*); then the resolution of compiling, on vices and virtues, a comprehensive work (*ḥadānī gharaḍun ikhtalaja fī sirrī wa-amalun iʿtalaja fī ṣadrī ʿalā an ajmaʿa [...] wa-ajʿalahu [...]*). After that are described the author's personal involvement (*fa-shammartu ʿan sāq al-jidd wa-ḥasartu ʿan sāʿid al-kadd [...]*), the choice of the best sources *(ʿamadtu ilā ḥisān al-kutub [...]*), the inclusion/exclusion of the different types of materials (*jamaʿtu fī hādhā l-kitāb [...] aẓhartu [...] jaʿaltuhu [...] kasawtuhu [...]*), the arrangement of the materials and so on. All these are given as the consecutive phases of a complex and careful process of construction of the anthology. Literary conventions of course dictate a certain progression in describing the criteria and the steps of the compositional process, but what seems remarkable here is the completeness of the list, the detail in which each single operation is described and, above all, the fact that grammatical forms pointing at subjectivity are chosen instead of impersonal forms.

5 Signs of the Author's Voice: Authorial Interventions

The main body of the text is also punctuated with authorial interventions consisting of comments on the reported material, apostrophes or clarifications. Clearly indicated by linguistic signs like the first person, singular or plural, in the verbs and in the pronouns, they are an obvious hint at the author's intention to show his control over the text and his ability in building a coherent textual arrangement.

Some of them aim at explaining the criteria of inclusion or exclusion of the materials or at elucidating the essence of the topic treated. The following are telling examples. The first one is a statement explaining why some available materials have been left out on the basis that they are not relevant to the author's intention: in the chapter on mad people and on their witty sayings the author asserts that even if the stories of Mānī (a famous "intelligent madman") are delightful, to present them in full

would not fit the intended purpose.[45] The second example is a commentary on the exhaustive treatment of the topic he is dealing with and on the educative function of amusing stories, used as an introduction to the last story of the chapter. The author affirms that he has already said enough concerning the theme treated, but since relaxation of the mind is a useful tool to educate "I deemed proper to add this story to this section".[46] The third is a commentary on the necessity to write a brief preface to the materials contained in the section in question, in order to elucidate the topic he discusses and to give it the proper conceptual frame. The passage is contained in the section on intelligent men misled by their intelligence. Al-Waṭwāṭ says: "we must now mention an introduction explaining the real meaning of what we decided to write and the purpose we intended".[47]

Other frequent passages are those where al-Waṭwāṭ makes statements concerning his way of organizing the text: for instance, the type of material or the topics he decides to start a certain section or chapter with. Declarations like "we must begin with stories about [...]"[48] or "we must now mention [...]"[49] are recurrent through the text, sometimes coupled with apostrophes pointing at the writer's authority: "know that the first thing we must start with is [...]."[50]

Internal cross-references are also recurrent, such as "we have already given in the first part of this section some information about [...]",[51] "we have already given at the beginning of this book [...]".[52] These declara-

45 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 171: *wa-akhbāru Mānī aḥlā min musāmarati l-amānī lākin istīfā'uhā rubbamā yakhruju 'ani l-gharaḍi wa-yubaddilu jawhara mā sharaṭnāhu bi-l-gharaḍ.*

46 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 229: *qultu: wa-fī mā dhakarnāhu min hādhā l-fanni kifāyatun wa-maqna'un 'alā anna l-khāṭira idhā nsharaḥa nqāda wa-idhā kalla tamanna'a wa-ra'aytu ṣawāban ilḥāqa hādhihi l-ḥikāyati bi-hādha l-faṣli.*

47 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 265: *yanbaghī lanā an nadhkura muqaddimatan tuntaju 'anhā ḥaqīqatu mā tarjamnā 'alayhi wa-sāqanā al-gharaḍu ilayhi.*

48 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 281: *wa-wājibun an nabda'a bi [...].*

49 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 371: *yajibu 'alaynā an nadhkura awwalan mā ṣadara 'an [...].*

50 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 555: *i'lam anna awwala mā yanbaghī an nabda'a bihi mā [...].*

51 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 358: *qad kunnā qaddamnā fī awwali faṣlin min hādhā l-kitābi jumlatan mimmā warada 'ani l-kuramā'.*

52 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 439: *qad kunnā qaddamnā fī ṣadri l-kitābi mā [...].*

tions clearly aim at showing the author's capability for recalling previous passages whenever necessary, thus showing his control over the text and representing him as a qualified man of letters. Other interventions point at displaying his ability to assess the value and the consistency of the material, thereby emphasizing his literary taste. Examples of such statements are for instance the following, where the author remarks the parallelism between similar stories: "I said: what was blamed is similar to this anecdote [...]".[53] On the whole, all these authorial interventions fulfil what is called a "meta-literary function", i.e. the author's discourse on the nature of his work. This can be taken as an indication of the author's desire to emphasize his acute awareness of the techniques and the processes implied in writing fine pieces of literature.

Some other authorial interventions, by far less neutral, seem to fulfil instead what is called an "ideological function" in that they convey the author's moral and ideological convictions, sometimes expressing bitter criticism of dubious behaviours. A case in point is the comment on al-Mutanabbī's verses of lampoon against Kāfūr, which are quoted in a section on people lacking intelligence.[54] The section opens with some sayings ascribed to al-Jāḥiẓ, who features listing the categories of silly people, with primary school teachers and eunuchs making up the first rank.[55] When these are mentioned, al-Waṭwāṭ seizes the opportunity to report some verses of lampoon by Ibn al-Rūmī and, immediately after, a selection of verses by al-Mutanabbī, taken from the lampoons on Kāfūr. Immediately after this quotation of nine verses comes an authorial intervention of a markedly vehement character. First, the author curses poets for their hypocrisy, then he launches into in a severe reproach of al-Mutanabbī accusing him of being self-serving, greedy and false for having praised and subsequently lampooned his patron.[56] The tone of this commentary is extremely coarse and even if it is given in an impersonal

53 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 288: *qultu wa-qad ashbaha mā ʿība mā ḥukiya anna [...]*.

54 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 157 ff.

55 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 157, 158. This was a *topos* in *adab* literature. On this see Ghersetti, "Wick of the lamp."

56 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 159.

manner and there is, properly speaking, no linguistic sign of the author's voice one has the overwhelming impression that the author's voice is distinctly present.

6 Author's Voice or Writer's Voice? Text and Autobiography

One of the possible criteria used to cast "old materials" into a new and relatively original literary form is using autobiography: Hoyland discussed this in relation with the pseudo-Iṣfahānī's *Book of Strangers*, and he affirms that "originality lies in having brought together, and connected with an autobiographical thread, two very common literary *topoi* – the happening upon an inscription of relevance to one's own situation, and the theme of nostalgia and homesickness – that would seem never to have been connected before".[57] If we substitute "originality" with "subjectivity" and consider that not only connecting two *topoi* but also simply mentioning one in a certain context can stand for the authorial voice, we can easily see that certain topics treated in *Ghurar al-khaṣā'iṣ* are by no means devoid of significance. Autobiographical elements can thus be a means to leave room for expression of the author's voice, both directly and indirectly.

If we trust his biographers, al-Waṭwāṭ had a hard life and felt unhappy: a clear sensation of his distress can be perceived in many passages where his voice emerges to point at his state of misery. A direct reminder of this can be found in the last section of the anthology serving as an epilogue. This is actually a long prayer full of linguistic signs of the author's voice which are a tangible manifestation of his subjectivity: there is a remarkable occurrence of the pronouns in the first person,[58] especially in connection with indications of personal conditions of difficulty (for instance *ij'ali l-yaqīna fī qalbī wa-l-nūra fī baṣarī*[59] *wa-l-naṣīḥata fī ṣadrī wa-dhikraka fī lisānī [...] as'aluka l-rafāhiyata fī ma'īshatī [...] la tarzuqnī rizqan*

57 Hoyland, "History, fiction and authorship," 39.

58 To give an example, in 8 lines of one page (610) we counted 18 of them; the rest of the text is as rich as the sample we checked.

59 Literary conventions apart, this could well be a reference to the ophthalmic disease that affected al-Waṭwāṭ.

yuṭghīnī wa-la tabtalinī bi-faqrin yuḍnīnī [...] and so on) and of verbs in the first person, both plural and singular. In conformity with the literary convention in use, al-Waṭwāṭ largely employs the modesty *topos* that is typically used in the preface: in this epilogue the writer emphasizes his weakness by means of a rich gamut of terms referring to his frailty and vulnerability (*ḍaʿufu, lā quwwata lī, muqirran bi-sūʾi ʿamalī [...]*)[60] and asks God to grant him his livelihood and to remove him from poverty. This kind of personal justifications and apologetic statements for weaknesses, shortcomings or inadequacies are no doubt commonplaces and can be considered part and parcel of the range of topics the writers had at their disposal. The same al-Waṭwāṭ seems to consider the final invocation to God among the canonical features of a book ("it is recommendable for those who have written a book to close it with a prayer, just like they began it by praising God").[61] But in this case the allusion to his condition of distress, the insistence on the theme and the accumulation of references to personal situations give to the author's invocations an unusual autobiographical flavour and the author's voice seems to merge with that of the writer.

This is all the more the case when there is no linguistic sign of the author's voice, but the inclusion of certain topics and their arrangement function as an indirect indication pointing to the presence of the writer.

One of the means the author can use to show his presence in the text is the use of metaphors or the use of renewed *topoi* that "allow authors to depict themselves at work both in the material world in which books are produced, and in the immaterial world where books are conceived and dreamed".[62] In our case both the *topos* of "the misery of the men of letters" and its collocation serve as a kind of self-representation and are a clear hint at al-Waṭwāṭ's intention to manifest his presence in the text. The chapter on *faṣāḥa* and *balāgha* (a meaningful context, since they are the pre-eminent qualities of the distinguished men of letters) contains a

60 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 610.
61 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 607.
62 Greene, "Introduction," 9-10.

section on *ḥirfat al-adab* "the misery of the profession".[63] *Ḥirfat al-adab* is an expression used "to express the disappointment felt by a poet when he leads a life of poverty and full of uncertainties",[64] but it is also suitable for secretaries, grammarians and in general all the professionals of the "art of the word". The *topos* has been extensively treated by S. A. Bonebakker, but nowhere in the sources he quotes, *ḥirfat al-adab* appears to be connected with booksellers and/or stationers. The application of this specific theme to the professionals of the art of the book (*ahl al-wirāqa*) thus seems something peculiar to *Ghurar al-khaṣā'iṣ*. Al-Waṭwāṭ devotes a distinct sub-section of the part on *ḥirfat al-adab* to the misery of *ahl al-wirāqa* and indeed gives it a distinct title.[65] Even in the absence of any overt reference to the events of his life, one has the impression that this part of the book has much to do with his personal experience and should be taken as a hint at his desire to be recognized as a man of letters and not as a simple bookseller. As a matter of fact, the materials quoted contain allusions to the low standard of living of *ahl al-wirāqa* and, more interestingly, sad remarks on the unappreciated literary merits of the *warrāq*. These are some examples:

> I [Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥabīb known as Abū Hiffān] asked a bookseller 'How are you?'; he replied: 'My life is narrower than an inkwell, my body is thinner than a ruler (*misṭara*), my rank is more fragile than glass, my fortune is darker than oak apples when they are mixed with vitriol, my misfortune is more stuck to me than resin, my food is more bitter than aloe, my drink is more roily than ink and anxiety and pain flow in my heart's blood clot like the ink in the pen nib'. When I exclaimed: 'My friend, you mentioned one affliction after the other!', he recited:
>
> > Money hides every defect of men // money raises every scoundrel who is falling

63 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 204-209.
64 Bonebakker, "The Misery of men of letters," 147.
65 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 207-209.

> You must have money. Seek to make money // and hurl the book of science against a wall.[66]

And:

> *Wirāqa* and studying // and occupying oneself with knowledge are the origins of humiliation, financial // straits, disgrace and afflictions.[67]

> As for *wirāqa*, it is the most unhappy profession // its branches and fruits are deprivation
> The one who practices it is comparable to the tailor's needle // that clothes the naked, being itself nude.[68]

These passages clearly depict *wirāqa* as something dealing with the intellectual, immaterial side of books more than with their materiality, something obviously contrasting with the everyday occupation of the writer of *Ghurar al-khaṣā'iṣ*. And in fact he desired to be recognized more as an author than as a bookseller.[69] The choice of the *ḥirfat al-adab topos* and its connection with *ahl al-wirāqa* therefore is not fortuitous at all since it parallelizes autobiographical details of al-Waṭwāṭ's life. The core of the matter seems to be the underestimation of the cultural and literary merits of *ahl al-wirāqa*, and this points at the sense of seclusion which – we understand from his biography – al-Waṭwāṭ must have felt. The choice of this particular theme and its inclusion in the wider context of *faṣāḥa*, a means of social promotion and a way to obtain a high rank even for people of inferior birth, is a significant – although indirect – sign of the writer's voice.

66 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 207-208.

67 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 208 (anonymous verses).

68 Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar*, 208; the verses are by Abū Muḥammad b. Sāra (Ibn Diḥya, *al-Muṭrib fī ash'ār ahl al-Maghrib*, 78).

69 Maury, "Ǧamâl al-Dîn al-Waṭwâṭ," 230: "Waṭwâṭ desire fortement être écrivain [...] il a envie de se faire un nom [...]".

7 Conclusions

In pre-modern Arabic anthologies there are many ways for the author to reveal his subjectivity in the text: in the case in point, which aimed at investigating the presence of the author's voice and the manifestations of his subjectivity in a Mamluk literary anthology, we have seen that both linguistic signs (e.g. verbs and pronouns in the first person, apostrophes) and non-linguistic signs (e.g. the selection, inclusion or exclusion of certain topics or materials and their collocation) can contribute to convey the author's presence. Even sticking to the conventions in use and respecting the limits imposed by the literary canons of works mostly consisting in compilation like *adab* anthologies, authors had a wide gamut of options to manifest themselves in their texts, and they used them with great awareness in order to offer a vivid self-representation and to proclaim their role as accomplished men of letters. The author, both historical and implicit, continues to be unavoidable, affirms Umberto Eco in his *The limits of interpretation*. This is true even in texts that a hasty evaluation would perceive as devoid of any trace of subjectivity: perhaps it is not time yet to proclaim the "death of the author".

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The Author as Pioneer[ing Genius]: Graeco-Arabic Philosophical Autobiographies and the Paradigmatic Ego[1]

Dimitri Gutas

Among the numerous pre-modern Arabic autobiographies that have at long last begun to be seriously studied in the past two decades, those written by philosophers—i.e., thinkers also versed in the sciences of the ancients—occupy a special place in the study of the subject under investigation, Concepts of Authorship in Pre-modern Arabic Texts. I have been naturally aware of them for many years—with some quite intimately—but I have never looked at them from the perspective from which we are approaching our subject today. I am thus delightfully surprised to find not only that they shed much and indispensable light on many aspects of our *problématique*—for who better to illuminate us about the facets of authorship than an author writing about himself—but also that they have been crafted with consummate artistry precisely because of their multi-layered referentiality.

I mentioned above as authors of autobiographies the philosophers, using the term as they understood it, referring, that is, to scholars who cultivated what was called the "sciences of the ancients" (*ʿulūm al-awāʾil*), all of which were included under the rubric "philosophy" with its many subdivisions in late antique and early Islamic classification—logic and philosophy as we understand them but also the sciences, including physics, biology, psychology, and of course medicine, all the branches of mathematics, and ethics and politics. The practitioners were many—as a matter of fact, for the entire half millennium of the ʿAbbāsids (750-1258), about half of the *surviving* autobiographies are by such scholars, whom I will briefly list: Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, al-Fārābī, Ibn al-

1 Apart from some minor corrections and the addition of references, this is the text of the lecture, its style retained, delivered at the conference. I am grateful to the conveners and the editors for this opportunity to investigate the literary dimensions of essentially philosophical texts and reap the benefits of diversification of approach.

Dāya, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Bīrūnī, Ibn al-Haytham, Ibn Riḍwān, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī, al-Shahrastānī, al-Bayhaqī, Samaw'al al-Maghribī, and ʿAbdallaṭīf al-Baghdādī.[2] So in a very real sense Arabic autobiography during those centuries was in fact the genre cultivated by these authors. How these relate to the other half, of course, is a question that still has to be examined, like so many others in the study of Arabic literatures, but which is also beyond the scope of the present essay.

Looking at these autobiographies, then, for all the divergent emphases, purposes, and points they make, they nevertheless share a common characteristic regarding the concept of authorship they present: they all evince a very strong and ineluctable authorial voice or ego—there is no mistaking the personality who is talking to us. This may not be a very original thing to say for authors of autobiographies, but these are not regular authors of books: the ego that is presented is paradigmatic and path-breaking, even pioneering. Let me now briefly discuss the different aspects and modalities of this self-presentation and, in the end, what they tell us about the genre and its context.

First, the historical context. One peculiarity of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, or, better expressed, of the early ʿAbbāsid cultural ideology that promoted the translation movement, as I have argued elsewhere,[3] is that it deliberately resuscitated a defunct tradition of high learning and managed to present itself as its rightful heir. This is unique in the history of culturally significant translations from antiquity to the Renaissance. Other translation movements or activities, be they from Arabic into Latin or Byzantine Greek or Hebrew, consisted of the translation of works actually in use by a living and higher culture into the languages of the receiving one. This is significant of course for the analysis and understanding of the nature of the ʿAbbāsid ideology, but it is not our immediate concern. What it does tell us for our purposes is that

2 See the list drawn in Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self*, 256-266. To these, of course, may be added other autobiographical reports in sundry contexts, i.e., not formal autobiographies, such as Ibn Ṭufayl's introduction to his *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*; cf. Gutas, "Ibn Ṭufayl," 238, note 31.

3 Gutas, "Translation Movement in Spain," 17-18.

Greek antiquity was set up, throughout the ʿAbbāsid period, as the age of almost infallible predecessors who should be duly followed—they were the counterpart, for secular scholars who called them *al-awāʾil*, of what the religious scholars called *al-salaf*. This backward-facing stance adopted during the first ʿAbbāsid century had the felicitous consequence, given the vitality and creativity of the age (which is to be explained separately—and again, not here), of fostering a healthy competition between the ancients and the moderns rather than sterile imitation. In a way, the first ʿAbbāsid centuries can be compared to the second Christian century in antiquity, the period that is called the Second Sophistic, during which Greek scholars were "concerned almost as much with the consolidation and correct preservation of earlier learning as with the creation of new modes of thought."[4] The early ʿAbbāsid period was thus the second Second Sophistic.

In consequence, philosophers (in the broad sense of the term I described above) who wrote autobiographies and necessarily adopted this stance, were happy to follow the models of that period. Aristotle, of course, was the paradigmatic teacher of all times, and although he did not write an autobiography, his biographies were well known and circulated widely in Arabic. Particularly well known were some accounts of the alleged philosophical sessions, the *majālis*, of Plato, in which he reportedly called Aristotle "the Intellect," *al-ʿaql*, and would not start the discussion until Aristotle was present,[5] something which may well stand at the very root of the self conception of the Arabic autobiographers as geniuses. But even more than Aristotle, for the genre of autobiography itself no ancient personality provided a better example than Galen, arguably the most gifted and most representative thinker of the Second Sophistic. Galen notoriously talked about himself as a physician and as a philosopher, and in almost every single one of his works one can find an

4 Nutton, "Medical Autobiography," 52-53.

5 This report appears in late antique biographies of Aristotle and may go back to that of Ptolemy al-Gharīb; it was translated into Syriac and Arabic and then widely diffused in Arabic gnomologia, including Ḥunayn's *Nawādir*, and Aristotle's biographies. See Riginos, *Platonica*, 132-133, and Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature*, 161 and 382-384.

autobiographical reference, either as a case history, or anecdote, or reminiscence; he also wrote two bibliographies of his books, one enumerating them in order to establish their authenticity, and another to teach the order in which they should be read. But he never wrote a separate, and what could be called a conventional, autobiography. The reason is that his writings—his medicine, his philosophy—*are* his autobiography: he developed a style of total engagement with the subjects he was treating, achieving what can be called a fusion of the personal and the professional. The assessments one reads about him are that Galen "is the hero of his own story",[6] and that he "is both teacher and model, both author and exemplar."[7] Of the conventional motifs and forms which one can find in autobiographies, Galen employed all of them: Vivian Nutton identified five in Galen's treatise *On Prognosis*: a list of writings, case histories, life-style apologetics, moral diatribe, and professional expertise to enhance reputation.[8] The Arabic philosophers use all of them, in varying degrees, in their autobiographies, in a style in which they are the heroes of their own stories. Only in their case, although one can find sporadic autobiographical references in their works, they *did* write separate autobiographies, thus actualizing what was latent in Galen and creating a new form of the genre, striking for its polymorphous nature. I will thus not dwell, except in passing, on the five conventional motifs or contents just enumerated, for they are obvious and well known: autobiographies are nothing if not self-serving morality and promotion; I will concentrate instead on what is novel, original, and characteristic of them.

Let me start right away with one aspect of this polymorphy, the combined genre of autobiography and biography written together. This may have its origins with Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) and his pupil and amanuensis, al-Jūzjānī. Ibn Sīnā ends his autobiography with the words, "And I returned to Jurjān, where Abū ʿUbayd al-Jūzjānī joined me." Right after this Abū ʿUbayd begins his biography with the words, "These are the very words that the Master has narrated to me; from here on [follows]

6 Hankinson, "The Man and His Work," 24.
7 Nutton, "Medical Autobiography," 52.
8 Ibid., 60-61.

what I witnessed myself of his life."[9] This auto-/biography complex is transmitted together in the manuscripts, and although much remains to be studied about the precise details of transmission, it is clear that it was originally composed as a single piece. The significance of this complex is manifest. On a personal level, it reveals the innermost feelings of relative self-worth of the two people; on a social level, it informs us about the teacher-student relationship and its significance in the propagation of knowledge in that society; on a historical level it raises the question about the precise time in Ibn Sīnā's life when this collaboration on the complex was effected, for from all we know about his work and that of Abū ʿUbayd, the concordance of their scholarly views was not always a given, and there would have been periods in which such a collaboration may not have been possible. And its significance for our subject is clear: if in the autobiography proper the ego of the author comes forth as strong and pioneering, in the auto-/biography complex it is corroborated by the public approval which the biographer records. All in all, it is a remarkable piece of literature, rich in depth and nuance. This joint genre of auto-/biography was followed in subsequent centuries, as we can witness in Yāqūt's biography of Ibn al-ʿAdīm, which includes the latter's autobiography, or indeed in Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's account of ʿAbdallaṭīf al-Baghdādī, about whom more later.

As a matter of fact, this genre of a complex of autobiography and biography was not only followed, but even expanded upon, in at least one instance, provided by the work of two of the greatest medieval scientists, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and al-Bīrūnī. To begin with, al-Rāzī (who died in 925) wrote "The Philosophical Life," what has been described as an *apologia pro vita sua*, in which he defended his lifestyle against calumniators while at the same time composing an impressive ethical treatise.[10] In addition, however, he also wrote another autobiography/-bibliography, unfortunately not extant, in which he must have given some basic facts

9 Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, 42-44 (Arabic text).

10 See, most conveniently, the English translation by Arberry, "The Philosophic Life." For full details see the entry by H. Daiber on al-Rāzī in Rudolph, *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, 261-289.

about his life and a list of his writings, very much along the lines of Galen's autobibliography. This was picked up over a hundred years later by al-Bīrūnī who used it in 1036 to compile his own complex of auto-/biography. It consisted of three parts. In the first, he gave a brief life and a list of the works of al-Rāzī, adding a criticism of al-Rāzī's unorthodox religious views; in the second he presented a synopsis of the history of ancient medicine, based on the work of Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn, thus manifestly situating the work of al-Rāzī and its significance in a historical and global perspective; and in the third he presented a list of his own works. Now al-Bīrūnī was not a physician—though he did write on pharmacology what is arguably the most erudite work on the subject—but he composed the biobibliography of al-Rāzī, who is clearly presented as one of the greatest physicians of all time in the context of the history of medicine, and yet whom he criticized for his religious views; nevertheless, al-Bīrūnī added his own works at the end, thus presenting himself in the company of what preceded—the juxtaposition and its implications are far-reaching.

But this is not all. Over two centuries later, a scholar from Tabrīz who signed his name as Ghaḍanfar—Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī, otherwise unknown: he was born in 1233[11]—published al-Bīrūnī's complex of auto-/bio-/bibliography and added an astrological appendix in praise of al-Bīrūnī, in which he offered a detailed analysis of his hero's horoscope: to the historical dimension provided by al-Bīrūnī's account of al-Rāzī's and his own works, Ghaḍanfar now added a cosmic dimension: the stars, which govern events in the cosmos, manifestly selected al-Bīrūnī to shine among humans. And the grand finale to all this: Ghaḍanfar added at the very end of the appendix a brief account of his own life and studies.[12] This triple auto-/bio-/bibliography complex luckily survives in a manuscript in Leiden, dating from the end of the 13th century and manifestly copied from Ghaḍanfar's own edition—a very valuable, and possibly even unique, volume indeed.[13]

11 D. Pingree in *EIr* 4, 276b; or 1231, according to Witkam, *Inventory,* 61.

12 Text in Moḥaghghegh, *Fehrest,* 75-110; study in Sachau, *Chronologie,* XIV-XV.

13 MS Leiden Or. 133, pp. 33-65, copied in 692 H. See the description by Witkam,

What these auto-/biography complexes show very clearly is that the genre, as it developed among the philosophical authors in Arabic, consisted of what can be called "participatory autobiography." The protagonist—indeed, the protagonists—comes in them not only with a dominant, if not unique, personality and a strong authorial voice, but he is interwoven into the life of his associates—friends and enemies, at times—of his society, of his times, of history, and, as in the case of Ghaḍanfar, of the cosmos.

A particular aspect of this participation I just mentioned needs to be highlighted, and this is the additional, and prominent, engagement of each autobiographer with his predecessors in the club—or rather, pantheon, I should say. The inter-referentiality among these autobiographies is tremendous. And this, I think, is the greatest indicator of the "consciousness of self" and self-worth of these authors that some European scholars have been looking for and so spectacularly missing. For this pantheon includes some of the greatest minds in human history who are conscious of their greatness—and as it turns out, justifiedly so: we still do so consider them. This pantheon includes, as I mentioned at the outset, certainly Aristotle and Galen, and their successors, both in antiquity and Islam. Al-Fārābī, for instance, has a brief piece entitled by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, who cites it, "On the appearance of philosophy," in which he gives a run-though of Aristotelian philosophers through the centuries and ends with himself as the latest link in the chain, in direct descent from Aristotle.[14] And I have already mentioned above al-Bīrūnī providing a roster of physicians in whose company al-Rāzī is placed.

But even beyond this inter-referentiality on a panoramic scale, there are direct allusions and references to a predecessor with whom the autobiographer is disputing and to whom he is even comparing himself in order to indicate his superiority. In this regard, Ibn Sīnā's autobiography proved an irresistible stimulus—or irritant, as the case might be—calling for response and one-upmanship. Ibn Sīnā famously describes his

Inventory, 60-61, available also on line at http://www.islamicmanuscripts.info/inventories/leiden/or01000.pdf (accessed 24/5/2014).

14 See the translation and study of this piece in Gutas, "Alexandria to Baghdad."

studies of philosophy on his own, when he was about sixteen years old, as follows:

> The next year and a half I devoted myself entirely to reading philosophy: I read logic and all the parts of philosophy once again. During this time I did not sleep completely through a single night, or occupy myself with anything else by day.[15]

Al-Ghazālī echoes this as follows in his *Munqidh*:

> I girded myself for the task of learning [philosophy] by the mere perusal of [the] writings [of the philosophers] without seeking the help of a master and teacher. I devoted myself to that in the moments I had free from writing and lecturing on the legal sciences—and I was then burdened with the teaching and instruction of three hundred students in Baghdad. As it turned out, through mere reading in those embezzled moments, God Most High gave me an insight into the farthest reaches of the philosophers' sciences in less than two years.[16]

So al-Ghazālī says that he learned philosophy in about the same time it took Ibn Sīnā to do it, but he goes one better by mentioning that he did it under extreme circumstances: while Ibn Sīnā devoted himself day and night to his studies, al-Ghazālī says he had to do it in stolen moments from between writing and lecturing 300 students (and we all know what that means). Al-Ghazālī's mention of the number—rounded out, to be sure—has no other function than to highlight the difference between Ibn Sīnā's study of philosophy in tranquillity and his own under stress, and to show himself, al-Ghazālī, the superior thinker.

On the same subject ʿAbdallaṭīf al-Baghdādī is more explicit. He is also very meticulous in saying precisely which books he studied as a young boy and how long it took him, and on the subject of Euclid's geometry he compares himself to Ibn Sīnā. He says:

15 Gutas, *Avicenna*, 27 ([1]1988), 16 ([2]2014).

16 McCarthy, *Deliverance*, 61.

> I began on the *Book of Elements*—I mean the book by Euclid—and I solved it in little time (were I not afraid of being suspected [of lying], I would specify the time; in any case, it was less than the time in which Ibn Sīnā solved the book).

Now Ibn Sīnā does not specify in his autobiography the length of time it took him to study Euclid's book, only that it was before his sixteenth birthday.[17] But Ibn Sīnā *does* mention how long it took him to study other subjects in philosophy, and since the *Elements* is the only book which Ibn Sīnā and ʿAbdallaṭīf mention in common as having studied in their teens, this was the only book with regard to whose study ʿAbdallaṭīf could compare himself to Ibn Sīnā favorably. The explicit mention of Ibn Sīnā's name in this case—as opposed to al-Ghazālī's indirect allusion—documents quite dramatically that ʿAbdallaṭīf's autobiography is consciously written against the background of Ibn Sīnā's. This, at all events, seems to be the case with all philosophical autobiographies or autobiographical references after Ibn Sīnā, which lends yet another, highly personal dimension to the genre. "Diachronic interpersonal dynamics and high personal ambitions as shaping attitudes—and, perhaps, doctrines—among philosophers may be a subject worth investigating at some point. To my mind, it appears quite incontestable that Ibn Sīnā became not only *the* major authority on philosophy in subsequent centuries, but also the yardstick against which all intellectuals, regardless whether they viewed themselves as philosophers or theologians or scholars with such pretensions, measured themselves and *competed*. For those on the highest echelons of intellectual power and might, it became a matter of pride to be able to claim that they were smarter and better than Ibn Sīnā. I don't know whether this can be called intellectual jealousy or not, operating on a personal level (rather than, that is, on a level of ideological or doctrinal differences), but it seems quite certain that thinkers like al-Ghazālī and definitely Fakhraddīn al-Rāzī were consumed with an in-

17 Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, 22-27.

tense desire to show themselves intellectually superior to Ibn Sīnā and steal some, if not all, of his glory."[18]

To continue with this point, ʿAbdallaṭīf may be explicit and perhaps petty with regard to Ibn Sīnā and his studies of geometry, but he is implicit, though original and profound, in his defense of philosophy against al-Ghazālī's unacceptable (and hypocritical, the implication is) attacks on philosophers. For in his autobiography, the *Munqidh*, and more extensively in his opening remarks in the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī says that Muslim philosophers, who believe themselves to be possessed of superior intelligence, have rejected the duties regarding acts of worship and the 'fetters' (*quyūd*) of Islamic law and follow the ancient philosophers. ʿAbdallaṭīf answers vigorously in his autobiography by turning the tables on al-Ghazālī and shows up the gross error of al-Ghazālī's calumnies by using the same argument of abstemious living that al-Ghazālī had used to impugn the philosophers. He appears to be quite proud of himself for having thought of it, for he introduces it with a fanfare:

> I will tell you a secret so amazing and of such momentous benefit that had this book of mine (i.e., the *K. al-Naṣīḥatayn*) contained nothing else but this alone, it would have been enough to lend honor [to my book]. It is the following: We have recounted about the philosophers that they said that philosophy ought not to be taught to anybody except to those who grew up according to prophetic practice and are accustomed to acting according to religious law. I will tell you the reason for this. This is that religious law accustoms one to be bound by its fetters (*quyūd*) wherever one comes across its commands and prohibitions. But the fetters of philosophy are more numerous and heavier; so whoever is not accustomed to the fetters of religious law despite their lightness, how will he withstand the fetters of philosophy with all their weight? And how can one who is used to sheer unfetteredness and total lack of any ties go over to heavy fetters and bits [of bridle] restricting most movements? But as for the person who is accustomed to the fetters of religious law, it is possible for him grad-

18 Gutas, "Philosophy in the Twelfth Century," 14, note 19.

> ually to move towards the fetters of philosophy and to endure them because he would go over to them not all at once and as if it were starting off [with them], but after a lengthy and gradual process [beginning] from his early days and his first formation.
>
> Let me explain this somewhat. Religious law prohibits adultery and commands averting the glance [from women who do not belong to one's household]; it allows, however, a man to have four wives and as many beautiful concubines as he wishes. This is a loose and light fetter. Philosophy, however, makes it tight and prohibits abandoning oneself to sexual activities insofar as these weaken the body and the soul and divert one from acquiring philosophy! Again, religious law has made unlawful certain beverages and foods and allowed some others; this is a loose fetter. Then came along the fetter of philosophy which is tighter than that and forbade gorging oneself with food and drink out of fear for [damage to] body and soul together. The same applies to amassing wealth: religious law commands collecting what is permitted, whereas philosophy tightens [this regulation] and forbids one to have more wealth than one needs for his sustenance, so that its preservation will not distract him from the attainment of virtues! Plato said that abundance of money hinders the acquisition of philosophy just as obesity hinders scaling walls.[19]

Thus ʿAbdallaṭīf clearly implies that the philosophers, far from leading dissolute lives, are paragons of real virtue, whereas those who abide by the conventions of religious law are themselves the lecherous and incontinent people.

Next, I mentioned above that al-Rāzī wrote two autobiographies, and that is yet another fascinating characteristic of the genre in Arabic: autobiographers recount their personal lives and lifestyles repeatedly on different occasions for different purposes. Sometimes a second autobiography may be no more than a relatively brief reference embedded in another

19 MS Bursa, Hüseyin Çelebi 823, ff. 97^{r-v}, cited in Gutas, "Philosophy in the Twelfth Century," 22-23.

work, but at times it is a full-blown variant autobiography. For the former case, we have again al-Ghazālī, with his notoriously self-serving and mendacious "crisis of faith," his leaving teaching and his return to it after "discovering" Sufism. A spate of recent research has laid bare the historical and social context of his autobiography, self-servingly entitled *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, "What delivers from error," in which he portrays his life "largely decontextualized and disembodied: ... it is God who cures him of his original aporia, who forces him to leave his position in Baghdad and who creates the conditions for him to return to teaching in Nishapur."[20] However, in a letter to the Seljuq ruler, Sanjar, al-Ghazālī reveals his deep involvement with politics and political personalities of his day—including Sanjar's father, Mālikshāh, to whom he owed his position in Baghdad in the first place—and his final resolution to desist from involvement with politics henceforth. There is no mention of any spiritual crisis or of discovery of the Sufi path as the true way: the voice of the spiritual author in the *Munqidh* now speaks as a hack practitioner of *realpolitik*.[21]

At the other extreme of multi-autobiographical authors we have the same ʿAbdallaṭīf, who wrote, it seems, three full blown such accounts, two of which survive, one embedded in Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's biography and the other constituting the final chapter of his work entitled, *Two Pieces of Advice*. The former appears to follow standard conventions, presenting the protagonist as paragon of studiousness by comparison to other leading personalities of his day on whom he provides interesting judgments. The second is a treatise on the defense of philosophy and medicine presented as ʿAbdallaṭīf's personal journey of studying the philosophy and medicine of Avicenna, coming to the realization of their falsity and advising people to return to the original works of Plato and Aristotle, and Hippocrates and Galen, and ending with the vigorous defense of philosophy I presented earlier.[22]

20 Garden, "Al-Ghazālī's Autobiographical Writings," 587-8.
21 Ibid., 590-1.
22 Gutas, "Philosophy in the Twelfth Century."

To this polyphony of the same person that we can witness in these autobiographies, we can add, finally, something which expands the concept of authorship to its fullest possible extent, the author as pseudo-author. This occurs, to be precise, in al-Jūzjānī's biography of Ibn Sīnā and not in the autobiography section as such, but these complexes, as I discussed above, are essentially a single unit of composition even if composed by different authors. The incident has to do with the well known story of how one day, in the *majlis* of 'Alā' al-Dawla in Iṣfahān, when Ibn Sīnā tried to discuss a literary subject that had come up, one of the scholars present insulted him by saying that Ibn Sīnā's expertise was in philosophy and medicine but not in literature, and that therefore those present should not have to listen to him. Ibn Sīnā naturally became incensed at this, proceeded to forge three essays in the style of well-known belles-lettrists, had the manuscript bound in an old and worn leather cover, and then showed it to the person who had insulted him. He told him that they had allegedly found the book while hunting in the desert, and asked him to examine it and tell them what it contains. The man was unable to do so and Ibn Sīnā then revealed the forgery to him, thus eliciting the embarrassed man's apology.

The story does sound true, for it is something that Ibn Sīnā would do, since it is clear from all his personal writings that have survived he could not suffer any insult to his intellectual powers, but it does have a literary predecessor, and indeed in a book by Galen, *Epidemics II*, which, ironically, now survives only in its medieval Arabic translation, the very text that Ibn Sīnā himself read. The story is about the second century AD satirist, parodist, and wit, Lucian, as representative of the Second Sophistic I mentioned at the outset as Galen himself, whom he knew. The story there goes as follows:

> [Lucian] compiled an obscure and meaningless treatise, which he ascribed to Heracleitus and gave to some men who handed it to a philosopher whose word was regarded as true and reliable. The poor man failed to see the joke against him and produced interpretations of the text of which he believed he was making the first edition, and

> thus incurred general ridicule. Lucian also invented some nonsensical grammatical notes which he passed on to some grammarians whose detailed expositions and elucidations only made them look foolish.[23]

The similarities, especially of the second story, with the Ibn Sīnā incident are indeed striking, and the whole thing in the Ibn Sīnā complex may certainly be nothing but a retelling of a topos. But whether factual or not, it does not make any difference in our analysis of the concept of authorship presented in the philosophical autobiographies—the very fact that the paradigmatic protagonist was seen as someone who could also have, or imitate, the authorial voice of others is sufficient to indicate to us the breadth of the conception. In these multiple autobiographies we thus get *one* historical person but *more than one authors*, speaking in their own voices, as well as an intimation of the possibility that one person can also be, by imitation, *every* author.

In the hands of the philosophers during the ʿAbbāsid period, Arabic autobiography was developed into an original and infinitely supple literary genre that stretched the concept of authorship to its fullest extent or, alternately put, made it capacious enough to include every authorial voice. Much beyond the solipsistic "consciousness of self" productions allegedly to be seen in European autobiographies (and in accordance to which it has been negatively judged),[24] this newly developed genre functioned at various personal, social, disciplinary, historical, and cosmic levels of expressiveness and effectiveness. And this is as it should be and

23 Nutton, "Medical Autobiography," 58.

24 Cf. Rosenthal, *Autobiographie,* 40: "Keine der Autobiographien ist aus dem Bewusstsein eines Eigenwertes des einmalig Persönlichen entstanden; sondern alle, besonders deutlich die wenigen, die sich über die Form des blossen Lebenslaufes erheben, verfolgen sachliche Zwecke, die dem gesamten übrigen Schaffen der Verfasser weitestgehend kongruent sind." ("None of the autobiographies came into being out of a consciousness of the individual value of the uniquely personal; rather they all, and especially clearly the few that transcend the form of a mere curriculum vitae, pursue practical purposes that are in wholesale agreement with the entire remaining work of the authors.")

a clear reflection of its source: the philosophers who authored these autobiographies and auto-/biography complexes claimed to encompass all of reality in their knowledge—which, in fact, they did.

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Authorship in the *Sīra* Literature

Andreas Görke

It has been common to speak of 'authors' and their 'works' in the field of the biography of the Prophet (*sīra* or *maghāzī* literature) for a long time. Josef Horovitz called his well-known study on the origins of this literature 'The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors'[1], and in almost any work dealing with the genre will we encounter these terms.

However, it is apparent that different scholars have different views of how the term is to be used with regard to early Islamic literature. This can be seen for example in the question of who is to be regarded as the first author of a biography of the Prophet. Thus Fuat Sezgin regards figures such as Abān b. ʿUthmān (d. around 95/714 or 105/723), ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 93/712 or 94/713), Shurahbīl b. Saʿīd (d. 123/741), and Wahb b. Munabbih (d. ca. 110/728) all as authors,[2] and Salwā Mursī al-Ṭāhir has claimed ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr's work to be "the first *sīra* in Islam".[3] Others would regard Ibn Isḥāq (d. ca. 150/767), who lived two generations later as the first to write a book on the biography of the Prophet,[4] while yet others see the works of al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), Ibn Hishām (d. ca. 218/834), and Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) as "the first to depict the life of Muhammad".[5]

The reason for this disagreement lies in the question of what an author actually is. As we will see, this question is difficult to answer with regard to early Islamic literature in general and the *sīra* literature in particular. The difficulties arise from the character of early Islamic literature, and

1 Originally published in a series of four articles in the journal *Islamic Culture* in 1927 (pp. 535-59) and 1928 (pp. 22-50, 164-82, 495-526) and now easily accessible in the edition of Lawrence I. Conrad: Horovitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors*.

2 Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*, 251, 277f.

3 Mursī al-Ṭāhir, *Bidāyat al-kitāba*. On the work see Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 13, 20.

4 E.g. Jeffery, "The Quest of the Historical Mohammed," 328.

5 Ohlig, "Foreword: Islam's 'Hidden' Origins," 8.

here especially from four features: the compilatory character of the literature mostly being made up of very small textual units of different origin (*akhbār*, sg. *khabar*), the formal requirements of the *khabar*, namely that the narrator is expected to remain absent from the narrative, the significance of the oral element in the transmission of texts, and the character of the *sīra* literature between history, salvation history and fiction, with high importance given to early authorities, ideally eyewitnesses of the events.

What is an Author? Theoretical Considerations

Before we turn to discuss authorship in the *sīra* literature, we need to address the question of what makes an author an author. So far little research has been done on the concept of authorship and its development in Arabic or Islamic literature, and we will have to rely at least partly on studies dealing with authorship in a European context and then consider to what extent they can be applied to Islamic literature.

When we look at definitions of the term author, they usually focus on individuals. Thus Martha Woodmansee has summarised a common notion of the term as follows: "an author is an individual who is solely responsible – and therefore exclusively deserving of credit – for the production of a unique work."[6] Andrew Bennett put it in similar terms: "This common-sense notion of the author involves the idea of an individual (singular) who is responsible for or who originates, who writes or composes a (literary) text and who is thereby considered an inventor or founder and who [...] is thought to have certain ownership rights over the text as well as a certain authority over its interpretation."[7]

Both definitions emphasise the individual character of an author and his responsibility for some kind of work. We would usually consider this work to be a written text – a book, an article or some other document – and see the author as the person who is responsible for its contents and

6 Woodmansee, "The Genius and the Copyright," 426. In her book *The Author, Art and the Market*, 35, she adds the notion of 'original' to characterise the work.

7 Bennett, *The Author*, 7.

its wording. Usually, we would also assume that authorship involves some form of creativity, authority or originality.[8]

Over the last decades, this idea of an individual and original authorship has been shown to be a fairly recent concept, emerging only in the eighteenth century. The English word 'author' is derived from the medieval term *auctor*, which is derived from the Latin verbs *agere* ('to act' or 'to perform'), *augere* ('to make grow', 'originate', 'promote', or 'increase'), and *auieo* ('to tie together', namely verses with feet and metres).[9] In late antiquity and in medieval times, the idea of *auctoritas*, implying both authority and authenticity, was central in the discussion of texts; a text could only be 'authentic' when it had been produced by a named *auctor*, while works of unknown authorship were regarded as apocryphal and had far less *auctoritas*. To dispute an attribution and thus deprive a work of its *auctor* was therefore regarded as a severe step. On the other hand, it was not uncommon to attribute popular works to known authorities rather than their actual later writers as the latter did not possess the same *auctoritas*.[10] Each discipline had its own *auctores*, its renowned authorities, and the study of their texts remained the basis of the educational system until the fifteenth century.[11] With the discovery of the New World, however, things changed, as the new discoveries could not be explained or described by relying on the ancient authorities. In line with developments in other fields that started to break with tradition at this time, a new concept of the author emerged, where the author was less dependent on earlier authorities but could himself claim authority for his own words.[12] He was nevertheless basically a craftsman who followed specific rules and techniques. Only later the idea of the individual genius

8 Pease, "Author," 105.

9 Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 10. Pease, "Author," 106. The Greek derivation suggested by Minnis and Pease seems to be problematic. Cf. Seng, "Autor," 1276. I wish to thank Prof. Dr. Lale Behzadi and Prof. Dr. Sabine Vogt for making me aware of this.

10 Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 11–12.

11 Ibid. 13. Pease, "Author," 106.

12 Pease, "Author," 107–108.

emerged, who transcended ordinary culture and was only bound by his creative imagination.[13]

It is obvious already from this brief glimpse into the history of the concept of authorship that our modern understanding of author is not necessarily applicable to pre-modern literature, and in fact that some of the implied characteristics do not necessarily apply to all modern works either. Jack Stillinger, for instance, has challenged the idea of the author as a solitary genius and has provided numerous examples for – unacknowledged – multiple authorship.[14] He concluded that "multiple authorship is a frequently occurring phenomenon, one of the routine ways of producing literature all along"[15] and that we need to reconsider our theories of authorship to accommodate this fact. In the *sīra* literature, multiple authorship – in the sense of a large number of persons involved in the production of a text – is the rule.[16]

Not everyone involved in the production of a text would necessarily be regarded as an author. The thirteenth-century Franciscan monk St. Bonaventure distinguished four different ways of making a book and specified the roles or functions involved in these. A scribe (*scriptor*), according to this classification, is someone who "writes others' words, adding nothing and changing nothing". A compiler (*compilator*) puts together "passages which are not his own". A commentator (*commentator*) "writes both others' words and his own, but with the others' words in prime place and his own only added for purposes of clarification". And finally an author (*auctor*) "writes both his own words and others', but with his own in prime place and others' added only for purposes of confirmation".[17]

13 Ibid. 108–109.
14 Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship*.
15 Ibid. 201.
16 Leder, *Das Korpus*, 283, with regard to Islamic compilatory literature as a whole.
17 Burrow, *Medieval Writers and Their Work*, 29–30.

Authorship in the Arabic-Islamic Literature

When we turn to the Arabic-Islamic literature, we can notice that the terms used with regard to authorship have a different etymology and history as well as different connotations and associations than their Latin counterparts. The most common Arabic term used to denote an author is *mu'allif*. The verb *allafa* means to bring together, to collect or to unite.[18] A second common term is *muṣannif*. The corresponding verb, *ṣannafa*, in general signifies to assort, to separate or to distinguish different parts.[19] As we can see, connotations here are less focused on authority or the act of creating something new but rather on compiling and bringing into order. Thus the perception of what a *mu'allif* or *muṣannif* does should be different from that of an 'author'. Like in medieval Europe, however, the *mu'allif* or *muṣannif* was not the only person involved in the production of a book; other important professions were that of the scribe or copyist (*warrāq* or *nassākh*)[20] and possibly of a famulus dictating a work (*mustamlī*).[21]

In many cases the terminology used in the literature does not indicate the activity of the people involved in the production of the text, but rather focuses on the existence of some form of writing. Thus Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist* frequently says *lahu min al-kutub* (to him belong [the following] books), or that someone is the *ṣāḥib* (literally the lord, master, possessor, or owner) of a book. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī distinguishes between *kutub li-fulān* and *kutub ʿan fulān*, possibly implying by the first phrase that the work in question was given its final form by the person mentioned, while in the second case indicating that the work was compiled by later editors but was based on the named person's materials.[22] *Kitāb*, however, does not necessarily refer to a book but can denote any piece of writing, including notes or aide-memoires, as the root *kataba* only refers

18 Cf. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v. ʾ-l-f.
19 Cf. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v. ṣ-n-f.
20 Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, 43–51.
21 Ibid. 26. Weisweiler, "Das Amt des Mustamlī in der arabischen Wissenschaft."
22 Görke, *Das Kitāb al-Amwāl*, 3.

to the act of writing down.[23] The noun *kātib* (someone who writes) would rather be used for secretaries and need not involve any creative act.

If we compare the terms used in the Arabic-Islamic literature to medieval European concepts, we may find some correspondence between the terms *warrāq* or *nassākh* and the *scriptor* of Bonaventure's classification. Some parallels may likewise be seen between the term *compilator* and its Arabic counterparts *mu'allif* or *muṣannif*, but the latter terms are usually used in a much broader sense. In later Islamic literature, we also find commentaries (*sharḥ*) of books and thus could find parallels to Bonaventure's *commentator*. But there is no Arabic term that is similar in scope to his *auctor*.

The Character of the *Sīra* Literature

The major problem when discussing authorship in the *sīra* literature, however, is not the question of terminology, but rather what the people credited with the production of works did actually do. To answer this question, let us have a look at the literature and the features that define what 'authorship' in this literature can mean.

Sīra literature can best be described as a mixture between historiography, salvation history and fictional narration. Some of the narratives clearly establish links to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus the story of Muḥammad's grandfather vowing to sacrifice his son 'Abdallāh, and God eventually accepting 100 camels as a sacrifice instead,[24] evokes the story of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son,[25] and the story of the annunciation of Muḥammad's birth to his mother Āmina[26] has parallels to the annunciation of Jesus' birth to Mary.[27] Other parts of the *sīra* seem to be modelled on the lives of Moses or David.[28] The *sīra* also abounds in miracle stories that show how Muḥammad is protected and guided by God

23 Sellheim, "Kitāb," 207.
24 Cf. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 66-68.
25 Gen 22:1-19.
26 Cf. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 69.
27 Lk 1:26-38.
28 Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 189–214. Maghen, "Davidic Motifs."

and is heir to the previous prophets. Some parts like for instance the story of Muḥammad's night journey and ascent to heaven (*isrā'* and *mi'rāj*) consist of carefully composed narratives that have more of a fictional than of a historical character. Other parts of the *sīra* appear to be more interested in establishing factual accounts of what really happened. It can be shown that in general factual traditions are transmitted more faithfully than fictional narratives, but as different cultures have different concepts of truth and history,[29] we should not regard these categories as necessarily exclusive but rather conceive them as two sides of a continuum.[30] The character of the *sīra* literature thus draws some limits to the freedom of creating, shaping and presenting the material, but still allows for some room to form and develop narratives as long as they can be considered to be more or less reliable representations of what was conceived to be history.

A second important feature of the *sīra* literature is its compilatory character. Almost all early Islamic works dealing with the biography of the Prophet are compilations that bring together different kinds of materials such as narratives about single events, poetry, lists, Qur'anic verses and elaborations thereof, and others. As compilations rely on the existence of earlier material – which may at least in part already have been fixed in wording – the question arises to what extent the compiler of a work can be regarded as responsible for the text. Here the difference between the notions of *mu'allif* or *muṣannif* and our understanding of the term 'author' becomes very apparent, with the Arabic terms putting more emphasis on the arrangement of the material and less on the originality or authority over the text.

The main part of these compilations consists of reports about single events in the life of Muḥammad. These reports mostly come in the style of *akhbār*, of seemingly factual reports, usually made up of several elements that are loosely fit together. They are mostly furnished with an *isnād*, a chain of authorities comprising several names and going back to

29 Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, 13–14.

30 Hoyland, "History, fiction, and authorship," 18.

an eyewitness or a prominent early scholar. While this *isnād* is supposed to guarantee the authenticity of the text, it does not indicate which transformation the text underwent in the process of transmission.[31] The narrator himself is usually completely absent from the narration.[32] The style of the *akhbār* lends itself to abridgements or additions; as it is usually composed of only very loosely connected passages, the omission or addition of parts or the restructuring of the *khabar* does not cause major breaks and often cannot be noticed unless several variants are compared.[33] This style thus facilitates the deliberate shaping of the material but also easily leads to inadvertent changes and needs to be considered as a third defining feature of the *sīra* literature when we consider the question of authorship.

Finally, and closely linked to the features above is the importance of the oral element in the early transmission of the *sīra* material. Most of the material was passed on orally for at least two or three generations, and the process from oral to written transmission took place gradually.[34] As it is often impossible to identify exactly when and in which context or milieu a tradition originally emerged, and as there is no fixed text, it is difficult to speak of authorship with regard to oral traditions.[35]

These features thus provide some explanation why the question of authorship in the *sīra* literature has remained controversial. Similar observations of course apply in other fields of early Islamic literature, such as *ḥadīth* or historiography, to which the *sīra* is linked. Trying to account for the aspect of originality, Stefan Leder used the term author with regard to narrations that are only preserved in later adaptations, but where an

31 Leder, *Das Korpus*, 11–12, 111.

32 Ibid. 176. Hoyland, "History, fiction, and authorship," 22. Leder and Kilpatrick, "Classical Arabic Prose Literature," 11. Leder, "The Literary Use of the *Khabar*," 307. Cf. Beaumont, "Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions," 13–15, 26.

33 Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*, 153–155. Leder, "The Use of Composite Form," 128–129. Id. "Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature," 67.

34 See the detailed discussion in Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, in particular 28–61, 111–141. Id. *Charakter und Authentie*, 53–58.

35 Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, 54–56.

individual's creativity in the narrative structure and plot can still be recognised.[36] And Harald Motzki spoke of authors in the sense that they taught almost all the material transmitted in their name, although the arrangement of the material is owed to their students.[37]

The explanatory value of the term 'author' seems limited when so divergent concepts of the term are used. It nevertheless remains important to identify who is responsible for a text, if we are to use it as a historical source. A text may often tell us more about the time in which it was produced than about the time to which it refers, but in order to draw conclusions to the first, it is necessary to establish who has actually shaped the text and when. The question of authorship thus cannot be neglected.

Rather than following a specific definition of 'author' and then determining who would qualify as an author according to that definition, in the following we want to discuss the role of the different people who were involved in the production of *sīra* texts. This compilatory character of the literature makes it necessary to distinguish between two different aspects: the role of the persons involved in the composition and elaboration of the single narratives on the one hand, and those responsible for the composition of compilations in which these single narratives are included on the other hand.[38] The latter may rely on fixed texts, but can also be involved in the careful recasting of the narratives they include in their works, while the former may only be involved in the creation, transmission and transformation of unconnected narratives, but could at the same time compose works of their own using these narratives.

The Emergence and Transformation of Narratives on the Life of Muḥammad

Let us first have a look at the single narratives which are furnished with an *isnād*. There have been several attempts to closer define the roles of

36 Leder, "Features of the Novel in Early Historiography," 74, 96.

37 Motzki, "The Author and his Work in the Islamic Literature of the First Centuries," 193–196.

38 Leder/Kilpatrick, "Classical Arabic Prose Literature," 18. Leder, "Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature," 81.

the persons who figure in the *isnād* and distinguish them from each other. Different terms have been used and partly coined with this aim, including informant, guarantor, original reporter, common link, originator, collector, transmitter, or author, but they have not been used consistently.[39] Sebastian Günther has recently tried to systematise these and other terms according to different categories such as the technical function of a person in the transmission, his significance for a later compiler and his contribution to the consolidation and fixing of the transmitted material.[40] However, these categories often overlap and do not necessarily tell us much about the individual's role in the shaping of the text.

One method that can help us to understand the different roles and functions of the various people who feature in the *isnād* is the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, mostly used for reconstructing the earliest layers of a tradition. To get reliable results it is necessary to have a large number of variant versions of a tradition, but given that there are enough variants, the method can be used to determine the roles of the persons involved in the shaping, transmission and spread of the tradition. Thus, for instance, when all students of a certain authority except for one transmit a similar story and only in the version of one student additional elements can be found, it is likely that these elements were introduced by this student. Likewise if all students relate the same story and only in one version some of the elements seem to be missing, it is likely that these are omissions and can be attributed to the student transmitting this version. The same considerations apply for the structure of the narrative or the wording. Conclusions gained by this method are in general provisional. In many cases, for instance, it cannot be ruled out that one transmitter spread different versions at different times. But if some pattern recurs in several traditions with the same transmitter, this makes it more likely that he is indeed responsible for the changes.

There have been several studies focusing on the development of single narratives in the course of their transmission, both in the field of the bi-

39 Günther, "Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations," 82–83.

40 Günther, "Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations," 84–89.

ography of the Prophet and related fields, such as history or *ḥadīth*. This gives us a good idea of the changes that typically occur in the transmission of these narratives. The following is an attempt to explain in general terms how narratives on the life of the Prophet emerged and changed during the course of transmission until they eventually become fixed and stable texts.

First Generation: (alleged) Eye Witnesses

So far it has not been possible to securely trace back any narrative about the life of Muḥammad to a Companion of the Prophet. Several reports in the *sīra* do not claim to go back to an eyewitness but only to a Successor. Quite often, only in some versions is a report traced back to an alleged eyewitness, while in others the Successor is given as the first source.[41] It is therefore possible that the alleged eyewitnesses were only inserted at some point of the narration to make it appear more reliable, although it cannot be ruled out that the named persons indeed were the sources of information for the following generation. The information passed on at this stage will mostly have been reminiscences, personal recollections of past events.[42] While the memories of the events will have been important for the participants, they did not at this stage lead to any collective vision of the history which was relevant for the whole community.[43] Thus, as a rule these accounts will not have any connection to one another, and they may often be in disagreement about what happened.

Second Generation (Successors, active between ca. 60/680 and 110/728)

This appears to be the time when the first longer narratives about the life of the Prophet were composed, probably by taking together some reports and forming them into a narrative. These seem to be narratives of single

41 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 16-17, 34, 193, 255-256.

42 On reminiscences as basis for oral history, see Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, 8–10.

43 Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 138–139.

events, not yet coherent accounts of the life of Muḥammad.[44] There is only little evidence of use of the Qur'an as a source for these narratives at this time. They are likely to be at least partially based on the memories and recollections of some of the people involved. Many of them do, however, contain miracle stories or legendary elements, and they convey a partly transfigured image of Muḥammad. These narratives should be distinguished from stories that about the same time, possibly already slightly earlier, were created by professional storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*, sg. *qāṣṣ*) drawing on a certain repertoire of motives and narrative styles and that were mainly intended for entertainment and edification.[45] Although originally distinct genres, two generations later people like Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767) and Mūsā b. ʿUqba (d. 141/758) draw on both types of narrations,[46] and in the further course of transmission, some of these popular stories seem to get transformed into *khabar* of the first type.[47]

It is instructive to see that these first longer narratives appear at the same time that sees a developing Islamic self-image in other areas as well, such as the coinage reform under the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik. This may indicate that these narratives were created as response to a growing need for a distinctly Islamic identity. The figures active at this time – among the more prominent were ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 93/712 or 94/713), Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/713), and Abān b. ʿUthmān (d. around 95/714 or 105/723) – did not write books; if they had any written records at all, these would be nothing more than aide-memoires or notebooks. They nevertheless were important in shaping the traditions about Muḥammad's life. Without written accounts and without a chronological framework, they should not be regarded as historians, but rather may be seen as a kind of encyclopaedic informants who collected a large amount of knowledge about the past and were the primary source

44 See Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 266-267, and Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 23-24 for assessments regarding the traditions of ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr.

45 Hoyland, "History, fiction, and authorship," 23–24. Leder/Kilpatrick, "Classical Arabic Prose Literature," 14. Görke/Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 268, 270, 276–278.

46 Ibid. 275–276.

47 Beaumont, "Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim traditions," 21–22.

of information for the next generation.[48] They are *akhbārī*s in the sense that they combined different, originally distinct accounts and reminiscences into a coherent narrative, a practice which the emerging *ḥadīth* criticism regarded as problematic.[49] It is this and the next two generations who ultimately define what is worth remembering about the life of Muḥammad.

Third Generation (active between ca. 80/699 and 130/748)

In the third generation, we can observe two main mechanisms at work: the creation of new narratives, and the transmission and recasting of existing narratives. New narratives are created similar to the process we have seen in the second generation. They are formed out of reminiscences that have been passed down in families and of an evolving tradition about events that became to be regarded as significant. On the other hand, existing narratives are transmitted and in the course of this transmission are carefully recast. The changes made at this stage always include a rephrasing (due to the fact that the traditions at this stage are mostly transmitted orally the text of the traditions is not fixed), but usually also involve a restructuring, the narrative enhancement of the story, and the addition of further elements. Part of this is apparently the attempt to reconcile different narratives, to link narratives to each other, or to make connections to verses of the Qur'an or to poetry, where relevant. While the conflation of different accounts into a single one apparently originated in the generation prior to this,[50] the practice becomes more widespread now, as a larger number of already developed narratives are transmitted.[51]

48 On encyclopaedic informants and their reliability as sources see Hartwig, "Oral traditions." Pender-Cudlip, "Encyclopedic Informants," 200–202, 209–210. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, 190–192. Id. *Oral Tradition as History*, 39.

49 Hoyland, "History, fiction, and authorship," 20. Görke, "The relationship between *maghāzī* and *ḥadīth*," 174–176.

50 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 74–77, 266–267.

51 Al-Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing*, 29. Lecker, "Wāqidī's account," 19–20. Görke, "The relationship between *maghāzī* and *ḥadīth*," 176.

The reworking of narratives in this and the following generation needs also to be understood against the background of the transformation of personal narratives into group accounts. Those involved in the collection, combination and transmission of these accounts passed them on because they deemed them relevant. But they were relevant for them for other reasons than they were for their informants. Reminiscences and personal accounts that were passed on in families will have served among other things to glorify their own forefathers and explain family traditions. They are thus often conflicting and irreconcilable with other accounts.[52] Those who were later to be regarded as the early authorities on the *sīra* had to reconcile these different personal accounts, however, and, more importantly, they had to decide which traditions were significant and relevant in order to understand the early history of the community, as this was the main reason to prevent traditions from falling into oblivion. Only those traditions that were in some way relevant for the community would be remembered and passed down, and changes in the society were likely to be reflected through the adaptation of the traditions.[53]

In this generation, we can also see the emergence of a chronological framework,[54] and at least some of the persons active at this time put down their narrations in writing and thereby contributed to the fixation of the texts.[55] The establishment of a chronological framework can be seen as a movement towards historiography, as dates and a coherent dating scheme are essential to history and distinguish it from myth and epic.[56] Among the best known representatives of this time are ʿĀṣim b. ʿUmar b. Qatāda (d. ca. 120/738), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), and ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad (d. ca. 130/748).

52 See Landau-Tasseron, "Processes of Redaction," 257–259 for examples.

53 See Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, 19–21, for an example of the transition of personal accounts to group accounts.

54 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 271–272. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 232.

55 Schoeler, *The Genesis*, 47–50. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 206. Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between history and legend*, 344-345.

56 Finley, "Myth, Memory, and History," 284–285.

Fourth Generation (active between ca. 120/738 and 160/777)

While some of the narrations were written down in the third generation, the production of actual books combining several narratives begins in the fourth generation. We will deal with the compilation process below, but the emergence of books contributes significantly to the stabilisation of the texts of the single narratives. The most famous representatives of this generation are Mūsā b. ʿUqba (d. 141/758), Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767) and Maʿmar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770). Although it can be shown that they partly relied on written material passed down from the prior generation, at least some of them still used this material freely and continued to adapt the narrations. The extent of this reworking seems to be at least in part dependent on the type of work in which the narratives are included. As shown elsewhere,[57] the works that emerge at this time are of two types: on the one hand, independent works are created that are mainly devoted to the biography of Muḥammad and try to create a coherent narrative of his life. The works of Ibn Isḥāq and Mūsā b. ʿUqba can be regarded as the earliest representatives of this type of work, which we may call independent *sīra* works. On the other hand, the single narratives about Muḥammad's life are collected in chapters on *maghāzī* in larger *ḥadīth* collections without connecting them to each other. The work of Maʿmar b. Rāshid appears to have been of this type. These different approaches also have an impact on the text of the narratives. Thus it is very likely that those who like Maʿmar b. Rāshid kept the narrations separate – thereby conforming to the demands of the *ḥadīth* scholars – were also more faithful in transmitting the texts and did not actively shape the traditions. An indication of this may be that variants of traditions transmitted among *ḥadīth* scholars appear to be much closer to each other than to the same traditions transmitted by *sīra* scholars.[58] Those who like Mūsā b. ʿUqba and Ibn Isḥāq produced coherent narratives, on the other hand, can be shown to consciously rework the material they receive.[59]

57 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 273–278.

58 Ibid. 26, 55–56, 62–63, 128.

59 Leder, "The Use of Composite Form," 132–139; Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie*, 142–143. Görke et al. "First Century Sources," 11–15.

Fifth and Sixth Generations (active between ca. 150/767 and 260/874)

In these generations most of the narratives that were shaped by the previous generations become fixed texts and are published in various independent works and collections. Partly these are *ḥadīth* collections, such as the works of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827), Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), or al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). Other works are specifically devoted to the biography of Muḥammad, such as al-Wāqidī's (d. 207/823) *Maghāzī*, Ibn Hishām's (d. 218/833) *Sīra* or the first two volumes of Ibn Saʿd's (d. 230/845) *Ṭabaqāt*. There are still variants between different versions of the same traditions that were transmitted from scholars of the fourth generation, partly due to the character and transmission of the works from that generation (see below). However, these variants now become fixed and are regarded as different versions of the same text. We can also still see a process of conscious recasting and combining different narratives into one by some scholars, such as al-Wāqidī and Ibn Saʿd, sometimes probably in an attempt to systematise and make sense of the reports handed down.[60]

Later Generations (after around 260/874)

From around the middle of the 3rd century of Islam, the wording of the individual traditions does not seem to change much anymore. The texts are fixed and the sources in which they can be found are available. As a rule, later compilers, when they refer to earlier authorities, do not change the wording but mostly remain faithful to the text. They may, however, only quote part of a tradition and juxtapose it with others. In some cases they freely summarise a tradition.

60 See e.g. Landau-Tasseron, "Processes of Redaction," in particular 261–263, 270. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 56–58, 212–215.

The Creation of Works

We have seen that some persons in the second and third generation after the Prophet seem to have put down in writing the traditions they taught. However, these written texts cannot be considered real books. They were of various character, comprising simple notes, detailed draft notes or notebooks intended for teaching, and official collections for the exclusive use of the caliphal court.[61] The creation of real works on the life of Muḥammad only begins in the fourth generation with scholars such as Ibn Isḥāq, Mūsā b. ʿUqba, and Maʿmar b. Rāshid.[62] These scholars partly rely on earlier written material, but unlike their predecessors they organise their material according to chronological considerations.[63] We have already seen that they took two different approaches in dealing with the material, either producing chapters on *maghāzī* within larger *ḥadīth* collections (which, however, could also be transmitted independently), or creating comprehensive *sīra* or *maghāzī* works. While the first type can best be described as a thematically and chronologically arranged selection of single narratives, the second type offers much more room for 'authorial' activity. Thus there are frequent summaries, connecting passages and commentaries that link the material together and contribute to a coherent narrative of the life of Muḥammad. In contrast to the first type, works of the second type often also include additional material which is not transmitted with *isnād*s, such as poetry, list of participants, documents, stories by storytellers and verses of the Qur'an.

Both types of works are still mostly confined to teaching and are not intended for a broader readership. They are often only put to writing by the compilers' students, which leads to different recensions. There are for instance so many different versions of Ibn Isḥāq's text – transmitted by different students of his – that it is impossible to reconstruct a definite

61 Schoeler, *The Genesis*, 49–50.

62 Cf. Jones, "The Maghāzī Literature," 347. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 273–278.

63 Cf. Jones, "The Maghāzī Literature," 349. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 273, 277.

version of his book.[64] While there are some passages that are more or less identical in wording and thus can be assumed to reflect Ibn Isḥāq's original text, other passages differ substantially. In the transmission of these works, differences could occur by the teacher presenting his material differently in different lectures, the students producing different written records and these students in turn transmitting the material differently.[65] Apparently, the following generations did not consider these works to be closed texts that could not be amended or changed. This only changes with the works of Ibn Hishām and al-Bukhārī, which also generate commentaries and were thus obviously conceived as fixed and complete texts.[66]

From the middle of the third century, the production of real books in the sense of closed texts becomes the rule. We can distinguish four major kinds of works, in which narratives about the life of Muḥammad feature: a) *sīra* works in the narrower meaning of the sense, devoted to depicting the life of Muḥammad in a more or less coherent narrative; b) universal histories that devote some chapters or volumes to the life of Muḥammad; c) works discussing some aspects of the life of Muḥammad, such as the proofs of his prophethood (*dalā'il al-nubuwwa*); and d) *ḥadīh* collections. In addition to these four types, individual traditions can be found in other works, such as legal works or commentaries of the Qur'an (e). They are for instance used to elucidate passages of the Qur'an or as examples of the Prophet's practice.

As we have seen, the scholars composing these works had more or less fixed texts at their disposal that had been shaped over the previous generations. On the one hand they could draw on single narratives, often in several different versions, on the other hand these narratives had been put in specific contexts, with comments by earlier scholars and additional material. Even without making significant changes to the single texts that were passed down from previous generations, they could fol-

64 Al-Samuk, *Die historischen Überlieferungen*, 80, 162. Muranyi, "Ibn Isḥāq's *K. al-Maghāzī*," 269.

65 Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, 33, 45.

66 Leder and Kilpatrick, "Classical Arabic Prose Literature," 24.

low an agenda of their own by using different compilatory techniques and strategies. Fred Donner has recently identified four such strategies in his study of Ibn ʿAsākir's handling of his material on the caliph ʿUthmān, namely the strategies of selection, placement, repetition, and manipulation.[67] Carl Brockelmann, in his comparison of Ibn al-Athīr's work to his main source and model, the history of al-Ṭabarī, had observed several techniques at work, among them the reduction of redundancy through omission, the harmonisation of different traditions into one, the filling of gaps from other sources, the inclusion of comments to explain circumstances that were no longer familiar to his audience and the adaptation of vocabulary and style to the conventions and customs of his time.[68]

We can observe almost all of these techniques and strategies being employed in works including narratives about the life of Muḥammad from the third century onwards. While the extent to which these techniques were used has to be established in every single case, some general observation can be made with regard to the different types of works in which these narratives figure. In general, those works which only quote single narratives to elucidate passages of the Qur'an or to use them to argue for a legal point (e) often quote only a relevant passage from the longer narratives; they may sometimes only give a paraphrase. In *ḥadīth* collections (d), the narratives usually are reproduced from earlier sources without significant changes. They may be considerably shortened, however, depending on the chapter in which they are included. In these cases, the most important strategy consists in the selection of the material, and possibly its placement.

With regard to the other types of works, the processes are more complex. There are works that tell the life of Muḥammad in a more or less coherent narrative, following the models of Ibn Isḥāq, Mūsā b. ʿUqba and al-Wāqidī. While some of these works are confined to the life of Muḥammad (a), more often Muḥammad's biography is discussed within univer-

67 Donner, "ʿUthmān and the Rāshidūn Caliphs," 47 and *passim*.

68 Brockelmann, *Das Verhältnis*, 3-20. See also Franz, *Kompilation in Arabischen Chroniken*, 4.

sal histories (b). These works again can be divided into two types. One type quotes extensively from previous works (of which different recensions may have been available), both of the independent *sīra* type (such as Ibn Isḥāq, Mūsā b. ʿUqba, and al-Wāqidī) and of the *ḥadīth* collection type (such as Maʿmar, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn Abī Shayba, and al-Bukhārī). The authors or compilers of these books use different techniques in presenting their material. They make a selection from the numerous accounts that are available to them. They sometimes juxtapose different accounts, often quoting only passages from longer narratives, and they sometimes comment on the differences between the accounts, either trying to reconcile them or explaining why one version seems to be more reliable than the other. They may also include *ḥadīth*s that were previously used in legal or exegetical debates and thereby widen the scope of the material included. Some, like Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1334), seem to put more focus on a coherent narrative; they present fewer variants and allow less room for the discussion of the different accounts. Others, like Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), include more variants, more additional material, and they devote more room to comments on the material they present. Other representatives of this kind of work include the history of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and the volumes on the biography of the Prophet in al-Dhahabī's (d. 748/1348) history of Islam. All these works make use of a wide array of the different techniques and strategies of compilation.

The second type of works that cover the entire life of Muḥammad may likewise rely on earlier literature, but they mostly do not quote earlier works explicitly, but rather retell the biography of Muḥammad in one coherent narrative. Examples of this type of work are the histories of al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897), al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233). Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's (d. 463/1073) summary of the life of the Prophet, *al-Durar fī khtiṣār al-maghāzī wa-l-siyar,* has a similar approach. The relationship between these works and the earlier sources from which they draw their material is yet to be studied. It is apparent that this approach allows for more authorial freedom, as the authors of these works not only choose which events to include and which traditions to follow, but they are also not bound by the established wording of the ac-

counts but can rephrase and summarise their sources. Others use even more poetic licence and for instance retell events of the life of Muḥammad in verse.[69]

In addition to these works which cover the life of Muḥammad, there are numerous works which incorporate a significant account of traditions on his life, but do not attempt to create a coherent narrative in chronological order, but rather focus on different aspects of Muḥammad's life such as the proofs of his prophethood (*dalā'il al-nubuwwa*) (c). When they quote their sources – which again usually are the major works of the second and third centuries –, they show a similar range of sources used and discussion of variants as we can find in the historical works. Some quote only one or a few traditions for an event, others quote several variants and discuss the differences. We thus find the same techniques at work – a selection of the topics to include, a selection of the traditions to quote, a possible emphasis through the order and repetition of sources and the inclusion of their own commentaries.

Despite these general observations, the extent to which different compilers used the various techniques to present the material varies considerably and needs to be studied in every individual case. Kurt Franz in his study of different compilations and their presentation of the Zanj rebellion identified three types of compilations, which can serve as a model for compilations in the *sīra* literature as well:[70] readaptations, which show an individual character that clearly distinguishes them from their models and sources; collections or epitomes, which differ from their sources in the considerable reduction of the material, without, however, producing an independent text; and copies which simply reproduce a text without any major modifications. While the first two models can be applied both to complete works and to individual narratives or larger topics, the last category only refers to the latter and can for instance be seen in *ḥadīth* collections.

69 See Arberry, "The Sīra in Verse" for some examples.

70 Franz, *Kompilation in arabischen Chroniken*, 269–270.

Conclusion

From the very beginning, *sīra* literature can be regarded as an example of multiple authorship with a large number of persons involved in the production of any text. This applies on the one hand to the development of the single narratives about any given event. These traditions, mostly created in the second or third generation after Muḥammad's death from alleged reminiscences from eyewitnesses but also from edifying stories of professional storytellers are refined, embellished, rephrased, rearranged, shortened, extended with new materials or combined with other traditions in the course of the transmission over the next generations. Despite all these changes, the transmitters usually retain the core of the tradition, the basic story.[71] If enough variants of a tradition have been recorded in the sources, it is often possible to find out who is responsible for which elements in a specific variant with regard to form, content, the addition or omission of material and sometimes the wording. Several of the individuals involved in the transmission of the text may have placed them in the context of a larger, more or less fixed work. However, the tradition retains its independent character and it or parts of it can be used in other contexts in later works. In this regard, when speaking of traditions in the *sīra* it is helpful to also reference the *isnād*, the chain of authorities, which credits many of the main figures involved in the shaping of a tradition.

On the other hand, we have to look at the production of larger works incorporating these traditions. These can be of very different character, of which some include only individual traditions while others produce coherent narratives of the life of Muḥammad or on aspects of his life. These works can be based mostly or completely on existing written traditions which are only rearranged, but they can likewise modify these traditions, add new ones, and comment on them.

When we take together the developments of the traditions and the development of the works, we can distinguish three main phases:

71 Hoyland, "History, fiction, and authorship," 33. Leder, "The Use of Composite Form," 144.

First phase: from about 60/680 to about 130/737. In this phase, there are no compilations that discuss the life of Muḥammad as a whole, but only narratives that relate to some episodes of his life. The traditions are mostly passed on orally or based on some notes, and there is no fixed text. Transmitters adapt and recast the traditions, enhance the narrative, add new material, omit other material, combine different narratives into one, start to make connections to the Qur'an and restructure the narratives they receive. However, they usually retain the core of the narratives, which, whether historical or not, can often be traced back to the generation of the followers (*tābiʿūn*).

Second phase: from about 130/737 to about 230/845. In this phase, compilations emerge that combine several narrations and aim to cover more or less the whole life of Muḥammad (or part of it, as in the case of al-Wāqidī, who confined himself to events after the *hijra*). Two different types of these compilations develop. One of these keeps the narratives separate and does not try to create a coherent account of Muḥammad's life, as can be seen for instance in the collection of Maʿmar b. Rāshid that was incorporated in ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*. Others try to create a coherent account by linking the narratives and providing a consistent time frame as can be seen in the works of Ibn Isḥāq, Mūsā b. ʿUqba and al-Wāqidī.[72] The narratives included in these works are not yet fixed and are still object to adaptation and recasting, addition, omission and restructuring, although to a lesser degree than in the first phase. They do, however, become stabilised in different variants through the inclusion in these works.

Third phase: after about 230/845. In this phase, there are fewer changes to the texts of the narratives themselves. There may be omissions, but in general the text is taken over more or less verbatim from the main authorities of the second phase such as Ibn Isḥāq, Maʿmar b. Rāshid, Mūsā b. ʿUqba, and al-Wāqidī. The narratives may, however, be placed in a different context, split up in several parts or juxtaposed with other narratives. Examples for this can be seen in al-Ṭabarī's history and his com-

72 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 273–278.

mentary of the Qur'an, where the same narrative can be used for different purposes, the chapter on the *maghāzī* in al-Bukhārī's *ḥadīth* collection, or the biographies of the Prophet by Ibn Kathīr or Ibn Sayyid al-Nās.

In all phases we can identify single persons who are responsible for some part of the final texts we see. In some cases we can establish who initially created a narrative, who was responsible for its careful development and narrative enhancement, who made connections to verses of the Qur'an or combined different narratives into one, who first wrote down the narrative and therefore more or less fixed its text, who placed the narrative in a coherent chronology of the life of the Prophet and who may later have called this into question and provided a different context. All these contributions involve some form of originality and creative effort.

With regard to the question of who can be regarded as an author in the *sīra* literature, there thus is no objective answer. The answer rather depends on our understanding of what makes an author an author. Several different criteria are feasible, among them the responsibility for the contents of a text, the responsibility for its form and structure, the responsibility for its context, and the responsibility for its wording. Other criteria could be the creativity or originality in the production of a text, the creation of a written text, or the creation of a closed text.

In the *sīra* literature we would usually find those who are responsible for the *contents*, *form* and *structure* of the single narratives about Muḥammad's life in the second to fourth generations after Muḥammad's death. Those responsible for the *wording* of the single narratives mostly lived between the fourth and sixth generations. The *arrangement* of the different narratives in larger works and their placement in a specific *context* was first done by individuals of the third and fourth generations, but the conscious rearrangement and recontextualisation of the narratives characterises the later literature. *Written texts* first appear in the third and fourth generations, *closed texts* from the sixth generation onwards.

Those who produced closed texts (or books in the stricter sense of the meaning) from the middle of the third/ninth century onwards can be regarded as authors by any standard – even when they relied on written texts of their predecessors, the act of compilation involves originality and creativity. However, if the texts are to be analysed with regard to the question of the milieu in which they were produced, the authors' intentions and agendas in producing a work, and the techniques involved in achieving their aims, this can only be achieved by a careful comparison of variants of the same traditions in other works.

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The Council of Dictation *(imlāʾ)* as Collective Authorship: An Inquiry into *Adab al-imlāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ* of al-Samʿānī

Abdessamad Belhaj

1 Introduction

In his *Fihrist,* Ibn al-Nadīm (d. c. 385/998) notes that Ibn Durayd (d. 933) dictated two different versions of his *Jamharat al-lugha* from memory. Since the dictations, *amālī* (plural of *imlāʾ*) took place in different councils, one in Persia and the other in Iraq, the copies of the book are different.[1] Certainly, Ibn Durayd was not a victim of a *tour de mémoire*, and he was not an isolated case. Dictation, the form he used to transmit his knowledge, was central to authorship in medieval Islam.[2] As an interactive framework of scholarly communication, it is highly versatile and it is expected to vary according to circumstances. Although dictation was usually associated with *ḥadīth*, it was also widely practiced in *kalām*, *fiqh*, lexicography and literature.

As late as the 17th century, Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1068 /1657) describes a dictation council as follows:

> A scholar sits down, surrounded by his students with inkwells and papers. The scholar dictates the knowledge God has revealed to him earlier while the students write it down. This process is called *al-imlāʾ* and *al-amālī*.[3]

The above passage raises several questions. First, it is not the same whether a scholar dictates in a mosque, a house or a school. Each of these places has its distinct effect on the means in which knowledge is delivered. For instance, a dictation in a mosque should respect a more restricted and obligatory ethical code than the one held in a house, espe-

1 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 67.

2 See the ground-breaking work of Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, 32, 53 and 58.

3 Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, 161.

cially if it is the scholar's house. Furthermore, it makes a difference whether a scholar dictates "what God has revealed to him", as Khalīfa said, in the form of a quotation or an opinion. The number, the attentiveness, and the equipment of the students also play a role in the reception. As a result, differences, additions and modifications occur in the transcribed texts as the transcription moves beyond the control of those individuals who, perhaps inadvertently, contributed to the dictation. Finally, the dictation becomes the master's book, discarding the aforementioned elements participating in the work.

Considering that dictation is an essential characteristic of transmitting, interpreting and teaching religious knowledge, it deserves our attention in any study of authorship in medieval Islam. Its importance emerges all the more from the fact that dictation was used in the process of transmission and interpretation of the foundational texts, the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*. Moreover, it is through dictation that early scholarly circles, *ḥilaq al-ʿilm*, spread their knowledge. Together with other deliberative literary forms such as recitation, *qirāʾa*, assignment of a lesson, *muḥāsaba*, collective memorization, *dhikr*, dictation attests the collective character of producing and disseminating knowledge in medieval Islam.

It is argued here that *imlāʾ* is a locus of collective authorship. In particular, I highlight the role of those (individuals and groups) who take part in a dictation council but who are often considered marginal in the process of authoring works (the audience, the transcriber, the dictation assistant). These participants deserve to be considered secondary authors insofar as they shape the form and the content of the transmitted tradition. The dictatee, the primary author, collaborates with these voices to assemble the book. I contend that the author to whom the book is attributed should be credited with the effort only partially. A council of dictation should be considered as a process of knowledge-sharing. As marginal authors change, the central author is required to modify the version he dictates. As it will be explained below, a dictatee should avoid theological controversies while transmitting his knowledge. This recalls the role of the rhetoric of the council in the authorship. A dictated book

is not a linear piece of work. Rather, it is a body of knowledge transmitted and coloured by the mood of a *majlis*.

I intend to support this claim through an analysis of *Adab al-imlāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ* by ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Samʿānī (d. 1167). This book is well-known to Western scholarship. The first critical edition was edited by Max Weisweiler in 1952.[4] Weisweiler also examined the significance of this literature in the history of education in Islam.[5] Later scholars such as A. S. Tritton[6] and George Makdisi[7] dealt with the meaning and the functions of dictation as a learning process. The more recent studies of Christopher Melchert[8] and Jens Scheiner[9] contextualize al-Samʿānī's book in the history of *ḥadīth* learning. The conclusions reached by these studies complement each other, drawing attention to different aspects of *Adab al-imlāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ*.

My contribution is to explore the significance of al-Samʿānī's work as a means to deepen our understanding of authorship in Islamic literature. At first glimpse, the book appears as a prototype book of dictation in *ḥadīth,* artfully written, constructing a coherent ethics of transmission. However, at a closer reading, it implicitly shows the recognition of multiple authorships in a dictation council. Despite the attempt of al-Samʿānī to idealize the *majlis* of *ḥadīth*, prominently led by the transmitter, several elements in his book betray the deliberative character of his enterprise and its dependence on rhetoric strategies.

As described by al-Samʿānī, a council of dictation involves three elements: the *mumlī*, the dictatee who transmits knowledge to the audience, the *mustamlī*, the dictation assistant, and the *kātib*, the transcriber, usually a

4 Weisweiler, *Die Methodik des Diktatkollegs: Adab al-imlāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ*. I use this edition for the *Adab al-imlāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ* of al-Samʿānī.

5 Weisweiler, "Das Amt des Mustamlī in der arabischen Wissenschaft."

6 Tritton, *Materials*, 33.

7 Makdisi, *Religion,* 271. Makdisi, "Scholasticism and Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West," 180.

8 Melchert, "The Etiquette of Learning in the Early Islamic Study Circle," 33-44.

9 Scheiner, "'When the Class Goes on too Long, the Devil Takes Part in it': *adab al-muḥaddith* according to Ibn aṣ-Ṣalâḥ ash-Shahrazûrî (d. 643/1245)," 183–200.

student or a group of students. In my view, throughout the book, a fourth element is necessary to understand the functioning of a council: the audience. The public involvement is integral in defining the content and the form of transmission. In the following, I will treat each element separately, showing its contribution to the performance within a dictation council.

2 The Dictatee

Contrary to the traditional image of a dictatee as the master of the game, as promoted by Ḥājjī Khalīfa, al-Samʿānī portrays the dictatee as a performer who is very attentive toward the needs of his audience. He warns against boring the public with an indeterminably long dictation and also warns that failing to get the audience's attention would lead to fatigue and laziness.[10] Ultimately, the public would discard the teaching the dictatee aims to transmit. Additionally, the dictatee should be moderate and to the point as it is more preferable to give less than more.[11] One has also to beware of speaking of controversial issues which usually involve theology and politics. The dictatee should adapt his transmission to the receptivity of the audience rather than focusing on the accomplishment of an objective task. The time and length of a dictation, which also decides the size of the transmitted text in a council, is to be considered with regard to the audience's patience.

This means that a given dictatee would dictate a different number of *ḥadīth*s or versions of *ḥadīth*s on different occasions. The implication of this practice might explain the contrast between the various versions of the transmitted texts. The aforementioned example of *Jamharat al-lugha* perfectly illustrates the dissimilar copies resulting from various councils of dictation. Ibn al-Nadīm asserts that the book exists in different copies with unequal lengths, while others are considered more voluminous. Still, he notes that the version dictated in Persia has a distinguishing sign at the beginning of the copy. The complete version, Ibn

10 Al-Samʿānī, *Adab*, 66.

11 Al-Samʿānī, *Adab*, 67.

al-Nadīm continues, is the last version, the Iraqi one. It is also considered the standard version. At this level, not all copies of the Iraqi dictation are identical. For Ibn al-Nadīm, the most correct version is that of Abū l-Fatḥ ʿUbayd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Naḥwī who derived his copy out of several copies, then read it with Ibn Durayd.[12]

Furthermore, the dictatee is required to finish his council with stories and anecdotes. According to al-Samʿānī, a dictatee should seek any way to introduce wisdom, poetry and narrations that could make his council more enjoyable.[13] This underlines the *adab* character of a dictation council. Al-Samʿānī does not seem to be bothered by mixing sacredness, associated with *ḥadīth*, and entertainment. After all, it is only by some diversion that the dictatee could save his council from boredom. The material used by al-Samʿānī to justify his call to distraction in a *ḥadīth* council, recalls the influence of his literary background.

The question al-Samʿānī does not deal with, but inevitably emerges, is the outcome of the council where stories become intermingled with *ḥadīth*s. Would all the material be counted as *ḥadīth*? Probably not all receivers would blend a *ḥadīth* with other materials, but if at least some of them do, which will be proven below, this would make *ḥadīth* a piece of *adab*.[14] In the latter, there is room for *addenda*, regardless of its genre and origin. An example of a hybrid *Amālī* book is *Amālī Ibn Ḥajar* of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1448) described by Ḥājjī Khalīfa as a book whose material is composed mainly of *ḥadīth*.[15] The hybrid character, inherent as it is in the ideal dictation council of al-Samʿānī, would explain the indistinct or blurred boundaries between genres, structures and contents in several compilations that have reached us. Such hybridity is very likely to have shaped Muslim literature in its early stages, dominated by orality; one can then postulate that the earlier the work, the more inclusive and hybrid it will be. For example, the work known as *Majālis Thaʿlab* of

12 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 67.

13 Al-Samʿānī, *Adab*, 68-69.

14 The study of *ḥadīth* as *adab*, especially aspects of *adab* as religious ethics and etiquette can be read in: Sperl, "Man's 'Hollow Core'," 459-486.

15 Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, 162.

Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Thaʿlab (d. 904), also known as *Amālī Thaʿlab*, mixes the genres of Arabic lexicography, poetry, prose, Qur'anic exegesis and others. It is a piece of *adab* characteristic of the literature of the 9th century. One of Thaʿlab's major sources is his master Ibn al-Aʿrābī (d. 845) about whom he tells us that "I saw him while some one hundred persons attended his council, each of them asking him or reading in front of him, and Ibn al-Aʿrābī responding to them without a book. I stayed with him a decade or so; I have never seen him with a book and I do not doubt that he dictated to people what could be the load of camels."[16]

The solution to countering the intrinsic unreliability of dictation by memory would be to dictate from a book, al-Samʿānī recommends, since memory usually betrays the dictatee. However, this does not seem to be the rule. As ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, quoted by al-Samʿānī, asserts, the master of a dictation council is not expected to dictate from a book.[17] In other words, a dictatee, especially a traditionalist, enjoys authority as a transmitter of the knowledge he knows by heart, *ḥāfiẓ*. Most narrations al-Samʿānī quotes in favor of dictating from a book go back to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Even here, ʿAbdallāh, the son of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, informs us that he did not see his father dictating from his memory unless he is dictating less than one hundred *ḥadīth*s.[18]

3 The Dictation Assistant

In a dictation council, the function of a dictation assistant is not less important than that of the dictatee. Al-Samʿānī underlines two opinions about the dictation assistant. On the one side, he praises him as the link between the dictatee and the audience, serving as the professional voice of the dictatee. He transmits what the dictatee first utters and repeats it to the audience in an audible way.[19] Both the dictatee and the dictation assistant contribute, celebrate and venerate the transmitted knowledge.

16 Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Thaʿlab, *Majālis Thaʿlab*, 10.
17 Al-Samʿānī, *Adab*, 46.
18 Ibid. 47.
19 Ibid. 89.

On the other side, he reports that the dictation assistants have the reputation of being rabble rousers among the scholars of *ḥadīth*.[20]

This gives rise to the following question: To what extent can the assistant accurately and effectively communicate the dictatee's words? Al-Samʿānī seems to be aware of the problem. He narrates that Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Wāsiṭī's council in the mosque of al-Ruṣāfa counted one hundred thousand persons with only two dictation assistants (that is an assistant for every fifty thousand persons).[21] Another council by Abū Muslim al-Kajjī dictated *ḥadīth* in a council with seven dictation assistants, each of which transmits to his next colleague. People had to stand up in order to write. In his council, al-Samʿānī tells us, there were more than forty thousand people who wrote his dictation.[22] Of course, this number excludes those who attend the council for the sake of listening to *ḥadīth* or seeing the master. In any case, these numbers should not impress us; I will come back to their significance in relation to a dictation council later.

The dictation procedure is composed of the following steps: the dictation assistant asks the dictatee: who did you say? (*man dhakarta*?) The dictatee says "such-and-such (*fulān*) the son of such-and-such reported to us," and mentions word by word the transmitted *ḥadīth*.[23] The dictation assistant should repeat after him in a loud voice and be faithful to the dictatee's words. However, al-Samʿānī narrates several cases where the dictatee delivers a word and the assistant mistakenly repeats another one. For example, ʿAmr becomes Bishr, *taliyya* is heard by some assistants as *baliyya* or *qaliyya*.[24] The issue becomes more complicated with several dictation assistants. For the chain of command invariably becomes independent of the dictatee. Once the latter enunciates words and precepts of a tradition, the assistant transmits it until it reaches the audience, whereby the dictatee loses control over the transmission's path as it happens. He cannot interrupt the process. The tradition utterances become

20 Ibid. 91.
21 Ibid. 96.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid. 103-104.
24 Ibid. 92.

the property of the listener regardless of the precise form and content of the transmission in the way the dictatee initiated it. If the first dictation assistant makes a mistake, the latter continues its way until the last dictation assistant rectifies it. Anyone who experienced a dictation council, still alive today in Muslim mosques and other centers of worship and learning, or conducted a dictation session in a language class would not be surprised to hear about these cases. Al-Samʿānī's argument is that ideally an assistant should reproduce verbatim the words of the dictatee, but in reality, irregularities invariably happen. If they occur in a council of *ḥadīth*, in which every word is meticulously parsed and highly venerated, therefore, this is most likely to take place in other councils as well.

Certainly, al-Samʿānī does not want to cast doubt about the precision of the work realized by the dictation assistant. Nevertheless, his narrations do possess inaccuracies and highlight the frequent distortions and mishearings between the dictate and his assistant/audience. With the best of intentions, one cannot fail to notice the difficulty an assistant has in controlling any transmission. The assistant can claim control only within a small circle. Another weakness occurring within this ever changing flux of information is the irreversibility of the process once the dictatee transmits it to the dictation assistant. Therefore, it becomes the latter's responsibility to communicate with the audience and, here, the dictatee is passive. Even if showing the copy to the dictatee is possible, the dictatee is just unable to read all written copies.

4 The Transcriber

A third element of a dictation council is transcription which is performed by a transcriber or *kātib*. Although ordinary people who are interested in the transmitted material might also write down dictated statements, it is usually a student who does so. Al-Samʿānī does not conform to the strict rules of transcription, therefore, it is possible to transcribe directly from the dictatee without paying attention to his assistant, we are told.[25] Hierarchy is challenged here and the council is open to the

25 Ibid. 171.

information from the dictatee to the transcriber. Transcription has more chances to be accurate if the number of students is limited. In this case, the function of an assistant would be useless. This raises another problem: some students would transcribe what they heard from the assistant because he is louder or closer to the dictatee while others would prefer just to listen to him. In light of his experience, al-Samʿānī does not seem to trust the assistant much. That being the case, the dictatee has no direct control over the transcriber. Markedly, a student is the weakest link in the chain. Most students do not understand the technical language, are unfamiliar with names of scholars and do not possess the requisite skill and training to write down the dictation correctly.

Al-Samʿānī is acutely aware of the deficiencies of transcription. He recommends transcribing the transmission of the dictatee and noting the vocalization of names and letters to prevent misplacement of diacritical marks, *taṣḥīf*.[26] He reminds his reader that the assistant who is not knowledgeable in the discipline of *ḥadīth* might make mistakes such as Busr and Bishr, ʿAbbās and ʿAyyāsh, ʿUbayda and ʿAbīda.[27] In this particular instance, an average student would have similar difficulties to that of a dictation assistant. He would not have the expertise that would allow him to correct the assistant. Taking into account the different proficiency levels of transcribers, it is expected that mistakes are more likely to happen among new students. In this case, the dictatee runs the risk of ending up with copies full of mistakes that can be spread around by students without any regard for accuracy. As previously stated, the larger the circle, the greater the risks will be for mistakes to occur.

To limit the unruliness of transcription, al-Samʿānī recommends what is called copy revision, *muʿāraḍa*. In this process, at the conclusion of the dictation, the assistant reads aloud the entire text and the students compare the read text to their transcription to assure precision.[28] In the revised copy, the assistant highlights his important role in the dictation council. If at all possible, this could enable him to harmonize various

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid. 171.
28 Ibid. 77.

copies, however only for cases in which the audience is fairly small. In contrast, for larger audiences this seems to be unfeasible. Additionally, the scrutinized reading and the revision process provide a new dimension to the council of dictation; it introduces new elements such as intonation, handling names and technical words or misreading. Be that as it may, the transcriber possesses authority and, by default, has the final say in the writing process. His copy might end to be the standard one.

5 The Audience

Throughout the three previous elements, it was noted that the audience is an imposing variable in a dictation council. A dictatee could only consider his council successful if he reaches the audience effectively. A criterion which defines the success of a council of dictation is the number of its attendants. In this regard, al-Samʿānī praises councils of dictation that can sometimes be a gathering of thousands of people. In his *Adab al-imlāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ*, two accounts are offered to illustrate this celebration among the attendees. The first account concerns the council of Yazīd b. Hārūn, allegedly attended by seventy thousand people.[29] The second is the *majlis* of ʿAlī b. ʿĀṣim. It was reported that one hundred thousand people attended his council. Sometimes, ʿAlī b. ʿĀṣim had to repeat a *ḥadīth* fourteen times and yet people were unable to hear it. The rule according to which the dictation assistant should repeat the transmission was ignored here. The situation required the dictation assistant to climb a palm tree in order to transmit the *ḥadīth* to the audience.[30] With admiration to ʿAlī b. ʿĀṣim, al-Samʿānī reports the jealousy of the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim, who was worried about the popularity of the master in Baghdad.[31]

Considering the tendency of medieval Muslim authors toward exaggeration and metonymic use of numbers, I would not draw any conclusion from the number of people in attendance that al-Samʿānī presents to us. However, if there is anything we learn from these two accounts, it is that

29 Ibid. 16.
30 Ibid. 17.
31 Ibid.

a council of dictation of *ḥadīth* is a performance. It is a performative act in two senses: first, as a council of dictation and second, as a narrative process which is supposed to show us what happened in the council.[32] It aims at affecting the audience and getting them engaged. Religious knowledge becomes an openly celebrated feast. In particular, the council of ʿAlī b. ʿĀṣim seems to challenge our conception of a *majlis*. Here, the master is not venerated for his knowledge by a circle of dedicated students, sitting calmly around him in a *ḥalqa*. Instead, the dictatee hopelessly tries to transmit a tradition and the dictation assistant conveys *ḥadīth* to the audience.

A further rhetorical element of the council of dictation is convenience. Al-Samʿānī exhorts the dictatee to dictate only the *ḥadīth*s that the common people, *ʿawāmm,* could understand. He justifies this popularization of knowledge by a tradition ascribed to ʿAlī asking narrators to report only what common people know and eschew what they reject.[33] In other words, the dictatee should select those traditions that are likely to please his audience. Thus, a council of dictation is an adaptation and evolves according to circumstances. Taking into account the number of people who attend the council, the speaker should be careful. If he narrates anything that could be understood as inconvenient, the meeting could easily be aggressive. Collective authorship in this instance, appears here as a collective censure. The transmission of *ḥadīth* and religious knowledge is seen as the collective responsibility of the community. Both the dictatee and the audience adhere to a collective reference which traces the lines of what should be said. Certain *ḥadīth*s would be discarded and others could be venerated for political or theological reasons.

The decisive role the audience plays in a dictation council challenges the traditional elitism ascribed to the transmission of *ḥadīth*. If I may push the argument further, I would say that a council of dictation embodies the concept of open collective authorship. Adapting transmission to the

32 For narration as performance insofar as the narrative structure itself emerges in the interaction between the narrator and his audience, see: Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices*, 161.

33 Ibid. 60.

audience, even the religious knowledge that was held to be sacred by its transmitters, implies that knowledge was considered, to a certain extent, as an open source. In addition, it highlights the dependence of Muslim knowledge on convention. Since the audience changes from one place to another and over time, the final draft of the transmission, if such a draft was possible in medieval Islamic scholarship, could vary more or less.

This raises the question of individual authorship. If dictated works undergo a process of editing such as described above, is there any sense in considering medieval transmission as works ascribed to a particular individual? In light of what I presented here, genuine individual authorship appears to be an illusion. This can be attributed to our modern construction and not to the reality of medieval Islam. Since the convention in our times is that an author, in general, is an independent self who produces a work and who owns its intellectual rights, we have a proclivity to project this conception on medieval authors. For example, we see in the treatises ascribed to al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820) or al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869), the original expressions of their thoughts in form and content while their works could be seen rather as *fruit d'un travail collectif*. This idea was adopted by Claude Gilliot as a hypothesis about the writing down of the Qur'an.[34] In my view, collective authorship does not exclude individual authorship upstream, but, logically, includes it downstream (so to say). The way Gilliot perceives a collective work suggests that it is a process where one author borrows ideas from his contemporaries and puts them in a book he claims to be his message. A collective work, as it appears through councils of dictations, goes over generations and places. The outcome should be praised as the work of the many, not of the one.

Conclusion

In sum, the council of dictation offers a potential of collective authorship in two ways. Horizontally speaking, it is a collaborative project involving the audience, the dictatee, the dictation assistant, and the transcriber. At the vertical level, it is a deliberative process, open to exchange and cor-

34 Gilliot, "Le Coran," 185-231.

rection. It has been shown that a council of dictation is not a hierarchical or strict process of knowledge transmission from an active authority to a passive audience. The outcome of a council of dictation cannot be said to be an individual work of a transmitter. Besides, the copy he meant to transmit might, often, not be the same to the one he transmits actually.

Hasty generalizations apart, al-Samʿānī's *Adab al-imlāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ* offers us an example of scholarship in contact with the audience, celebrating knowledge as a performance. Yet, these scholars construct an ethics of science which they promote as a norm. Al-Samʿānī painstakingly establishes rules to conduct a council of *ḥadīth* keeping in mind the ideally imagined prophetic gathering. However, the rhetoric of the *majlis* forces him to concede much of these rules. To put it differently, the reception of knowledge, as incarnated by councils of dictation, resists the claims of originality, individuality and thoroughness, values highly recommended in the ethics of science.

This confirms the close relationship of authorship and authority. The dictatee's authority is framed by that of his collaborators. By conceding some authority to the other participants of the council, the dictatee accepts, modestly, the role of sharing knowledge and authorship.

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Assembling an Author:
On The Making of al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*

Bilal W. Orfali and Maurice A. Pomerantz

Modern readers encounter a book assuming that the author has played a central role in its creation. They anticipate (rightly or wrongly) that the name prominently displayed on the cover has been involved in the making of the book: i.e., drafting the text; dividing the work into sections; and arranging the contents. In some cases, they might imagine that this author selected the pictures, decided on the captions, and has chosen such material features such as the typeface and paper. While readers know that editors and publishers often shape the final form of modern books in important ways, few would hesitate to affirm that the role of the author is central to the modern book's production.

Authors in the medieval Arabic world were also involved in many aspects of the production of their own books. For instance, the author may have selected the individual poems, letters, stories, or speeches. He may have considered their arrangement. He may have even made an autograph copy on particular paper and using particular ink. Alternatively, the author may have dictated the work aloud to multiple scribes, and authorized them to teach the work through the granting of an *ijāza*. The particular features of authorial control in an age before mechanical reproduction are certainly of vital concern to the student of classical Arabic literature in general and deserve greater awareness on the part of their modern students.

In this article, we address such problems of authorship and authorial control through a particular example: the collection of the *Maqāmāt* of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī. One of the central works of Classical Arabic literature, the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī has long been known mainly through Muḥammad ʿAbduh's standard edition of 1889.

Most modern readers have been content to read the *maqāmāt* in ʿAbduh's edition without reference to the earlier manuscript tradition, be-

lieving that the noted Muslim scholar had altered the text in various places only for the sake of moral propriety.[1] Yet as D. S. Richards pointed out in an article of 1991, many of the hypotheses of modern critics about the text of Hamadhānī would not withstand scrutiny because the basic features of the text that were assumed to be the work of the author such as the titles of *maqāmāt* and their order, were clearly the product of later redaction and not the work of the author.[2]

Recent studies of the *Maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī suggest further difficulties in offering basic interpretations of the text of the *maqāmāt* in the absence of a critical edition based on a thorough study of the work's manuscript tradition.[3] In an article entitled, "Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāma* of Bishr b. ʿAwāna," Ibrahim Geries demonstrates how a text that falls outside of the canon of Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* in the standard editions, *Bishriyya*, is numbered as a *maqāma* in two manuscripts. Moreover, Geries demonstrates how modern scholars' reliance upon the late recension of ʿAbduh has led them to base their analyses on terms and expressions that are late interpolations in the text.[4]

In the recent article, entitled "A Lost Maqāma of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamaḏānī?" we identify a hitherto unknown *maqāma* on medicine in

1 Monroe, *The Art of Badīʿ Az-Zamān*, 112, "Serious problems exist concerning the textual transmission of the *Maqāmāt* by Hamadhānī yet many of these cannot be solved without the existence of a critical edition explaining the number and ordering of the maqāmas as they appear in different recensions," or more positively on p. 14, "It is my hope that the eventual appearance of Professor Pierre A. Mackay's criticial edition of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* will provide future scholars with the means to correct any shortcomings attributable to faulty readings." Unfortunately, Mackay's edition has never appeared. Most modern readers unfortunately have not even used the uncensored editions. Of these versions, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's edition is on the whole superior. It includes the *Bishriyya* as a *maqāma* and does at times "correct" ʿAbduh in certain places.

2 Richards, "The 'Maqāmāt'."

3 Geries, "Maqāma of Bishr b. ʿawāna," 125-126, "The absence of a reliable critical edition of the *maqāmas* has had an adverse effect on a number of studies that have dealt with them, singly or as a whole, especially with respect to their nature, their sequence, their unity, their number, their poetics and the interpretation of some of them."

4 Ibid.

the second oldest extant manuscript of the *Maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī, Yale University MS, Salisbury collection 63.[5] We discuss in the article its possible authenticity, noting that because of its early preservation in the corpus, *al-Maqāma al-Ṭibbiyya* is better attested than one-fifth of the *maqāmāt* included in the *textus receptus* and urge a re-evaluation of the textual history of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*.

In the present article, we focus primarily on the collection of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* in an effort to understand how the *Maqāmāt* in the absence of the author's direct participation came to be assembled into an independent literary work. The first section of the paper surveys the earliest evidence for the circulation of Hamadhānī's work prior to the appearance of manuscripts. The next section considers the growth of Hamadhānī's collection from the 6th-10th/12th-16th centuries. The article then provides a list of the extant manuscripts of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* and divides them into three main families. The last section discusses how the manuscripts of Hamadhānī were influenced by the later tradition of authoring *maqāmāt* in collections.

1 The Circulation of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* prior to MS Fatih 4097

The *maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī are works that can be read independently of one another. Nevertheless, certain features suggest that the collection ought to be read together. The recurrence of characters, the narrative device of recognition (*anagnorisis*), and the variation of the locales of action point to an author conscious of the creation of a collection, or at the least a group of works intended to be read serially. Hamadhānī himself refers to the *maqāmāt* of Abū l-Fatḥ in the plural, as if the individual *maqāmas* acquired meaning from being a part of a presumed totality.

In all probability, Hamadhānī never compiled his own *maqāmāt* in a definitive written collection. Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*, nevertheless, circulated and became known to his contemporaries as works of elegant prose. Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1038) who had met and known Hamadhānī, quotes from the *maqāmāt* in both his *Thimār al-qulūb* and

5 Orfali and Pomerantz, "A Lost Maqāma of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamaḏānī?"

in his *Yatīmat al-dahr*. He does so, however, treating the *maqāmāt* as elegant *exempla* of prose stylistics. If he was aware of the *maqāma* as a distinctive literary form, he does not discuss this.[6]

Abū Isḥāq al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1021), also includes *maqāmāt* in his compilation *Zahr al-ādāb*. His quotations are far more substantial than those of al-Thaʿālibī. He relates twenty *maqāmāt* in total throughout the volume. Al-Ḥuṣrī is conscious of the literary form of the *maqāma*s—which might explain his attempts to suggest their kinship to a work of Ibn Durayd. Indeed, al-Ḥuṣrī identifies Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* as featuring the two characters who are named by the author: ʿĪsā b. Hishām and Abū l-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī.[7] When al-Ḥusrī quotes from the *Maqāmāt* he consistently refers to them as from "the composition of Badīʿ al-Zamān from the Maqāmāt of Abū l-Fatḥ" (*min inshāʾ Badīʿ al-Zamān fī maqāmāt Abī l-Fatḥ*). At one point, al-Ḥuṣrī states that the text which he is relating is "from the Maqāmāt of al-Iskandarī on beggary which he composed and dictated in 385/995" (*min maqāmāt al-Iskandarī fī l-kudya mimmā anshaʾahu Badīʿ al-Zamān wa-amlāhu fī shuhūr sanat khams wa-thamānīn wa-thalāthimiʾa*).

Al-Ḥuṣrī relates Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* in the *Zahr al-Ādab* much as he does in other works of poetry and prose—classifying them according to the subjects which they describe. Thus he relates the *Azādhiyya* in a section on the "description of food" (*waṣf al-ṭaʿām*).[8] Similarly, in the course of a discussion of al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Ḥuṣrī supplies a "*maqāma* that is related to the mention of al-Jāḥiẓ."[9] Some of these groupings by al-Ḥuṣrī match modern generic classifications, such as a section of the work on "the abasement of the beggar" (*dhull al-suʾāl*) which prompts him to relate the text of the *Makfūfiyya*.[10] In all of the above cases, al-Ḥuṣrī considers the individual *maqāmāt* examples of the prose composition of Hamadhānī

6 See al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb*, 203. For the quotations to *Yatīmat al-dahr*, see Geries, "On Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila," esp. 188.

7 Al-Ḥusrī, *Zahr al-ādāb wa-thimār al-albāb*, 305.

8 Al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-ādāb*, 2:343.

9 Al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-ādāb*, 2:543.

10 Al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-ādāb*, 4:1132.

on various topics, and not as components of a particular written collection.

In his *Maqama: a history of a genre* Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila posits the existence of an earlier, smaller collection of twenty to thirty of Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*, circulating in North Africa. The evidence that Hämeen-Anttila adduces for this smaller collection of *maqāmāt* comes from a variety of sources: Richards' examination of the manuscripts (noted above); the statement of Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī (d. 460/1067) in his *Masā'il al-intiqād* that Hamadhānī's collection contains 20 *maqāmas*; and citations from twenty of the *maqāmāt* in al-Ḥuṣrī's *Zahr al-ādāb* noted above. Given the early date and provenance of these witnesses to the *Maqāmāt*, Hämeen-Anttila suggests that they point to the existence of an early manuscript tradition containing twenty *maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī, with most of the *maqāmāt* included in this early collection coming from the beginning of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* (according to the order of the standard edition of Muḥammad 'Abduh).[11]

2 The Growth of Hamadhānī's Corpus of *Maqāmāt* from the 6th-10th/12th-16th century

MS Fatih 4097: The First Extant *Maqāma* Collection

MS Fatih 4097 dating to 520/1126 is a particularly important manuscript for the study of the early history of the *maqāma* genre. First, it is the oldest extant collection of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*. Second, it is bound with the collection of ten *maqāmāt* of Ibn Nāqiyā (d. 485/1092). The latter collection is distinctive because it is the first *maqāma* collection we know of to have a written introduction which identifies its author, and to have a uniform hero that appears in all of the *maqāmāt*.

Although identified on the title page (f. 2a) as the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī, the *Maqāmāt* in MS Fatīḥ 4097 lacks an introduction. The *Maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī begin on f. 2b with the *basmala* followed imme-

11 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 118-119.

diately by the phrase "*ḥaddathanā ʿĪsā b. Hishām.*" Subsequent *maqāmāt* are identified by numeric titles.

The most significant feature of the *maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī in MS Fatih 4097 is that there are forty *maqāma*s in the collection. The number forty as many previous scholars have stated is suggestive of a link to *ḥadīth* collections.[12] Individual *maqāma*s can be understood as "reports" related by one individual about the sayings and actions of another. In this way, the *maqāma* collection might be considered akin to a *musnad* that contains the reports of a particular companion of the Prophet, arranged according to narration.[13]

MS Fatih 4097 presents the *maqāmāt* in an order which differs considerably from the *Maqāmāt* in the standard edition. The two subsequent dated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt*, MS School of Oriental and African Studies 47280 which is a nineteenth-century copy of a manuscript copied in the year 562/1166-1167 and MS Yale University, Salisbury collection 63 copied in 603/1206 also follow the order of MS Fatih. The fact that both manuscripts include the same core of the same forty *maqāmāt* in roughly the same order as MS Fatih suggests their filiation to MS Fatih and to one another.[14]

The Appearance of Two Collections of Fifty *Maqāmāt* post-dating al-Ḥarīrī

Maqāmāt MS SOAS and MS Yale are also interesting in that they both contain fifty *maqāmāt*.[15] Their "growth" appears to be a response to the rise in prominence of the collection of fifty *maqāmāt* authored by

12 Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy*, 53-4.

13 Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, 79.

14 In some cases, the MSS Yale and SOAS provide materials that are missing from MS Fatih, such as the ending of the *Sijistāniyya* which is preserved in both of these MSS but not in MS Fatih (and the standard edition). This suggests that these two manuscripts may rely on a manuscript tradition independent from MS Fatih. For a reproduction of this ending, see Orfali and Pomerantz, "*Maqāmāt Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*".

15 MS SOAS 47280 is a 19th-century copy of a manuscript dated to 562/1166-7.

al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122) completed in 504/1111-2. Ḥarīrī praised Hamadhānī in the introduction to his *Maqāmāt*. This sparked interest in the text of Hamadhānī as the author of the first *maqāma* collection.

The additional ten *maqāmāt* found in both the SOAS and Yale manuscripts come from two main sources: the so-called "amusing tales" (*mulaḥ*) of Hamadhānī and additional *maqāmāt*.

1 Mulaḥ

The *mulaḥ* are a "miscellany of texts transmitted on the authority of Hamadhānī outside his main collections (*Maqāmāt* and *Rasā'il*) and put together by an anonymous collector," as Hämeen-Anttila has described them.[16] The *mulaḥ* do not mention the characters of either the narrator or trickster. As Ibrahim Geries notes, however, the *mulaḥ* are not distinguished from *maqāmāt* in MS Aya Sofya 4283 (692/1225). Subjecting these *mulāḥ* to further analysis and comparing them with similar stories found in other sources, Ibrahim Geries concludes that they are mainly pre-existing literary anecdotes which were related by Hamadhānī. They were included in some manuscripts of Hamadhānī by compilers who considered these anecdotes to be *maqāmāt*.[17] In our further research on the topic, we note that both MS SOAS and MS Yale include seven *mulaḥ* as *maqāmāt*. In both cases, the *mulāḥ* appear toward the end of the collection, positions 37-43 in the case of MS Yale, and positions 43-50 in MS SOAS.

2 Additional *Maqāmāt*

Both MS SOAS and MS Yale include three additional *maqāmāt*. In MS Yale the three additional *maqāmāt* are: a letter that is described as a *mulḥa* in the Istanbul edition; the *Maṭlabiyya*; and the newly-discovered *Ṭibbiyya*.[18] MS SOAS also contains three additional *maqāmāt* (nos. 48-50)

16 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 77.

17 Geries, "Maqāma of Bishr b. ʿAwāna," 136.

18 See Orfali and Pomerantz, "A Lost *Maqāma* of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamaḏānī?," esp. 248.

which we have named: *Hamadhāniyya*, *Sharīfiyya* [which is a *maqāma* and *risāla*], and *Khātamiyya*.[19]

3 Additions to the Manuscripts of the 10th/16th century

A large group of *maqāmāt* were added to the corpus in the tenth/sixteenth century [*Mighzaliyya, Nājimiyya, Khalafiyya, Nīsābūriyya, ʿIlmiyya, Mulūkiyya, Ṣufriyya, Sāriyya, Tamīmiyya, Khamriyya*]. This group includes all of the so-called "panegyric" *maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī that he purportedly composed in 383/993 in celebration of the ruler, Khalaf b. Aḥmad.

The Three Families: The Extant Manuscripts of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*

We identify three main families in our work on the manuscript tradition of Hamadhānī, which we term **A**, **A**[1], and **B**. We base our findings on the order and contents of the manuscripts and not on their specific readings. A stemma based on a comparison of readings will be a focus of future research.

1 Family **A**

The first family, **A** is the most heterogeneous. It includes the five oldest manuscripts: MS Fatih 4097, MS SOAS 47280, MS Yale 63, MS Aya Sofya 4283, and MS Paris 3923. These manuscripts vary greatly from one another. However, it is likely that both MS SOAS and MS Yale are related to MS Fatih 4097, or share a common ancestor, because of the common order of *maqāmāt*. MS Aya Sofya and MS Paris appear at times to foreshadow the later order of family **B**. The final folio of MS Aya Sofya is from the *Shiʿriyya*, which suggests that the manuscript may have contained other *maqāmāt* that are no longer extant.

Manuscripts belonging to Family **A**:

1. Istanbul Fatih 4097 (520/1126)
2. London SOAS 47280 (13th/19th c.)

19 See Pomerantz and Orfali, "Three *Maqāmāt* Attributed to al-Hamadhānī."

3. Yale University 63 (603/1206)
4. Istanbul Aya Sofya 4283 (692/1225)
5. Paris BN 3923 (8th/14th c.)

2 Family **A**[1]

The second family **A**[1] includes twenty manuscripts which date from the 17th century until the 19th. These manuscripts all retain the order of MS Fatih 4097. The three supplementary *maqāmāt* discussed by Orfali and Pomerantz in "Three *Maqāmāt* Attributed to al-Hamadhānī"[20] appear in half of the manuscripts belonging to **A**[1].

Manuscripts belonging to Family **A**[1]:

1. Edinburgh MS Or. 49 (11th/17th c.)
2. Tehran Ilāhiyyāt 3/441 (11th/17th)
3. Mashhad Riẓavī 4984 (1140/1727)
4. Tehran Millī Shūravī 20 (1110/1698)
5. Tehran Adabīyāt 3/74 (12th/18th)
6. Istanbul University A1227 (?)
7. Damascus Asad Library 218 (1243/1827)
8. Tehran *Kitābkhānah wa Markaz-i Asnād Majlis Shūrā-yi Islāmī* 303 (1270/1853)
9. Tehran Majlis 2/5764 (1278/1861)
10. Istanbul University A234 (1296/1878)
11. King Saud University (1307/1889)
12. Tehran Majlis 621 (12th-13th/18th-19th)

20 Pomerantz and Orfali, "Three *Maqāmāt* Attributed to al-Hamadhānī."

	Baṣriyya	Fazārīyya	Qazwīnīyya	Balkhīyya	Kūfīyya	Qarīḍīyya	Qirdīyya	Mawṣilīyya	Asadīyya	Ḥirzīyya	Mārīstānīyya	Wa'ẓīyya	Mafūfīyya	Jāḥiẓīyya	Bukhārīyya	Adhārbayjānīyya	Azādhānīyya	Sāsānīyya	Jurjānīyya	Sijistānīyya	Iṣfahānīyya	Ḥamdānīyya	Ahwāzīyya	Baghdādīyya	Ghalānīyya	Rusāfīyya	Wāṣīyya	Dārīyya	Ḥulwānīyya
FAMILY A																													
Istanbul Fatih 4097 (520/1126)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	29	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
London SOAS 47280 (13th/19th)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Yale University 63 (603/1206)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	24	25	44	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	11	34	26	27	28
Istanbul Aya Sofya 4283 (692/1225)	22	24	25	26	1		20	19		3	4		15	18	17	10	13	12	11		2	14			16	23	21	6	7
Paris BN 3923 (8th/14th)	2	3	7	11	13	8	14	15	16				5	4	6	17	9	10	18	12	19	1			20				
FAMILY A[1]																													
Edinburgh MS Or. 49 (11th/17th)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Istanbul University A1227 (no date)	1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Istanbul University A234 (1296/1878)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Tehran Majlis Shūrā-yi Islāmī 303 (1270/1853)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Damascus Asad Library 218 (1243/1827)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Tehran Majlis 631 (13th/19th)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Tehran Majlis 2/5764 (1278/1861)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Tehran Kitābkhānah-i Millī 8046 (no date)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Tehran Lithograph (1296/1878)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
King Saud University 814 (1307/1889)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26			
Princeton MS 2007	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
FAMILY B																													
Cambridge University Library 1096/7 (964/1557)	13	14	18	3	5	1	20	21	6	23	24	27	16	15	17	8	2	19	9	4	10	30	11	12	7	31	42	44	34
Istanbul Nurosmaniyye 4270 (1064/1654)	13	14	18	3	5	1	20	21	6	23	24	27	16	15	17	8	2	19	9	4	10	30	11	12	7	31	42	44	34
Istanbul Fatih 4098 (1116/1704)	13	14	15	3	5	1	20	21	6	23	24	27	17	16	18	8	2	19	9	4	10	30	11	12	7	31	42	44	34
Cairo Dār al-Kutub *mīm* 112	13	14		3	5		1		6							8	2		9	4	10		11	12	7				
Cairo Dār al-Kutub 1853 (1280/1863)	13	14	18	3	5	1	20	21	6	23	24	27	*	15	16	8	2	19	9	4	10	30	11	12	7	31	42	44	34
Cairo Al-Azhar 271	13	14	18	3	5	1	20		6				16	15	17	8	2	19	9	4	10		11	12	7				
Cambridge MS Add. 1060 (1822)	2	3	7	11	13	8	14	15	16				5	4	6	17	9	10	18	12	19		1		20				
Markaz Malik Faisal 5930 (1282/1865)	13	14	18	3	5	1	20	21	6	23	24	27	16	15	17	8	2	19	9	4	10	30	11	12	7	31	44		34
EARLY PRINT EDITIONS																													
Istanbul Dār al-Jawā'ib (1298/1880)	13	14	18	3	5	1	20	21	6	23	24	27	16	15	17	8	2	19	9	4	10	30	11	12	7	31	42	44	34
Beirut 'Abduh (1889)	13	14	18	3	5	1	20	21	6	23	24	26	16	15	17	8	2	19	9	4	10	29	11	12	7	30	41	43	33
Cawnpore Kanfūr (1904)				3	5	1		10								7	2		8	4	9				6				

Bishriyya	Majāʿiyya	Shāmiyya	Maḍriyya	Armaniyya	Ṣaymarriyya	Iblīsiyya	Aswadiyya	ʿIrāqiyya	Nahīdiyya	Shīrāziyya	Matlabiyya	Ṭibbiyya 1	Mulḥa 2	Mulḥa 3	Mulḥa 4	Mulḥa 5	Mulḥa 6	Mulḥa 7	Risāla	Mizhal Iyya	Nājimiyya	Khalaf Iyya	Nisābūriyya	ʿIlmiyya	Shlʿriyya	Mulūk Iyya	Ṣufriyya	Sāriyya	Tamīmiyya	Khamrīyya	Hamadhāniyya	Risāla	Khātimiyya	
																																		FAMILY A
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																								**Istanbul Fatih 4097** (520/1126)
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			44	45	46	47	48	49	50												41	42	43	**London SOAS 47280** (13th/19th)
29	31	32	10	33	30	45	46	47	35	36	49	48	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	50														**Yale University 63** (603/1206)
8			5		9	27	28	29	30	31	32		33	34	37	35	36			33					38									**Istanbul Aya Sofya 4283** (692/1225)
																																		Paris BN 3923 (8th/14th)
																																		FAMILY A[1]
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																					41			**Edinburgh MS Or. 49** (11th/17th)
29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39																					40	41	42	**Istanbul University A1227 (no date)**
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38																										**Istanbul University A234** (1296/1878)
30	32	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			44	45	46	47	48	49	50												41	42	43	**Tehran Majlis Shūrā-yi Islāmī 303** (1270/1853)
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			44	45	46	47	48	49	50												41	42	43	**Damascus Asad Library 218** (1243/1827)
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			44	45	46	47	48	49	50												41	42	43	**Tehran Majlis 631** (13th/19th)
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			44	45	46	47	48	49	50												41	42	43	**Tehran Majlis 2/5764** (1278/1861)
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			44	45	46	47	48	49	50												41	42	43	**Tehran Kitābkhānah-i Millī 8046** (no date)
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40																								**Tehran Lithograph** (1296/1878)
																																		King Saud University 814 (1307/1889)
30	32	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40			44	45	46	47	48	49	50												41	42	43	**Princeton MS 2007**
																																		FAMILY B
	25	26	22	37	43	36	28	29	35	33										32	38	39	40	41	45	46	47	48	49	50				**Cambridge University Library 1096/7** (964/1557)
	25	26	22	37	43	36	28	29	35	33										32	38	39	40	41	45	46	47	48	49	50				**Istanbul Nurosmaniyye 4270** (1064/1654)
	25	26	22	37	43	36	28	29	35	33										32	38	39	40	41	45	46	47	48	49	50				**Istanbul Fatih 4098** (1116/1704)
																																		Cairo Dār al-Kutub *mīm* 112
	25	26	22	37	43	36	28	29	35											32	38	39	40	41	45	46	47	48	49	50				**Cairo Dār al-Kutub 1853** (1280/1863)
																																		Cairo Al-Azhar 271
																																		Cambridge MS Add. 1060 (1822)
	25	26	22	37	43	36	28	29		33										32	38	39	40	41	45	46	47	48	49	50				**Markaz Malik Faisal 5930** (1282/1865)
																																		EARLY PRINT EDITIONS
	25	26	22	37	43	36	28	29	35	33										32	38	39	40	41	45	46	47	48	49	50				**Istanbul Dār al-Jawāʾib** (1298/1880)
51	25		22	36	42	35	27	28	34	32	50									31	37	38	39	40	44	45	46	47	48	49				**Beirut ʿAbduh** (1889)
																																		Cawnpore Kanfūr (1904)

13. Tehran Majlis 631 (13th/19th)
14. Qom Gulpayganī 4/4181-101/21 (13th/19th)
15. Tehran Ṣipāhsālār 7006 (13th/19th)
16. Mashhad Ilāhiyyāt 619 (13th/19th)
17. Tehran Malik 4/2357 (13th/19th)
18. Tehran Majlis 2/4113 (13th/19th)
19. Princeton University 2007
20. Tehran Kitābkhānah-i Millī Jumhūrī-yi Islāmī-yi Irān 8046

3 Family **B**

The third family **B** includes fifteen manuscripts dating from the 10th/16th to the 13th/19th century. The manuscripts in this family follow the order commonly known from the ʿAbduh edition. The family includes eleven additional *maqāmāt* [*Mighzaliyya, Nājimiyya, Khalafiyya, Nīsābūriyya, ʿIlmiyya, Shiʿriyya, Mulūkiyya, Ṣufriyya, Sāriyya, Tamīmiyya, Khamriyya*] as a group at the end of the collections. Only one of this group, the *Shiʿriyya* is found in a manuscript prior the 10th/16th century.

Manuscripts belonging to family **B**:

1. Cambridge University Library 1096/7 (Qq. 118) (964/1557)
2. London BM Or. 5635 (10th/16th)
3. Istanbul Nurosmaniyye 4270 (1064/1654)
4. Istanbul Fatih 4098 (1116/1704)
5. Istanbul Reisulkuttab 912 (1130/ 1717-8)
6. Istanbul Hamidiye 1197 (1174/1760-1)
7. Cairo Dār al-Kutub *mīm* 112 (undated)
8. Cairo Dār al-Kutub 1853 (1280/1863)

9. Cairo al-Azhar ms. (undated)
10. Cambridge MS Add. 1060 (1822)
11. Riyāḍ King Faisal Center 5930 (1282/1865)
12. Copenhagen, Cod. Arab. 224
13. Istanbul Bayezit 2640
14. Tehran Majlis 303 (1270/1853)
15. Tehran Majlis 5/8951 (9 Muḥarram 1250/18 May 1834)

3 Becoming a *Maqāma* Collection: Introductions, Characters, Closure

With the rise to prominence of al-Ḥarīrī's collection of fifty *maqāmāt* during the 6th/12th century, readers began to consider Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* as a collection. *Maqāma* collections such as those of Ḥarīrī and Ibn Nāqiyā (d. 485/1092), possessed introductions, identities of main characters, and occasionally, some notion of closure. In the following section we consider ways in which Hamadhānī's manuscripts begin to conform to expectations about *maqāma* collections.

Introductions (*muqaddimāt*)

Introductions were common to prose works in the fourth/tenth century. Thus if Hamadhānī had in fact collected his own work, it would have been natural for him to begin with an introduction.[21] From Ibn Nāqiyā onward, it was common for the author of a *maqāma* collection to indicate his own role in the composition of the collection in the introduction in the first person. While extant introductions to Hamadhānī's manuscripts identify him as the author or transmitter of the *maqāmāt*, the fact that he is not the author of their introductions, distinguishes Hamadhānī's work from subsequent *maqāma* collections.

21 Orfali "The Art of the *Muqaddima*." In *The Oral and Written in Early Islam*, 46, Schoeler draws attention to the Greek distinction between *hypomnēma*, "notes for private use", and *syngramma*, literary works that are "redacted according to common rules."

Of the manuscripts of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* copied prior to the tenth/sixteenth century, [MS Fatih 4097 (520/1126), MS SOAS 47280 (562/1166-7), MS Yale Salisbury 63 (603/1206), MS Aya Sofya 4283 (692/1225) Paris BN 3923 (8th/14th c.)] two preface the collection with introductions. The introduction in the SOAS manuscript is as follows, "This is what the esteemed teacher Abū l-Faḍl Badīʿ al-Zamān Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn Hamadhānī related from ʿĪsā b. Hishām of the *maqāmāt* of Abū al-Fatḥ l-Iskandarī" (*hādhā mimmā amlāhu al-ustādh al-imām al-fāḍil Abū l-Faḍl Badīʿ al-Zamān Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī riwāyat*[an] *ʿan ʿĪsā b. Hishām min maqāmāt Abī l-Fatḥ*).[22] MS Aya Sofya 4283 begins with the following introduction, "These *maqāmāt* were dictated by the teacher Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī in Nīshāpūr and he mentioned that he had composed them to be uttered in the voice of Abū l-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī and to have been related by ʿĪsā b. Hishām, whereas others have mentioned that they were composed by Abū l-Ḥusayn b. Fāris and the report concerning this has become widely known". (*hādhihi al-maqāmāt amlāhā al-ustādh Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī bi-Nīsābūr wa-dhakara annahu ansha'ahā ʿalā lisān Abī l-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī wa-rawāhā ʿan ʿĪsā b. Hishām wa-dhakara ghayruhu annahā min inshā' Abī l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Fāris wa-tawātara al-khabar bi-dhālik*).[23] The fifth-oldest ms. MS Paris 3923 (the only one of the five early manuscripts to include the letters (*rasā'il*) of Hamadhānī) introduces Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* not as a separate work, but rather as "*maqāmāt* which he made and placed on the tongues of beggars" (*wa-min al-maqāmāt allatī ʿamilahā ʿalā alsinat al-mukaddīn*),[24] suggesting that the compiler still did not perhaps envision the work of Hamadhānī to be more than a sum of individual *maqāma*s.

Later manuscripts of Hamadhānī such as MS Nurosmaniyya 4270 copied in 1064/1654, MS Veliyuddin Efendi 2640 (1126/1714) and MS

22 MS SOAS, fol. 2a.

23 MS Aya Sofya 4283, folio 1b. The manuscript begins on fol. 1a with a prominent title page, referring to the work's title as *al-Maqāmāt al-Badīʿiyya*, which were related by (*min imlā'*) the *ustādh* Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī.

24 MS Paris 3293 f. 3a.

Reisulkuttab 912 copied in 1130/1718, as Geries notes, begin with an introduction which appears to draw upon the language of al-Ḥuṣrī's *Zahr al-ādāb* and Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī's *Masā'il al-intiqād*, which states that "Badīʿ al-Zamān forged (?) (*zawwara*) *maqāmas* which he composed extemporaneously (*badīhat*^{an}) at the close of his literary sessions attributing them to a storyteller he called ʿĪsā b. Hishām, who had heard them from an eloquent man named Abū l-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī."[25] This introduction, it should be noted, is found only in one late family of manuscripts from the tenth/sixteenth century onwards, and is not in any of the early manuscripts.

Main Characters

The second feature typical of the *maqāma* collection is the uniformity of the narrator and the hero. In the case of the *Maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī it is usually assumed that the *maqāmāt* are related by ʿĪsā b. Hishām and that the main protagonist is Abū l-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī. The notion that a *maqāma* collection must possess a consistent narrator and protagonist, however, must have taken some time to evolve as the first readers of Hamadhānī interpreted the form of the *maqāma* in different ways.

For instance, Ibn Nāqiyā's collection of ten *maqāmāt* is uniform in their protagonist, but differs with respect to narrators. His collection of *maqāmāt* is held together by a unity of place, Baghdad, which is very different from the Hamadhānian prototype based on the travel of the narrator.[26] Al-Ḥarīrī's choice of a single narrator and protagonist for his collection, al-Ḥārith b. Hammām and Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī was influential for the remainder of the tradition of *maqāma* writing.

The earliest collection of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*, MS Fatih 4097, includes several instances of *maqāmāt* which are not related on the authority of ʿĪsā b. Hishām. The *Bishriyya* in MS Fatiḥ 4097, as noted by

25 Al-Sharīshī (d. 620/1222) in his *Sharḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, 1:15 states that Hamadhānī would compose *maqāmāt* extemporaneously (*irtijāl*$_{an}$) at the end of his *majālis* according to the suggestions of his audience.

26 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 133-140.

Ibrahim Geries, is related on the authority of al-Ḥasan or al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Fārisīnī.[27] At the time of authoring this article, Geries was unable to identify this person. In the opening letter of MS Paris 3239, Hamadhānī relates a poem of the poet Barkawayh al-Zinjānī, from a certain Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Fārisīnī who may indeed be identical to the narrator of the *Bishriyya*. The *Ṣaymariyya*, similarly, is prefaced by the statement, "Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, known as Abū l-ʿAnbas al-Ṣaymarī said." As has been noted by previous scholarship, Abū l-ʿAnbas was a historical personage who died in 275/888.[28]

If the identity of the narrator was not a common feature of the *maqāmāt*, perhaps the identity of the trickster character was important for the unity of the collection? However, the hero, as well, varies throughout the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī. While Abū l-Fatḥ appears in the majority of the *maqāmāt*, there are other figures in the so-called panegyric *maqāmāt*, who play the role of the trickster.[29]

Indeed, in this regard, it is significant to note the modes by which Hamadhānī referred to the *maqāmāt*. In one instance, referring to criticisms made by his rival Abū Bakr al-Khʷārizmī, Hamadhānī wrote, "he prepared a slander against us for that which we have related of the *Maqāmāt* of Abī l-Fatḥ" (*tajhīz qadḥ*[in] *ʿalaynā fī mā rawaynā min maqāmāt al-Iskandarī*), which suggests that the *maqāmāt* belong to Abū l-Fatḥ.[30] The *Asadiyya maqāma* opens with the narrator ʿĪsā b. Hishām stating, "From what was related to me of the *maqāmāt* of Iskandarī and his statements [there were statements and actions] that would make gazelles listen and the sparrow flutter."[31]

27 Geries, "Maqāma of Bishr b. ʿAwāna," 130, discusses the problem of al-Fārisīnī.

28 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 44.

29 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 60.

30 Hamadhānī, *Kashf al-maʿānī*, 389-390; MS Paris 3239, f. 2a.

31 In Muḥammad ʿAbduh's edition, the line is rendered, "what was reported to me of the *maqāmāt* of al-Iskandarī and his speech was what a beast who takes flight would listen to and to what a sparrow would flutter in response." (*kāna yablughunī min maqāmāt al-Iskandarī wa-maqālātihi mā yuṣghī ilayhi al-nafūr wa-yantafiḍ lahu al-ʿuṣfūr*) However, the earliest manuscripts MS Fatiḥ 4097, MS SOAS 47280, MS Yale 63 read *mā yuṣghī ilayhi al-fūr*. As Lane, *Lexicon*, 6:241 notes, *fūr* is a term for gazelles. This rare word

It is worth noting, too, that both of these passages demonstrate that Hamadhānī distanced himself from the immediate authorship of the collection. In the passage from his letters, Hamadhānī defends himself from the criticisms of his rival al-Kh^{w}ārizmī, describing himself as simply the relator of the *Maqāmāt* of Abū l-Fatḥ. Meanwhile in the *Asadiyya,* Hamadhānī describes the *maqāmāt* as the exploits of Iskandarī as opposed to his speech (*maqālāt*).

Closure of Hamadhānī's Corpus of *Maqāmāt*

The collection of forty *maqāmāt* found in MS Fatih 4097 is the oldest form in which we know the *maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī. And in some sense the number forty, because of its associations in collections of *ḥadīth* seem to be a plausible sum total for a *maqāma* collection.[32] However because of Hamadhānī's famed boast that he had authored more than 400 *maqāmāt* made in the course of his famed literary contest with Abū Bakr al-Kh^{w}ārizmī (d. 383/993), medieval and modern scholars believed that the corpus of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* was "open". That is, there was no one definitive collection of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* and the majority of his *maqāmāt* had not reached later readers.

The title page (f. 2a) of MS Fatih 4097 preserves a marginal note which is of great importance to the history of the corpus. The scribe who wrote this note is not the copyist of the main text of the manuscript, but provides alternate titles and numbering in the margins of the manuscript suggesting that he is working from another, now-lost, manuscript of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*. Having read the contents of MS Fatih 4097, the scribe identifies the *Khamriyya* and *Ṭibbiyya* as two *maqāmāt* that are not found among the forty *maqāmāt*:

appears to have been replaced by *nafūr*, however, *fūr* is a case of *lectio difficilior*. The motif of a poet in dialogue with gazelles, is found in the *Dīwān Majnūn Laylā* edited by Y. Farḥāt (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1992), 149.

32 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Kīlīṭū, *Mafhūm al-muʾallif*, 20 suggests this. One might go further and describe the significance of the number forty more broadly in Judaism and Islam.

رأيت له مقامتين ليستا هنا إحداهما خمرية وأوّلها اتفق لي في عنفوان الشبيبة والأخرى طبّية أوّلها عنّ لي الاجتياز ببلاد الأهواز وعدّة المقامات أربعمائة قاله مصنّفها والثعالبي

> I have seen two other *maqāmāt* belonging to him [viz., Hamadhānī]. The first is the *Khamriyya* which begins with 'it happened to me in the flush of youth,' and the second is the *Ṭibbiyya,* which begins, with 'I happened to pass through the lands of al-Ahwāz.' There are four hundred *maqāmāt* as both their author and al-Thaʿālibī assert.[33]

As we have shown in our recent article, the *Ṭibbiyya* is found in MS Yale 63, while the *Khamriyya* does not appear until MS Cambridge 1096/7 dating to the 964/1557.

Attempts to close Hamadhānī's text do not seem to have been definitive. In the 6th/12th century, the corpus of Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* as MSS Yale and SOAS attest seems to have grown to include fifty *maqāmāt* in the 6th/12th century. Following Richard's suggestion, it seems that Hamadhānī's collections grew in size to fifty *maqāma*s mainly in response to the existence of Ḥarīrī's collection of fifty *maqāmāt*.[34]

4 Conclusion: The Closure of the Corpus

Thus we can see that the *Maqāmāt* of Ḥarīrī fundamentally differs from the *Maqāmāt* of Hamadhānī in that it was authored as a collection. In the introduction to the work, Ḥarīrī states his claim to his authorship of the entire work.[35] He publicly affirmed his authorship of the work through the first public audition of the work in Baghdad upon his com-

33 The terms *al-Khamriyya* and *al-Ṭibbiyya* may also simply describe the contents of the two *maqāma*s (i.e. a *maqāma* concerning wine, and a *maqāma* concerning medicine) and may not be the titles by which they were known.

34 Richards, "The 'Maqāmāt'," 98, "Here one might entertain the idea that, rather than Ḥarīrī imitating the size of Hamadhānī's output, as has been suggested but is nowhere expressed by Ḥarīrī himself, the sum of fifty *maqāma*s found in the Ottoman Mss. is the result of efforts to effect the reverse, to bring Hamadhānī's *œuvre* up to the size of Ḥarīrī's."

35 Kīlīṭū, *Mafhūm al-muʾallif,* 13. The controversies surrounding Ḥarīrī's authorship of the work, underscored throughout Kilīṭū's study, were perhaps reactions on the part of later critics to Ḥarīrī's strident claims of originality throughout the work.

pletion of the 50 *maqāmāt* in 504/1111-12.[36] Moreover, the text of Ḥarīrī itself provides a sort of narrative closure. Ḥarīrī's fiftieth *maqāma, Baṣriyya,* discusses the repentance (*tawba*) of the hero Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī providing a definitive conclusion. The hero finished his career in the home city of the author and the collection came to an end.[37]

By contrast, Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* remained "open" for many centuries. In the MS SOAS we find the expression, "this is the end of what we have found of the Maqāmāt" (*hādha ākhir mā wajadnāhu min al-maqāmāt*) as if the scribe were cognizant of the fact that more could be found.[38] For an author who had purportedly composed four hundred *maqāmāt,* the possibility seemingly remained for further additions of new *maqāma*s.

Later additions to the corpus seem to aim at defining certain features of his authorship and may possibly represent attempts at the closure of the corpus. Two of the three additional *maqāmāt* which we have recently published in MS SOAS (and ten other manuscripts in family **B**) discuss the return of Abū al-Fatḥ to Hamadhān (the home city of al-Hamadhānī) which seems to echo the return of Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī to Baṣra (the home city of Ḥarīrī). It should be noted, that there is no suggestion in these *maqāma*s that Abū l-Fatḥ repents of his roguery.

The latest additions to the corpus of Hamadhānī first attested in the tenth/sixteenth century, include the six panegyric *maqāmāt* that Hamadhānī allegedly wrote in celebration for the ruler Khalaf b. Aḥmad who reigned in Sīstān until 393/1003.[39] When taken as a group, these *maqāmāt* include several different heroes in addition to Abū l-Fatḥ, which is somewhat anomalous.[40] However, they are uniform in providing what was until the date of their addition to the corpus a missing feature: the context of authorship.

36 Mackay, "Certificates of Transmission."

37 Kīlīṭū, *Mafhūm al-muʾallif*, 7.

38 E.g. MS SOAS, f. 127b and MS Yale end with this formula. MS Fatih 4097, by contrast, states, "This is the end of the *maqāmāt*."

39 C.E. Bosworth, Ḵalaf b. Aḥmad, *EIr*, 15:362-3.

40 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 60.

Hamadhānī has gone down in history as the creator of the *maqāma* genre. Yet he does not appear to have been the inventor of the *maqāma* collection. As this article has suggested, ideas about *maqāma* collections that emerged after Hamadhānī's lifetime shaped his literary legacy in significant ways.

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Author Disguised and Disclosed: Uncovering Facts in al-Hamadhānī's Fiction

Vahid Behmardi

Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, known as Badīʿ al-Zamān (Hamadhān 358/968–Hirāt 398/1008), is one of Iran's prominent Arabic belletrists who lived during the 4th century A.H.[1], the era in which Arabic artistic prose witnessed an unprecedented thrive throughout the Persian lands. Al-Hamadhānī is credited for being the 'inventor' of a novel genre in Arabic literature that he had, presumably, named the *maqāma*. In its original form, as presented by al-Hamadhānī, the *maqāma* is a short narrative written in a sophisticated and ornamented style, where prose and poetry are usually intertwined. The form and theme of the *maqāma*, which was established by al-Hamadhānī, rapidly became an exemplary model for following *maqāma* authors. Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī of Baṣra (446/1054–516/1122) was the most renowned belletrist among those following al-Hamadhānī's footsteps in the composition of *maqāma* narratives.

One of the major features of what may be called the *Hamadhānian maqāma* is the existence of a consistent narrator who, besides telling the story, plays the role of one of its major characters. In most preserved *maqāmas,* the hero is an individual endowed with rhetorical and treacherous talents, often matching or surpassing those of the narrator himself. In al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt,* the narrator is exclusively ʿĪsā ibn Hishām and the hero, whenever named, is Abū al-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī. Although ʿĪsā ibn Hishām is present in all *maqāmas*, al-Iskandarī is either mentioned by name while playing an active role within the development of events, or disguised, absent and replaced by a sub-hero who is usually depicted as being inferior to the narrator or the nominal hero (al-Iskan-

1 A large majority of classical and modern biographies of Arabic men of letters have dedicated chapters or, at least, parts of their work to the life and literature of al-Hamadhānī. The most renowned classical biographical Arabic works are: al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr,* 293-344, and al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ*, 161-202.

darī). All the characters playing different roles within his *Maqāmāt* are intended to be fictional figures created by the author. Perhaps this fact about the *maqāma* genre made al-Qalqashandī define it as being an '*Uḥdūtha*', which indicates that it resembles an entertaining and fictional short tale.[2]

In addition to the composition of the alleged fictional *maqāmas*, al-Hamadhānī is known for being one of the major belletrists contributing to the development of artistic epistolography in the pattern established by Ibn al-ʿAmīd and those belonging to his literary circle, such as Abū al-Qāsim Ismāʿīl al-Ṭālqānī, better known as al-Ṣāḥib ibn ʿAbbād (326/938–386/995), and Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbbās al-Khwārizmī (323/935–383/993). In general, al-Hamadhānī's letters were either addressed to family members, to social figures he encountered during his extensive journeys or kept in touch with, or to prominent counterparts and political figures from his region. In summary, al-Hamadhānī's literary heritage for posterity[3] consists of his *Maqāmāt*, the corpus of his *Rasā'il*-letters and the *Dīwān*, which is mainly a collection of poems addressed to the poet's contemporaries and some riddles written in verse.

A noteworthy aspect of al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*, which are fictional, and his *Rasā'il*, which are based on real life situations, is the recurrence of certain sentences, or even whole paragraphs. Although many of al-Hamadhānī's letters may be described as autobiographical in regard to their content, academic studies on al-Hamadhānī and his literature have so far paid only little or no attention to comparing these two types of

2 See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā fī Ṣināʿat al-Inshā*, 110.

3 In this study, the following Arabic editions of the three works have been used:

- al-Ṭarābulusī, *Kashf al-Maʿānī wal-Bayān ʿan Rasā'il Badīʿ al-Zamān*. Referred to in this study as *Rasā'il*.
- ʿAbduh, *Maqāmāt Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*. Referred to in this study as *Maqāmāt* (ʿAbduh). For English translations of the *Maqāmāt:* Prendergast, trans., *Maqāmāt of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*. Referred to in this study as *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast).
- al-Hamadhānī, *Dīwān Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*. Referred to in this study as *Dīwān*.

texts analytically.[4] A thorough comparative examination of both works has revealed the existence of an implicative interaction between al-Hamadhānī's factual and fictional works which can lead to further interesting conclusions. Alongside the introspective connection between the content of both works, the textual linkage spotted is far more significant than the results of a comparison between corresponding views expressed in the *Rasā'il* and the *Maqāmāt*.[5]

In this study, 'textual linkage' refers to a literal consistency that exists between certain parts of both works. In particular, a great deal of extracts found in different *maqāma* stories, such as the *Maqāmāt* of *Advice*, *Dīnār*, *Nīshāpūr*, *Knowledge*, *Jurjān* and *Khalaf*, were literally restated in the *Rasā'il* or vice-versa. The analysis of this literal consistency regarding the content and the chronological order of the letters examined can disclose a factual dimension which was concealed by what the author had intended to present as fictional short stories under the title of *maqāma*s.

At this point, the question that may be put forth is as to whether the parts of the *Rasā'il* under consideration were restated in the *Maqāmāt* or if the opposite was actually the case! An attempt to answer this question requires determining the exact or, at least, the approximate dates of composition of the six above-mentioned *maqāma*s, as well as the dates of relevant letters. However, it seems almost impossible to determine the exact dates of composition of each *maqāma*, whereas it is possible to fix approximate dates for some of the letters. Nevertheless, the existence of a certain consistency between the fictional and factual works of al-Hamadhānī suggests that what he presented as fiction in his *Maqāmāt* reflects much of his real life, either instantly or through recollection.

4 For example Monroe in *The Art of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*, makes use of the *Rasā'il* as illustrative data without getting into any comparative analysis. Also see Daif, *al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuhu fī al-Nathr al-ʿArabī*, 242-254. It conducts a brief study of the *Rasā'il* without paying attention to the linkage between the work and the *Maqāmāt*.

5 Monroe, *The Art of Badīʿ al-Zamān*, 53.

Al-Thaʿālibī, al-Hamadhānī's contemporary and friend, mentions that the latter composed four hundred *maqāma*s after arriving in Nīshāpūr.[6] However, a statement by Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī about al-Hamadhānī, which the latter quoted in his record of a literary debate that took place between both belletrists in Nīshāpūr in 382 A.H., raises some doubts about al-Thaʿālibī's remark regarding Nīshāpūr as the birthplace of the *Maqāmāt*. In addition, when al-Hamadhānī moved to Nīshāpūr in 382 A.H., al-Khwārizmī claimed that al-Hamadhānī's literary skills were limited to the composition of *maqāma*s.[7] This implies that al-Hamadhānī was already reputed to being a *maqāma* author prior to his arrival to Nīshāpūr at the age of twenty-four. This refutes the assumption that dates al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* to the Nīshāpūr period.

It seems reasonable to establish approximate dates for al-Hamadhānī's letters on the basis of their content or addressees. However, this does not provide historical evidence resolving the problem of determining the chronological relation between the six proposed *maqāma*s and the resembling letters. Nonetheless, the examination of the textual linkage between the two texts may elucidate the evolutionary process that al-Hamadhānī's literature underwent and also determine the extent to which his *Maqāmāt* can be studied as fiction or fact. Moreover, this can disclose whether, in composing the *Maqāmāt*, the author was disguising certain facts about his real life and the real identity of particular characters by disguising them under the cover of fiction.

The Globetrotter:

The notion and the image of cities constitute a remarkable aspect of the *maqāma*s, which were composed by both al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī. The 'cities' in al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* may not be a fictitious element in all instances. Impressively, in some *Maqāmāt* the cities mentioned in the course of events seem to be related to the author's real life. Under

6 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, 294. Al-Thaʿālibī might have taken this data from two letters by al-Hamadhānī where he mentions the 400 maqāmas. See *Rasā'il*, 390 and 516.

7 *Rasā'il*, 389-390.

the condition that the geographic space in his letters correlates with the element of the cities in the *Maqāmāt*, such as the settings for the narratives, certain facts about the life of the author can be unfolded from the text of the *Maqāmāt*.

For example, in one of his letters, al-Hamadhānī claims that he "travelled across the world and encountered various types of people".[8] Biographical sources confirm that his journeys throughout his relatively short life were excessive and, consequently, left a distinct mark on the *Maqāmāt*.[9] The work may be viewed as a fictional autobiography where the concept of 'journey' and the image of 'cities' is a focal point. Of course, considering the cities in the *Maqāmāt* as a major aspect of a fictional autobiography requires more investigation and sufficient evidence. This could be derived from the actual corpus of al-Hamadhānī's letters, which constitute a factual autobiography to a reasonable extent. Therefore, it seems sensible to view the fictional part of al-Hamadhānī's literature in the light of his factual works. In other words, through the *Rasā'il* the *Maqāmāt* can reach further dimensions of factuality, whereas the *Maqāmāt* can be analyzed regarding the author's daily life, journeys and social encounters.

At the same time, one should bear in mind that the images or descriptions of cities introduced by al-Hamadhānī in his letters belong to a different category than the type of images and descriptions found in the *Maqāmāt*. However, the cities, as mentioned in the *Maqāmāt,* may contribute to the disclosure of certain realities about those cities Ibn Hishām travels to in the course of events. Al-Hamadhānī's description of

8 *Rasā'il,* 376 (Translated into English by the author).

9 Al-Hamadhānī was born in Hamadhān, West Iran. At the age of twenty-two, he left his birthplace and moved to Rayy (current Tehran area), where he became associated with the court of al-Ṣāḥib ibn ʿAbbād. Shortly afterwards, he moved to Jurjān in the east of Rayy where he stayed for almost a year whilst being accommodated by the local Ismāʿīlis. At the age of twenty-four, he reached Nīshāpūr in Khurāsān and after staying there for almost one year, he moved to Hirāt where he lived in prosperity until he died. According to al-Thaʿālibī, there was no single city in Khurāsān, Sīstān and Ghazna that al-Hamadhānī had not visited, and no king, prince or minster he had not met and benefited from. See al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, 295.

those cities in his letters is a verifiable account, whereas this cannot be said about their portrayal in the *Maqāmāt*, as the author did not actually inhabit or visit many of the cities he mentions in the work.[10] Nevertheless, common knowledge about those cities, for example their names and what was commonly attributed to them, may have inspired the author in relating certain cities to certain events or themes, directly or indirectly. This would therefore be in accord with the nature, reputation or name of each particular city as well as with the setting of events in each particular *maqāma*.[11]

Interestingly, a careful study of al-Hamadhānī's *Rasā'il* shows that the absolute majority of his letters were composed during the Nīshāpūr and post-Nīshāpūr period (382–398 A.H.). This implies that none of the cities he had lived in or passed through before reaching Nīshāpūr are mentioned in his published letters. However, in his late letters that belong to the Hirāt period, al-Hamadhānī often mentions certain cities related to the period of his childhood, such as his birthplace Hamadhān.[12] Thus, it is almost certain that prior to his arrival to Nīshāpūr, Hamadhānī was not known as a composer of letters. This may have led al-Khwārizmī to the conclusion that al-Hamadhānī was not skilled in any branch of literature except the composition of *maqāmas*.[13] It may be suggested that al-Hamadhānī began to compose such eloquent and sophisticated letters successfully in order to challenge al-Khwārizmī, as he was renowned for being a master in the composition of artistic letters, or in order to become a part of the circle of Khurāsānian belletrists who enjoyed authority and wealth, something al-Hamadhānī was able to achieve towards the latter years of his life.

10 Al-Hamadhānī never dwelled in any of the Iraqi cities mentioned frequently in his *Maqāmāt*, nor in any of the Iranian cities that fall outside the route of his long journey from Hamadhān to Hirāt.

11 The *Maqāma of Kūfa* is a representative example where al-Hamadhānī narrates a story that can be applicable to his person and life, although he had never visited or lived in Kūfa.

12 *Rasā'il*, 402.

13 *Rasā'il*, 389-390.

Since the preserved compilation of al-Hamadhānī's letters dates back to the last fifteen years of his life, the city that he frequently mentions is Hirāt, in which he spent his final years in prosperity and welfare.[14] Accordingly, in the last letter he composed before his death he mentions that Hirāt stands as a "support for the state and its eye".[15] In an earlier letter, he states that "Hirāt is ... the city of peace,[16] the province of Islam, the abode of Sunnism and its pivot, and the flame of guidance and its light-stand".[17] It is quite evident from this statement that the features of Hirāt mentioned by al-Hamadhānī are of religious connotations and therefore provide a positive image of the city to his readers.

The case totally changes when al-Hamadhānī mentions the people of Hirāt in his letters, where, despite his praise of the city's religious traits, he slanders them in a vicious manner by saying that they were disunited to the extent that the life and property of individuals were in constant danger, houses were being ruined, people robbed and every man behaved as if he were a king of his own. He mentions that, one day, as he attended the Great Mosque in Hirāt, he found an ill man squatting at the foot of each single pillar in the main chamber. When he tried to talk to him, the miserable man at the pillar could hardly comprehend what he was telling him as a result of the misery and frustration he was living in. He concludes that such a situation was the result of social disunity. He goes on, in another letter, to reveal what he claimed to be the disgraceful nature of Hirāt's natives by describing them as misers who are unwilling to praise anyone, yet very courageous in slander. He adds that goodness among them was hidden behind a wall, whereas evil was as visible as a flame at the top of a minaret.[18] These attributes of the society of Hirāt, according to al-Hamadhānī's letters, demonstrate and reflect the typical social conditions and personal characteristics that are frequently encountered when reading the *Maqāmāt*. This may suggest that Hirāt and its

14 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, 295.

15 *Rasā'il*, 299.

16 This title was often given to Baghdad.

17 *Rasā'il*, 480.

18 See *Rasā'il*, pp. 304, 307, 319 and 320. Many of Hamadhānī's descriptions attributing to Hirāt and its natives can be sighted in the *Maqāmāt*.

citizens constituted an exemplary model for al-Hamadhānī in the composition of several *maqāmas* still found in the preserved compilation of the *Maqāmāt*. This also suggests that the existing *Maqāmāt* do not entirely belong to the Nīshāpūr or pre-Nīshāpūr period, but rather to the latter years of al-Hamadhānī's life, as it is the case with most of his letters.[19]

Ironically, al-Hamadhānī was known to have lived in considerable wealth and prosperity, while Hirāt and its citizens were undergoing disastrous and devastating conditions.[20] This resembles the conditions of al-Iskandarī who used to take unwarranted advantage of his decaying society and, henceforth, made fortunes to the extent that he mentions this in the end of the *Maqāma of Kūfa*:

> Let not my demanding deceive three, I am in a state of affluence so great that the pocket of joy would tear, I could, if I wished, have ceilings of gold.[21]

Certainly, al-Hamadhānī of Hirāt who we find in the *Rasā'il* and described by al-Thaʿālibī in *Yatīmat al-Dahr* did not differ much from Abū al-Fatḥ of Alexandria in this respect![22] What is noteworthy is the fact that the city of Hirāt, where al-Hamadhānī spent the last fifteen years of his life, is never mentioned in any of the existing *maqāmas*! Was he disguising the real identity of Hirāt and al-Iskandarī by refraining from including the name of that city among the many localities that were visited by the heroes and the narrator of the *maqāmas*?

19 In case this fact can be verified through textual analysis or new biographical sources, then it may be assumed that al-Hamadhānī's early works, including the four hundred *maqāmas* he points out to, should be counted among his lost works. Similarly, this would also imply that the existing works by al-Hamadhānī, which were preserved by his fans after he gained fame and fortune upon his arrival to Nīshāpūr and after his death, must belong to this latter period of his life.

20 See al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, 295.

21 *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 40.

22 It is evident from many of al-Hamadhānī's letters that he was quite wealthy when he was in Hirāt, unlike his conditions when reaching Nīshāpūr. See *Rasā'il*, pp. 248, 249, 266, 305, and 359.

Iskandarī or the Merchant:

When investigating the *Maqāmāt* and their textual relation to the *Rasā'il*, the most indicative, comparative analysis can be made between the *Maqāma of Advice*,[23] on the one hand, and a letter by al-Hamadhānī addressed to one of the prominent citizens of Nīshāpūr, Abū al-Ṭayyib Sahl ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣuʿlūkī al-Nīsābūrī,[24] on the other hand. In this letter, the author relates the story of a merchant advising his son on methods of saving money. Likewise, the *Maqāma of Advice* deals with the same topic, where al-Iskandarī instructs his son similarly before sending him for commerce. At the beginning of his letter, al-Hamadhānī tells Abū al-Ṭayyib the following:

> Perhaps my case with the Shaykh, the Imam, is similar to the case of the merchant and his son when the former bid farewell to the latter after he had given him money to work with.[25]

He continues by introducing the dialogue that took place between the merchant and his son. The significant point about this letter is the recurrence of the merchant's speech in al-Iskandarī's words in the *Maqāma of Advice*. The common statements that illustrate the nature of the piece of advice by both al-Iskandarī and the merchant are as follows:

> O my dear son, though I rely upon the soundness of thy wisdom and the purity of thy stock, still I am solicitous and the solicitous augurs ill. And I am not free from fear for thee on account of desire and its power, and lust and its demon. Therefore seek aid against them, in day by fasting and in the night by sleeping. Verily it is a garb whose exterior is hunger and whose interior is sleep, and no lion has ever put it on whose fierceness has not been softened... Verily, generosity is quicker in consuming wealth than the moth-worm is in wool, and greediness is unluckier than Basūs. Do not quote me their saying,

23 *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 153-155.

24 *Rasā'il*, 393-397. Ṣuʿlūkī is mentioned in *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol. 4, 483. It is said that he was the mufti of Khurāsān and a respected and wealthy jurist. See al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*, vol. 3, 172.

25 *Rasā'il*, 393 (Translated into English by the author).

> "Verily God is generous", ... Yeah, Verily God is indeed generous, but God's generosity increases us but does not decrease Him; it benefits us, but does not injure Him. Now whoever is in this condition let him be generous. But a generosity that does not increase thee till it decreases me, that does not feather thee till it plucks me, is an abandonment, I will not say a fiendish one but a fatal one... And imagine between one meal and another ocean gale, except that there is no danger, and the distance to China, except that there is not travel... Verily it is wealth – May God bless thee! – therefore be sure not to spend except from profits. Thou shouldest eat bread and salt, and thou hast permission in regard to vinegar and onions, as long as thou feelest no repugnance towards them... And flesh is as valuable as thine own flesh and me thinks thou eatest it not.[26]

When comparing the piece of advice in both, the letter to Abū al-Ṭayyib and the *maqāma*, it becomes obvious that the two pieces are almost identical in letter and spirit.[27] However, the *maqāma* ends the piece of advice without a final conclusion, contrary to the way the typical structure of a *maqāma* should be![28] Yet, what may be called the 'Story of Advice' in the letter proceeds as follows after the merchant ends his advice to his son:

> When the son was away, he was eager to learn. Thus, he spent whatever he possessed on obtaining knowledge. After he was deprived from his newly acquired money as well as the money that he received from his father, he returned to the latter in poverty but with knowledge about the *Qur'ān* and the *Tafsīr*. He said to his father: "O father, I have come to you ... with the *Qur'ān* and its meanings ... traditions ... patterns of speech, poetry ... grammar ... language ... and literature..." [When the father heard all that] he took him to the cam-

26 *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 53-55.

27 It should be added that the statements of the *maqāma* which do not appear in the story of the letter are, more or less, typical expressions of the *Maqāmāt*, such as: "Hast thou understood them both, O son of the vile woman?" or "Hast thou understood them, O son of the unlucky woman?" and other such expressions.

28 It is possible that some *maqāmas* may have been added to the collection of the *Maqāmāt* before being finished writing. This assumption is reaffirmed when comparing the *Maqāmāt* with the *Rasā'il*.

> bist (foreign exchange dealer), the draper, ... the butcher and finally to the grocer and asked for a bunch of herb, and told the grocer to choose a commentary on one chapter of the *Qur'ān* in return to the herb. But the grocer refused his offer saying: "We sell for money and not for interpreted chapters." Thereupon, the father took some dust in his hand and put it on his son's head while telling him: "O son of the unlucky woman! You have left with quintals [of money] and returned with legends that a man with brain would not exchange it with a bunch of herb."[29]

It is likely that the story of the merchant and his son in al-Hamadhānī's letter, as well as the story found in the *Maqāma of Advice*, have the same origin. However, the narrative in the letter, which develops into a short story or even a complete *maqāma*, advances in five consecutive stages as follows:

- The merchant addresses his son (this is the common part between the *maqāma* and the letter).
- The son educates himself instead of collecting wealth.
- The son returns to his father.
- The father takes his son to the market.
- The father rebukes his son.

The advice in al-Hamadhānī's letter is an introduction to the proceeding events. If both stories supposedly evolved under similar circumstances or reflect the same incident, then the *Maqāma of Advice* can be seen as an incomplete piece of work that developed into a complete and comprehensive story at a later stage in al-Hamadhānī's letter to Abū al-Ṭayyib and which matches a complete *maqāma*. As a matter of fact, the story of the merchant includes certain aspects that are typical of the *maqāma* genre in general, such as the dramatic construction, which is represented by the dialogue on the one hand, and the sequence of events leading to a sarcastic end, on the other hand.

29 *Rasā'il*, 395-396 (Translated into English by the author).

It may be suggested that the boy in the story above represents al-Hamadhānī who spent his earthly fortune on obtaining knowledge but, unfortunately, his addressees, Abū al-Ṭayyib and his entourage, did not appreciate his knowledge, exactly like the grocer who had no appreciation for learning. In this way, al-Hamadhānī rebuked the addressees and, at the same time, asked them for a gift. It should also be noted here that al-Hamadhānī was not enjoying a wealthy life when composing his letter to Abū al-Ṭayyib. In fact, he had reached Nīshāpūr in a state of despair. These observations may result in the following proposed conclusions:

1. The *Maqāma of Advice* was produced prior to the letter to Abū al-Ṭayyib.
2. It was left incomplete.
3. It was composed either before al-Hamadhānī's arrival to Nīshāpūr or, most likely, during his early days there and recorded the whole story he had in mind.

This latter conclusion, in addition to shedding some light on the genesis of al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*, suggests the existence of a strong link between what is intended to sound fiction in al-Hamadhānī's works and what is narrated as a fact.

As already mentioned, the letter, which includes the story of the merchant, was written to Abū al-Ṭayyib of Nīshāpūr. In al-Hamadhānī's account on his debate with al-Khwārizmī,[30] it is mentioned that his first encounter with his opponent took place at the residence of the same Abū al-Ṭayyib. When the second debate was organized at the house of Abū al-Qāsim al-Mustawfī, some friends of Abū al-Ṭayyib were present. In his account, al-Hamadhānī commends Abū al-Ṭayyib and his entourage.[31] This implies that when he composed the account, most likely after the debate, both men were on good terms. However, the letters of al-Hamadhānī to Abū al-Ṭayyib indicate mutual hostility, which implies

30 For an analytical study on the debate, see Rowson, "Religion and Politics in the Career of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī," 653-673.

31 *Rasā'il*, 62.

that those letters were written towards the end of al-Hamadhānī's first year in Nīshāpūr or even later. This is contrary to what is found in the poems al-Hamadhānī had composed in praise of the same Abū al-Ṭayyib upon arriving at Nīshāpūr and in demeaning the inhabitants of that city by using an ironic language.[32]

Some dates, at this point, could further clarify certain facts. Al-Hamadhānī moved to Nīshāpūr in 382 A.H. and al-Khwārizmī died a year later, in 383 A.H. At the time of the debate, al-Hamadhānī had already composed a number of *maqāma*s according to al-Khwārizmī's testimony, which has been mentioned earlier. Those pieces of evidence may be sufficient to confirm the precedence of the *Maqāma of Advice* over the story of the merchant. There may be a gap of at least one year between both works. This suggests that some of the stories in the *Maqāmāt* must have been produced during his first year in Nīshāpūr. This also suggests that a story mentioned in a *maqāma* may well be related to a story in al-Hamadhānī's real life as reflected in the *Rasā'il*.

One might assume that those *maqāma*s, which resemble the *Maqāma of Advice* in being inconclusive, could have belonged to the earlier Nīshāpūr periods, whereas the more complete and conclusive ones, which are more or less identical to the structure of the story of the merchant, belong to the later Nīshāpūr or post-Nīshāpūr periods!

Real or Fictional Abuse:

A similar textual linkage between the two pieces of literature can be found in a different letter written by al-Hamadhānī to Abū al-Ṭayyib. It is one of the most abusive and outrageous letters in the *Rasā'il*, despite its brevity. The humiliating and abusive titles given to Abū al-Ṭayyib demonstrate the excessive tension which was built up between the two men and led al-Hamadhānī to addressing Abū al-Ṭayyib with the following letter:

32 See *Dīwān*, pp. 16-19, 69-72.

> O span of the hand! What is all this arrogance? O small span! What is all this drapery? O monkey! What is this gown? O *Ya'jūj*! When is the emergence? O beer! For how much would you be sold? O dog! When would you meet me? O mouthful of the shamefaced! We are at your door. O egg of the worm! Who brought you up? O beer! O seed! O who is always followed by an insult! O furuncle! How painful you are. O lice! We will have a word with you. If you consider it, you will allow it to come about. Peace be upon you.[33]

Evidently, the above letter echoes the statements of al-Iskandarī in the *Maqāma of Dīnār*, such as: "O cold of the old woman! O sultriness of Tammūz! O filth of the goglet! O non-current dirham! ...".[34] A study of both texts, i.e. the letter (above) and the *maqāma*, leads to an assumption contrary to the one deduced from the comparison of the previous letter to Abū al-Ṭayyib and the *Maqāma of Advice*. In the case of the *Maqāma of Dīnār* and the above-mentioned "letter of assault", it is obvious that the letter falls short of the *maqāma*. It can be described as a primitive state of the proposed *maqāma*. The tensions between al-Hamadhānī and Abū al-Ṭayyib increased towards the end of al-Hamadhānī's first year in Nīshāpūr. Therefore, if the *Maqāma of Dīnār* was an improved version of the letter, then it must have been composed by the end of 382 A.H. or even later.

When studying the tale as a tale related to the factual letter sent by al-Hamadhānī to Abū al-Ṭayyib, it becomes obvious that in the *Maqāma of Dīnār* the author was depicting himself being represented by the figure of al-Iskandarī as well as the figure of his contester in the tale of the *maqāma*. Perhaps, that is why he concludes the *maqāma* with a statement by the narrator in which he describes both abusers as being "*Badīʿ al-Kalām*".[35] This not only gives the reader a hint to "*Badīʿ al-Zamān*", but also to the unity in the characters of both the abuser and the abused!

33 *Dīwān*, 431-432 (Translated into English by the author).

34 *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 164-167.

35 *Maqāmāt* (ʿAbduh), 222.

There are at least three sources that al-Hamadhānī may have benefited from before composing the *Maqāma of Dīnār* and probably did benefit from after writing the letter to Abū al-Ṭayyib. Ironically enough, the first source was a letter written by his opponent, al-Khwārizmī, to Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī al-Badīhī, who was known as a globetrotter poet. Al-Khwārizmī's letter includes more than a dozen statements that are almost identical to those mentioned by al-Hamadhānī in the *Maqāma of Dīnār*.[36] Al-Hamadhānī may have come across al-Khwārizmī's letter while residing in Nīshāpūr and chose to adopt many parts of it. Most likely, this letter of al-Khwārizmī had been composed prior to the debate between the two men. This must be concluded, as al-Thaʻālibī reports that al-Khwārizmī remained inactive until his death soon afterwards.[37]

In addition, it must be assumed that the letter of al-Hamadhānī to Abū al-Ṭayyib was composed after the debate and that the *Maqāma of Dīnār* came later on. This implies that the chain of such "works of plagarism" goes back to al-Khwārizmī before reaching al-Hamadhānī. Therefore, when the latter was composing his *maqāma*, he had several real figures in mind, which he had already encountered. Another two references originating from the letter of Khwārizmī can be regarded as source material for al-Hamadhānī to develop his abusive literature:

First, a speech by his contemporary Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī recorded by al-Thaʻālibī in *Laṭāʾif al-Maʻārif*.[38] Second, a poem by his contemporary satirist al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Baghdādī whose poetry was circulating in Nīshāpūr.[39] Many of the abusive statements of Abū Dulaf, as well as similar statements in the poem of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, were echoed in the *Maqāma of Dīnār*. This would suggest that much of the circulating literature of al-Hamadhānī's age contributed to the development of his *maqāmas*, in which its fictional characters were derived from the real world al-Hamadhānī was living in.

36 See al-Khwarizmi, *Rasāʾil al-Khwārizmī*, 443-447.
37 Al-Thaʻālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol. 4, 238.
38 Al-Thaʻālibī, *Laṭāʾif al-Maʻārif*, 234-239.
39 Al-Thaʻālibī records one of his abusive poems in *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol. 3, 41-43.

The Hypocrite Clergy and Fortune Hunters:

Furthermore, a third *maqāma* called the *Maqāma of Nīshāpūr* should not be left out when studying al-Hamadhānī's *Rasā'il*. Two of his letters, one to Aḥmad al-Zūzanī[40] and the other to Sahl ibn al-Marzubān,[41] bear resemblance to the *Maqāma of Nīshāpūr*. Moreover, the two *maqāmas of Knowledge* and *Nīshāpūr* can be linked to the letter to al-Zūzanī, whereas the two paragraphs from the *Maqāma of Nīshāpūr* are a description by ʻĪsā ibn Hishām as well as a statement in which he admits his own hypocrisy.

The first paragraph of this *maqāma*, which was restated in the letter to al-Zūzanī, is a description of a common social disease in Nīshāpūr in those days: the hypocrite clergy. In the *maqāma*, al-Iskandarī comes out on a Friday making an outward appearance of a pious Muslim cleric by wearing Islamic clothing. When ʻĪsā asked the one praying next to him, a native of Nīshāpūr, about the identity of the cleric, the native of Nīshāpūr replied:

> A moth that attacks none but the woolen garment of the orphans, a locust that falls upon none but the forbidden crop, a burglar that breaks into none but the treasury of pious bequests, a Kurd that raids upon none but the weak, a wolf that preys upon none but God's servants, between their kneeling and prostration, a warrior that plunders nothing but God's property, under cover of covenants and witnesses.[42]

The same description is used in al-Hamadhānī's letter to Nīshāpūr's judge for a different judge of that city: Abū Bakr al-Ḥīrī.[43] In the above

40 *Rasā'il*, 162-175. Abū al-Qāsim ʻAlī ibn Mubārak al-Zūzanī, from Zūzan in the province of Khurāsān, was skilled in various branches of learning as well as a Muʻtazilite and a Sufi. At the time al-Hamadhānī came to Nīshāpūr, al-Zūzanī was also living there and was one of its magistrates. See al-Thaʻālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol. 4, 517.

41 *Rasā'il*, 150-157. Abū Naṣr Sahl ibn al-Marzubān, originally from Isfahān but a resident of Nīshāpūr when al-Hamadhānī was living there, was known for collecting rare books. See al-Thaʻālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol. 4, 452-455.

42 *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 150. When this imposter was asked about his identity, he replied: "I am a man known as al-Iskandarī", 151.

43 *Rasā'il*, 172.

example, the corresponding statements in the *Rasā'il* and the *Maqāmāt* reveal the true identity of al-Iskandarī in the *Maqāma of Nīshāpūr*: According to the letter to al-Zūzanī, it is none other than Abū al-Bakr al-Ḥīrī.[44] The other paragraph, which was restated in the letter to al-Zūzanī, is an additional proof for the cleric's dissimulation. It shows that his rituals were entirely for earthly desires, despite his words that were derived from religious terms such as *Kaʿba, ḥajj, mashʿar, qibla* and *Minā*.[45]

It has been stated earlier that al-Hamadhānī's letter to al-Zūzanī shows significant links to the two *maqāmas*: the *Maqāma of Nīshāpūr* and the *Maqāma of Knowledge*. Both, the paragraph in the latter *maqāma* and the text of the letter, are a description of knowledge.[46] This relationship between one letter and two *maqāmas* may suggest that the composition dates of the two *maqāmas* were the same. Although the exact date of the composition of the two *maqāmas* cannot be determined, the fact that al-Hamadhānī mentions five thousand *dirhams* in his letter to al-Zūzanī, which were embezzled from him by al-Ḥīrī, in addition to him mentioning a farm he had leased for three years, indicate that the realization of the *Maqāmāt* must have been after 385 A.H. while bearing in mind that al-Hamadhānī's arrival to Nīshāpūr, in poverty, was in 382 A.H.

Furthermore, in al-Hamadhānī's account on his debate with al-Khwārizmī, one sentence and one verse from the *Maqāma of Jurjān* were restated.[47] It is interesting to note that the *Maqāma of Jurjān* tells

44 This fact easily refutes the assumption that al-Iskandarī represents none other than Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī. For some arguments regarding the identities of the two characters of ʿĪsā ibn Hishām and Abū al-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, 41–43.

45 The paragraph reads as follows: "to the Kaʿba of the needy, not to the Kaʿba of the pilgrims, to the station of generosity not to the station of sanctity, to the house of captives, not to the house of sacrifices, to the source of gifts, not to the Qibla of prayer" (compare between *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 151 and *Rasā'il*, 151). Al-Thaʿālibī considers this paragraph as one of the most eloquent excerpts of al-Hamadhānī's prose, see *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, vol. 4, 297).

46 Compare *al-Maqāma al-ʿilmiyya* in *Maqāmāt* (ʿAbduh), 202- 03, with al-Hamadhānī's letter in the *Rasā'il*, 165-167.

47 The sentence is: "I am barer than a palm of the hand", and the verse is: "And among us there are *maqāmas* whose faces are fair, And councils where words are followed by

the story of a man from Alexandria (in the period of the Umayyad Andalusia)[48] who, after travelling to the city of Hamadhān, continued his journey until he found himself in the midst of an audience which offered him some money due to his eloquence and desperate condition. In fact, al-Iskandarī in the *Maqāma of Jurjān* is very similar to al-Hamadhānī in the assembly of al-Khwārizmī, which took place in the house of Abū al-Ṭayyib. Al-Hamadhānī was an eloquent speaker who claimed to have Arab origins,[49] similar to the Umayyads. He lived in Hamadhān and travelled across many countries until he reached Nīshāpūr. After taking part in a gathering of poets and belletrists in Nīshāpūr, he not only gained fame but also made a fortune as a reward for his rhetorical and poetic talents. The *Maqāma of Jurjān* relates exactly the same story about al-Iskandarī![50]

The textual link between a letter that al-Hamadhānī wrote to one of his friends[51] and the *Maqāma of Khalaf* provides further interesting clarifications to the chronology of the *Maqāmāt*, as well as to the factual identities of its fictional figures. The verbally restated sentences read as follows:

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deeds". *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 53-54. In *Rasā'il*, see 30-32.

48 See *Maqāmāt* (ʿAbduh), 46, note no. 7.

49 In one of his letters, al-Hamadhānī says that "his name is Aḥmad, his birthplace is Hamadhān, he belongs to Taghlib – a Christian tribe of Arabs who inhibited northwestern Iraq and to whom the notable Umayyad poet, al-Akhṭal, belonged to – and originated from Muḍar (the original tribe from which the forefathers of Prophet Muḥammad descended)". See *Rasā'il*, 8-9. Both tribes of Taghlib and Muḍar are of ʿAdnānī origin. In al-Hamadhānī, *Dīwān*, 78, a poem can be found in praise of an Arab tribe. The title of the poem "*urjūza ʿadnānīyya*".

50 In one of his poems (see *Dīwān*, 23-25), al-Hamadhānī praises the noblemen of Jurjān with whom he spent almost a year before proceeding to Nīshāpūr. It is noteworthy that, besides praising Jurjān's noblemen, he condemns its *qāḍī* (judge) in a most abusive language. In the same poem, he also refers to Jurjān as a place where "a hopeful man would go for begging"! The *Dīwān*, in addition to the *Rasā'il*, can serve as a source of information for disclosing the factual dimensions of the *Maqāmāt*, if the individuals and places mentioned in al-Hamadhānī's poems are analyzed and linked to apparently fictional figures and sites that appear in the *Maqāmāt*.

51 *Rasā'il*, 264-266.

> Verily estrangement rankles in the breast as fire is kindled in the fire-stick. If it were extinguished, it will subside and vanish, but, if it continues to exist, it will scatter and spread. And the vessel will fill and overflow, if the drops fall into it consecutively; and reproach [in the *Rasā'il* it is 'moth'], when it is left alone, will hatch and lay. No snare catches the freeborn [in the *Rasā'il* it is 'us' – al-Hamadhānī's reference to himself] like bounty, and no scourge repels him like rudeness. But, in any case, we look down from above, upon the generous with an amorous glance, and upon the ignoble with a contemptuous regard. Therefore he who meets us with a long nose, we will meet him with an elephant's trunk, and him who regards us as kance, we will dispose of for a paltry price. Now, thou [in the *Rasā'il* it is al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs – a reference to al-Hamadhānī's addressee] didst not plant me for thy slave to uproot me, nor didst thou buy me for thy servants to sell me.[52]

Despite the similarity of the text used both in the *maqāma* and the letter, when examined closely, two major differences between the two texts disclose the real identities of the two fictional characters mentioned in the *Maqāma of Khalaf*: 'Īsā and a lad to whom he gets attached. In the letter, the 'freeborn' man in the *maqāma*, which is a reference to the lad, is replaced by the word 'I', by means of which al-Hamadhānī wants to point out to himself. 'You', as a reference to 'Īsā in the *maqāma*, becomes al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs in the letter. Within the circle of people al-Hamadhānī used to correspond with, three individuals held that title: 'Adnān ibn Muḥammad, the Governor of Hirāt; Abū al-Faḍl al-Mīkālī and Abū Ja'far al-Mīkālī. However, al-Hamadhānī never addressed Abū al-Faḍl al-Mīkālī and Abū Ja'far al-Mīkālī with that title, whereas he did address 'Adnān ibn Muḥammad with that title.[53] In addition, the lad's rebuking tone in the *maqāma* echoes the tone of several parts of al-Hamadhānī's letters to 'Adnān, which makes it more likely that he is the factual figure represented by 'Īsā in the *Maqāma of Khalaf*.

52 *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 149.

53 See *Rasā'il*, pp. 423, 427, 429 and 431.

The above-mentioned *maqāma* is a eulogy to Khalaf ibn Aḥmad (d. 399 A.H.), the Amīr of Sijistān, and is one of six *maqāma*s that were composed for the same purpose.[54] Some scholars believe that these were composed after al-Hamadhānī's departure from Nīshāpūr in order to contact the Amīr of Sijistān.[55] This would imply that the six *maqāma*s in praise of Khalaf were composed during the same period of time. There is no doubt that they can be classified as belonging to the post-Nīshāpūr period in al-Hamadhānī's life. However, a statement in the *Maqāma of Nīshāpūr* suggests a relatively late date, for 'Īsā's friend, who was heading for Khalaf from Nīshāpūr, told him that he is 'going up'.[56] This indicates that he could not have been going to Sijistān. If this were the case, he should have gone down from Nīshāpūr and not 'up'.

Back then, the only place he could have gone upward to in order to meet Khalaf was Jūzjān. It is worth mentioning that Khalaf was sent into honorable captivity in Jūzjān in 393 A.H. This would imply that the *Maqāma of Nīshāpūr* could not have been written before that date. The only question remaining unanswered is whether the six *maqāma*s on Khalaf can be traced back to specific dates! In the light of the above conclusion regarding the likelihood that the two *maqāma*s (*Knowledge* and *Nīshāpūr*) were composed on equal dates, it can be suggested that the former *maqāma* should be classified among the late ones. If the verbal resemblance between the different *maqāma*s can be regarded as an indication to proximal authorship, then the dates the two *maqāma*s (*Khalaf* and *Kūfa*, of the Sufi) were composed on may well be convergent due to the existence of identical statements in both *maqāma*s.[57]

54 These are the *Maqāmāt of Khalaf*, *Nājim*, *Nīshāpūr*, *King*, *Sārī* and *Tamīm*.

55 See Daif, *al-Maqāma*, 15.

56 *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), 151.

57 These read as follows: "The envoy of might and its messenger. The defeated of hunger and its outcast, and an exile whose beast is lean and fatigued, whose life is hardship, and between whom and his two chicks are vast deserts. A guest whose shadow is light, and whose stray is a loaf". *Maqāmāt* (Prendergast), pp. 39, 144 and 145.

Conclusion:

The above analysis of the textual linkage between the *Rasā'il* and the *Maqāmāt* shows that most of the six *maqāma*s mentioned above, if not all, cannot be counted among the four hundred *maqāma*s al-Hamadhānī refers to in a letter he wrote while living in Nīshāpūr in any way.[58] In addition to disclosing identities of characters, localities and events in the *Rasā'il*-based *Maqāmāt*, this comparison between both works provides substance for the study regarding the evolution of the *Maqāmāt* throughout the different stages of the author's life, in which Nīshāpūr was a turning point.

Ultimately, this study may also pave the way for new interpretations of the *Maqāmāt*. This would display the fact that al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* are multi-layer pieces of literature that provide sufficient room for further investigations. These investigations should deal with the realism and the intellectual dimensions which the author has succeeded in presenting as a fictional world, which automatically drive attention to the form it was written in. The form may have also been intended to serve as a veil to the content and its connotations.

Last but not least, it should be mentioned here that none of the three major works of al-Hamadhānī (the *Maqāmāt*, the *Rasā'il* and the *Dīwān*) have yet been published in scholarly critical editions. It goes without saying that the availability of critical editions of these three works will definitely improve studies on al-Hamadhānī's literature, clarify the organic relationship between the three works and adjust inaccuracies or misinterpretations that may have occurred in recent studies.

58 See *Rasā'il*, 390.

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Who Authored al-Madāʾinī's Works?

Ilkka Lindstedt

1 Introduction

In this somewhat provocatively titled article, I will discuss the problem of authorship as regards the works of the second–third AH/eighth–ninth century CE *akhbārī*, collector and composer of historical narratives, al-Madāʾinī.[1] While also the origin of his material could be taken into consideration in this regard,[2] here I will deal with the transmission of his works and *khabar*s, narratives. It will be seen that al-Madāʾinī's students-cum-transmitters participated in the authorial processes. In some cases it can be hypothesized, but not easily demonstrated, that the existence of some of al-Madāʾinī's works is more due to his students than himself. That is, they were collected by them during his life or posthumously from the diverse material that al-Madāʾinī lectured (lecturing was the primary way for him to disseminate his material). Al-Madāʾinī's material was further reworked by later authors who worked in a more "writerly"[3] environment, such as al-Ṭabarī.

2 The Bio- and Bibliography of al-Madāʾinī

I have treated al-Madāʾinī's life and works elsewhere at length,[4] so what follows is merely a summary. Al-Madāʾinī is said to have been born in 135/752–3 in Basra.[5] His full name was Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Qurashī al-Madāʾinī. The *nisba* al-Qurashī is due to

1 The article is partly based on my dissertation at the University of Helsinki: Lindstedt, *The Transmission of al-Madāʾinī's Material: Historiographical Studies*.

2 That is, we could discuss how al-Madāʾinī transmitted and edited material that was also known to his contemporary *akhbārī*s. This is not done here.

3 Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture*. See, for instance, Landau-Tasseron, "Processes of Redaction," on how Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī molded their narratives and how they were further used by later authors.

4 Lindstedt, "The Life and Deeds." The earlier standard studies on al-Madāʾinī are Rotter, Zur Überlieferung; EI², al-Madāʾinī (U. Sezgin).

5 Al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-Qabas* 184.

al-Madāʾinī's family's *mawlā* status. The sources say that al-Madāʾinī (read: his great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather) was a *mawlā* of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Samura b. Ḥabīb al-Qurashī (d. 50 or 51/670–2).[6] The latter was an Arab commander, who campaigned in Sijistān, Khurāsān, and Zābulistān.[7] Hence, one of al-Madāʾinī's forefathers was, most likely, a war prisoner, presumably of Iranian descent, who converted to Islam.

Al-Madāʾinī spent a significant part of his life in Basra, receiving his primary education there. Al-Madāʾinī also lived elsewhere in Iraq, at least in Kufa, al-Madāʾin (the ancient Ctesiphon), and Baghdad. His stay in Kufa is probably related to studies in Muʿtazili theology.[8] His teacher was a certain Muʿammar ibn/abū al-Ashʿath, of whom we do not know much. Three of al-Madāʾinī's other teachers given in biographical sources such as al-Dhahabī[9] are also Kufan, including his earliest teacher, ʿAwāna b. al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764–5 or later).

Al-Madāʾinī's religious persuasion is hard to ascertain. He might have been a moderate Shiʿite. This is based on two things: first, al-Jāḥiẓ, the first author to comment on al-Madāʾinī, calls him and some other *akhbārī*s Shiʿi, although interpreting the exact meaning of this is hard since al-Jāḥiẓ's note is mocking in character.[10] Second, the names of his works as well as the quotations from them show an interest in Shiʿi matters,[11] although Shiʿi biographers do not count him as belonging to their rite.

While we have no information of al-Madāʾinī's exact activities during his sojourn in al-Madāʾin (whence his *nisba*), the information that he did stay there seems reliable to some extent since in one narrative al-Madāʾinī himself refers to that.[12] Later, al-Madāʾinī settled in Baghdad.

6 Ibn ʿAdī, *Kāmil* v, 1855.
7 EI², ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Samura (Gibb).
8 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* i, 100.
9 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh* vi, 104.
10 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasāʾil* ii, 225.
11 The possibility of al-Madāʾinī's Shiʿi inclination has also been noted by Leder, "The Paradigmatic Character," 47.
12 Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira* iii, 84.

We do not know whether this was before or after the civil war between the brothers al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn in the years 194–198/810–813. It could be that it happened only after the fourth *fitna*, since according to one narrative, he met the caliph al-Maʾmūn there, who reigned from Baghdad in 204–218/819–833.[13] Al-Madāʾinī's main patron was the singer and boon-companion of the caliphs, Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 235/849–50).[14] In Baghdad, al-Madāʾinī rose truly to prominence and was able to compose an imposing corpus of works.

We cannot know with any certainty when al-Madāʾinī died (he must have been very old). Be that as it may, it is said to have happened at Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī's home in Baghdad.[15] The most credible dates for his death are 228/842–3[16] or Dhū l-Qaʿda 224/September–October 839:[17] the first because it is from the earliest source to give a year of death for al-Madāʾinī, the second because it is rather exact and could therefore be a report based on real information. All the other years given for his death in the sources seem to be more or less products of guesswork.

Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* lists the titles of over two hundred of al-Madāʾinī's works.[18] Two *adab* works have survived to our day: the *Kitāb al-Taʿāzī*, "The Book of Condolences" (only partially extant), and another work, the manuscript of which is entitled *Risālat al-Mutazawwijāt min Quraysh*, "Epistle on Qurashī Wives," but which has been edited as *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh*, "The Qurashī Women Who [Married One Husband] After Another."[19] I have argued, however, that the work has been edited under an incorrect title and should instead be identified with the *Kitāb Man Qutila ʿanhā Zawjuhā*, "The Book of Women Whose Husbands

13 Yāqūt, *Irshād* v, 311
14 Lindstedt, "The Role of al-Madāʾinī's Students," 314-315.
15 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* i, 101.
16 Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* iii, 1330.
17 Al-Rabaʿī, *Taʾrīkh Mīlād* ii, 495.
18 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* i, 101–104. For a complete bibliography, see Lindstedt, "The Life and Deeds."
19 Edited by ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn in his collection *Nawādir al-Makhṭūṭāt* i.

Were Killed."[20] The *riwāya* and the *isnād*s in both works show that they are extant in later recensions only.

3 The Lecture-Based Environment and the Transmission of al-Madā'inī's Works

It has already been mentioned that al-Madā'inī circulated his works mainly by lecturing. The *isnād*s and the biographical works – these two being, to some extent, independent proof – establish the aural[21] mode of transmission, even if there is a piece of evidence suggesting that al-Madā'inī published some of his works by taking them to copyists-cum-stationers (*warrāqūn*). This emerges in a comment of al-Jāḥiẓ, who says that *akhbārī*s like al-Madā'inī invented/forged (*wallada*) narratives in their books which they then brought to *warrāqīn*, presumably for copying and selling.[22] It could be that al-Jāḥiẓ was just deriding the *akhbārī*s' way of composing works as too effortless, something which al-Masʿūdī explicitly states when making a comparison between al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Madā'inī, noting pejoratively that the latter "only transmitted what he heard," instead of composing more original works like al-Jāḥiẓ.[23]

Lecture or study circle-based transmission is explicitly mentioned in five cases in connection with al-Madā'inī:[24]

20 Lindstedt, "Al-Madā'inī: Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh."

21 For the term and what it entails, see Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*; *The Genesis of Literature*.

22 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il* ii, 225. It should be mentioned that two of al-Madā'inī's transmitters, Banūsa and Muḥammad b. Hārūn (both unidentified), bear the title *al-warrāq*. However, all other students of his are described as being al-Madā'inī's transmitters (*rāwī/rāwiya*), which implies oral/aural transmission. See Lindstedt, "The Role of al-Madā'inī's Students."

23 Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* v, 104.

24 I.e., if we exclude as insufficient proof the many instances in the Arabic biographical dictionaries where someone is said to have participated in al-Madā'inī's lectures (*samiʿa ʿan al-Madā'inī*) and the hundreds or thousands of *isnād*s reading *ḥaddathanī/-nā al-Madā'inī*. These words do not seem to carry a precise technical sense in connection to eighth–ninth century historical or *adab* writing/lecturing. However, some other terms, such as *qara'tu/ʿaraḍtu ʿalā* seem to have had a more exact meaning.

1. According to a report in Abū l-Faraj's *Aghānī*, the Umayyad-era poets al-Farazdaq and Jarīr were discussed in a study circle (*ḥalqa*) held by al-Madā'inī.[25]

2. Yāqūt says that Aḥmad b. al-Ḥārith read aloud (*asmaʿa*) to al-Madā'inī the latter's works.[26] This signifies that he transmitted al-Madā'inī's works by means of what is termed *qirā'a*/*ʿarḍ*, reading them in the presence of his teacher. The same type of transmission surfaces also in the following two instances.

3. Al-Balādhurī notes twice in his *isnād*s: *qara'tu ʿalā al-Madā'inī*.[27] This should be considered important evidence, since it surfaces in al-Madā'inī's direct student's work which is extant.

4. An *isnād* in the *Aghānī* reads: ʿUmar b. Shabba: *ʿaraḍtu ʿalā al-Madā'inī*.[28]

5. Al-Ṭabarī proffers an *isnād*: "Abū Zayd [ʿUmar b. Shabba] said: 'I mentioned that [report] to Abū l-Ḥasan [al-Madā'inī], but he rejected/disliked it (*ankarahu*).'"[29] This again suggests oral/aural transmission in a study circle or other informal setting.

In al-Madā'inī's time, writing was an integral part of the scholar's profession. Nonetheless, his and many of his contemporaries' works did not usually circulate in manuscript form (as authored and published books); rather, they were disseminated through lectures and existed in notebook form.[30] When it is understood that al-Madā'inī disseminated his works through lectures, it ensues that he most likely modified them during his career. There is not, hence, only one original wording to his works which could be restored, but many, and the modern scholars reconstructing lost works should bear this in mind.[31] There are also other reasons for

25 Abū l-Faraj, *Aghānī* viii, 290.
26 Yāqūt, *Irshād* i, 408.
27 Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* ii, 616; (ed. Damascus) vii, 562.
28 Abū l-Faraj, *Aghānī* v, 118.
29 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* i, 3456.
30 Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 40-42.
31 For further on this problem, see Landau-Tasseron, "On the Reconstruction of Lost

the fact that al-Madāʾinī's material surfaces in divergent quotations in later works: his transmitter-cum-students probably modified the material in the course of transmission, whatever the mode; and the later authors of books proper redacted their sources.[32]

Shawkat Toorawa sees the third/ninth century as a crucial period when the Arab-Islamic civilization moved from the oral/aural increasingly toward the written.[33] A somewhat related but not identical phenomenon was the rise of a written work with a final, fixed form.[34] My studies corroborate this.[35] Although some of his contemporaries already composed real books that circulated in manuscript form, al-Madāʾinī mostly acted in the aural environment. The historical works of the late second/eighth–early third/ninth-century authors, transmitted through lectures, have not survived to anything like the same extent as later works; one can only speculate how much effect the fact that they did not have a fixed form had on their survival.[36]

The decisive turn, it seems, happened a generation later, during the lives of al-Madāʾinī's students. This can be seen, for instance, in the career of Aḥmad b. Abī Khaythama (d. Jumādā I 279/July–August 892), who transmitted his *Taʾrīkh* only verbatim and in full and contended that other authors must not quote from it only passages they considered useful. It was in his opinion a complete, definitive work which should be accepted or discarded as a whole. However, Ibn Abī Khaythama still considered *samāʿ* to be the most reliable way of transmitting his work – and maybe it was, since the Arabic script was somewhat ambiguous at the time

Sources."

32 Lindstedt, "The Transmission of al-Madāʾinī's Historical Material to al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī," 51-53.

33 Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture*.

34 See also Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*.

35 Especially Lindstedt, "The Role of al-Madāʾinī's Students."

36 A very important reason, which is unrelated to the question of the mode of transmission, is without a doubt the fact that these works were rather short monographs which became dispensable with the appearance of such works as al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*.

when diacritics were only sparingly used.[37] Other al-Madāʾinī's students, such as Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ (d. ca. 240/854–5) and ʿUmar b. Shabba (d. Jumādā II 262/March 876 or later), also transmitted their historical works by lecturing.[38] This is how they are extant today, as manuscripts that ultimately derive from their authors' students' notebooks.

But it was very laborious to transmit long works like Ibn Abī Khaythama's *Taʾrīkh* by *samāʿ*. Some students of al-Madāʾinī, say, al-Balādhurī (d. ca. 279/892–3), wrote multivolume works, which were mainly transmitted by copying. And al-Jāḥiẓ (d. Muḥarram 255/December 868–January 869 or earlier), who also seems to have been a student of al-Madāʾinī, perhaps during their Basra days, overtly disliked aural transmission and instead emphasized the significance of the written word.[39]

4 Al-Madāʾinī's Students' Role in the Transmission of His Material and Later Redactorial Processes in the Written Environment

There is often one generation or more between al-Madāʾinī and the sources that we have at hand. In some cases, al-Madāʾinī's students' works are preserved, such as Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ's *Taʾrīkh*, al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ* and *Ansāb*, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's (d. Dhū l-Qaʿda 256/October 870) *Muwaffaqiyyāt*, ʿUmar b. Shabba's *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna*, and so on.

The next point I want to underscore is that all al-Madāʾinī's works which are extant or we have details of are later recensions. This can be seen in his *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh*/*Kitāb Man Qutila ʿanhā Zawjuhā*[40] as well as in many surviving quotations of his works. Furthermore, although I will not treat at length al-Madāʾinī's other work that is (partly) extant, the *Kitāb al-Taʿāzī*, even a quick look at it shows that all the *khabar*s are preceded by a long *isnād*: Abū Sahl Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar <- Abū Ṭālib ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad <- Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b.

37 Al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh* iv, 384

38 Lindstedt, "The Role of al-Madāʾinī's Students," 315-316, 321-322.

39 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh* vi, 438.

40 Lindstedt, "Al-Madāʾinī: *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh*."

al-Mutawakkil <- al-Madāʾinī.[41] That such *isnād*s are repeated throughout this work and the *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh/Man Qutila ʿanhā Zawjuhā* is, in my opinion, an avowal of the fact that they were redacted, and perhaps compiled in a manuscript form, by al-Madāʾinī's students. Whether or not al-Madāʾinī himself planned that his lectures on these subjects should form such works we can only, lacking any direct evidence, speculate.

Based on these remarks, I argue that there was probably not simply such a thing as a book by al-Madāʾinī, notwithstanding the al-Jāḥiẓ quotation that shows early authors themselves bringing their books to copyists and booksellers (*warrāqūn*). Al-Madāʾinī's *kitāb*s existed *fī riwāyat fulān* (in a recension of one of his students), although they were known as al-Madāʾinī's works and do include authentic material that is traceable to him.[42] Later authors did not have direct access to al-Madāʾinī's works since al-Madāʾinī mainly disseminated his material by lecturing. Rather, what al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī,[43] and others had at hand were al-Madāʾinī's works (and *khabar*s) *fī riwāyat fulān*, in a later recension.

However, some writers of definitively authored works were al-Madāʾinī's students, for example al-Balādhurī, but this does not mean that their al-Madāʾinī quotations are less modified (in al-Balādhurī's case, they are sometimes *further* from the original, inasmuch as this can be reconstructed). One should also try to differentiate between the al-Madāʾinī quotations that are from recensions of al-Madāʾinī's works and those that are from al-Madāʾinī's students' works that included al-Madāʾinī's material.[44]

41 Complete *riwāya* in al-Madāʾinī, *Kitāb al-Taʿāzī* 21. The *isnād* recurs, in abridged form or in full, *passim*.

42 During my studies on al-Madāʾinī, I have very rarely come across material purportedly quoted from him that can be suspected or ascertained to be falsely ascribed to him. Of course, later authors citing him often modified their quotations and, for example, inserted passages from other sources without stating explicitly what they were doing.

43 Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī lived in the third–fourth/ninth–tenth centuries, not a century before as some scholars have claimed. See my "The Transmission of al-Madāʾinī's Material: Historiographical Studies 43–44."

44 I have tried to make this distinction in Lindstedt, "The Role of al-Madāʾinī's Students,"

To end this paper, I will try to demonstrate, with an analysis of one *khabar*, how al-Madā'inī's students and later authors transmitting from his direct students reworked their al-Madā'inī quotations. I will take as my example the long speech of Ziyād b. Abīhi,[45] the famous governor of Iraq and the East under the caliph Muʿāwiya. This is chosen as the example because it seems that the speeches ascribed to various persons were quoted almost verbatim from al-Madā'inī[46] (and probably from other authorities too). When divergences appear, then, they are rather interesting. Ziyād b. Abīhi's speech as reported by al-Madā'inī is known, at least, in the following versions:

1. Al-Madā'inī -> al-Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān* ii, 61–65.
2. Al-Madā'inī -> al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Muwaffaqiyyāt* 254–258.
3. Al-Madā'inī -> ʿUmar b. Shabba -> al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* ii, 73–76.
4. Al-Madā'inī -> ? -> Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ* iv, 176–181.
5. Al-Madā'inī -> ? -> Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, *ʿIqd* iv, 106–108.

There are, then, at least three different direct students (al-Jāḥiẓ, ʿUmar b. Shabba, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār) of al-Madā'inī who transmitted or quoted this *khabar*. The provenance of Ibn Aʿtham and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi's quotation is left untold and we can only speculate whether they had in front of them, for example, al-Jāḥiẓ's *Bayān* or al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's *Muwaffaqiyyāt* or whether they were transmitting from al-Madā'inī's *kitāb* which they had *fī riwāyat fulān*.

When we go carefully through the texts, we find that they are rather similar but not identical. The divergences are mostly a matter of replacing

although, it must be admitted, our knowledge of this matter is imperfect.

45 According to the *Fihrist*, al-Madā'inī composed a work called *Kitāb Akhbār Ziyād b. Abīhi*; see Lindstedt, "The Life and Deeds," 247. Whether the speech is quoted from that work or not is, of course, difficult to say since none of the sources mention a *kitāb* as their source.

46 The life of a given narrative before al-Madā'inī is often hard or impossible to trace exactly.

words with synonyms.[47] This is in line with what the lecture-based transmission model assumes, namely:

> Because *aḥādīth* were mostly transmitted aurally (even if supported by written notes), meaning that small mistakes were easily made, the analysis assumes that even slight differences in the textual variants of a single *ḥadīth* indicate actual transmission from one person to another while identical texts should be treated as having been copied from others and their *asānīd* as having been forged.[48]

We can, therefore be quite confident that, for instance, al-Ṭabarī was really quoting ʿUmar b. Shabba and not, say, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār who appears, in any case, quite rarely as al-Ṭabarī's source.

All versions except Ibn Aʿtham's agree with each other in their basic form. Ibn Aʿtham's text is different since it is markedly shorter than the others and one suspects this is because Ibn Aʿtham abridged the speech. Ibn Aʿtham's modification work is something we can postulate to have happened in a writerly, rather than a lecture-based, environment. That is, while Ibn Aʿtham probably received this speech from one of al-Madāʾinī's students who had participated in al-Madāʾinī's lectures, Ibn Aʿtham was working on the basis of written works, books proper. On the other hand, according to the bio-bibliographical literature, al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, and ʿUmar b. Shabba, participated in al-Madāʾinī's lec-

47 For instance, the sentence: ***ḥarām*** *ʿalayya al-ṭaʿām wa-l-sharāb ḥattā* ***usawwīhā*** [scil. "hiding places" mentioned in the last sentence] *bi-l-arḍ hadman wa-iḥrāqan* vs. ***muḥarram*** *ʿalayya al-ṭaʿām wa-l-sharāb ḥattā* ***aḍaʿu hādhihi al-mawākhīr*** *[bi-?]al-arḍ hadman wa-iḥrāqan*; and a few lines down: *halaka* vs. *qutila* (al-Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān* ii, 62 and al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Muwaffaqiyyāt* 255, respectively). The assumption is that this is due to transmission according to the lecture-based model. Such alterations can, of course, also happen in the written environment, but one assumes that in the written environment the changes are different, for instance, long sections in an otherwise verbatim-quoted text are removed or added in-between, etc. This is exactly what Ibn Aʿtham was doing.

48 The editors' introduction to Boekhoff-van der Voort & Versteegh & Wagemakers (eds), *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources*, 10.

tures; also al-Ṭabarī still at least partially worked in an environment which emphasized the significance of the aural component.[49]

5 Conclusions

To the question posed in the title ("who authored al-Madāʾinī's works?"), we can answer that al-Madāʾinī is certainly the author[50] of (at least most of) the individual narratives (*khabar*s) attributed to him but the composition of larger works (*kutub*) attributed to him might be the handiwork of his students. It should be clear to the reader by now that, unfortunately, we do not have at hand the original wording of al-Madāʾinī's works or historical narratives but only second- or third-hand quotations or recensions. We have at least three factors contributing to this: first, since al-Madāʾinī disseminated his works primarily through study circles and lecture classes, he probably reworked his material over the years; second, his students transmitted his material in different ways; and finally, later authors who quoted al-Madāʾinī through his students modified the material in ways that suited their ideological or aesthetic sense.

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49 For more detailed evidence, see Lindstedt, "The Role of al-Madāʾinī's Students."

50 Of course, in many cases he seems to have been only a collector of earlier material.

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Multilayered Authorship in Arabic Anecdotal Literature

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila

Reading an Arabic anecdote in an *adab* collection such as Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889) *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, or in a historical source, such as al-Masʿūdī's (d. 345/956) *Murūj al-dhahab*, one rarely stops to think about its author. One either takes the historical information of the anecdote to build a picture of the past, or analyses the structure of the anecdote or its place in the compilation or, finally, reads it for the cultural information the text may have. But rarely does one consider the question of authorship. This is, perhaps, mainly due to the anonymity of the anecdotes: the same material travels from one collection to another, often changing on the way, and it is difficult to point out any particular person as *the* author.

These anecdotes are usually studied either from a historical, literary or folkloristic viewpoint. The historians are either interested in teasing out the historical evidence or analysing the political and ideological motives of the author or, finally, in understanding the processes of transmission against the often implicit background of evaluating the reliability of the historical information.[1] Folklorists seem more interested in the meandering of motives from one source into another than in the impact of individual authors on them[2] and, finally, scholars working from the viewpoint of comparative literature are often more interested in the text itself than its authors.[3]

Stefan Leder, "Authorship," has spoken of early historical *akhbār* as unauthored literature. In a sense, he is, of course, right but that should not close our eyes to the fact that every text has, in another sense, one or several authors. The problem is that in early prose, we encounter a situa-

1 Thus, e.g., Gregor Schoeler has in many publications – see especially *Genesis* and *Oral* – analysed the transmission of texts from this historical point of view. Also Stefan Leder's studies (Authorship), and (Features), take historical *akhbār* and *ḥadīth*s as their starting point.

2 E.g., Marzolph, *Arabia Ridens*.

3 E.g., Malti-Douglas, *Structures*.

tion where several persons, many of them anonymous, have taken part in forming the final text, which may further exist in several versions with major differences.

The authorship of a large part of Arabic literary anecdotes before the tenth century is multilayered in the sense that the texts are the result of the work of multiple authors.[4] There are also stories by a single author, but these are probably in a minority – one example will be mentioned at the end of this paper. Single, individual authors are more common in philosophy, scholarly literature and literary letters.

It should be emphasized that having multiple authors does not mean that the text belongs to folklore. Arabic anecdotes were transmitted in learned circles, using a polished and literary Classical Arabic as their linguistic medium, and at least some of them are the product of a very conscious literary mind. In Arabic folklore, one does find traces of learned prose and elements derived from high literature, but the literary tradition seems to have benefited from folklore only sporadically.[5]

Many long anecdotes which circulated in Arabic literature from the eighth to the mid-tenth centuries exhibit clear indications that they were composed by a series of authors, each moulding the material on successive stages.[6] I will take my examples from among the anecdotes featuring Khālid ibn Ṣafwān (d. 135/752), as I have studied in depth this particular orator, wit, courtier and tribal leader of the Late Umayyad and Early ʿAb-

4 The multilayered authorship of Arabic anecdotes to some extent resembles the situation in modern internet literature where there have been attempts (mainly unsuccessful ones, though) to create a truly polyphonic work, authored by a large number of writers. Unfortunately, this often leads not only to polyphony, but to cacophony, too.

5 Cf., e.g., Hämeen-Anttila, "Oral." There are borderline cases, like that of the final Cairene redaction of the *Arabian Nights*, which even includes lengthy passages directly taken from learned books and inserted into the collection more or less as such without ever having become integral parts of the oral tradition.

6 In short anecdotes, the situation seems similar to that of longer anecdotes, but the brevity of the texts makes it difficult to follow the changes they have undergone and the probability of the text having been transmitted without major changes – i.e., that it only has a single author – is, obviously, the greater the simpler the text is.

bāsid periods.[7] What I am to say, however, should also be valid for other similar stories connected with characters of the Pre-Islamic, Umayyad or Early ʿAbbāsid periods, with the partial exception of major religious or political authorities.

In most long anecdotes, several authors have been involved in the process of producing the final text(s). We may identify four layers of persons who can claim a part in the formation of the final text(s):

1. The first is the protagonist of the story himself, most anecdotes claiming to be reports of real events, where an integral part of the story is often an oration, saying, or witticism, implied to be given in the *expressis verbis* of the protagonist, who is a historical person. Part(s) of such stories may, indeed, go back to a historical character, who may really have delivered some of the speeches attributed to him, or at least parts of them. Hence, he is the original author of the speech, or saying, that forms the core of the story, however much it may have been transformed during the process before the first – or better still: most archaic – version that has been preserved to us.[8]

The protagonist cannot in many cases be given any authorial credit. Stories may be completely devoid of historicity, though they mask themselves as historical (pseudo-historical stories). If the story is not authentic, the protagonist has no more to do with the genesis of the story than a historical character in a Shakespearean play. More probably than not, however, many stories contain a nucleus of "genuine" history, so that we have to allow the protagonist a role, even though perhaps only a minor one. His part in the story may be limited to a brief saying or the outlines

7 See Hämeen-Anttila, "Short stories," "Khālid: between history and literature," and, "Khālid: an orator." I am presently preparing a monograph on Khālid's speeches and stories about him.

8 It is vital to make a distinction between the first preserved version of a story and the oldest one. The date of the codifier (cf. below) basically has nothing to do with the date of the version he codifies. A late codifier may preserve an archaic version while an early codifier may have changed his version significantly.

of events around which stories and speeches have later been composed. The protagonist is usually not the main author.

To take an example, there is a witty and well-timed[9] quotation of the hemistich *saḥābatu ṣayfin ʿan qalīlin taqashshaʿū* by Khālid ibn Ṣafwān in a story about him and Bilāl ibn abī Burda.[10] The story exists in several versions, three of which can be found in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* 7/1:56–7, 87, and (ed. al-ʿAẓm) 7:402, and they cannot be reduced to one original version: the events unfold differently, the motif of the protagonists' behaviour varies, while almost only this one saying remains intact.[11]

2. The second layer is formed by a chain of oral transmitters of the orations and the anecdotes. There is nothing to indicate that, e.g., Umayyad speeches would usually have been composed in writing or would have been taken down at the time of their oral delivery or even memorized immediately after, excepting, perhaps, the speeches of the most important political and religious characters, and even in their case I very much doubt the exact historicity of the speeches attributed to them. Many early speakers themselves were probably not literate – e.g., in the case of Khālid ibn Ṣafwān there is nothing in the corpus to imply he was – and there is no reason to assume that their speeches were devotedly memorized, especially when they were neither religious nor political authorities.

However, stories about them and their sayings and deeds were later written down. *Ergo*, they must have lived on for a while orally. The stories and speeches must have also undergone changes during this process of oral transmission, but I would presume that during the oral transmis-

9 Or badly-timed, depending on our perspective. As readers we enjoy the punch line which, according to some versions, led to Khālid's imprisonment or even his death.

10 I have discussed this particular story in Hämeen-Anttila, "Khālid: between history and literature," 239–42 (with full documentation).

11 Moreover, al-Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 3:146, relates the same story but attributes it to Ibn Shubruma and Ṭāriq, instead of Khālid and Bilāl ibn abī Burda, but as our aim here is not to find historical facts, it is, in the final analysis, immaterial whether the words were originally spoken by Khālid or Ibn Shubruma.

sion these changes were mostly unconscious rather than deliberate: people kept in mind witty sayings, interesting stories, and extracts of speeches and probably believed they were transmitting them intact to the next generation. One should again emphasize that oral transmission does not make the stories ordinary folklore, as this was a learned form of transmission. This second layer had perhaps the least to give to the artistic and literary genesis of these stories.

3. The third layer is formed by anonymous authors who composed stories out of the elements transmitted to them. This layer of authors is distinguished from the previous one by their conscious elaboration of the stories. In many cases, we still have both simple and elaborate versions of the same story. In the version unedited by these conscious, although anonymous, authors the text may be simple and fragmentary, perhaps consisting of no more than a witty line by the protagonist and a most elementary setting for the incident. In the best of cases, we may even hope to have "authentic" material transmitted to us in a form untouched by later literary modifications. I put the word "authentic" in quotation marks, as we, of course, can never prove that a certain saying by the protagonist (first-layer author) would have been transmitted exactly as such. The best we can do is to show that a brief – and hence easily memorizable – saying is widely attested relatively early and does not contain any anachronistic elements.

In stories edited by anonymous authors, we often find several originally separate anecdotes merged together, a carefully elaborated literary structure and a very balanced and elegant use of language. When the story is well told and structurally complex, one cannot dismiss its creators as mere transmitters. Creating a long, *novella*-like anecdote out of brief sayings, jokes, and fragments of speeches needs more than mechanical transmission or gluing-together of elements of various provenances. In the case of these anonymous authors, we may at least sometimes speak of conscious creative work, not necessarily inferior to a *novella* by Boccac-

cio, although these authors did not leave us information about their names.

I call this third class "anonymous authors". They are anonymous as far as we do not know them by name, but they are not an anonymous mass. They are clearly individual authors.[12] It is probable that they worked in writing, but if so, their works have been lost. The *isnād*s in the stories rarely help us identify these authors. First of all, few anecdotes are provided with an *isnād* and, secondly, there does not seem to be any recurring names in the *isnād*s linked to the more complex stories, identifiable as authors responsible for the elaboration of the story.[13]

One might raise the question why I postulate such shadowy anonymous authors at all. In some cases, the earliest codifiers of the stories, my fourth layer of authors, may well be identical with these anonymous authors, but in others this is made improbable by the earliest written evidence, which I will discuss in the light of some examples below.

4. The fourth layer consists of early codifiers, or codifier-authors, such as al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), al-Masʿūdī, al-Bayhaqī (early fourth/tenth century), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–9), and others in whose collections a story may be found for the first time in its complete form. The differences between the versions in various early sources show that the work of the anonymous authors of the third layer was not considered fixed and the early codifiers continued working on the received material. Although for brevity's sake I call them codifiers, this does not imply that their role was restricted to writing the stories down. On the contrary, most early codi-

12 Here we come to the phase of transmission where Schoeler's aural model of transmission is of great interest. However, it is not my aim to discuss Schoeler's theories in this paper. Note that in, e.g., the case of al-Madāʾinī, it is very difficult to draw a clear boundary between literary and historical activities. For al-Madāʾinī's transmission of historical material, see also Lindstedt in this volume.

13 The lack of an *isnād* system makes a major difference between literary and religious material, historical material coming somewhere between the two, although the borderline between history and literature is very vague, the same anecdote often serving both genres.

fiers seem to have edited, sometimes heavily, the texts they inserted into their collection, as can be seen when we compare all the versions of a story with each other: it rarely happens that versions are even close to being identical with each other and the changes are considerable and relate to the artistic structure of the story. These codifiers were also authors in their own right.

The stories as the codifiers received them have usually not survived, and we cannot exactly know what these codifiers did, but by comparing individual versions we can see that they considered the received text freely modifiable and were neither restricted by questions of copyright nor by historical accuracy. The same holds true in even clearly historical works but even more so in belles lettres: in general, authors of historical works, such as al-Balādhurī, tend to be more faithful transmitters than their colleagues compiling anecdotal *adab* works. One thing, however, seems rather certain. The authors rarely had a hidden political agenda, but they usually worked on aesthetic principles. Religious or historical texts, where one may find hidden agendas, have received more scholarly attention. In them, stories may be manipulated or invented in order to show the Umayyads in a bad light or the Shiite Imams may be made to accept the superiority of Abū Bakr over ʿAlī. No such obvious motives can be shown in the Khālid corpus, the majority of anecdotes dealing with non-political and non-religious issues and Khālid being too unimportant to become a bone of contention.

5. As a fifth layer we could add the written transmission in anthologies, but it seems that in the second millennium and even earlier the freedoms taken in transmitting received material were lessened, as one may see when studying, e.g., Ibn ʿAbdrabbih's (d. 328/940) *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* and its sources.[14] An anthologist did occasionally abbreviate the story and modify its details, but basically the freedom of the author was gone and

14 Cf. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen*. It goes without saying that the change was not abrupt and authors took different degrees of liberty with the stories they transmitted.

anecdotes were merely anthologized, taken as such from the original sources and set in a new context with often minimal or no changes. There seems to have been a sense of the Classical anecdote corpus having been closed. Little new material was added before Mamlūk times and the received material was transmitted more or less intact, except for the case of some authors like Ibn Ḥamdūn (d. 562/1166–7).

Now let us sum up the question from another point of view. Who is the author of the story we read in the preserved literature? The most obvious point is that in the majority of cases there are several authorial voices, both in the corpus as a whole and in an individual anecdote. Somewhere, buried deep under later layers we may still hope to hear the voice of the protagonist(s), mainly in brief sayings. Above it, we have the uncertain layer of oral transmitters who, perhaps, did little conscious alterations to the stories.

Above this layer, there comes the conscious literary recreation of the story in the hands of anonymous authors. The anonymous authors and the first codifiers are difficult to distinguish from each other and one might as well speak of a layer of several subsequent authors, the main difference being that the anonymous authors remained anonymous while their colleagues of a more literary period had their names attached to the stories. But the borderline is far from clear.

The fifth layer, the anthologists, should usually, in my opinion, no longer be considered authors in their own right, at least not when we speak of individual anecdotes. The changes they made to the text are minimal and their main role lies in arranging and rearranging the existent material. Many scholars have emphasized the importance of this organizing work in anthologies and the creativity needed in it, but I do not completely share their view. The anthologists did, sometimes, carefully consider a suitable place for each anecdote in a collection and the context of an anecdote obviously influences our reading of it, yet I hesitate to put

them on a par with what I would call authors proper. Moreover, many anthologists seem to have done their work rather mechanically.

Of the four layers of authors proper the first (the protagonist, often corresponding to a real historical character), the third (the anonymous author) and the fourth (the first codifier) are very often to be considered conscious authors, the protagonist especially when the story is built around a speech or a saying.[15] The second layer, the early oral, or semiliterate, transmitters, may better be considered transmitters only, like transmitters of the fifth layer.

Three Examples of Multilayered Authorship

Hitherto I have mainly restricted myself to a theoretical discussion of the question, but let us now consider three concrete examples to see how this model of multilayered authorship actually works.

Elsewhere, I have extensively discussed a long anecdote, four variants of which are found in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* 7/1, and there are dozens of other attestations in other books.[16] The main constituents of the story are a speech, glorifying Southern Arabs, by Ibn Makhrama, the devastating but concise ridicule of the same by Khālid, given at the instigation of the Caliph al-Saffāḥ and, finally, a boast about the Northern Arabs by Khālid. To this basic structure some other elements have been added, such as a philological (and slightly obscene) joke on Southern Arabic dialects.

Some of the long versions of this story, attested in preserved books by known authors of the fourth layer, are artistic and well able to compete with the *novelle* of Italian literature. As, e.g., al-Balādhurī usually transmits material rather faithfully, we may assume that there was an earlier anonymous[17] author of the third layer.

15 The protagonist may, of course, also have told of his own actions, thus becoming, in fact, an oral transmitter as well.

16 Hämeen-Anttila, "Khālid: an orator," with full documentation. In al-Balādhurī, the versions are found on pp. 71, 77–79, 80, and 85.

17 Al-Balādhurī introduces the story in the main version by the simple *qālū* "they tell".

That this anonymous author created the story such as we know it, instead of only transmitting an old story going back to Khālid himself, is shown by the separate existence of some elements of the story. They are not fragments of the long story, in the sense that a longer story would have become fragmented and elements of it would have lived on in a shorter form. This is shown, e.g., by the changes in the protagonists. Hence, al-Balādhurī (*Ansāb* 7/1:71) narrates a part of the story as a discussion between Khālid and al-Ḥajjāj (d. 95/714) and it is hard to understand why Khālid's interlocutor should have been downgraded to a Governor, but the reverse upgrading is typical in anecdotes.[18] The anonymous author took various anecdotes about Khālid's life and compiled one continuous, lengthy narrative out of them.

The existence of the second layer, oral transmitters, cannot be proven, but it is only natural to presume that the originally independent stories were not put down in writing immediately after the incidents. That the incidents have any historicity behind them at all cannot, of course, be proven, as very few contemporary sources exist. Some of the elements may well be purely fictitious. What we can say, though, is that the core of the story, the witticism by Khālid ("How can he boast to Muḍar of people who ride asses, weave clothes, train monkeys and tan hides? A hoopoe led (Solomon) to them and a rat drowned them.") is attested in dozens of early sources and had very early on become part of believed history: the sources are unanimous that this was said by Khālid. The proliferation of early versions would indicate that the story circulated widely and, whether the witticism originally be by Khālid or someone else, must have been orally transmitted.

It would sound credible to me that Khālid, indeed, said something like this in some connection, but even if not, there was someone who invented this saying and it got wide circulation very early on. It is, in the final analysis, immaterial whether this person was Khālid ibn Ṣafwān or "Khālid ibn Ṣafwān", i.e., an anonymous person inventing a saying and putting it in Khālid's mouth.

18 Cf. Hämeen-Anttila, "Khālid: an orator."

As a second example we may take the long story about Khālid and Umm Salama, which we know from several almost contemporary authors of the tenth century, the most important being al-Masʿūdī and al-Bayhaqī, the two offering versions which share the same elements but radically differ from each other in, e.g., wording.[19] It is a very artistically constructed story where Khālid first describes the pleasures of polygamy to al-Saffāḥ. The Caliph's wife, Umm Salama, hears about this and sends men to beat Khālid up, although he is able to run to the safety of his house before his bones are broken. When again at court, Khālid wisely reverses his opinion by speaking against polygamy and the story ends with his being rewarded by Umm Salama.

The story is composed of originally independent elements. An early source, al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* 7/1:59 (explicitly on al-Madāʾinī's authority), quotes a speech by Khālid against marriage in general, whether monogamy or polygamy, addressed to a rather obscure Ibn Ribāṭ al-Fuqaymī. Such an ascetic sermon is well in line with Khālid's known (or reported, to be on the safe side) asceticism and misogyny and the upgrading of the interlocutor (Ibn Ribāṭ > al-Saffāḥ) in later versions is typical. Also other parts of the story circulate independently in early sources, and often in a form that cannot derive from the long version, which is, if we base ourselves on the first attestations, moreover much younger. Thus, e.g., al-Balādhurī, again on the authority of al-Madāʾinī, transmits a speech by Khālid on ideal women (*Ansāb* 7/1:61) but with no reference to either polygamy or monogamy. Last but not least, there is a *ḥadīth* on the Prophet Muḥammad and his wife Umm Salama[20] which has basically the same structure as the story about Khālid and al-Saffāḥ's wife Umm Salama, and is quite clearly used as its intertext.

Hence, we can show that several of the elements of the long story circulated separately by the mid-9th century. The long story surfaces a century later in several different versions, which contain the same elements but use them differently, thus showing the influence of early codifier-au-

19 See Hämeen-Anttila, "Short stories," with an analysis and full documentation.

20 E.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 4913 (cognate to no. 5191).

thors. These versions cannot have been born independently from the same separate elements, but the elements must have been joined together by one creative author, who decided to combine certain elements into one story. This anonymous author must have worked before al-Bayhaqī and al-Masʿūdī, who already use his story, and he may well have been later than al-Balādhurī, though not necessarily so – al-Balādhurī may have quoted material taken from al-Madāʾinī, ignoring a longer story developed already by his time from the same elements.[21]

The third example I will discuss more extensively and with full documentation, as it has not been discussed in detail before. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* 7/1:60, gives the oldest version on the authority of a "*qāla*", which in this case seems to refer back to the authority of the previous anecdote, al-Madāʾinī:

> He (al-Madāʾinī) said: Once Khālid went on a pilgrimage and left his son Ribʿī in charge of his property. By the time he was back Ribʿī had spent a considerable sum. Khālid said: "I put Ribʿī in charge of my property, and, by God, he was quicker in it than moths are in wool in summer (*asraʿu min al-sūsi fī l-ṣūfi fī l-ṣayf*)!"

There are other versions of the story which seems to have enjoyed wide circulation, viz.:

> Someone asked Khālid ibn Ṣafwān: "How is your son?" He replied: "He is the lord of the young men of his people in both wit and *adab*." He was asked: "How much do you give him a month?" Khālid replied: "Thirty dirhams." The other said: "What can he do with a mere thirty dirhams! Why don't you give him more? Your income is thirty thousand!" Khālid replied: "The thirty dirhams are quicker to destroy my property than are moths in wool in summer!"

21 Theoretically, one of the codifier-authors could have created the story (and hence be identical with the third-layer anonymous author) but this is made improbable by the temporal proximity of the authors and their immediate successors: the long combined story was already in wide circulation when we first come across it.

When Khālid's words were related to him al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said: "I stand witness that Khālid is a trueborn Tamīmī!"
(Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Durra* 35. Other attestations: al-Maydānī, *Majmaʿ* i, 149;[22] al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār* 679;[23] Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Jamhara* i, 201;[24] al-Ābī, *Nathr* iii, 290;[25] Ibn Durayd, *Jamhara* 83;[26] al-Zamakhsharī, *Mustaqṣā* i, 6.)

Another short piece of lexical inspiration is also attached to the story in some versions:[27]

ākal min al-sūs: It is told that Khālid ibn Ṣafwān said to his son Ribʿī: "Oh my son, you are quicker to squander and destroy my property than are moths in wool in summer! By God, you will not prosper this year, nor the next (*qāb*) nor the one after that (*qubāqib*)!" – This is like when you say: "You will not prosper today, nor tomorrow nor the day after that."
(al-Qālī, *Afʿal*, 22. Parallels for the latter, lexical part (mostly without mentioning Khālid's name): Ibn ʿAbbād, *Muḥīṭ,* 5:215, 430 (here only *al-ʿām – qābil – qabāʾil*); Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān,* 11:8 (s.v. QBB);[28] Ibn Du-

22 Al-Maydānī adds the explanation "al-Ḥasan said this because the Tamīmīs are known for their avarice and greed."

23 Only Khālid's last phrase is transmitted in the *Thimār*. Al-Thaʿālibī tacitly changes *al-thalāthūn* to *la-thalāthūn*, as he does not give the preceding discussion which legitimizes the determined article. Al-Thaʿālibī deems this to be the most eloquent among comparisons with moths.

24 Abbreviated, but the basic elements (the allowance of an anonymous son plus the proverb) are there.

25 Abbreviated, as in Abū Hilāl, but using the expression *la-aʿbath for la-asraʿ* against all other versions.

26 Ibn Durayd narrates this as something said by an anonymous Bedouin about his son's one *dānaq* daily allowance. That the versions are interdependent is shown by the presence of the two key elements, the allowance of a son and the proverb, though here Bedouinized to "*al-ʿuthth fī l-ṣūf fī l-ṣayf*".

27 I am borrowing the term from Blachère's (*Histoire* 3:530) famous, but perhaps somewhat unjust, description of some Basran and Kufan poets.

28 The lexicographical tradition gives the respective names of the years usually in the sequence *al-ʿām – qābil – qābb – qubāqib – muqabqib*. This seems to contain some fantastical formations of the lexicographers. Ibn Manẓūr also adds (from Ibn Sīda)

rayd, *Jamhara,* 176 and 1212; al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb,* 8:299; al-Ṣaghānī, *Takmila,* 1:234; *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* 5:29; al-Fīrūzābādī, *Qāmūs,* s.v. QBB; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj,* 3:512; al-Balawī, *Alif-bāʾ,* 2:436. See also Kraemer, "Legajo-Studien," 281, note 1.)

The saying *asraʿu min al-sūs(i fī l-ṣūfi fī l-ṣayf)* is also found as an anonymous proverb (e.g., *Kitāb al-ʿAyn,* 2:231–2; al-Ābī, *Nathr,* 6:192; al-Maydānī, *Majmaʿ,* 2:462[29]).[30] Whether Khālid originated this proverb, cannot be said, but, according to our evidence, it was he who made it popular. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Mustaqṣā,* 1:6, attributes the saying to him.

A further version may be found in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb,* 7/1:82, viz.:

> They say: People said to Khālid about his son: "You own (*yaduka tashtamilu*)[31] more than thirty thousand (dirhams), yet you give your son just a dirham a day. He is at his wit's end, as you know." Khālid replied: "Two *dānaq*s for his bread, two for a chicken, and two for fruit. That is a proper[32] diet."

One notices three elements which have been differently combined in these stories and versions, viz.

1. the allowance to Khālid's son,
2. the proverb *ākal/asraʿ* etc.,
3. a functionally similar lexicographical list of year names.

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al-Aṣmaʿī as the authority of this story and lets him add: "They (the Arabs) do not know anything past this", i.e., any word denoting further years in the future.

29 Here *afsad,* instead of *asraʿ*.

30 Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī (*apud* al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma,* 4:203) embellished this to blame a Governor (*ʿāmil*): "a moth in silk in summer time is merely a well-doer in comparison to him." Abū l-Qāsim al-Wāsānī (*apud* al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma,* 1:342) inserted this in one of his poems. Similar expressions are also widely found in literature, e.g., al-Hamadhānī, *Maqāmāt,* 317–8 (*inna l-karama asraʿu fī l-māli min al-sūs = Rasāʾil* 394), al-Jurjānī, *Muntakhab,* 409 (*al-ʿiyāl sūs al-māl*). These are far too numerous to be listed.

31 Other versions have *tastaghillu* which may be a better reading.

32 Or "pious" (*ṣāliḥ*).

The versions either mention the son's name or not, and other elements have been added to some of the versions (Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's comment; Khālid's miserly advice as how to survive on a shoestring budget of a dirham a day). The theme of all the stories is Khālid's miserliness towards his son.

As the text is very short, we cannot clearly distinguish between the various authorial layers. The first, the protagonist, is there and there is no reason to doubt the historicity of the saying about moths or, at least, its early circulation in connection with Khālid's name. The second layer, the oral transmitters, could easily be responsible for the wide variation in this story, which would fit well with the general characteristics of oral lore. The third layer, that of anonymous authors, is perhaps unnecessary to postulate in this case, as the final formulations do not show any signs of a strong creative authorship. The text is brief and witty but nothing more than that. The fourth layer, the first codifiers, is of course there, as that is the *sine qua non* for the preservation of any text.

From a practical point of view such texts are cumbersome for the literary historian. They are hard to date. Should we date Ibn Ḥamdūn's (d. 562/1166–7) version of the Ibn Makhrama story in his *Tadhkira* 3:411–3 (no. 1102), to the mid-12th century, although it does resemble an earlier version codified by al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), itself probably, but not necessarily,[33] deriving from al-Madāʾinī (d. 228/842–3), possibly, but again not necessarily, in a faithful fashion? Should we date it to al-Balādhurī's or al-Madāʾinī's times? But most probably neither of the two invented the stories they codified. On the other hand, it would be credulous to call the speeches of Khālid specimens of mid-8th-century prose, as many of them hardly existed as such at that time and if they did, they were certainly not exactly in their present form.

33 Al-Balādhurī uses *isnād*s only intermittently, favouring the anonymous *qāla* series, which may, or may not, refer to the authority quoted for the previous anecdote. Al-Balādhurī is untypically profuse with his *isnād*s, obviously considering himself a historian. In most *adab* books, *isnād*s are even rarer.

But to ignore this literature would mean to ignore a major part of pre-tenth-century Arabic prose – and when we remember that similar problems are also found in connection with, e.g., Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's (d. 139/756?) translations, the early history of Arabic literary prose would be in danger of vanishing away, which again would misrepresent the situation.

There is no simple solution to these problems. In the case of long anecdotes, and probably short ones, too, we have to live with this uncertainty of dating. It seems best to think in terms of genres and to analyse texts as products of a process that in some cases may have taken centuries. What we may describe in a history of Arabic prose is the early anecdotal literature as such, in a group bringing together stories, versions and elements from more than two centuries into a sometimes unanalysable whole. The earliest date we can give to a story is, of course, its earliest attestation, with sometimes a possibility of speculating on the immediate source of this, as in the case of al-Balādhurī, who probably transmitted Khālid material rather faithfully from al-Madāʾinī. To go back earlier than al-Madāʾinī is difficult, so this Khālid material has to be dated vaguely to a period covering almost a century. It can be used to analyse the prose style of the early 8th to the early 9th centuries, but in the case of, e.g., the material first attested in al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj*, we already have a span of two centuries.

The majority of pre-tenth-century specimens of literary prose are results of multilayered authorship. Later, literary prose texts by a single author became more common, as in the *maqāma*s of al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008), where the plot of the story is often taken from the anecdotal corpus, but the final product is freely rewritten, so that there is no more reason to speak of multilayered authorship in al-Hamadhānī's *maqāma*s as there would be in Shakespeare's plays.[34] Al-Hamadhānī's sources may in some cases be located in earlier literature, but his *maqāma*s cannot be called mere versions of these earlier anecdotes.[35]

34 I make this comparison on purpose: as Shakespeare took his plots from earlier literature there is *some* reason to suggest something similar also in his case.

35 For al-Hamadhānī's sources, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama,* 62–98.

Al-Jāḥiẓ and a Single-Author Text

Let me conclude with a brief note on one early single-author text, al-Jāḥiẓ's *Mufākharat al-jawārī wa-l-ghilmān*. This charming text is one of the earliest preserved Arabic *munāẓara*s, or literary debates.[36] It does have elements of multilayered authorship as it largely consists of quotations of poetry and prose, yet I prefer to consider it a single-author text, as the structure of the story is a creation by al-Jāḥiẓ and only by him: no other authorial hand has taken part in the construction of the main story line. It, like many of his other *risāla*s, also differs from his longer works which come closer to being anthologies – well-structured ones, though.[37] Why I select this particular text as an example is that it also exhibits an interesting merger of the authorial voice with one of the protagonists. The text is a debate between the Lover of Boys and the Lover of Girls. What distinguishes it from ordinary *munāẓara*s and makes it interesting from the point of view of authorship is that the voice of the author finally merges with that of the Lover of Girls. The author often voices his opinion at the end of a *munāẓara*, but in al-Jāḥiẓ's text it is technically one of the protagonists, the Lover of Girls, not the author, who starts speaking about "our book" (*Rasā'il,* 2:123) and addressing the reader.

This final merger of voices throws an interesting light on the whole story, beginning as it does as a seemingly impartial debate between two fictional characters and ending up in showing the author coalesce with one of his characters. But I will leave this aspect to another time. What concerns us here is that the text, considered as a whole, is, despite its anthological nature, basically a single-author text. We know that it was al-Jāḥiẓ, and al-Jāḥiẓ only, who created the structure of the text and selected the anecdotes and verses to be quoted in it, perhaps working in a fashion not much different from that of our anonymous authors of the third layer. On the level of the quoted anecdotes, though, we come back to multilayered authorship.

36 On the definition of the genre, see Hämeen-Anttila, "Khālid: an orator."

37 Especially James Montgomery has in several recent articles (James E. Montgomery, *al-Jāḥiẓ*) emphasized the necessity of reading the material of al-Jāḥiẓ in its full context.

As will have been noticed, the multiplicity of authors is partly related to the question of the historicity of the anecdotes. When the anecdotes base themselves on historical events, a certain element of multiple authors immediately comes into the picture, as there is both a historical protagonist and a later author manipulating him. In a modern historical novel the situation is different, as the bulk of the text is created by the modern author and sometimes the plot and the speeches have nothing whatsoever to do with the real historical person: the whole novel may be the product of a single modern author's imagination. In the case of the anecdotes, the bulk of the text may, on the contrary, be a speech by the protagonist, known from earlier sources to go down, if not to the protagonist himself, at least to the level of some generations earlier than the known author.

A story of multilayered authorship is not necessarily polyphonic. While a polyphonic text is a text which speaks with a variety of tongues, as it were,[38] in the text with multiple authors there is often only one final voice, that of the last author, who has appropriated the work of his predecessors and moulded the text to his liking. The multiplicity of voices is synchronic and horizontal in the case of polyphonic texts, but diachronic and vertical in stories of multilayered authorship. Naturally, though, some texts may both be polyphonic and of multilayered authorship.

What difference does it make, finally, whether we have a single author or multiple authors? From the point of view of the literary analysis of the final text it does not, perhaps, matter, but for a literary historian it does. Writing the history of early Arabic literary prose is a complicated project, partly because of the fact that we have plenty of material claiming to date from the early periods while, in fact, being later reworkings of earlier material, but next to no material that can confidently be dated to the early periods as such. This may be one of the reasons we have no comprehensive study of early Arabic prose as yet. However, to understand the development of Arabic prose, one should tackle the question of multiauthored prose and, through meticulous analysis, try to uncover the au-

38 For polyphony in literature, see introduction.

thorial layers in the texts to be able to follow the development of the anecdotes and, through them, the development of narrative structures and style in early Arabic literature. The task is not easy, but it is challenging.

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Reluctant Authors:

The Dilemma of Quoting Disapproved Content in Adab Works

Zoltán Szombathy

Post-modern literary theory has brought along many ludicrous scholarly fads and a great deal of cumbersome jargon, but it has also served to call attention to the need to revise some of the received wisdom about authorship and literary production. Among other things, compilation as a creative process, a form of authorship as it were, has received growing attention in recent years. This is a particularly welcome development in the study of pre-modern Arabic literature, in which anthologies and other forms of largely compiled material played an important role.[1] The simplistic view regarding processes of textual borrowing, compilation and recycling as a second-rate kind of literary activity in contradistinction to 'original' authorship has been largely discarded now. It is increasingly recognised that already existing, 'foreign' texts can be built into a new work – a characteristic feature of Arabic writing – in highly inventive and creative ways. By handling, utilising and perhaps manipulating existing material for their own uses authors reveal a lot about their own ideas and attitudes, especially when they offer explicit comments, as many of them do, on the passages they are recycling.

It is especially intriguing to find an author making use of a text yet immediately registering his disapproval of it. This signals a palpable unease with what one is doing, a highly ambiguous attitude towards one's source material. After all, one could always either take it or leave it. Thus it seems slightly schizophrenic to borrow and make use – often ample use – of some literary material and then immediately mark one's reservations about, or even condemnation of, the text just utilised.

1 An outstanding example of an approach to Arabic literature that shows a special sensitiveness to the creative possibilities inherent in literary compilation is Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*.

1 The Problem of Quotation

In no culture is quotation an unproblematic matter. Part of the trouble results from issues of intellectual property and author's rights, witness all the contemporary legal problems and debates surrounding quotations of copyrighted matter. Yet part of the problem is less materialistic than moralistic. The inherent ambivalence of quotation seems to be universal rather than culture-specific, even though the particular aspects that can make a text objectionable are tied to particular social and cultural environments.

For the sake of argument, suppose a contemporary author of postmodern prose cited long passages from the most hateful parts of *Mein Kampf* and claimed that by this process he turned the ominous text into purely literary material. One thing we can take for granted is that this argument would hardly convince all critics, and a heated debate would arise regarding the innocence or otherwise, indeed the permissibility or otherwise, of such practices. Some people would stress that such an extensive citation, whatever the author's intentions, will contribute to the dissemination of Hitler's views and cause offence to surviving victims and all decent men, others would emphasise the literary context and its transforming influence on the original text. The debate would predictably focus on the nature of the relationship between composing a text and quoting it for new purposes.

The same problem seems to be at the core of some Muslim anthologists' negative comments, sometimes vehement ones, on content they have just cited. It is obvious that by doing so the authors seek to distance themselves from their own quotations and unburden themselves of (part of) the responsibility for it. Why they chose to do so is the main concern of this paper, whereas the particular types of content that were perceived as offensive fall outside the purview of the following analysis.[2] Whatever

2 To offer just a short, far from exhaustive, list: the targets of such condemnations include excessive praise in panegyrics, blasphemies, perceived insults to the Prophet's honour (or to other prophets, angels, etc.), 'lying' (in the broadest possible sense), slanderous texts (especially *hijāʾ* poetry), love poetry that was either indecent (e.g.

the particular material being denounced, the pattern is roughly the same: an author quotes some earlier literary text and then condemns it for some perceived moral failing. Condemnation is not carried to the point of actually omitting the offending quotation. Instead, in a perfunctory nod to dominant norms the author records his disapproval right after the citation of the objectionable passages.[3] This remarkable practice is pregnant with implications. Why did many authors, once they had decided to incorporate a given content into their anthologies, deem it necessary to mark their disapproval of it? And to view the issue from the opposite angle, if they really disapproved of it, why did they decide to put it into their works in the first place? Did they mark their disapproval as a precautionary measure, that is to say, to appease all or part of their intended audience, which they suspected might disapprove (and, possibly, take action against them)? Or did they really feel uneasy handling the material they showed disapproval of? Did they have moral qualms, or did they bow to perceived outside pressure, or both? It bears emphasis that the problem cannot be reduced to a question of sincerity or otherwise. As I argue in my book on *mujūn*, sincerity is, on the one hand, impossible to gauge, and on the other hand authors – like ordinary people – can implicitly or explicitly subscribe simultaneously to various different and even conflicting norms according to the particular situation in which they find themselves.[4] A crude dichotomy of sincere versus insincere is therefore totally unhelpful. That is not the framework in which I try to address the issue. The fundamental question that this essay asks is a different one. What kind of discourse does the practice of condemning one's own quotations reflect? What kinds of controversy does it respond to?[5]

amorous poems about boys) or likely to cause offence to male relatives, descriptions of immorality and forbidden behaviour such as in wine poetry, and generally all sorts of *mujūn*.

3 Frédéric Lagrange has aptly characterised such disowning expressions as an "*affectation de quelques froncements de sourcils;*" see Lagrange, "L'obscénité du vizir," 55.

4 Szombathy, *Mujūn,* 258-65, 292-5. On the role of conventions in Arabic poetry (and their effect on the 'sincerity' of this type of literature), see García Gómez, "Convencionalismo e insinceridad;" and also cf. Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*.

5 All this forms part of a more general issue, namely the problem of handling texts

By way of a brief illustration, a number of condemnatory comments by anthologists on quoted material follow. In the biography of Yūsuf b. al-Durr al-Baghdādī in the *Kharīdat al-qaṣr* of ʿImād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-Iṣbahānī (519-97/1125-1201), the anthologist cites a short love poem with a rather blasphemous-sounding conceit, then cautiously adds: "You see what [the poet] has committed for the sake of this exaggeration; we ask God's forgiveness for such talk (*awqaʿathu hādhihi l-mubālagha fī-mā tarā wa-nastaghfir Allāh taʿālā min mithl hādhā l-qawl*)."[6] And here is another passage from the same anthology coming right after the quotation of a funny but rather irreverent invective poem:

> Now, such [talk] may well please one as an entertaining conceit, yet for someone to address God with such words is a sign of fickle faith and piety. We beseech God to make us persevere in correct faith![7]

Another pertinent example is the anthologist's criticism appended to a sample of blasphemous verses by Abū Nuwās. The author is Ibn al-Muzarraʿ al-Shāmī (fl. early 4th/10th c.), and it is important to note that elsewhere in the same work he is very explicit about his admiration for the *oeuvre* of the great libertine poet. And yet, appreciative as he was of Abū Nuwās's talents, the author felt it necessary to condemn many of the verses that he quoted from the poet. He uses phrases like "I do not know why he had to say that, given he did not really believe it" and "I see no excuse for his having uttered such things, given his belief in the divine law of Islam and its requirements".[8] And here is the Andalusian anthologist Ibn Diḥya al-Balansī (6th-7th/12th-13th c.) commenting on a poetic conceit likening a patron's hand to the Black Stone in Mecca (the former being described as even more deserving of a kiss): "It is an in-

borrowed from previous authors. Unlike disapproved quotations, other aspects of the general problem were discussed systematically and in great detail by mediaeval Muslim authors; e. g. the question of *sariqa*, or plagiarism, on which see von Grunebaum, "The Concept of Plagiarism."

6 Al-Kātib al-Iṣbahānī, *Kharīda*, 2:328.

7 Al-Kātib al-Iṣbahānī, *Kharīda*, 2:331-2. For further examples from this anthology, see op. cit. 1:44 and 330; 2:47, 80, 84, 98 and 294.

8 Ibn al-Muzarraʿ, *Sariqāt*, 144-6.

stance of exaggerations and embellishments by the poets", but "what a difference there is between the hand [of a human] and the Black Stone in this world and the next!" For all his indignant commentary, he has just quoted the offensive verses in full.[9] Certain works of al-Mutanabbī and al-Maʿarrī, while quoted in more than one literary anthology, drew strongly condemnatory comments almost as a matter of anthologists' routine. One anthologist adds the following expression of outrage to his quotation of a poem by al-Mutanabbī: "he would deserve a slap in the face for this poem".[10] Examples from *adab* literature could be multiplied almost at will. In his book-length study of Arabic invective poetry, van Gelder devotes a whole chapter to the odd contrast between anthologists' declarations of disapproval of malicious *hijāʾ* poetry and their all too enthusiastic inclusion of plenty of cruel lampoons in their anthologies.[11]

Of course this ambiguous practice would have had an obvious and easy alternative. Authors could simply have omitted all the disapproved content from their selections of *adab*. That this also happened, if not very frequently, is evident from sporadic and brief comments on acts of self-censorship by authors. The all but insurmountable problem for the student of mediaeval Arabic literature is that in many if not most cases either the omission itself is hidden – that is to say, uncommented on – or else the reasons for omission are shrouded in obscure rhetoric. The very limited corpus of clearly phrased data suggest that sectarian and political considerations must have played a prominent role in acts of literary self-censorship. Concerns of personal and family honour were also among

9 Ibn Diḥya, *Muṭrib,* 15-6.

10 For comments on al-Mutanabbī's works, see for instance al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī, *Īḍāḥ,* 6:63-4; Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Ṭabaqāt,* 82; al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma,* 1:146, 161 and 167-70; 2:214; 4:418; al-Thaʿālibī, *Tatimma,* 2:113; al-ʿAskarī, *Ṣināʿatayn,* 122-3 and 384; al-Jurjānī, *Ishārāt,* 321-2; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 3:497. For similar comments on al-Maʿarrī, see al-Bākharzī, *Dumya,* 1:157-8; Ibn Maʿṣūm, *Sulāfa,* 386-7. Modern editions of mediaeval Arabic works published in the Middle East often carry comparable editorial comments in footnote; for a typical specimen in English translation see Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam*, 128; and also see Szombathy, *Mujūn*, 244-5 for more on this issue.

11 Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly,* 78-95.

the reasons for omitting certain texts from literary anthologies, especially in the case of extremely offensive pieces of invective poetry.[12]

2 Islamic Jurisprudence on the Quotation of Disapproved Material[13]

In certain genres of religious literature – like anti-*bidʿa* treatises, fatwa collections, and juridical works on certain subjects such as the proofs of unbelief or the handling of Qur'anic quotations in inappropriate contexts – it was obviously impossible for authors to avoid citing (by way of illustration) disapproved, reprehensible, and even outright blasphemous utterances. Here is an apologetic commentary by the Hanafite Ibn Baydakīn al-Turkumānī (8th-9th/14th-15th c.) about his own quotations of blasphemous anecdotes current among the common people: "I have said [here] what they say, citing them (*ḥākiyan*), for the purpose of good advice, not by way of joking or actually believing [these things]... "[14] Palpable is the author's uneasiness with the need to quote such objectionable material, if only to illustrate its heinousness. The need to evaluate such texts for juridical purposes meant that the quotation of disapproved material could not but become a serious legal issue. Since the views of jurists were seen as normative in traditional Muslim societies (even if not necessarily determining actual practice), it will be worthwhile to explore at some length their ideas on the subject.

It is important to stress as a starting-point for the analysis that follows that Islamic jurisprudence accords attention to various aspects of literary

12 For some examples of literary self-censorship, see for instance al-Thaʿālibī, *Tatimma*, 1:70; al-Kātib al-Iṣbahānī, *Kharīda*, 2:84; Ibn Maʿṣūm, *Sulāfa*, 244-8. On the issue of the often very harsh social sanctions for hurtful *hijāʾ*, see Szombathy, "Actions speak louder."

13 In writing the final version of this essay, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Abdessamad Belhaj. I have benefited vastly from his profound knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence; he generously offered to read through the first draft of my essay and gave me extremely helpful commentary and suggestions on the whole section on the juridical aspects of the issue, which has been extensively revised as the result of his valuable comments. I also owe to him my references to the following works: al-Sulamī, *Qawāʿid*; al-Nawawī, *Majmūʿ*; Ibn Qudāma, *Mughnī*; Ibn Mufliḥ, *Furūʿ*.

14 Al-Turkumānī, *Lumaʿ*, 1:184.

production, but not to literature *per se*. In other words, Islamic law has nothing to say on literature as such, but has quite a few things to say on certain aspects of literature. Indeed, jurists do not use the concept of 'literary quotation' (and, for that matter, 'literature') at all. What they are concerned with are *utterances* – whether or not these occur in speech or writing, in literary or ordinary contexts. Thus the focus of interest of Muslim jurists can be defined as the acts – actual acts or speech acts – of legally responsible persons. Some of these speech acts happen to occur in literary texts, but that is not a determining factor for legal purposes. Accordingly, the discussion of disapproved quotations in literary works is never treated separately from the wider problem of quotation in general. Quotations are quotations, and literary works have no claims of being treated differently in this regard – neither preferentially nor at a disadvantage – from any other type of human utterance or text.

In juridical texts, the term used to convey the notion of citing, and thus transmitting, a text of questionable morality penned by someone else was usually some derivative of the verb *ḥakā*.[15] Of course the word *ḥakā* carried no negative connotations in itself (and as we will have occasion to observe, synonyms might occasionally be used instead of it), and therefore the quotation of blameworthy material would often be specified as *ḥikāyat al-munkar* or even *ḥikāyat al-kufr* as the case might be.

At first sight, an overview of the juridical material seems to suggest that legal opinions ran the whole gamut from remarkably permissive to unflinchingly stern. A closer reading of the material, however, reveals that Muslim jurisprudents typically favoured an intentionalistic approach to the subject. The bottom line was that the intention of the person quoting some material must be taken into consideration, and it would have to be established whether the person quoting something actually endorsed it.[16]

15 It appears that in similar contexts the root had negative connotations. For instance, this is the verb employed in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Talbīs Iblīs* in reference to the poets' reprehensible custom of describing ('narrating': *yaḥkūn*) sinful acts in wine poetry and other immoral genres. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs*, 180-1.

16 In fact the issue of examining intentions is an all-encompassing one in Islamic jurisprudence, going far beyond the field of evaluating speech acts. It is also an

Yet this general principle, while seldom explicitly questioned, seems to have been followed in practice in varying ways. The differences of approach certainly do not correspond to consistent differences between particular schools of law, even if one might perhaps notice a slight tendency for Twelver Shiʿi and Maliki authorities to tolerate citations of disapproved literary material to a lesser degree than their Shafiʿi and Hanafi counterparts. Nonetheless such differences, if they exist at all, are of no real consequence since scholars of one school of law would usually feel at ease to quote and endorse the opinion of an authority belonging to a different *madhhab* if it fit their own outlook. The most important distinction, then, is not one between particular schools of law but between individual scholars, with an overwhelming majority whole-heartedly following a lenient approach to the problem and a minority having serious reservations about such an approach and favouring an extremely limited margin of tolerance for offensive quotations.[17]

One of the Muslim jurists who lent special attention to the problem of objectionable quotations is the prominent Shafiʿi scholar of Mecca Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566). His views are in no way unique, given his heavy reliance on the views of earlier scholars, mostly Shafiʿis, such as Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Adhruʿī (d. 783/1381); indeed most of his discussion consists of quotations from earlier writings. On the authority, it seems, of the Hanbalite Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī (d. 620/1223), he asserts that composing poems with too vivid descriptions of the physique of a concrete woman is prohibited (*muḥarram*). However,

> [the same verdict] is not applicable to the transmitter of it (*rāwīhi*). That is because the *maghāzī* [literature] contains quotations of odes by the unbelievers (*qaṣā'id al-kuffār*) with which they lampooned the Prophet's companions, and no-one objects to that. [...] al-Adhruʿī says:

extremely complex one, yet the starting-point is always the principle that intent matters unless some specific reason makes it irrelevant for legal scrutiny. See Powers, *Intent*, 3.

17 This differs from what one finds in the field of contract law, where the tendency to emphasise or play down intent as a definitive legal criterion shows differences along the lines of *madhhab* adherence. See Powers, *Intent*, 114.

> "[...] Scholars have blamed Jarīr and al-Farazdaq for their mutual lampoons, yet they have not blamed anyone who quoted these [verses] as evidence on grammar or other fields of rhetoric."[18]

Although the wording of the next sentence is somewhat ambiguous, al-Adhruʿī seems further to opine that the same principle should be applied to quotations of frivolous poetry by contemporaries as well even if it cannot conceivably be used as linguistic evidence. Further on, we read:

> Al-Rāfiʿī says: "The sin of him who cites invective poetry is not like [i.e. is slighter than] the sin of its author (*wa-laysa ithm ḥākī l-hajw ka-ithm munshiʾihi*)[19]." Al-Adhruʿī says; and he is followed by al-Zarkashī [in this opinion]: "This is only true if they [i.e. their activity] are equal [in publicity and notoriety]. If [the author] composes [the lampoon] but does not make it public (*lam yudhiʿhu*), and then the other cites it and [thereby] makes it public, the sin of the latter is beyond doubt greater."[20]

Elsewhere, this author borrows a passage from al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) which evinces the same approach. Classifying the contents of poetry from a juridical point of view, al-Māwardī states that poems may be prohibited owing to two features – to wit, lying and obscenity – and in both cases the original author loses his status as a morally upright Muslim (and thus a trustworthy witness in legal proceedings). However, people who merely transmit the objectionable poetry are not to be automatically regarded as immoral. Quoting it for an acceptable reason ("by necessity", *iḍṭirāran*) is morally and legally unimpeachable, whereas doing so for no serious reason (*ikhtiyāran*) is not.[21] This intention-based approach is very explicitly recommended by more than one Shafiʿi author as well as au-

18 Al-Haytamī, *Zawājir*, 2:213-4. See the original passage by Ibn Qudāma in *Mughnī*, 14:165.

19 The edition I consulted reads *ka-ithm munshidihi* ("the sin of him who recites it"), but this I believe is an obvious misspelling and makes no sense in the context. Furthermore, in the next sentence the text clearly speaks of the act of composing ("*idhā anshaʾahu*") a lampoon as opposed to citing it.

20 Al-Haytamī, *Zawājir*, 2:214.

21 Al-Haytamī, *Zawājir*, 2:216.

thorities of other legal schools. Indeed, the eponymous founder of the Shafiʿi school already favoured lenience in dealing with the quotation of objectionable material, as is evidenced by this passage in his *Kitāb al-umm*:

> As for those who transmit (*riwāya*) stories that may harm some people (*fīhā makrūh ʿalā l-nās*): this is reprehensible (*yukrah*) yet does not invalidate their testimony [in legal matters], because hardly anyone is totally safe from this if he is a transmitter [of literary texts] (*idhā kāna min ahl al-riwāya*). Now, if those stories are slanderous to a free man, or they are about questioning [someone's] descent, their [the transmitters'] testimony should be rejected [only] if they do it often, or else if their goal is to transmit such things and tell them [to people] even if they do not do it often. [...] The same is true of the transmission of your contemporaries' false talk and similar material (*wa-kadhālika riwāyat ahl zamānika min al-irjāf wa-mā ashbahahu*), and of jesting as well. It does not invalidate [the narrator's] testimony unless the jesting is taken to the extreme of slandering [someone's] descent or slandering a free man, or bawdiness (*fāḥisha*). If [the narrator] reaches this point, and he is explicit (*aẓharahu*), his testimony should be rejected.[22]

Later jurists tended to concur, even though the particular context and the degree of explicitness of their verdicts varied. Thus the Shafiʿi al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) states clearly that "no Muslim will become an unbeliever by citing [a text expressing] unbelief (*lā yaṣīr al-muslim kāfiran bi-ḥikāyatihi l-kufr*)".[23] ʿIzz al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī (d. 660/1262), a jurist of the same school, who discusses quotations in conjunction with the issue of coercion, states that "uttering a word [betraying] unbelief is a prohibited, corrupt thing (*mafsada muḥarrama*), yet it is allowed *by way of quotation* [emphasis added] or under duress (*jāʾiz bi-l-ḥikāya wa-*

22 Al-Shāfiʿī, *Umm*, 7:513-4.

23 Al-Nawawī, *Majmūʿ*, 3:99. Analogously, al-Nawawī argues that an unbeliever will not become a Muslim simply by citing a Muslim's declaration of the faith, the two *shahāda* formulae, usually regarded as the prerequisite speech act to enter the fold of Islam.

l-ikrāh)".[24] The somewhat obscure Hanafi author Abū l-Fatḥ al-Walwālijī (fl. early 6th/12th c.) strongly recommends the avoidance of reading old Arabic poetry that contains mention of immoral acts or drinking wine, yet he allows its use for reasonable purposes such as learning proper Arabic. More to the point, he also expressly allows, if only in a laconic fatwa, the quotation of other people's indecent verses. As he argues, one may sing such verses and still be regarded as a Muslim of impeccable morals (an acceptable witness) "because he [merely] quotes someone else (*li-annahu yaḥkī ʿan ghayrihi*)".[25] Certain Maliki authorities had a comparably lenient attitude. Thus Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr al-Namarī of Cordoba (d. 463/1071) allows for the possibility that a littérateur or poet inadvertently utters things that he should not – his example is reproaches to Fate, tantamount to complaining of God's decrees – but adds that one should ask God's forgiveness after such a lapse and strive not to repeat it.[26] This, one will observe, is roughly what anthologists would do after citing some text about which they felt particularly uneasy.

The eminent Hanbalite authority Ibn Mufliḥ al-Maqdisī (d. 763/1362) raises the approach described in the preceding passages to the status of quasi-consensus. In his words, "someone who cites [a text expressing] unbelief without believing it must not be declared an unbeliever; it is all but a matter of consensus (*wa-lā yukaffar man ḥakā kufran wa-lā yaʿtaqiduhu, wa-laʿalla hādhā ijmāʿ*)".[27] While total consensus it may not have been, the available evidence does suggest that it was the dominant opinion. The underlying principle, presented by jurists more or less explicitly, can be summarised thus: the quotation of reprehensible material

24 Al-Sulamī, *Qawāʿid*, 1:137.

25 Al-Walwālijī, *Fatāwī*, 2:320; 4:145-6; 5:419.

26 Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Istidhkār,* 8:552. The question of responsibility for other people's sinful words is also touched upon in a fatwa by the Andalusian Qāḍī Ibn Ward (d. 540/1146), even though it is not directly relevant to the issue of quotations, discussing as it does the use of indecent nicknames. According to this scholar, if such a nickname is widely known anyway and thus cannot offend the addressee then the person using it cannot be held responsible for it. It is still advisable, however, to refrain from using it. See Ibn Ward, *Ajwiba,* 106-7.

27 Ibn Mufliḥ, *Furūʿ*, 10:190.

is a different category, and a far less serious offence, than the production of the same texts. The former should not cause the loss of the status of moral impeccability, especially if there is a compelling and morally acceptable excuse for the quotation.

While not explicitly questioning this general principle, some jurists defined acceptable quotations in an exceedingly restrictive manner. Since this less lenient approach was clearly endorsed by a minority of jurists only, I will confine the following discussion to two scholars' views, neither of whom represents the authoritative consensus of his own legal school.

Perhaps the most detailed quasi-legal text that I know of on the quotation (*ḥikāya*) of offensive texts – more precisely, insults to the Prophet – is a chapter in the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ al-Yaḥṣubī (496-544/1103-46), incorporated in various later Maliki and Shafi'i works.[28] This author first asserts that the nature and the context of the citation must be investigated (*yunẓar fī ṣūrat ḥikāyatihi wa-qarīnat maqālatihi*), and then rules that texts offensive to the Prophet can only be legitimately cited in the context of witnessing against the author or refuting them – clearly not the typical context of quotations of disapproved material in literature. The subsequent passages are worth quoting at some length:

> As for allowing the quotation of such a text for any other reason, I do not see any possibility of that at all (*lā arā lahā madkhalan fī l-bāb*). It is not legitimate for anyone to crack jokes on the Prophet's honour (*al-tafakkuh bi-'irḍ al-nabī*) and to rinse his mouth with offensive remarks about him – neither as the author [of such words] nor as its transmitter (*lā dhākiran wa-lā āthiran*) for no juridically acceptable purpose. [...] The ancient and more recent generations of rightly-guided imams [i.e. the founders of the four Sunni schools of law]

28 Abdessamad Belhaj calls my attention to the fact that the *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, being as it is a very special work, cannot be considered a work of jurisprudence *sensu stricto*. However, it remains true that it is regularly cited as a legitimate authority on the issue by later jurists (and not just Malikites) and has all but attained the status of the classic, authoritative source on its subject-matter. (See for instance its prominent place within the legal studies of a West African Malikite scholar in Sanneh, *The Jakhanke*, 99-100.)

> agree on [permitting] the citation (*ḥikāya*) of the views of the unbelievers and godless people in their books and their gatherings in order to clarify them and refute their dubious claims. [...] As for mentioning such things in other contexts – such as quoting insults to [the Prophet] or belittling his position by way of [entertaining] stories, nightly conversation, funny anecdotes, and people's talk and prattle about everything valuable and worthless, the drolleries of libertines, the anecdotes of silly people and the cultivation of the genre of "it was said" and "he said so" (*al-khawḍ fī qīl wa-qāl*) – all this is forbidden. Some of it is more forbidden and to be more severely punished than other [types]. If the person citing it has no intention [to offend] or no knowledge of the degree (*miqdār*) [of offensiveness] of what he cites, or if he does not habitually [quote such texts], or if the text is not quite so outrageous and its narrator does not appear to endorse and approve of it, he must be deterred and told never to quote such a thing again. [...] However, if the text is really outrageous, the punishment must be stricter [accordingly].[29]

Other scholars might go even further and regard it somewhat sinful merely *to listen to*, let alone transmit, certain types of reprehensible content.[30] For instance, there is a fatwa (cited in various prominent Maliki collections) ruling that anyone who listens to the ʿAntar romance and similar folk epics shall lose his status as a trustworthy witness. To clarify this strange strictness, the interesting argument is added that this text being a bunch of sheer lies, listening to it should be construed as endorsing lying; and whoever regards lying as licit is a liar (*mustaḥill al-kadhib kādhib*).[31]

29 Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Shifāʾ*, 360-1; al-Wansharīsī, *Miʿyār*, 2:359-60; and a shortened version in al-Haytamī, *Iʿlām*, 385-6.

30 E.g. ʿAbd al-Barr, *Istidhkār*, 8:579 ["*wa-lā salima l-qāʾil wa-l-mustamiʿ fihi min sayyiʾa*"]; al-Turkumānī, *Lumaʿ*, 1:179.

31 Al-Burzulī, *Fatāwā*, 1:381; al-Wansharīsī, *Miʿyār*, 11:172. As noted above, this is no consensus of the Malikites, who seem generally to have allowed the transmission of even literary material of doubtful morality except in a sacred place such as a mosque. For instance the *Maqāmāt*, even though often a respectable part of the Arabic linguistic

Like ʿIyāḍ, the Twelver Shiite author Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) also has a stern view of the transmission of objectionable material but he too allows the quotation of such material for salutary purposes, such as religious disputes or the refutation of false opinions. His argument focuses on the issue of copying books, but it can probably be understood to refer to any analogous avenue of dissemination, including quotations. In his words,

> [...] it is not allowed (*lā yajūz*) to copy books of unbelief and falsity (*ḍalāl*) and [thereby] to perpetuate them, except with the aim of confirming the evidence against the opponent [in a dispute] and refuting him.[32]

Thus despite the dominance of a reasonable approach to quotations emphasising the decisive role of intent, scholars were somewhat undecided as to the proper legal status and consequences of quotations. A minority of scholars tended to regard an offensive quotation largely the responsibility of the person quoting it, others made a common-sense distinction between responsibility for an original text and a quotation respectively, with many shades in between.

3 The Impact of Islamic Ethics and Juridical Concepts on Littérateurs

It remains to see just how much of an echo the views of jurisprudents regarding objectionable quotations had among men of letters. To return to the basic query formulated in the beginning section of this essay: does the anthologists' frequent habit of expressing disapproval of their own quotations reflect awareness of certain juridical views?

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curriculum in certain Malikite scholarly circles, might not be read within the sacred space because of their 'mendacious' and obscene content (*li-mā fīhā min al-kadhib wa-l-fuḥsh*). See al-Wansharīsī, *Miʿyār,* 1:24; 11:13. On the use of the *Maqāmāt* as a tool in the linguistic training of West African Malikite scholars, see Sanneh, *The Jakhanke,* 99 and 149 (where he characterises al-Ḥarīrī's work as a "standard text" for West African scholars, comparable in importance to the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*).

32 Al-Ṭūsī, *Nihāya,* 1:369.

To begin, it is worth noting that some jurists clearly had no intention of enforcing their negative verdicts regarding certain types of literary text. Suffice to compare, for instance, the comments of the Hanbali Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) on various licentious literary motifs in his *Talbīs Iblīs* with his compilation of licentious anecdotes under the title *Akhbār al-ẓirāf wa-l-mutamājinīn*.[33] Of course, many religious savants were also accomplished or dilettante poets, anthologists and literary experts, which could occasionally lead to interesting ambiguities. In his multi-volume work on literary tropes, the Hanafi Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434) classifies all facetious uses of Qur'anic quotations (*taḍmīn āya karīma fī maʿnā hazl*) as totally unacceptable, then immediately proceeds to illustrate the category with an outrageous couplet setting two Qur'anic verses in an obscene context.[34]

This overlap between the categories of *ʿālim* and *adīb* cannot have failed to cause at least some seepage of juridical views into literary circles. Being well-versed in the religious disciplines, some littérateurs were apparently acutely aware of the problem arising from quotations of disapproved content. Al-Jāḥiẓ is a good example. A noted Muʿtazili theologian besides his status as an outstanding author, al-Jāḥiẓ offers some lengthy and perceptive commentary on the issue, joining the lenient camp – not surprisingly, I might add. He deals with the question in his idiosyncratic way in the opening section of *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*. In trademark Jāḥiẓian style, he embarks upon a polemic against a (perhaps fictitious) detractor of an earlier book of his, who apparently objected to al-Jāḥiẓ quoting the views of an unacceptable religio-political party (to wit, extremist ʿUthmāniyya, or anti-Shiites). His opponent has suggested that quoting such views is endorsing them. It is worth citing some of the arguments of al-Jāḥiẓ:

33 For his 'official' stance see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs,* 128-9.

34 Ibn Ḥijja, *Khizāna*, 4:357. It is questionable if, in expressing this opinion, the author is wearing his jurist's hat – for he was also a noted littérateur and this work is a work of *adab* – but al-Suyūṭī obviously regarded this passage by Ibn Ḥijja as a valid legal opinion because he cites it (in a slightly different wording) in his fatwa on the subject of *iqtibās*; see al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥāwī,* 1:266.

> You have objected to my citing (*ḥikāya*) the views of the ʿUthmāniyya and Ḍirāriyya party. Since you heard me say in the first part of my book "the ʿUthmāniyya and the Ḍirāriyya say [this and that]" – just as you also heard me say "the extremist Shiites and the Zaydites say [this and that]" – you declared me an extremist anti-Shiite (*ḥakamta ʿalayya bi-l-naṣb*) because of my citation [of their views] (*li-ḥikāyatī*); now why have you not declared me a Shiite because of my citation [of such views as well]? And why do I not belong in your opinion to the extremist Shiites because of my citing extremist Shiite arguments, just as I belong in your opinion to the anti-Shiites because of my citing their arguments?[35]

And so he goes on to argue that citing someone's opinion or speech should not be seen as amounting to an acceptance, let alone propagation, of it. In the course of this argument, he quotes the Qur'an and old Arabic poetry to buttress his position, and like many jurists notes that many pious people in Islamic history did not object to transmitting all kinds of facetiae and drolleries.[36] The conclusion is that quoting objectionable literary content is no endorsement of the views and attitudes expressed therein, and should not be treated in the same way as the composition of such material.

Littérateurs also responded to the juridical discourse concerning quotations in subtler, far less explicit ways. The ambiguity of the jurists' position on the issue may have partly been the inspiration for a remarkably widespread literary technique, namely pseudo-quotations from fictitious or real personages. This conventional feature of Arabic literature could be used so as to turn a primary text into a quotation and thereby to remove part of the responsibility for it. Of course, fictitious narrators and protagonists are a conspicuous feature of Arabic literary texts, and it is only one of their many functions that they allow the author to symbolically disown the text. An author could distance himself from a blasphe-

35 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, 1:17.

36 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, 1:20-5.

mous but funny text of his own making simply by attributing it to some stereotypical representative of impiety. A person known to have been a heretic would be an ideal 'narrator' of such a text. This is the role which we frequently find the person of the Muʿtazilite-theologian-become-free-thinker Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. 298/911) playing in literary texts. Infamous for his extreme theological views, this man was transformed in facetious literary texts into a caricature bent on uttering scandalous, if also very funny, things. The Hanafi scholar al-Turkumānī (fl. 8th-9th/14th-15th c.) bemoans the habit of many people to ascribe all kinds of blasphemous jokes to Ibn al-Rāwandī as a ruse to disclaim responsibility for those texts and disseminate them without fear of sanctions ("... *yatajarrad al-ʿabd bi-mazḥihi ʿalā 'Llāh taʿālā wa-yuḍīfuhu ilā 'bn al-Rāwandī*").[37] A certain Ibn al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 315/927-8), originally a wealthy jeweller and financier in Baghdad, had a similar literary career as the narrator of much silly – and at times quite blasphemous – nonsense in anecdotes ("*aṭradat ʿalayhi l-ʿāmma wa-ashbāh al-ʿāmma min al-khāṣṣa hādhihi l-nawādir wa-hādhihi l-shubah*"). It is reported that he was anything but silly as a living person, but wisely decided to pose as a gullible and harmless simpleton at the Abbasid court to elude intrigues and the better to defend his monetary interests.[38]

Arabic literature features a wide range of such stereotyped narrators, and these are too well-known to need more than fleeting mention here. The list includes vulgar commoners, effeminates, primitive country bumpkins of various origins (such as Kurds, Daylamites, Nabateans), uncouth Bedouin tribesmen, as well as such more or less fictitious persons as Ashʿab, Muzabbid and Juḥā. A short anecdote will suffice here to illustrate the way some stereotyped personification of stupidity or irreverence (here a Bedouin) is employed to shift the blame away from the actual narrator of the text:

37 Ibn Baydakīn, *Lumaʿ*, 1:184. On the historical Ibn al-Rāwandī, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 216-7. In other texts anonymous 'false prophets' (*mutanabbī*) play the same role; see for instance Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ẓirāf*, 107-8 and 133; Ibn Saʿīd, *Muqtaṭaf*, 178.

38 Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār*, 1:29-30; al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār*, 2:661; and also see al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 1:374-6 and al-Tawḥīdī, *Baṣā'ir* 2(4), 105-6 for anecdotes featuring this man.

> A Bedouin was asked: "Do you know how to pray to your Lord?" He said he did, whereupon they told him: "Go ahead, pray." So he said: "My God, you've given us Islam, though we hadn't asked for it; so please don't deny us Paradise, which we do ask for!"[39]

At least some religious savants were apparently aware of this use of pseudo-quotations, as indicated by al-Turkumānī's remark, just mentioned, about people inventing blasphemous stories and attributing these to Ibn al-Rāwandī. The chapter of al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ discussed above is even more explicit about this trick and recommends drastic measures against it:

> If the person citing some material [offensive to the Prophet] is accused of having invented it and ascribed it to someone else, and if that is his habit and he approves of it or he is fond of such things [...] seeking and memorising such texts or transmitting lampoons and abuses about [the Prophet]: this person must be treated as though he were the abuser himself; his words must be taken at face value, and his [trick of] attributing them to someone else should be no excuse. He must be killed immediately and sent precipitously to the deepest hell.[40]

39 Ibn Simāk, *Zaharāt*, 149. Of course, the image of the Bedouin in literature and in Middle Eastern popular culture is a complex one, an amalgam of such disparate traits (each emphasised in different contexts) as the Bedouin's bravery and savagery, his hospitable character and complete tactlessness, his eloquence and ignorance, and so on. One of the stock motifs of Arabic literature is the uncouth and uncivilised Bedouin who acts as the proverbial elephant in a china shop, and this image was obviously popular for several reasons, including the chauvinism of urbanites, the fun of subverting ancient stereotypes, and as I argue here, also for the convenience of hiding behind a stereotyped 'narrator' when uttering outrageous words. However, the complexity of reasons for the presentation of the Bedouin in Arabic texts is a moot point here. What is important (and undeniable) is that extremely risqué and even blasphemous jokes would sound safer if put in the mouth of a stereotyped embodiment of ignorance such as a Bedouin. On the literary portrayal of the Bedouin, see Binay, *Die Figur des Beduinen*, esp. pp. 171-85 on *Beduinenwitze*.

40 Al-Wansharīsī, *Miʿyār*, 2:360.

Besides all these repercussions of juridical views in literary circles, littérateurs would also develop their own line of argument in defence of the more questionable aspects of their art, an argument that apparently had wide currency but had little to do with the ideas of jurisprudents. This argument is based on the proposal that literature has to be judged according to criteria other than those used for non-literary texts and statements.[41] In this approach, the religious convictions and beliefs of a poet – as manifested in his work – are simply irrelevant to the assessment (and enjoyment) of his products. These must be judged according to other, purely aesthetic, criteria, not religious or moral ones. This approach was commonplace in the mediaeval period and, as exemplified by the following two excerpts, was even stated explicitly by some authors. The texts also demonstrate – if only by their polemical tone – that the approach had its detractors:

> If [the poet's unsound] religiosity were to deface [his] poetry and and mistaken beliefs justified the disesteem of a poet, then the very name of Abū Nuwās should be effaced from all collections of poetry and should not be mentioned when the generations [of poets] are enumerated. And it is all the more true of [the poets of] the pre-Islamic period. [...] However, these are two completely separate matters: religion has nothing to do with poetry.[42]

> [...] religiosity is not a measure of a poet's [worth]; incorrect religious convictions cannot be grounds for rating a poet low.[43]

41 As noted earlier, Islamic jurisprudence recognises no distinction between literary texts and ordinary speech acts. Thus one may even say this proposal is diametrically opposed to the very starting-point of all the juridical discourse regarding the subject.

42 Al-Qāḍī al-Jurjānī, *Wasāṭa*, 66.

43 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, 1:168. Also cf. al-Ṣūlī, *Akhbār*, 172-4 and Ibn Saʿīd, *Ghuṣūn*, 7-8. Such views are succinctly summarised by Geert Jan van Gelder: "Poetry and the criticism of poetry lie outside the domain of ethics, in the view of [...] the majority of Arab critics." See van Gelder, "Mixtures," 188. This approach, discussed seriously in the above passages, could also be expressed in a sarcastic tone; see for instance Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr,* 139; al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār,* 1:358.

4 Conclusions

Authorship in pre-modern Arabic literature shows quite a number of interesting aspects that set it apart from what is commonly expected of an author in modern western societies. A practice common in the pre-modern era that is likely to strike a modern reader as exotic is for an author to mark his disapproval, in no uncertain terms, of certain types of material that he has just quoted. One is left wondering about the motives behind such an authorial practice, which is a remarkably recurrent feature of *adab* works. Of course the very fact that an author decided to cite a given text, his declarations of disapproval notwithstanding, shows the profound ambivalence of his attitude toward it.

This essay has proposed that any attempt at making sense of such an ambivalent attitude must take account of the prevailing Islamic juridical discourse on the issue of quotation. Given that quotations of objectionable contents were considered a problematic issue in Islamic jurisprudence, and that jurists did not represent an isolated group among mediaeval Muslim intellectuals but freely interacted with the rest of the learned class, it stands to reason to suppose that their views would influence the opinions and practices of all men of letters. For legal purposes, the fundamental question was who must assume moral and legal responsibility for a quotation – the person who originally composed it, or else the person quoting it. The former answer was certainly the prevailing view, although the issue was far from unambiguous. Some jurists imputed all responsibility for a quotation to its original author and gave a wide margin of tolerance for quoting earlier material, even objectionable texts. Two important observations can be made here. First, differences of opinions among jurists in this matter did not correspond to particular schools of law, and second, the issue remained somewhat controversial, resulting in a great deal of ambivalence as to the proper treatment of objectionable quotations.

Men of letters seem to have been aware of all the controversies going on in juridical circles, and to have reacted to these in various ways. They could explicitly discuss the problems of quoting a disapproved text. They

would happily resort to pseudo-quotations to disown certain types of literary material, especially blasphemies. They also developed the notion that literature and morality are two separate areas and are to be evaluated according to different criteria. And of course they would also condemn some of their own quotations, just in case.

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Authorial Guidance:
Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's Closing Remarks

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Every text or, to be more precise, every reading of a text, has a beginning and an end. What seems like a self-evident truth opens a wide range of possible paths in the hermeneutic process. When we talk about books made from papyrus or paper, we begin the book by opening it or we look at the beginning of the scroll, and we end it by closing it or by getting to the last line of a parchment. But apart from this physical, rather haptic, experience there is far more to discover in terms of our perception, our definitions, our ways of interpretation, and, in particular, our authorial concepts. The end of a text is of imminent importance with regard to its authorship. If we assume a linear reading – or at least a linear use – of the text,[1] the ending is the author's last chance to guide the reader in the intended direction, to shape a possible outcome and to provide closure. It is the last chance to silence potential criticism and to give the finishing touch to the image the author has fashioned. There are several questions to be asked and points to be considered when we talk about closure, the first of which would be: Where does the end of a given text begin?

Depending on the narrative, the end could even start on the first page, the whole text being an endeavor to finally reach a certain outcome. Another question would be: is the end of a text its real end? And, more importantly in our context: who is leading the way towards the end? The present paper will show the complexity of ending as a literary procedure by using the example of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, a master of self-dramatization.[2]

1 Which, of course, we cannot be certain of, especially with regard to the anthological and performative character of early Arabic prose.

2 I would like to thank Julia Rubanovich and Miriam Goldstein (Hebrew University) who invited me to Jerusalem in 2014 to discuss a preliminary version of this paper at a workshop on authorial composition in medieval Arabic and Persian literature.

Preliminary Notes

Let me begin with some introductory remarks about author and text, albeit with certain reservations because most of the so-called historical facts are extracted from the book itself. For several reasons, nearly two hundred years had to pass before the first biographical account of the author's life came to be written down by Yāqūt (d. 1229) in his *Irshād*.[3]

Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī was probably born in Baghdad and died 1023 in Shiraz. He wrote his book *Akhlāq al-wazīrayn* after he had clashed twice with his employers in Rayy, the first time with Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, the second time several years later with al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād, both viziers under the reign of the Buyids. The work was originally commissioned by the Baghdadi vizier Ibn Saʿdān, who eventually hired al-Tawḥīdī not only as a copyist, but as an educated companion, and for whom al-Tawḥīdī also wrote his collection of their evening sessions *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* ("The Book of Delight and Entertainment").[4]

While the usually known title *Akhlāq al-wazīrayn* is often translated rather neutrally as "The Portrait/the Characters of the Two Viziers"[5], Arabic variations of the title portray more clearly the book's tenor: *Dhamm al-wazīrayn* ("The Disapproval of the Two Viziers") or *Mathālib al-wazīrayn* ("The Shortcomings/Vices of the Two Viziers"). Furthermore, the book is a rare example of a work of prose that consists nearly entirely of denunciation and blame.[6] Of the 550 pages of the Tanjī edition, the first 78 are a theoretical introduction to the reasons that led al-Tawḥīdī to compose this work. The portrait of al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād then takes up pages 79 to 320. The rest are, theoretically, dedicated to Ibn al-ʿAmīd, although the author frequently returns to al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād, his principle object of resentment. Both characters are depicted as degenerate, vain, ridiculous, arrogant, untruthful, and cruel. Moreover, in

3 Yāqūt, *Irshād* V, 380-407.

4 Another aspect of al-Tawḥīdī's authorship is discussed in Behzadi, "The Art of Entertainment. Forty Nights with Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī."

5 See for example M. Bergé, "Abu Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī" in CHAL, 114.

6 Cf. Lagrange, "L'obscénité du vizir," and the French translation *La Satire des deux vizirs*.

al-Tawḥīdī's eyes, they claim to be more than they are while in truth, they know nothing. Both viziers, by the way, had a reputation – and promoted it actively – of being very educated and refined writers and poets themselves. Al-Tawḥīdī writes about Ibn ʿAbbād in the following, using a third person to express his contempt:

> I asked al-Musayyabī: What do you say about Ibn ʿAbbād? He said: When it comes to degeneracy he possesses an inimitable Qur'an, and in the field of stupid insolence a revealed Āya [i.e. a Qur'an verse], for envy he has a real disposition, and in matters of lying he has got an adhering disgrace [...] his appearance is a delusion, and his inside is ignorance [...] Praise be upon Him who has created him as a nuisance for those who are good and educated, and gave him wealth and possession in abundance.[7]

Similarly, Ibn al-ʿAmīd is depicted:

> About Ibn al-ʿAmīd Abū l-Faḍl, he was a totally different chapter and a different disaster [...] He used to pretend patience behind which was just idiocy, he claimed knowledge that he was ignorant about, and he fancied himself as brave while he "is more a coward than someone who fears death when he farts" [he quotes a proverb]. He has claimed to excel in logic but knows nothing about it, he has not read a single book by someone important, he has suggested to be aware of geometry while he is indeed far away from it; in the field of chancellery he did not even know the basic rules of calculation; he really was the stupidest man with regard to incomes and expenses.[8]

Al-Tawḥīdī himself has often been portrayed as a rather gloomy person. Kraemer in his study calls him a "difficult person" who found "fault with everyone he met" and displayed a "chronic pessimism", and as someone who suffered throughout his lifetime from a lack of appreciation as a writer.[9] Instead, he had to beg for appointments and often ended as a scribe and copyist. The text, therefore, is mostly regarded as a form of ex-

7 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 107.
8 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 321.
9 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 213.

aggerated revenge for the unjust treatment which he endured at the hands of both Ibn ʿAbbād and Ibn al-ʿAmīd.

While this may have been the case, the value of this book goes far beyond its historical significance. If we consider its performative character and its rhetorical aspirations, it may even serve to teach us something about our own established theoretical concepts, so that we may vary them, enrich them, and look at them from a new angle, especially with regard to authorship, for example, and more specifically with regard to closure.

Author and Closure

Before turning to the end of this book, we have to ask about our definition of the author. In literary theory it has been long since established that we distinguish carefully between author and narrator, between narrator and character, and between the different roles and perspectives a narrator may assume (or shifts of perspective between the aforementioned, referred to as types of focalization in the field of narratology). Research in Western medieval studies, in the course of time, has distanced itself from this strict separation. It seems appropriate nowadays to consider historical circumstances without being interpreted as having made a positivistic reading.[10] These approaches, as well as the very inspiring research on closure that has been done in the Classics so far, usually take fictional literature as a starting point which, in pre-modern times, means mostly drama, epic, and poetry.[11]

In historiography, the "literary turn" has been widely accepted in recent years. Nevertheless, it remains difficult sometimes to examine so-called historical texts by applying methods deriving from literary theory without raising suspicions. There seems to be no middle ground between either viewing a non-fictional text as an authentic historical source on the one hand, or as a historical source that has been manipulated for some

10 See Unzeitig, *Autorname*, 17, 347, 350.

11 Roberts et al., *Classical Closure*. First attempts to acknowledge closure-related structures can be found in Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, esp. 72-77.

reason, either by the author himself or by later readers on the other. We could go so far as to state that the categories "fictional" and "non-fictional" in our context fail to be useful.[12]

In our case, the book has been labeled from its beginnings as a report, an eyewitness account, albeit a biased one. The author, therefore, has been identified as the historical figure, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. Indeed, nowhere in his work does al-Tawḥīdī explicitly suggest that his text might be something other than the actual truth. As a littérateur, on the other hand, he is a master of the word, and it is worth looking at the different roles he plays, the different voices with which he speaks. In shaping the end, he is, as well as any writer of any text – and even more so as a writer of a piece of entertaining literature – interested in predetermining the hermeneutic path and protecting his side of the story.

After the rediscovery of the author and his comeback in literary theory,[13] authorial functions can be found especially at the end of a text. Don P. Fowler has done the groundwork in the Classics by distinguishing five different senses of closure, borrowed in part from philosophical discourse. Closure, for him, can be understood as:

1. The concluding section of a literary work;
2. The process by which the reader of a work comes to see the end as satisfyingly final;
3. The degree to which an ending is satisfyingly final;
4. The degree to which the questions posed in the work are answered, tensions released, conflicts resolved;
5. The degree to which the work allows new critical readings.[14]

While we can use this classification without reservation with our text, too, we will see that some points are of lesser significance and others should be added to broaden the scope of the classification.

12 Glauch, "Ich-Erzähler ohne Stimme," 161/162, 184.
13 See Burke, *The death and return of the author*.
14 Fowler, "First Thoughts," 78.

The Arabic text consists of a rather loose succession of anecdotes, reports, and verses, either by the author himself or by his many sources. Its main target is the Buyid vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād. The creator of the text, possibly an individual named Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, indicates that he is aware of the controversial nature of his statements.[15] Therefore, it could be especially revealing to see how he intends to end this text.

Markers of Closure

Although any decision about the beginning of an end can seem arbitrary, certain markers of closure make themselves apparent, especially in a text with such a seemingly obvious agenda like this one. I will follow Yāqūt here who apparently had the same idea, presenting an extract of the last 58 pages (492-550), starting with page 492 where the succession of anecdotes stops.[16]

It is quite evident that the author cannot release the reader with this accumulation of accusations against two of the highest ranking officials of the time without giving a final statement. Let us go through the last pages and try to identify markers of closure as well as measures of rhetoric which the author takes to bring the text to the intended end.

Language and Style

The first marker is a change in language and tone. After the elaborate style of presenting anecdotes and quoting informants, other sources, verses etc. we suddenly hear an accusatory voice, a first-person narrator, who through repetition creates a solemn atmosphere. The concluding

15 And he tries to put himself in line with well-known predecessors to justify his scheme; for example al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 42f.

16 Yāqūt, *Irshād*, vol. V. The entry on al-Tawḥīdī covers pages 380 to 407. On page 396 Yāqūt introduces his quotation: "Abū Ḥayyān said near the end of his book ..." (ʿinda qurbihi min farāghi kitābihi). He then quotes several pages (Yāqūt, *Irshād*, vol. 5., 396-404; al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 492-509), omits a lengthy part and then quotes the last page again by writing: "Abū Ḥayyān ends his book about the character of the two viziers after apologizing for what he did ..." (wa-khatama Abū Ḥayyān kitābahu fī akhlāq al-wazīrayn baʿda an iʿtadhara ʿan fiʿlihi ...) (Yāqūt, *Irshād*, vol. 5., 404-405; al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 550).

section (Fowler, point 1) begins with a series of exclamations each starting the same way: Five times the voice calls out: *Fa-mā dhanbī* (how am I to blame/what is my fault/how can it be my fault, ...), thus nearly composing a hymn, an incantation, and creating the atmosphere of a tribunal where there seems to exist no equal firing power: it's the single voice against the rest of the world.

A well-known measure of rhetoric is the direct appeal to the reader. Al-Tawḥīdī calls him the Listener (*al-sāmiʿ*) and addresses him several times. The last page of the book is quite conventional where the author quotes some appropriate verses and nearly disappears behind a prayer, leaving the very last word, in a sense, to God himself. While there is a first person existent throughout the book, in this last passage (except the last page) the individual voice is even more plainly audible, the text transforming into a dialogue where one person takes over both voices, the accuser and the accused.

Argumentation

While the criteria in Fowler's list relate to fictional texts, they point to the existence of specific literary strategies which allow a given story to come to an end. The reader of our book (even the contemporary one) probably knows the outcome as he knows the two famous protagonists. There seems to be no need for suspense with regard to a complicated story, nor is there a need to solve conflicts or problems between characters that have been introduced in the book (see Fowler point 4). On the other hand, when we consider how daring al-Tawḥīdī has positioned himself outside the accepted hierarchy of the time, it is fascinating to watch how he tries to save his neck. It is not the result that is of interest here, not the end itself, but rather the way the author navigates through the stormy weather he himself helped to create. For that purpose, several modes, features, markers, and strategies can be identified:

1 Rejecting Authority

The first measure is to reject the sole responsibility; one could also say that the author here disaffirms his authority. He does so by handing over authority to others (as a transmitter as well as a victim):

> Is it my fault (*fa-mā dhanbī*), if the great and learned men of our time, when I asked them about him [Ibn ʿAbbād], described him all in the manner I have collected in this book? I have even abstained from mentioning many of his turpitudes, because I did not want to be redundant, and I wanted to keep the pen from writing down [too many] atrocities, from spreading repulsive deeds or tribulations one does not want to hear or talk about. Not to mention those words of him that have escaped me because I have left him in 370 [980/81].[17]

> Is it my fault (*fa-mā dhanbī*), if I recount the bitterness of failure he has made me swallow after giving me hope, and if I recount the ill success he has caused after feeding my aspirations, considering the [my] long time of service, [his] never ending promises, and [my] good faith [in him]. As if I alone have been exposed to his meanness, or as if I alone have been treated by him like this.[18]

The author is not alone in having suffered. Having constructed a case against his accused, he falls back into an imaginary line of victimized, like-minded individuals.

2 Isolating the Adversary and Setting the Norm

Al-Tawḥīdī had been asked by Najāḥ, the librarian, to copy thirty volumes of Ibn ʿAbbād's correspondence to be sent to Khurasān. His suggestion to extract the best parts and to arrange them properly in order to be passed around in sessions was met with Ibn ʿAbbād's disconcertment; apparently he felt lectured. According to al-Tawḥīdī, this happened not least because there had been a miscommunication:

17 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 492.
18 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 492.

> This was made known to him in an unflattering way, which I did not know, and he said:
>
> "He belittled my epistles, he refused to copy them, and he abused them. O God, I will acknowledge nothing that he knows, and he will realize his luck when it has left him."[19]

In al-Tawḥīdī's eyes, Ibn ʿAbbād is clearly overreacting which he has to counter with equal exaggeration, giving a sample of his rhetorical skills and his knowledge, and ridiculing the object of his criticism:

> As if I had abused the Qur'an, or thrown menstrual pads on the Kaaba, or wounded the she-camel of Ṣāliḥ, or defecated in the well of Zamzam. Or as if I had suggested that al-Naẓẓām had been Manichaean, or al-ʿAllāf a supporter of the Dayṣāniyya, or al-Jubbā'ī a follower of the Butriyya, or as if I had said that Abū Hāshim had died in the house of a wine merchant, or ʿAbbād [the father] had been just a teacher for little school boys.[20]

3 Solidarity with the Reader

The author seeks solidarity with the reader by recounting this outrageous request and virtually telling the reader: "See what he did to me! Can you imagine this?":

> Is it my fault (*fa-mā dhanbī*), you people, if I could not copy thirty volumes? Who would like to approve this effort, so that I should excuse him, if he condemns my refusal? What kind of person would copy this amount and would then pray to God to get back his eyesight or the use of his hand?[21]

Al-Tawḥīdī replaces subjective emotions with allegedly objective standards (reason, common sense etc.), and at the same time fraternizes with his readers.

19 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 493.
20 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 493-494.
21 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 493.

4 Rhetoric Battles (Degradation)

Al-Tawḥīdī's main battlefield was *adab*, the writing of elegant prose. Ibn ʿAbbād had a reputation for his eloquent and graceful style, the very skill upon which al-Tawḥīdī set all his ambition and for which he sought acknowledgment. His strongest adversary could not attest al-Tawḥīdī's proficiency in writing, and vice versa. Instead they seek to talk down their respective literary merits. The battle goes as follows:

> Is it then my fault (*fa-mā dhanbī*) when he said to me: "Wherever did you get that gaudy tawdry style you keep writing to me in?" I replied: "How could my style be otherwise than as His Excellency describes it, seeing that I pluck the fruit of his 'Epistles', drink at the fount of his learning, make his *adab* my guiding light, and do my humble best to draw a few drops from his ocean and strain a trickle of his outpourings?"
>
> He retorted: "You are lying and sinning, you bastard! Where are my words intrusive and begging, where do you find in them servility and the plea for mercy? My words belong to heaven, yours are dung."[22]

5 The Process of Selection

If the reader has the temporary impression that there is a stalemate, this changes immediately with the fifth exclamation. Now, the author mounts his strongest weapon: he alone chooses what to include in the text. He uses his authority to present evidence of his excellence in prose. But in order not to appear as someone who one-sidedly misuses his power, we learn that he did so against his will:

> Is it my fault (*fa-mā dhanbī*), if when he asked me: "Have you been with Ibn al-ʿAmīd Abū l-Fatḥ?" I replied: "Yes, I have visited him and joined his session, and I have seen what happened to him there, how he has been praised with verses, how he is outstanding in this, how he excels in that, how he takes this and that on to promote scholars

22 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 493.

> and littérateurs, how he has sent Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī this and has given Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī that ..."
>
> At that he furrowed his face, and his words became dismissing [...] Then he said: "I know that you have sought refuge with him in Iraq; read your letter for me in which you have asked him for his favor, and in which you have praised him." I refused, but he ordered and insisted, so I read it to him, whereupon he in a fury lost his self-control.[23]

Although he tries to refuse, eventually he has to share his lengthy letter with Abū l-Fatḥ.[24] This letter does not only praise Ibn al-ʿAmīd's rival, it is first of all proof of al-Tawḥīdī's skills as a writer and shows that he can do more than deliver blame if the person is worth it.

6 The Author in Danger or The Author as Hero

What happens now is a vivid illustration of authority within communication. For al-Tawḥīdī, there is no doubt that he has crossed a line. Again, this is not his own assessment alone; others, too, have noticed it, including his target:

> Afterwards, I was informed: "You have harmed yourself by describing his enemy in such good words, and by singling him out so clearly and making him the master of humankind." [...]
>
> They also said to me: "You have harmed yourself, and you have thrown all caution to the winds. He hates you and despises you and finds that you have crossed the line with your words, that you don't know your class, and that you have forgotten your rank."[25]

In his answer, al-Tawḥīdī reveals his code of honor which prevents him from insulting a person without cause. By this *argumentum e contrario*, he indicates that Ibn ʿAbbād deserves what he got, and he, al-Tawḥīdī, had exposed himself to danger by adhering to his code of honor.

23 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 495-496.
24 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 496-504.
25 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 504.

> I replied: "I did not want him to watch me attacking the honor of such an important man, bashing him without consideration, or turning my back on him."[26]

7 Résumé

A very prominent feature in textual endings is to sum up the text in one catching phrase, an important step to meet the expectation of the reader (see Fowler's points 2 and 3). Al-Tawḥīdī's résumé of these exclamations takes the form of a rhetorical question:

> If these matters are unclear, and if these consequences are unknown, is not the point of all the goodwill that is the reason for devotion, and does not devotion lead to praise? And the same goes for insult that is the reason for hatred/aversion, and does not hatred lead to disapproval? Well, that's exactly the case.[27]

For those who, after having read this rhetorical exclamation mark, still have doubts about the real outcome of the presented material, he declares the bottom line as follows:

> Ibn ʿAbbād was extremely jealous of everyone who had rhetorical skills und could express himself in an elegant way.[28]

The book could have stopped here. However, by all appearances, it should end with a *finale furioso*. To illustrate his verdict, al-Tawḥīdī adds that Ibn ʿAbbād one day got carried away and laughed heartily about an anecdote he, al-Tawḥīdī, had told him. He even requested that al-Tawḥīdī should repeat it. Afterwards, someone informed al-Tawḥīdī how angry Ibn ʿAbbād had been about the situation. The reason for this anger, al-Tawḥīdī affirms, could be nothing other than fury about his, al-Tawḥīdī's, excellence and pure envy. After several pages of sayings and further anecdotes on the subject of tyranny in general, the author (i.e. the audible voice) wraps things up by saying:

26 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 504.
27 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 505.
28 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 505.

> I have added report to report, and word to word, to increase the benefit, and to display the knowledge, in order to support what I have said with clear arguments, and in order to provide appealing pleasure.[29]

Here, al-Tawḥīdī applies the conventional ending of an *adab* work which specifies the well-known and rather non-specific purpose of *adab* itself: to be useful, learned, clear, and entertaining.

8 The Author and God

A direct appeal to the reader/listener follows immediately afterwards:

> Oh listener! You have listened to true and doubtful stories, among them detestable and agreeable ones. If God has endowed you with fairness and lets you love justice, if He has provided you with kindness and has secured your share of graciousness, and if He has raised you in terms of goodness, then I will be content with your judgment; I will not fear your hostility, and I will have faith in what God will put on your tongue, and what He has designed for me from you.[30]

Instead of leaving it to the reader to pass his judgment independently, the author alone sets the conditions under which he will accept a verdict. What seems like a humble gesture (relying on God) can also be read differently: The only acceptable verdict comes from the other great author, God himself. And since God's intentions are unreadable, the author alone will decide if the reader's reaction is appropriate. Thus, the author puts himself in line with the Creator; at least in his realm he is God.

9 Anticipation of Critique

His fellow critics are fallible beings, therefore, once again he has to refer to possible objections and refute them at once:

> Know that if you ask for an apology, I have given a clear one already, and if you demand motivation, it has been provided with utmost clar-

29 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 547.
30 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 547.

> ity; and if you are angry on behalf of Ibn ʿAbbād or Ibn al-ʿAmīd, I have filled this book with their merits [too], with accounts of their education, their honor, and their glory.[31]

While we can find this technique – the anticipation of critique – quite often in medieval Arabic literature, it rarely happens that an author deliberately puts himself outside the circles of establishment, and at the same time claims to have been fulfilling all the circles' criteria for what is considered appropriate scholarly behavior.

10 The Author as a Keeper (in Form of Self-Praise)

By writing down so many anecdotes and details from the vizier's life, al-Tawḥīdī, or so he claims, has done him a favor, i.e. he has preserved his deeds for posterity:

> ... so let me know who nowadays has filled ten sheets of paper with their characteristics, qualities, and honorable deeds, and with everything that informs about their circle of influence and their power; who undertakes it to celebrate them, to meet their demands, and to make known their reputation and their goals; [...] Who, then, has written down all this among those who are mentioned only together with these two, who are known only in connection with these two, who, if not one of these two had turned to them, today would stand watch in the road, or pick up kernels from the streets, or linger in the last corner of the Hamam.[32]

11 The Author as a Medium

He returns then to the argument brought up before: it is not a matter of his character nor is it a singular occurrence, an encounter that regrettably went wrong. What happens here is a dissociation of the author as an individual; instead the focus is being lead to a certain mechanism and structure. He as an author is merely the mouthpiece or medium. This could have happened to anyone:

31 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 548.

32 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 548.

> Be certain that whoever rides the humps and swims in the waters of this story like I did, whoever would say what I have said, and whoever exposes like I did, would be judged and condemned like I have been.[33]

Closure and Openness/Closeness

Fictional literature is perceived as inherently open.[34] The author via his narrator(s) enters a semantic negotiation process together with his potential reader that cannot be closed even if there is a suggestion for a possible ending. By taking on the role of the author, al-Tawḥīdī demonstrates a mechanism that is at work in every text: It is impossible to simply declare a work as "closed" or "open", because these statements very much depend on the perspectives, the critical zeitgeist, and the questions asked.

The audible voice in *Akhlāq al-Wazīrayn* plays with the implications offered by authorial functions: sometimes the authority comes in handy, sometimes it is better to shrug the authorial voice and hide behind the voices of others. Al-Tawḥīdī stands prominently in the foreground of the narrative, but the real person al-Tawḥīdī vanishes behind the roles and functions he adopts. As the arranger of his material, he remains the creator. But as only one of many factors in the process of originating the text, the author is much less the master of the hermeneutic process than he claims to be. Interestingly, the relief about this minimized authority – be it desired or not – is palpable, too.

The final passage is a vivid example of a communication process in which the parties involved do not act under equal conditions. Officially, the vizier is in the key position. He possesses authority and influence; with his power he eventually makes al-Tawḥīdī leave the court. Al-Tawḥīdī strikes back and presents himself as a powerful author who in this arena possesses the prerogative of final explanation. However, this is neither possible nor advisable in the form of an uninterrupted invective.

33 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 549.

34 Grewing et al., *The Door Ajar*, 10.

In order to really gain the upper hand, at the end al-Tawḥīdī has to step back as an author without undermining his authority. Once the book is out of his hand, it is available for interpretation. Therefore, all possible pros and cons have to be included in the text. This technique opens the text on one hand, because the reader is free to choose between the arguments while on the other, it is the author, in fact, who determines the weight of certain arguments and the weakness of others. We witness here a permanent vacillation between closing and opening. The author displays his last will without calling it a last will. He presents a summary, and he claims authority because this is his story. A little later he rejects authority because the story could have happened to anyone. He evaluates his own writing but does not accept the evaluation of others. He gives an apology and takes it back immediately. The author presents explanations and justifications; although he fraternizes with the reader he does not trust his judgement. He practices the art of balancing – a common feature in medieval Arabic writing – but the outcome of the balancing must match his authorial interpretation. Depending on our perspective, this could be a quite hermetic way of presenting a text, or, on the contrary, we could see it as a way of dynamicization, of getting away from fixed meanings and static characters.[35] Be that as it may, we can observe a discursive need[36] and an imaginative play with literary conventions here.

This way of writing culminates at the end of the text and thus refers to pivotal aspects of the authorial function. The author offers himself as a medium with which the potential reader *ex post facto* can gain access to certain historical events, in non-fictional texts in particular. The author, in order to prevent the termination of this mediation process, has to achieve a balance between maintaining his authority and not patronizing the reader. Ironic twists, relativizations, addressing the authorship itself: All this can be seen as commentary on the process of writing, reading, and the mutual understanding of writers and readers in general; a

35 Stock, "Figur," 203.

36 See the phrase "diskursives Bedürfnis" in Glauch, "Ich-Erzähler ohne Stimme," 161.

process that in every new generation and in changing circumstances begins all over again.[37]

If we translate the story of the vizier and his scribe into a story about communication, the result would be that perfect communication, if at all possible, can be achieved between equal protagonists only, and that communication is all about balancing. The ideal would be the following, expressed in verses by an unknown poet and quoted on the last page:

> I have not enjoyed support by a stranger
> Nor a benefit by a someone close to me for fifty years;
> Praise be to God, thank you: I am content
> Because I don't have to accuse the miser
> Nor do I have to praise the benefactor.[38]

It is perhaps impossible to eliminate dependencies entirely, as al-Tawḥīdī knows too well; he adds:

> I wish I could be like him, but incapacity dominates me; it is planted in my nature.[39]

However, one could try to make the interdependencies visible, and to reveal the accompanying distortions and inconsistencies therein. Al-Tawḥīdī presents himself as the creator of the text but delegates the authority of the verdicts and the responsibility for the consequences to others. Thus, he weaves a network that is supposed to avert or at least minimize the risk of appearing untrustworthy. Here, the author seems aware of the fact that any given text is shaped by the author's perspective, by his choices, by the collage of sections and sequences he arranges, and in the order presented by him. In essence, he dismantles his authorial authority in order to increase his credibility. Al-Tawḥīdī ultimately, through his actions, (consciously or otherwise) reveals the inimitable essence of authorship.

37 It still has to be discussed in what way Fowlers fifth point ("the degree to which the work allows new critical readings") relates to a universal quality of textual reception.

38 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 550.

39 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Wazīrayn*, 550.

Conclusion

A popular way of ending a text is to come back to the beginning. In the beginning I have mentioned that assessments of al-Tawḥīdī to date, with all due respect, mostly focus on his difficult personal situation that somehow must have affected his writing and his own judgment. One example is the following statement: "Tawḥīdī, clearly, is not an objective source."[40]

Well, of course he is not. But who is? Instead, this quite diverse and multifaceted text, though not fictional in the first place, is built upon, and shows in an exemplary manner, one of the basic narrative mechanisms, the "narrative principle of cooperation" between author and reader which can be manipulated and suspended, too.[41]

Without neglecting the historical circumstances, we can learn something about literary conventions and about the functioning of textual understanding, if we perceive the individuals in the text as characters. Characters have to function in the text only, not in real life. Both al-Tawḥīdī and his counterpart(s) are designed as characters; they adopt certain functions and can be seen as paradigms of certain narrative features.[42] The author's guidance is an endeavor with an uncertain outcome; but it has been and still remains a very vivid activity, although created so many centuries ago. Al-Tawḥīdī's authorship, then, is part of the ongoing process to form history via (hi)stories, and to show how revealing it can be to supposedly swerve from reality.[43] Research on authorship and on closure in medieval Arabic literature is still far from being exhausted. The end of this paper, therefore, is only a temporary one.[44]

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40 Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian*, 42.

41 "Narratives Kooperationsprinzip zwischen Autor und Leser", Jannidis, *Figur und Person*, 56.

42 Jannidis, *Figur und Person*, 161.

43 Frank Kermode, among many other subtle insights regarding the end, has commented on the illuminating effects and of the potentials of fiction, and on the writing of history in *The Sense of an Ending*, 42f., 50f., and *passim*.

44 Or, as Don P. Fowler put it: "Or has all ending, in the end, to be just stopping?", "Second Thoughts," 22.

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The objective of the contributions presented in this volume is the investigation of authorship in pre-modern Arabic texts. From several angles and different perspectives it has been asked how the author in his various facets and aspects, and as a principle of organization and guidance, can be traced and understood. The author can be perceived as a historical individual, a singular genius, or a gifted anthologist; he can claim authority or pass it on to others. The author can be invisible, applying textual strategies for steering the reader's perception and interpretation, trying to leave the reader oblivious to his authorial interference. Although authors can be proud to present their knowledge and their opinions, they can also be reluctant to show themselves and can even disclaim their responsibility, depending on the issue at hand.

The contributions gathered in this volume provide a fresh view on the multilayered nature of authorial functions and open up new perspectives on our understanding of the rich and diverse pre-modern Arabic culture and literature.

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