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The Medieval Islamic Literary World-System: The Lexicographic Turn

In Casanova's reading of the *World Republic of Letters,* major restructuration and hence proliferation of the literary world-system is neither totally ordained by academic institutionalization processes, nor confined to the systematization of language through difference and struggle against a hegemonic Latin. In her view, these are no less motivated and driven by the corporate effort of grammarians and writers, an effort that in the case of English drew impetus from a sustained privileging of literature in a self-assertive nationalism.[1] Applied to the medieval and "pre-modern" Islamic cultural world-system, one can argue that grammar, lexicography, and literary production assume even more significance as evidenced in the massive production and demand. As an exemplary man of letters, the Andalusian poet, philologist, and grammarian Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344), for example, who settled in Cairo and the Levant, made popular the teaching of Turkish grammar. His Turkish grammar manual was a landmark in the rise of Turkish as the language of empire. That rise coincided with the upsurge in lexicographic activity in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. In Persian, poets like Asadī Ṭūsī and Qaṭrān Tabrīzī prepared the way for Muḥammad Naqjavānī's (728/1328) *Ṣiḥāḥ al-Furs,* which was based on Asadī's dictionary but took as model Abū Naṣr Ismāʿīl ibn Ḥammād al-Jawharī's (d. 1002 or 1008) Arabic lexicon *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (The purist).[2] Like the use of Latin by the rising European vernaculars, both Turkish and Persian made enormous use of Arabic antecedent authority, specifically spelled out in a lexical activity whereby rhetoric was the discursive domain for scholars. Al-Jawharī's lexicon was invaluable to the expanding Ottoman Empire. Mehmet bin Mustafa Vankulu (d. 1592) rendered it in a bilingual Arabic-Turkish dictionary that was to be among the first seventeen texts which Ibrahim Müteferrika published in Istanbul in 1729 as *Vankulu Lügati*. The copious

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[1] Joe Cleary, "The World of Literary System: Atlas and Epitaph," review of *The World Republic of Letters,* by Pascale Casanova, trans. M. B. DeBevoise, *Field Day Review* 2 (2006): 196–219.

[2] *Tāj al-Lughah wa-Ṣiḥāḥ al-ʿArabīyah* (The crown of language and correct Arabic), better known by its short title, *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ fī al-Lughah* (The correct or purist language). John A. Haywood, *Arabic Lexicography: Its History, and Its Place in the General History of Lexicography* (Leiden, 1965), ch. six. M. J. L. Young, "Arabic Biographical Writing," in *Religion, Learning, and Science in the ʿAbbasid Period*, ed. M. J. L. Young, J. D. Latham, and R. B. Serjeant, The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990).

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DOI: 10.6082/M1Q52MSK. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1Q52MSK)

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front matter which *Vankulu Lügati* has is no less than the summoning of authority on the side of the publisher in this imperial venture.[3] The renowned publisher was the first Muslim to be credited with establishing a printing press.[4] On the other hand, the edition of al-Jawharī's *Ṣiḥāḥ* that was begun by E. Scheidius with a Latin translation appeared only in part at Harderwijk (the Netherlands, 1776). The lexicon, with its 40,000 entries arranged alphabetically according to the last letter of the word root, would soon serve as the base and model for the enormous lexical effort during the Mamluk period. Its centrality to the effort is not confined to the model itself, however, or to its material that was incorporated by the Tunisian Muḥammad ibn al-Mukarram ibn Manẓūr in his (d. 711/1311) massive compilation, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (The Arab language). Al-Jawharī's career is also exemplary for a republic of letters. Born in Farab (southern Kazakhstan), and working on his dictionary in Nishapur where he died, he received his early education in Baghdad and the Hijaz. In other words, he represents the model Islamic scholar whose search for knowledge inevitably leads to centers of learning, and whose devotion to Arabic knows no bounds. Ethnic or residential roots were to fade and the ultimate devotion to Arabic as the language of a Muslim community took over even when its grammar and lexical models were deployed to promote competing languages and vernaculars, like Turkish and Persian.

While also prompted and provoked by the dominance of Arabic, both Turkish and Persian happened to come into their medieval standardization as the languages of empires, following the rule of the Buyids and Seljuks and the ultimate Mongol institutionalization of Persian as the official language. Arabic was on the defensive throughout, but the devotion and skill of its writers, lexicographers, and other professionals in the book industry consolidated its already well-established lexical base, turning it into the field of rhetoric as a world-system with far-reaching explorations not only in theology, logic, and philosophy, but also in poetry, prose, and the performing arts as the medium for an Islamic culture. The great lexicographic achievements made over centuries within the middle and

[3] The catalog description (Indiana University, Lilly Library DR 403 M82215, vol. 1) notes that *Vankulu Lügati* has "the most extensive front matter of all the seventeen books in the Müteferrika series. It opens with a foreword by Müteferrika and contains a copy of the original imperial edict *(ferman)* issued by Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703–1730), followed by religious decrees *(fetvas)* issued by leading religious figures in the administration giving religious clearance to Müteferrika to establish a press. The religious decrees are followed by a copy of the pamphlet entitled 'The Usefulness of Printing' *(Vesiletü't-tibaʿa),* which Müteferrika wrote and presented to Grand Vizier Damad Ibrahim Paşa. In this pamphlet, Müteferrika lists ten reasons why an imperial printing house should be established."

[4] William J. Watson, "Ibrahim Muteferrika and Turkish Incunabula," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 3 (1968): 435–41. Also, Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den Boogert, and Bart Westerweel, *The Republic of Letters and the Levant* (Leiden, 2005), 266–67.

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pre-modern period are many,[5] but they culminated as a first stage in the epochal lexicographical achievement of Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab,* a work known for its systematic and comprehensive alphabetical arrangement which takes into consideration the needs of actual use and reference. Under each root or variation and conjugation there are examples of use and misuse that make each entry a lively encounter, especially as these are taken verbatim or in a condensed form from antecedent authority that receives due citation. To date it is practically unsurpassed. It was followed by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqrī Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Fayyūmī (d. 770/1368) in his *Al-Miṣbāh al-Munīr* (The enlightening lamp). In the period under discussion it holds a prominent place among contemporary lexicons. Al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415) produced his *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Th encompassing ocean) soon after, to be followed by the Yemenite Abū al-Fayḍ Muḥammad Murtaḍá al-Zabīdī (d. 1205?/1791), who in his voluminous *Tāj al-ʿArūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs* (The bride's crown from the pearls of the Qāmūs) provides some balance to al-Fīrūzābādī's "Ocean," including further information and incorporating almost in full Ibn Manẓūr's indispensable "Arab language."[6]

However, in the context of our discussion of the republic of letters in the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, these lexicons are no mere listing of words and meanings: Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān* is a thoughtful reclamation of the lexical space that includes an extensive treasury of proverbs, maxims, poetry, and prose, along with Quran and hadith. Words place the reader into a network of negotiation and correspondence that manages to revive and hold both the ancient and more recent past in dialogue. Thus, it is of immediate relevance to the Mamluk era and its dynamics of the innovative encyclopedic creativity in the context of knowledge acquisition. On the other hand, this lexicographic fervor sets the stage for its unconditional espousal by the *nahḍah* or *yaqẓah* (Arab awakening) advocates.

[5] In the period under discussion, these are: Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Abū al-Manāqib al-Zanjānī's (d. 656/1258) *Tahdhīb al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (i.e., al-Jawharī's); Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Rāzī's (d. 666?/1268) *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ;* Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Anṣārī al-Shaṭibī's (d. 684/1285) *Ḥawāshī ʿalá Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ;* Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manẓūr's (d. 711/1311) *Lisān al-ʿArab;* Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Andalusī Abū Ḥayyān's (d. 745/1344) *Tuḥfat al-Arīb fī Gharīb al-Qurʾān;* Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqrī al-Fayyūmī's (d. 770/1368) *Al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr;* Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Fīrūzābādī's (d. 817/1415) *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ;* Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Al-Muzhir;* Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Khafājī's (d. 1069/1659) *Sharḥ Durrat al-Ghawwāṣ;* and Murtaḍá al-Zabīdī's (d. 1205/1790) *Tāj al-ʿArūs.* Ahead of them there were many others, but a mention has to be made of Ibn Sīdah's (d. 458/1066) *Al-Muḥkam wa-al-Muḥīṭ al-Aʿẓam;* and al-Ṣaghānī's (d. 650/1252) *Al-ʿUbāb, Majmaʿ al-Baḥrayn, Al-Takmilah, Al-Dhayl, Al-Shawārd,* and *Al-Aḍdād.*

[6] For an overview of this significant base, which requires more work, see M. G. Carter, "Arabic Lexicography," in *Religion, Learning, and Science in the ʿAbbasid Period*, 106–17; also Haywood, *Arabic Lexicography;* and Ulrich Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1970).

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DOI: 10.6082/M1Q52MSK. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1Q52MSK)

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Although they had their own point of departure on other matters, they could not resist the compelling lexicographic achievement of the Mamluk period.

The ways in which proponents of the *nahḍah* seek to adjust the engagement with lexicons are worth seeing through Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq's (1805–87) analysis of lexicographic activity to be found in his meticulous piece of research, *Al-Jāsūs ʿalá al-Qāmūs.*[7] In it he describes Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab* as follows: "It is reported that it lists eighty thousand items; and it is wonderful in its transmissions, refinement, amendments, and organization: but it is limited in circulation compared to other lexicons. It came after the first age [of the Mamluk period] and was contemporaneous to the time of the author [al-Suyūṭī] of *Al-Muzhir* (sic; al-Suyūṭī came later). May God have them all in His mercy."[8] From this we are to understand that al-Shidyāq is puzzled by this neglect on the part of al-Suyūṭī. "It is strange that Imam al-Suyūṭī does not mention the author of *Lisān* among those who have authored in the field of language." Actually, al-Suyūṭī mentions Ibn Manẓūr in his *Bughyat.*[9] However it is the lexicon that provokes al-Shidyāq's interest: "It is a book in language, philology, grammar, conjugation, hadith explication, and Quranic exegesis." He justifies repetition as being a meticulous transference of information from each primary lexicon. No wonder, he concludes, that: "it is the best book ever authored in language, but its enormous size led to its limited circulation; it discourages students from buying it."[10] Al-Shidyāq makes use of the occasion to criticize al-Suyūṭī for other omissions; and also to underline the significance of al-Jawharī's *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ.* To him, al-Jawharī sets the standard of correctness as applied by the Bedouin Arabs with whom he was in conversation during his stay in Iraq and Hijaz.[11] His lexicon received high acclaim and was to undergo reviews, updates, and amendments; to be followed a year later by Aḥmad ibn Zakarīyā al-Qazwīnī ibn Fāris's (d. 395/1004) *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* (Language standards compendium).[12] Moreover, in methodological terms, al-Shidyāq brought into the discussion another element that underscores the conversational milieu in the middle period. Biographers, explicators, and litterateurs write about these efforts in their entries and obituaries on authors and compilers. There is also the element of comparison, because al-Shidyāq has a comparatist bent and sets out to evaluate each one against the other, especially if a person like al-Suyūṭī has omitted something of significance. Hence, in order to correct the ancestor

[7] *Al-Jāsūs ʿalá al-Qāmūs,* by Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, editor of *Al-Jawāʾib* (Istanbul, 1299).

[8] Ibid. *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 2010), introduction, 79.

[9] See the note by the editors, *Lisān al-ʿArab,* 1:9.

[10] Al-Shidyāq, *Al-Jāsūs ʿalá al-Qāmūs,* 97–80.

[11] Ibid., 105.

[12] Needless to say, the list is long and there are many lexicons that take over from preceding efforts or carry on a more specialized and focused research.

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(al-Suyūṭī) who applauds al-Fīrūzābādī's *Qāmūs* while overlooking the role of *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, he explains: "*Al-Ṣiḥāḥ* has the advantage over *Al-Qāmūs* in that it is distinguished by clarity of expression, the consolidated support of the Quran, hadith, Arab proverbs and maxims, and grammatical, linguistic, and conjugational rules. The author often applies a speech construct and structure along with an explanation of lexica."[13] Al-Shidyāq is meticulous, but selectively so. Ibn Manẓūr admits that he has emptied the contents of early lexicons into his enormous dictionary, letting each entry include and appropriate their successive items. The primary sources that he cites are many.[14] Indeed, Ibn Manẓūr's preface is more or a less a reclamation of Arabic and its placement at the center of cultural effectiveness, along with an apology for omissions and a disclaimer of faults, in that he chooses to describe himself as the provider of an accessible concordance. The reclamative tone is more assertive, corresponding as it does to what al-Shidyāq would like to have the lexicographic enterprise become. His reclamation of Ibn Manẓūr brings to one's mind the latter's lament that in his time "to speak in Arabic was often seen as a drawback." Ibn Manẓūr adds: "People compete in compilations of translations in foreign tongues [primarily Latin, Turkish, and Persian], and also in showing their competence in these; hence I have compiled the contents of this work in an age whose people are not proud of their own native language."[15] Th lament should not be taken lightly, for power relations and the loss of Arab political primacy and hence the diminishing role of Arabic in centers of power drove many to search for benefit and profit elsewhere. Al-Fīrūzābādī is no less aware of the problem, but he recognizes the survivalist potential in the Arabic language despite what is "befalling its people." He laments that schools are the only space where Arabic is studied and promoted. But the diligent lexicographer nevertheless overlooks Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān* and instead offers deserved plaudits to al-Saghānī's lexicon *al-ʿUbāb* (The vast ocean), Ibn Sīdah's *Al-Muḥkam* (The concise), and al-Jawharī's *Ṣiḥāḥ*. He admits that in his time *Ṣiḥāḥ* was the most popular, a verdict that leads him to adopt its contents in full but adding in red what is disputed, updated, and corrected. In anticipation of further lexicographic efforts, he explains the reasons behind this abridged version of his voluminous *Al-Lāmiʿ* (The superb lexicon), which amount to no more than the need to make it more accessible. He nevertheless sets a modernist *(muḥdath)* criterion, in that he negates antecedent

[13] Al-Shidyāq, *Al-Jāsūs ʿalá al-Qāmūs*, introduction, 81.

[14] They include: *Tahdhīb al-Lughah* by Abū Manṣūr al-Azharī (d .370/981?); *Al-Muḥkam* by Ibn Sīdah al-Andalusī (d. 458/1066); *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ* by Abū Naṣr Ismāʿīl ibn Ḥammād al-Jawharī (d. 398/1008); *Ḥāshiyat al-Ṣiḥāḥ* by Muḥammad ibn Barrī (d. 582/1187); *Al-Nihāyah* by Abū al-Saʿādāt ibn al-Athīr al-Jazrī (d. 630/1232); along with *Jamharat al-Lughah* by Ibn Durayd (d. 321/934), which is not listed. See editors' note, 1:13.

[15] Ibn Manẓūr, 1:18.

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recurrence as being a value in its own right. He quotes the poet Abū Tammām's remark that "there is so much that is untouched by ancients for their descendants to pick up." Moreover, al-Fīrūzābādī proclaims the lexicographic effort and "the science of language" as "sufficient enough to cover the basic needs of every science," and Islamic law in particular.[16] The negation of antecedent authority is no ordinary matter, and had it been followed up in a wider range of knowledge, it could have left n abiding impact on the construction of knowledge.

Models for *Nahḍah*

Both the need to consolidate correct usage and the broader circulation of Arabic, along with its centrality to every other pursuit, entitles al-Fīrūzābādī's well-organized, neat, and affordable lexicon to emerge as an important antecedent treasury not only to the *nahḍah* and its valorization of lexical enquiry and research, but also and very primarily so to eighteenth-century scholarship. Murtaḍá al-Zabīdī's massive *Tāj al-ʿArūs* might be his best achievement, crowning also his other solid contributions to hadith scholarship, philology, and literature. But we need first to notice his choice of title. In line with his elegies of longing and pining addressed to his dead wife, al-Zabīdī chose a feminine subject as the title for his lexicon.[17] Unlike his predecessors, the "bride's crown" opens up the field of writing, along perhaps with a few others, for public inclusion of women's presence. In the late eighteenth century, "women did appear in the chronicles."[18] Studying with the lexicographer and hadith scholar Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭīb al-Fāsī (d. 1170/1756), with his commitment to clarity of usage and extensive use of hadith in explication, al-Zabīdī brought the medievalist combined interest in root formation and thence conjugation conterminously with an empirical research into the field of practice. Like a free anthropologist, unhampered by a binary other than correct and actual use, he undertook travels, research, meetings, and contacts to corroborate his lexicon. His celebrated salon in Cairo was a meeting place for discussions and a workshop for significant compilations. He made use of all, especially his antecedent authority al-Fīrūzābādī. His students were to carry out further projects and to enrich the cultural scene with studies in philology, hadith, poetry, and history. Noticeably, early lexicographers' inclusion of the description of regions and people received further impetus in al-Zabīdī's dictionary, which makes demography, geography, and medicine among the areas of interest for the rising reading

[16] Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Fīrūzābādī, *Muʿjam al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, ed. Khalīl Maʾmūn Shīḥā (Beirut, 2009), 22.

[17] On these poems mourning his wife, see Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Syracuse, 1979; repr. 1998) 62, 222, n. 20.

[18] Ibid., 62.

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public. The interest in lexicography in the eighteenth century recalls perhaps the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the zenith of lexicographic research reached unparalleled status. Peter Gran noticed that "six out of the ten copies of a standard dictionary in al-Azhar's library were made in the eighteenth century."[19]

Concomitant with this interest was the revived interest in Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* and *Durrat al-Ghawwāṣ* (The diver's pearl). The revived celebration of the *Maqāmāt* is unique to the age. Studies on and copies of the *Maqāmāt* began to multiply, perhaps following Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khafājī's (d. 1069/1653) study and his emulation of the genre.[20] To memorize the *Maqāmā*t was part of learning good Arabic, as was the tradition in al-Ḥarīrī's days. In the eighteenth century the practice was followed by almost everybody keen on mastering eloquence in speech and clarity in writing. Along with this noticeable revival was the rise of commentaries on al-Qazwīnī's (d. 675/1276) *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* (The resume of the key), the latter being *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm* (Key to the sciences) by Yūsuf ibn Abī Bakr al-Sakkākī (d. 1228).[21]

Two other prominent trends relate to a preoccupation that puzzled scholars for being uniquely typical of eighteenth-century-Egypt. One was the interest in the battle of Badr (17 Ramadan 2/13 March 624), an interest which Peter Gran could not find a reason for other than asking a question: "Is it possible that the eighteenth-century writers of the Battle of Badr felt a renewed sense of identification with the forces of Muhammad [against the non-believing aristocracy of his tribe]? Did they feel that they, too, were struggling in a rather hostile environment against powerful odds?"[22] While it sounds rhetorical, the question still begs further answers, especially if we read it along with the increasing care for the populace already spelled out in al-Shirbīnī's *Hazz al-Quḥūf,* with its dashing satire of the elitism, pedantry in scholarship, compendious and commentarial surplus, and biting irony of some religious circles and sham Sufism.[23] Committed Sufis were already involved in reaching out to the masses. To reach peasants and lower classes, Sufis resorted to the *mawwāl*s and other popular forms of colloquial poetry,[24] a method that was depreciated by the "doyen of literature" Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889–1973) and others when it continued to hold sway in the nineteenth century.[25]

[19] Ibid., 63.

[20] Ibid., 61. There is a further note in the concluding chapter on al-Ḥarīrī as a controversial subject for medievalists.

[21] Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm* (Key to sciences), ed. Naʿīm Zarzūr (Beirut, 1983).

[22] Gran, *Islamic Roots,* 69.

[23] Yūsuf al-Shirbīnī, *Kitāb Hazz al-Quḥūf bi-Sharḥ Qaṣīd Abī Shādūf* (Brains confounded by the ode of Abū Shādūf expounded), ed. and trans. Humphrey Davies (Leuven, 2005).

[24] Gran, *Islamic Roots,* 66–67.

[25] Ibid.

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The combined care for a colloquial *mawwāl,* and the interest in the *faṣīḥ* (pure) of al-Ḥarīrī and in lexicography and philology, are not disconnected from the attention bestowed on the battle of Badr as the victory of a message that rests on Qu anic inimitability *(iʿjāz).* All these were part of the make-up of a political unconscious that could have taken a more nuanced and overt form of resistance not only to Ottoman occupation, but also to another discursive one that continued to hold sway among centers of power. The official Islamic discourse and its core, that was substantially formed by "*nābitat ʿaṣrinā*" (as al-Jāḥiẓ called the Umayyad clientele during the Abbasid period and which was consolidated through the application of the privileged class),[26] was no ordinary challenge for the rising learned class in eighteenth-century Egypt. In their Sufi struggle and revisionist reading of tradition, they were increasingly aware of how the second Umayyad caliph Yazīd used to sing of the war achievements of the Meccan aristocracy in the ensuing battle of Uḥud (23 March 625) against the Prophet and his companions, a battle that returned to the Meccan aristocracy a sense of victory and power and proved an Islamic vulnerability in war tactics and weakness in mobilization. "Had my masters at the Battle of Badr seen ..." was the Umayyad slogan and trope for the recovery of rule and supremacy.[27] The middle period witnessed a striding Umayyad discourse under the garb of consensual Sunnah, partly resisted by prominent scholars and jurists like al-Suyūṭī. A counter movement, the praise of the Prophet poem, the *badīʿīyah,* made a comeback in the eighteenth century.[28]

As philology is the stage and means for this discussion, it is bound to receive a great deal of attention throughout the middle and pre-modern period. Its rise to prominence, manifested in the study of tribal and lexical roots, attributes, applications, usage, methods of authentication, and argumentation in poetic and prose

[26] Abū ʿUthmān ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) tactfully alludes to this officialdom as the discourse of "*nābitat ʿaṣrinā,*" a reference to the pro-Umayyad forces that was to impact official discourse ever since. Abū ʿUthmān ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, "Risālah fī Banī Umayyah," in Aḥmad Zakī Ṣafwat, *Jamharat Rasāʾil al-ʿArab,* 2nd ed. (Cairo, 1971), 4:56–68, esp. 58–60.

[27] It was reported that Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah (d. 683), the second Umayyad caliph, purportedly tapped the severed head of al-Ḥusayn, the Prophet's grandson, while reciting a poem by Ibn al-Zibaʿrī that celebrated victory over the Prophet at the Battle of Uḥud (625). For a long time that poem served as the Umayyads' mode of recall of their sense of vengeance against the family of the Prophet. Al-Jāḥiẓ, "Risālah," 62.

[28] The credit for the coinage and practice of the term goes to Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 750/1349), the pioneer in the *badīʿīyah* as a specifically thematic, ideational exercise in expressiveness. He uses "*mukhtaraʿāt*" and other terms to indicate unprecedented newness or inventiveness. See Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah al-Badīʿīyah fī ʿUlūm al-Balāghah wa-Maḥāsin al-Badīʿ* (The explication of the sufficient *badīʿīyah* ode in rhetorical sciences and adornments in innovativeness), ed. Nasīb Nashāwī (Beirut, 1982; repr., 1992), 6. Abū Bakr ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (767–837/1366–1434) also used the term. See Abū Bakr ibn ʿAlī Taqī al-Dīn ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī*, Khizānat al-Adab* (The ultimate treasure trove of literature), ed. Kawkab Diyāb (Beirut, 2001).

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domains is only a sign of contestation in the struggle for ascendency. The philologist is a much-needed player in the staging of power relations. On the other hand, the nineteenth century undergoes similar challenges and hence its intellectuals find so much resonance in the prolegomena of Ibn Manẓūr and al-Fīrūzābādī.[29] The battle-ground is to be primarily lexicographic.

The Fight for Culture: Compendiums and Commentaries

The habitual critique of Arab and Islamic modernity is primarily centered on a rejection of a politics of loss and failure in which the modernists (and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was no exception) categorize the middle period as one of petty entities—albeit with cultural centers in Cairo and Damascus, Morocco, Khwārizm, and Khurasan.[30] In their negative reading of the past, modernists rarely acknowledge its writing. Indeed, they see the compendium, which is a conspicuous landmark of medieval and pre-modern production, as nothing more than a sign of exhaustion and lack of creativity. Portrayed as a merely passive container, the compendium is turned in the dominant modernist discourse into a trope for hagiography, superstition, visitations, rampant esoteric practices, excursions in craftsmanship, and whatever connotes a general lack of rationality. In such a depiction of premodern Arabic tradition it is not difficult to see how much is borrowed from the enlightenment critique.[31]

At this juncture we need to reflect on Michel Foucault's discussion of a similar compendious pursuit to be found in sixteenth-century European commentaries, and to consider how far his explanation can be applied to the medieval Islamic gloss and commentary. He quotes Montaigne,[32] who explains: "There is more work in interpreting interpretations than in interpreting things; and more books about books than on any other subject; we do nothing but write glosses on one another."[33] Foucault comments that "these words are not a statement of the bankruptcy of a culture buried beneath its own monuments; they are a definition

[29] Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Fīrūzābādī, *Muʿjam al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, ed. Khalīl Maʾmūn Shīḥā (Beirut, 2009), 24.

[30] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's article appeared in *Al-Jadīd* (1930) and was reprinted in *Akhbār al-Adab* 186 (2 Feb 1997): 30. Cited by Roger Allen, "The Post-Classical Period: Parameters and Preliminaries," in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and D .S. Richards, Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, vol. 6 (Cambridge and New York, 2006), 14, 15. Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī, *Al-Khiṭāb al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir* (Contemporary Arabic discourse) (Beirut, 1989), 36.

[31] For a comparative perspective, see Herbert Weisinger, "The Middle Ages and the Late Eighteenth Century Historians," *Philological Quarterly* 28 (Jan 1948): 63–79.

[32] Montaigne, *Essais*, 1580–8, livre 3, chap. 8, in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1970; repr., 1994), 45.

[33] Ibid., 40.

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of the inevitable relation that a language maintained with itself in the sixteenth century."[34] The last qualification, the emphasis on historicity, resonates with his argument that the relation of languages to the world is one of analogy, where resemblance stands unchallenged as the base for a written knowledge. Taking the scriptures as a point of departure, Foucault's analysis is an attempt to define commentary and gloss as the infinite proliferation of interpretation that justifies the "sovereignty of an original text."[35] He adds: "And it is this text, by providing foundation for the commentary that offers its ultimate revelation as the promised reward of the commentary." Thus, it is the "interstice occurring between the primal Text and the infinity of Interpretation" that accounts for the proliferation to infinity in interpretation, commentary, and gloss that take writing as a substantial part of the "fabric of the world."[36]

I draw attention here to this analysis for a number of reasons, not the least being the way in which commentary and compendia in the pre-modern period of Arab-Islamic thought have tended to be denigrated among modernists. Islamic medievalists usually focused on the compendium as a treasury of knowledge; the compiler is thus a producer who aims to provide readers with a reservoir which would otherwise be inaccessible in its original form, found in scattered books. The compendium emerges as a lexical index of knowledge, a place where words are listed not only for their etymology or resemblance, nor for their "infinity of adjacent and similar fidelities of interpretation"[37] within a ternary "system of signs,"[38] but primarily for their encyclopedic range among fields of knowledge and communication, a case that is made conspicuous in the model set by Ibn Manẓūr's lexicon, with its wide-ranging reliance on books of geography, demography, history, and literature. The commentary, by contrast, can function differently whenever it is addressed to the learned and highly sophisticated class of literati, people well versed in philosophy, geography, history, philology, and pure science. Thus the books that emerged over a number of centuries as commentaries on Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm* are no mere dabbling in philological enquiry, nor are they casual explanations and interpretations; instead they regularly unearth the uses of rhetoric and its intricate workings in Arabic as exemplified in written and oral knowledge. They bring the spheres of philosophy, philology, speech acts, semantics, and semiology into conversation, as if to construct intertwined and highly integrated exchanges of information and opinion, as was the case in the responses to al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī's *Īḍāḥ al-Miftāḥ* (The explicator of the key) and

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 41.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 42.

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Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ (The resume of the key), or Ibn Sīnā's *Al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt* (Remarks and admonitions).[39]

To relocate the discussion in terms of cultural dialectics, whereby conflict and struggle sustain a dynamic process larger than the outcome of wars and invasions and in relation to the conceptualization of a republic of letters, we need to consider first whether or not literary overproduction can be a problem. What if we regard the economics of surplus, especially in matters of contrafaction, parody, and parallel scholarly or explicatory maturations, as both an accumulation and dispersion that make use of an open space in a relatively decentralized state? What if we question the practice of authorized transmission or reading and reporting as a dynamic of a nonbinding gift transaction? What if we read carefully not T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and Individual Talent," with his statements on the ephebe's or neophyte's dependency on ancestors, but rather the renowned Egyptian poet Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī's (686–768/1287–1366) sophisticated summation of the ongoing dispute among scholars on the scope of plagiarism (i.e., broadly-based intertextuality) as world-system specific? He stipulates: "I have seen how the byproducts of people's thoughts [*natāʾij afkār al-nās*] are no more than progeny passed on from one to another and from nations whose poetries originate side by side on this earth."[40] Although the Mamluk state was able to claim an Islamic hegemonic order and rule in many regions in the Arab world, it was much less centralized than the earlier Abbasid or Umayyad empires had been. It was also only part of a larger Islamic world where production in philosophy, theology, science, and philology was enormous. For lengthy periods individual sultanates and emirates exercised autonomous rule. Indeed, beyond Mamluk domains, there were sovereign sultanates like Khwārizm that witnessed a very active and thriving cultural life. Yāqūt for one describes the spread of public and private libraries and book markets there from the twelfth century onwards.[41] On the other hand,

[39] Ibn Sīnā, *Remarks and Admonitions,* pt. 1, Logic, trans. S. Inati (Toronto, 1984).

[40] Cited in Ibn Ḥijjah, *Khizānat al-Adab,* 46. ʿAbduh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Qalqīlah, *Al-Naqd al-Adabī fī al-ʿAṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Literary criticism in the Mamluk period) (Cairo, 1972; based on his 1969 dissertation), 170; but also in Ibn Nubātah, *Talṭīf al-Mazāj min Shiʿr Ibn al-Ḥajjāj* (Refining the mood with the poetry of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj), ed. Najm ʿAbd Allāh Muṣṭafá (Susah, 2001), 49.

[41] In Cairo the historian al-Maqrīzī mentions the Fusṭāṭ book market, the book-sellers' and copyists' markets *(sūq al-kutubīyīn/sūq al-warrāqīn)*. These markets grow or decline in accordance with topographical and demographic changes. We should remember that Khizānat al-Kutub (the Ayyubid library collection housed at the citadel that kept only a selected list from the famous earlier Fatimid collection) was lost in a raging fire in 1292. On the other hand, whatever survived found its way into collections supported by wealthy patrons, like Ibn Khaldūn's friend, the wealthy amir Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn ʿAlī al-Ustādār, who "purchased [books] from the royal citadel" for his Jamālī madrasah. Recorded too is Baybars II's gift of 500 volumes to the restored mosque of al-Hākim. No less significant concerning these libraries and collections was

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traditionalist Islamic discourse in the Arab East continued to set the tone for a nostalgic yearning for a past Golden Age of Islamic order, a tone that would necessarily denigrate the present. Thus, the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258 was bewailed by no less than the Egyptian jurist and scholar Ibn Duqmāq as being the loss of a center, since the universe "was now left without a caliph." [42] No wonder then that the Mamluks were desperate to bring a caliph in person from Baghdad as a symbolic Islamic presence with no more than a ceremonial role.[43] Al-Maqrīzī provides us with an example of a symbolic gesture on the part of the token caliph, the Abbasid Aḥmad ibn al-Ẓāhir (al-Mustanṣir), who drew up a letter of allegiance to the Mamluk sultan Baybars that in fact assigns the latter the authority of the caliph: "For the Commander of the Faithful thanks you for these feats, and admits that, had it not been for your care, the ruptures could have been too vast to be patched. Hence we are hereby endowing you with the rule of the lands of Egypt, al-Shām (Syria), Diyār Bakr, the Hijaz, Yemen, and the Euphrates, and the lands that come under new conquests all over, and assigning to you the administration of their military and populations."[44] Scholars are not far off the mark when they view the shadow play *(bābah)* of the Cairene oculist Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 1310) as a burlesque of that period, one in which the caliph, his descendants,

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the linguistic diversity involved and the co-existence within them of works in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. Thus, the chronicler and historian Ibn Dawādārī notes that there was a fascinating "Turkish book" in the impressive Arabic collection of the amir Badr al-Dīn Baysarī al-Shamsī (d. 1298). Among known private collections and libraries were those of the Sāmānid Nūḥ ibn Naṣr (d. 954), al-Ṣāḥib ibn ʿAbbād (d. 995), and Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-ʿAlqamī, the minister for the last Abbasid caliphs al-Mustaʿṣim (d. 1258). The bibliophile Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī made use of the library in Marv to compile his compendiums and dictionaries. Indeed, Cairo, Aleppo, and Damascus were known for their libraries, as described by Muslim and Western travelers. The fourteenth-century Jerusalem notable Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Nāṣirī had a magnificent collection, as described in Ulrich Haarmann, "The Library of a Fourteenth Century Jerusalem Scholar," *Der Islam* 61 (1984): 327–33. See respectively: Robert Irwin, "Mamluk Literature," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 1–30; Carl Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981); Mohammed Makki Sibai, *Mosque Libraries: an Historical Study* (London, 1987); Donald Little, "Religion under the Mamluks," *Muslim World* 73 (1983): 170; and Ulrich Haarmann, "Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt," in *Proceedings of the Sixth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies,* ed. Frithiof Rundgren (Leiden, 1975), 99, 102. For more, see Bakr Shaykh Amīn, *Muṭālaʿāt fī al-Shiʿr al-Mamlūkī wa-al-ʿUthmānī* (Beirut, 2007), 66–76.

[42] Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aydamar ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Jawhar al-Thamīn fī Siyar al-Mulūk wa-al-Salāṭīn* (The precious stone in the conduct accounts of kings and sultans) (Ṣaydā, 1999), 223.

[43] Between 1261 and 1517, the token Abbasid caliphs were : al-Mustanṣir II, al-Ḥakīm I, al-Mustakfī I, al-Wāthiq I, al-Ḥakīm II, al-Muʿtaḍid, al-Mutawakkil I, al-Mustaʿṣim, al-Wāthiq II, al-Mustaʿīn, al-Muʿtaḍid II, al-Mustakfī II, al-Qāʾim, al-Mustanjid, al-Mutawakkil II, al-Mustamsik, and al-Mutawakkil III.

[44] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk* (Cairo, 1941), 1:2:454.

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and the Mamluk sultan were all muddled in their intentions and aspirations.[45] Furthermore, during the same period the city of Cairo in particular was to become an attractive location for learned scholars and litterateurs, in that there was enough mobility, opportunity, resources, and renowned scholarly circles and institutions to stimulate intellectual activity.[46] Other cities like Damascus, Aleppo, Fes, Qayrawān, Bukhārā, Samarqand, and Khajand also had their own literate culture, assemblies, reading sessions in private or public spaces, book markets, and learned or learning circles; but Cairo had inherited the cultural traditions of the Fatimids (969–1171) and their successors, the Ayyubids (1171–1250), and offered a cultural climate that was particularly conducive to the growth of knowledge. The learned and their disciples were not always affluent, and al-Maqrīzī lists ordinary jurists and learners as fifth in the scale of income.[47] On the other hand, in Damascus in particular there were also multiple sessions in jurisdiction, *adab,* and grammar that at times were to take place in different sections of the mosque.[48] We have on record the names of highly recognized scholars who started their careers as merchants, booksellers, slaves, copyists, and sons of porters,[49] and whose studies on grammar and lexicography served as bases for their eventual scholarly

[45] See especially Fawzī Muḥammad Amīn, *Adab al-ʿAṣr al-Awwal al-Mamlūkī: Malāmiḥ al-Mujtamaʿ al-Miṣrī* (Susah, 2009), 12–17. An extensive reading of Ibn Dāniyāl's oeuvre is by Li Guo in *The Performing Arts in Medieval Islam: Shadow Play and Popular Poetry in Ibn Dāniyāl's Mamluk Cairo* (Leiden, 2012).

[46] Muhsin al-Musawi, "Elite Prose—Pre-Modern Belletrist Prose," in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period,* ed. Allen and Richards, 101–33; Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle and London, 2001). Also Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo,* 17–18; C. E. Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture and Administration* (London, 1982); and J. H. Escovitz, "Vocational Patterns of the Scribes of the Mamluk Chancery," *Arabica* 23 (1976): 42–62. Regarding the role of chancery scribes, see Muhsin al-Musawi, "Vindicating Profession or a Personal Career? Al-Qalqashandī's *Maqāmah* in Context," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 111–35.

[47] Maḥmūd Rizq Salīm's quote from al-Maqrīzī's *Ighāthat al-Ummah* in *Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī* (Cairo, 1980), 16. See also Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands* (Edinburgh, 2012), 25.

[48] George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West with Special Reference to Scholasticism* (Edinburgh, 1990), 51; also Hirschler, *Written Word,* 36, 48–49.

[49] See in particular Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's (d. 626/1229) itinerary, in Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 49; also Hirschler's use of Bauer, 190–91. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah mentions in ʿAdan its "pious qāḍī Sālim ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Hindī; [whose]… father …had been a slave, employed as a porter, but the son devoted himself to learning and became a master and leader[in the religious sciences]." *Tuḥfat al-Nuẓẓār fī Gharāʾib al-Amṣār wa-ʿAjāʾib al-Asfār* (The observer's delight in surprises of cities and wonders in journeys), ed. and trans. H. A. R. Gibb, C. Defrémery, and B .R. Sanguinetti as *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325–1354* (Cambridge, 1962; repr. Millwood, NY, 1986), 2:373.

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repute and recognition.[50] Compendiums and anthologies appeared to be one form in a culture industry that was meant to meet the demand for partial reading and discussion of public texts in large or private reading sessions, as documented by scholars who have done some research on the processes of teaching and learning during this period. In other words, the compendium is not a servile reproduction, an unoriginal collation of material and hence a superfluous piece of work, but rather one part of the learning tools, like manuals and formularies, needed to accommodate educational demands. They served as means in the production of knowledge.[51] Throughout these manuals and the centers and means of learning, like libraries, mosques, and other sites of education, Arabic and its sciences hold sway. In other words, the lexical base as broadly defined in Ibn Manẓūr's entries sets the stage for the tabulation of knowledge.

A careful navigation between the twin poles of textual systems and deviations from the norm can also help in the process of restoring this enormous bulk of cultural production to the center of an Arab-Islamic conceptualization of knowledge. It also necessitates a more serious engagement with the substantial work done so far in textual and philological enquiry, including contributions to the reconstruction of the concept of knowledge in classical Islam.[52] But to argue the case in more positive terms, especially in the context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century interlocutors, it is perhaps worthwhile to speculate on those issues that may serve to reclaim the relevance of that knowledge to the so-called push toward modernity or "awakening" at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century, and all in spite of the predominant negative perspective. The "awakening" was itself another perpetuation of "the republic of letters," only it was to take place within a rather mixed discursive space where the European enlightenment held sway.[53] Its revivalist prologue was meant to balance the paradoxical "charming" incursion of Europe.[54] Even so, there is in such an ambivalent space enough room

[50] Ibid.

[51] See more in Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority;* Hirschler, 26–27, 40–41, 45–47, and esp. 186–93; and Thomas Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien der Mamlükenzeit," 71–122, in *Die Mamlüken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur,* ed. S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam (Hamburg, 2003).

[52] George Makdisi's *The Rise of Humanism* is of particular significance to any reconstruction of textual communities in the postclassical era.

[53] J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (Leiden, 1984); and Muhsin al-Musawi, *Islam on the Street* (Lantham, MD, 2009).

[54] Much is written on this "seduction." See Abdelfattah Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language,* trans. Wael Hassan (Syracuse, 2008), e.g., 9; originally published in Arabic, *Lan Tatakallam Lughatī* (Beirut, 2002).

[For] exemplary discussions of moving "beyond Eurocentrism" as a means to organize world and Middle Eastern history, see Gran, *Islamic Roots;* idem, *Rise of the Rich: A New View of Modern*

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for conjecture and positivist thought. The battle over the body of knowledge, its lexicographical fervor, surplus of production, density of titles, and the eventual sense of loss among reluctant heirs (i.e., modernists) tend to blur the picture and prevent us from looking into the mechanics of production, its significations and markers that must have connected it economically and culturally to its milieu, and thence to the systematic institutionalization of a book industry. The book in its many formats, forms, and targets has reached its zenith within the available means of production. Its front material and divisions received systematic lexical differentiation and naming to guide or respond to readers' expectations. Hence paratexts and peritexts are significations that provide us with a register of priorities and an index of tastes. They should have been an established lexical code among producers, mediators, and consumers.[55]

Thresholds in a Complex Phenomenon

Other noticeable markers are worth mentioning as part of the process of identifying the complexity of acquisition and dissemination of knowledge in the period under consideration. One relates to the kind of prefatory note that was common among scholars of that period. It was not only a *khuṭbah,* explaining the purpose and structure of the book, but also and primarily an autobiographical itinerary that traces also the history of composition or compilation. Such is the prefatory note for the native of Herat Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī's (d. 792/1390) *Muṭawwal,*[56] which concludes with an expression of some anxiety lest the book suffer at the hands of the stubborn or the dogmatic. In expressing such anxiety, Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī echoes Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (667–750/1278–1349), "for obduracy and obstinacy are rampant, and jealousy and disputation are widespread."[57] But no matter how authors and writers approach the latter issue, it still signifies an active climate for ideas. On the other hand, among writers and scholars there were nevertheless significant differences on scholarly, theoretical, ethnic, and sectarian levels, but these appear in their writings as part of the ongoing conversation. Difference and blunt antagonism is one sign of their authors' liveliness and activism. Had they been passive and pacifists they would not have taken the trouble of disputation and research. As a dynamic arena where difference is played out in full, the pre-modern scene offers a complex situation where constel-

World History (Syracuse, 2008); Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York, 1989); and idem, *The Arab Nation* (New York, 1978).

[55] Especially on paratexts as thresholds, fringes, zones between texts and off-texts, see Gerard Genette *Paratexts: Thresholds for Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997), 1–15.

[56] Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī, *Al-Muṭawwal: Sharḥ Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* (The elaborate or expanded: the explication of the resume of the key) (Beirut, 2004).

[57] Al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah,* 101.

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lations of praise poetry to the Prophet, the rise of compendiums in every field of knowledge, the exhilarated pace of textual and philological exploration, and the tendency to engage with each other across time and space provide a combative linguistic, theological, and informational arsenal to counteract perhaps the vicissitudes of war and occupation. As these gain momentum and generate rejoinders through words and lexical multiplication, we need to see the activity in relation to its seeming peripheral matter: title page, invocations of the divine for blessing and consecration *(basmalah),* expressed gratitude to God *(ḥamdalah),* praise to the Prophet and his companions and family, and prayers, divisions of contents, sectional subtitles, epigraphs, postface, and cover. Along with these there are marginal notes, thresholds, prologues, epilogues, colophons, illustrations, prefaces, and copyists' stamps. The *basmalah* and *ḥamdalah* may take a short or long form to include the writer's invocation of God's help and also to establish an identity as a Muslim subject, a point that may be further consolidated by a referent to the writer's *madhhab,* or official Islamic school of law, like Maliki or Hanafi. The affiliation that concludes a surname empowers the writer among a specific constituency, and underscores the pertinence of the text, defines its logic and content, and addresses an identifiable Islamic community. Thus Ibn al-Ḥājib, to be discussed below, identifies himself as a Maliki theologian. The name, title, dedication, and invocation are thresholds and identifications. The text derives its cohesion and plausibility from their visibility. Illustrated books complement the narrative or the poem, populate its empty spaces and holes, and lend concreteness to abstract or allusive/elusive passages. This shows well in Iranian manuscripts of *Majnūn Laylá*. In the Baghdadi school of Yaḥyá ibn Maḥmūd al-Wāsiṭī (d. 1237), as extant in his illustrations of the *Maqāmāt* of Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī (1054–1122), the illustrator cares for the community and the group rather than the single protagonist, a point that matches and augments the increasing awareness among writers and painters of the artisanal, mercantile, and laboring classes. No less present, along with the author, is the copyist. The copyist for Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ's book, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Mūsá ibn Mulḥam, could not leave himself out of the transaction between the author and the reader, and hence concludes the book with a poem in praise of the relatively small book in comparison to the customary voluminous output, in which he also identifies himself as the copyist. In this transaction, the copyist elevates his calligraphic skill as an artisan to the level of the author, sublimating it with a short poem of his own in praise of the product and placing himself among critics with some say on the matter at hand.[58] Thresholds that entail titles, prologues, and customary bracketing of the author's name between religious in-

[58] Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ, *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr* [though it means "writing" elegant compositions in Gelder's translation, the implication as rationalized by his editor is "emancipating innovation"], ed. Ḥifnī Muḥammad Sharaf (Cairo, 1995), 622. Geert Jan van Gelder, "A Good Cause: Fantastic Aetiology

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vocation of the names of God, the Prophet, and his family and companions usually lead us into *khuṭbat al-kitāb*. But as usual, it is there that the author will refer to his own person as the shaykh, or *ʿālim,* whose honorific title is ameliorated by being "God's worshipper," His "slave." The humility expressed should be read, however, as a declaration of independence, self-respect, and denial of any servitude or subservience to humans. The matter differs when there is patronage, for the latter may take a differentiated status that splits economic dependency from an ideological one that could entail loss of independent thinking. In most cases, however, there is an undifferentiated patronage that combines its three components in one package: to be supported, and endowed with a dignified status, the poet or author has to renounce or tone down any ideological difference that cannot fit into the codified system.[59] This undifferentiated patronage gets manifested in the form of plain encomium.

But there is more to guide us into the intricacies, not only of levels of patronage or independence in relation to material identifiers, but also of the text itself. The highly developed rhetoric and its sophisticated poetics re-situate us into a spatial critical compound where every term summons concrete images. As these common poetics and peripheral matter generate more in the ongoing production, they provide in part the material constitution of a literacy planetary system. The pre-Islamic poetics of the erotic prelude, *nasīb,* that recalls the departing beloved and her tribe through an engagement with the remains and ruins of a campsite, re-emerges under a different guise and name. What rhetoricians call *barāʿat al-maṭlaʿ* and *barāʿat al-istihlāl* (felicitous and suggestive openings) such as loaded preludes bring about the impact of the place. Through its associations with the pre-Islamic amatory poetic opening and evocations of desire and longing, the recollected or invoked site collapses the spatial and the philological. While the site invokes memory, antecedent tradition of the relevant poetics serves as a base for the newly constituted verbal threshold. Thus al-Mutanabbī says: "Greetings to a site where once a slender one captivated you!"[60] Indeed, Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī's elaborate canvas in rhetoric led many to expound on this territory with more derivations or referents and documentation that most often consolidate a concrete base for poetics that at this juncture derives wording from the human body, craft, and material like silk or metal, craftsmanship like embroidery, and abodes.

(Ḥusn al-Taʿlīl) in Arabic Poetics," in Takhyīl: *The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics*, pt. 2, Studies, ed. Geert Jan van Gelder and Marlé Hammond (London, 2008), 230.

[59] On the distinction between undifferentiated and differentiated patronage, see Andre Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London and New York, 1992), 17.

[60] Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician or the Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic Badiʿ Drawn from ʿAbd al-Ghani an-Nabulsi's Nafahat al-Azhar ʿala nasamat al-ashar* (Wiesbaden, 1998), 7.

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But both the *taqdīm* (preface), *khuṭbah* (plan and intention), and subdivisions or headings *(ruʾūs)* mean choice and convey a specific plan that shows more conspicuously in adapted or appropriated translations like Abū Isḥāq al-Kindī's (d. 870) adaptation of Ibn Nāʿimah al-Ḥimṣī's translation of the *Enneads* by the third-century philosopher Plotinus, wrongly attributed by a later scribe to Aristotle.[61] Indeed the translator makes it clear that he *naqala* (transferred) what al-Kindī *aṣlaḥa* (corrected and appropriated).[62] The adaptor probably wrote the prologue not to explicate the emergence of the copied and circulated text, and the labor involved in making it available, but primarily to connect the book to a large corpus of philosophical discourse in which al-Kindī was a major player.[63]

Paratexts are not supplementary material *(dhayl),* for dedications and divine invocations function as the text in action. They are not to be confused with what is added later by publishers and editors, and need to be considered only as they appear in their manuscript form. They may emerge as divisions within the text, as Aḥmad ibn ʿArabshāh (1389–1450) does in his biography of Timur, for example. He makes a point of separating an anecdotal narrative of some relevance from the main thrust of his coverage of Timur's conquests. Thus, we come across portions that are placed under the category of "*maqṭaʿ*" (section) and "story," for example.[64]

On other occasions, and they are abundant in the manuscript tradition of the period under consideration, there are marginal notes that could have been an afterthought, an addition by a copyist, disciple, or transmitter. The marginal note is no less functional than a commentary or a gloss, but the latter may well grow into another book. Whenever margins and colored lines, passages, or words multiply we understand that the author struggles to cope with exceptions, current notions, and usage that require attention. But matters can get more complicated whenever a number of scholars across the period under consideration and all over the Islamic lands derive stimulation and impetus or a clue from an author's gloss, or marginal and border note *(ḥāshiyah).* The gloss may well grow into another expanded *ḥāshiyah* or *sharḥ* (explication), *takmilah* (complement, addenda, or supplement), or *dhayl* (supplement). Indeed, it is part of the practice to have these *shurūḥ* taken so seriously by scholars and their reading public that it is rare not to have copies of them still extant. Among the prominent cases, next to the commentaries in rhetoric on praise odes to the Prophet, are the ones that deal specifically with al-Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm*. It suffices to say at this point that the number of books and commentaries instigated is astounding; the sheer

[61] Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle* (London, 2002), 1.

[62] Ibid., 18.

[63] For a translation of the Prologue in the order it appears in the original, see ibid., 27–30.

[64] Aḥmad ibn ʿArabshāh, *Tamerlane: or, Timur, the Great Amir,* trans. J. H. Sanders (London, 1936).

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sequence of abridgements and expansions that take their cue from al-Qazwīnī's impressive abridgement of the third part of al-Sakkākī's *Key* is enormous in both quality and quantity. The scholarly production takes place in a highly specialized domain, the greatest merit of which for educated readers derives from its bearing on the study of religious texts and its systematic and highly nuanced and persuasive instruction in the art of logic and grammar. The rationale behind the effort receives due promotional impetus through the abridgement by the noted scholar and rhetorician Najm al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d.675/1276), who hits a sensitive nerve in his resume of al-Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ*. He praises the *Key* as "the best in rhetoric" for its organization, edition, and gathering of principles and roots. But he justifies the abridgement because the primary text or source "is not devoid of padding, digression, and complexity, lacking clarification and abstraction and hence inviting abridgement."[65] In other words, the explicator or editor is here playing the role of the discerning reader, someone who is aware of the needs of others among the reading community. He justifies the effort behind his resume *(talkhīṣ)* as an inevitable response to the demands of a literate society to make it "accessible" and "easy for its readers to understand."[66] This rationale opens the door for further endeavors in the same direction. Each critic or editor has to justify a scholarly effort, and Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī gives further explanations for his expanded reading and explication of al-Qazwīnī's abridgement, which was obviously so popular among scholars that it invited scholars to expand, explicate, and comment in order to meet the needs of a growing readership. Al-Taftazānī embarked on a double venture. He issued an abridgement *(mukhtaṣar)* and an extended version *(muṭawwal).* He begins by explaining the reason behind his effort as an obligation to release rhetoric from the many misunderstandings and dogmatic explications that beset it. As there was no better place than Khwārizm, he decided to settle there since "Jurjānīyat Khwārizm is the abode of noble men and the haven of the upholders of virtue." There he obtained "the treasuries of knowledge" while consulting knowledgeable rhetors.[67] Working diligently on al-Qazwīnī's abridgement, he celebrates his "*muṭawwal*" as being both comprehensive and meticulous, a feat that can be substantiated by the number of commentaries that followed.[68]

[65] Najm al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* [The resume of the key], (Beirut, n.d.), 1:8–14.

[66] Ibid., 97, 98, 99.

[67] Quoted in al-Taftazānī, *Muṭawwal,* 13. The sequence of the quote is re-ordered to make "lack" a reason for the editor's effort, which is seemingly meant to be so in the original.
Ibid.

[68] For a concordance of these abridgements and explications, see al-Qazwīnī, *Al-Īḍāḥ fī ʿUlūm al-Balāghah,* ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim Khafājah (Beirut, n.d.), 1:8–14.

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Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's (d. 1413) commentary demonstrates the impossibility of such a claim and the inevitable limitations of any project in rhetoric.[69]

In other words, within the lexical domain, terminology and systematic classification of rhetoric place Arabic into a territorial space occupied by rhetors, grammarians, and logicians. Book production relies on this contribution to legitimize its presence. The astounding multiplication of commentaries attests to this turn, which could be seen as an ultimate appropriation of specialized knowledge to the needs of the Islamic street. *Sharḥ* in this case can take many forms, as commentary, explication, marginal notes, and annotations. It can add, emend, explicate, and expand on the original. Its origins, development, and stupendous growth should not be treated as some kind of second-hand or duplicated project. Like manuals, these works flourish and expand whenever there is a thriving reading climate and a community of scholars to participate in discussion. The trend is a testament to a burgeoning book industry and a dynamic cultural climate, which forced scholars to settle in congenial spaces that would make it possible for them to pursue their research, analysis, and consultation. Hence *sharḥ* as a scholarly pursuit belongs among the primary concerns and interests of participants in a republic of letters which is larger than any body politic. The *sharḥ* is an encyclopedic work, a compendium with a plan and strategies of explication, as the significant endeavors that we have been discussing make clear. But each explicator directs his *sharḥ* into the domains he is most familiar with. Al-Taftazānī leads it into speculative theology; while the nineteenth-century publisher decided on his own to have Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *Itmām al-Dirāyah* (Completion of knowledge) in grammar and rhetoric bracket al-Sakkākī's text.[70] The publisher speaks of this bracketing as "embroidering and embellishing" its "forelocks."[71] Al-Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ* provokes just as many commentaries as al-Ḥillī's *Ode* and its explanation, and yet each signifies a specific trend in reading, analysis, and annotation. The *Key* places grammar into rhetoric in order to reorient speculative theological reasoning neatly within the domains of the Arabic language and its sciences. The studies of Quranic "inimitability" are brought back into a combined study of logic, grammar, rhetoric, and poetry. Thus, for instance, we have *Al-Kāfiyah fī al-Naḥw* (The sufficient guide in syntax) by the prominent grammarian and speculative theologian Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 1249), but soon afterwards we have *Sharḥ Kāfiyat Ibn al-Ḥājib* by Raḍī al-Dīn Muḥammad Astarabādhī (d. after 1284); another *Sharḥ* by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Jumʿah ibn Zayd (d. 1297); yet another

[69] His commentaries appear as marginal notes or footnotes to the *Muṭawwal*. The editor and publisher included these along with al-Qazwīnī in their version of *Al-Muṭawwal*, 97, 98, 99.

[70] Abu Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Sakkākī, *Kitāb Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm*.

[71] Ibid., embroidered and embellished with Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *Itmām al-Dirāyah* (Completion of knowledge) (Miṣr, n.d).

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by no less than Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Jamāʿah (d. 1333); and even another by Ṣalāḥ ibn ʿAlī ibn Mahdī al-Zaydī (d. 1446), with a different title from the preceding ones. It has the title: *Al-Najm al-Thāqib: Sharḥ Kāfiyat Ibn al-Ḥājib* (Th piercing star: elucidating the sufficient guide by Ibn al-Ḥājib). Indeed, even more grammarians and philologists would expound on *Al-Kāfiyah* throughout the next six centuries, especially in the eighteenth century. But we are invited to look at this concordance in terms of objective circumstances that impelled scholars to carry on such a project in grammar throughout the thirteenth century. Itineraries in the pursuit of grammar cannot be random engagements across a crowded paratextual map. They build on and reflect on each other so densely that we end up with scarcity of titles and the resignation of some scholars to this fact by adding only their name to their subgeneric commentary like, in the case of the explicator al-Raḍī, *Sharḥ al-Raḍī*. In the latter case, however, it is good to know that resignation entails also a new contract with the source, an exchange that may elicit further responses and commentaries, as the case was in al-Raḍī's commentary. Put together these form the curriculum for training in syntax. Hence Muḥammad al-Shawkānī (d. 1834), for example, cites these books among required readings.[72] On other occasions, the text at hand raises serious issues in theological thought, logic, and grammar, and calls therefore for the intervention of solid scholars across the Islamic lands. Such was the case of Ibn al-Ḥājib's *Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahá al-Uṣūlī* (The resume of the ultimate theological basics). ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355) wrote his *sharḥ* (commentary) on Ibn al-Ḥājib's *Resume*. His commentary was followed by the marginal gloss of Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. 1390) and another by al-Sharīf ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 1413). The three are among the most prominent scholars and speculative theologians of their times. Thus, when the glosses, as *ḥawāshī* (marginal explications and annotations), were to be reproduced later in print, the text itself is either showcased in a bordered layout with each explanation and commentary on the left, right, top, and bottom, or it disappears altogether whenever al-Ījī's commentary replaces it. The reciprocity between the host's text and that of the guest undergoes serious transformation when the original author is knowledgeable enough to raise more questions and commentaries or simply invites further explanations. Indeed, the host and guest analogy gets problematized in these intersectional spaces where theologians and also critics scrutinize every textual and conceptualized unit in detail, depending

[72] In *Ṭalab al-ʿIlm wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Mutaʿallimīn: Adab al-Ṭālab wa-Muntahá al-Arab* (loosely: The search for knowledge and classes of learners: the most desired manners in the acquisition of Islamic knowledge). Associating the knowledge of grammar with Islamic law, he stipulates: "know that the student desiring knowledge of the sciences of Sacred Law must master the disquisitions and intricacies in *Sharḥ al-Raḍī ʿalá al-Kāfiyah*; along with what is scrutinized in *Mughnī al-Labīb*." [Also translated as the sufficient knowledge of the sensible one]. He lists the rest of the books which he considers primers that must be known.

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on which copy is at hand.[73] There are scholars like the Moroccan linguist and scholar Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 1756), the author of *Riḥlah ilá al-Hijāz,* who was also known in his time for a significant series of *shurūḥ*. The *shurūḥ* attest to the popularity of the text under review, a case that applies to almost every book of significance, not only in hadith and theology, but specifically in grammar and philology. Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī's (d. 1360) *Al-Mughnī al-Labīb ʿan Kutub al-Aʿārīb* (The adroit substitute for grammar books) is a case in point. It has its own *Sharḥ* by Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Damāmīnī (d. 1424?), who is a solid scholar, poet, and litterateur. Ibn Hishām's other books, like *Shudhūr al-Dhahab* (Snippets of gold), also received a number of *shurūḥ* (commentaries, glosses, and explications). Th *shurūḥ* phenomenon that puzzled modernists like Jurjī Zaydān and brought about their biting criticism of the past period signifies a number of things that are lost on most modernists: there is, first, the demand for these in their time; otherwise writers and scholars would not waste time and effort on such painstaking projects. Among the well-known and wealthy booksellers in Cairo, with a network of copyists, was Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yaḥyá al-Waṭwāṭ (1235–1318), an encyclopedist and author in natural sciences.[74] His wealth indicates a lucrative business. There is, second, the genealogical accumulation of a specific undertaking in theology, logic, or grammar, for example, that requires further elucidation and commentary to meet a horizon of expectations under different circumstances and times. In this sense, the commentary is not different from a translation. There is, third, the inevitable change in taste or milieu that requires a different "cultural script" to fit into acceptable cultural norms.[75]

The semiotics of titles is no less significant, as they are meant to lead the reader into the text and trap him/her in its intricacies. Thus Ibn al-Ḥājib's *Kāfiyah* (Th sufficient guide) generates other *Kāfiyah*s in other domains, such as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī's in poetry and rhetoric. On the other hand, the use of *sajʿ* (rhyming) in these titles cannot be a random choice or a mere show of dexterity and craft. In response to a horizon of expectation and need, the writer perhaps would like to have his/her production compatible with current needs and demands. In these titles we come across resonance, assonance, intonation, paronomasia, antithesis, contrafaction, and also referents that send us to the body of the text and its inter- and sub-texts. Thus, we encounter ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAbbāsī's (d. 1556) *Kitāb Sharḥ Shawāhid al-Talkhīṣ al-Musammá Maʿāhid al-Tanṣīṣ* (Designating fa-

[73] See, for instance, *Al-Ḥāshiyah* of al-Taftazānī, and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī on al-Ījī's commentary, supplemented by Shaykh Ḥusayn al-Harawī's (Cairo, 1974).

[74] Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ, *Mabāhij al-Fikar wa-Manāhij al-ʿIbar=Encyclopaedia of Four Natural Sciences,* ed. F. Sezgin and M. Amawi (Frankfurt am Main, 1990).

[75] Lefevere describes the cultural script as "the accepted pattern of behavior expected of people to fill certain roles in a certain culture." *Translation,* 89.

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miliar texts: a commentary on the evidentiary verses in *Al-Talkhīṣ*), for example, which implicates us in the study of a series of samples, referents, and intertextual documentation, while meeting the disposition for resonance in titles.[76] The terms "*maʿāhid*" and "*tanṣīṣ*" are loaded, not only with the immediate contractual denotative of the first and the textuality of the second, but also because both work in unison to connote the thresholds of the text. On the other hand, although the word *tanṣīṣ* refers to a textual documentation of references, it derives from the verb *naṣṣa* (noun *naṣṣ*: text) that comes with the preposition *ʿalá* to mean "stipulate in writing." The moment the author or philologist undertakes the pursuit of documentation, textual analysis, and annotation, he/she is deeply involved in scriptoria. Peritexts and paratexts signify then a dense writing tradition where lexicography holds sway.

This noticeable semiotics to be seen in titles of the middle period relates to a professionally-oriented practice. It involves something more akin to market-place language than the rhetorically rich titles of the classical Islamic period. There is less emphasis on the originating rhetorical preoccupation with *iʿjāz* (inimitability), and eloquence. The plain attributes in secretarial or other manuals that constitute a regular phenomenon until the twelfth century give way to a process based more on craft, profession, or market-place transaction. Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk (d. 608/1211) sets a road in his *Dār al-Ṭirāz* (House of brocade), which is a unique study of *muwashshaḥ* as intricately woven cloth or an embroidered gown in a textile house.[77] On the other hand, this same shift toward professional and marketplace semiotics entails kinesis, a dramatic normative predication on a rhetorical figure. The subgenre *muwashshaḥ* which the author and poet Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk explores in *Dār al-Ṭirāz* combines in the title its stimulating attributes as a street-staged performance and abode of art. Two significant examples that respond and play on each other through processes of parody and subversion are those of al-Ṣafadī and Ibn Ḥijjah. The latter's *Kashf al-Lithām* (exposing, unveiling) is a counter-discourse to the former's *Faḍḍ al-Khitām* (unsealing, deflowering, and resolving). This battle within titles that reflect on each other in order to undermine content is fought in masculinist terms over a feminized body of tropes and figures of speech like *tawriyah*. At times, the reliance on a Quranic verse from the "Surah of Light," for example, can generate other titles. Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd al-Buṣīrī (1211–94) uses *Al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah* (Pearly stars) as a title for his praise (Mantle) ode to the Prophet, borrowing from the verse on the light of God. The use became so popular that it lent itself easily to other variations, not only in poetry but also in a *maqāmah* addressed, not to the Prophet as the case is in the source ode, but

[76] ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAbbāsī, *Kitāb Sharḥ Shawāhid al-Talkhīṣ al-Musammá Maʿāhid al-Tanṣīṣ* (Miṣr, 1899).

[77] Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk, *Dār al-Ṭirāz* (Damascus, 1977).

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DOI: 10.6082/M1Q52MSK. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1Q52MSK)

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to a patron. Such is the *maqāmah* by the eminent chancery scribe Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ʿAbd Allah al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418).[78] The itinerary which the term takes, from a specific reference to God's light, to the Prophet, and then to a patron, cannot be an ordinary one, and must be seen in terms of a comprehensive drive to humanize knowledge. In this context, titles that make use of concrete terms such as pearls and gems abound, and the whole book industry dances in lively and kinetic imagery.

Private Libraries and Scholarly Networks

With all this in mind, I am here engaging with the contentious modern critique of medieval and pre-modern cultural production as a point of departure, focusing on issues that have previously incurred so much disparagement, especially issues that pertain to lexical proliferation and its systematization in a culture industry. These relate to authorship, legitimation and validation, rhetoric and possible superfluity, genealogical construction, transactional codes among peers, fellows, and mentors, public communication and reading, and the impact of a milieu. Very often all these or at least a substantial subset of them show up in one phenomenal production, such as the so-named *badīʿīyah* (encomiums to the Prophet), in its circulation and vogue among the learned and common publics. Through a re-mapping of cultural production, along with its previous archival validation or an alternative rapport with reading publics, there emerge new concerns and classifications, each with its concomitant definitions of identity, space, authority, and, most importantly, language and rhetoric.

The upsurge in rhetorical experimentation and the shift away from official discourse, coupled with a sustained undercurrent that dismantles generic or representative divides between high and low—all characteristic of the pre-modern era—requires different analysis of the production of knowledge. This enhanced devotion to rhetoric, one that has engendered so much negative criticism against a so-called "age of superfluity," is an accurate reflection of a full-scale grammatical and linguistic movement aimed at reorienting literate culture, that being a feature of a strongly established, multi-disciplinary effort characteristic of ninth- through eleventh-century knowledge. Elaborated effectively among rhetors, the growth in this rhetorical corpus was often played out among aspiring scholars, like the students and fellows of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), a scholar who gave credence and legitimacy to an amazing network of disciples actively involved in presentations, rejoinders, and disputations. The case of the poet and rhetor Rashīd al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ (d. 578/1182), the chief secretary in Khurasan, with his guide to rhetorical figures in *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr fī Daqāʾiq al-Shiʿr* (The groves of

[78] See al-Musawi, "Vindicating Profession or a Personal Career?"

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enchantment in the secrets of poetry), is a case in point.[79] Al-Waṭwāṭ's network, as shown in his published letters, demonstrates the significance of this activity in reconciling views, raising questions, strengthening disputations, and ending up by contributing to profound philological knowledge. He made it possible for scholars to be hosted at his own location where they could work on certain books and matters in which they would receive authorization to transmit and teach.[80] Although the book relied on its author's knowledge of the work of the Persian scholar Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rādūyānī, *Tarjumān al-Balāghah* (Guide to eloquence, written 507/1114), its systematic approach was well-recognized by prominent poets and critics across the Islamic lands. His bilingual expertise and competence as poet and rhetorician was admired by Yāqūt al-Mawṣilī al-Kātib (d. 618/1221–22) in his massive biographical dictionary as "the most knowledgeable of people in Arabic language," a language in which he excelled just as he did in his native Persian. He used to write poetry, in the same rhyme, rhythm and equivalent wording, in both languages. In *The Groves of Enchantment in the Secrets of Poetry* he lists and supplies examples of fifty-five figures and tropes.[81] The brilliant Egyptian rhetor and poet Abū Muḥammad Zakī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Aẓīm ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ (d. 654/1256) was similarly to set a model for the Iraqi merchant, eminent poet, critic, and scholar Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 750/1349), who also argues, like his predecessor, the case for his contribution to rhetoric in terms of some detailed recognition of antecedent authority which took the form of a cultural production that was perused, digested, or critiqued by the successor scholar. In these cases, a chain of tutors and a genealogy of readings can be retrieved; from the process books emerge as the most conspicuous presence in the makeup of a newly authored text that, in the case of al-Ḥillī for example, was to become pivotal for a new wave not only in theorizations regarding rhetoric, but also in the perpetuation of a new dynamic, the encomium to the prophet, not the court, as a means of retention and reclamation of Islamic legitimacy following the era of the "rightly guided" caliphs. Placed at the center of literate culture, this dynamic also leads the discussion of the inimitability of the Quran *(iʿjāz)* on to another sacral but rarely trodden territory. A new sphere for discussion was to grow alongside these other discussions, one that was to enlist the participation of readers, policy makers, historians, biographers, speculative theologians, grammarians, lexicographers, and every writer of note. Despite the devastation that affected these lands and their libraries as a result of

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[79] Rashīd al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ served as chief secretary *(ṣāḥib dīwān al-inshāʾ)* to ʿAzīz Khwārizm Shāh (d. 1156) and his successor Āl-Arsalān (d. 568/1172). See al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr fī Daqāʾiq al-Shiʿr,* ed. Ibrāhīm Amīn al-Shawārbī (Cairo, 1945).

[80] Ibid., 30–36.

[81] Ibid.

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the Mongol invasions, learned networks still proved to have enough vigor of their own to inject fresh energy into the scene.

We need to keep Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī's place in mind in the process of defining lines of demarcation in scholarship, between Arabs (meaning writers devoted to Arabic language, not on the basis of race) and non-Arabs. In the thirteenth century, there were books that specifically address the criteria for the assessment of non-Arab poetry, meaning in this case the poetry written in Persian as the official language under the Mongols. Along with al-Rādūyānī's work noted earlier, there was Muḥammad ibn Qays al-Rāzī's (d. 1232) *Al-Muʿjam fī Maʿāyīr Ashʿār al-ʿAjam* (The compendium on the principles of Persian poetry). The amount of Sufi poetry composed in Persian between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries may well explain the need for bilingual works of criticism or others that were written in Persian. However, this trend should not be confused with the developing application of multiple modes of analysis among scholars. There were initially the ones using the method of the speculative theologians and the others with their habitual and traditional ways of reading and analysis. The last method was followed particularly by Jalāl al-Din al-Suyūṭī and a chain of other critics, until al-Zabīdī's proclaimed preference for the "Arab" way, as being the uncontaminated traditional reading.[82]

But both criticism and rhetoric show the influence of two discourses of specifically analogical reasoning: the Muʿtazilite and the Ashʿarite. The situation was to be politicized further soon after both the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517 and the emergence of Safavid Iran (1502–1736) under Shah ʿAbbās (r. 1588–1629), where both Azerbaijan and Shirwan were annexed to Iran. Among later arrivals from there to Damascus was Mullah Maḥmūd al-Kurdī (d. 1663), who was to settle in Damascus and teach there, using the method which biographers and historians such as Muḥammad Amīn al-Muḥibbī (d. 1699) specify as being the method of verifi ation (commentary and annotation), *taḥqīq,* as practiced in *kutub al-aʿājim* (the books of non-Arabs).[83] Although this phrase replaces that of *al-qudamāʾ* (the

[82] See Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century," *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 2 (May 2006): 268.

[83] Ibid. Although meaning "verification," the term *taḥqīq* is equivalent to commentary and annotation, an authenticating method that was pursued from the thirteenth century onwards. As for the term *aʿājim,* it began to undergo deflection to mean partly "Persians" only after the rise of the sectarian divide. In Islamic times, and well before the fifteenth century, it meant "non-Arabs." Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143), himself of Persian origin and born in Khwārizm, used the term *ʿajam khalq Allāh* (the non-Arabs among God's creatures). See the preface to his *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī ʿIlm al-Lughah* (Beirut, 1990), 11–12. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldūn used *ʿajam* to mean other nations in his *Kitāb al-ʿIbar wa-Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ wa-al-Khabar fī Ayyām al-ʿArab wa-al-ʿAjam wa-al-Barbar wa-Man ʿĀṣarahum min Dhawī al-Sulṭān al-Akbar.* As noted also by Nabil Matar,

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ancients, i.e., the Greeks), from the twelfth century it assumed a broader application that accompanied the increasing resurgence of national languages across the Islamic lands. With Hulagu Khan's (d. 1265) sweeping and devastating conquests of lands all across Asia and the Near East, the Persian language received legitimation as the official language of the Mongol empire, giving it, in Hamid Dabashi's phrase, world dimensions.[84] At a later date, the Kurdish scholar Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1690) was notably mentioned as a scholar with whom such prominent Arab scholars as ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1731) and Abū al-Mawāhib al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1714) studied rhetoric, grammar, and philology.[85]

While setting the scene for future generations of scholars, al-Zamakhsharī's circle was more bent on making its point by applying Muʿtazilite reasoning in rhetoric and claiming Arabic as their deliberately acknowledged language of choice. The circle thus did not have the same impact on some other scholars. No less vigorous was the group of scholars that took al-Sakkākī's *Key to Sciences* as the subject of analysis and discourse, including al-Qazwīnī and al-Taftazānī. Entrenched between Muʿtazilites and Ashʿarites, analysis and logical reasoning in the study of language and its enunciation in poetry and prose consolidates a discursive constellation of its own, with many different voices and applications. To a certain extent traditional philology found itself marginalized and began thereafter to reach into domains that were once closed to literati, including the street and its speakers.

Shifting discursive and conversational positions manifest an acute sense of crisis, especially around the mid thirteenth century. As if to ward off the haunting memory of the sack of Baghdad by the Mongol army in 1258 and the consequent campaign to impose Persian or their own language imperially, a counter movement took place. There was soon after an enormous accumulation of compendiums, lexicons, dictionaries, rejoinders, encyclopedic topographies, geographies, and histories that developed along with works composed in every field of knowledge which closely rivals the output of the heyday of productivity in Abbasid Baghdad. Benefitting greatly from this invigorating cultural activity and encyclopedic productivity, the Mamluk state in particular derived moral and ad-

In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century (New York and London, 2003): "Although the very concept of 'Europe' did not exist either among the Christian Arabs or Muslims, there was a curiosity about the Rūm (the Qurʾanic name for the Byzantines) the ifranj (Franks) and the ʿajam (Spaniards)...," xviii. Muḥammad ʿAbd Al-Wahhāb al-Ghassānī al-Andalusī uses the term to refer to non-Arabic speaking people. See his *Riḥlat al-Wazīr fī Iftikāk al-Asīr, 1690–1691* [The travels of the vizier to release the hostage), ed. Nūrī al-Jarrāḥ (Abu Dhabi, 2002).

[84] Hamid Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism* (Cambridge, 2012).

[85] For more on the seventeenth century, see El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification, 265, minus his interpretation of "*kutub al-aʿājim*."

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ministrative power from the institution of the chancery as an administrative and cultural center maintained by its elite. The latter in turn engendered a vigorous atmosphere of competition, one that involved not only departments like finance, military, and chancery scribes, but also an ever-increasing number of other kinds of authors who chose to operate outside statist domains in order to exercise their independence and sense of ownership. As a consequence of this increase in productivity, a new textual regime is established in almost every branch of knowledge, although the predominant field involves issues of statecraft, social order, moral and religious thought, worldly pursuits, and sensory or visionary experience.

As a natural consequence of this cultural milieu, we find a number of epistles or *maqāmāt* that focus specifically on disputation, debate or dialogue among the three leading administrative departments: finance, war and military, and chancery—the last being the primary domain for writers, or *arbāb al-aqlām* (lords of the pen).[86] While clearly being a major participant in the process of state building, at the same time this assiduous activity arouses some suspicions on our part, not with respect to the rules of supply and demand, competition and advancement among writers, but rather relating to its unsettling magnitude. A question that arises is thus: are we in the presence of Borges' minutely drawn map that negates its original?[87] Is this an institutionalization in rhetorical form of a paper empire, of words on words, and *kalām ʿalá kalām* (metadiscourse)? Even when negated by modernists as superfluity, negation of rhetoric and its domains in the culture industry only testifies to its presence in a rich culture which necessarily takes language as its field. "The disclaiming of rhetoric," says Christine Brooke-Rose, "is itself a figure of rhetoric."[88] Was this enterprise essentially constructed on an antecedent authority or a contemporary inventory of poets, prose writers, Sufis, speculative theologians and rationalists, each category having its impact on

[86] For references to this usage, see Qalqīlah, *Al-Naqd al-Adabī,* 43. Ibn Ḥijjah included this in his *Sharḥ* (mistakenly called *Khizānat al-Adab)* as "Risālat al-sayf wa-al-qalam." See *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1:360.

[87] Jean Baudrillard writes in *Simulacra and Simulation,* trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, 1994), 1: "If once we were able to view the Borges fable in which the cartographers of the empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly (the decline of the Empire witnesses the fraying of this map, little by little, and its fall into ruins, though some shreds are still discernible in the deserts—the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction testifying to some pride equal to the empire and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, a bit as the double ends by being confused with the real through aging)—as the most beautiful allegory of simulation, this fable has now come full circle for us, and possesses nothing but the discrete charm of second order simulacra."

[88] Christine Brooke-Rose, "Whatever Happened to Narratology?" *Poetics Today* 11, no. 2 (summer 1990): 283–93.

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extraction, conjugation, patching, inversion, derivation, abstruse reasoning, and logical postulations, not to mention hundreds of other means for stemming up with new meanings from the same root or name?[89] However, the simulacrum is no paper tiger. Instead it is there in order to raise questions, invite conceptualization, and also lead to action. Perhaps in anticipation of a disintegrating Mamluk order that is to ensue as a result of the Ottoman invasion of Egypt (1517), it lays the "groundwork" in words in order to formulate a displacement of notions and nations.

[89] Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ʿAbbāsid Age* (Leiden, 1991), 16–17. In her translation, al-Jāḥiẓ says: "For the Mutakallimūn [speculative theologians] selected expressions for their concepts, deriving terminology for things for which the Arab language had no word. In doing so they have set the precedent in this for all who came after them and the model for all who follow. Thus they say accident *(ʿaraḍ)* and essence *(jawhar);* to be *(aysa)* and not to be *(laysa).* They distinguish between nullity (*buṭlān*) and nihility (*talāshin*) and they use the terms "thisness" *(hādhiyyah)* identity *(huwiyyah)* and quiddity *(māhiyyah).* In the same way, al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad assigned names to the meters of the *qaṣīdas*...whereas the [Bedouin] Arabs had not known the meters by those names. Similarly, the grammarians named and referred to the circumstantial accusative *(ḥāl)* the adverbial accusatives (*ẓurūf* and such things)...Likewise, the mathematicians draw upon names which they have designated as signs in order to understand one another...Someone preaching in the heart of the Caliph's palace said, 'God brought him out of the door of non-being *(laysiyyah)* and let him enter the door of being *(aysiyyah).*' These expressions are permissible in the art of Kalam when existing words lack the requisite range of meaning. The expressions of the Mutakallimun are also befitting to poetry..." But see also ʿĀrif Tāmir on the use of these terms by al-Karmānī and al-Fārābī: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Munāẓarāt* (The debates), ed. ʿArif Tāmir (Beirut, 1992), 28–29.

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