2 History, fiction and authorship in the first centuries of Islam

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Fiction is the basis of society, the bond of commercial prosperity, the channel of communication between nation and nation, and not infrequently the interpreter between a man and his own conscience.

(William Carleton, 'An Essay on Irish Swearing', in. D. J. O'Donoghue (ed.), *Traits and Stories of The Irish Peasantry* (London, 1896))

And when I look at a history book and think of the imaginative effort it has taken to squeeze this oozing world between two boards and typeset, I am astonished. Perhaps the event has an unassailable truth. God saw it. God knows. But I am not God.

(Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges are not The Only Fruit* (London, 1985))

Introduction

It is said that at a gathering of scholars and reciters of poetry in the caliphal palace, the 'Abbasid ruler al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–85) enquired of two of the most renowned there present, al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī and Ḥammād al-Rāwiya, why the pre-Islamic poet Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā opened one of his compositions apparently in the middle of the topic. Mufaḍḍal replied: 'No information on this has been conveyed to me', whereas Ḥammād rejoined: 'Zuhayr did not speak thus, but rather thus', and promptly quoted three lines as if they were the supposedly missing opening of the poem. Under pressure from the caliph, however, Ḥammād admitted that he had concocted these lines himself. Accordingly Mahdī bestowed upon Ḥammād 20,000 dirhams (silver coins) 'on account of the excellence of his verses', and upon Mufaḍḍal 50,000, 'as a reward for the accuracy of his transmission'.[1]

At issue in this seemingly ingenuous anecdote are two points. First, it illustrates the transition from a living historical tradition which may be continuously emended and updated to one which must be preserved intact and untampered with; and second, it raises the question of who is qualified to pass on this latter tradition. Ḥammād stands for the reciter who retains for himself the freedom to revise, refine and restructure poems and narratives as befits the occasion. But this mode of transmission, which had made him a favourite among the Umayyad

rulers (41–132/661–750), is found wanting by their successors, the ʿAbbasids (132–656/750–1258). The past had, by their day, come to acquire legitimating and normative value. A line of ancient poetry might elucidate a Qurʾanic verse and so help us to know what God wants us to do in the here and now; a saying (*ḥadīth*) of the Prophet Muḥammad might provide a model for present action; and a deed of one of Muḥammad's Companions might be of relevance in determining the current government's right to rule. In such a situation, reliability and trustworthiness in the transmission of historical material, whether poetry or prose, was essential, and scholars busied themselves with putting in place mechanisms to ensure that accuracy was observed. Hence it was to the scholars – represented in the given tale by Mufaḍḍal, for whom the original text is a cultural artefact that cannot be manipulated – that the task of preserving knowledge about the past was entrusted, while those who practised adaptation and revision of the Muslim heritage were relegated to second place, as Ḥammād is earlier, or even dismissed as forgers and corrupters.[2]

This helps to explain the self-professed preference of medieval Arabic literature for fact over fiction, or for 'truthfulness' (*ṣidq*) over 'lying' (*kadhib*), as Muslim literary critics would express it. In the case of poetry, it was generally accepted, though not without some dispute, that imaginative invention (*takhyīl*) was permissible. For prose, however, such invention was at best frowned upon and most often condemned, and almost any prose text will be decked out with a variety of devices to prove that it is factual or 'true', that it was not contrived by an author but conveys what actually happened in reality.[3] In practice, of course, fiction in the sense of imaginative invention does occur in early Arabic prose writing, not least in the field of history. This is most clearly to be witnessed in the productions of public storytellers, whether the short narratives familiar to us from the *Thousand and One Nights* or the full-scale popular epics and romances which have been touched on in Chapter 1[4] and will be referred to again later in this one. 'Such stories', one critic of the period observed,

> contain wonders and bizarre events which are arranged in a way that pleases the people who are assembled together. They enjoy engaging in such storytelling and spend their time together passing these tales around. These stories, or rather most of them, have absolutely no basis at all (*lā aṣla lahu*).[5]

Such fanciful tales told for amusement (*khurāfāt* or *asmār*) were disdained by most scholars,[6] who saw merit only in a 'true', historical report, termed *ḥadīth* or *khabar*. One is initially tempted, therefore, to equate the former genre with 'fiction' and the latter with 'history'; but studies in Western literature have demonstrated that fiction and history are less easily distinguished than had generally been thought. Both place events, actual or putative, in a meaningful sequence, and give them a narrative structure that orders and emphasizes narrative details in the interests of a larger conceptual unity. As Hayden White has observed, the 'techniques or strategies that they (historians and fiction writers) use in the composition of their discourses can be shown to be substantially the same, however

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different they may appear on a purely surface, or dictional, level of their texts'.[7] The presumed reference of historical writing to actual events, and the ways in which historical writing verifies these references, have been the dominant criteria for separating fiction from history. Yet fictional works often allude to actual events and may make use of documents to back up their pretensions, and history has frequently resorted to invention or to reporting the merely plausible, since if it were to embrace only the substantially verifiable, it would be unable to place its assertions within a context that would make them meaningful. In short, the two forms have continually had recourse to each other's techniques, and so have more in common than is usually assumed.

If it is debatable whether modern historiography can be strictly separated from fiction, in the case of early Islam it is even more problematic, for when Muslim scholars came to reconstruct the history of their community, they were forced to draw heavily upon the narratives of storytellers. In the *Ta'rīkh* ('History') of the famed Andalusian jurist 'Abd al-Malik ibn Ḥabīb (d. 238/853), for instance, we find numerous legendary stories about Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, the Muslim conqueror of Spain: that he laid siege to a fortress of copper and discovered sealed vessels containing sprites imprisoned there by Solomon; that he ordered his general to alight at a red hill where stood a statue of a bull which had to be shattered, and command of the vanguard to be given to a tall fair man with a squint and withered hands, and so on.[8] Islamicists do, nevertheless, usually differentiate sharply between fact and fiction. The *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, for example, devotes two volumes (1990) to the 'Abbasid period: one to 'Belles-Lettres', chiefly poetry, and one to 'Religion, Science and Learning'; and it is to the latter that history is assigned. Volume II of the encyclopaedic *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie* (1987) makes the same distinction, with 'Bildungs-und Unterhaltungsliteratur' – edifying and entertaining literature – in chapter 5, historical and religious writing in chapters 6 and 7. The problem with this approach – that it implies that it is inappropriate to apply techniques of literary analysis to a large proportion of Arabic prose – is remarked upon by Stefan Leder and Hilary Kilpatrick in their recent survey of 'Classical Arabic Prose Literature' (1992). Yet they too all but equate prose with facticity: 'Authors' original works (they say) fall into two categories, fictional and non-fictional', the former being 'a very small but fascinating group [which] date from the 4th/10th century or later', and apparently comprise only five items, all bar one in rhymed prose (*saj'*).[9]

It seems to me preferable to regard history and fiction as lying on the same continuum – an approach explored more recently by Leder and his collaborators in *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature* (1998) – with scholarly compilations situated at one end and legendary sagas at the other, all to some degree possessing factual references and semblances of verification, but all to some extent animated by the imagination. This is not to say that Muslim historians knowingly fabricated material, or used fabricated materials – on the contrary, most of the writers we shall consider here would have been convinced of the truth of what they wrote – but rather that history requires the mediations of fiction in its treatments of the past.

AQ: Leader *et al.* 1998 'story telling in the frame work of non-fictional Arabic Literature' is not listed in Bibliography. Please provide complete publication details

Such ideas have come late to our field. Until recently, the principal vehicle of academic exchange in the field of Arabic literature, the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, has never dedicated space to a consideration of whether historical prose should come within its purview, or to a discussion of the nature and role of fiction in medieval Arabic literature, nor even to what is meant by 'literature' in the Islamic context (not a gratuitous question, since there is no corresponding word in medieval Arabic). Islamicists have in general thought of Muslim historians as impartial compilers rather than creative authors: 'The overall objectivity of Arabic historiography is remarkable...the historian merely furnished the material', observed Gustave von Grunebaum in 1946;[10] while in 1980, Patricia Crone could still say, of the earliest Arabic historians: 'The works of the first com-pilers...are...mere piles of disparate traditions reflecting no one personality, school, time or place.'[11] In addition, modern historians have been obsessed with the question of authenticity, of which accounts are true and which false, as though fact and fiction are like wheat and chaff that must be winnowed. This has begun to change as our subject is slowly permeated by the researches of Paul Ricœur, Roland Barthes, Hayden White and others, on the boundaries of history and fiction and the nature of narrativity. The result is that attention is now being paid to the manner of transmission of an account as well as to its facticity, to how an account has been put together as well as to what is says. In what follows, I shall outline the directions in which some recent studies are tending.

The background of Arabic historiography

To say that one cannot easily draw a line between history and fiction is certainly not to say that they are the same thing. In particular, the intentions of the writer and the reception by the audience will often differ in each case. This is important to bear in mind for the purposes of this discussion, for narratives which we may classify as fictional according to our own analytical standards may not have been perceived as such in their original context. Before discussing some of the basic techniques of writing used by Arabic historiographers, I shall therefore begin by saying a few words about the different approaches of those involved in the production of early Islamic history.

The raw material for Islamic history is the individual report, the narration of a single saying or deed or event, usually very pithy in nature. In a general way such reports would have circulated from the beginning of Islam. Once, however, the say-ings and deeds of the early heroes of Islam came to acquire normative value, that is, to be regarded as a model for present behaviour and policy – presumably shortly after the lives of these heroes had begun to recede from living memory – they became an object of collection and study. As this activity became more systematic, different disciplines developed but all drew upon the same body of material. Thus one and the same report could appear in a number of different contexts. The speech of the first caliph Abū Bakr to the armies departing for Syria in 13/634 is, for example, cited by historians of the Muslim conquests, by lawyers wanting to codify the conduct of war, by philologists interested in early oratory and so on.[12]

The most common words for such a report are *ḥadīth* and *khabar* which, though substantially overlapping in meaning and usage, are not synonymous. The latter is broader in scope, and indeed often, in its plural form (*akhbār*), signified historical reports in general, whereas the former became more closely tied to the deeds and *dicta* of religiously authoritative figures, and in particular the Prophet Muḥammad.

Consequently, a scholar of *ḥadīth* (a *muḥaddith*) and a scholar of *akhbār* (an *akhbārī*), though they might use each other's source material, had different aims and methods. The science of *ḥadīth*, concerned as it was with determining the value of reports as legal precedent, was a serious business and entailed providing a list (*isnād*) of those who had passed on the report in question from the first person to the last. By contrast, *akhbār*, studied more for their legitimating and edifying qualities than their normative import, would often be introduced with a simple 'they said' or 'it is said'. Though disapproved of by *muḥaddith*s, this practice was tolerated in certain circumstances, as is suggested by the statement of one of the most famous of their number, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855):

> As regards traditions from the Messenger of God on what is allowed and what is forbidden, on what is laid down and what is decreed, we are tough (*tashaddadnā*) on the *isnād*; but for traditions from the Prophet on the virtues of certain actions and on what does not prescribe or proscribe, we go easy (*tasāhalnā*) on the *isnād*.[13]

What was not forgiven by most *muḥaddith*s, however, was 'the production of one single text with an orderly narrative (*'alā siyāqa wāḥida*) from a group of people often in disagreement', the complaint levelled by Ibn Ḥanbal against the best known writer on the Prophet's military campaigns (*maghāzī*), Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823).[14] Here is the nub of the matter: *akhbārī*s were creating orderly narratives. To do so meant imparting a structure to a set of originally distinct accounts. More particularly, it meant using one's powers of reasoning, which was anathema to the *muḥaddith*s. Their stance was basically anti-intellectualist. In their view, in transmitting, one should efface one's own self and not let one's own ideas and thoughts intrude, but simply be a medium for a report to pass from one person to another. Only in this way could the continuity of the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muḥammad among the Muslim community be preserved. Thus when the famous jurist and Qur'ān commentator Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) tried his hand at history writing, he emphasized from the outset of his work that he had relied

> solely upon the reports transmitted to me which I cite therein and upon the traditions which I ascribe to their narrators therein, to the exclusion of what may be apprehended by rational argument or deduced by the human mind.[15]

So when, as very commonly occurred, a *muḥaddith* accused an *akhbārī* of 'lying' (*kadhib*), the accusation had less to do with the facticity of individual reports

than with the method of their transmission. Consider, for example, the following *ḥadīth*:

> The Prophet of God said: There was among your forebears a man who killed ninety-nine men, and then he enquired after the most learned person in the land and was directed to a monk. So he went to him and said that he had killed ninety-nine men, and asked whether there was in that case any chance of repentance for him. The monk replied, No; and so the man killed him too and thus made it a round hundred. Then he again enquired after the most learned person in the land and was directed to a scholar. He said that he had killed a hundred men, and asked if there was in that case any chance of repentance for him. The scholar said, Yes, for who should come between him and repentance? 'Go to such and such a land, for in it are a people who worship God; worship God with them and do not return to your own land, since it is an evil land.'
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> He therefore set off, but when he had got halfway, death came to him. The angels of mercy and the angels of retribution then argued over him; the former said he had come as a penitent turning his heart towards God, whereas the latter said that he had never done a good deed. An angel in the image of a human then came to them, and they appointed him judge between them; and he said: 'Measure the distance between the two lands, and whichever he is nearer to, he belongs to that one.' They measured, and found him to be nearer to the land he was heading for, and so the angels of mercy took possession of him.

To us, this is obviously fictional; yet it appears in one of the two canonical collections of *ḥadīth*, that of Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), as well as in that of the highly critical Ibn Ḥanbal.[16] This is because the chains of transmission from the Prophet are faultless and the transmitters highly acclaimed; for in the science of *ḥadīth*, confirmation of authenticity was to be had not so much by analysing the text as by knowledge of the men who had transmitted it. As the great jurist Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) said: 'The truth or falsity of most *ḥadīth* cannot be inferred except through the truth or falsity of the narrator, with the exception of a few special instances.'[17] A *muḥaddith*'s appraisal of a *ḥadīth* as true or false centred, therefore, on such questions as whether the narrator (in this case the Prophet) was genuinely responsible for the text or not, and whether it had then been accurately conveyed to the present generation. To this end much effort was expended on categorizing *ḥadīth*s as poorly or soundly transmitted (*saqīm* or *ṣaḥīḥ*) and *muḥaddith*s as weak or trustworthy (*ḍaʿīf* or *thiqa*); and the accusation of dishonesty and deception (*tadlīs*) was levelled not at fabricators of reports, but at those who dealt in defective *isnād*s.

An *akhbārī* maintained the same empahsis on transmitted and consensual knowledge, but would be more willing to manipulate the text of reports. Whereas a *muḥaddith* would, or at least should, simply present all the different versions of a report integrally and separately without any interference, an *akhbārī* would be

more likely to try and combine them, harmonize them, expand, abridge, paraphrase or interpret them, usually with an eye to the greater picture that he wished to paint, or with a view to the particular position that he sought to advocate. He would, however, deny being engaged in any such literary activity and prefer, like the *muḥaddith*, to hide himself from the reader's perception, so enhancing the impression that his text was merely an objective representation of events. This he achieved by the use of an *isnād* (even if it consisted of no more than 'they said'), which allowed him to disown the text, and by narrative techniques, particularly the use of direct speech, which left the characters to explain their intentions for themselves and so obviated the need for any external comment or interpretation. An *akhbārī* would also cast his net wider when fishing for source material, potentially taking in Biblical narratives, the pre-Islamic history of ancient Yemen, tribal lore, genealogy, poetry and so on. This inevitably entailed a degree of laxity *vis-à-vis* sources, and one will often find quoted 'a trustworthy informant', 'an old man in Mecca some forty years ago', 'some scholars', 'one of my companions' and the like.[18] For the *akhbārī*, then, the category of 'true' was more elastic than would be allowed by a *muḥaddith* as regards both content and form; but the focus was still very much religiously orientated on what was, as one might say, 'true to Islam'.

*Muḥaddith*s and *akhbārī*s were thus very close in outlook even if their methods and aims diverged. Very different, however, was the *adīb*, the gentleman scholar, who might also apply himself to history writing. Whereas the two former generally concentrated on *'ilm*, religious knowledge, the latter pursued *adab*, a well-rounded education that embraced personal experience, ratiocination and foreign, non-Arab wisdom, and regarded Islam intellectually as the beginning rather than as the end of all truth. 'He who wishes to become a religious scholar (*'ālim*)', it was often said, 'let him devote himself to one subject; but he who wishes to become a gentleman scholar (*adīb*), let him seek breadth in learning'.

The *adīb* would use much the same material as religious scholars when writing history, though also taking note of non-Islamic learning; but he would have a contempt for the uncritical approach (*taqlīd*) of the *'ulamā'* (religious scholars; sing. *'ālim*). 'Do not repeat what fools say: "I only report what I heard" ', advised Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (early second/eighth century), chief secretary of the caliph al-Manṣūr, 'For most of what you hear is false, and most reporters are fools.' Rather, a certain degree of critical investigation (*baḥth*) was necessary, as is explained by the polymath al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868):

> The correct procedure which God commanded, made desirable and urged us to embrace, is that we should reject two kinds of reports: those that are contradictory and implausible, and those that are impossible in nature and beyond the capacity of created beings. If a report belongs to neither of these two kinds and is subject to being judged possible, one proceeds by seeking confirmation.

For an *adīb*, therefore, the opposition between what is true and what is false centred upon what was in accordance with, or contrary to, reason (*'aql*) and personal experience (*tajriba*).[19]

An *adīb* would also be more interested than a *muḥaddith* or an *akhbārī* in the entertainment and edification value of a report; and the question of whether or not it was true would be less relevant than whether or not it was true to life. For this, rigorous standards of transmission would be beside the point. Thus the Andalusi Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940), in the introduction to his huge compendium of *akhbār, al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, felt justified in declaring that he would delete 'the *isnād*s from most reports, my purpose being to achieve lightness of touch and conciseness and to avoid being ponderous; for these are entertaining stories, pieces of wisdom and anecdotes, which do not benefit from any *isnād* being attached to them'. Finally, unlike his more religious-minded colleagues, an *adīb* would not absent himself from the narrative, pretending to play no part in its formation. Rather, in accord with his more humanist bent, he would display something of his *persona*, spell out his programme and purpose in writing, or include some mention of first-hand experiences. This, for instance, is how Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. *c.*350/960) commences his historical opus, *Ta'rīkh Sinī Mulūk al-Arḍ wa al-Anbiyā'* ('Chronology of the Kings of the Earth and the Prophets'):

> This is a work in which I have included the histories of the years of the kings of the earth and its prophets .... Before detailing these histories, I begin with an introduction from which may be inferred the changes in the modes of historical dating and the corruption and confusion therein. In it I also discuss the territorial extension of great nations on the earth's surface and where the small nations fit in between, from which may be seen how some were able to gain mastery over others and how the power of some was absorbed into the power of others, so that their events became the cause for the confusion of historical dates.

And Aū 'Alī al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī (d. 384/994) says of his collection of historical reports, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, known, in D. S. Margoliouth's English translation, as 'The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge', that 'The reason which led me to write them down is that I used in former days to consort with venerable and virtuous scholars and literati who had come to know about religions . . . kingdoms . . . kings . . . state secretaries and viziers'; and he expresses the hope:

> the wise and rational man, the clever and educated man, when he hears and digests these tales, can benefit therefrom . . . so that he may dispense with direct experience or learning their like from the mouths of men, and become well versed in the ways of this world and the next, fully acquainted with the consequences of virtues and vice.[20]

Finally we come to the *qāṣṣ*, usually translated as 'storyteller'. According to the eminent religious authority Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), his business was *qaṣaṣ*, that is, 'relating narratives (*akhbār*) of peoples of the past [wherein] there is a lesson to be gained which gives warning, an admonition which rebukes and an example of the right to be emulated', *tadhkīr*, 'informing mankind of the blessing God has

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bestowed upon them, urging them to render thanks to Him and warning them lest they disobey Him', and *wa'z*, the 'instilling of fear that softens the heart'. We should therefore bear in mind that the term *qāṣṣ* conveys the notion of 'religious preacher' as well as 'storyteller', especially as Ibn al-Jawzī goes on to say that the *qāṣṣ* was considered responsible for instructing the masses in the basic tenets and beliefs of Islam.[21] The *qāṣṣ* might belong to the ranks of the scholars, like Ibn al-Jawzī himself, who regularly attracted crowds of thousands when he spoke in public, but was also a brilliant polymath who wrote widely on all aspects of Arabic learning. He might be a political figure, for example, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Ḥātim ibn Nu'mān al-Bāhilī, who was governor of Armenia for al-Walīd I (r. 86–96/705–15), was also known as 'a teller of stories and proverbs'.[22] But more commonly the *qāṣṣ* would be an ascetic of one type or another, whose interest would lie in enjoining pious conduct (*wara'*). The *qāṣṣ* often fell foul of the authorities, for he did not always keep to the edifying pursuits expected of him, but became involved in propaganda, championing and damning various religious and political positions, and in straightforward entertainment, recounting historical epics, love stories, fables and the like. Opposition to the *qāṣṣ* came chiefly from two quarters: the government, wary of free agents who could condemn as well as promote its actions, and scholars, who disliked the more amateurish of them trespassing on their field. The attitude of the jurist Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/796) may be taken as typical:

> I have met by these pillars [of the mosque in Medina] many of those who say 'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said . . .', but have never taken anything from them, even though if one of them were to be entrusted with a treasury he would fulfil that trust. This is because they are not people of this business . . . . They are preoccupied with fear of Allah and asceticism, whereas this business, teaching *ḥadīth* and giving legal decisions, needs men who have awareness of Allah, scrupulousness, steadfastness, exactitude, knowledge and understanding . . . . As for those who do not have this exactitude and understanding, no benefit can be derived from them, nor are they a conclusive proof, nor should knowledge be taken from them.[23]

What made both rulers and scholars particularly nervous was the very broad reach of the *qāṣṣ*, who was for that reason a very significant feature of Islamic society.[24]

Finally, before moving on to the discussion proper of historiography, it is worth drawing attention to a few caveats. The first is that history was not recognized as an independent discipline in the period considered here, and indeed occupied a somewhat ambiguous position in Islamic society in general. It was often spurned by practitioners of the law or the rational sciences, and at best served as an auxiliary subject. Yet though history, save for the biography of the Prophet, never formed part of Muslim higher education, it was a feature of everyone's elementary education. A fourth/tenth-century philosophical compendium informs us that

children in school learned the Qur'ān, history (*akhbār*), poetry, grammar and lexicography; every ambitious man was recommended to 'read historical works, study biographies and the experiences of the nations', and for statesmen, history was the main source of political inspiration: 'the knowledge of genealogy and history belongs to the sciences of kings and important persons.'[25] A second, related point is that there were few professional historians in this period. Most of the writers we will consider were government officials (secretaries, judges, etc.), religious scholars who earned money by giving legal opinions or by teaching, or they were men of independent means, or else were maintained by patrons. History was, therefore, composed by people either of their own volition or by official commission, but seldom as part of their everyday duties. Consequently – and this is the third caveat – the approaches to transmission outlined earlier were not formally imposed or instilled, but rather were arrived at by constant interaction and debate among scholars and by following the example of respected practitioners, and were therefore, to a considerable degree, fluid and malleable.[26]

These three caveats combine to make a fourth, namely that Muslim historical writing is very varied and often idiosyncratic. In his 'History' (*Ta'rīkh*), Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/892) details the contribution of numerous ancient nations to world culture before finally arriving at Islam, and displays a marked fondness for astrology. Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) organizes his history of the Islamic conquests, 'Conquests of the Countries' (*Futūḥ al-Buldān*), geographically, and pays much attention to fiscal and administrative matters. The 'Experiences of the Nations' (*Tajārib al-Umam*) of Abū 'Alī Aḥmad Miskawayh (d. 420/1030) orders events annalistically and according to their worth as examples of effective and successful leadership, his target audience being 'viziers, army commanders, governors of cities and leaders of the high and low'.[27] The 'History' of Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, referred to earlier, is much concerned with chronology and seeks to correlate the different systems used by various nations. As a final illustration of the diversity of historical writing, in his *Kitāb al-Awā'il* ('The Book of Firsts'), Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. *c*.400/1010), treats the origins of things, arranging in rough chronological order reports on the first occurrence or execution of a particular feat, custom or science, according to a long-established genre.[28]

Elements of fiction in Arabic history writing

Emplotment

This term signifies the placing of events in a meaningful configuration; and I shall begin my discussion of Arabic history writing by looking at two of the most basic ways in which it makes use of emplotment, namely by applying a causal framework (such as causal linkages, chronological ordering or teleological explication) to historical reports, and by the deployment of certain narrative strategies (characterization, plot, rhetorical devices, dramatic visualization, etc.).

I shall examine emplotment first as an interpretative device, then as a narrative procedure, making a rough distinction between localized and larger-scale uses of the technique.

(a) Emplotment and interpretative structure

Micro procedures An important feature of Islamic learning was the 'journey in quest of knowledge' (*riḥla fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*), whether to intellectual centres of the Muslim world to listen to learned teachers or to the abodes of Arab tribes to imbibe their lore and language.[29] Thus the philologist ʿAbd al-Malik al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 213/828) informs us in the introduction to his 'History of the Arabs before Islam' (*Taʾrīkh al-ʿArab qabla al-Islām*) that he 'travelled widely among the tribes, seeking out the transmitters of reports and keepers of ancient histories until I extracted all the stories of the genealogists and learned the tales related by old men regarding their ancestry'.[30]

Having assembled his material, the next task for the scholar was to 'make sense' of it. Consider the comment of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742):

> I was informed by Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr, ʿAlqama ibn Waqqās and ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUtba ibn Masʿūd about the report of ʿĀʾisha, wife of the Prophet, when the slanderers said what they said about her and God then declared her innocent. All of them related to me part of this report, some of them being more mindful of it than others and more sound in preserving a record of it. I myself took care to preserve from each informant the report he related to me, with some parts of their report confirming other parts. This is what they related . . .

Following this, Zuhrī proceeds to give a single, seamless narrative constructed from the individual accounts of his informants.[31] In very similar words, Wāqidī tells us how he put together his account of the Battle of Ḥunayn (8/630), where the Prophet, newly reconciled with the Meccans, defeated a large body of pagans, from numerous testimonies: 'each [of my informants] related part of the story, some knowing more than others about it, and I combined (*jamaʿtu*) all of what they told me about it'.[32] An *adīb* would proceed on the same basis. For his portrayal of the lovers ʿUrwa ibn Ḥizām and ʿAfrāʾ, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. *c*.363/972) lists a number of informants, then states: 'I brought together their narratives, then combined them (*jamaʿtuhā*).'[33] Thus the scholar would evaluate his material, shape it, give it coherence and meaning, make it 'an orderly narrative', in the (pejorative) words of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal quoted earlier.[34]

This activity operated at all levels of narration. A good example at the level of the individual incident is offered by the accounts of the delegation of the tribe of Tamīm to the Prophet, which have been analysed by Ella Landau-Tasseron. Wāqidī affirms that the delegation came to negotiate the release of prisoners who had been taken captive previously by an agent of the Prophet, whereas, half a century earlier, Ibn Isḥāq (d. 151/761) states that this was just one of the many

tribal delegations of the year AH 9 which came to contend with Muḥammad in boasting contests between the poets of each side, after the usual pre-Islamic custom. One might at first assume that there is a true and a false version, but a closer look suggests otherwise. Ibn Isḥāq reports an earlier incident involving Tamīm, in which a number of members of a Tamīmite clan are captured and brought to Mecca by a Muslim raiding party. Ten leaders of Tamīm then come before Muḥammad to negotiate their release. This would seem to have nothing to do with the later delegation of the year 9, although both were attended by an oratorical exchange on the part of the poets. There were, then, two distinct delegations of Tamīm despatched at different times and for different reasons, and Wāqidī, in trying to order his material, conflated the two accounts, in the process 'creating' a new one.[35]

Another example at this level, though in a different vein, is given by Daniel Beaumont with regard to conversion stories. These, he says, are usually recounted in a very programmatic fashion: Islam is presented to a person (*'araḍa 'alyhi al-islāma/al-amra*), the Qur'ān is recited (*qara'a*), and the person invariably believes and accepts (*āmana wa ṣaddaqa*). These same four verbs, Beaumont maintains, are found in one tradition after another to describe the entire process of conversion: presentation and recitation by the proselytizer, belief and acceptance on the part of the convert. Beaumont's explanation of this is that scholars were working with large numbers of disparate accounts and needed some way of making them more manageable. The deployment of certain key words served to summarize and harmonize, to 'boil down' what were originally very different narratives. These particular verbs were chosen because they were thought to be consonant with the larger meaning of the events: 'the verbs may, first of all, reflect theology, and secondarily perhaps the event'.[36]

The interpretative process may also be discerned at an intermediate level. The biography (*Sīra*) of the Prophet by Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq provides an interesting case, for interspersed among the transmitted items of information are numerous personal comments and reflections. Sometimes the latter serve to bind together a group of distinct *ḥadīth*s by developing a common theme. Thus Ibn Isḥāq opens his account of Muḥammad's first reception of the Qur'ān with the following musing:

> When the time came for revelation to descend upon the Prophet of God, he was already a believer in God and in what was to be revealed to him. He was, moreover, fully prepared to act accordingly and to suffer for his faith what God had imposed upon him: both the pleasure and the displeasure of mankind. Prophecy imposes heavy burdens and responsibilities that can be shouldered only by prophets of authority and courage, with the aid and blessing of God. This is because of what prophets meet with from people and what divinely ordained events may befall them.

At other times, *ḥadīth*s are used as evidence in support of the author's reflections. Thus Ibn Isḥāq appends to the given passage the report transmitted by Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. *c*.110/728) that 'Jonah was a pious servant of God,

but he was an impatient man. When the burdens of prophecy – and prophecy is
burdensome – were imposed upon him, he cracked under the heavy strain. Jonah
threw off this burden and fled.' Ibn Isḥāq strikes us as unusual among religious
scholars for the degree to which he lets his own thoughts and ideas intrude into
the narrative, but he was very likely typical of those who wrote before the science
of *ḥadīth* had attained maturity and begun to assert itself, just as the use of per-
sonal opinion (*ra'y*) was widespread among jurists before *muḥaddith*s pressured
them to reduce the role of speculative reasoning.[37]

Macro procedures   Finally, the interpretative process may be brought into play on
the macro-level, endowing a whole œuvre with a measure of coherence and unity.
In performing this task, the Muslim historian had at his disposal a number of
different models and would be aided by a variety of guiding principles.

Of prime importance as a model was the Qur'ān. For example, when Ṭabarī
begins his exposition of rulers of past kingdoms, he writes:

> Let us now turn to the mention of the first to be given dominion and
> blessings by God who then were ungrateful, denied and rebelled against God
> and waxed proud; and then God withdrew his blessing, shamed him and
> brought him low.[38]

This is clearly inspired by the Qur'anic cyclical vision of history whereby a
people is shown favour by God, but subsequently turns its back on Him and so
suffers extinction. And indeed the same words and concepts are present: the
conferring of bounty (*an'ama 'alā*), the display of ingratitude (*kafara*) and insolence
(*'aṣā, istakbara*) incurring requital and ignominy (*akhzā, adhalla*).[39]

Another essential model of coherence was afforded by the literary forms
current among the peoples conquered by the Arabs. Ibn Isḥāq's biography of
Muḥammad, for example, owes much to ancient Near Eastern hagiographical
ideas, translating to an Arabian setting such traditional themes as annunciation,
revelation, persecution and exodus.[40] Third, the pre-Islamic Arabian past could
provide models, an obvious example being genealogy, whereby a whole text could
be ordered in terms of the family trees of the persons included and history
expressed in the form of lineage.[41]

The guiding principles which would direct an author in coordinating and
correlating a large body of material were his various convictions and assumptions,
political and religious. An example of such a guiding principle has been given
recently by Fred Donner, who argues that Muslim universal chronicles all exhibit
the same concern to establish the legitimacy of Muḥammad's prophethood, of
his community (*umma*) and of the hegemony of Islam, and that this resulted in a
connected 'salvation history' of which all versions tended to follow much the same
format. This would typically be setting the stage for Muḥammad and Islam
(Muḥammad's *umma* is presented as the prophetic heir to Biblical tradition
and the temporal heir to Persia and the other kingdoms, while the pre-Islamic
Arab 'dark ages' – *jāhiliyya* – are set in contrast to the impending enlightenment
of Islam); narrating the life of Muḥammad, the revelation of the Qur'ān and

birth of the Muslim community, which are identified as the turning point in history between Creation and the Day of Judgement; the Islamic conquests are then shown as a reflection of God's preference for Islam and those who accept it; the Muslim civil wars provide an exemplar of the struggle of the pious against tyranny and the eventual triumph of consensus; and the caliphate symbolizes the community's continuity, which stretches back to the Prophet.[42] This format is found not only in the world histories of religious scholars but also in those of *adībs*. Though the latter would, typically, display much more curiosity about the cultures of pre-Islamic peoples, they too view the mission of Muḥammad as opening a new age in which the development of the Muslim community is the only important theme, and in which non-Muslim peoples, insofar as they feature at all, are no longer treated as having an autonomous history of their own. As Tarif Khalidi observes of the *adīb* 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956),

> a disparity becomes immediately apparent between the cultural account of earlier nations and the political character of his Islamic history, which is dynastic/annalistic in form. This disparity...was not peculiar to Mas'ūdī's histories but is also found in Ya'qūbī and Maqdisī, both of whom were approximate contemporaries of Mas'ūdī and wrote histories with a similar structure.[43]

Another frequently encountered guiding principle is the freedom from error of all the Prophet's Companions. Thus the author of a work on the 'Conquest of Syria' (*Futūḥ al-Shām*) wrongly ascribed to Wāqidī informs us that he writes

> to make clear the virtues of the Companions of God's Messenger and their exertions in war so as thereby to convince the backsliders who deviate from custom and duty; for were it not for the Companions, together with God's will, the Muslims would not possess the land, nor would knowledge of this religion have spread.[44]

The latter point is crucial: the Companions were responsible for passing on Muḥammad's teaching to the next generation of Muslims, and it is obvious why experts in religious matters would wish to exalt them. The problem with this, however, is that the Companions were involved on both sides of a civil war over the succession to the caliphate (35–40/656–61). To exculpate all parties to a dispute is at best an uphill task. In his book on this civil war, *Kitāb al-Jamal wa Masīr 'Ā'isha wa 'Alī* ('The Battle of the Camel, and the Conduct of 'Ā'isha and 'Alī') Sayf ibn 'Umar al-Tamīmī (d. 180/796) strives to portray the Companions as the innocent victims of the Saba'iyya, allegedly the followers of a Jewish convert to Islam named 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba', who are accordingly cast in the role of cynical troublemakers. Whereas other historians show the government of the caliph 'Uthmān (23–35/644–56) as nepotistic and contrary to Islam, Sayf ibn 'Umar sets out to demonstrate that this image is false and to reveal the part played by the Saba'iyya in creating it. In the same way, he claims that the Battle of the

Camel (36/656), in which the Companions ‘Ā’isha, Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, ‘Alī ibn Abī
Ṭālib and others fought on opposite sides, was instigated by the same Saba’iyya,
whereas the Companions’ intent had rather been to seek reconciliation.[45] And of
course not just the early, crucial decades of Islamic history but also later periods
threw up problematic issues.[46]

(b) Emplotment and narrative structure

An anecdote is told about the ‘Abbasid caliph Manṣūr and Abū Dulāma, a poet
notorious for his wit and practical jokes. The caliph’s wife Ḥammāda bint ‘Īsā has
just died, and an assembly is standing at her grave awaiting her burial. Manṣūr
asks Abū Dulāma what has been prepared for this occasion (*makān*), expecting him
to have composed some appropriate verses. The poet, however, chooses to
misunderstand the question, saying that for this (burial) place (*makān*) Ḥammāda
has been prepared, whereupon Manṣūr bursts out laughing.[47]

The event may or may not have happened (though it is to be noted that the
motif of hilarity at the graveside occurs elsewhere in Arabic literature). Here,
however, we are more interested in the way in which the tale is recounted so as to
heighten the humour of the incident, and also in how the various transmitters
add their own dimension to the piece. The crux of the story is of course the
incongruity between mourning and mirth. This is brought out in the narrative by
intensifying the initial mood of pathos with the observation that ‘Manṣūr was
grieved and broken-hearted (*muta’allim wa ka’ib*)’, then counterpointing this at the
end with the antonymic and very graphic statement that ‘he fell about laughing
(*ḍaḥika ḥattā istalqā*)’.[48] In certain versions, an element of shame is added, as
Manṣūr realizes that his conduct – laughing in public at such an inopportune
moment – has caused him loss of dignity, and it is said that he ‘hid his face’, or
castigated Abū Dulāma with the words: ‘Woe upon you; you have disgraced me
in front of everyone.’

In short, in this and numerous other such ‘historical’ narratives, we can detect
a degree of creative freedom, some elements of fiction and the presence of an
author. No one has done more in recent years to analyse this phenomenon than
Stefan Leder, and we will now look at one of his examples. For reasons that
remain unclear, Khālid al-Qasrī, governor of Iraq and the eastern provinces
under the caliph Hishām for more than a decade (from 724 to 737), was dismissed
in the year 120/737 and eventually tortured to death under his successor, Yūsuf
ibn ‘Umar al-Thaqafī.[49] An ‘Account of the Killing of Khālid al-Qasrī’ was com-
posed by the *akhbārī* al-Haytham ibn ‘Adī (d. 207/822), and survives in fragments
excerpted by later writers. Two episodes present Khālid in conversation first with
‘Uryān ibn Haytham and then with Bilāl ibn Abī Burda, two of his close subor-
dinates. The essential plot in both consists in the subordinates’ vain attempt to
warn Khālid of the ‘evil intentions’ of the caliph’s tribe of Quraysh. Both
conclude with a prediction. ‘Uryān remarks: ‘It is as if he were already dismissed,
everything taken from him, and accused of what he did not do, and having

nothing at his disposal – and so it came to pass'; and Bilāl says: 'It is as if with this man (Khālid's successor) there were sent a man unkind, of odious character, deficient in piety and shame, who set upon him with malice and vindictiveness – and so it came to pass.' Both episodes depict the historical situation in very general terms, the operative factors in it being the envy of Quraysh and the caliph's power to dispose. The main focus is rather on the character of Khālid, stubborn and proud, maintaining until the end: 'Never shall I give in out of meekness/compulsion.'

Haytham, like a good *akhbārī*, remains withdrawn from the narrative, so lending it an aura of obejectivity. He provides *isnād*s which go back to 'Uryān and Bilāl, and presents these two as telling their own story in their own words, he himself being no more than a recorder. It is nevertheless clear that there is a single narrator who, though apparently distant from the world of the characters, is very much in charge. The concluding prediction, for example, is retrospective, and so can only be the work of someone acquainted with the outcome, and its function is evidently to connect the present incident to future events. It also contains an interpretation of the dialogue, drawing our attention to the meaning and consequences of Khālid's attitude. For when coupled with the comment, which appears in both episodes, that Khālid owed all his present wealth and high rank to the caliph, it is hinted that, by his refusal to comply, Khālid is at least partly responsible for his own fall from grace.

Haytham's account was taken up and reworked by subsequent transmitters. That these 'transmitters' did indeed actively rework it is immediately evident from a comparison of the versions of al-Ṭabarī (d. 314/923) and al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892). The latter's is much shorter; the abridgement clearly plays a part in this, but it cannot be the whole explanation. In the 'Uryān episode, for example, the dialogue is very simple in Balādhurī's version. 'Uryān openly speaks his mind, and Khālid interjects only twice: once to say that he does not suspect 'Uryān of malice, nor anticipate any danger, and a second time to aver that he will never humiliate himself by making concessions. In Ṭabarī's rendering, however, the format is much more complex. The two men are made to have much more of a conversation, with Khālid responding five times to the advice proffered by 'Uryān. It thus seems impossible that Balādhurī's concise report could be the result of straightforward editing. The process of anonymous transformation in the course of transmission, which is what we appear to have here, is called by Leder 'unavowed authorship', because 'the ascription to an early authority is maintained while no hints as to the author of the adaptation are given'.[50]

One of the most obvious manifestations of storytelling is the proliferation of variant versions of an incident, for its practitioners usually operate with a limited number of stock motifs and plots which they combine in different ways for different performances. Since a good *muḥaddith* would not like to exclude one version in favour of another, we very often find recorded numerous retellings of a particular event. And indeed the more one reads through the Islamic historical tradition, the more one discerns traces of a long narrative process.

The most noticeable products of this process are, on the one hand, the recurrence of motifs both across the whole body of the storytelling tradition[51] and in multiple variant versions of a single *ḥadīth* or *khabar*, and, on the other, characterization. Recognizable personal traits come to be attached to certain historical figures thus ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, close companion of the Prophet and subsequently caliph, is fiercely loyal and honest, but liable to rush in where angels fear to tread; the famous early Muslim general Khālid ibn al-Walīd is a tough, no-nonsense sort of guy who shoots first and asks questions later, etc. An example of the former phenomenon is afforded by the plethora of reports recounting the killing of Abū Rāfiʿ by a party of men dispatched by the Prophet. This bare outline is all that is agreed upon by the accounts, which otherwise differ so greatly from each other as almost to constitute separate stories. Yet there is the presence of common ingredients in all, or most, of the versions, in which, however, they play different roles and are introduced in a different order such as keys to a gate; Abū Rāfiʿ in a dark upper room; his pallor; he is not killed at the first attempt; someone has poor sight; someone hurts their leg in a fall; there is a wait for confirmation of Abū Rāfiʿ's death. Behind all this there must obviously lie a prototype, or reality, or both. More importantly, though, the versions reflect the activity of storytelling, whereby each retelling leads to the production of a new story, but with the key constituents intact, albeit recast.[52]

Originality

The trait most commonly associated with modern fiction is originality, the concept that the writer, although he or she may borrow some elements, does not draw wholly upon pre-existing documents or upon the testimony of others, and is responsible for the principal ideas animating the work. It is a salient characteristic of medieval Arabic prose writings, however, that they seem to consist of almost nothing but citations of earlier texts and eyewitness reports, and it is for this reason that modern scholars speak of compilers and anthologies rather than of authors and fiction.

This is not to say that the texts in question are not astonishingly varied. There may be assembled in them information on aspects of human behaviour (virtues and vices; passions, such as avarice and love) and types (sages and fools), literary forms (orations, figures of speech, proverbs, poems), professions (secretaries, scholars, poets, physicians, singing girls), events (conquests, battles, assassinations), which may be arranged geographically, chronologically, by generations, social status or type, and so on. And of course the compiler would, as noted earlier, engage to a greater or lesser extent in shaping the accounts he had gathered. But this still does not accord with the standard definition of a fictional work: that the author should have devised the narrative himself, and not simply have selected, organized and edited the narratives of others. Yet many compilations that are ostensibly purely derivative are in fact a great deal more original than they might appear at first sight. Three examples are given in the following sections.

(a) Al-Azdī's 'Conquest of Syria' and other epic narratives

Haytham ibn 'Adī's account of Khālid al-Qasrī's downfall would seem to have been a fairly extended piece of narrative for, as shown earlier, elements of the plot and characterization can still be seen in the dissected remains left to us by its transmitters.[53] The question then arises whether this sort of account was exceptional or common, and, if common, whether any examples have survived intact. A good candidate is the 'Conquest of Syria' by, or attributed to, a certain Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Azdī. On first encountering this work, one is immediately struck by how readable it is, especially if one is used to ploughing through Ṭabarī and Balādhurī. This is in part because it is less broken up by *isnād*s and because variant versions of reports are rarely cited.[54] But it is much more because the author has taken great care in shaping his narrative.

The overall theme is clear: the Muslims' victory in Syria was an expression of God's will, His reward to them for accepting Islam, and the Byzantines' defeat was likewise a part of the divine plan, a punishment for compromising God's oneness through their belief in the Trinity and for their unjust rule. This theme continually manifests itself in the profusion of exchanges, epistolary and oratorical, between Muslim and Byzantine agents. Woven into the narrative is another thread, that of the Muslims' military prowess and heroic exertions. The characterization rather cleverly mirrors and furthers the plot, for the two main characters, Abū 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ and Khālid ibn al-Walīd, embody spiritual and military virtue respectively. The former is the wise and level-headed leader, the keen decision-maker and perceptive arbiter upon whom success depends, a pious man entirely committed to God's cause and caring nothing for the ephemeral distractions of the world. Khālid, on the other hand, is the fearless and hot-tempered warrior of long campaign experience, the soldier who has little patience for negotiations over matters he knows will have to be settled by force. His spiritual integrity is not in question, but his military contribution is to the fore.

There is also much drama present in this text, created by the inclusion of numerous impassioned speeches, hurried exchanges of letters, charged interviews between Muslim and Byzantine leaders, near defeats and hand-to-hand combats.[55] There are occasional contradictions and inconsistencies – the penalty for adultery is mentioned once as flogging and elsewhere as stoning; the drinking of wine is portrayed as a Byzantine vice and also as a pleasure that will be lost to the Muslims if they should be vanquished; and there is sometimes confusion over which Muslim general is in command where – but the tight maintenance of thematic unity, strong characterization, absence of digressions and attention to dramatic effect, all indicate that we are dealing with a single author who is fully in charge of his narrative.[56]

Certainly there are many portions of the work that conform to the scholarly accounts of the Islamic conquests; yet it has an unabashedly epic style. Though precise, topographic and historical details are often given, it is the drama, the courage, the rhetoric that is the thing. One is tempted, therefore, to place this text on the fiction side of the continuum, to see it more as historicized fiction than as

fictionalized history. Alongside it one might range a number of other works. Very close in content and style is the previously mentioned 'Conquest of Syria' (*Futūḥ al-Shām*) falsely attributed to Wāqidī, though it is even more patently fictionalized history. It has been studied by Rudi Paret, who says of it:

> The bravery and prowess of the Muslims have reached fantastic proportions.... They are always in the minority, but console themselves with the oft-cited Qur'anic saying, 'How many a small band has achieved victory with God's leave over a large band' (Qur'ān 2:249).... The Arabs practise no betrayal and never lie...have good relations amongst themselves, are filled with a sense of justice, are absolute paragons of virtue. Above all, however, they are pious and firmly committed to the hereafter, whereas among their Christian opponents it is just the reverse.... It is a simple black-and-white picture. Everything advantageous is attributed to [the Muslim] side, everything detrimental to their antagonists. And everywhere a basic theological-apologetic mood prevails.[57]

An example from a slightly later period is the 'Battle of Ṣiffīn' (*Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*) by Naṣr ibn Muzāhim al-Minqarī (d. 221/827). Again, *isnād*s are unintrusive, speeches and letters are frequent and fervent, characterization is vivid, emotion and drama are high on the agenda, and a single overall theme – here, the just but vain fight of the fourth caliph, ʿAlī, against the wicked machinations of the future caliph Muʿāwiya and his henchman ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ – permeates and directs the narrative. As a final instance we might take the history of the *adīb* Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/895) called 'The Long Narratives' (*al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*) which, in language elevated in style and light on *isnād*s, blends the drama of wars with wisdom, dialogue, speeches, letters and arguments, and links the long and distinguished past of Persia with the present rule of the Muslim Arab state.

Similar in style but less dependent upon, or even wholly independent of, the scholarly tradition are such heroic cycles as *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, *Ghazwat al-Arqāṭ* and *al-Badr Nār*, which treat the tribal feuds and holy wars of the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid caliphates. Though most of these epic *sīra*s advance claims of facticity, they fly free of such restraints, ranging through time and space on the edge of a world of fantasy. In the frontier epic *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, the great-great-grandfather of the heroine is introduced as living in the time of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 65–86/ 685–705); he dies while her grandfather is on an expedition to Constantinople. Dhāt al-Himma herself is unmarried when the first ʿAbbasid caliph al-Saffāḥ (r. 132–6/ 750–4) ascends the throne, and she is still a formidable fighter at the start of the rule of al-Wāthiq (r. 227–32/841–6). Her son ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, who dies during Wāthiq's reign, was born during the reign of al-Mahdī (158–69/775–85), and it is then that the third major character of the cycle, al-Baṭṭāl, embarks upon a career that extends beyond the death of Wāthiq, who has by implication been accorded more than twenty years of rule. Though the action centres on the Syrian-Byzantine frontier, locations as far afield as India, Spain, Ethiopia and Yemen are mentioned, and some are too remote to require specification.[58]

When dealing with the 'legendary' accounts of Muḥammad's campaigns, Rudi Paret distinguished between those with a historical basis and those with none bar

the inclusion of historical persons and places. He emphasized, however, that the general character of both types of narrative was similar. Both have an 'ahistorical stamp': both opt for an idealizing style of presentation (goodies are wholly good and baddies wholly bad; early Islam was a Golden Age), and both propagandize on behalf of the rightness of Islam and the righteousness of its first adherents.[59]

It is very noticeable that the amount of modern scholarship devoted to a text purporting to depict the past will be proportionate to the degree to which it appears anchored in historical reality, so strongly does the 'fetishism for facts' linger on amongst us. If Paret is right, this is not a sound criterion for selection rather, we should start to concentrate more on the manner and style of delivery, the apparent aim of the text and the nature of its intended audience.

(b) Al-Jāḥiẓ's 'Book of Misers'

In the introduction to the work (*Kitāb al-Bukhalā'*), the author, Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (*c*.160–255/776–868 or 9) tells us that he wrote it in response to being entreated to discourse upon 'humorous anecdotes of misers and the argumentation of stingy people',[60] and this he accomplishes magnificently, parading before us a galaxy of curious and comic avaricious figures, their character and actions described in a manner both astute and amusing. A recent translator states that his own interest in the work lay in 'the picture it gives of life in traditional Arab society'.[61] And certainly one can enjoy the 'Misers' simply for its lively portrayal of characters and customs and its polished narration of witty tales and amusing stratagems. Yet it is evidently much more than that. Very commonly it is explained as an attack upon a newly arisen monied class in Iraq, or else as a disparagement of non-Arabs, whose concern with wealth contrasts unfavourably with the Arab virtues of generosity and hospitality. The work seems, however, too diffuse and light-hearted for such an interpretation.

More plausible is Daniel Beaumont's thesis that the 'Misers' is a work of satire and parody with miserliness (*bukhl*) simply the means by which this is achieved, not the subject itself. Thus the account of misers trading examples of thrifty behaviour in the mosque is intended as a satire upon *muḥaddith*s exchanging examples of Prophetic behaviour, so mocking the idea of *taqlīd*, the use of example as a model for one's own conduct. The presence of parody is suggested by the mosque setting and by the words of the first shaykh, so typical of a religious scholar: 'I am not aware of any (holy) book forbidding it or custom (*sunna*) prohibiting it.'[62] And the tale of al-Kindī[63] aims to satirize philosophers and their (mis)use of argumentation as in al-Kindī's letter to a tenant, justifying charging him a higher rent for having guests to stay, is a parody of a philosophical treatise, for the ways in which people cause wear and tear on a house are minutely categorized, and arguments are given in the terse and abstract style characteristic of philosophers:

> When feet increase, walking increases...then the clay flakes off and the plaster crumbles and the steps crack.... And when the enterings and exitings and openings and closings and lockings and unlockings increase, then the doors split and their fixtures break.

As a final illustration we might take the shaykh of Khurāsān behind whose lengthy arguments in favour of a glass lamp over a stoneware or ceramic one would seem to lie a jibe at Ṣūfī adepts and their fondness for esoteric exegesis: 'When the beams of the flame fall upon the material of the glass, lamp and flame become one (he says), each of the two giving all the light back to its owner', an idea evocative of the Ṣūfī concept of mystical union with the Godhead, which is at the same time comic because of its suggestion that no light is wasted. The shaykh clinches his point with a citation of the Sūra of Light from the Qur'ān, a chapter beloved of Muslim mystics, interpreting the words 'the lamp is in a glass' (Qur'ān 24:35) as a sanctification of his own choice, and the words 'light upon light' as a reference to the oil in the glass, 'luminosity upon luminosity redoubling'.[64]

Jāḥiẓ's 'Misers' may be compared, and contrasted, with al-Khaḥīb al-Baghdādī's (d. 463/1071) 'Misers'[65] and Ibn al-Jawzī's *Akhbār al-Ḥamqā' wa al-Mughaffalīn* ('Fools and Ignoramuses'), which lie at the compilation rather than the composition end of the spectrum. Their material is drawn from the testimony of others, which has been edited and organized with the compilers' own views and comments interpolated here and there; but, though they may contain many fictional elements, they cannot be said to be works of fiction. Jāḥiẓ makes extensive use of the *isnād*, so giving the impression that he too is mostly drawing upon other sources. Once the presence of parody is recognized, however, it becomes clear that Jāḥiẓ has contrived his own material. It is then no longer necessary to ponder – as some modern scholars have done – the exact identity of the circle of misers who frequent the mosque in order to share stories of parsimonious conduct, for they are conjured up by Jāḥiẓ to serve as a parodized image of *muḥaddith*s pooling recipes for pious conduct. As Beaumont notes: 'Parody is necessarily fictive, since it has as its basis the transformation of some anterior text by the comic text.' Moreover, from comments such as that of Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) that Jāḥiẓ was 'one of the greatest liars in the community . . . and one of the greatest promoters of falsehood' we can assume that the fictional character of a number of Jāḥiẓ's works was recognized by his contemporaries.[66]

(c) Pseudo-Iṣfahānī's 'Book of Strangers'

The subject matter of *Kitāb al-Ghurabā'*, which has been attributed to Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. *c.*363/972), author of the monumental literary history, the 'Great Book of Songs' (*Kitāb al-Aghānī*), but which is probably by an unknown, slightly later author, is stated clearly at the outset:

> I have gathered in this book what I have heard or seen for myself, or learnt in other ways, about those who composed poetry when they found them-selves strangers, who gave expression to the grief they felt and who revealed their complaints of love to every person driven from his home and far removed from his friends by writing of their sufferings on walls and disclosing their secrets in every tavern and garden.[67]

His 'strangers' are those absent from home and loved ones, often constrained to be so by fate and circumstance. Their common situation creates a bond, and these strangers are apt to share their feelings by committing them to verse and inscribing them on whatever material is to hand, chiefly stones and walls. The theme of these graffiti is the pain of separation and the transience of pleasure and fortune. There is therefore a tone of melancholy and nostalgia, occasionally of misery and despair. Yet the book is saved from being sombre reading by the streak of irreverence that runs through it. For though these exiles know that it is 'contentment that is wealth' (graffito no.7), and that one should 'leave the world to one' enemies' (no.30), they are nevertheless aware that 'the lapses of strangers are forgivable . . . because they are far from their homes' (no.62), and that 'one will not experience anything sweeter or more delightful than behaving badly' (no.58). They thus frequently transgress convention, engaging in love affairs and drinking bouts with an abandon that comes from feeling free of society's fetters.

The book contains seventy-six episodes; all bar one contain a graffito, most introduced by a story about the inscriber and the situation that impelled him to inscribe it. The question arises whether one should consider this text an anthology, as one scholar has called it, or one man's creation, a 'work of fiction', in the words of another.[68] To put it differently, did pseudo-Iṣfahānī merely collect and edit these stories with their accompanying graffiti, or did he have a hand in their composition? Was he a compiler or an author? Here again, one should not be influenced by the frequent appearance of *isnād*s, since they are as often as not used merely for realistic effect. On the other hand, the likely fictionality of some of the episodes should not mislead, for pseudo-Iṣfahānī could have transcribed fictitious accounts from his informants in good faith.

As regards content, it should be noted that pseudo-Iṣfahānī draws not only upon the hearsay of others, but also upon his own experiences. In the introduction, he makes it clear that he himself is or has been in the position of a stranger:

> The conflict in my heart and the anguish in my breast cause me to behave in this fashion . . . my situation calls for imitation of them [the 'Strangers' of his title] and the injustice of Time leads me to adorn myself with their badge.

He himself plays a part in 14 of the book's 76 episodes, and in 4 cases is himself responsible for the graffito: a beautiful girl in a monastery near Baghdad and a poem written about her arouse in him 'old sadness and grief' (no.13); at an inn in Basra, he scribbles verses on a wall bemoaning that 'Time has reduced me to a state in which I cannot offer hospitality to guests' (no.15); while 'on some business' in Bā Jisra, a siege obliges him to stay, and he complains in verse on the wall of the mosque that 'my soul is anxious and weary, my eye tearful from lengthy weeping' (no.55); and once, in his youth, he penned a poem for his male lover 'on the wall we used to lean against', and was severely reproached by his partner for risking their exposure (no.64). Though no exact details of his plight, business interests or love life are given, the author is nevertheless, by medieval standards, remarkably revealing of his feelings and of himself (the trawling of one's own

self and experiences for inspiration is of course a major characteristic of modern fiction).[69]

Moving on to form, one notices that there are a number of ingredients which serve to knit the episodes together and which might more plausibly be the result of the deliberate design of an author than of the chance findings of a compiler. A good example is the destructive element of Time (*al-zaman, al-dahr, al-ayyām*), which dogs these 'strangers' mercilessly and runs like a refrain through the whole work. The author speaks at the outset of 'the injustice of Time' with regard to his own situation, and later bewails that 'Time has reduced me to a state in which I cannot offer hospitality to guests' (see earlier), a condition he shares with other strangers such as 'the calamities of Time (says one) have driven me from place to place' (no.8); another describes himself as 'chased by Time from every country' (no.10), and there are numerous other 'autobiographical' references to Time, as well as generalizations. Thus of man it is noted that 'Time will hurt him so much' (no.2), and as against the transience of man's achievements, it is accepted that only 'the kingship of the Lord of the Throne will endure forever' (no.34), 'nothing endures against Time except God' (no.52), 'the reverses of Fate will destroy [earthly delights]' (no.3), 'buildings were erected for Time to destroy' (no.26); and 'if anything could survive the calamities of Time, his [the Buyid prince Mu'izz al-Dawla's] kingship of all things would survive,[70] but everything is destined to change and reach an end' (no.67).

What are the probable purpose of the book, and the effect it has upon the reader or listener? Most obviously, the 'Book of Strangers' does not adopt an academic format for there is no attempt to explore a thesis, nor to expatiate on the pros and cons of the subject, nor to amass proof-texts from the Qur'ān, the sayings of the Prophet, poetry and wisdom literature. Rather, the work focuses on the emotions, on the pangs felt by those away from home for their nearest and dearest. A visitor to the lighthouse of Alexandria bemoans that 'misfortunes have separated me from those that I love' (no.8); another stranger laments that he is 'far removed from home, forever distanced from the loved ones who do not know my plight' (no.7). 'My heart is still with you and dwells among you,' writes a Damascene in the remote Iraqi village of Darzījān (no.40) and a Baghdadi languishing in Nishapur writes: 'I wish I knew what has happened to my family and children since I left, and to my beloved friend who wept when I bade him farewell' (no.44). Pesudo-Iṣfahānī paints a background of the physical sufferings of strangers – 'my body is wretched with discomfort' (no.51); 'I walked barefoot to this place until my feet were bleeding' (no.59) – and of the perils which attend frequent travel – shipwreck (nos.18, 69, 71), brigandage (nos.38, 42, 55), and the like. Evidently, then, he seeks to call forth an emotional response, and to offer a testimony, to the misery of strangers, which he himself has experienced and with which he empathizes. It was perhaps with a view to consoling himself that he decided to set the experiences down in writing. The effect upon the reader is, if not strongly moving, at least touching, and often amusing.

It would seem preferable, then, to regard pseudo-Iṣfahānī as an author rather than as a compiler. Very possibly he drew upon materials collected during his

wanderings, but recast them with a free hand. His originality lies in having brought together, and connected with an autobiographical thread, two very common literary *topoi* – the happening upon an inscription of relevance to one's own situation, and the theme of nostalgia and homesickness[71] – that would seem never to have been connected before.

Conclusion

For presenting *Robinson Crusoe* (1704) as 'a just History of Fact', Daniel Defoe was criticized by many for deceiving people, and was even branded by some, most famously Charles Gildon, as a liar. In the preface to *Serious Reflections on Robinson Crusoe* (1720), Defoe rejected the claims of the 'ill-tempered Part of the World…that…the Story is feign'd', and countered that 'the Story, though Allegorical, is also Historical'. Note that he does not simply insist that his composition was 'true', but rather that it contained 'Matters of real History' even as he admitted that it was a 'Fable'.[72] Other writers of eighteenth-century fiction show a similar reluctance to have their fictions definitively separated from history. They did not seem to conceive of their work, as we would now, as a genre fully distinct from that of history; and indeed their 'novels' often simulated forms of history writing – biography (Fielding's *Tom Jones*), autobiography (Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*), family history (Richardson's *Clarissa* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*) – and imitated its techniques, notably the description of actual events, such as the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 in *Tom Jones* and the war of the Spanish Succession in *Tristram Shandy*, and the deployment of documents and eyewitness testimony.

It seems to me that, like Defoe's critics, we may be unjustified in drawing too rigid a line between 'Fables and Legends' (the heading of a chapter in the '*Abbasid Belles-Lettres* volume of the *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*) and 'History' (the title of a chapter in the Religion, Science and Learning volume). As Defoe said of one of his own 'Fables':

> when I go about a Work in which I must tell a great many Stories, which may in their own nature seem incredible and in which I must expect a great part of Mankind will question the Sincerity of the Relator, I do not do it without a particular sense upon me of the proper Duty of a Historian.
>
> (*The Storm*, 1704)

The Muslim author of a Conquest epic or a Yemeni saga, even if not quite expressing himself thus, would also most likely have felt that the probabilistic truths of his own work added an essential dimension to the understanding of his community's history, even if not so verifiably referential as those set down by a Ṭabarī or a Balādhurī. Moreover, 'serious' histories are too much permeated by legendary and supernatural material to permit such a rigorous division.

It also appears to me that we have been too hasty in damning many Muslim historians as mere compilers. Such a label has the unfortunate consequence that individual works are not evaluated as a unity but simply ransacked for factual

needles in the narrative haystack. Yet some creative effort is always involved in compilation, as anyone will know who has attempted to collate a large body of heterogeneous information, and as Hilary Kilpatrick has now demonstrated extensively in the case of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's 'Great Book of Songs'.[73] Transmission and authorship should also therefore, like history and fiction, be viewed as lying on a continuum, with slavish copyists at one extreme and surrealist poets at the other, but very few being outright plagiarists or totally original. Many an Islamicist would still object that writers like Ṭabarī and Balādhurī are simply copying earlier sources and themselves had no hand in the creation of the texts that they pass on, as is evident from the internally contradictory nature of many of these texts and their lack of any overall ideological consistency. All this is true, and for that reason such writers should be situated at the transmission end of the spectrum; but this does not mean that they contributed nothing. The world history of Ibn Kathīr, for example, which dates from the 770s/1370s, is for the most part a faithful rendering of earlier accounts; yet he still makes his own stance very clear. He expands the section on the Life of Muḥammad to almost a quarter of the whole text (it occupies less than a twentieth of the world history of Ibn al-Athīr, d. 630/1233), and he appends a special part devoted to the trials and tribulations attending the last days of the world which is of markedly admonitory tone. Though apparently citing conflicting traditions impartially, he lets his own view be known with a laconic 'this is very unusual', or by noting that this report is unique and that widespread, or by pointing to the opinion of the Qur'ān or of earlier authorities on the matter. In short, his own personality peeps through the façade of self-effacement, and his cultural milieu is easily discerned[75] (he wrote at a time when *ḥadīth*-based history was gaining ascendancy over the more *adab*-based).

Most of the issues outlined earlier had their origin in the study of early Islamic history and in debates about the reliability of the Arabic sources. These debates have begun to influence Arabic literary historians, though not all are convinced that 'historical' texts fall within their domain, while many historians remain obsessed with ascertaining how the past intrinsically was, rather than how it was represented. Traditionally and stereotypically, this has been the state of affairs, and both historians and literary historians have largely ignored the perspectives that might be afforded by theory drawn from other fields. Nevertheless, the barriers are beginning to be broken down: witness the influence of such works as Wolfgang Iser's *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre* (1991, English translation 1993), and the recent appearance of volumes such as those edited by Stefan Leder (*Story-telling in The Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature*, 1998) and Harald Motzki (*The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of The Sources*, 1999), Tayeb El-Hibri's *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and The Narrative of The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate* (1999) and Michael Cooperson's *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of The Prophets in The Age of al-Maʾmūn* (2000).

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Notes

1 Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, VI, pp. 89–91. In the *Aghānī*, Ḥammād adds only two lines, but in Zubayr's *Dīwān*, Ahlwardt (1870), p. 81, he adds three.
2 For discussion of this anecdote and of the general point, see Stetkevych (1991), pp. 241–56, Jones (1992), pp. 21–5 and Drory (1996), pp. 33–49.
3 For this point, and some exceptions to it, see Drory (1994) and Bonebakker (1992) (a) and (b). For the corresponding debate in poetry, see Ajami (1988).
4 See Chapter 1, text to note 2.
5 Drory (1994), p. 156, citing the medieval anthologist al-Muʿāfā ibn Zakarīyā al-Nahrawānī (d. 390/1000).
6 Modern scholarship has followed medieval scholarship in this, see Ghazi (1957), who observed that most general accounts of Arabic literature pay little attention to imaginative writing, and Chraïbi (1998), who remarks that though the *Thousand and One Nights* have attracted much attention, they are only 'the tip of an iceberg'.
7 White (1978), p. 121. For this paragraph, I have relied particularly upon Zimmermann (1996), chapter 1.
8 ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Ḥabīb, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 145,144, 136–7.
9 Leder and Kilpatrick (1992), pp. 2, 16.
10 Von Grunebaum (1946), pp. 281, 283.
11 Crone (1980), p. 10. In justice to Crone, she was reacting to a theory proposed by Julius Wellhausen, who rightly felt that the 'mere compilers' view was wrong, but incorrectly argued that the early historians were representatives of a unified historical outlook.
12 For references, see Hoyland (1991), pp. 221–2.
13 Lecker (1995), p. 23, note 39, where Ibn Ḥanbal's words are quoted from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071).
14 Lecker (1995), p. 21, again quoting al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī.
15 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, p. 6.
16 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, p. 328 (under *tawba*); Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, III, p. 72.
17 Shāfiʿī, *Risāla*, p. 399 , trans. Khadduri (1961), pp. 251–2.
18 These examples can all be found in Ibn Isḥāq's (*c.*85–151/704–67) *Life of Muḥammad*, trans. Guillaume (1955).
19 The above quotations are taken from Khalidi (1994), pp. 95, 100, 106–7.
20 These quotations are again from Khalidi (1994), pp. 100, 113–14.
21 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kītāb al-Quṣṣāṣ*, ed. and trans. Swartz (1971), paragraphs 3–6. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, II, p. 950, gives an example of a *qāṣṣ* engaging in pure sermonizing.
22 Lewond, *History of Armenia*, chapter 10.
23 Cited by Dutton (1999), pp. 17–18.
24 See Athamina (1992), and the literature cited in note 1 thereof.
25 Cited by Rosenthal (1952), pp. 41, 43–4.
26 See Robinson (2003). Scholarship became increasingly professionalized and institutions did develop in the third/ninth century, but since history was not a subject of higher education, it remained relatively free from control.
27 Cited by Khalidi (1994), p. 174.
28 How he developed the genre is described by Khalidi (1994), p. 174.
29 A recent survey is Touati (2000).
30 Aṣmaʿī, *Ta'rīkh al-ʿArab*, p. 3.
31 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, p. 153.

32 Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, p. 885.
33 Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XXIV, p. 145; see also Kilpatrick (2003), chapter 5.
34 Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, VI, p. 194.
35 References for this paragraph and further discussion are in Landau-Tasseron (1986).
36 References for this paragraph and further discussion are in Beaumont (1996).
37 References for the above passages and further discussion are in Khalidi (1994), pp. 34–9.
38 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, p. 78.
39 For these terms, see Kasis (1983); on the influence of the Qur'anic vision of history, see Humphreys (1989).
40 See Wansbrough (1978) and Rubin (1995). Another transposed literary format is that of annalistic history, see Hoyland (1991).
41 See Khalidi (1994), pp. 49–61.
42 See Donner (1998), Part II.
43 Khalidi (1975), p. 114.
44 Pseudo-Waqidī, *Futūḥ*, p. 112.
45 See Crone (1996).
46 See, for example, El-Hibri (1995).
47 References for this anecdote and further discussion are in Fähndrich (1977).
48 On this *topos*, see Müller (1993).
49 See Hawting (1986), pp. 81–3.
50 References and further discussion are in Leder (1990). The final quotation is from Leder (1992), p. 284. See also Leder (1988).
51 See Noth (1994).
52 References and further discussion are in Mattock (1986).
53 From the differing lengths of extracts quoted from early *akhbārī*s by later compilers, we may infer that many of their accounts were originally longer than those now preserved for us, see Donner (1998), pp. 268–9.
54 On Azdī's sources, see Mourad (2000).
55 Compare similar features in Ibn Zunbul's *Infiṣāl*, see Chapter 1, pp. [11–13] given earlier.
56 References for this passage and further discussion are in Conrad (1987).
57 Paret (1970), pp. 742–3.
58 See Canard (1965) and Lyons (1995), I, *passim*, II, pp. 151–238, III, pp. 301–504.
59 Paret (1930), pp. 151–2. Chraïbi (1998) classifies Arabic narrative literature in general on the basis of language and register ('savante/écrite; moyenne; populaire/orale') rather than content.
60 Jāḥiẓ, *Bukhalā'*, I, p. 17, trans. Serjeant (1997), p. 1.
61 Serjeant (1997), p. xxvi.
62 Jāḥiẓ, *Bukhalā'*, I, p. 63, trans. Serjeant (1997), p. 25.
63 Jāḥiẓ, *Bukhalā'*, I, pp. 143–70, trans. Serjeant (1997), pp. 67–78.
64 Jāḥiẓ, *Bukhalā'*, I, pp. 50–3; further discussion is in Beaumont (1994).
65 See Malti-Douglas (1985).
66 For references to Ibn Qutayba's estimate of Jāḥiẓ, see Chapter 4, note 156.
67 Translations are taken from Crone and Moreh (2000), where full commentary is to be found. Crone and Moreh argue that the attribution to Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī is false, ibid., chapter 4. On the authorship of the work see also Kilpatrick (2004).
68 Kilpatrick (1980); Rosenthal (1997), p. 65.
69 On medieval Arabic autobiographical writing, see Reynolds (ed.) (2001).
70 He reigned in Baghdad 334–56/945–67.
71 See three studies of the theme, by Wadad al-Qadi, Kathrin Müller and Suzanne Enderwitz, in Part I of Neuwirth *et al.* (eds) (1999).
72 For references and further discussion, see Mayer (1997), chapter 1.

73 Kilpatrick (2003).
74 Noted in Hoyland (1999). The same point is made for Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī by
      Kilpatrick (1997).

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