

Islamic Literature Between Theory And Practice

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If literature is the expression in words of human ideas, emotions and beliefs, and if it reflects culture and collective attitudes, is it justifiable to speak of literature belonging to an ideology in the same way as we speak of literature belonging to a nation, a country or a linguistic group? The question that poses itself is whether we can treat literary works that are the product of certain ideological or philosophical influences as more or less distinct cultural entities. It stands to reason that, having so much in common, literary works emanating from a certain collective ideological frame of mind can be grouped together in spite of national, linguistic, cultural, and stylistic differences. So, it would appear that we are perfectly safe in speaking of Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, or even evolutionary, socialist, Marxist, Freudian, or existentialist literature in much the same way as we speak of Arabic, English, American, French, or Malay literature.¹ However, it is to be conceded that, as in the case of literatures of linguistic or national groups, what is meant by each individual term needs to be more defined. Islamic literature is the concern of this paper, and an attempt at a working definition of it will be made later. It is to be noted, moreover, that literary schools belonging to specific ideologies reflect - sometimes consciously/directly and other times unconsciously/

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indirectly - the ideals, values, and attitudes of their respective mother ideologies and communities in works of art like poetry, drama, and the novel.

For a conception of Islamic literature and a better understanding of its features and characteristics, one has naturally to go first to the Qur'an, both as a source of legislation/code formulator and a masterpiece of literary excellence. The Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) is the second place to look into, again as a source of legislation and as a practical application of Islamic values in literature. Moreover, it is in the plan of this paper to look at the attitudes and literary practices of some chosen Companions of the Prophet (SAAS) and at some modern 'Islamic' authors and works to have a comparative look at the Islamic conception of literature and how this conception was put into practice in the early years of Islam and how it is being practised in the present day.

Islamic Conception of Literature

Islam describes itself more as a comprehensive way of life - for individuals as well as communities - than as a religion in the narrow sense of a system of worship and ritualistic practice. The teachings of Islam have specific instructions and recommendations for every aspect of life in an announced attempt at making man's life better, richer, and happier, both in this world and in the hereafter. Moreover, it is Islam's implied aim not only to form the righteous individual and the virtuous community and state but also to build a civilization on the pillars of Islamic beliefs and codes of behaviour.²

Following from this, it was only natural for literature to come, in one way or another, under the influence of the Islamic doctrine and way of life in Muslim communities. This is particularly so in view of the pronounced interest of Islam in literature and the important role that literature or literary practice has played in the propagation of Islam from the very beginning.

It is interesting and enlightening here to notice that the very first word of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet (SAAS) was an instruction to read, signifying the important role reading and knowledge were going to play in the new religion. In the fourth verse of the same surah we read that it was God who taught man with the 'pen'.³ The 'pen' is again held in very high esteem as the subject of an oath made by God in the first verse of the sixty-eighth surah (which, significantly, carries the title *al-Qalam*, 'The Pen').

In fact, the Qur'an, Islam's greatest miracle, has strong and obvious literary undertones. It was through the highly impressive eloquence of the Qur'an that many of the early Muslims in Arabia came to embrace Islam. They were a people of great linguistic abilities, and eloquence played a great role in their lives. They felt that the Qur'an was like nothing they had heard or said before. It put forward the claim that it was not the word of a human being but of God, and this claim was substantiated mainly by the highly sophisticated use of language, the like of which no one of the ancient Arabs could produce. This makes it clear that the Qur'an depended to a great extent on linguistic and literary aspects in propagating and supporting Islam in the early days. Moreover, this aspect of the miracle of the Qur'an still holds strongly today.

Scholarly volumes have been written and continue to be written about the Qur'anic use of language and its rhetorical inimitability (*i'jaz*).⁴ However, two aspects of the Qur'anic use of language will be considered sufficient here to exemplify the literary aspect of the Qur'an touching on our topic. In innumerable instances, the Qur'an uses highly imaginative figurative language to drive home its points. In its description of the state of mind of the hypocrites who profess Islam and hide disbelief, for example, the Qur'an gives two graphic pictures. The first depicts those who have lit a fire in order to see around (signifying the light of faith they once had or professed to have had), but the fire was soon extinguished leaving them in total darkness. The other figure is that of total darkness broken by intermittent thunder and lightning (perhaps again signifying the light of the message they professed to hold), which instead of giving them light gives them fear and makes them put their fingers in their ears for fear of death.⁵ To show the status of believers, the Qur'an gives the illustration of a healthy plant that is the pride of the farmer and provokes the envy and anger of his enemies. The Qur'an states that this is the example for believers given in the Bible as well.⁶

Many literary critics would frown upon the idea of discussing the content and the form of a literary work separately. The Qur'an is seen to provide a perfect example of the match between form and content. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that the Qur'an gives 'form' due attention. A major point that should be made here is the complete and balanced musical effect of many of the Qur'anic verses and passages. Bearing in mind that the Qur'an is not poetry (as is stated explicitly in many verses), it is to be noticed that the Qur'an goes to some lengths to retain the built-in musical effect of many of its passages. It is obviously and naturally impossible to discern or discuss this trait in a translation, but the reader of the Qur'an can feel that in order to retain the on-going musical 'rhyme'

in certain verses, the Qur'an sometimes makes a break at the end of the verse even though the meaning is not yet complete, and the meaning would be completed in the next verse; a practice that resembles 'enjambment' in poetry. This is done as it appears, to keep the musical structure of the passage. An example will illustrate this point further.

ويقول الذين امنوا لولا نزلت سورة فاذا أنزلت سورة
 محكمة وذكر فيها القتال رأيت الذين في قلوبهم مرض
 ينظرون إليك نظر المغشي عليه من الموت فأولى لهم*
 طاعة وقول معروف فإذا عزم الأمر فلو صدقوا الله
 خيراً لهم.

In reciting these two verses,⁷ the reader will notice that the break at the end of the first quoted verse at the subject *أولى لهم* leaves the meaning of the verse incomplete in a sense and to be made complete in the predicate in the first four words of the following verse, *طاعة*. It is clear that the break was made at that specific place to retain the musical effect of the dominant 'rhyme' of the passage.

Furthermore, the Qur'an at other times cites common words ending in a peculiar form not normally used in standard Arabic solely to keep the smooth flowing and balanced prevalent 'rhyme'. Such words used in a passage in *Surah al-Haqqah*, for example, are *حسابيه، كتابيه، سلطانيه* and *ماليه*. We notice that to the end of the ordinary spelling of each word is added the sound *يه* to retain the musical effect.⁸ This shows clearly that the Qur'an pays particular attention to 'form' as well as 'content', bringing both in unison to produce a single effect contributing greatly to its literary aspect, which has charmed readers for centuries.

If the Qur'an itself is, in one of its facets, a literary miracle, as we have seen, it is no wonder that Islam takes great care of literature and that literature has played an important role in Islamic practice. But the kind of literature endorsed and encouraged by Islam is of course that which furthers and upholds its values. It must carry the values seen by the mother ideology proper for man's life. It must reflect the concept of monotheism (worshipping God alone with no partners, the basic tenet of Islam), belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (SAAS), and the values of justice, truth, and honesty as perceived in Islam. It must furthermore stand up to wrong doing, oppression, and perversion and help the individual fight his base

tendencies which are not in line with Islam's values, to give but a few examples.

In his article 'Characteristics of Islamic Art', R. Ettinghausen speaks of four main characteristics that can be found to apply to literature as well as to other branches of art: fear of the Day of Judgement, belief in the human nature of Muhammad (SAAS), submission to God, and centrality of the Qur'an.⁹

Islamic Literature Defined

At this stage we should try to define what this paper means by Islamic literature. We might as well first have a look at definitions given by other students of the topic. J. Kritzeck uses 'Islam' in the loose sense of the 'vast community of Moslems, the lands in which they live, their social and political institutions, and indeed the whole of their cultures'. To him, the term 'Islamic literature' denotes literature written by people belonging to Muslim nations.¹⁰ 'Imad al-Din Khalil attempts a definition of Islamic literature saying that it is 'An aesthetic impressive expression in words of the Islamic concept of existence'.¹¹ Another interesting view is put forward by Muhammad Qutb, who is of the opinion that under the title of Islamic literature should go not only works by Muslim writers but also works by non-Muslim writers that express views in line with Islamic values. He cites works by the Indian R. Tagore and the Irishman J. M. Synge as examples.¹² For working purposes, this paper will restrict consideration to literary works expressing Islamic ideals by Muslim (mainly Arabic) writers.

It should not be understood from what has been said, however, that Islamic literature should be another form of preaching - far from it. According to theorists of Islamic literature, it is essential that it not fall into the 'trap' of preaching and direct, prosaic rhetoric.¹³ Besides being truthful to the Islamic view, practice, and way of life, a literary work, they argue, should fulfil aesthetic conditions required in literature or it will be classed as preaching rather than artistic writing. More of the aesthetic aspects and commitment in Islamic literature will be considered later, in the discussion of the Islamic view of poetry.

Types of Literature

Before we move on to our next point, it is worth our while here to notice that considerable interest in the topic of Islamic literature has been

shown lately. This has taken three main forms. A great increase is to be witnessed lately in the number of literary works that can be classified as Islamic in the different arts of poetry, drama, the novel, the short story, and the essay in Arabic and in other languages of the Islamic world. These works reflect the growing interest in the affairs of the Muslim ummah and the problems facing it in the modern world. References to some such works will be made in due course. Interest in Islamic literature is further reflected in the publishing of books purporting to delineate a 'theory' for Islamic literature. Lastly, the increasing interest in Islamic literature shows in the holding of international seminars and conferences devoted to its cause. Three such seminars are: the International Seminar for Islamic Literature held in Lucknow, India, 17-19 April 1981; the Seminar of Discourse on Islamic Literature held in Madinah, 5-9 Rajab 1402H and the meeting in Makkah on 10 March 1982 to establish the Islamic Institution for Publication, Distribution, and Art Productions.¹⁴

Poetry

Turning to the Islamic conception of poetry we notice first that the Qur'an vehemently denies the 'charge' levelled against Muhammad (SAAS) that he was a poet and that the revelation was a kind of poetry. The disbelievers in Makkah, in an attempt to evade the necessity of faith, said that the revelation was mere poetry, and the Qur'an records this in several verses.¹⁵

This 'accusation', argues Jaber Qumeiha, carries an implicit recognition on the side of the disbelievers of the greatness of the Qur'an as a literary miracle, as they grouped it with their highest achievement and pride.¹⁶ However, the Qur'an refutes their accusation, stating categorically that the Prophet (SAAS) was not and could never be a poet and that revelation is something totally different from poetry in source and nature.¹⁷

This brings into discussion the subject of the source of poetic inspiration. M.A. Hamdun makes the remark that in Greco-Roman culture, and also in Chinese culture for that matter, there was no distinction made between divine and poetic inspiration, as the latter's source was held to be 'divine' muses. In pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, the Arabs thought of the *jinn* as the source of poetic inspiration. This changed later to a belief in the human source of poetic inspiration.¹⁸ This is in line with the Islamic view, which distinguishes between the infallible, divine source of revelation and the human source of poetry, which is open to 'good' as well as 'evil' influences.

The attitude of the Qur'an, however, is to be sought mainly in the last four verses of the twenty-sixth surah, interestingly and significantly entitled *al-Shu'ara'*, 'Poets'. The verses begin with a general statement about poets being followed by the misguided. It depicts poets as wanderers in a valley transgressing the limits of reason, common sense, and belief in what they say and saying what they do not mean or not practising what they say. Historians and scholars of the Qur'an record that Muslim poets, especially 'Abdullah Ibn Rawaha, were very sad upon hearing those verses. But soon new verses were revealed with exceptions regarding the poets mentioned in the earlier verses. To be excluded from criticism, stated the new verses, are poets who believe, do good, and remember God. This set the Muslim poets at ease.¹⁹ So it is clear that the Qur'an does not consider poetry inadmissible as did Plato in his *Republic*, for example. Rather, it distinguishes between two types of poetry: the righteous which serves the altruistic causes of man and the stray which misleads and harms man's chances for a better life. A classical Muslim scholar, Abu Hilal al-'Askari (of the tenth century) elaborates on this point saying: 'the fact that God the glorious and the magnificent made exceptions in the question of poets indicates that the blameworthy in poetry is that which avoids the right to go to the wrong and the just to go to the unjust'.²⁰ The great Muslim scholar, al-Ghazali (of the twelfth century) arrives at the same conclusion in his statement that 'Poetry is but a form of speech: the good of it is acceptable, and the evil abominable Reciting and composing poetry is not to be considered forbidden [*haram*] if it does not include abomination'.²¹

Concerning the Prophet's attitude toward poetry, we notice that he encouraged poetry that was in line with Islamic ideals. He even appreciated pre-Islamic poetry that expressed views not in contradiction with Islamic precepts. The Prophet (SAAS) is reported to have listened to his Companions on several occasions reciting lines from pre-Islamic poetry at length and to have smiled at that and at some of the lines.²² Moreover, he is reported to have appreciated individual pre-Islamic poets like 'Antara Ibn Shaddad and Umaiyyah ibn Abi al-Salt.²³

Much as he appreciated poetry, the Prophet (SAAS) could not manage to recite a single line of poetry. It is reported that he tried on at least three occasions to recite specific lines of poetry by Labid, Tarafa, and al-'Abbas Ibn Mirdas but could on none of the occasions get the lines right, in spite of corrections brought to his attention by those who were present.²⁴ The Prophet's (SAAS) appreciation of poetry further shows in his statement, 'In some poetry is wisdom', and in his saying commenting on the battle of words raging between the Muslim and disbelieving poets in the early days of the Islamic state, 'Poetry is more effective on enemies than arrows are'.²⁵

A brief account of the battle of poetry just mentioned would be both interesting and illuminating here. Besides conventional weapons known in the day, the disbelievers used poetry in the war they were waging against Islam. Their poets composed poems abusing the Prophet (SAAS), the Muslims, and their religion. These were very painful weapons that made the Muslims feel down, as they were not prepared for this kind of war. Several poets offered to fight back, but the Prophet (SAAS) chose Hassan Ibn Thabit to be the mouthpiece of the Muslims in the battle and commanded him to retaliate saying, 'answer them for us. O God, support him with the holy spirit',²⁶ He even had a pulpit made for Hassan and put in the mosque.

After the capture of the city of Makkah by the Muslims, poets began to compose poems to panegyryze the Prophet (SAAS) and seek his forgiveness. The most distinguished of these was Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr, the son of one of the most celebrated poets in pre-Islamic times and one who had refused earlier to accept the call of Islam. He came to the Prophet (SAAS) in the mosque and recited his famous ode beginning with

بانت سعاد قلبي اليوم متبول متيم إثرها لم يفد مكبول

Beatrix [Su'ad] hath departed. Therefore was my heart that day distracted, raving after her, irredeemably enchained.²⁷

The Prophet (SAAS) was so happy with the coming of Ka'b into the Muslim community and with his poem that he gave him his striped Yemeni cloak or mantle (*burdah*) in reward, and the poem was since called *Qasidat al-Burdah*, 'The Poem of the Cloak'. So we can safely deduce that the Prophet (SAAS) not only appreciated but also encouraged poetry. However, he made a distinction between reasonable poetry (which apparently included love poetry) and 'wandering' poetry, and he accepted reasonable poetry even from non-Muslim poets.

This was also the attitude of the Prophet's Companions, as can be seen most clearly in the dealings of the second caliph, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, with poets. He is reported to have said, 'recite poetry, it guides to manners'.²⁸ However, he was harsh on stray poets. There is a well-known and oft-quoted incident in which 'Umar punished the famous poet al-Hutay'ah for abusing some people in his poetry. Moreover, 'Umar's conception of poetry shows in the conversation he held with the sons of Harim Ibn Sinan, a well-known and generous chieftain in pre-Islamic times,

whose influence and generosity were instrumental in bringing to an end one of the fiercest and bloodiest battles in pre-Islamic times. The famous poet Zuhayr Ibn Abi Sulma composed a lengthy ode eulogizing Harim and his feat. 'Umar met Harim's sons and asked them to recite Zuhayr's verses on their father. When they had done, he remarked, 'he said good things about you'. Harim's sons said, 'and we gave him a good reward for it'. On this 'Umar commented, 'What you have given him has gone, but what he gave you still lives'.²⁹ This shows how 'Umar, as a representative of a prevalent trend of thought in the community, felt about poetry. He was of the attitude that good poetry is to be accepted and that it survives material reward.

Going against this appreciative trend was, paradoxically, one of the greatest poets of pre-Islamic times, Labid Ibn Rabi'ah, the composer of one of the seven *mu'allaqat* (the major poems hung on the walls of the Ka'ba). When he was asked to recite poetry after converting to Islam, he said, 'God has given me better than verse: the surahs of the Qur'an'.³⁰ It is to be noticed, however, that this does not represent a general trend but a personal preference on the part of the poet.

An important point that merits some discussion here is the statement attributed to al-Asma'i (an eighth-century philologist and critic) that poetry achieves high levels of eloquence only in matters of hatred, self-glory, exaggeration, and enmity; that in Islam it is restrained and cannot take free reign in expression; and that, following this, poetry had gone soft in Islam. Al-Asma'i makes a specific remark saying that poetry flourished in adversity and that Hassan Ibn Thabit's poetry used to be strong before Islam, but when Islam came its strength waned.³¹ This view was taken over by several literary historians and critics. In an attempt at explaining the alleged softness of poetry in Islam, W. A. Clouston says that 'During most part of the first century after the rise of Islam, the successors of Muhammad (SAAS) were too much engrossed in extending their dominions to bestow any patronage on science or literature'.³² A modern Muslim author, M.H. Braighish, accepts al-Asma'i's argument but explains it in a totally different manner. He asserts that the weakness of poetry in the early days of Islam is due largely to the fact that poets clung to old forms of expression and old images and did not adjust their ways to the spirit of the new religion which, he argues, needed new forms to express new ideas and new relationships.³³

Nevertheless, there have been scholars who did not accept the argument of the weakness of poetry in Islam. The prominent Muslim historian, Ibn Khaldun, asserts that the Muslim poets' ways and styles were polished by their contact with the eloquence and the rich style of the Qur'an and thus achieved a higher standard of eloquence than that of their pre-Islamic

counterparts.³⁴ Usamah Yusuf Shehab, a modern Islamic critic, goes to great lengths to refute al-Asma'i's argument and arrives at the conclusion that in Islam poetry did not go soft. On the contrary, it grew stronger but it took another direction and acquired a different nature.³⁵

The problem concerns not only early Islamic poetry but has far-reaching ramifications and touches on the very relationship between Islam and poetry. It is to be noticed that poetry thrives mainly on contradictions, feelings of internal tension, deprivation, and unease. A person who is satisfied with life, has nothing to complain of, and feels at ease with the universe is most likely to make a poor poet, if he makes one at all. Islam aims at instilling a spirit of conciliation between man and the universe by teaching surrender to God's will and acceptance of fate with feelings of satisfaction and by making man feel a meaningful part of life within proper, set limits. The achievement of this aim is likely to eradicate internal strife, existential anxiety, and tensions, thus drying many of the sources of exquisite poetry.³⁶

However, if Islam dries these painful sources of literary creativity, it opens new paths for literary achievement. A Muslim poet has virgin fields in expressing his love for God, the Prophet (SAAS), fellow Muslims, and humanity and in struggling to establish Islam in himself and on earth. Khalil sees that Islam has removed sources of negative tension and anxiety and replaced them with new sources of positive creative tension.³⁷

A point that has raised some controversy in Western literature and literary criticism is the relation between art, beauty, and truth. To put it crudely, should art serve an altruistic cause or should it be an end in itself? This paper cannot aim at presenting different views on the matter - partly due to the sheer volume of the debate from different quarters and partly due to the fact that it has little bearing on our topic, as we shall see.³⁸

One can say that the aesthetic problem is solved in the theory of Islamic literature by virtue of its very definition. Being an offshoot of a certain ideology, Islamic literature has to serve the aims and values of that ideology. But the problem cannot be dismissed out of hand. The line between literature and preaching should be drawn very clearly, and the aesthetic component should be delineated in a plausible theory of Islamic literature.

'Imad al-Din Khalil quotes a *hadith* of the Prophet (SAAS) saying, 'God is beautiful [and] he loves beauty'. In commenting on the *hadith*, Khalil notices that beauty is to be found everywhere in God's creation, both in nature and in human beings. The Qur'an draws man's attention to beauty in innumerable verses. Khalil further remarks that God who has created beautiful things has provided man with receptors to appreciate and be impressed by beauty: the senses, the mind, and the emotive aspect of man. However, Khalil makes the fine distinction that beauty according to Islam

is attached to its system of values and is not an end in itself and that man should be able to differentiate between real, valuable beauty and deceptive, superficial beauty that is likely to throw into imbalance man's faculties and hinder his efforts for a better life.³⁹ Islamic aesthetic cannot, for example, endorse the view that beauty is the 'wonderful thing detached from benefit or utility'.⁴⁰

If Islam shows this great interest in beauty, it is but natural for a theory of Islamic literature to study the aesthetic aspect of art. Naturally, this paper cannot do full justice to the subject, which merits an independent treatise. However, on a purely theoretical level, we can notice that works of poetry or prose that can be classed as Islamic pay great attention to beautiful forms and not only to content. Islamic literature cares for real, truthful beauty but not for its own pure sake or for marketing purposes. This is not to say that pleasure is an illegal aim to be sought in Islam. Najib al-Kilani quotes a *hadith* of the Prophet (SAAS) saying, 'relieve your souls [of their worries by amusement] every now and then, because souls may lose sight [of reason] if they are overworked'. On this, al-Kilani comments that Islamic literature, in line with the Prophetic recommendation, seeks genuine and shuns superficial and harmful pleasure.⁴¹ He argues, moreover, that 'It is a great danger for Islamic literature to sacrifice aesthetic values for the sake of content'.⁴²

We can then safely deduce that Islamic literature purports to work in a dual function: presenting beauty and pleasure and at the same time relaying a message about life and the universe in line with the Islamic view. In this light we can see that 'art for art's sake' is alien to Islamic literature. Beauty and art must form an integral part of the system and should not be ends in themselves.⁴³

A related point is the question of commitment. That is, to what should a Muslim artist give his primary inner felt allegiance: ideology or art? Admittedly, the question is not an easy one. On the one hand there is the danger of falling into direct preaching and on the other of wandering in the valleys of either empty beauty and pompous rhetoric with little or no message or of low life found by Islam to be pernicious to man's natural goals in the world. Naturally, then, Islamic literature is primarily committed to the Islamic view and what it sees as conducive to man's higher interests. Al-Khunain sees that

the source of Islamic commitment in poetry comes forth from the religion of Islam and its doctrine and from the Muslim poet's desire to attain the pleasure of his Creator ... How he moulds his poem is of little consequence as long as the content is in line with truth, or at least does not contain obscenities. His effort towards perfection in his poetry, moreover, is an Islamic duty.⁴⁴

While followers of the Parnassian school struggle to 'liberate' art and poetry from altruistic causes, we see that the Islamic theory of literature ties it to Islam's value system.

This view finds partial expression in a line of poetry by Hassan Ibn Thabit:

وإن أشعر بيت أنت قائله بيت يقال إذا أنشدته صدقا

The greatest[most poetic] line of verse you can recite is one about which people would say, 'You have told the truth'.

The pillars of Islamic commitment in poetry are to be found in the verses of *Surah al-Shu'ara'* referred to previously: believing in God, doing good, and remembering God in everything one says or does.

Islamic literary theorists argue that after excluding all fields of forbidden activities and topics likely to excite base instincts in a forbidden manner, there is still wide room for literature to move in like expression of Muslim brotherhood, human concerns, love in all its permitted forms, and sympathy.⁴⁵

From a survey of Arabic literature one cannot have the impression that it all serves Islamic views. Much of Arabic poetry written after the times of the first four caliphs did not express Islamic ideals and cannot be considered Islamic according to the definition adopted in this paper. However, the Islamic tradition was never broken, and it found expression in Arabic in the works of such poets as Abu al-'Atahiyah and al-Sharif al-Radi, in some works of Abu Tammam and Ibn al-Rumi, and in the later poems of Abu Nuwas; in Persian in the works of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (the sufi writer of *al-Mathnawi*) and 'Umar al-Khayyam (the author of *al-Ruba'iyyat*); and in Turkish in the works of Yunus Emre, to mention only a few examples.

In modern times, with the revival of the Islamic spirit, there has been an increasing interest in 'Islamic' poetry and an increase in the number of 'Islamic' poets in various languages. In Arabic we may mention Ahmad Shauqi, who was awarded the title of 'Prince of the Poets' in a gathering of poets from all over the Arab world. We can notice that a sense of strong and passionate Islamic interest permeates many of his poems. Of the several classic odes he devoted to Islamic topics, we may mention *wulida al Huda* ('Guidance is Born') on the occasion of the birthday of the Prophet (SAAS) and *Nahj al-Burdah* ('In the Method of al-Burdah'). 'Umar Baha' al-Amiri, is a well known Syrian poet whose most widely read group of poems is *Ma'a al-Lah* ('With God'). Another Syrian poet who can be mentioned

here is Muhammad Munla Ghuzayil, author of *al-Subh al-Qarib* ('The Near Morning'), 'Abd al-Rahman al-'Ashmawi is a Saudi poet whose works include *Ila Ummati* ('To My Nation') and *Qasa'id ila Lubnan* ('Poems to Lebanon'). Another widely-read modern Islamic poet is the Iraqi Walid al-A'zami, whose groups like *al-Shu'a'* ('The Beam') and *al-zawabi'* ('The Tornadoes') deal with problems facing the ummah in the present. From among other Islamic poets we may mention Hali and Hafeez in Urdu, Necip Fazil and Erdem Bayazit in Turkish, and Kemala and A.S. Amin in Malay.

However, perhaps the most internationally known Islamic poet of the twentieth century is Muhammad Iqbal, who wrote in Persian and Urdu and expressed in such poems as 'Secret of the Soul', 'The Message of the Orient' and 'The Caravan Bell', a deep sense of belonging and commitment to Islam and the Muslim ummah. He deeply influenced Islamic poets all over the world, and Najib al-Kilani, for one, admits being greatly moved and influenced by Iqbal in his view of poetry.⁴⁶

A survey of the poetry of these and other poets would show a great interest in the affairs of Muslims in the world of today, a great pride in Islamic culture, a deep sense of sadness and frustration at the current state of the Muslim ummah, and a hope that salvation will come about and that an upward trend will save Muslims from the state of backwardness from which they are suffering.

A question that has given rise to a great deal of debate in literary quarters, especially in Arabic-speaking countries, concerns the 'form' of poetry. Traditional literary theorists and poets have preferred to stick to the classical form (*'amud*) of Arabic poetry, with a single rhythm and rhyme throughout the poem. The more 'liberal' among Islamic poets prefer to write in a more flexible style, with multiple rhymes and lines of varied rhythm and length, which was introduced into Arabic poetry after contact with modern European verse forms. However, most Islamic literature theorists seem to be of the opinion that freedom of choice should be left to individual poets to write in whichever fashion they deem fit for their subjects. Old forms are not sacred and can be changed if other, more suitable, forms are found, so long as poets keep to accepted norms in subject matter.⁴⁷

Prose

In prose, we discern three main prose arts in early Islamic days: oratory, letter writing, and narration. These arts thrived then on account of great demand for them in propagating the message of the religion and establishing the state. Speech making, for example, was a must in several religious

practices, like the Friday and 'Id congregations. Moreover, it was used on many other occasions like pilgrimage, the sending of military campaigns, and inauguration of new caliphs. The Prophet (SAAS) was an eloquent orator and used speeches extensively on various occasions to deliver his message.⁴⁸ The first four caliphs were eloquent orators, too, who used speeches to a great extent in their attempts at establishing the rule of the *shari'ah* and delineating the message of Islam.⁴⁹ The Prophet (SAAS) as well as his successors also used letters to relay the message of Islam and to send instructions to their representatives in faraway places.⁵⁰ The speeches and the letters of the day were characterized by being of a highly religious content, by starting and ending with relevant doxology, and by quoting extensively from the Qur'an.

Narration is probably the nearest of these three categories to artistic writing. Narratives are a prominent feature of the Qur'anic style. The Qur'an, for teaching purposes, gives extensive accounts of ancient prophets and peoples in a highly impressive manner. It is interesting here to note that a whole surah of the Qur'an (the twenty-eighth), for example, carries the title *al-Qasas* ('The Narratives'). The twelfth surah, entitled *Yusuf*, is devoted almost entirely to a narration of the life of Prophet (SAAS). Moreover, other surahs abound with stories of Prophets (SAAS) and their peoples.⁵¹ The Prophet (SAAS) also used narratives in his speeches and *ahadith*, again for teaching purposes.⁵² Storytelling flourished in the early days of Islam, especially by Tamim al-Dari and other storytellers who were given permission to tell their stories in the mosque before being chased out by the fourth caliph, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, when their stories began to lean toward more profane topics.⁵³

Narratives continued to be popular forms of literary expression and have acquired renewed popularity in the twentieth century with the introduction of new narrative forms. Stories about ancient Prophets (SAAS) were written based on the Qur'anic and biblical accounts, the latter being provided by Jewish and Christian converts to Islam. A classic example is al-Tha'labi's *'Ara'is al-Majalis: Qasas al-Anbiya'* ('The Brides of Sessions: Narratives of the Prophets') in the eleventh century. From among innumerable stories, romances, and biographies we may count the following as examples of the most influential and time enduring. *Kalilah wa Dimnah* ('Kalilah and Dimnah') by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (of the eighth century) is a group of fables meant mainly to give instruction to kings on how to treat their subjects and teach subjects how to deal with kings. *Sirat 'Antara* ('The Biography of 'Antara'), widely believed to be the production of al-Asma'i (of the eighth century), recounts in epic style the fictional adventures of a pre-Islamic hero bestowing on him many Islamic characteristics.⁵⁴ *Sirat*

al-Malik Saif Ibn Dhi Yazan ('The Biography of King Saif ibn Dhi Yazan') is again a fictional folk account (belonging to the fourteenth century) of the life and adventures of a king who actually lived long before the coming of Islam, again bestowing on him Islamic traits under the pretext that he was a believer in the Hanafi religion established by Prophet Abraham (AS). While much of the *Arabian Nights* cannot possibly be said to uphold Islamic moral values, there still are in the stories elements that warrant classifying them with Islamic works. We can also mention here the *maqamat*, which are short stories written in a highly ornate style displaying a great skill in manipulating figures of speech and other linguistic tricks. Two of the most famous *maqamat* writers are al-Hamadhani (tenth century) and al-Hariri (eleventh century) whose works depict the social life under the 'Abbasids.

In the twentieth century we can discern a rising interest in narrative art forms among Muslim writers. This has taken mainly three forms: the novel, the short story, and the play. In the novel, we see that Najib al-Kilani holds much of the ground with novels like *Qatil Hamzah* ('The Killer of Hamzah'), *'Amaliqat al-Shimal* ('The Giants of the North'), *'Adhra' Diakarta* ('The Maiden of Jakarta') and *Layali Turkistan* ('The Nights of Turkistan'). While the first of these novels deals with a historical topic, the martyrdom of Hamzah, an uncle of the Prophet (SAAS), the last three deal with problems facing different Muslim communities in wide apart localities in the modern world. 'Ali Ahmad Bakathir also helped popularize the 'Islamic novel' with works like *Wa Islamah* for example. In his theoretical work *Madkhal ila al-Adab al-Islami* ('An Introduction to Islamic Literature'), al-Kilani makes the remark that the hero in Islamic novels, unlike his counterpart in modern European narratives, should present a good example to be followed in honesty, meticulousness, and uprightness.

Among the numerous short story writers, we may mention Muhammad al-Majdhub *Qasas la Tansa* ('Unforgettable Stories'), Ibrahim 'Assi *Haditha fi shari' al-Hurriyyah* ('An Event in Liberty Street') and Hanan Lahham *Milad Jadid* ('A New Birth'). Again, the short stories exhibit a strong sense of belonging to the Muslim ummah and an awareness of the political, social and intellectual problems facing twentieth-century Muslims.

Theatre

In spite of the fact that early Muslims translated much of the works of the Greeks, especially in philosophy and medicine, they did not take any interest in Greek theatre (probably due to the obvious polytheistic overtones in the plays). The theatre had to wait until the twentieth century

to be introduced into Arabic literature, and then at the hands of Christian writers. Nevertheless, the theatre acquired increasing popularity, and Muslim writers took up the new form and tried to amend its techniques to suit their rules and ideals. Islamic theatre, besides restricting itself to topics and ways of treatment, not in conflict with Islamic teachings, has, for example, to avoid showing any of the prophets or any of the revered Companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) on stage. Again, both women and men appearing on stage should be properly dressed in accordance with the Islamic dress code. Among the most famous playwrights in modern Arabic literature we may mention Taufiq al-Hakim (*Muhammad*), Ali Ahmad Bakathir, *al-Malhama al-Islamiyyah al-Kubra* ('The Great Islamic Epic'), in nineteen parts giving the biographies of nineteen personages from Islamic history, Najib al-Kilani *'Umar Yazhar fi al-Quds* ('Umar Appears in Jerusalem'), about the repercussions of the defeat of Arab armies by the Israeli army in June 1967), and 'Imad al-Din Khalil *al-Ma'surun* ('The Captured'), *Mu'jizah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyah* ('A Miracle in the West Bank'), and *Sarkha 'ind al-Masjid al-Aqsa* ('A Cry at al-Aqsa Mosque').

It is to be noticed that most of these plays - and this can be guessed even from reading the titles - deal with the central Arab/Muslim cause of modern times: the conflict with Israel and the challenge it poses to the Muslim ummah. The plays show the Muslim playwrights' great shock, pain, and frustration at the setback of the Arab/Muslim powers in the face of Israel and the powers supporting it. They also express great hope that things will change and the belief that the change will come about through Muslims and Arabs going back to the ideals and values of their religion.

Essay writing is another prominent feature of modern Islamic literature. Modern Islamic essays express the revival in Islamic spirit and give a new interpretation of Islamic subjects of interest relevant to contemporary world affairs. Perhaps the most prominent and influential Islamic essayists are Mustafa Sadeq al-Rafe'i *I'jaz al-Qur'an* ('The Inimitability of the Qur'an') and *Wahiy al-Qalam* ('The Inspiration of the Pen') and 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad *Yas'alunak* ('They Ask You').

Relationship Between Islamic And Other Literary Schools

It is useful at this stage to comment briefly on the nature of the relationship between the Islamic school of literature and other literary schools: Classical, Romantic, Realist, Absurdist, and Futurist, to give a few examples. It is to be noticed that, while Islamic literature may have some aspects in common with some of these schools and trends, it nevertheless retains its distinct identity stemming from its mother ideology. It can be

found to be classical, romantic, or realistic in some of its aspects or in some works, but it is always Islamic and differs from all other schools in being subservient to an Islamic view of life.⁵⁵

In this, Islamic literature is seen to be fulfilling certain functions in life. In its ideological dimension, for example, Islamic literature has the responsibility of relaying the Islamic view to readers in a lively manner. Its political function lies in promoting the concept of Islamic unity and the interests of Muslim communities. Its sociological function concerns protecting Muslim societies from degeneration, fragmentation, and decay. Its psychological aspect lies mainly in the attempt to help individuals cope with pressures and stressful situations through what may resemble an 'Islamic catharsis,' which differs from Aristotelian catharsis in that it acknowledges the role a providential God plays in man's life and in that it does not encourage excessive joyfulness in agreeable situations and excessive sadness in adverse ones.⁵⁶ Islamic literature is also seen to have an educational function in promoting self-discipline and in developing moral and aesthetical values.⁵⁷

Thus, Islamic literature can play a major role in propagating the message of Islam and in serving the interests of Muslim communities in a lively and aesthetic manner.

NOTES

- See Gustave E. von Grunebaum, 'The Spirit of Islam as Shown in Its Literature', *Studia Islamica*, 1(1953); reprinted in *Themes in Medieval Arabic Literature* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), pp. 101, 113.
2. These are more or less the three meanings of the word 'Islam' referred to in M. A. Hamdun, *Nahwa Nazariyya lil Adab al-Islami*, ('Towards a Theory of Islamic Literature') [Arabic] (Jeddah: Al-Manhal, 1986), 68; see also Yahya Armajani, 'Islamic Literature in Post-War Iran', in *The World of Islam*, ed. James Kritzeck and R. Bayly Winder (London: Macmillan, 1960), 271. English translations of Arabic titles have been supplied by the author throughout this paper.

3. *Surah al-'Alaq* (96):1-4 One of the more widely read translators of the Qur'an, 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, gives the following commentary on verse 4: 'The Arabic words for 'teach' and 'knowledge' are from the same root. It is impossible to produce in a Translation the complete orchestral harmony of the word for 'read', 'teach', 'pen', (which implies reading, writing, books, study, research), 'knowledge' (including science, self knowledge, spiritual understanding), and 'proclaim', an alternative meaning of the word for 'to read'. *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, new revised ed. [Brentwood, MD: Amana Corp., 1409H/1989CE], 1672, n.6206).
4. For an example of ancient books on the topic see Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, *Kitab I'jaz al-Qur'an* ('The Book of the Qur'anic I'jaz') [Arabic] (Egypt: Islamic Printing Press, 1965); for a modern example see Hifni Muhammad Sharaf, *Al-I'jaz al-Balaghi fi al-Qur'an bain al-Nazariyyah wa al-Tatbiq* ('The Rhetorical I'jaz of the Qur'an Between Theory and Practice') [Arabic] (Cairo: Higher Council of Islamic Affairs, 1970).
5. *Surah al-Baqarah* (2): 16-19
6. *Surah al-Fath* (48):29
7. *Surah Muhammad* (47):20-21. No attempt will be made in this study to give a translation of verses of the Qur'an. The writer is of the belief that the Qur'an, due to its rich and intricate style, is really untranslatable and that a dangerous measure of misrepresentation is unavoidable in trying to translate the Qur'an. This is apt to cause a serious distortion to the message of the Qur'an, which is Allah's word and should not be tampered with. However, the gist of the relevant verses will be given in English, and the interested reader can find ways to probe deeper into the matter. For more information on this point see Sheikh Othman al-Safi, *Bid'iyat Tarjamat al-Qur'an al-Karim* ('Translation of the Qur'an Seen as a Deviation from Religion') [Arabic] (Pakistan: forthcoming).
8. *Surah al-Haqqah* (69):6-31
9. R. Ettinghausen, 'Characteristics of Islamic Art' quoted in Hamdun, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
10. James Kritzeck, (ed.), *Anthology of Islamic Literature* (Hammondsworth:

Pelican Books, 1964), p. 15. A detailed discussion of this concept is outside the scope of this paper, mainly for reasons of space, but it is to be noticed that it begs a number of questions. For example, shall we include under Islamic literature works by people who belong to Muslim nations but do not appear to subscribe to Islamic beliefs or practices in their works (Salman Rushdie is probably the most obvious example that comes to mind, but one can include under this category a long list of writers like Najib Mahfuz, Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus, and Nizar Qabbani in Arabic and Nazim Hikmat in Turkish)? That would surely appear a misnomer. Nevertheless, this seems to be what Kritzeck had in mind from his including even wine poems by Abu Nuwas, for example, in his anthology. In fact he extended the concept of 'Islamic literature' to include even pre-Islamic poets like Imru' al-Qais, Tarafa, and others.

'Imad al-Din Khalil, *Madkhal ila Nazariyyat al-Adab al-Islami* ('An Introduction to the Theory of Islamic Literature') [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah, 1987), p. 69; translation of this and all other quotations from Arabic sources are the author's unless otherwise stated.

12. Muhammad Qutb, *Manhaj al-Fan al-Islami* ('The Method of Islamic Art') [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1983); Tagore's 'Trip to the Market' is discussed pp. 199-202 and Synge's 'Riders to the Sea' pp. 212-21. 'Imad al-Din Khalil, *op. cit.*, p. 213, strongly endorses this view and puts it into practice in his study of the Spanish writer Alexandra Cassona's 'A Boat without a Fisherman' in his *fi al-Naqd al-Islami al-Mu'asir* ('On Contemporary Islamic Criticism') [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah, 1984), pp. 67-99.
13. See, e.g., Khalil, *op. cit.*, p. 78; Najib al-Kilani, *Madkhal ila al-Adab al-Islami* ('An Introduction to Islamic Literature') [Arabic] (Qatar: The Book of al-Ummah, 1407H), pp. 100-02; and Muhammad al-Nadawi, *Al-Adab al-Islami wa Silatuhu bi al-Hayat* ('Islamic Literature and its Relationship with Life') [Arabic] (Cairo: Dar al-Sahwah, 1985), p. 17.
14. For further information on these seminars and for a listing of their recommendations see Usamah Yusuf Shehab, *Nahwa Adab Islami Mu'asir* ('Towards a Contemporary Islamic Literature') [Arabic] (Amman: Dar al-Bashir, 1985), p. 192ff., and Sa'd Abu al-Rida, *Al-Adab al-Islam : Qadiyyah wa Bina* ('Islamic Literature: Cause and Construction') [Arabic] (Jeddah: 'Alam al-Ma'rifah, 1983), pp. 170-83.

15. See *surah al-Anbiya'* (21):5, *surah al-Saffat* (37):36, and *surah al-Tur* (52):30.
16. Jaber Qumeiha, *Adab al-Khulafa' al-Rashidin* ('The Literature of the Well-Guided Caliphs') [Arabic] (Cairo and Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Misri wa al-Lubnani, 1984), p. 14.
17. See *surah Ya Sin* (36):69 and *surah al-Haqqah* (69):41.
18. Hamdun, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-21.
19. See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* ('Exegesis of the Great Qur'an') [Arabic] (Cairo: Dar al-Turath, n.d.), 3:354.
20. Abu Hilal al-'Askari, *Kitab al-Sina'atayn: al-Kitaba wa al-Nathr* ('The Book of the Two Crafts: Prose and Poetry') [Arabic] (Istanbul: n.p., 1320 h) p. 104.
21. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* ('Reviving the Sciences of Religion') [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 3:126.
22. Quoted in M. al-Nadawi, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
23. Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, *al-Sahih*, trans, M.M. Khan, (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1983), 8:108.
24. Mustafa Sadeq al-Raf'ei, *I'jaz al-Qur'an* ('Inimitability of the Qur'an') [Arabic] (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijariyah, 1961), p. 342.
25. Quoted in M. al-Nadawi, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
26. Al-Bukhari, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-13.
27. The translation is by J.W. Redhouse in *Arabian Poetry*, (ed.), W.A. Clouston (London: Darf Publishers Ltd., 1986), p. 305. Notice that the poem begins with love poetry (*nasib*) before moving to a eulogy of the Prophet (SAAS). This is in accordance with the ancient Arabic poetic practice of beginning with love poetry before dealing with the main topic. Ka'b, then, asked for forgiveness from the Prophet (SAAS) saying:

نبئت أن رسول الله أوعدني والعفو عند رسول الله مأمول
 مهلا هداك الذي أعظاك نافلة القرآن فيها مواعظ والفصل
 لا تأخذني بأقوال الوشاة ولم أذنب وإن كثرة في الأقاويل

'I have been informed that the Apostle of God hath threatened me; but pardon is hoped for from the Apostle of God.

Respite! - May He guide thee [O Apostle!] aright, who hath given thee the free gift of the Qur'an, in which are exhortation and detail! -

Punish me not, then at the words of calumniators : for I have not offended, though stories have multiplied concerning me."

Hassan Ibn Thabit followed this practice in many of his poems as well. The thirteenth-century Egyptian poet al-Busiri composed a rather lengthy ode entitled 'al-Burdah' that begins with the words

أمن تذكر جيران بذي سلم مزجت دمعاً جرى من مقلة بدم

('Is it from a recollection of neighbours at Dhu-Salam that thou hast mixed with blood the tears flowing from an eyeball?' [trans. Redhouse in *Ibid.*, p. 319]. In the twentieth century, Ahmad Shauqi wrote a poem called 'In the Method of al-Burdah' beginning with ريم على

القاع بين البان والعلم أحل سفك دمي في الأشهر الحرم
 ('A deer in the valley between al-Ban and al-'Alam legitimized spilling my blood in the *haram* months [wherein fighting is prohibited]'). All these poems begin with love poetry before proceeding to praise the Prophet (SAAS) and his message.

28. Quoted in Qumeiha, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

29. Quoted in M. al-Nadawi, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

30. Quoted in Shehab, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

31. See Abu al-Rida, *Islamic Literature*, 26 and Sami Makki al-'Ani, *Al-Islam wa al-Shi'r* (on 'Islam and Poetry') [Arabic] (Kuwait: 'Alam al-Ma'rifah, 1983), pp. 18-19.

32. Clouston, *op. cit.*, p. 1xvi.
33. M.H. Braighish, *fi al-Adab al-Islami al-Mu'asir* (On Contemporary Islamic Literature') [Arabic] (Al-Zarqa', Jordan: Al-Manar, 1985), 57.
34. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Bollingen Foundation, 1980), pp. 396-97.
35. Shehab, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-06.
36. William James, the American psychologist, asserts that 'The greatest cure for anxiety is, without doubt, faith' (Quoted in Arabic in M.O. Najati, *Al-Qur'an wa 'Ilm al-Nafs* ('The Qur'an and Psychology') [Beirut and Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1985], p. 248.
37. See Khalil, *op. cit.*, p. 57, and al-Kilani, *Afaq al-Adab al-Islami* ('Horizon of Islamic Literature') [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah, 1985), p. 75.
38. A somewhat detailed account of the issue of commitment in literature, mainly with respect to socialism, Western capitalism, and existentialism, is given in Nasir 'Abdul-Rahman al-Khunain, *Al-Iltizam al-Islami fi al-Shi'r* ('Islamic Commitment in Poetry') [Arabic] (Al-Riyad: Dar al-Asalah, 1987), pp. 45-101 *passim*.
39. For a fuller account see Khalil, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-43 *passim*.
40. Attributed to Kant in Hamdun, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
41. Al-Kilani, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.
42. Khalil, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
43. For an account of the debates over this point that engaged many Arab critics, ancient as well as modern, see al-Khunain, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-14 *passim*.
44. *Ibid*, 184.
45. See M. al-Nadawi, *op. cit.*, p. 52; Khalil, *op. cit.*, p. 94; al-Khunain, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-72 *passim*; see also Ahmad al-Jada' and Husni Jarrar,

Shu'ara' al-Da'wah al-Islamiyyah fi al-'Asr al-Hadith ('The Poets of the Islamic Call in the Modern Age') [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah, 1978).

46. See al-Kilani, *Introduction to Islamic Literature*, 22; for a general discussion of Iqbal's poetry and his contributions see Qutb, *Method of Islamic Art*, 184-92, and Abu al-Hassan al-Nadwi, *Glory of Iqbal*, trans. M. A. Kidawi (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1979).
47. See al-Kilani, *Introduction to Islamic Literature*, 19-20; Khalil, *Introduction to the Theory of Islamic Literature*, 164; and Braighish, *On Contemporary Islamic Literature*, 66.
48. For an English translation of an example of the Prophet's speeches see Ismail Hamid, *Arabic and Islamic Literary Traditions with References to Malay Islamic Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 1982), 59.
49. For an English translation of an example of Abu Bakr's speeches see *ibid.*, 60; for original examples in Arabic, see relevant sections in Qumeiha, *Literature of the Caliphs*.
50. The Prophet's letter to al-Muqauqis, the king of Egypt, is translated in Ismail Hamid, *Arabic and Islamic Literary Traditions*, 69; for examples of caliphs' letters see relevant sections in Qumeiha, *Literature of the Caliphs*.
51. See 'Ali M. al-Bajawi et al., *The Narratives of the Qur'an* [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-'Arabi, 1986).
52. See Tal'at Salem, *Selections from Narratives in the Sunnah* [Arabic] (Cairo: al-Zahra', 1988); also Bakri Sheikh Amin, *The Literature of the Prophet's Sayings* [Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1979).
53. See Ismail Hamid, *Arabic and Islamic Literary Traditions*, 81
54. See Terrick Hamilton, *Antar: A Bedouen Romance* (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Printers, 1981), ii.
55. For a fuller discussion see especially Khalil, *Introduction to the Theory of Islamic Literature*, 127-53.

56. Hamdun, *Towards a Theory of Islamic Literature*, 151.

57. Khalil, *Introduction to the Theory of Islamic Literature*, 174-82.