

The Qur'an and *Adab*
The Shaping of Literary Traditions
in Classical Islam

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Nuha Alshaar

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2. *Mu'allaqā* (dated 16th/17th century CE) by the pre- and early Islamic poet Labid b. Rabi'a (d. c. 40/660). MS AP 6 (fol. 62v), Library of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut.

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‘I See a Distant Fire’: Tha‘ālibī’s
(d. 429/1030) *Kitāb al-Iqtibās min
al-Qur’ān al-karīm*

BILAL ORFALI AND MAURICE POMERANTZ

SCHOLARS HAVE often addressed the literary features and properties of the Qur’an. Several well-known modern monographs discuss Qur’anic imagery and narrative, such as *al-Taṣwīr al-fannī fī l-Qur’ān* by Sayyid Quṭb and *al-Fann al-qaṣaṣī fī l-Qur’ān al-karīm* by Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalaf Allāh.¹ In many ways, these studies are heirs to a rich classical tradition of works composed by authors such as Abū l-Ḥasan al-Rummānī (d. 384/994), Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078) that attempted to describe the Qur’an’s literary features within a discussion of the inimitability (*i’jāz*) of the sacred text.

The relationship between the Qur’an and Arabic literature, however, is not limited to the presence of literary features in the Qur’an, as the Qur’an profoundly influenced Arabic literature. To this end, Ibtisām Marhūn al-Ṣaffār and Wadād al-Qāḍī have devoted studies to the impact of the Qur’an on the development of Arabic literature,² and Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām has considered the influence of the Qur’an on the development of classical Arabic literary theory.³

This chapter investigates the usage of the Qur’an in Arabic literature through the practice of quotation and allusion, taking as its main subject the literary anthology *al-Iqtibās min al-Qur’ān al-karīm* by Abū Maṣṣūr ‘Abd al-Malik al-Tha‘ālibī (d. 429/1038). In the classical period, scholars applied a variety of terms to describe various types

of Qur'anic usages and borrowings, such as *sariqa* (literary borrowing; lit. theft), *ikhtilās* ([mis]appropriation), *naz'lintizā'* (extraction), *taḍmīn* (insertion), *'aqd* (knotting), *istishhād* (citation), *talwīh/talmīh* (allusion), *ishāra* (reference), *isti'āra* (borrowing), *istinbāt/istikhrāj* (extraction) or, the most common term, *iqtibās* (quotation).⁴

Incorporating Qur'anic quotations in prose and poetry was a common practice in Islam from as early as the lifetime of the Prophet, as attested by the statements and poetry of the Prophet's Companions.⁵ Because of the constraints of metre and rhyme, allusions are understandably more common in poetry than direct quotations. This obviously is because the verses of the Qur'an do not fit within the Arabic metrical system without minor or major adjustments or changes.⁶ Hikmat Faraj Badrī has compiled a useful dictionary of all the Qur'anic verses and phrases used in the practice of *iqtibās* in poetry, that is, those Qur'anic phrases that conform to the system of poetic metres.⁷

Views on *iqtibās*

Premodern *littérateurs* and critics also devoted attention to the practice of incorporating the Qur'an in literature. The renowned Umayyad secretary 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. 132/750) even identified the Qur'an as the first item in the required list of studies for state bureaucrats.⁸ The earliest-known work on *iqtibās* is *Sariqāt al-Kumayt min al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Ibn Kunāsa (d. 207/822), which unfortunately has not survived.⁹ Its title suggests, though, that this scholar understood the practice of quoting the Qur'an in poetry as *sariqa* (literary borrowing; lit. theft), a term which does not necessarily convey a pejorative sense.¹⁰ Ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣbahānī (d. 297/909) devoted the ninety-third chapter of his *Kitāb al-Zahra* to the topic '*Dhikr mā'sta'ārathu'l-shu'arā' min al-Qur'ān wa-mā naqalathu ilā ash'ārihā min sā'ir al-ma'ānī*' (A Discussion of What Poets Borrowed from the Qur'an and What They Incorporated into Their Poetry from Common Motifs).¹¹ Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 298/911) in his *al-Risāla al-'Adhrā'* counselled that secretaries should learn to be efficient in extracting appropriate verses of the Qur'an and proverbial citations from their sources

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(*naz' āy al-Qur'ān fī mawāḍi' ihā wa' jtilāb al-amthāl fī amākinihā*).¹² Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 360/970) dedicated a chapter to the employment by Abū Nuwās (d. between 198/813 and 200/815) of Qur'anic expressions and ideas in poetry.¹³ Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), in a statement preserved in *Thamarāt al-awraq* of Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434), noted that the *kātib* (secretary) ought to memorise the Qur'an in order to extract (*li-yantazi'a*) from its verses.¹⁴

The earliest comprehensive book on *iqtibās* as an independent subject that is extant is Tha'ālibī's *al-Iqtibās min al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, which will be discussed in detail below. The term employed by Tha'ālibī (i.e. *iqtibās*), became the conventional one for referring to the quoting or using of the Qur'an in literary texts. *Iqtibās*, literally 'taking a live coal or a firebrand (*qabas*) from a fire', denotes a quotation or borrowing from the Qur'an or Hadith with or without explicit acknowledgement. The regrettably lost *Kitāb Intizā'āt [min] al-Qur'ān*, attributed to Tha'ālibī's contemporary Abū Sa'd al-'Amīdī (d. 433/1042), was likely also devoted to the issue of borrowings from the Qur'an.¹⁵ A similar title, *Kitāb Intizā'āt al-Qur'ān al-'azīm* by the Fatimid secretary Abū'l-Qāsim 'Alī Ibn al-Ṣayrafī (d. 542/1147), survives in manuscript form. The work lists the Qur'anic verses that could be used by state secretaries in the presentation of various topics.¹⁶ Later, the practice of *iqtibās* became a common subject in *adab* and rhetorical works.¹⁷

The use of quotations from the Qur'an in literature generally prompted little objection from *littérateurs*, and significantly most legal scholars were in favour of *iqtibās*. Nevertheless, some scholars disapproved of *iqtibās* even before Tha'ālibī's extensive composition on the subject. The first critical voice, however, allegedly belonged to al-Ḥasan b. Yasār al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), whose opinion on the matter is recorded in *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, the encyclopaedia of chancery practice by Shihāb al-Dīn Abū'l-'Abbās al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418).¹⁸ Some authorities in theology, such as Bāqillānī, condemned *iqtibās* if it should occur in poetry rather than in prose,¹⁹ an opinion that found approval in later works.²⁰ Others deemed the practice of *iqtibās* permissible only if the writer acknowledged the borrowing. Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239) reported that some held this

opinion but that he himself did not.²¹ Some opined, furthermore, that Qur'anic materials may be used in prose only in the form of direct quotational borrowings, which meant that this group believed that neither allusion nor paraphrase was permissible.²² 'Alī Ibn Khalaf al-Kātib (d. fifth/eleventh century) opined that the poetic verse that incorporates the Qur'anic verse is always inferior to the Qur'anic original in terms of expressiveness (*balāgha*); he thus argued in favour of quotational borrowing.²³ Mālikī scholars were in general more critical of *iqtibās* and some of them condemned all kinds of *iqtibās*, which they considered an act of *kufr* (disbelief).²⁴

The discussion on the legitimacy of *iqtibās* becomes more elaborate in the eighth/fourteenth century. The Shādhilī scholar Dāwūd b. 'Umar b. Ibrāhīm al-Bākhilī (d. c. 730/1329) addressed this issue in detail in his *al-Laṭīfa al-marḍiyya bi-sharḥ du'ā' al-shādhiliyya*, raising questions as to whether the quotation in verse can be employed in a meaning different from the original Qur'anic intent, and whether one may change a verse's word order or its wording in quotation. The author seems to be in favour of these two practices and quotes several statements in support of his opinions. This is followed by examples of various types of *iqtibās* taken from earlier *littérateurs*.²⁵

Critics such as Ibn Hija al-Ḥamawī, following Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. c. 750/1349), divided *iqtibās* into three categories: acceptable or recommended (*maqbul*), such as in sermons and letters of investiture (*'uhūd*); permissible (*mubāḥ*), such as in *ghazals* (love poetry), letters and stories; and objectionable (*mardūd*), such as quoting the Qur'an in a frivolous manner.²⁶ Even a strong supporter of *iqtibās* such as Tha'libī dedicated a few pages in his book to censuring reprehensible *iqtibās* (*iqtibās makrūh*).²⁷

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) was also in favour of the practice of *iqtibās* and compiled an anthology on the subject: *Aḥāsīn al-iqtinās fī maḥāsīn al-iqtibās*.²⁸ In this work, Suyūṭī placed his own poetic verses that contained examples of *iqtibās* in alphabetical order according to the rhyme letter. In this work's introduction, he states that he has not used *iqtibās* in a frivolous manner and notes his disapproval of this practice. He addresses the topic of

iqtibās in his other works, such as *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, *Sharḥ 'uqūd al-jumān*, *Raf' al-bās wa kashf al-iltibās fī darb al-mathal min al-Qur'ān wa'l-iqtibās*, as well as in his *maqāmāt*, quoting various legal opinions on the legitimacy of the practice and offering numerous examples of different kinds of *iqtibās*.²⁹ In his *fatwa* treatise *Raf' al-bās*, for example, he addresses questions such as the use of *iqtibās* in prayer (generally prohibited), or in the case of ritual impurity (generally accepted), or changing the wording of the Qur'an in *iqtibās* (generally accepted), or changing the context or meaning of the verse (generally accepted), or employing *iqtibās* in poetry (generally accepted).

The Shāfi'i mufti Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Abī'l-Luṭf (fl. 992/1584) composed a *fatwa* treatise entitled *Raf' al-iltibās 'an munkir al-iqtibās*. This treatise survives in several manuscripts.³⁰ The Princeton manuscript found in the Yahuda section (no. 832) in the Garrett Collection is divided into two chapters (*bābs*). The first is entitled '*Fī bayān jawāz al-iqtibās balāghatan wa shar'an*' (The Permissibility of *iqtibās* in Rhetoric and According to Religious Law) and the second is entitled '*Fī bayān al-adilla 'alā'l-jawāz*' (On Proving the Permissibility [of *iqtibās*]). The author mentions that he has been informed that someone has unduly denied the practice of *iqtibās*, and that this prompted him to answer this judgement using legal proofs that rely on hadiths, the opinions and prose illustrations of a wide range of religious Ḥanafī, Shāfi'i and Mālikī scholars (*muhaddithūn*, *mufassirūn* and *fuqahā'*) including 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), Muḥaffar al-Dīn Ibn al-Sā'ātī (d. 694/1295), Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṭībī (d. 743/1342), Mas'ūd b. 'Umar al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390) and Suyūṭī, in addition to those of the *udabā'* (*littérateurs*; sing. *adīb*) including Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122), 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Iṣfahānī (d. c. 600/1204), Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Nubāta (d. 768/1366), and those of the author himself.

Motives for *iqtibās*

There is no single explanation as to why *littérateurs* used the Qur'an in their literary works. Studying and memorising the Qur'an

was part of schooling from childhood, and with repeated practice students learned Qur'anic formulations to the point that they became accustomed to these words and used them in their writing. Also, the pre-eminence of Arabic as the language of the state, society and religion encouraged widespread knowledge of the Qur'anic text.³¹

Moreover, the Qur'an is a sacred text that has been revered as a religious guide and a source of eloquence that possesses miraculous attributes.³² Ibn Khalaf al-Kātib stated that the main motivation for Qur'anic borrowing was to seek divine favour.³³ Others, such as secretaries, adorned their works with Qur'anic references to prove their talent and skill in appropriating Qur'anic language and themes. A reference to or quotation from the Qur'an, the memorised text *par excellence*, had the advantage of being recognisable to others and appreciated by a wide audience. As reflected above in the statements of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Shaybānī and Tawḥīdī, by the fourth/tenth century the practice of incorporating verses from poetry, the Qur'an and proverbs (*amthāl*) developed into an artistic technique, an acceptable touchstone by which to test the competence of a *kātib*.³⁴ Moreover, as Qalqashandī noted, the Qur'an was often used to furnish evidence for arguments that aided the author in establishing definitive proofs for his claims with concision and force.³⁵

Quoting the Qur'an, however, was not always an act of piety or a means of demonstrating proof or winning an argument. In some cases, quoting the Qur'an served to lampoon or parody the concepts and themes of the sacred text, as in the *mujūn* (ribald) poetry of Bashshār b. Burd (d. 168/784) and Abū Nuwās. The Qur'an was also sometimes used in humorous contexts, as is the case in stories of party-crashers (*tufayliyyūn*) and penurious men (*bukhalā'*), where the protagonists quote the religious text to protect them from being thrown out of parties or to procure food.³⁶ Often, these quotes appear alongside sexual references or suggestive innuendos. In such narratives, the sacred text moves from a world of authority to a world of play or parody, as Fedwa Malti-Douglas, Geert Jan van Gelder and Ulrich Marzolph have noted in their studies.³⁷ Van Gelder adds that when poets, and by extension the *udabā'*, are being

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frivolous, they usually intend to shock their audience, an effect that can be achieved by using Qur'anic references, especially because they are 'readily recognised, blatant, and unsubtle'.³⁸

Bearing in mind the eloquence of the Qur'an, *littérateurs* employ Qur'anic verses in order to raise the stylistic register of the literary piece, whether in prose or poetry. Tha'ālibī emphasised that the practice of quoting the Qur'an was a conscious decision of the writer. He alluded to earlier attempts to challenge the literary pre-eminence of the Qur'an, the so-called *mu'āraḍāt al-Qur'ān*. In this early period, a *kātib* could prove his talent by imitating the Qur'an just as a poet might prove his mastery by imitating a famous ode. After the *i'jāz* dogma started to take shape with Ibrāhīm Ibn Sayyār al-Nazzām (d. after 220/835), *littérateurs* became more wary of Qur'anic imitation.

Tha'ālibī's *Kitāb al-Iqtibās*

Tha'ālibī does not mention the purpose of compiling *al-Iqtibās* in the introduction to the work, but one can presume that one broad aim was to promote the use of the Qur'an as a literary embellishment in Arabic writings. As is the case for many of his other anthologies, Tha'ālibī's main goals in *al-Iqtibās* are practical rather than theoretical. He does not offer any views on the validity of *iqtibās* and appears uninterested in engaging with the legal problems or theological questions raised by other scholars, prior or contemporary to him, mentioned above. Indeed, he dismisses attempts to challenge the Qur'an as failures:

When the domain of Islam grew and the broad arches of faith were constructed; when the rays of faith were fixed on the horizons and illumined the hearts with the light of certainty, there was no extremely eloquent spokesman nor any silver-tongued poet whom God did not make his mind and art incapable [of reaching the Qur'an's excellence] (*khatama 'alā khāṭirihi wa fannihi*).³⁹

Tha'ālibī simply asserts that the best that men can do is to take their words and meanings from the Qur'an:

The utmost effort of those *littérateurs* to adorn with eloquence and to practice skillful use of language is to borrow from the Qur'an's lexemes (*alfāz*) or from its meanings (*ma'ānī*) in the various types of their aims or to cite the Qur'an's language or to employ its wisdom in their styles, so that their speech obtains by such borrowing a display which has no limit in its beauty and a source that knows no bounds in luminosity. It obtains thereby a sweetness and elegance mellifluent in whole and part, and obtains a grandeur and magnificence of singular radiance.⁴⁰

He affirms his basic premise that *iqtibās* is licit by citing examples of the Prophet's practice. He then asserts that other members of the Muslim community have followed the Prophet's example, as well as those of his Companions and the Successors and so on until the present day, in their practice of *iqtibās*.⁴¹

Tha'ālibī does not relate a comprehensive definition of *iqtibās* anywhere in his work. This fact may lead us to surmise that he is working with an inherited or widely known definition of the practice of *iqtibās*. Significantly, it appears that for him, the practice includes both the quotation of words (*alfāz*) and the borrowing of Qur'anic meanings (*ma'ānī*). For example, when Tha'ālibī considers 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's (d. 40/661) practice of *iqtibās*, these are instances of borrowings of Qur'anic meaning and not Qur'anic diction. The first example provided by Tha'ālibī is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's saying: 'The value of each man is that which he does righteously' (*qīmat kull imri' in mā yuḥsinuhu*). Tha'ālibī states that this is an example of *iqtibās* from Q. 2:247. Tha'ālibī believes the aphorism derives its main idea from what is voiced by the Qur'an (*mā naṭaqa bihi*) in this verse concerning the rationale for the choice of Saul as a king.⁴²

Structure and content of *Kitāb al-Iqtibās*

Tha'ālibī's *al-Iqtibās* is the first book devoted exclusively to the topic of Qur'anic quotation. Given the ubiquity of Qur'anic quotation in Arabic literature and discourse, the author was faced with the challenge of compiling diverse materials and arranging them in an interesting and useful fashion.

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In the introduction to the work, Tha'ālibī confesses that he had long intended to compose this treatise on Qur'anic quotation but did not have the time to complete it. He describes how he would spend one day in composing it (*ta'līfīhi*) and then put it aside for days, and that he would work a month on it and then put it aside for a year. Following a common *topos* of introductions, Tha'ālibī then thanks his patron, the ruler of Nishapur, the *amīr* and *ṣāhib al-jaysh* (commander of the army), Abū Muẓaffar Naṣr b. Nāṣir [Sebüktegin] (d. 412/1021), for providing him with the support which allowed him to complete the ambitious work.⁴³ Although this introductory address is formulaic, Tha'ālibī's words nonetheless suggest his own sense of responsibility to his readership and his patron, as well as his devotion to the subject matter.⁴⁴

Tha'ālibī's *Iqtibās* is divided into twenty-five chapters in the following manner:⁴⁵

1. Blessings (*fī l-taḥāmīd*)
2. The Prophet (*fī dhikr al-nabī*)
3. The Family of the Prophet (*fī dhikr al-itra al-zakiyya wa'l-shajara al-nabawiyya*)
4. Companions of the Prophet (*fī dhikr al-ṣahāba*)
5. Prophets (*fī dhikr al-anbiyā'*)
6. Excellence of Knowledge and Scholars (*fī faḍl al-ilm wa'l-ulamā'*)
7. Cultivation, Reason, Wisdom and Spiritual Counsel (*fī dhikr al-adab wa'l-aql wa'l-ḥikma wa'l-maw'iza al-ḥasana*)
8. Excellent Qualities and Noble Acts (*fī dhikr maḥāsini al-khiṣāl wa makārim al-af'āl*)
9. Blameworthy Defects and Wrongful Acts (*fī dhikr ma'ā'ib al-khilāl wa maqābiḥ al-af'āl*)
10. Opposing Qualities and Numbers (*fī dhikr anwā' min al-aḍḍād wa'l-a'dād*)
11. Women, Children and Brothers (*fī dhikr al-nisā' wa'l-awlād wa'l-ikhwān*)
12. Food and Drink (*fī dhikr al-ṭa'ām wa'l-sharāb*)
13. Clear Expression, Oratory and the Benefits of Eloquence (*fī dhikr al-bayān wa'l-khaṭāba wa thamarāt al-faṣāḥa wa'l-balāgha*)

14. Silencing Responses (*fī dhikr al-jawābāt al-muskita*)
15. Entertaining Anecdotes and Rarities (*fī mūlah al-nawādir*)
16. Reprehensible *iqtibās* (*fī l-iqtibās al-makrūh*)
17. Dreams and their Interpretation (*fī dhikr al-ru'yā wa 'ajā' ibihā wa'l-ta'bīrāt wa badā' ihā*)
18. Writing, Letters, Accounting (*fī dhikr al-khaṭṭ wa'l-kitāb wa'l-ḥisāb*)
19. Proverbs and Similar Types of Lexemes (*fī l-amthāl wa'l-alfāz al-latī tajrī majrāhā*)
20. Poetry and Poets (*fī dhikr al-shi'r wa'l-shu'arā'*)
21. The *iqtibās* of that which is in the Qur'an of Instances of Concision, Inimitability, Simile and Metaphor, Paronomasia, Antithesis (*fī iqtibās ba'd mā fī l-Qur'ān min al-ijāz wa'l-i'jāz wa'l-tashbīh wa'l-isti'āra wa'l-tajnīs wa'l-ṭibāq wa-mā yajrī majrāhā*)
22. Various Arts of Differing Ranks in Rare and Elegant Recitations (*fī funūn mukhtalifat al-tartīb fī tarā'if al-tilāwāt wa laṭā'ifihā*)⁴⁶
23. Concerning Various Arts of Different Ranks (*fī funūn mukhtalifat al-tartīb*)⁴⁷
24. Invocations (*fī l-da'wāt al-mustajāba*)
25. Spells and Amulets (*fī l-ruqā wa'l-aḥrāz*)

Fields of discourse

As can be seen from the above list, Tha'ālibī's notion of *iqtibās* addresses a wide range of different topics that he arranged following what appears to be nine broad fields of discourse (see below). The first section of the volume (chapters 1–5) moves from the Qur'an as a central source of praise of God to its role in the historical foundations of the religious community. The second section of the work (chapters 6–12) considers the Qur'anic text's place as a source of knowledge and wisdom, and as a guide to personal ethics and social comportment. The third section (chapters 13–16 and 18–21) relates mainly to the use of the Qur'an in speech and writing, prose and poetic composition. The final section (chapters 17 and 22–5) addresses the Qur'an in dream interpretation, recitation, prayer and magic. We shall now examine each of these broad fields of discourse in detail.

Tha'ālibī's Kitāb al-Iqtibās min al-Qur'ān al-karīm

Opening prayers to God

The first field of discourse in *al-Iqtibās* is Qur'anic borrowing for the praise of God (*taḥmīd*), which is found in the first chapter of the work.⁴⁸ In the opening of this chapter, Tha'ālibī cites examples of *iqtibās* of *taḥmīd*. Tha'ālibī then demonstrates the manner through which God might be praised with examples of quotations, which he groups under the subtopics: 'The Wonders of Creation', 'Divine Attributes' and the 'Enumeration of God's Blessings'.⁴⁹ Throughout these subtopics, Tha'ālibī does not simply arrange examples of allusions by verses according to themes, but often demonstrates the ways in which the same verse might be employed in different ways by juxtaposing usages that illuminate possibilities in the Qur'anic text.⁵⁰

The Qur'an and the foundation of the religio-political community

The second major field of discourse addresses the Qur'an's foundational role in the religio-political history of the community, and the lives of the Prophet, his Family and Companions and other Prophets. Tha'ālibī cites instances in which the Qur'an discusses the Prophet's favour in the eyes of God, the need to invoke prayers upon him and God's wisdom in making him a man. Throughout these sections, Tha'ālibī selects Qur'anic verses in which God Himself indicates the importance of the Prophet and provides examples of the practice of earlier Muslims in praising the Prophet through *iqtibās*. For example, in reference to the importance of the Prophet, Tha'ālibī quotes 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), who stated, 'By God, By God, God did not create a soul that was more noble than Muhammad, and we did not hear Him swear by anyone's life but his when He said in Q. 15:72: *By your life, indeed they are blind in intoxication*.'⁵¹

In Tha'ālibī's understanding, prophetic hadiths, being the language of the Prophet, could contain examples of prophetic *iqtibās*. The last subsection of the chapter on the Prophet is entitled 'Concerning Some of that which was Related from Him [the Prophet] of Speech that was Borrowed (*al-muqtabas*) from the Words of the Qur'an'. As an example of this, Tha'ālibī cites the following prophetic hadith: 'There are three signs of a hypocrite: If he is entrusted by someone,

he betrays him; if he promises, he is unfaithful; and if he speaks, he lies.' Tha'ālibī states that the meaning of this hadith is taken (*ma'nāhu muqtabas*) from Q. 9:75–7.⁵²

In subsequent chapters on the Prophet's Family (*al-'itra al-nabawiyya*) and the Companions, Tha'ālibī moves from Qur'anic statements in which God speaks about these individuals to instances of the individuals' practice of *iqtibās*. In sections of chapters 3 and 4, Tha'ālibī discusses how the Family of the Prophet, the four 'rightly guided' caliphs and others, practised *iqtibās*. For instance, Tha'ālibī includes examples of the use of the Qur'an by the caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (r. 11–13/632–34) in his speeches and writing during the so-called 'period of apostasy' (*ayyām al-ridda*).⁵³ In these passages, there is a sense that these important individuals are not only selecting from the Qur'an in an effective way, but also that the Qur'anic text provides appropriate responses to the momentous events in the life of the community.

Knowledge and wisdom

The subjects of knowledge (*'ilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*) occupy chapters 6 and 7 of Tha'ālibī's compendium. Following the pattern established in previous chapters, Tha'ālibī first cites Qur'anic statements concerning knowledge and wisdom and then provides examples in which scholars have derived knowledge from the Qur'an. In several sections of chapter 6, Tha'ālibī quotes lines from a letter of the philosopher Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934) in which he provides descriptions of the arts (*ṣinā'āt*) of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and speculative theology (*kalām*), and cites appropriate Qur'anic verses endorsing their practice.⁵⁴

Tha'ālibī also highlights how scholars search the Qur'an for answers to particular questions. He refers to this scholarly probing of the Qur'anic text using the terms *istinbātāt* (deductions) and *intizā'āt* (abstractions) in reference to the strenuous search to locate subtle meanings. For example, Tha'ālibī states that Abū Muḥammad Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (d. 196/811) was asked if there was a verse in the Qur'an that would verify the statement, related on the Prophet's authority, which goes, 'No believer dies without becoming a martyr' (*mā min mu'min yamūt illā māta shahīdan*). Sufyān searched for

the answer in the Qur'an for three days, until he found it 'visible and open' in Q. 57:19: *Those who believe in God and His Prophets, these are the true ones and Witnesses [shuhadā'] before their Lord.*⁵⁵

Practical ethics

What Tha'ālibī terms the praiseworthy or blameworthy traits or qualities of other human beings, or what we might call 'practical ethics', forms the next main core of topics in chapters 8 and 9, and a section of chapter 10. Here, the author provides a florilegium of Qur'anic verses relating to a particular topic, such as 'forgiveness', and instances of the use of these verses, for example in accounts of men quoting apposite Qur'anic verses as they ask for forgiveness before their caliphs.⁵⁶ Tha'ālibī's treatment of ethics, however, can deftly move from the serious to the light-hearted. For example, he concludes this section with a story taken from *Kitāb al-Tāj*, the lost history of Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābi' (d. 384/995). It tells of a young man who, after leading a life of carousing and drinking, flees to Azerbaijan to escape his father's ire. After he stays there for a while, the young man writes a letter to his father in regret of his former ways, and the two reconcile. Upon reuniting with his son, the father quotes the lines of Q. 5:34: *Indeed those who repent before you are able to apprehend them, for God will be forgiving and merciful.*⁵⁷

Tha'ālibī's presentation of Qur'anic quotations relating to practical ethics in chapters 8 and 9 seems designed to demonstrate the multiplicity of topics for Qur'anic quotation. Throughout these sections, he follows a clear hierarchy in his organisation of topics and subtopics. For example, in chapter 8, he begins with quotations that encourage obedience to God, such as piety (*taqwā*), patience (*ṣabr*) and thanksgiving (*shukr*); then he discusses social bonds, such as loyalty to family (*fī ṣilat al-raḥim*) and kindness to one's parents (*fī birr al-wālidayn*); and he concludes with chapters on political ethics, such as consultation (*fī l-mashūra*) and the proper conduct of war (*fī adab al-ḥarb*).⁵⁸ In chapter 9, Tha'ālibī provides the corresponding discussion of quotations censuring blameworthy ethics. Although Tha'ālibī derives both the examples and the discussions of the examples from Qur'anic statements, there are some tensions between the two chapters. For example, Tha'ālibī describes the manipulation

of others (*mudārāt*) in chapter 8 as a praiseworthy ethic derived from the Qur'an. But in chapter 9, he warns against 'two-faced' behaviour (*fī dhamm dhī'l-wajhayn*).⁵⁹ Despite these possible contradictions, Tha'ālibī's arrangement seems to suggest the apparently limitless possibilities of topics for which a suitable Qur'anic quotation may be found.

In chapter 10, Tha'ālibī addresses the topic of contradictions supported by various Qur'anic verses. He provides instances in which quotations from the Qur'an can be used to endorse contrary positions. For example, in one section he provides quotations discussing the 'excellence of money and the desire to acquire it, and . . . of trade and reliance on a craft' (*fī faḍl al-māl wa'l-sā'i fī kasbihi wa . . . al-tijāra wa'timād al-ṣan'a*), while in the section following it he provides several quotations that contradict the previously offered advice.⁶⁰ Subsequent sections on slowness and haste (*al-ta'annī wa'l-'ajala*), love and hate (*al-ḥubb wa'l-bughḍ*), youth and old age (*al-shabāb wa'l-shayb*), and want and superabundance (*al-qilla wa'l-kathra*), afford a similar vision of the multiple possibilities latent in the Qur'anic text.⁶¹

Social conduct and comportment

Tha'ālibī discusses *iqtibās* from the Qur'an in relation to social conduct and comportment in chapters 11 and 12 with respect to 'women, children and brothers' (*al-nisā' wa'l-awlād wa'l-ikhwān*) and 'food and drink' (*al-ṭa'ām wa'l-sharāb*). Both of these chapters explore dimensions particular to its subject matter according to a pattern of opposites established in previous sections of the work. For example, while the first section of chapter 11 lauds marriage to women (*fī'l-nikāḥ wa dhikr al-nisā'*), the positive sentiment is tempered by the next section warning of the so-called 'wiles of women' (*kayd al-nisā'*) in reference to Q. 12:28: *your [womanly] guile is great (inna kaydakunna 'azīm)*.⁶² Women's use of *iqtibās* is also addressed. For instance, one story features a woman whose speech consisted solely of quotations from the Qur'an.⁶³ The sections on food and drink pertain to the fruits mentioned in the Qur'an. Tha'ālibī cites verses in which a poet extols the fig (*tīn*) over the olive (*zaytūn*) because it is mentioned first in Q. 95:1.⁶⁴

Speech

The use of *iqtibās* in speech is the subject of chapters 13, 14 and 15. In chapter 13, after an introductory section devoted to the praise of eloquence, Tha'ālibī provides a series of excerpts from thirteen orations (*khuṭab*) in historical order from the Prophet to 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 296/908), in order to demonstrate the practice of quotation from the Qur'an.⁶⁵ Displays of Qur'anic eloquence compared to human speech follow in the next section entitled 'Challenges and Retorts' (*mu'āraḍāt wa munāqaḍāt*). Tha'ālibī here relates stories where a person offers up a line of poetry and another person demonstrates that it is less eloquent than a corresponding verse of the Qur'an with the same meaning.⁶⁶ These are followed by instances of clever extemporaneous speech (*muḥāḍarāt*), such as the line that allegedly occurred to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib when he saw a group of men playing chess, quoting Q. 21:52 and speaking the words of Abraham, 'What are these "statues" to which you bow down?'⁶⁷ Chapter 14 continues with examples of Qur'anic usage that highlight the instantaneous recall of the responder in the genre of the so-called *al-jawābāt al-muskita* or the 'silencing retorts'. Here, the shared knowledge of the Qur'an is used often in highly inventive ways. For example, once someone insulted Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim Abū'l-'Aynā' (d. 283/896), calling him Abū'l-'Amyā', punning on his name, alleging his blindness rather than his sight. Instantly, he hurled back an insult taken from Q. 22:46: *Indeed their eyes are not blind, but their hearts are blind within their chests*, and the hearts [in this passage] are men like you.⁶⁸

Politics

Iqtibās in the field of politics is another central topic of this work. Although this topic is covered only in one chapter (chapter 18), it is the longest in the work, totalling nearly eighty pages in the published edition.⁶⁹ The main sources for this chapter are the letters of the three leading chancery stylists of Buyid Iraq and Iran roughly contemporary with Tha'ālibī: Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābi', 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Yūsuf al-Shīrāzī (d. 388/998) and al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995).⁷⁰ Tha'ālibī focuses upon the letters of investiture for office (*'uhūd*), from which he quotes extensively, since these letters enumerate

the particular duties of the office holders; he then quotes from the Qur'an to demonstrate that the particular duty was a divine command.⁷¹

Tha'ālibī's excerpts from political letters with Qur'anic citations also demonstrate how the Qur'an was utilised in other types of political letters (*sultāniyyāt*), namely those concerning the protection of roads and borders, the return of fugitives, market regulations, conquest and other topics.⁷² Similarly, his selection from friendly letters (*ikhwāniyyāt*) covers most common themes.⁷³ Tha'ālibī chooses sections from letters and does not provide the entire letter. It is interesting to note that his collection mainly features letters from the *littérateurs* of his own time.

Literary practice

Chapters 19, 20 and 21 address *iqtibās* in formal literary practices, such as in proverbs, poetry and rhetorical devices. Tha'ālibī's section on *iqtibās* in verse focuses mainly on poetry that borrows its meaning from the Qur'an. In one passage, Tha'ālibī begins with a verse from the poet Ismā'īl b. Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī (d. 173/789–90), 'God has dispersed that which I have gathered of knowledge between the donkeys, sheep and cattle' (*qad ḍayya'a'llāhu mā jama'tu min adabin/bayna'l-ḥamīri wa bayna'l-shā'i wa'l-baqari*). Tha'ālibī then cites poems by al-Manṣūr al-Namarī (d. 190/805–6), Abū 'Ubāda al-Walīd b. 'Ubayd al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897), Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. Aws (d. 231–2/845–6) and Abū'l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), which all seemingly refer to Q. 25:44: *Indeed they are like cattle, nay they have gone even further astray*. According to Tha'ālibī, this is a demonstration of the manner in which several poets may all make use of the same Qur'anic image.⁷⁴ Tha'ālibī continues this act of discovering Qur'anic antecedents in the following section dealing with what he terms the poets' 'hidden and elegant *iqtibās*' (*al-iqtibāsāt al-khafīyya al-laṭīfa*). At one point, he even suggests that one of the verses anthologised by Abū Tammām in his *Ḥamāsa* was so close in meaning to the Qur'an, that it was 'as if' the pre-Islamic poet was practising *iqtibās*.⁷⁵ The remainder of the sections of the chapter dealing with poetry addresses generic poetic genres (*aḡhrād*), such as panegyric poetry

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(*madh*), blame poetry (*'itāb*) and love poetry (*ghazal*), and considers cases of Qur'anic *iqtibās* within them.⁷⁶

In chapter 21, Tha'ālibī moves from the discussion of poetic *iqtibās* to the topic of poetic and rhetorical devices found in the Qur'an, such as concision (*ijāz*), metaphor (*isti'āra*), likeness (*tash-bīh*) and figurative language (*majāz*). Here, Tha'ālibī seems to be suggesting that one who considers the Qur'an's own use of language can derive general rules and standards relating to compositional style and eloquence. It is unclear, however, whether Tha'ālibī believed that following these general rules was a form of *iqtibās*.⁷⁷

Dream interpretations, prognostications, invocations and amulets

Several chapters explore *iqtibās* and its relation to hidden knowledge. For example, chapter 17 concerns interpretations of dreams and visions in the light of Qur'anic verses. The first section of the chapter provides accounts in which particular visions are interpreted, stressing the possibility for multiple and contradictory meanings of the same symbols and the applicability of various Qur'anic verses. The second section of the chapter contains a list of symbols in dreams, the meaning of which is always established because of their clear reference to Qur'anic verses. For example, a dream about meat implies slander (*ghība*) because of Q. 49:12, which says: *Would any one of you wish to eat the flesh of his dead brother, so they made it hateful*.⁷⁸

Chapters 22 and 23 deal with Qur'anic quotation in the interpretation and recitation of the Qur'an and the act of finding an omen from the Qur'an (*tafā'ul*).⁷⁹ Chapter 24 addresses various types of invocations to God, which are also quotations from the Qur'an.⁸⁰ The last chapter, chapter 25, concludes the work with reference to theurgical uses of the Qur'an, such as the use of Qur'anic expressions on amulets for pains and illnesses.⁸¹

Leitmotifs in the *Kitāb al-Iqtibās*

Having considered the main topics of the work in detail, three main leitmotifs of the work can be seen. In the first place, it is clear that throughout the text, Tha'ālibī considers the Qur'an as a *productive*

source for new meanings. Time and time again, Tha'ālibī clusters *akhbār* (accounts), letters or poems that quote from or allude to the same verses of the Qur'an. This clustering serves to demonstrate the seemingly inexhaustible productive possibilities latent in the source text, as well as the artistry of the individual authors in incorporating or adapting particular verses on the level of both style and meaning.

The second major leitmotif of the work, in some ways the converse of the first, is the *universal application of Qur'anic expressions*. Throughout the work, Tha'ālibī incorporates Qur'anic borrowings into an almost limitless range of social, intellectual and literary contexts. In this compendium, the Qur'an speaks to a wide plurality of topics that can, and often do, appear to be opposed to one another, such that Tha'ālibī is able to discuss the virtues of generosity and frugality while finding Qur'anic support for both.

The third major leitmotif of the work is that *new Qur'anic meanings are discoverable*. Throughout the many chapters dealing with religio-political history, practical ethics, social comportment, literary production and even magical practices, Tha'ālibī demonstrates that new meanings of the Qur'anic text are always to be uncovered. For Tha'ālibī, the modes of discovery of new meanings are themselves plural. Strenuous exercise of the rational mind (while certainly praiseworthy) is no more important than modes of discovery that occur through witty repartee in the course of an amusing anecdote or through revelation in a dream.

The *Adīb's* Qur'an: *Al-Iqtibās* within Tha'ālibī's Oeuvre and Thought

In Molière's play *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (The Bourgeois Gentleman), the famed Monsieur Jourdain asks for something to be written in a form that is neither verse nor prose. His interlocutor, the 'philosophy master', replies to him that 'there is no other way to express oneself besides verse and prose . . . because if it is not verse it is prose, and if it is not prose, it is verse'.⁸²

Unlike the philosophy master who submits a facile answer to Monsieur Jourdain's question, *udabā'* like Tha'ālibī were very

interested in the relationships between poetry and prose, and spent much time and effort on the art of transforming poetry into prose and vice versa.⁸³ Tha'ālibī devoted a number of books to the topic of 'prosification' in addition to his comments on the subject in his *Yatīmat al-dahr* and its continuation *Tatimmat al-Yatīma*. In fact, Tha'ālibī is credited with the oldest surviving work on the subject of prosification (*nathr al-naẓm*) in his work *Nathr al-naẓm wa ḥall al-ʿaḡd*.⁸⁴ Moreover, in addition to this work, he wrote three other treatises on the topic of prosification. The first two of these works, *Siḥr al-balāgha wa sirr al-barāʿa* and *Nuzhat al-albāb wa ʿumdat al-kuttāb*, consider the practice of prosification (*ḥall al-naẓm*) and rendering the product into simple prose (*nathr*).⁸⁵ Thus, for Tha'ālibī, though 'prose was not verse' it could be fashioned from verse and could thus display much of the latter's imagery and expressiveness.

Similarly, for Tha'ālibī and other *udabāʾ*, not all prose was simple prose. In an unpublished work entitled *Sajʿ al-manthūr* (Rhymed and Rhythmic Prose), also known as *Risālat sajʿ iyyāt al-Tha'ālibī* and *Qurādat al-dhahab*, Tha'ālibī collects examples of prosification, this time rendering the poetic verses into rhymed and rhythmic prose (*sajʿ*) and proverbs (*amthāl*).⁸⁶ The work is addressed to state secretaries and bureaucrats (*kuttāb*) in particular, and he encouraged them to memorise and use these examples in their correspondence (*mukātabāt*). According to Tha'ālibī, it is *sajʿ* and poetry (*shiʿr*), not unadorned prose, which are suitable for use in official missives or letters of friendship. In this work, Tha'ālibī suggests that a hierarchy in the modes of speech exists: *sajʿ* and *shiʿr* are more artistic, refined and appropriate in certain contexts than unadorned *nathr*.

Finally, there is the case of Qur'anic language that is not prose or verse or *sajʿ*. Although according to some scholars the Qur'an may partake of attributes of all three forms, other scholars were wary of comparing divine and human speech.⁸⁷ On various occasions in his works, and in the introduction of *al-Iqtibās*, Tha'ālibī acknowledges the Qur'an's inimitability (*iʿjāz*). However, he does not explain his justification for his belief in the doctrine of *iʿjāz*, although by his time a number of scholars had provided detailed treatments of the topic.⁸⁸

For Tha'ālibī, the Qur'an as divine language is of an entirely different register than human language. Human language, as we have seen above, includes *nathr*, *saj'* and *shi'r*, and the *adīb* may express the same idea in more than one form. These different forms have different uses and there are contexts in which one form is more suitable than another. Indeed, as we have just noted, the well-trained *adīb* studies the art of transforming speech from one mode to another and is sensitive to the differences between forms. Divine language, however, can only be used through *iqtibās* to embellish or improve human speech as it sets the standard for the utmost eloquence in all areas of human discourse. There is ultimately no manner of transforming human speech into divine language.

Throughout Tha'ālibī's *al-Iqtibās*, we have seen the many ways in which quotation and allusion to the Qur'an were practised for four centuries in the Muslim community. As an *adīb* skilled in both poetry and prose, Tha'ālibī was sensitive to the technical obstacles involved in the quotation of and allusion to the Qur'an, such as the fact that verses of the Qur'an must be incorporated in poetry in a somewhat different manner than in prose. Yet, his work is broader than a discourse on the technical aspects of the art of *iqtibās*. As we have demonstrated above, Tha'ālibī's *al-Iqtibās* is both a record of and a guide to the innumerable ways humans encountered the miraculously eloquent words of their Lord.

NOTES

- 1 Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Taṣwīr al-fannī fī'l-Qur'ān* (Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1959); Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalaf Allāh, *al-Fann al-qaṣaṣī fī'l-Qur'ān al-karīm*, ed. Khalīl 'Abd al-Karīm (Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Intishār al-'Arabī, 1999).
- 2 Ibtisām Marhūn al-Ṣaffār, *Athar al-Qur'ān fī'l-adab al-'arabī fī'l-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī* (Amman, Juhayna, 2005); Wadād al-Qādī, 'The Impact of the Qur'an on the Epistolography of 'Abd al-Ḥamid b. Yaḥyā al-Kātib (d. 132/750)' (chapter 11), pp. 341–79 in this volume; eadem, 'The Limitations of Qur'ānic Usage in Early Arabic Poetry: The Example of a Khārijite Poem', in Wolfhart Heinrichs and Gregor Schoeler, eds, *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag* (Beirut, Steiner, 1994), pp. 162–81; eadem, *Bishr b. Abī Kubār al-Balawī: Namūdhaj min al-nathr al-fannī al-mubakkir fī'l-Yaman* (Beirut, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1985); eadem and Mustansir Mir, 'Literature and the Qur'an', *EQ*, vol. III, pp. 205–27.

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- 3 Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām, *Athar al-Qur'ān fī taṭawwūr al-naqd al-'arabi ilā ākhir al-qarn al-rābi' al-hijri* (Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1968).
- 4 For a general treatment of the topic, see Qāḍī and Mir, 'Literature and the Qur'ān', *EQ*, vol. III, pp. 205–27; Duncan B. Macdonald and Seeger A. Bonebakker, 'Iktibās', *EP*, vol. III, pp. 1091b–92a; Amidu Sanni, *The Arabic Theory of Prosification and Versification: On Ḥall and Naẓm in Arabic Theoretical Discourse* (Stuttgart, Steiner, 1998), pp. 135–53.
- 5 Ṣaffār, *Athar al-Qur'ān*; Qāḍī and Mir, 'Literature and the Qur'ān', *EQ*, vol. III, p. 215.
- 6 For the use of the Qur'ān in poetry, see 'Abd al-Hādī al-Fukaykī, *al-Iqtibās min al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Damascus, Dār al-Numayr, 1996).
- 7 Ḥikmat Faraj Badrī, *Mu'jam āyāt al-iqtibās* (Baghdad, Dār al-Rashīd li'l-Nashr, 1980). See also Claude France Audebert, 'Emprunts faits au Coran par quelques poètes du IIe/VIIIe siècle', *Arabica* 47, no. 3 (2000), pp. 457–77.
- 8 See Qāḍī, 'The Impact of the Qur'ān', p. 343 in this volume.
- 9 See al-Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *Qurāḍat al-dhahab*, ed. al-Shādhilī Bū Yahyā (Tunis, al-Sharika al-Tūnisiyya li'l-Tawzī', 1972), p. 99, cited in Sanni, *Arabic Theory*, p. 139.
- 10 Wolfhart Heinrichs explains that for the Arab critics 'there is a stable and limited pool of motifs or poetical themes (*ma'ānī*) that is worthy to be expressed in poetry', thus *sariqa* became 'a way of life for later poets'. Therefore, judgement on a particular *sariqa* depends on how elegantly a poet employed the borrowed meaning and whether he introduced a change or improvement in structure (*lafẓ*), content (*ma'nā*) or context (e.g. use in a different genre). See Wolfhart Heinrichs, 'An Evaluation of *Sariqa*', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5–6 (1987–8), pp. 358 and 359.
- 11 Ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Zahra*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, 2 vols (Amman, Maktabat al-Manār, 1985), vol. II, pp. 815–20.
- 12 Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, *al-Risāla al-'Adhrā'*, ed. Zakī Mubārak (Cairo, Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1931), p. 7.
- 13 Sanni, *Arabic Theory*, p. 137.
- 14 Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, *Thamarāt al-awraq*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 2005), p. 260.
- 15 See Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, ed. David S. Margoliouth, 7 vols (London, Luzac and Co., 1923–35), vol. VI, p. 328, cited in Sanni, *Arabic Theory*, p. 142. Sanni mentions that this work may be taken as the third part of 'Amīdī's trilogy on the subject of textual borrowings if we take into consideration his two other works: *al-Irshād ilā ḥall al-manẓūm* and *al-Hidāya ilā naẓm al-manthūr*.
- 16 See Qāḍī and Mir, 'Literature and the Qur'ān', p. 216.
- 17 See Sanni, *Arabic Theory*, pp. 143ff.
- 18 Shihāb al-Dīn Abū'l-'Abbās al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 14 vols (Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1922), vol. I, pp. 191–2.
- 19 Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 4 vols (Cairo, Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, [2000]), vol. I, p. 483.
- 20 Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī attributes this same opinion to Muḥyī'l-Dīn al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277–8) and Bahā' al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 763/1361). See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Sharḥ 'uqūd al-jumān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Uthmān (Beirut, Dār

- al-Fikr, n.d.), p. 168; idem, 'Raf' al-bās wa kashf al-iltibās fī ḍarb al-mathal min al-Qur'ān wa'l-iqtibās', in idem, *al-Hāwī li'l-fatāwī*, 2 vols (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1352/[1933]), vol. I, p. 278.
- 21 Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir fī adab al-kātib wa'l-shā'ir*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥūfi and Badawī Ṭabāna, 4 vols (Cairo, Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1962), vol. III, p. 200.
- 22 See Suyūṭī, 'Raf' al-bās', vol. I, p. 259.
- 23 'Alī Ibn Khalaf al-Kātib, *Mawādd al-bayān*, ed. Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Ḍāmin (Damascus, Dār al-Bashā'ir, 2003), pp. 44–5.
- 24 Suyūṭī attributes this opinion to his *hijāzī* contemporary qāḍī al-quḍāt Muḥyī'l-Dīn b. Abī'l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī. See Suyūṭī, *Sharḥ 'uqūd al-jumān*, p. 168. In 'Raf' al-bās', however, the strict prohibition seems to result from the use of *iqtibās* in poetry, see idem, 'Raf' al-bās', vol. I, p. 278.
- 25 See Dāwūd b. 'Umar b. Ibrāhīm al-Bākhilī, *al-Laṭīfa al-marḍiyya bi-sharḥ du'ā' al-shādhiliyya*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Naṣṣār (Cairo, Dār al-Karz, 2011), pp. 148–65.
- 26 See Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Hījja al-Ḥamawī, *Khizānat al-adab wa ghāyat al-arab* (Cairo, Būlāq, 1291/1882), p. 539. See also Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Qur'āniyya (Saudi Arabia, Wizārat al-Shu'un al-Islāmiyya, n.d.), p. 721; 'Abd al-'Aziz Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-kāfiya al-badī'iyya*, ed. Nasīb Nashāwī (Damascus, Majma' al-Lughā al-'Arabiyya, 1982), p. 326.
- 27 See Abū Manṣūr al-Tha'ālibī, *al-Iqtibās min al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, ed. Ibtisām Marhūn al-Ṣaffār, 2 vols (al-Manṣūra, Dār al-Wafā', 1992), vol. II, pp. 57–8.
- 28 See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muḥāḍara*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols (Cairo, 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1967), vol. I, p. 344; idem, *Aḥāsīn al-iqtinās fī maḥāsīn al-iqtibās*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm (Damascus, Dār al-Anwār, 1996).
- 29 See Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, pp. 719–27; idem, *Sharḥ 'uqūd al-jumān*, pp. 165–70; idem, 'Raf' al-bās', vol. I, pp. 259–84; idem, *Sharḥ maqāmāt Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, ed. Samīr Maḥmūd al-Durūbī, 2 vols (Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1989), vol. I, pp. 725–9.
- 30 See Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 5 vols (2 vols and 3 supplements) (Leiden, Brill, 1937–49), vol. II, p. 367 and supplement II, p. 394; Bilal Orfali, 'In Defense of the Use of Qur'ān in *Adab*: Ibn Abī l-Luṭf's *Raf' al-iltibās 'an munkir al-iqtibas'*, in Maurice A. Pomerantz and Aram A. Shahin, eds, *The Heritage of Arabo-Islamic Learning: Studies Presented to Wadad Kadi* (Leiden, Brill, 2016), pp. 498–527.
- 31 Qāḍī and Mīr, 'Literature and the Qur'ān', p. 215.
- 32 For a discussion of the miraculous nature (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān, see Sophia Vasalou, 'The Miraculous Eloquence of the Qur'ān: General Trajectories and Individual Approaches', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2002), pp. 23–53 and the sources listed there.
- 33 Ibn Khalaf al-Kātib, *Mawādd al-bayān*, pp. 44–5.
- 34 See also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal*, vol. I, p. 101. Even a non-Muslim like Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī' (d. 384/995) memorised the Qur'ān and used to quote its verses in his letters (*yuṣarrifu āyātahu fī rasā'ilih*). See Abū Manṣūr al-Tha'ālibī,

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- Yatīmat al-dahr fī maḥāsin ahl al-‘aṣr*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī'l-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, 4 vols (Cairo, Maṭba‘at al-Sa‘āda, 1956), vol. II, pp. 242–3.
- 35 Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā*, vol. I, pp. 191–3.
- 36 See Sarah R. bin Tyeer, ‘The Qur’an and the Aesthetics of *Adab: Hikāyat Abī'l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī* by Abū al-Muṭahhar al-Azdī (fl. Fifth/Eleventh Century)’ (chapter 9), pp. 275 and 282 in this volume.
- 37 See Fedwa Malti-Douglas, ‘Playing with the Sacred: Religious Intertext in *Adab* Discourse’, in Asma Afsaruddin and A.H. Mathias Zahniser, eds, *Humanism, Culture and Language in the Near East: Studies in Honor of Georg Krotkoff* (Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 1997), pp. 51–9; Geert Jan van Gelder, ‘Forbidden Firebrands: Frivolous *Iqtibās* (Quotation from the Qur’an) According to Medieval Arab Critics’, *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 20–21 (2002–3), pp. 3–16; Ulrich Marzolph, ‘The Quran and Jocular Literature’, *Arabica* 47, no. 3 (2000), pp. 478–87.
- 38 See van Gelder, ‘Forbidden Firebrands’, p. 4.
- 39 Tha’ālibī, *al-Iqtibās*, vol. I, p. 39.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., pp. 125–6.
- 43 Ibid., pp. 39–40.
- 44 See Bilal Orfali, ‘The Art of the *Muqaddima* in the Works of Abū Manṣūr al-Tha’ālibī (d. 429/1039)’, in Lale Behzadi and Vahid Behmardi, eds, *The Weaving of Words: Approaches to Classical Arabic Prose* (Beirut, Franz Steiner, 2009), pp. 181–202.
- 45 Tha’ālibī, *al-Iqtibās*, vol. I, pp. 39–43. For a useful overview of the work, see Claude Gilliot, ‘Un Florilège Coranique: Le *Iqtibās min al-qur’ān* de Abū Manṣūr al-Tha’ālibī (ob. 430/init. 3 oct. 1038 ou 429)’, *Arabica* 47, no. 3 (2000), pp. 494 ff.
- 46 In her introduction to Tha’ālibī, *al-Iqtibās*, vol. I, pp. 39–40, the editor reads the title of chapter 22 as *Fī funūn mukhtalifāt al-tartīb fī tarā’if al-ta’wīlāt wa laṭā’ifihā*; however, the title of the chapter in *al-Iqtibās*, vol. II, p. 209 is ‘*Fī funūn mukhtalifāt al-tartīb fī tarā’if/ḥarā’if al-tilāwāt wa laṭā’ifihā*’. Since the chapter concerns both Qur’anic interpretation and recitation, it is difficult to reconstruct the proper reading of the title.
- 47 The content of this chapter includes the following sections: *fī’l-faraj ba’d al-shidda wa’l-yusr ba’d al-‘usr*; *fī’l-tafā’ul min al-Qur’ān*; *fī dhikr al-qur’a*; *fī ḥubb al-waṭan*; *fī’l-yamīn*; *fī dhikr al-sulṭān*; *fī’l-hidya*; *fī’l-riyāh*; *fī dhikr al-dhahab wa faḍlihi*; *fī dhikr al-nār*; *fī dhikr al-fīl*; *fī dhikr al-ibl*; *fī dhikr al-khayl*; *fī dhikr suwar wa āy al-Qur’ān*.
- 48 Tha’ālibī, *al-Iqtibās*, vol. I, pp. 47–51.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 53–69.
- 50 See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 57–8 concerning Q. 55:29.
- 51 Ibid., p. 73. All translations of the Qur’an are from Arthur J. Arberry (*The Koran Interpreted* [London, Allen and Unwin, 1955]) with some modifications.
- 52 Tha’ālibī, *al-Iqtibās*, vol. I, pp. 84–5. The example in question is a correspondence in meaning between the prophetic hadith and Q. 9:75–7.
- 53 Ibid., pp. 111–14. See, for instance, the use of Q. 24:55.
- 54 Ibid., pp. 188–9. See, for instance, his reference to God’s instruction of Adam in Q. 2:31 regarding the importance of teaching generally.

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- 55 Ibid., p. 193.
56 Ibid., p. 215.
57 Ibid., pp. 216–17.
58 Ibid., pp. 209–11 (*taqwā*), pp. 211–12 (*ṣabr*), pp. 212–13 (*shukr*), pp. 217–18 (*fi ṣilat al-raḥim*), p. 219 (*fi birr al-wālidayn*), p. 229 (*fi'l-mashūra*), pp. 231–3 (*fi adab al-ḥarb*).
59 Ibid., p. 226 (*mudārāt*), p. 243 (*fi dhamm dhī'l-wajhayn*).
60 Ibid., pp. 254–7. See Q. 73:20 (in favour) and Q. 2:267 (against).
61 Ibid., pp. 257–61.
62 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 5–6 (*nikāḥ*), pp. 7–8 (*fi dhikr kaydihinna*).
63 Ibid., pp. 7–8.
64 Ibid., p. 17.
65 Ibid., pp. 23–31.
66 Ibid., pp. 31–3.
67 Ibid., p. 33. See also Qādī, 'The Impact of the Qur'an', pp. 365–6 in this volume.
68 Ibid., p. 45.
69 Ibid., pp. 73–149.
70 For the letters of Ṣābi', see Klaus U. Hachmeier, *Die Briefe Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi's (st. 384/994 A.H./A.D.)* (Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 2002); for the letters of Shirāzī, see J. Christoph Bürgel, *Die Hofkorrespondenz 'Adud ad-Daulas und ihr Verhältnis zu anderen historischen Quellen der frühen Büyiden* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1965); for the letters of al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād, see Maurice A. Pomerantz, *Licit Magic and Divine Grace: The Life and Letters of al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995)* (Leiden, Brill, forthcoming).
71 Tha'ālibi, *al-Iqtibās*, vol. II, pp. 81–9.
72 Ibid., pp. 90–130.
73 Ibid., pp. 131–49.
74 Ibid., pp. 165–6.
75 Ibid., pp. 169–70.
76 Ibid., pp. 171–93.
77 Ibid., pp. 197–205.
78 Ibid., pp. 61–9.
79 Ibid., pp. 209–15.
80 Ibid., pp. 245–57.
81 Ibid., pp. 261–9.
82 'Tout ce qui est prose n'est point vers; et tout ce qui n'est point vers est prose.' Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1883), p. 30 (act 3, scene 3).
83 See Sanni, *Arabic Theory*.
84 Abū Maṣū' al-Tha'ālibi, *Nathr al-naẓm wa ḥall al-'aqd*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Tammām (Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1990). For a discussion of this work, see *ibid.*, pp. 15ff.
85 *Sihr al-balāgha* has been published several times, while *Nuzhat al-albāb* survives in one manuscript in the 'Arif Ḥikmat Library (no. 271-Majāmi') in Medina and draws extensively upon *Sihr al-balāgha*. For the published editions of *Sihr al-Balāgha*, see Bilal Orfali, 'The Works of Abū Maṣū' al-Tha'ālibi (350–429/961–1039)', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 40, no. 3 (2009), pp. 291–2. In these two works, *Sihr al-balāgha wa sirr al-barā'a* and *Nuzhat al-albāb wa*

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'umdat al-kuttāb, in similar fashion to his *Nathr al-nazm*, Tha'ālibī provides verses of poetry which he transformed into prose in a manner that lacked any analytical standards of guidance or explicit categorisation according to the techniques of prosification. In *Siḥr al-balāgha*, he lists the poets whose poetry is transformed into prose without providing quotations from the verses. In both of these works, Qur'anic verses are also transformed into prose sayings; in Tha'ālibī's mind, this demonstrates the proximity of the practice of *iqtibās* to that of *ḥall*.

- 86 Tha'ālibī, however, gives the original verses at the beginning of each chapter. *Saj' al-manthūr* survives in four manuscripts in Istanbul: MS 2337/2, Topkapı Ahmet III Library; MS 1188, Yeni Cami Library; MS 741/1, Arapca Yazmalar University; and MS 3207/1, Bayezid Umumi Library.
- 87 For an important discussion of scholars' opinions on the presence of *saj'* in the Qur'an, see Devin J. Stewart, 'Saj' in the Qur'an: Prosody and Structure', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21, no. 2 (1990), pp. 101–39.
- 88 For example, Rummānī in his *al-Nukat fi i'jāz al-Qur'ān*, Khaṭṭābī in his *Bayān i'jāz al-Qur'ān* and Bāqillānī in his *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, as well as various other theologians who commented on the topic.