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PhD dissertation

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The Interpretation of Literary Works in Pre-Modern Arabic Literature: Theoretical Framework for Interpretation and Critical Analyses of the Short Narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights*

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Középkori arab irodalmi művek értelmezése: Elméleti kérdések és *Az Ezeregyéjszaka meséi* című gyűjteményes kötet rövid elbeszéléseinek kritikai elemzése

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Introduction

After about three hundred years of research, it would seem that there is little left to say about *The Thousand and One Nights*. Indeed, many an avenue had been opened, researched, and exhausted. The most obvious example concerns the history of this widely popular collection, the research of which was the very first inquiry ever made. This process is natural in the life of any manuscript whose provenance has to be explored before further questions can be raised. It is ever so relevant in the *Nights*' case since there has never been a complete authoritative manuscript discovered which would have limited the speculations about its origin. The interest in the history of the collection was fueled for centuries by its dispersed nature. Research of the *Nights* has not been propelled by the question of the comparative study of various manuscripts, which could have finally brought the inquiries to a satisfying conclusion regarding authorship and age. On the contrary, the gradually realized futility of such endeavors steered scholars throughout the centuries towards discovering and examining details that could not, in essence, complete our knowledge of the collection, only deepen our understanding of it.

This observation stands true for every aspect of the *Nights* research. Whether historical, cultural, or literary, the sum of its results cannot provide a complete picture of the collection. It can certainly not answer the most fundamental question of 'What is *The Thousand and One Nights*?'. Many answers exist to the question. They are always right, but, at the same time, they are always lacking. However, this dichotomy cannot be kept against the research method. It is simply in the nature of the *Nights*. Precisely, it is why there is still a lot to discover about the collection after three hundred years of research.

The State of Research

Historical inquiries have been exhausted, that is true. However, the cultural relevance of the stories is still present. It is an astonishing characteristic of the *Nights* that it can redefine itself according to the changing times and the various cultures.[1] This resilience is evident in its ability

[1] The history of the research of *The Thousand and One Nights* is extensive. It is impossible to give a detailed account of it in the framework of the present study. Accordingly, the following summary will concentrate on its disciplinary development, only concentrating in more detail on the aspects that have relevance to the present inquiries to be able to place this work in the context of the present state of research. Secondary literature will be provided in the footnotes to provide examples and help navigate the vast number of sources. However, these lists are by no way complete.
For an exhaustive bibliography concerning the *Nights*, one may consult Ulrich Marzolph's *The* Arabian Nights *Bibliography*, which is updated regularly: https://wwwuser.gwdg.de/~umarzol/arabiannights.html (last accessed on 10th September, 2023) In 2016, the bibliography was also published. (Marzolph, U.: The Arabian Nights International Bibliography, in: *Arabic Manuscripts of the* Thousand and One Nights*: Presentation and Critical*

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to become part of the culture it encounters, further widening its research horizons. Folklore studies, translation studies, and even literary studies are good examples of this flexibility of the material. While folklore studies attempt to bring this material into the fold of Western folklore and regard the material as part of a common heritage,[2] translation studies concentrate on the question of adopting an unfamiliar material written, in most cases, in a fundamentally different language, into the language of the target audience and also adapting it into its culture.[3] Moreover, there is the future of the collection to consider since, over time, it also considerably influenced the literature of the target culture.[4] Traces of the *Nights* can be recognized both in

Editions of Four Noteworthy Texts; Observations on Some Osmanli Translations, dir. A. Chraïbi, Paris (espaces&signes), 2016, 493–564.)

[2] Hasan El-Shamy, for example, argues for the appropriation of the tale-type and motive index to Arabic folk literature in general, and *The Thousand and One Nights* in particular. See: El-Shamy, H. M.: Psychologically-Based Criteria for Classification by Motif and Tale Type, *Journal of Folklore Research*, 34, 1997, 233–243; El-Shamy, H.: A Motif Index of Alf Laylah Wa Laylah: Its Relevance to the Study of Culture, Society, the Individual, and Character Transmutation, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 36, 2005, 235–268. He also prepared both the tale-type index of the Arab world (El-Shamy, H. M.: *Types of the Folktale in the Arab World: A Demographically Oriented Tale-Type Index*, Bloomington (Indiana University Press, 2004.) and the motif index for the *Nights* (El-Shamy, H. M.: *A Motif Index of The Thousand and One Nights*, Bloomington (Indiana University Press, 2006.). Various other studies connect the collection to oral tradition and folk literature: Chraïbi, A.: Classification des traditions narratives arabes par «conte-type»: Application a l'étude de quelques rôles de poète, *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 50, 1998, 29–59; El-Shamy, H.: The Oral Connections of the *Arabian Nights*, in: *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, I, eds. U. Marzolph and R. van Leeuwen, Santa Barbara – Denver – Oxford (ABC-CLIO), 2004, 9–13; Tuczay, Ch. A.: Motifs in *The Arabian Nights* and in Ancient and Medieval European Literature: A Comparison, *Folklore*, 116, 2005, 272–291; El-Shamy, H.: A *Motif Index of Alf Laylah Wa Laylah*: Its Relevance to the Study of Culture, Society, the Individual, and Character Transmutation, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 36, 2005, 235–268; El-Shamy, H. M.: Mythological Constituents of *Alf layla wa layla*, in *The* Arabian Nights *and Orientalism: Perspectives from East and West*, eds. Y. Yamanaka and T. Nishio, London – New York (I. B. Tauris), 2006, 25–46; Marzolph, U.: The *Arabian Nights* in Comparative Folk Narrative Research, in *The* Arabian Nights *and Orientalism: Perspectives from East and West*, eds. Y. Yamanaka and T. Nishio, London – New York (I. B. Tauris), 2006, 3–24.

[3] For a list of studies relating to the question of translations, see: fn.50.

[4] Richard van Leeuwen is one of the leading scholars whose names are connected to the study of contemporary literature and the influence the *Nights* exert on it. See: van Leeuwen, R.: *The* Thousand and One Nights *and Twentieth-Century Fiction: Intertextual Readings*, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2018. However, numerous studies treat the subject in various contexts. See, for example: Caracciolo, P. L.: Wilkie Collins and the Ladies of Baghdad, or the Sleeper Awakened, in *The* Arabian Nights *in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of* The Thousand and One Nights *into British Culture*, ed. P. L. Caracciolo, Houndmills – London (MacMillan Press), 1988, 143–177; Grant, A.: The Genie and the Albatross: Coleridge and the *Arabian Nights*, in *The* Arabian Nights *in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of* The Thousand and One Nights *into British Culture*, ed. P. L. Caracciolo, Houndmills – London (MacMillan Press), 1988, 111–129; Slater, M.: Dickens in Wonderland, in *The* Arabian Nights *in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of* The Thousand and One Nights *into British Culture*, ed. P. L. Caracciolo, Houndmills – London (MacMillan Press), 1988, 130–142.Aravamudan, S.: The Adventure Chronotope and the Oriental Xenotrope: Galland, Sheridan, and Joyce Domesticate *The Arabian Nights*, in The Arabian Nights *in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2008, 235–263; Caracciolo, P. L.: The House of Fiction and *le jardin anglo-chinois*, *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 7, 2004, 199–211; Fishburn, E.: Traces of the *Thousand and One Nights* in Borges, *Middle Eastern Literature*, 7, 2004, 213–222; Fulford, T.: Coleridge and the Oriental Tale, in The Arabian Nights *in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2008, 213–234; Landry, D.: William Beckford's Vathek and the Uses of Oriental Re-enactment, in The Arabian Nights *in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2008, 167–194; Watt, J.: 'The peculiar character of the Arabian tale': William Beckford and *The Arabian Nights*, in The Arabian Nights *in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2008, 195–211.

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literature and art in the general sense.[5] In the 18th century, a new genre was based on it in Western Europe, which became known as the Oriental tale. Till the present day, the *Nights* has not ceased to exert its influence both in Eastern and Western cultures, effectively producing newer and newer material for research.

Besides its legacy, the original material may still provide for scientific research, be it as varied as it is. The literary interest in the material was relatively late to appear, but it proved to be growing steadily in the last couple of decades. More specialized inquiries have taken over the discussion of particular stories. Folklore research, which has definite literary relations, has already been mentioned. There are also such inquiries that concentrate on specific elements within the stories, such as slave-girls or supernatural beings.[6] Furthermore, various ideological concepts within the work are examined. Political or religious considerations[7] and social relations[8] are common subjects in these cases. These approaches have strong socio-cultural allusions and are more concerned with the text's connection to reality and handle the text as more of a cultural product than a literary work.

More text-centered studies explore, for example, the allegorical and metaphorical allusions[9] or the narrative techniques of the collection.[10] However, interestingly enough, genre

[5] Numerous studies provide information on the influence of the collection on music or film-making. See, for example: Irwin, R.: *A Thousand and One Nights* at the Movies, *Middle Eastern Literature*, 7, 2004, 223–233; Ouyang, W-Ch.: Whose Story Is It? Sindbad the Sailor in Literature and Film, *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 7, 2004, 133–147; Al-Taee, N.: Under the Spell of Magic: The Oriental Tale in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*, in The Arabian Nights *in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2008, 265–295.

[6] For example, slave-girls (van Gelder, G. J.: Slave-Girl Lost and Regained: Transformation of a Story, *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 201–217.); jinns and other supernatural beings: Gerhardt, M. I.: *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of The Thousand and One Nights*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1963, 273–337; Irwin, R.: *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London – New York (Tauris Parke Paperbacks), 2005, 178–213; Warner, M.: *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the* Arabian Nights, London (Chatto & Windus), 2011, esp. 33–83, 87–159; from a Western point of view: Duggan, A. E.: From Genie to Efreet: Fantastic Apparitions in the Tales of "The Arabian Nights", *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 26, 2015, 113–135.

[7] Mahdi, M.: *The Thousand and One Nights (Alf Layla wa-Layla): From the Earliest Known Sources*, Leiden – New York (E. J. Brill), 1994, III, 127–139; Irwin, R.: Political Though in *The Thousand and One Nights*, *Marvels and Tales*, 18, 2004, 246–257; Starkey, J.: Death, Paradise and the Arabian Nights, *Mortality*, 14, 2009, 286–302.

[8] El-Shamy, H.: Siblings in *Alf layla wa-layla*, *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 170–186. Feminist discourse: Enderwitz, S.: Shahrazād Is One of Us: Practical Narrative, Theoretical Discussion, and Feminist Discourse, *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 187–200.

[9] Hamori, A.: An Allegory from The Arabian Nights: The City of Brass, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 34, 1971, 9–19; El-Zein, A.: The Symbolical and Mystical Meanings in "ʿAbdullah of the Sea and ʿAbdullah of the Land" (*The Arabian Nights*), *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 19, 2008, 397–409.

[10] The most significant work in this field is David Pinault's monography on the narrative techniques of the *Nights* (Pinault, D.: *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*, Leiden (Brill), 1992.). However, there are numerous studies discussing the subject. See, for example: Hamori, A.: A Comic Romance from the Thousand and One Nights: The Tale of Two Viziers, *Arabica*, 30, 1983, 38–56; Haring, L.: Framing in Oral Narrative, *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 229–245; Irwin, 2005, 214–236; Müller, K.: Formulas and Formulaic Pictures: Elements of Oral Literature in the *Thousand and One Nights*, *The* Arabian Nights *and Orientalism: Perspectives from East and West*, eds. Y. Yamanaka and T. Nishio, London – New York (I. B. Tauris), 2006, 47–67; Thomann, J.: The End of the *Arabian Nights* in Early MS Tradition, in: *Contacts and interaction: Proceedings of the 27th Congress of*

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studies have not been given much consideration. That is not to say that genre did not or does not concern scholars, but it seems to be more of a given than a problem to be scientifically approached. Classifications are made but not questioned any further. My present study joins the *Nights* research at this point, with the definite intent to compensate for the lack of a theoretically based generic study of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Problems and Observations

The present inquiry grew from my preoccupation with the question of generic classification and its apparent dichotomy of strict regulation and flexible application concerning the stories of the *Nights*. In Western research, there is no shortage of generic terms applied to the stories of the collection but what is missing is any consensus regarding the application of these terms. In other words, there is no consensus on what should be considered the basis of such generic classifications. This dichotomy in Western research raises concerns regarding its validity in the literary study of the collection. Thematic, cultural, and historical considerations are just as likely to be regarded as good classificatory categories as stricter generic terms such as *fairy-tale* or *exemplum*. Thus, my discussion of the *Nights* is based on the idea of *genre* as it ponders its relevance in the context of pre-modern Arabic prose literature. However, instead of a strict classificatory approach, the present study takes a more theoretical stance and attempts to build a framework in which the collection's content can be read.

Scholars tend to assume one of two approaches when discussing *genre* in connection with the *Nights*. One is when a general systematization is intended for detailed examination or general descriptive purposes. Mia I. Gerhardt's seminal work, *The Art of Story-Telling in the Thousand and One Nights,* is an excellent example. Enno Littmann also took a similar approach.[11] Besides these specialized works, scholars tend to categorize the collection's stories in general terms. Geert Jan van Gelder writes that the *Nights* is the "vast collection of tales, stories, legends, romances, fables, anecdotes, farces and jokes".[12] After lamenting the fact that the *Nights* is mainly known as a collection of fairy-tales, Robert Irwin widens the scope of

the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants Helsinki 2014, eds. J. Hämeen-Anttila, P. Koskikallio and I. Lindstedt, Leuven (Peeters), 2017, 477–485; Thomann, J.: Reshaping the Frame Story of the *Thousand and One Nights*: The Coherence of Prologue and Epilogue in the Earliest Existing Arabic Mss, in: The Thousand and One Nights*: Sources and Transformations in Literature, Art, and Science*, ed. I. Akel and W. Granara, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2020, 27–36.

[11] Littmann, E.: Zur Entstehung und Geschichte von Tausendundeiner Nacht, in *Die Erzählungen aus den tausend und ein Nächten: Vollständige deutsche Ausgabe in sechs Bänden: Zum ersten Mal nach dem arabischen Urtext der Calcuttaer Ausgabe vom Jahre 1839*, VI, transl. E. Littmann, Leipzig (Insel-Verlag), 1921, 681–771.

[12] van Gelder, G. J.: Compleat Men, Women and Books: On Medieval Arabic Encyclopaedism, in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996*, ed. P. Binkley, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 1997, 242.

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stories found in the *Nights* when saying, "[i]t also includes long heroic epics, wisdom literature, fables, cosmological fantasy, pornography, scatological jokes, mystical devotional tales, chronicles of low life, rhetorical debates and masses of poetry".[13]

The other approach does not strive to systematize the content of the collection. It takes a particular work, or a group of works, and discusses them under the umbrella of one specific generic term. They are either general discussions of particular works or comparative studies. Romance and love-story are the two most popular names in secondary literature,[14] but one may also meet such terms as epic[15] and even the detective story.[16] Be it as may, these studies into the various fields of genre share a great degree of subjectivity. Whether directly or indirectly, they use the Western genre-system to explain the works at hand, as a result of which the stories under scrutiny are evaluated according to such requirements that may not be part of the original context of the works.

The approaches mentioned above show a great deal of similarity in that they employ many genre-denoting terms meant to categorize but, in reality, only achieve to represent different approaches to the works. Lacking a theoretical background, they remain isolated and fail to account for a generic system in the framework of which the stories of the *Nights* can be critically evaluated. The result of this lack of a theory that would support a unified and competent literary approach is that not only the specific genres included in the collection are not determined, but it also remains uncertain to which genre a specific story belongs. The story of *Kemerezzeman and Budour* is an excellent example of the abovementioned problems. It is one of the most studied stories of the *Nights*, and, as such, it shows well the diverse attitudes scholars took concerning the story. It is a fairy-tale in Mia I. Gerhard's grandiose work.[17] It is discussed as a romance in Peter Heath's *Romance as Genre in 'The Thousand and One Nights'*[18] while Richard van Leeuwen expresses its connection to Greek romances.[19]

[13] Irwin, 2005, 2.
[14] Hamori, A.: Notes on Two Love Stories from the Thousand and One Nights, *Studia Islamica*, 43, 1976, 65–80; Hamori, 1983, 38–56; Heath, P.: Romance as Genre in 'The Thousand and One Nights' (Part 1), *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 18, 1987, 1–21; Heath, P.: Romance as Genre in 'The Thousand and One Nights' (Part 2), *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 19, 1988, 3–26.
[15] Grégoire, H. and R. Goossens: Byzantinisches Epos und arabischer Ritterroman, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 88, 1934, 213–232; Ouyang, W-Ch.: Romancing the Epic: ʿUmar al-Nuʿmān as Narrative of Empowerment, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 3, 2000, 5–18; Ouyang, W-Ch.: The Epical Turn of Romance: Love in the Narrative of ʿUmar al-Nuʿmān, *Oriente Moderno, Nuova serie*, 22, 2003, 485–504.
[16] Malti-Douglas, F.: The Classical Arabic Detective, *Arabica*, 35, 1988, 59–91; esp. 74–79.
[17] Gerhardt, 1963, 285–295.
[18] Heath, 1987, 1–21; Heath, 1988, 3–26.
[19] van Leeuwen, R.: *The Thousand and One Nights: Space, Travel and Transformation*, London – New York (Routledge), 2007, 60–76.

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However, it is not only the lack of a solid theoretical foundation for generic classification regarding the *Nights* which results in a somewhat chaotic state of affairs. The terms used to designate generic categories also originate outside Arabic culture and are mainly based on Western concepts of literature. All these attempts at classification ignore the Arabic context of the stories discussed. They all present viable approaches in some instances, but they ignore an important aspect of these works: their origin.

Genre classification seems to fulfill the role of familiarization on the part of the Western reader.[20] Genre classification allows the reader to place the unfamiliar into the context of the familiar, which, in this case, means that the work is read against a cultural background that is not its own. Although the text becomes interpretable in this way for the foreign reader, the interpretation is based on concepts alien to the work and is placed into a literary convention that is independent of that of its own. However, this interpretation is not wholly removed from it, either, since it is indeed supported by the text itself. Thus, reading becomes a kind of cultural appropriation on the part of the Western reader, even more so that these readers come to know the collections through their language and through the lens of an intermediate source, the translator. As Kamran Rastegar points out,

> Shorn of a clear historical, cultural, or even geographical center, the *Nights* were able to be read in such a way as to be representative of a wide range of social expectations and desires as translated texts for which an authentic *ur*text was absent, the fabric and sensibility of these various translations were able to very freely accommodate different audiences and therefore different social imaginaries.[21]

Any reader has to be mindful of this cultural appropriation and displacement of any foreign work and the limitations and possibilities of such approaches.

Interpretation is influenced by the literary traditions and cultural knowledge of the foreign culture through which the work is read. This interpretation, however, greatly affects our generic understanding of these stories since we do not see the short pieces as reports written in the *khabar* form, for example, but try to grasp them through more familiar concepts like anecdotes in general or fables, religious stories, crime stories in particular. Similarly, it is not enough to

[20] Kamran Rastegar, as a criticism of Richard Hole and his attempts to disclose the ancient Greek origins of the *Nights*, observes that the purpose of such attempt – and subsequent attempts – may be explained by the desire to support the merit of the Arabic collection. (Rastegar, K.: *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures*, London – New York (Routledge), 2010, 39–43.) In a more general way, Eva Sallis claims that readers either recognized the unfamiliar as the "exotic Other" ignoring the fact that it is precisely these readers' ignorance of the unfamiliar which creates such categories as "exotic" or "other", or they "academically rendered the felt unfamiliar familiar as knowledge, 'mastering' the various difficulties". (Sallis, E.: *Sheherazade through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of the* Thousand and One Nights, London – New York (Routledge), 1999, 10.)

[21] Rastegar, 2010, 55.

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refer to longer pieces about love as entertaining stories; we are compelled to call them a love-stories, fairy-tales, or even novellas.

There are questions that this approach may answer, and thus, it cannot be ignored, but there are questions to which it cannot prove an answer. For example, it cannot account for the place of a particular piece of writing within the history of Arabic literature. It cannot determine its relation to other similar works, or it cannot describe the reasons for its presence in particular collections and the way it was adapted to be able to be included in this collection. Despite these questions not bearing any significance in the chronological examination of the history of the *Nights*' stories, they do possess great relevance in the life of the individual stories.

It may be the reason behind the apparent lack of studies about the shorter narratives of the *Nights*. While Western research abounds in studies of the fantastic stories of love and adventure, the shorter pieces suffer from neglect. The shortage of critical discussion regarding the short narratives in the collection shows well for the dominance of Western approaches in the *Nights*' research. Strange as they might be, such stories as *ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn and the Marvelous Lamp* or *ʿAlī Baba and the Forty Thieves* remain the most famous stories in the collection. The strangeness of these stories – Galland's orphan stories in this case, nonetheless – is easier to familiarize with than that of the short stories, which are more closely embedded in Arabic culture.

Proposed Questions and Theses

This is a gap my study intends to fill through the examination of the short narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights*. There are indeed studies that endeavor to study the shorter pieces of the collection but most of them still insist on a comparative perspective with a decidedly Western flavor.[22] If the studies attempt to put the discussion into Arabic context, they remain more socio-cultural than literary in their inquiry.[23] According to my previous statement, the stories under discussion in the framework of the present study are brought into relation with the short narrative forms of pre-modern Arabic literature that are primarily found in compiled *adab* works in an attempt to put the discussion of these stories in an Arabic literary context.

[22] Short narratives are considered, for example, when the connection between the *Nights* and classical Greek or Roman literature is discussed: Bacher, W.: Der Miles gloriosus des Plautus in 1001 Nacht, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 30, 1876, 141–143; Grunebaum, G. E. von: Greek Form Elements in the *Arabian Nights*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 62, 1942, 277–292. Although Mia Gerhardt dedicates a separate chapter to the short narratives of the *Nights*, the grouping of these stories into instructive pieces, anecdotes, moral tales, and pious tales is still very much based on Western concepts. (Gerhardt, 1963, 339–374.)

[23] Irwin, 2005, 120–139, 140–158, 159–177, 178–213.

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However, if applying Western terms to an Eastern work proves problematic, it also has to be pointed out that using Arabic terms is just as likely to pose difficulties. There are a lot of problems concerning the genre conception of pre-modern Arabic literature, which is all due to the fact, as it will be pointed out, that pre-modern Arabic literature does not have the same understanding of *genre* as Western literature does. It simply does not form such a fundamental and strict classificatory category in pre-modern Arabic literature, which is based on other considerations. As I will show during my research, this literature is more intentional than classificatory which becomes apparent when one examines the Arabic genre-denoting terms that are to classify short narratives. These terms are arbitrary, concentrating on special aspects that correspond to various intentions of the person using these terms. The descriptive characteristics of the various generic denoting terms are so varied and so dependent on context that they cannot be regarded as genres at all. They may assign theme and purpose to certain texts but there is something else informing the actual understanding of the work: the narrative form.

Regrettably, this kind of approach to the genres of pre-modern Arabic short narratives has not attracted much attention which is understandable, knowing the difficulties such an approach would encounter. Even in the present study, claims are made only tentatively, well aware of the fact that further studies may very well dispute the stance it takes.

In connection with *The Thousand and One Nights*, it is Richard van Leeuwen who talks about *genre* in a theoretical framework. In formulating his conception of the term, he makes use of Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of *genre*, which is elaborated in the context of *dialogism*.[24] Dialogism perceives any given text in a constant state of production, which means that the meaning of a text is not fixed but is subjected to spatio-temporal changes.[25] It is in constant dialogue with its social and historical context.[26] It is this social and historical context into which van Leeuwen places the pre-modern Arabic collection to be able to discuss its influence on

[24] van Leeuwen, R.: The Thousand and One Nights and the Formation of Genres: The Case of Jacques Cazotte, in *Crossing and Passages in Genre and Culture*, eds. Ch. Szyska and F. Pannewick, Wiesbaden (Reichert Verlag), 2003, 54; van Leeuwen, R.: The Cultural Context of Translating Arabic Literature, in *Cultural Encounters in Translation from Arabic*, ed. S. Faiq. Clevedon – Buffalo – Toronto (Multilingual Matters Ltd.), 2004, 17–18. Based on: Bakhtin, M. M.: *Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. M. Holquist. Austin (University of Texas Press), 1981.

[25] The problems concerning *genre*, in a way, closely resemble the observations of Mikhail Bakhtin regarding the novel as a fixed genre. He recognizes the difficulties of such approaches and calls attention to the apparent deficiencies of the results of such inquiries. According to him, it is not sufficient to regard the novel as other fixed genres. It is a constantly changing genre and, as such, it cannot be described according to the criteria of the description of fixed genres. All such endeavors are doomed to fail, a fact which is well attested by the failure of such approaches "in giving us as much as a hint of comprehensive formula for the novel as a genre". (Bakhtin, 1981, 8.) Naturally, the situation is quite different in the present case but the basic principles stand.

[26] Holquist, M.: *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*. London – New York (Routledge), 2002, 138.

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modern European literature. In effect, it is not the *Nights*, which is under scrutiny but the concept of it; an ideology, which has its own life in European culture. It is an intriguing concept but, unfortunately, it is not concerned with the collection as a literary work in itself.

Van Leeuwen's study is diachronic and as such, it works well with Bakhtin's historical poetics. For him, *text* has a fixed physical form that goes through history and space in that fixed form in which it had been born. Studying the *Nights* in its Arabic context, however, does not allow for this kind of approach to the text. In a pre-modern Arabic context, *text* should be understood as the source material, be it only a concept or a particular account preserved in cultural memory. This source material is used and reused time and time again and, while diachronic considerations play an important role in studying the various manifestations of these materials, the *literary works* and their presence in the literary tradition are perceived not along the vertical line of history but on the horizontal one, alluding to their coexistence in tradition, which cannot be ignored, either. My study assumes this synchronic approach which, I find, facilitates the understanding of the examined works not only as texts the meaning of which is historically and culturally contextualized but as literary works whose understanding presupposes a more complex system of contextualization based on intention and interpretation.

Keeping in mind this complex system of intention and interpretation, it is not genres – as in genre-denoting terms – but narrative forms that provide the basis for the present study of short narratives since it is the narrative form that carries those pieces of information which can decidedly determine both intention and interpretation. Although it is still the classificatory aspect of *genre* that characterizes the *Nights* research, in modern theory, interpretation is interlinked with genre theory, which, going beyond the traditional ideas, recognizes and discusses the hermeneutical problems of *genre*.[27] This attitude gives us the tools to revisit *genre* and the related problems which arise during the discussion of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

In the following, intention and interpretation are conceptualized in the framework of literary communication in which text loses its central role and becomes a container of meaning, a meaning which is subjected to both authorial intent and the reader's interpretation within a shared literary convention. The recognition of the role of communication and, more precisely, that of literary communication as a framework for literary analysis is not widespread,[28] even

[27] Kent, Th.: *Interpretation and Genre: The Role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts*, Lewisburg (Bucknell University Press), 1986, 26. See also: Hirsch, E. D.: *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven – London (Yale University Press), 1967; and Devitt, A. J.: *Writing Genres*, Carbondale (Southern Illinois University), 2004, esp. 163–190.

[28] Bauer, Th.: Mamluk Literature as a Means of Communication, in: *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies – State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann, Goettingen (V&R unipress – Bonn University Press), 2013, 23–56; Behzadi, L.: Authorial Guidance: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's Closing Remarks, in: *Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern*

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though much of pre-modern Arabic literature is based on an exchange between *sender* and *receiver*. The role of communication in pre-modern Arabic literature is well attested in the aural nature of education which required personal contact between teacher and student.[29] Furthermore, it is also coded into the informative nature of prose literature and the way it ensures the veracity of the information handed down. It is communication between teacher and student, between the source of a report and the receiver. This communication becomes literary when the relationship between *author* and *reader* is discussed. Both communication and literary communication are based on strict rules which have to be observed for a successful exchange and it is with these rules in mind that the examination of the text mediated between the two parties can be discussed.

However important a role communication plays in pre-modern Arabic literature, the literary aspect of it is mostly ignored. Discussions of individual texts are conducted based on such exchange and they also provided literary analysis as well but the role of literary communication in the wider sense of literary conventions and how they are formed are not touched upon. Stefan Leder discusses the subject in his study, *Conventions of Fictional Narration in Learned Literature,* in connection with the question of fiction.[30] According to his observation, the fictitious nature of a text can only be understood in context, the interpretation of which is dependent on the relationship between narrator and receiver in any given convention. The nature of this relationship and, indeed, the nature of all the participants have to be determined for the interpretation to work.

The present study recognizes the role communication plays in pre-modern Arabic literature both in a practical and a theoretical way. It claims that literature is heavily based on communication which is understood as a special kind of exchange between author and reader which is based on convention. Literature is a result of interpretation which is highly contextual, depending on the author's intentions within a literary convention and the reader's process of meaning-making which is determined by the same literary convention.

Arabic Texts, eds. L. Behzadi and J. Hämeen-Anttila, Bamberg (University of Bamberg Press), 1995, 215–234. In addition, Leyla Ozgur Alhassen, for example, examines the Koranic stories from such an aspect, claiming that her study focuses on the relationship between *narrator* and *audience*, although her approach is decidedly more aligned with redear-response theory than literary communication in general. (Alhassen, L. O.: *Qur'ānic Stories: God, Revelation and the Audience*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press), 2021, 1.)

[29] Schoeler, G.: *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, transl. U. Vagelpohl, ed. J. E. Montgomery, London – New York (Routledge), 2006, 40–42; Schoeler, G.: *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press), 2011, 122–125. Ali, S. M.: *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past*. Notre Dame, Indiana (University of Notre Dame Press), 2010, 38–46.

[30] Leder, S.: Conventions of Fictional Narration in Learned Literature, *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. S. Leder, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz Verlag), 1998, 34–60.

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It has to be stated that this framework for interpretation is not to claim historicity, that is, it does not intend to give a contemporary reading of pre-modern Arabic works. I do not find such an endeavor plausible. All it can provide is a hypothetical reading which is as unbiased by modern prejudices as it can get while supporting such an understanding of the texts which is as close to its original context as it is possible without making unfounded claims. It is a reading which employs a modern theoretical framework, seeing that it is in our time and with our background knowledge that we read these works, but it is a reading which recognizes and utilizes the pre-modern Arabic literary tradition in order to facilitate a closer understanding of these works. It is always risky to employ modern theoretical approaches to medieval works, but I find that there are many advantages to treating *The Thousand and One Nights* in such a way.

As the present study is mainly concerned with the short narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights*, it is necessary to place these narratives into the appropriate literary context as far as narrative form is concerned. *Khabar* is not the first term that the mention of the *Nights* conjures in the mind. Although *khabar* is not primarily associated with artistic literary expression – Gregor Schoeler cites the epistolary literature of the *kuttāb* as Arabic prose literature proper[31] –, its literary merits cannot be ignored, either. Schoeler also goes on to point out that already in the 8th century, there are examples of conscious literary effort on the part of the traditional *'ulamā'* as well.[32] Accordingly, in the following, I do argue in favor of the artistic literary quality of this literary form and use it as the main point of comparison in the discussion of the short narratives.

By using the *khabar* form as the central point of comparison, the study can place the short narratives in the collection into the context of Arabic literature since *khabar* is such a fundamental part of pre-modern Arabic prose literature. It can be found in the various fields of *adab* and, I will argue, it can be found in the *Nights* as well. In addition to providing a corresponding literary form in the *Nights*, the *khabar* form is also suitable to discuss how the short narratives of the collection depart from this traditional literary form and transform into other forms of expression, more popular. *Khabar* form is rather elastic, and its description greatly depends on the field of literature where we meet it. The different aspects of it help us to regard its characteristics in their transformation.

[31] Being a functional literary expression of the religious sciences practiced by the *'ulamā'*, *khabar* was hardly concerned with artistic expression. In the prose literature of early Islam, it was the epistolary literature of the *kuttāb* which represented that kind of artistic prose. About the epistolary literature, see: Schoeler, 2011, 56–60.
[32] Schoeler 2011, 61.

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This concept of rethinking the static nature of literary works, and the sources that are available to us, is not an entirely new one. Interestingly enough, the concept of the text as a work that is informative of much more than its actual content seems to be an ever-emerging concept in the field of historiography. More and more historians start to treat historical texts as literary works with additional meanings to the factual data. Shahzad Bashir calls attention to the lack of "a concerted effort to treat internal Islamic historical projections as rhetorical constructions situated within complex sociohistorical and literary traditions".[33] Maybe the reasons for this flourishing in the field of historiography can be found in the limitation of the material to answer those questions which, up until now, preoccupied historians. In encountering difficulties in their endeavors, they were forced to reformulate the questions and, in doing so, they find themselves rethinking their methods, shaping them to be able to answer questions not posed up until now. And surprisingly enough, again, this is what literary research of Arabic literature, at least that of pre-modern Arabic literature, seems to be doing at a much slower pace.

However, there are such works on pre-modern Arabic prose literature in general and on the *Nights* in particular, which pay special attention to the narrative technique of these works. Furthermore, *khabar* is the central topic of many narratological inquiries but it is mostly discussed in connection with historiography, *adab* literature and even *ḥadīth*. Scholars like Stefan Leder, Fedwa Malti-Douglas, Hilary Kilpatrick, Julia Bray and Daniel Beaumond bring much to the table regarding *khabar*-studies, and I am much obliged to their studies. However, there is still much to say about the much-discussed term, *khabar*.

My purpose is, then, twofold. First, I intend to discuss the problems which arise when one talks about *genre* in connection with pre-modern Arabic literature. I will show that the term, as modern literary research understands it, does not apply to this literature and a new way of reading is necessary if we wish to understand the stories of the *Nights* in their Arabic context. Secondly, I will rely on the short stories of the collection in examining the questions concerning genres. This seems an obvious choice since short narratives (*akhbār*) are indigenous to pre-modern Arabic prose literature. The short narratives of the *Nights* are not referred to as *khabar,* but I will argue that there are indeed such stories in the *Nights* which show close relation to this form of narrative. And those short stories which differ in a greater deal are also easier to understand when compared to this form.

[33] Bashir, Sh.: On Islamic Time: Rethinking Chronology in the Historiography of Muslim Societies, *History and Theory*, 53, 2014, 521.

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Keeping all of the above in mind, it has to be declared that the present study does not aim to examine how the proposed questions were handled in the context of pre-modern Arabic literary theory. Although the problems are definitely worth being discussed in that respect, the questions proposed does not suit for that kind of inquiry. Instead, they remain preoccupied with modern ideas and theories, and attempt to describe how this context is able to bridge the gap that seems to exist between two literary cultures. In this respect, Arabic works that could be considered theoretical are not taken into consideration during the present discussion. Nevertheless, my purpose is to be as mindful of the original pre-modern Arabic context of the works under discussion as possible within the framework of modern literary theory. I take this approach because I am convinced that, although it is important to understand how pre-modern Arabic literary theory worked, it is just as much pertinent to be aware of how modern literary theory can handle this foreign tradition in a way that does not alienate it from its original context and makes something of it which, in fact, it is not.

The Structure of the Study

The present discussion is primarily based on the close reading of the short narratives of the *Nights*. They are either discussed in particular groups or they are compared to the wider literary output of pre-modern Arabic prose literature. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to talk about the social, historical, and literary context to which the *Nights* and the additional works belong. Similarly, modern literary theory must be discussed in detail to draw up the theoretical framework which provides the basis for the close reading of the examined material.

First of all, however, *The Thousand and One Nights* has to be discussed. Since its manuscript tradition and its history in European literature are discussed extensively in secondary sources, I decided to give only a short report of it in Chapter 1. While striving to be comprehensive, the account of the history of the *Nights* emphasizes the more problematic points of this history. It is in light of these points that the methodology of my study is explained. Although I omit to discuss the methodology in the *Introduction*, it is to provide it with a place where it can be freely elaborated and its intrinsic nature to the history of the collection can be fully appreciated. Only after this can the collection be placed into the context of pre-modern Arabic literature in the following part of Chapter 1. The rest of Chapter 1 is dedicated to the designation and discussion of the material used in the analysis. Furthermore, a section of concluding remarks is also added, which brings together all the diverse observations made in the chapter and makes a statement about the general aim of the paper and the methods used in the discussion.

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Chapter 2 provides the starting point of the discussion of the short narratives with the textual analysis of the *khabar* form. Based on Gérard Genette's work, *khabar* is defined as a *narrative* and discussed from three angles: *khabar* as story, *khabar* as narration, and *khabar* as narrating. Through the close examination of the *khabar* form, this chapter is to bring attention to the shortcoming of a purely textual approach to the short narratives and to propose a more comprehensive approach: literary communication.

It is in Chapter 3 that the theoretical background of literary communication and its relevance in the study of short narratives are discussed. Relying on the result of modern literary theory, I argue that literary communication is a suitable framework to circumvent the problems *genre* is posing in our understanding of pre-modern Arabic prose works. After the theory of literary communication is presented, the definition of *genre* is revisited through which the rationality behind the shift from classification to interpretation is explained. *Khabar* being the fundamental starting point for any discussion about short narratives, it is also explained how communication and literary communication are appropriate tools for discussion. In the last part of the chapter, the exact definitions for the necessary terms are provided for the rest of the analysis.

After the discussion of how *genre* is to be understood and, consequently, how *khabar* form is to be approached, the main part of the dissertation, Chapter 4, employs the observations made concerning genre perception and the theoretical framework in which pre-modern Arabic short narratives are best to be approached. The *khabar* form is discussed in *The Thousand and One Nights* from various perspectives with the intent to show how the short narratives of the collection, which cause considerable problems in terms of generic definition, may be discussed in the context of Arabic literature. Apart from the *khabar* form's transformation, certain changes in interpretation are addressed. It is through these formal and interpretative changes that the short narratives of the *Nights* gain their special flavor, which, while posing difficulties in interpretation, also make them unique literary creations, standing in their own right, while being part of a literary tradition.

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1. The Thousand and One Nights*: History, Methodology and Some Preliminary Remarks*

1.1. *The Thousand and One Nights*: History and Methodology

1.1.1. A Short History of *The Thousand and One Nights*

Although the secondary literature[34] attempting to provide a more or less detailed history of the *Nights* is vast, and any further description may seem redundant, the discussion of it cannot be avoided in the present case, even more so that the knowledge of the colorful history of the collection is necessary to understand the approach the present study takes toward the collection. The history of the collection presented here only scratched the surface of the intricate backstory of a work that is more than a physical text. It represents an idea that persisted from the earliest time of Islam through the present day. For a closer understanding of the workings behind the formation of the *Nights* as it is known today, I refer to the numerous studies which deal with the subject in greater detail than I have the opportunity here and whose titles can be found in the footnotes of the present chapter, presented in a thematically organized fashion. These lists, of course, are not exhaustive, but they provide a great variety of knowledge concerning the history of the *Nights*.

When reconstructing the possible history of the *Nights*, we can generally draw from three kinds of sources. One is in which references are made to that kind of literature the collection at hand is usually associated with, that is, fictional literature represented by *khurāfa*. Such references may be found in the Qur'ān, but the disapproving remarks that usually accompany such descriptions are relatively widespread even in the earliest period of Muslim Arab literature. Often cited examples are Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 990) and al-Maʿsūdī (896–956), whose works also mention the present collection by title.

The second kind of source consists of such Arabic works that reference works that show a high degree of similarity to the collection known as *The Thousand and One Nights*. One such example is the annals of Ḥamza al-Isbahānī (d. 961), in which he not only mentions such stories

[34] History of research: Ali, M. J.: The Growth of Scholarly Interest in the *Arabian Nights*, in: *The Arabian Nights Reader*, ed. U. Marzolph, Detroit (Wayne State University Press), 2006, 1–20. In her book, Eva Sallis provides an overview of the prevailing reading strategies of the collection which, ultimately, influenced the development of research; she also proposes a new kind of reading which centers on the reader: Sallis, E.: *Sheherazade through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of the* Thousand and One Nights, London – New York (Routledge), 1999, 69–84. Robert Irwin also provides a specialized overview of the narrative study of the collection: Irwin, R.: *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London – New York (Tauris Parke Paperbacks), 2005, 214–236.
Despite the popular conception that the *Nights* does not concern Arabic scholarship, there is an extensive list of titles collected by Ibrahim Akel which attests to the contrary. (Akel, I.: Arabic Editions and Bibliography, in: *Arabic Manuscripts of the* Thousand and One Nights*: Presentation and Critical Editions of Four Noteworthy Texts; Observations on Some Osmanli Translations*, dir. A. Chraïbi, Paris (espaces&signes), 2016, 451–491.)

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as the *Book of Sindibād* and that of Shīmās, but these titles are mentioned in a passage describing events when one has to answer difficult questions.[35] More tangible proof of stories that later became part of the *Nights* is in the book from the 14th century, *al-Ḥikāyāt al-ʾajība wa-l-akhbār al-gharība* in which one meets such stories as *Jullanār and Badr al-Bāṣim*, *Abū Muḥammad the Rest* and the stories of the barber about his six brothers.

The third group includes works that mention the collection by title. Ibn al-Nadīm's *al-Fihrist* has to be mentioned here, in which the author describes a story strikingly similar to that of the frame-story of the *Nights*. He also adds that the tales told by the heroine fill up a thousand nights (alf layla).[36] While al-Nadīm only mentions the thousand nights as the duration of story-telling, al-Masʿūdī in his *Murūj al-dhahab* explicitly states that the title of the collection he is describing is *Alf Layla*.[37] Both authors originate the Arabic collection from the Persian *Hazār Afsān*, meaning a thousand stories. They observe that this Persian work had been translated into Arabic and later expanded by other Arabic authors. Referring to Nabia Abbott, Eva Sallis describes that, within about two hundred years – from its translation around the time of Manṣūr (754–775) to its reference in al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab* (947) – this Persian collection "was deeply embedded into the culture which had appropriated it and it was utterly transformed in the process".[38] Only the frame-story remains as witness to this Persian work in the *Nights* as it stands today.

Although the above examples are the most popular to refer to when talking about the early history of the *Nights*, neither al-Masʿūdī nor Ibn al-Nadīm mentions thousand and one night, only one thousand. The explicit mention of thousand and one nights as the title of a book comes from other sources. In 1958, S. D. Goitein drew attention to a manuscript in The Geniza, a depository of records of the Jewish community from the 12th century Cairo. The manuscript contains a record of a bookseller who mentions *The Thousand and One Nights* by title, which, according to Goitein, is the oldest documentary evidence of the title.[39] However, his statement is refuted by Aboubakr Chraïbi, who provides an earlier example from the 10th century by the

[35] MacDonald, D. B.: The Earlier History of the *Arabian Nights*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3, 1924, 361–362.
[36] Ibn al-Nadīm, Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. Abī Yaʿqūb Isḥāq: *al-Fihrist*, ed. Yūsuf ʿAlī Ṭawīl, Bayrūt (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya), 1996/1416, 475.
[37] al-Masʿūdī, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn: *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, Qum (Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī), 1380–1422, II, 406.
[38] Sallis, 1999, 21. See also: Chraïbi, A.: Introduction, in: *Arabic Manuscripts of the* Thousand and One Nights*: Presentation and Critical Editions of Four Noteworthy Texts; Observations on Some Osmanli Translations*, dir. A. Chraïbi, Paris (espaces&signes), 2016, 17–23.
[39] Goitein, S. D.: The Oldest Documentary Evidence for the Title *Alf Laila wa-Laila*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 78, 1958, 301–302.

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author Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Yamanī.[40] Further mention has to be made of al-Makrīzī's (d. 1442) *al-Mawāʾiz wa-l-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* in which he refers Ibn Saʿīd, who lived about two hundred years before al-Maqrīzī and who, in his work, *al-Muḥallā bi-l-ashʿār* quotes a certain al-Qurṭubī mentioning the title *Thousand and One Nights*.[41]

The references mentioned above, scattered through centuries, although not able to establish the precise history of the collection, provide proof of the existence of a work that exhibited remarkable similarity – if not in content but in its underlying concept – to the *Nights* as we know it today. The exact content of the collection may be derived from the manuscripts themselves. These references, too, however, provide only partial information regarding the stories of the *Nights* since there exists no such manuscript which could be considered complete. Although there is evidence of the existence of a work titled *Alf Layla* from the 9th century,[42] the oldest extant manuscript originates from the 15th century.[43] This manuscript only contains about 280 nights. The rest of the stories found in the collection in their present forms have various origins.[44]

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[40] Chraïbi, A.: *Les mille et une nuits: Histoire du texte et classification des contes*, Paris (L'Harmattan), 2008, 29–33.

[41] MacDonald, 1924, 379–382; Chraïbi, 2008, 45–47.

[42] Abbott, N.: A Ninth-Century Fragment of the "Thousand Nights": New Light on the Early History of the *Arabian Nights*, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 8, 1949, 129–164.

[43] In his edition of the manuscript, Muhsin Mahdi dated it to the 14th century. However, the consensus is that it cannot be dated earlier than the 15th century. (Mahdi, M.: *The Thousand and One Nights (Alf Layla wa-Layla): From the Earliest Known Sources*, 3 vols, Leiden – New York (E. J. Brill), 1994.)

[44] For a detailed list of *Nights* manuscripts, see: Akel, I.: Liste des manuscrits arabes des Nuits, in: *Arabic Manuscripts of the Thousand and One Nights: Presentation and Critical Editions of Four Noteworthy Texts; Observations on Some Osmanli Translations*, dir. A. Chraïbi, Paris (espaces&signes), 2016, 65–114. Also, Johannes Thomann gives a list of manuscripts of Turkish translations of the *Nights*: Thomann, J.: Die frühesten türkischen Übersetzungen von Tausendundeiner Nacht und deren Bedeutung für die arabische Textgeschichte, *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques*, 70, 2016, 199–214.

For individual studies on the manuscript tradition of the *Nights*, see: Abbott, 1949, 129–164; El-Shamy, H.: The Oral Connections of the Arabian Nights, in: *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, eds. U. Marzolph and R. van Leeuwen, Santa Barbara – Denver – Oxford (ABC-CLIO), 2004, 9–13; Gerhardt, M. I.: *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of the* Thousand and One Nights, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1963, 9–18; Grotzfeld, H.: The Manuscript Tradition of the *Arabian Nights*, in: *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, eds. U. Marzolph and R. van Leeuwen, Santa Barbara – Denver – Oxford (ABC-CLIO), 2004, 17–21; Irwin, 2005, 42–62; MacDonald, D. B.: Maximilian Habicht and His Recension of the *Thousand and One Nights*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2, 1909, 685–704; MacDonald, D. B.: A Preliminary Classification of Some MSS of the *Arabian Nights*, in: *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Professor E. G. Browne*, eds. T. W. Arnold and R. A. Nicholson, Cambridge (The University Press), 1922, 304–321; MacDonald, 1924, 353–397; Marzolph, U.: Re-Locating the *Arabian Nights*, *Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta*, 87, 1998, 155–163; Muhawi, I.: The *Arabian Nights* and the Question of Authorship, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 24, 2005, 323–337; Sallis, 1999, 18–42; Thomann, 2016, 171–219; Thomann, J.: 'Oh Leader of Women in the World, oh Shahrazad!' The Ending of the *One Thousand and One Nights* in the Earliest Turkish Translation and Its Relationship to the Arabic Versions, in: *Endless Inspiration:* One Thousand and One Nights *in Comparative Perspective*, ed. O. Elmaz, Piscataway, NJ (Gorgias Press), 2020, 138–144; Thomann, J.: Reshaping the Frame Story of the *Thousand and One Nights*: The Coherence of Prologue and Epilogue in the Earliest Existing Arabic Mss, in: The Thousand and One Nights*: Sources and Transformations in Literature, Art, and Science*, ed. I. Akel and W. Granara, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2020, 25–26.

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However, it is not only the wholeness of manuscripts that prevents us from determining the original form of the collection, which, by scholarly consensus, is a non-existent concept, but the content of the available manuscripts is also considerably varied. Already in the 19th century, two recensions of the collection had been determined by Hermann Zotenberg, who was the first to differentiate between the Syrian and the Egyptian branches of the manuscripts. According to his observations, the Egyptian recension (ZER, as in Zotenberg's Egyptian Recension)[45] is the younger of the two branches, but, at the same time, it is the one that includes a greater number of stories.

If the references to and the manuscripts of the *Nights* make it challenging to talk about one particular collection by the name of *The Thousand and One Nights*, then, with the coming of the 18th century and the publication of its first translation into a European language, it has become exponentially so. Due to the French translation of Antoine Galland (1646–1715)[46], the European audience had come to know and appreciate the *Nights*. It is, however, not only his introduction of the collection to the European public, which determined the life of the collection in the following decades but his translation methods as well. It is the above-mentioned 15th-century manuscript that Galland had managed to procure from one of his contacts in Syria towards the end of the 17th century. By then, he had already translated the story of *Sindbad the Sailor* into French, which had been circulating in independent manuscripts. After learning about its existence and obtaining a copy of it, he was eager to translate the *Nights*. Galland was so enthusiastic about the collection that, finally, it was published even before *Sindbad the Sailor*, which had already been in print when Galland got to know about the *Nights*. The story of Sindbad got to be included in the third volume of Galland's translation of the *Nights*, him being of the mind that it had originally been part of the Arabic collection.

In any case, lacking a complete manuscript of the *Nights* and being obliged by popular demand, Galland had to find a way to provide the complete collection to his audience. As it happened, it was not solely Galland who influenced this early development of the collection. By the seventh volume, Galland had already exhausted his sources and even took the liberty to finish the story of Qamar al-Zamān which was left abruptly in his manuscript. His publisher took matters into his hands and published an eighth volume which included the story of *Ghānim*

[45] See: Sallis, 1999, 31–37.

[46] About Antoine Galland's life and the historical background of the French translation of the *Nights*, see: Mahdi, 1994, III, 11–49; Reynolds, D. F.: A Thousand and One Nights: a history of the text and its reception, in: *Arabic Literature in the Post Classical Period*, eds. R. Allen and D. S. Richards, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2006, 276; Dobie, M.: Translation in the Contact Zone: Antoine Galland's *Mille et Une Nuits: Contes Arabes*, in: The Arabian Nights *in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2008, 29–36;

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b. Ayyūb, which Galland had earlier translated,[47] and two tales translated from the Turkish by Pétis de la Croix (1653–1713), *Zayn al-Aṣnām* and *Khudādād*. At last, Ḥannā Diyāb (b. 1688) provided the material for the rest of the collection, a little more than a quarter of the whole work. Interestingly enough, it is to this oral material that the most famous stories, like *Ali Baba* and *Aladdin*, belong. For a long time, it has been assumed that the fourteen stories Ḥannā Diyāb told Galland were of Arabic origin and, accordingly, were recited in Arabic. As it turns out, it was not the case, and the stories were told in French and hastily recorded by Galland.[48] Galland formed full-fledged narratives from them in a manner that seamlessly fits into the original material.[49]

Following Galland's footsteps, many other translators took considerable freedom in editing and translating their versions of the *Nights*[50] even before the first Arabic editions appeared. It was only about a hundred years later, in the 19th century, when any interest in publishing the Arabic text arose. Of course, it only further complicated the already confusing history of the collection. Four authoritative editions were published in the 1800s:[51] Calcutta I (1814–1818), Bulaq (1835), Calcutta II (1839–1842), and Breslau (1825–1838). They are not authoritative in that they represent the *Nights* as a complete whole but in the sense that they represent the *Nights* as we know it today. They are the basis for most of the later translations as well. As Mia Gerhardt observes: "The contents of what is, to the modern European reader, the '1001 Nights' have therefore been determined by two basic factors: (1) the contents of the first

[47] It is uncertain whether Galland had indeed translated this work or he had written it himself since there is no Arabic version exists of the story. (Reynolds, 2006, 278.)

[48] Bottigheimer, R. B.: East Meets West: Hannā Diyāb and *The Thousand and One Nights*, *Marvels & Tales*, 28, 2014, 304–307. It is true that there are references in Galland's diary of receiving certain stories in written versions in Arabic from Ḥannā Diyāb but the existence of these texts cannot be proved as no such texts survived. (Larzul, S.: Further Considerations on Galland's "Mille at une Nuits": A Study of the Tales Told by Hanna, *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 259.)

[49] About the methods of his reconstruction of these stories, see: Chraïbi, A.: Galland's "Ali Baba" and Other Arabic Versions, *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 159–169; Larzul, 2004, 258–271.

[50] One of the most up-to-date summaries of the history of the translations of the *Nights* in the French and English is Bruce Fudge's study on the translation of Malcolm C. Lyons (2008) and André Miquel (2005). (Fudge, B.: More Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 136, 2016, 135–146.) For further discussions of the translations and the afterlife of the collection in European literature, see: Gerhardt, 1963, 67–113; Knipp, C.: The *Arabian Nights* in England: Galland's Translation and Its Successors, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 5, 1974, 44–54; Hagège, C.: Traitement du sens et fidélité dans l'adaptation classique : sur le texte arabe des « Mille et une nuits » et la traduction de Galland, *Arabica*, 27, 1980, 114–139; Wazzan, A. M.: The *Arabian Nights* in Western Literature: A Discourse Analysis, *Islamic Studies*, 32, 1993, 61–71; Sallis, 1999, 43–64; Irwin, R.: *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London – New York (Tauris Parke Paperbacks), 2005, 9–41; Dobie, 2006, 36; Rastegar, K.: *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures*, London – New York (Routledge), 2010, 37–54; van Leeuwen, R.: European Translations of the Thousand and One Nights and Their Reception: Oriental Falsification or Literary Fascination? *CLINA: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Communication*, 2, 2016, 29–41.

[51] For a more comprehensive history of the various Arabic editions, see: Mahdi, 1994, III, 87–126; Sallis, 1999, 30–31; Rastegar, 2010, 55–59.

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Arabic editions, (2) the contents of Galland's translation, which by reason of its immense popularity came to be considered as authoritative".[52] In recent years, Ibrahim Akel provided a detailed list of the Arabic editions of the collection.[53]

The *Nights*, then, as we know it today, is a construct based on the general concept of framed story-telling. It is a strange kind of coproduction between East and West. Richard van Leeuwen points out in connection with Galland's *Mille et une nuits*: "The *Mille et une nuits* was not an Oriental literary work, nor a European literary work. It was rather a work which blurred a cultural boundary, and which became, as Raymond Schwab put it, a 'homeless literary masterpiece'".[54] This statement stands true for the *Nights* as we know it since it was not only Galland who took great liberties in translating and compiling his collection but also the editors of the Arabic editions. Not to mention that they were not the only ones who contributed to the formation of the *Nights*. With the rising European interest in the collection, the later manuscripts show such endeavors on the part of Arab copyists as well that they tried to supply for the demand of complete manuscripts by copying stories to fit the collection.[55] The creative process of later translators[56] also deserves mentioning since their appropriation of the material to the taste of the contemporary audience has as much effect on our understanding of the *Nights* as the earlier compilations.[57] It has to be recognized, then, that although the earlier available manuscripts may attest to the existence of a contemporary Arabic audience, it is not with the same audience in mind that the *Nights*, in its present forms, had been brought into being.

The history of the *Nights* is an intriguing one that makes the study of the collection ever so complicated and fraught with uncertainties. With this complicated character of the *Nights* in mind, we shall approach the material at hand and choose the most appropriate examination method. However, there are many questions to consider.

[52] Gerhardt, 1963, 11.
[53] Akel, 2016, 432–451.
[54] van Leeuwen, R.: The Thousand and One Nights and the Formation of Genres: The Case of Jacques Cazotte, in: *Crossing and Passages in Genre and Culture*, eds. Ch. Szyska and F. Pannewick, Wiesbaden (Reichert Verlag), 2003, 58.
[55] Duncan B. MacDonald mentions one such example in connection with a manuscript of the *Story of Sūl and Shumūl* which shows the signs of being prepared to be included in the collection but had not been done so yet. (MacDonald, 1924, 359–361.) See also van Leeuwen, 2016, 35, 37.
[56] See: fn.50.
[57] Heinz Grotzfeld gives an excellent summary of the methods both compilers and translators used in creating the *Nights*: Grotzfeld, H.: Creativity, Random Selection, and "pia fraus": Observations on Compilation and Transmission of the "Arabian Nights", *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 218–228.

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1.1.2. Some Remarks to the Short History of *The Thousand and One Nights* and Some Methodological Considerations

As a first step, it is pertinent to ponder the nature of the collection. Although most of the research handles the material as part of written culture, many point out its origin in oral literature. It is the general opinion that the collection is a work born on the lips of its redactors and had a life of considerable freedom granted by the oral tradition. On the other hand, it is also recognized that this is a work existing in, albeit not canonized but fixed written forms. Bruce Fudge points out that "the collection is fundamentally a written tradition, transmitted by the pen".[58] However, this written form is also manifested in numerous variants, which means that besides the collection's dual nature as a "homeless literary masterpiece", it is also ambivalent in its form and existence. As Adnan M. Wazzan points out, the collection and the stories "remained completely free until the West took an interest in the work, put an end to its freedom and transferred it from the ears and mouths of the common people to the shelves of libraries and printed texts".[59] Eva Sallis argues for a dual character when she says: "The *Nights* is a book which acted as a collector of stories, literary and oral, which by inclusion became literary in an inclusive kind of way. The assertion that the *Nights* is one or the other is incorrect since it is uncomfortably both, and neither".[60]

Undoubtedly, the collection enjoyed great freedom as far as its content is concerned. Although existing in the oral tradition is one reason for this, it also has to be considered that, as not being part of the learned literature, which posed many constrictions on a work, it was free to be tempered with. Its structure of framed stories further gives unrestricted opportunities for increasing, decreasing, or changing the material. In this respect, it is not so different from the compiled works of learned literature, which also used shared material. On the one hand, it is the shared material that differentiates between them, the *Nights* being more inclusive than the *adab* works. On the other hand, the compilers' approach to the used material is different as the compilers of the *Nights* were not bound by convention and the requirement of *adab,* and thus, they were free to tamper with the text itself. In this regard, the *Nights* is written literature and whatever remains from its existence in oral story-telling has to be examined in the context of its present, written form. I will also handle the material as literature fixed in written form, which, we will see, has its own set of rules.

[58] Fudge, 2016, 139.
[59] Wazzan, 1993, 63.
[60] Sallis, 1999, 39.

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One of the most important questions when discussing *The Thousand and One Nights* concerns the source material. Before any meaningful discussion of the collection, it has to be determined what material should be used. There are generally three ways to go about choosing the material. One may use the original manuscripts for study, or one may turn to the edited material as their study material, and, of course, some prefer the translations. The choice, of course, is highly dependent on the proposed study. Furthermore, when choosing either direction, it has to be considered how to select from the chosen material. In the case of the manuscripts, the situation is relatively simple since we have either dated manuscripts of a specific provenance that can be studied for their content and their literary or historical context in Arabic literature; or we have manuscripts of as yet uncertain origin that may further the research concerning the previous questions, or may give way to philological ponderings. In the case of the edited volumes of the *Nights*, there are many uncertainties. There is no fixed version of the collection in the Arabic manuscript tradition, so there cannot be one authentic version edited from the manuscripts. This lack of an authentic version somewhat limits the usefulness of these edited volumes in scholarly research. Nevertheless, with careful consideration, these texts may also answer important questions, much like the translations whose content and form are just as varied as those of the manuscripts and editions.

It is clear that considering the whole body of the *Nights* – manuscript, edited, or translated – it is no small feat to choose the right way to examine it. It is certainly not so in the case of the present study, which aims for a literary study of pre-modern Arabic literature. It is challenging to claim scholarly aptitude without a complete manuscript and thus an authoritative edition from the time-period under discussion. Nevertheless, the questions raised in the present study are not irrelevant, so they must be addressed. However, it has to be done with careful consideration.

As my research is fundamentally a literary one, historical, social, and philological considerations fall outside its purview. In this respect, using the Arabic editions, or more precisely, the Calcutta II edition[61] as the focus of my study is satisfactory as far as the results are concerned. It is mainly because my study is based on a literary work which is a text fixed in writing. This one text represents one of many versions of the *Nights*. In some respects, the present distinction between the concept of the *Nights* and the actual written versions resembles how poetry was transmitted. Gregor Schoeler points out that "the emphasis was not on textual

[61] *The Alif Laila or Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Commonly Known as 'The Arabian Nights Entertainments'*, ed. W. H. MacNaghten, 4vols, Calcutta – London (W. Thacker and Co. and W. H. Allen and Co.), 1839–1842. Henceforth: *Alf Layla*.

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accuracy or the faithful transmission of the original but, rather, on the preservation and even improvement of the artistic and linguistic qualities of the poetry".[62] What is important regarding this tampering is that, although historically, the work remains the product of the same writer, we get a new work from a literary perspective. Essentially, this happens with every literary work orally transmitted before it is fixed in the form of an edited book. This also happens with a work without an author like the *Nights*. In the case of the *Nights*, however, there is no author whose work the collection could remain – an author whose original words one could refer to – and thus, with every new fixed form, a new version of the work comes into being.

Despite all the varied versions of the collection and its colorful history of manuscripts, editions, and translations, the inquiries of the present study have to be made in connection with one particular literary work. If more versions of the stories of the collection are discussed, those versions have to be considered separate literary works.

Of course, the *Nights* cannot be examined as a coherent unit in any version. General observations may be made through the study of the whole collection, but for decades now, the scholarly consensus has been that relevant information can only be gained through specialized treatment of the material. In the *Introduction*, the relevant studies were elaborated upon, providing a picture of how the collection is generally handled. However, this selective approach to the material is characterized by a lack of attention to the short narratives. This apparent shortcoming is one of the reasons I chose this group of stories. The other is that these short narratives lend themselves exceptionally well to studying the *Nights* within Arabic literature.

After designating Calcutta II as the basis of the present study, several groups of short narratives are determined, constituting the basis of the analysis. This determination of groups is admittedly arbitrary, based on general observations concerning length, themes, characters, and striving for some systematization. Nevertheless, this rudimentary system for selection is sufficient for the study.

The selected material is examined in relation to the most fundamental narrative form of pre-modern Arabic literature, the *khabar*. As stated above, *khabar* is the most well-defined term in contemporary sources and modern research, and as such, it is the most appropriate starting point in a series of inquiries concerning subjects lacking a proper theoretical background. Furthermore, by choosing the *khabar* as the basis of my inquiries, the questions asked regarding genre are placed into the context of Arabic literature. By examining this narrative form, it is not

[62] Schoeler, 2011, 20. This was perceivable even in the case of Qur'ān transmission in the early years. (Schoeler, 2011, 32.)

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only in the context of the *Nights* that the proposed questions gain relevance but also in the broader context of Arabic literature. Thus, *khabar* itself is examined.

Nevertheless, the present study focuses on the *Nights* as its primary subject, and the goal is to describe how the short stories of the collection can be interpreted in a generic framework and what difficulties one faces when they try applying traditional generic concepts to the collection. Most significantly, the study proposes an alternative way of dealing with generic concerns in the *Nights* within a literary framework.

The proposed approach raises questions concerning the literary treatment of the *Nights* and the concept of the *Nights* as a literary work. I have already stated that the *Nights* is a written work. These questions concern more the literariness of the collection and how much it may be considered the product of literary creativity. Eva Sallis argues for the close reading of the stories, but cautions against an indiscriminative evaluation of everything written as "[n]ot every asymmetry or every discord can be ascribed a purpose, since one of the *Nights*' obvious aspects is its inconsistency".[63] Similar concerns are raised by Heinz Grotzfeld when he points out that there were no critical considerations in mind when the compilers gathered material for the collection; they worked with whatever was at hand at the time.[64] Concerns regarding the literariness of the *Nights* may be neutralized by a given text being viewed precisely like that: a text. The collection is indeed "larger than any of its versions",[65] as Sallis claims. However, dismissing the individuality of the variations and their right to exist in themselves also limits our understanding of the work. Certain questions, questions mostly connected to literary inquiries, cannot be satisfactorily answered when allowing all the versions to play a role in interpretation. As I said earlier, different versions of the same story must be allowed their autonomy as separate literary works. The present study is not a study of literary evolution. Accordingly, it is not contextual in a literary historical sense but only in a literary sense.

Accordingly, my research is fundamentally synchronic rather than diachronic, characteristic of philological examinations. Even when placed into the context of Arabic prose literature with parallel texts provided for examination, I do not intend to examine the stories in their textual, historical context. Both in the context of Arabic literature and in that of the *Nights*, stories are discussed not in temporal relations but in relation to one another as individual works existing within the same time frame.

[63] Sallis, 1999, 81.
[64] Grotzfeld, 2004, 224.
[65] Sallis, 1999, 5.

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The proposed approach raises the fourth question of research: What is that material which can be legitimately used as contrast material? Seeing that the four authoritative editions – among them Calcutta II – are a patchwork of manuscripts of mostly uncertain origins, the text does not lend itself to a temporally determined examination as, for example, Mahdi's Leiden edition would. However, the answer depends, once again, on the questions asked.

Although primarily, it is the content of the *Nights* which is at the center of discussion, it has to be placed in the broader context of Arabic literature to understand fully the changes in reading of the texts. This context provides synchronicity to the study and does not attempt to determine any temporally relevant connections between the texts studied. Speaking of Arabic prose literature as a whole gives grounds for concern. It is a vast and not at all uniform territory. Even if it is restricted to a more or less unified cultural era, it is still questionable, knowing the history of the *Nights,* how it may be methodologically helpful for the proposed study.

Nevertheless, some restrictions have to be made for the sake of manageability. Even though it is not the textual history that is at the center of attention, one cannot go amiss by choosing a historical era with the highest probability of producing the *Nights* as we know it today. Of course, this is a problematic statement because we know very little about how the collection was put together on any given date before it was put into print in the 19th century. For this reason, I rely on indirect evidence of when the *Nights* might have been in the highest demand before its popularity in Europe. Although there is evidence of the collection being in existence in the 9th century, there seems to be a consensus that it was the Mamlūk era (1250–1517) in which it flourished and that many stories date from this time as well.[66] Ulrich Marzolph points out that, despite many stories found in one version or another in earlier collections, it is more probable that stories of the *Nights* corresponding to ones in other collections have more contemporary sources, that is, Mamlūk or Ottoman.[67]

From a literary-historical point of view, the Mamlūk era also signs the dawn of a new age in literature.[68] The study of the literary life of the Mamlūk period is nowhere near as developed as that of what we refer to as "classical" Arabic literature, but it can be confidently gathered that this period was no less thriving than the ones before it. Not only did collections thrive, but popular literature also enjoyed unprecedented popularity. I find this literary climate suitable to draw parallels between the output of this literature and the stories of the *Nights*. I do not claim that the stories under discussion are in the exact form in which they lived and were transmitted

[66] Sallis, 1999, 29.
[67] Marzolph, U.: In the Studio of the *Nights*, *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 17, 2014, 44.
[68] al-Bagdadi, N.: Registers of Arabic Literary History, *New Literary History*, 39, 2008, 440.

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in this era. In the light of the existing manuscripts and knowing the nature of the collection, it is almost impossible to say – the editions themselves being from the 19th century – and it cannot be the aim of this study, either. I am merely using this body of literature as a representative body of works of an era in which the *Nights* thrived.

In the following, then, *The Thousand and One Nights* is handled on the one hand as an ideological concept, the idea of cumulative story-telling within a narrative framework. On the other hand, it is a body of text fixed in a written form. However, it has not only one form but, as an ideological concept, it is embodied in various forms. These forms are considered independent literary works, variations of the *Nights*' general concept.

These aspects of the *Nights* influence fundamental aspects of the present study. An Arabic text has to be chosen for a study that aims at a discussion in the Arabic literary context. As stated earlier, this is the Calcutta II edition of William H. Macnaghten (1793–1841). Although not complete in a historical sense, this work, which is based on the Egyptian recension, represents the fullest version of the *Nights* as we know it today. It is the version of the *Nights* examined against the literary output of the Mamlūk era. This literary output, first and foremost, includes the works belonging to *adab*. The concept of *adab* will be described in detail in a later chapter; for now, suffice it to say that these works mainly represent historical, biographical, and *adab* literary works. When earlier works are referenced, they describe general concepts, mostly related to the *khabar* form. When talking about the *Nights* from a comparative perspective within Arabic literature, the Mamlūk works are referenced.

Although it is an Arabic text of the *Nights* which is under scrutiny, for easy access, English translations have to be provided for the quoted passages of all the Arabic sources. However, having already stated that translations are also independent versions of the *Nights*, it would be remiss to cite only the translated passages. Therefore, both Arabic and English versions will be provided. It will be apparent that using the English translation, in essence, does not influence the result of the examinations. Nevertheless, English quotations will only be preferred when using them does not directly refer to literary analysis. For the English translation of the *Nights*, I will refer to the translation of John Payne (1842–1916),[69] while in other cases, I use my translation. As for the titles of the individual stories, I will supply both Arabic and English titles when they are mentioned for the first time within a chapter. In other cases, I will use the English – when necessary, shortened English – titles to facilitate easier reading.

[69] Payne, J.: *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: now first completely done into English prose and verse, from the original Arabic*, 9 vols., London (Villon Society), 1882–1884.

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As for the transliteration of Arabic, I use the ALA-LC (American Library Association – Library of Congress) romanization. In the case of the translation of Payne, I will retain this script in the main text even if the translator uses another transliteration in the quoted passages. This diversity in transliteration mainly affects the proper names used in the *Nights* and the shortened titles which will be adjusted to the transliteration of the main text when necessary.

1.2. *The Thousand and One Nights* in the Context of Pre-Modern Arabic Literature

There are many ways to approach the material of *The Thousand and One Nights,* among which discussing it in its original Arabic context is one of the less popular routes. Knowing the history of the collection and the material available, it is hardly surprising. Apart from Galland's manuscript and some isolated manuscripts of individual stories, there is no such source material that would place the collection in any form into a specific time period. Nevertheless, such examinations also have to be made since our knowledge of the collection remains lacking without them.

The following discussion is not, first and foremost, the examination of how the *Nights* lived in the Mamlūk era; it is the examination of literary traditions melted together in a shared frame that is *The Thousand and One Nights*. Similarly, it is not the life of the collection as a whole but the life of the individual stories which interests us. For this discussion, however, we need, on the one hand, a fixed version of the *Nights* and, on the other, a control group of stories which I defined in temporal terms.

It is necessary because, even though the literary examination of the proposed questions is outside of temporal concerns, there are such elements of Arabic literature that cannot be discussed without temporal constraints. Such elements are, for example, the idea of *adab,* which provides the background of the discussion and the related social and historical changes that made it possible to reevaluate the concept of *adab* in the Mamlūk period. A similarly significant question is the concept of popular literature, which is claimed to be the backdrop of the formation of *The Thousand and One Nights* and which, as it will be shown, is going under changes during the period.

1.2.1. Historical Context: Literature of the Mamlūk Period

In the classical periodization of Arabic literary history, the Mamlūk period (1250–1517) marks the end of an era that had been concurrently labeled as "classical Islam" in Western research and witnessed the flowering of Arabic culture. It is a commonly held concept that Arabic culture had reached its zenith in the classical period and that nothing new or unique had been

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accomplished in the following centuries.[70] Not much had been done to support this statement with concrete evidence since, until recently, the literary output of later eras had remained mostly unresearched in the shadow of this prejudice.

However, Mamlūk studies are beginning to come into the front, and, gradually, more and more is revealed about that period of Arabic culture and literature, which can be labeled as "pre-modern". Thomas Bauer, Robert Irwin, Thomas Herzog, and Jonathan Berkey are just a few names in the field of developing Mamlūk scholarship. At the University of Chicago, the School of Mamluk Studies was founded, which organizes annual conferences to advocate scholarly debate in the field. At the same time, the Middle East Documentation Center at the University of Chicago publishes an online open access journal, *Mamluk Studies Review*, while supporting numerous online projects pertaining to the Mamlūk period, such as an online bibliography of Mamlūk studies.[71]

Against all the prejudice surrounding this era, there is evidence of a lively literary life on all levels of Mamlūk society.[72] Thomas Bauer goes as far as to call this period the golden age of anthologies,[73] while Konrad Hirschler talks about the 'encyclopedic age',[74] similar to Elias Muhanna, who writes that "[t]he Egyptian and Syrian territories of the Mamluk Empire witnessed the production of encyclopedic texts on a scale unprecedented in Islamic history".[75] Besides multi-thematic encyclopedias, Muhanna also cites commentary-anthologies, biographical dictionaries, and lexicographical dictionaries as emerging in this era.[76] C. E.

[70] Ignace Goldziher, for example, discusses this period under the title of "The Period of Decadence". (Goldziher, I.: *A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature*, Hildesheim (Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung), 1966, 141–158.) The reasons behind this long-standing prejudice are neatly described by Thomas Bauer. Bauer, Th.: Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 9, 2005, 105–107. It is also often lamented by scholars who recognize the achievements of this era: Mazolph, U.: Coining the Essentials: Arabic Encyclopaedias and Anthologies of the Pre-Modern Period, in *Collector's Knowledge: What Is Kept, What Is Discarded*, eds. A-S. Goeing, A. Grafton and P. Michel, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2013, 35-36, 37–38; Marzolph, U.: Medieval Knowledge in Modern Reading: A Fifteenth-Century Arabic Encylopaedia of Omni Re Scibili, in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996*, ed. P. Binkley, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 1997, 407–408; Muhanna, E.: *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*, Princeton – Oxford (Princeton University Press), 2018, 140–141.

[71] http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/index.html (last accessed on 27th October, 2022)

[72] Robert Irwin, in his study, gives an excellent overview of the literary output of the Mamlūk era. Irwin, R.: Mamluk Literature, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 7, 2003, 1–29.

[73] Bauer, Th.: Literarische Anthologien der Mamlūkenzeit, in*: Die Mamlūken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur*, eds. S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam. Hamburg (EB-Verlag), 2003, 71; Bauer, 2005, 122; Bauer, Th.: Mamluk Literature as a Means of Communication, in: *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies – State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann, Goettingen (V&R unipress – Bonn University Press), 2013, 53. See, also: Mazolph, 2013, 35. However, Robert Irwin, while recognizing this epoch as the "age of compilations and anthologies", points out that it was not more so than in the previous eras. (Irwin, 2003, 14.)

[74] Hirschler, K.: *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press, 2012, 19. See also: Mazolph, 2013, 34.

[75] Muhanna, 2018, 5.

[76] Muhanna, 2018, 51–55.

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Bosworth claims that this era is the culmination of secretary literature (*inshā'*).[77] Not to mention that popular literature also enjoyed unprecedented popularity[78] while the already thin line between this kind of literature and higher literature became even less defined.[79] Moreover, just as some literary forms saw their emergence (shadow play) or consolidation in these centuries, others underwent significant changes in form and adaptation. Ulrich Haarmann talks about the "literarization" of historiography,[80] while Jo van Steenbergen points out the great variety of forms in historiography as not only

> annalistic chronicles, but also individual biographies, impressive prosopographical collections of biographical dictionaries, multi-volume encyclopaedic works of history and geography, and combinations of these and of similar works of historiographical interest started to be written, published, consumed, and reproduced in unprecedented numbers.[81]

Indeed, in connection with *ṭabaqāt* literature, Ibrahim Hafsi observes that already in the 12th century, besides the traditionally chronologically arranged works, works started to assume an alphabetically organized structure as well.[82] The *isnād* also disappears or undergoes significant reduction.[83] Both of these changes, Hafsi labels as "revolution" and "daring break" in the context of their own era. Not to mention that these works are becoming thematically diverse since caliphs, kings, viziers, and even erudite women appear in the collections.[84]

However, we cannot forget that changes concerning social and cultural attitudes do not occur overnight. In this respect, the term "Mamlūk literature" is misleading as the social, cultural, and even political changes which resulted in the literature which can be recognized as

[77] Bosworth, C. E.: A 'maqāma' on Secretaryship: al-Qalqashandī's 'al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī'l-manāqib al-Badriyya', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 27, 1964, 292.
[78] Ghazoul, F. J.: *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context*, Cairo (The American University in Cairo Press), 1996, 31; Irwin (2003), 21–22; Herzog, Th.: Composition and Worldview of Some *Bourgeois* and *Petit-Bourgeois* Mamluk *Adab*-Encyclopedias, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 17, 2013, 105–106. Though he is careful in using the moniker 'popular culture': Berkey, J. P.: Popular Culture under the Mamluks: A Historiographical Survey, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 9, 2005, 138–139.
[79] Bauer, 2005, 110–111; Bauer, 2013, 23; Berkey, 2005, 138; Irwin, 2003, 18.
[80] Haarmann, U.: Auflösung und Bewahrung der klassischen Formen arabischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Zeit der Mamluken, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 121, 1971, 46–60.
[81] van Steenbergen, J.: *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage: al-Ḏahab al-masbūk fī ḏikr man ḥaǧǧa min al-ḫulafā' wa-l-mulūk*, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2016, 60. Ulrich Haarmann also talks about the sharp rise in the number of chronicles produced in the Mamlūk period: Haarmann, 1971, 58–59. Concerning biographical dictionaries, see Wadad al-Qadi's study in which she labels biographical dictionaries as the scholars' alternative history in response to the more and more elitist chronicles: al-Qadi, W.: Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community, in: *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2006, 23–75.
[82] In connection with the *ṭabaqāt* works concerning Muslim traditions: Hafsi, I.: Recherches sur le genre "ṭabaqāt", dans la littérature arabe I, *Arabica*, 23, 1976, 253. In connection with *ṭabaqāt* works concerning grammarians, he mentions this turn when discussing the 15th century: Hafsi, I.: Recherches sur le genre "ṭabaqāt", dans la littérature arabe III, *Arabica*, 24, 1977, 159. The same goes for the *ṭabaqāt* works concerning Qur'ān readers: Hafsi, I.: Recherches sur le genre «ṭabaqāt», dans la littérature arabe II, *Arabica*, 24, 1977, 4.
[83] Hafsi, 1976, 253–255, 255–256; al-Qadi, 2006, 68–69.
[84] Hafsi, 1977, 185; al-Qadi, 2006, 44–45, 69–70.

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"mamlūk" had already started taking effect in the earlier periods and continued well into the formation of the Mamlūk state. Nevertheless, the "mamlūk" designation can be applied to limit the period – and its literary output – under scrutiny on the ground that the Mamlūk era, in general, is representative of the literature which might have started its formation earlier. At the same time, I also took the liberty to use such sources which do not strictly belong to this period but are not that far removed as to be considered entirely separate from it.

Social Changes

Naturally, the changes, which are discernible in Mamlūk literature, did not happen in isolation, but they are part of a more general chain of events that took place due to the political and social changes of the period. With the formation of a military state under Mamlūk rule, society started rearranging itself. With a completely new ruling class, which had been trained for war,[85] it became possible for other groups of the social strata to gain ground in influential religious or administrative positions. Social mobility was reality like never before.[86] A significant result of this mobilization was "the gradual merger between the *adab*-oriented culture of the *kuttāb* and the *sunnah*-oriented culture of the *ulama*,"[87] a process that had been completed by the Ayyubid and Mamlūk periods.[88] Another result – primarily due to economic changes – was the rise of some part of the common people (*ʿāmma*).

Secondary literature writes about the collapse of the patronage system that, until the end of the ʿAbbāsid empire as a centralized state, had determined literary culture. However, scholars recently have gone to great lengths to prove that it was not entirely so.[89] The patronage system did have a significant influence on social interactions, although in a slightly altered form. The

[85] About the organization of the ruling elite, see: Stowasser, K.: Manners and Customs at the Mamluk Court, *Muqarnas*, 2, 1984, 13–15; Chamberlain, M.: *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350*. Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2002, 44–47, 47–51; van Steenbergen, J.: *Order out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture, 1341–1382*, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2006, 15–51; Levanoni, A.: The Mamlūks in Egypt and Syria: the Turkish Mamlūk sultanate (648–784/1250–1382) and the Circassian Mamlūk sultanate (784–923/1382–1517), in: *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, 2, *The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2010, 241–243, 259–260, 265–266.

[86] In general, see: Levanoni, 2010, 260–261. On the *awlād al-nās* and the opening up of the *amir*'s rank: van Steenbergen, 2006, 20–22. About the *ʿulamāʾ*: Lapidus, I. M.: *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 1984, 108–110; Marín, M.: The ʿulamāʾ, in: *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, 2, *The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2010, 692–695; Perho, I.: Climbing the Ladder: Social Mobility in the Mamluk Period, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 15, 2011, 19–20. On the emergence of an intermediate social level between *khāṣṣa* and *ʿāmma*: Herzog, Composition and Worldview, 100–106.

[87] Bauer, 2005, 108. In connection with encyclopedism – which so characterizes this period – Elias Muhanna describes in detail how the merge of these two classes affected the literary output of this era. (Muhanna, 2018, 56–82, 83–104.)

[88] Bauer, 2013, 23.

[89] van Steenbergen, 2006; Lapidus, 1984; Chamberlain, 2002.

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political significance of the system can be perceived in how patronal relationships transformed into a mutual collaboration: it was not just the *client* who needed recognition but the *patron* as well. This change was mainly apparent on the state level since the legitimacy of the Mamlūk sultan, in the absence of dynastic succession, was completely dependent on the recognition and support of his *mamlūk*s.[90] Power was centered around the households (*bayt*), with the sultan's household at the top – if not in actual power, then as a symbol of it – and the households of the military elite (*amīr*) were structured precisely like that of the sultan's, with an intricate system of patron-client relations. The case was not different regarding the households of the civilian elite (*aʾyān*).[91] Furthermore, important positions in administrative and religious establishments depended on whether one could secure a patron.[92]

Through these social changes, it was impossible for literature and culture to remain unaffected. For one, the merger of the social group whose education was founded in secular learning (*kuttāb*) and that whose education was a religious one (*ʾulamāʾ*) affected how literature came to be used in social interactions.[93] Also, the rise of part of the *ʾāmma* – though their ascent not easy and, indeed, not always looked upon with pleasure on the part of the intellectual elite[94] – and their participation in education witnessed the birth of an intermediate literature between the elite and the commoners.[95] Simultaneously, the broadening of the circle of those who produced literature and those who consumed it as "urban, bourgeois milieus increasingly participated in the consumption and production of literary texts."[96] This intermediate literature and the expansion of the circle of those interested in literature had a far-reaching consequence, as we will see below, regarding the ever-blurring distinction between popular literature and learned literature.[97] Furthermore, with the extreme stratification of the power structure throughout the Mamlūk empire and the patronage system becoming increasingly divided

[90] Levanoni, 2010, 274; Brett, M.: State formation and organization, in: *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, 2, *The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2010, 559–560.
[91] Chamberlain, 2002, 40.
[92] On the appointments of teachers in *madrasa*s, see: Marín, 2010, 690. On scholarly competition, see: Broadbridge, A. F.: Academic Rivalry and Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī", *Mamluk Studies Review*, 3, 1999, 85–107. On the role of *adab* literature in patron-client interaction: van Steenbergen, J.: Qalāwūnid Discourse, Elite Communication and the Mamluk Cultural Matrix: Interpreting a 14th-Century Panegyric, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 43, 2012, 1–28.
[93] Bauer, 2005, 109–111; especially in: Bauer, 2013, 23–56.
[94] Marín, 2010, 692–695; Perho, 2011, 19–35; Hirschler, 2012, 22–29; Herzog, Composition and Worldview, 100–106.
[95] Herzog, Composition and Worldview, 105.
[96] Bauer, 2013, 23. Also, see: Hirschler, 2012, 22, 70.
[97] Haarmann specifically points out the role of social changes in effecting the popularization of historiography. (Haarmann, 1971, 59.) Hirschler also discusses, through the example of Ibn al-ʿAsākir's *Tārīkh Dimashq*, how scholarly reading sessions became increasingly popular in nature to the point where solely popular reading sessions were held for the interested public. (Hirschler, 2012, 32–81.)

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horizontally and vertically, patron-client relationships also became more intimate, resulting in the emergence of private matters in communication.[98] Thus, the social structure's transformation and the resulting social interaction changes profoundly affected the thematic range of literature.[99]

The Concept of Adab *in Contemporary Culture*

Let us concentrate on literature and take our time to define *adab* as it was conceived in this cultural and social environment. Despite *adab* being a well-researched concept in Western scholarship, providing a general definition of the term is still challenging. In secondary literature, many concepts are described from various aspects of the term. There are three main lines of inquiry along which the concept of *adab* has been elaborated upon: moral, intellectual, and literary.

The moral aspect of the interpretation of *adab* is a generally accepted and commonly employed understanding of the term. Whatever stance a scholar would take on elaborating on the meaning of *adab*, the moral content remains the starting point of their inquiry. In pre-Islamic times, the meaning of *adab* correlated with *sunna*, which means "a way, course, rule, mode, or manner, of acting or conduct or life or the like".[100] It was something that had come down from the forefathers. According to some research, it quickly came to mean "knowledge" both in an intellectual and a practical sense.[101] It meant, on the one hand, the customs (upbringing, education, good-naturedness, etc.), and, on the other hand, all the knowledge of the sources which told about these customs. These sources mainly were sayings, poetry, anecdotes and the *ayyām* literature in the early times. The Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* literature later took over their primary roles, then later were supplemented by the knowledge of foreign sciences and literature (Greek, Indian, Persian). At this point, the different handling of the term developed, and the other two aspects mentioned above came into the front of the research.

[98] On the involvement of the *'āmma* in producing literature: Herzog, Composition and Worldview, 105. On the communication among the *'ulamā'*: Bauer, 2005, 109–110.
[99] On the widening of the thematic range of historical works, for example, see: Haarmann, 1971, 59.
[100] Lane, E. W.: *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 4, Beirut (Librairie du Liban Publishers), 1997, 1438.
[101] Bonebakker, S. A.: Adab and the Concept of Belles-Lettres, in: *'Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, eds. J. Ashtiany, T. M. Johnstone, J. Derek Latham, R. B. Serjeant, and G. Rex Smith, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2008, 17.

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From an intellectual point of view, emphasis is placed upon education on the one hand and social and cultural norms on the other. Studies dealing with the so-called "Islamic humanism,"[102] or the concept of knowledge and the sciences in general,[103] stress the influence of Hellenistic concepts on the formation of Muslim intellectual life. However, most of them caution against seeing anything other than a practical way of adopting these influences,[104] Islamic values remaining the driving force in shaping Muslim intellectual life. *Paideia*, nevertheless, becomes a determining factor in acquiring general knowledge, *adab*, as opposed to the specialized and religious sciences, *ʿulūm*.[105] *Adab*, in this respect, encompasses "a body of knowledge in the linguistic and literary field which comprises the genre of literature but includes further ancillary disciplines"[106] ranging from the linguistic sciences to history, ethics, and philosophy.[107] *Adab* as *paideia* means both a pedagogical system and the disciplines in this system that are necessary to acquire a general knowledge of ethical, moral, and intellectual value, which, in turn, is used in "literature and polite social intercourse".[108] And, of course, *adab* is the body of literature that contains all this knowledge.[109]

As for the literary approach, the studies are more diverse as the question of *adab* comes up during the discussion of a wide range of topics.[110] These studies share an approach of placing

[102] Kraemer, J. L.: Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: A Preliminary Study, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 104, 1984, 135–164; Carter, M. G.: Humanism and the Language Sciences in Medieval Islam, in: *Humanism, Culture and Language in the Near East: Studies in Honor of Georg Krotkoff*, eds. A. Afsaruddin and A. H. Mathias Zahniser, Winona Lake, India (Eisenbrauns), 1997, 27–38; Schöller, M.: Zum Begriff des „islamischen Humanismus, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 151, 2001, 275–320.
[103] von Grunebaum, G. E.: *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation*, Chicago – London (The University of Chicago Press), 1971, 221–257; Rosenthal, F.: *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2007; Heinrichs, W.: The Classification of the Sciences and the Consolidation of Philology in Classical Islam, in: *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East*, eds. J. W. Drijvers and A. A. MacDonald, Leiden – New York – Köln (E. J. Brill), 1995, 119–139.
[104] Grunebaum, 1971, 230–232; Kraemer, 1984, 142 [citing B. Spuler].
[105] On the relationship between *adab* and *ʿilm*, see: Grunebaum, 1971, 250–255; Rosenthal, 2007, 240–252; Bonebakker, S. A.: Early Arabic Literature and the Term Adab, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 5, 1984, 416–419; al-Bagdadi, 2008, 440; Ali, S. M.: *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past*, Notre Dame, Indiana (University of Notre Dame Press), 2010, 38.
[106] Heinrichs, 1995, 120.
[107] Grunebaum, 1971, 227.
[108] Carter, 1997, 30.
[109] See: Muhanna, 2018, 8.
[110] Monographs: Ali, 2010, 33–46; Malti-Douglas, F.: *Structures of Avarice: The Bukhalāʾ in Medieval Arabic Literature*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1985; 7–16. Studies mentioning the subject: Fahndrich, H. E.: The Wafayāt al-Aʿyān of Ibn Khallikān: A New Approach, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 93, 1973, 432–445; Bonebakker, 1984, 389–421; Bonebakker, 2008, 16–30; Holmberg, B.: *Adab* and Arabic Literature, in: *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective*, 4 vols, ed. A. Pettersson, Berlin – New York (Walter de Gruyter), 2006, 180–205; Leder, S.: The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form of Historical Writing, in: *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, eds. A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad, Princeton (The Darwin Press), 1992, 277–315; Leder, S. – H. Kilpatrick: Classical Arabic Prose Literature: A Researchers' Sketch Map, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 23, 1992, 2–26; Marzolph, U.: Adab in Transition – Creative Compilation in Nineteenth Century Print Tradition, in: *Compilation and Creation in Adab and Luġa: Studies in Memory of Naphtali Kinberg (1948–1997)*, eds. A. Arazi, J. Sadan, and D. J. Wasserstein, Pennsylvania

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adab as literature into a broader cultural context, effectively linking their point of view to that of those researchers we have discussed above. In this case, however, the definition of the term is approached from the opposite direction: it is not the whole which is broken down into its parts (the structure of *knowledge*), but this one specific aspect (*adab* as literature) is defined in the context of the whole. In this respect, using such terms as *adab*, *adab literature,* and *adab work* is a crucial point of distinction, albeit not employed according to an established tradition. What can be determined with certainty is that *adab* is both "a body of medieval writings which has come to be regarded as constituting a specific genre"[111] and a concept, or, as Grunebaum put it, "adab is, above all, an approach; it is, so to speak, a principle of form, not an array of materials".[112]

What remains to be discussed is the approach contemporary Arab writers took on the subject of *adab* in the Mamlūk era. As most of the above-mentioned studies deal with the classical period of Islam, we are not allowed to regard this problem solved until these sources are also considered. Unfortunately, the question of *adab* is not directly addressed by contemporary Arab writers, not even those whose primary preoccupation with literature was what we refer to today as *criticism* (*naqd*);[113] those who wish to inquire further into the matter have to content themselves with indirect references in texts which are more practical[114] than theoretical.

Through these indirect references, it is possible to assemble a list of characteristics that describe how *adab* had been understood by these authors.[115] In the "Preface" to his *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab,* al-Nuwayrī's (d. 1333) understanding of *adab* is shrouded in a complex metaphor of the desert. For him, "the art of adab" (*fann al-adab*) is what makes the desert

(Eisenbrauns), 1999, 160–172; Sadan, J.: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Brewer: Preliminary Remarks on the Adab of the Elite Versus Ḥikāyāt: The Continuation of Some of the Traditional Literary Models, from the "Classical" Arabic Heritage, up to the Emergence of Modern Forms, in: *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*, eds. S. Ballas and R. Snir, Toronto (York Press), 1998, 1–22; Sperl, S.: Man's "Hollow Core": Ethics and Aesthetics in Ḥadīth Literature and Classical Arabic Adab, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 70, 2007, 459–486; al-Bagdadi, 2008, 437–461; Orfali, B.: A Sketch Map of Arabic Poetry Anthologies up to the Fall of Baghdad, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 43, 2012, 29–59; Allan, M.: How Adab Became Literary: Formalism, Orientalism and the Institutions of World Literature, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 43, 2012, 172–196.

[111] Bonebakker, 2008, 17.

[112] Grunebaum, 1971, 255.

[113] Holmberg, 2006, I, 181.

[114] By practical, I mean the tendency of the compilers to discuss their method of selection and arrangement in their prefaces and the reasons by which they justify the inclusion of certain materials in their works. Even such works that claim a theoretical approach on the merit of their form of discussion (for example, *treatise*) lack the purely theoretical approach. The methodological approach of the compilers to selectivity and arrangement will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

[115] In the following, I will concentrate on those authors whose works are in the purview of the present research. These sources are mostly the works themselves which are studied throughout my discussion of the various topics but other works from the same authors are also dealt with if found relevant.

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bloom, what makes the water of the drinking place pleasant, and whose courts are spacious for those who stay there. *Adab* – or *fann al-adab* – is, then, what cultivates the mind. It is the sum of knowledge gathered from old and new sources.[116]

This richly described definition of *adab* leads us to another question: What is *fann*? *Fann* is a more frequently occurring term than *adab*; as such, it is imperative to consider its role in understanding *adab*. It appears in the plural (*funūn*) in the title of al-Nuwayrī's book, and it appears in the singular in al-Ibshīhī's (d. c. 1446) *al-Musaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*. In the English translation, al-Nuwayrī's "funūn" is translated as "arts," and Adam Mestyan, in his article on the origins of *fann*, supports this idea, albeit with reservations, seeing that it is not the only understanding of the word which is used in the book. In isolation, *fann* refers to "a field or a category of knowledge",[117] the acquisition of which is required for the cultivation of the mind. This understanding of the term is also how *fann* is understood by al-Ibshīhī when he writes about *kull fann ẓarīf*. *Fann* is the material of his book, the content ranging from Qur'anic verses and *aḥādīth* through serious or funny stories to examples of poetry.[118] What al-Ibshīhī enumerates as the content of his book – which contains *kull fann ẓarīf* – represents all the knowledge and a body of literature that constitutes *adab* as polite education.[119] This point of view is further reinforced in a later chapter in his book. In this chapter, *adab* is "the treasure when one is in need, the means to acquire virtue (*murūʾa*), a good friend in company and companion in loneliness, it is what makes a weak heart stronger, revitalizes the barren intellect and through which what is aspired can be reached".[120] It is a way of behavior and polite discourse, and it is art in that respect that it causes joy for the one who possesses it. Furthermore, it is connected to intelligence as a source of it.[121] Thus, it is education.

As it stands, contemporary authors seem to emphasize a work's content more than anything else when considering its *adab*-nature. The didactic and instructing nature of the works – through the terms of both *adab* and *fann* – is tightly connected to *knowledge* and is stressed in a sense that we can understand as educational. The form is not understood as a criterium of *genre* but as an artistic device employed for the audience's benefit. It is more aesthetic than

[116] al-Nuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb: *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol. I, al-Qāhira (Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya), n.d, 4.
[117] Mestyan, A.: Arabic Lexicography and European Aesthetics: The Origin of Fann, *Muqarnas*, 28, 2011, 80.
[118] al-Ibshīhī, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad: *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*, vol. I, Bayrūt (Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt), 1992/1412, 7.
[119] Ibn Fahd, for example, covers a similarly wide range of topics and materials in his work as he mentions *akhbār*, *nādira* and *masāmira* as the content of his book which deals with "kalām al-ḥukamā' wa-fiqar al-bulaghā' wa-laṭā'if al-udabā". (Ibn Fahd, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥmūd b. Sulaymān: *Manāzil al-aḥbāb wa-manāzih al-albāb*, ed. Muḥammad al-Dībājī, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 2012, 1–7.)
[120] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 38.
[121] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 38.

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anything else, and as such, it allows for a vast amount of material to be regarded as part of *adab*. This idea seems to align with the understanding of *adab* in the classical period as a group of materials that share educational (content) and aesthetic (form) values. This observation brings us to an important point to consider: Which material does *adab* consist of exactly?

Deciding on the scope of the present study, the question of historical writing also came to the center of my attention. Not all literature mentions historical writing as *adab*, or considers it as such. It is not a marginal question, however, when one attempts to read the *Nights* in its literary context or – as we will see in the following part – when one aims at a terminological systematization of the use of the term *adab*. "[M]uch of the material that the historiographer or […] the biographer incorporates into his work is part of his literary heritage, his literary tradition,"[122] and conversely, "[e]arly Islamic history is dealt with in several fields of Arabic literature".[123] This mutual accessibility of history and literature is well attested in contemporary works. Historiography is not understood in the same sense in medieval Arabic society as in modern Western research. This is what Samer M. Ali stresses in his monograph on Arabic literary salons, adding that "Arabo-Islamic culture deemed history a field of *adab*."[124] Thus, historiography was more like a "kind of narrative practice"[125] which was aligned with *adab* in the sense of general knowledge.

In conducting my research on the *Nights* and Mamlūk literature, I will adhere to the statement of Nadia al-Bagdadi when she claims that "[a]dab, including history and literature, and ʿilm are the two major categories of enunciation".[126] However, this observation needs some refinement from a terminological point of view as the employment of *adab* and "literature" on two levels of understanding may lead to some misunderstandings.

The Terminology of Adab

From all of the above, it becomes evident that the conception of *adab* is many-faceted, involving both theoretical and practical concepts, not to mention the written realizations of this knowledge. There is, however, no commonly accepted usage of such terms as *adab*, *adab* literature, literature, *belles-lettres*, etc. in the secondary literature. It is imperative for us to develop a working system of terminology that can handle all this variety of usages with as little detriment to the meaning of the various concepts as possible.

[122] Fahndrich, 1973, 433.
[123] Leder, 1992, 277.
[124] Ali, 2010, 37.
[125] Robinson, Ch. F.: *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2003, 6.
[126] al-Bagdadi, 2008, 440.

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First, *adab* has to be considered in its relation to such concepts as *literature*, *Literatur*, or *littérature* to determine to what extent these terms can be used as synonyms for the Arabic term. These terms signify the same content in modern conception: "written works, especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit".[127] The definition of the English term mostly covers the same meanings as the German and French equivalents. The evaluation of a work as belonging to *literature* is primarily based on artistic and aesthetic values. Stress is also based on the work's written form. The definition of *adab* in contemporary thought shares this same aspect. The Western terms also cover writings of specialized knowledge, a meaning which *adab* had also acquired. For this reason, however, it is problematic to define *adab* in a purely artistic sense – such is the case with *literature* as well – and, for the sake of clarity and due to the nature of my inquiry, it becomes necessary to find two separate words to describe these two different concepts.

In French, there is a term that can distinguish between the broader sense of *littérature* as the overall written production of culture and *littérature* as an artistic form: this is *belles-lettres*. In modern research, this is the term equated with *adab* when Arabic literature as an art form is under discussion. It might as well be a suitable solution for modern Arabic literature where the literary artistic output is more or less aligned with that of Western literature. However, we have seen that the situation is quite different when premodern Arabic literature is concerned. It is not only that *adab* has a broader cultural significance for it to be limited only to literature in the artistic sense, but the line between what is considered "literary" and what is "scientific" is more blurred than in modern times. The question of historiography is an excellent example of this blurriness, which will be addressed later.

This problem of pre-modern Arabic literature is addressed from the direction of scholarly activity of Western research in Bo Holmberg's article on *adab* in which he differentiates between the philological and the belletristic approach of scholars to Arabic literature. He notes that the philological approach, which dominated Western research from its outset, allows for the inclusion of such writings that are eventually excluded by the belletristic approach.[128] Although both approaches have their merits regarding the literary history of the Arabs, the philological approach gets closer to the essence of what can be rightfully considered as *adab*. This observation, however, still does not provide any solution to the problem of understanding *adab* as *literature*. It formulates even more questions. However, the attempt to answer these questions may help us get closer to a more crystalized terminology of Arabic literature.

[127] LITERATURE, in *Oxford Dictionary of English*, ed. A. Stevenson, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2010, 1031.
[128] Holmberg, 2006, 185.

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The first question is connected to the all-inclusive nature of the philological approach, which considered such fields of Arabic culture as part of Arabic literature as jurisprudence, philosophy, history, and Qur'ān exegesis, to mention a few.[129] It has already been noted that *adab* embodies general knowledge of ethical, moral, and intellectual value, which is set apart from the specialized knowledge of *ʿilm*. *Adab* and *ʿilm* are not mutually exclusive terms; they are complementary in that *ʿilm* can act as auxiliary knowledge to *adab* and vice versa. Although this understanding hints at the unique role Arabic culture attributes to knowledge, it does presuppose a kind of inherent distinction between the two fields of science. It means that the literature that includes all cultural and scientific aspects of the Arabic tradition cannot be regarded as *adab* in the artistic sense of the words. It also means that *adab,* in general, has a connotation that distinguishes it from a more exclusive circle of *adab* works that retain their informative nature but are entertaining and artistically pleasing simultaneously.

This observation does bring us closer to the terminology for which we are striving. It can be stated then that we can talk about *literature* in the sense of its first meaning according to Duden dictionary: "[gesamtes] Schrifttum, veröffentlichte [gedruckte] Schriften: wissenschaftliche L.; belletristische, schöngeistige, schöne L."[130] According to this approach, *adab* is a part of Arabic writerly culture, that is, Arabic literature as a whole, which includes all written output of Arabic culture, scientific or literary. This understanding of the Arabic term seems to settle one part of the problem by applying the term *adab* to the general concept of medieval Arab knowledge – general or specific – and its literary output. At the same time, however, it poses our next question: How can we refer to *adab* as a purely artistic expression that, in this case, covers not only a work's artistic merits but its informative and entertaining nature as well?

Can *adab* as an artistic expression be understood as *belles-lettres,* then? Although the French term is predominantly employed in connection with modern literature, it is not a uniform utilization of the word. According to several sources, it was around the 8th century that *adab* also appeared in connection with the art of literature.[131] It is in this century, then, when *adab* appears in the sense of *belles-lettres*. The French term is the one that most researchers use when they define *adab* through a Western concept. This general usage of the French term poses some

[129] Holmberg refers to Carl Brockelmann and Fuat Sezgin as examples of representatives of the philological approach. Their bibliographical works, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* and *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* respectively, include such materials which would not have been considered strictly as literature. (Holmberg, 2006, 185.)
[130] LITERATUR, in *Duden – Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*, Berlin (Dudenverlag), 2015, 1135–1136.
[131] Bonebakker, 2008, 19–20.

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problems, however. It is not only that the term *belles-lettres* does not have an exact definition in Western research, but it does not have the same extent of references as *adab*, either. For instance, *adab* does not cover poetry. It does mean the knowledge of poetry, but the art itself (*shi'r*) has always been considered a separate field of Arabic literature.[132] On the other hand, however, the Arabic term *adab* has a much broader connotation than the French phrase. In that sense, it stands closer to the meaning of *literature*.

From a rudimentary definition of *adab*, it can be concluded that those works belong here whose aim is to educate with their moral content but at the same time are entertaining, and they are consciously constructed both stylistically and grammatically. However, this claim is problematic if we consider that this definition, which is centered on content and form, allows for much more works to be considered *adab* as the term *belles-lettres* allows. Let us consider Fahndrich's statement: "To define the difference between 'biographical dictionary' and 'adab-work' (according to the traditional definition) is as difficult or impossible as to define the difference between information and entertainment. Here as there, the meanings overlap."[133] In other words: in Arabic literature, content and form are the most fundamental criteria for a highly respected work, be it historiographical, religious, or belletristic.

Despite its widespread use, then, *belles-lettres* is not a suitable term for describing the meaning of *adab*. The main reason for this is the rich history of the Arabic term that evolved from ancestral customs, through culture and manners, into literature while preserving its previous meanings. "*Adab* in this context – and possibly in most of its contexts in later medieval Arabic literature – is such a polysemant, denoting basically prose writing and the knowledge of grammar and lexicography but strongly alluding to the approach which is also called *adab*,"[134] to quote Fahndrich again. I find his approach exceptionally novel in that it is not exclusively focused on the literary aspect of *adab* but acknowledges all its additional content.

Following his footsteps, I propose the following approach: the differentiation between *adab* as a cultural phenomenon and *adab literature* as a special product of *adab* – which contemporary authors have also described as discussed previously – that presupposes a certain kind of reading. This differentiation sets *adab literature* apart from, for example, historiographical writing and secretarial writing. I find this division logical and more precise than talking about *adab* as literature that gives way for a confounding usage of the term "literature" itself. This way, we have a more or less general term, *adab*, which covers the

[132] Sadan, 1998, 2.
[133] Fahndrich, 1973, 439.
[134] Fahndrich, 1973, 440.

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cultural orientation of medieval Arab society and allows for varied kinds of literature (scientific and otherwise), of which *adab literature* is only one. Philip F. Kennedy uses the same expression when providing a definition for the *maqāma*, describing *adab literature* as "educative collections of anecdotes, usually involving historically identifiable personages".[135] Arabic terms also allow for *literature* to be used purely for written works[136] and not to get confused with *adab literature*.

Popular Literature and Adab

As my study deals primarily with *The Thousand and One Nights* and the problem of interpretation of its individual stories within Arabic culture or, more precisely, in the context of *adab*, the relationship between *adab* and the so-called *popular literature* has to be considered as well. Can the concept of popular literature be grasped through its opposition to *adab*? The lack of concern regarding the subject of *adab* on the part of contemporary Arab writers seems to suggest so. Compilers who set to arrange a book did not even consider the possibility of their work being regarded as anything else than an *adab work*. *Adab* was represented by what had been compiled by them through a careful selection and arrangement of material; what had been left out could very well be labeled as "popular." Berkey proposes a similar approach to popular culture, which rests upon a social hierarchy that differentiates between *khāṣṣa* and *ʿāmma*, which, in turn, imposes definition on what is considered popular and what is elite.[137] This approach adds the consideration of intended audiences into the mix and would certainly explain the contemporary authors' approach to *adab*.

However, the question deserves more attention since strict opposition regarding content and form represented by *adab works* or intended audience is impossible. It is not possible to draw a sharp line between *khāṣṣa* and *ʿāmma*, and, indeed, it is unwarranted to declare that the *khāṣṣa* was not interested in popular literature in any form and vice versa. This is a phenomenon that most research, discussing Mamlūk popular culture is aware of.[138] Despite this awareness,

[135] Kennedy, Ph. F.: The *Maqāmāt* as a Nexus of Interests. Reflections on Abdelfattah Kilito's *Les Séances*, in Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam, ed. J. Bray, London – New York (Routledge), 2006, 153.
[136] Donner, F. M.: *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*. Princeton (The Darwin Press), 1998, 2, fn.1.
[137] Berkey, 2005, 139. Jospeh Sadan, discussing the "adab of the elite and the ḥikāyāt", proposes a similar distinction in the ʿAbbāsid era in which *adab* literature may be defined as "pertaining almost exclusively to a distinctive class of sovereigns, princes, dignitaries, and intellectuals". (Sadan, 1998, 5.)
[138] Thomas Herzog provides a short theoretical background for the division between popular and elite culture, pointing out the problems of applying such an approach to Mamlūk culture. (Herzog, Th.: Mamluk (Popular) Culture: The State of Research, *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies: State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann, Goettingen (V&R unipress), 2013, 131–135.) Jonathan Berkey also summarizes the problem but seems reluctant to take a position in favor of either. (Berkey, 2005, 135–137.)

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however, besides the proponent of the dismissal of such divisions, there are those researchers who see the merit of maintaining this dichotomic division for analytical reasons.[139] I support the latter idea as knowing the audience – and the occasion for which that audience had gathered together – provides some pointers to the nature of the literary work.

As for content, it has already been shown that the boundary between *adab* and popular had been blurring during the centuries. With the growing interest in literature on the part of urban society,[140] it reached its zenith in the Mamlūk period. It was a period when popular material started to infiltrate *adab literature*;[141] a process which reached its culmination in the Mamlūk period when an unprecedented amount of the material of the high culture of *adab* got appropriated for popular consumption while some aspects of popular culture found their way into the culture of the educated.[142] Naturally, there remained themes and subjects which were not dealt with in one or the other, but a shared segment of materials existed.

Form may help one make a distinction in different ways, but there are certain overlaps between the two levels in that regard as well. For one, in prose literature, it is difficult to disregard the *khabar* form appearing in popular literature, even though popular literature can claim the long narrative form as its own. Popular poetry was more flexible in creating its own forms of expression but overlaps also exist.

The recording of the material may be considered a decisive factor in dividing popular and *adab*. In the 10th century, al-Tanūkhī (d. 994) emphasized the written form as opposed to the oral tradition, whose material "suffers distortion to the extent that story tellers who tell what we have already heard began to mix it with a lot that distorts and dilutes".[143] It suggests that it is not the material which determines what can be considered *adab* and what popular but a certain approach to the material of which both make use. Indeed, later authors go to great lengths to elaborate on their methods of selection, recording, and arrangement in their prefaces.[144] Al-

[139] Shoshan, B.: *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2002, 6–7.
[140] Bauer, 2013, 23.
[141] al-Musawi, M.: Abbasid Popular Narrative: the Formation of Readership and Cultural Production, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 38, 2007, 263–264, 278.
[142] Irwin, 2003, 13, 18–23; Shoshan, 2002, 76; al-Musawi, 2007, 343–345; Herzog, Composition and Worldview, 105–106.
[143] al-Tanūkhī, Abū ʿAlī al-Muḥassin b. ʿAlī: *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara wa-akhbār al-mudhākara*, vol. I, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1995, 1. Translated in al-Musawi, M. J.: The "Mansion" and the "Rubbish Mounds": *The Thousand and One Nights* in Popular Arabic Tradition, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 35, 2004, 334.
[144] The following authors provide a description of arrangement and a table of content in their prefaces: al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*; al-Ghuzūlī, ʿAlā al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bahā'ī al-Dimashqī: *Maṭāli' al-budūr fī manāzil al-surūr*, 2 vols, al-Qāhira (Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya), 2006/1426; Ibn Abī Ḥajala al-Tilmisānī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā: *Sukurdān al-sulṭān*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar, al-Qāhira (Maktabat al-Khānjī), 2001/1421; al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf…*; Ibn ʿArabshāh: *Fākihat al-khulafā' wa-mufākihat al-ẓurafā'*, al-Qāhira (Dār al-Āfāq al-ʿArabiyya), 2001/1421. Alphabetically ordered works are, not surprisingly, the historical and biographical anthologies: Ibn Khallikān, Abū al-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr:

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Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), for example, claimed that – in al-Musawi's words – "scholarly or artistic elaboration and meticulousness come with writing".[145]

The Mamlūk period is not different in that respect from the classical period. Al-Nuwayrī also stresses the importance of reading when he says that it was not from the lips of the respected scholars that he had collected his material but by reading.[146] Also, al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) refers back to al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868) in a treatise on the art of compilation when he states that while the pen preserves what is recorded, the tongue is prone to idle chatter.[147] Going on, he quotes ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kīsān on writing being more effective in making the mind think critically during the act of writing than speaking is during the act of speech.[148] Despite Arabic culture being regarded as primarily oral, there was a culturally accepted significance attached to written documentation which raised it above the popular culture even when the latter started to get recorded due to "increased urban demand".[149]

However, it would also prove misleading to assume that popular literature claimed orality as its own while high literature insisted on recorded material. On the contrary, research had already shown that orality played an essential role in Arabic literature (as in *adab*) and in Arabic scientific literature. Gregor Schoeler's research points out that, in varying degrees, depending on the field of literature, orality preserved its primary role in transmitting knowledge for quite some time.[150] With the appearance of books and the strengthening support for the written word in later centuries, the distinction between the oral nature of popular literature and the written nature of high literature might have become more definite. However, it does not change the fact that orality and the written form cannot be considered decisive when talking about the division of popular and *adab*.

Without denying the fact that there, indeed, exist certain forms of communication and specific thematic division that set apart high and popular literature, it seems that making a distinction between *adab* and popular is not primarily a question of form and content or even of an audience, rather a question of approach. In this respect, Konrad Hirschler's remarks may help to understand the complex nature of the relationship between popular literature and high

Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān, 8 vols, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1972; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh: *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, 10 vols, Bayrūt (Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī), 2009. However, al-Damīrī also arranges his material that way: al-Damīrī, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mūsā: *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, 4 vols, Dimashq (Dār al-Bashāʾir), 2005/1426.

[145] al-Musawi, 2004, 337.

[146] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, I, 5.

[147] al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn: *Taʿrīf bi-ādāb al-taʿlīf*, ed. Marzūq ʿAlī Ibrāhīm, al-Qāhira (Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī), 1989, 26.

[148] al-Suyūṭī, *Taʿrīf*, 26–27.

[149] al-Musawi, 2004, 334.

[150] Schoeler, 2006; Schoeler, 2011.

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literature. He does not directly talk about popular and high literature, which entails classifying literary works into one or the other category. However, he talks about reading practices – or a specific approach to the material, as I said earlier – which depends on "what was read, where it was read and who participated in the readings in terms of social profile."[151] His study is, however, primarily centered on the reader, that is, the consumption of a work and does not address the questions regarding the creation of a work.

It is during the creation of a work when the questions of orality and writing come to the fore. It has already been said that orality played a central role in Arabic literature in the earlier periods. However, even in orality, the fields of science and *adab* possessed a feature that set them strictly apart from other forms of literature: authentication. Orality – or aurality, as Schoeler refers to it – was to ensure the authenticity of the material transmitted through a chain of transmitters that can be traced down to a single source (an author). The transmitters in the chain gained authentication by reading the material to another authenticated transmitter or, in earlier times, being read the material by a transmitter or the author himself. This authentication was also preserved in writing through the presence of the *isnād* in the case of collected material. Geert Jan van Gelder reflects on the role of the author and the authorized transmission when he says, "[k]nowing facts gives a person status; but conversely any fact, any text derives its status from persons, who compose the text or transmit it, preferably orally, the written text being merely a convenient mnemonic device".[152] He sees the reason for the *Nights*' lack of status in Arabic literature in this relation of text and author.

Although it is not a decisive statement, it can be said that, in the Mamlūk period, *adab literature* was primarily written while the culture of the populace was predominantly oral. This simple fact results in two different attitudes towards the treatment of material: on the one hand, written recording imposes some restrictions on the compiler, while, on the other hand, oral tradition gives free rein to the performer and handles the material more flexibly. This flexibility is transferred to the written form of oral tradition: as "the tales were not to be written down as sacred tablet",[153] they were not under the obligation to comply with the prescriptions of high culture. While the author of the *adab work* had the freedom to choose freely from a predetermined set of source material, the freedom of the popular compiler was more significant

[151] Hirschler, 2012, 24.
[152] van Gelder, 1997, 251.
[153] al-Musawi, 2004, 334.

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in terms of material that was not tied to the common stock of *adab*, which, however, undoubtedly formed a part of his sources as well.[154]

With all the above observations in mind regarding both creation and consumption of literary works, we shall pose the question: Where can *The Thousand and One Nights* be placed within Arabic literature? The generally accepted view is that this collection of stories that vary from simple reports on one person or another through fables, exemplary tales, and detective stories to the almost epic-like fantastic tales belongs to the so-called popular literature.[155] There is no point in contesting this statement. It is, however, imperative to keep in mind that being popular is not an exclusive way to describe and understand the nature of the collection. Due to its great variety of content, this collection is an excellent example of the problems presented during the discussion of popular literature. Some stories are the perfect examples of popular tales that would not be found in an *adab* collection. Other stories, however, show a striking likeness to those found in an *adab* collection. The *adab* nature of these stories cannot be dismissed in these cases. And, of course, certain stories show undisputable European influences even though their Arabic manuscripts had shown up with time. Each story or group of stories requires specific treatment for us to fully appreciate it and its place in Arabic literature.

1.2.2. Conceptual Context: The Terminology of Short Narratives in Pre-Modern Arabic Literature and the Problem of Constructing a Theoretical Framework

As I mentioned earlier, one of the most significant shortcomings of Western research of the *Nights* concerning genre is that it tries to adapt Western concepts to an Eastern work. On the one hand, it is an entirely understandable and even well-founded approach given the dual nature of the collection, which tethers it to both Eastern and Western conventions. On the other hand, however, it significantly limits our understanding of this vast and colorful collection. I do not wish to contest the validity of the former approach. On the contrary, I do see the merit of such handling of the material. In connection with a work, which had been appropriated in different degrees to the taste of its foreign audience, it is necessary to adapt the language of discussion on it as well. It is inevitable for the Western audience to notice the Greek elements of some stories since it is an integral part of their own culture.[156] Just like the folkloristic elements are

[154] al-Musawi, 2007, 264.
[155] On the popular component of the *Nights*, see: al-Musawi, 2004, 356–363.
[156] The Greek impact on Arabic culture is without question. (See: Goodman, L. E.: The Greek Impact on Arabic Literature, *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 1983, 460–482; Grunebaum, G. E. von: Parallelism, Convergence, and Influence in the Relation of Arab and Byzantine Philosophy, Literature, and Piety, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 18, 1964, 89–111; Gutas, D.: *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society*, London, New York (Routledge), 1999; Pietruschka, U.: Classical Heritage and New

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likely to stand out for the same reason of familiarity,[157] just to mention the most popular branches of research.

However, inquiries based on such observations must be handled with caution, and one must know the limits of such discussions. It cannot be forgotten that it is not a Western work – even more so in the case of the short narratives – and the circumstances of its birth are different from those of the works to which we are likely to compare them. We can refer to a short story of the *Nights* as an *anecdote*, but, in reality, it will not provide us with anything more substantial than the satisfaction that we can connect it to our background knowledge of literature. It is a necessary step in starting a discussion about Arabic literature. It provides a point of reference from where constructive dialogue can take form between Western and Eastern literary cultures.

However, one has to question how the concept of *genre* may be placed in the context of pre-modern Arabic literature. Is there such a concept as *genre* at all? If there is, to what extent does it correspond to that of its Western counterpart? As such, the following discussion does not provide a terminological examination in the strict sense. Such inquiries are problematic because they are based on observations of individual works without bringing them into a shared context and because they also fail to consider how literary understanding works in the case of Arabic works. The result of such inquiries is a number of observations that are independent of one another. The conclusion that can be drawn from such observations is fragmentary at best and cannot provide for the construction of a comprehensive theory.

Such is the nature of Arabic literary tradition. Certain branches of sciences are granted prominence while others are understood through this first group. This bias is the ailment from which Arabic literature is also suffering: it is discussed through the language of tradition, linguistics, rhetoric, and *adab*. Consequently, the research is also handicapped by this very same fact simply because this is what the sources provide for. This problem will be addressed in the concluding part of this chapter. For the time being, suffice it to say that it is not lexicographical and, thus, a classificatory aspect of the research I intend to grasp but a more theoretical one.

Literary Forms: Literary Activities of Christians during the Umayyad Period, in: *Ideas, Images, and Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. S. Günther, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2005, 17–39; Rosenthal, F.: *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, London, New York (Routledge), 1992.) However, its impact on popular culture and the *Nights* itself cannot be proven beyond doubt. (Grunebaum, G. E. von: Greek Form Elements in the *Arabian Nights*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 62, 1942, 290.)

[157] *Fairy-tale* is an especially popular moniker when one discusses the stories of the *Nights*. And, indeed, in the loosest sense of the word, it is as adequate a term as it can get. (Some studies in connection with folklore and fairy-tale studies: Gerhardt, M. I.: *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1963, 273–337; Marzolph, U.: Grimm Nights: Reflections on the Connections between the Grimms' *Household Tales* and the *1001 Nights*, *Marvels & Tales*, 28, 2014, 75–87; Tuczay, Ch. A.: Motifs in *The Arabian Nights* and in Ancient and Medieval European Literature: A Comparison, *Folklore*, 116, 2005, 272–291. See also: fn.1.) However, when one employs a stricter definition of the term, problems will arise.

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Instead of concentrating on definitions of individual terms, which would lead us to no definite answers concerning genre, I will examine what these definitions tell us about the method of constructing the system on which the definitions rest.

To understand how literary understanding works in pre-modern Arabic literature, we should turn to the terms Western research considers as denoting genre. We usually associate these terms with *genre*, and examining how their meaning is understood in Arabic literature will help us recognize the main differences between genre as a concept in Western literary tradition and how these "genre-denoting terms" are employed in their original context.

The prefaces the compilers of collections added to their works greatly help provide many such terms. It has to be specified, though, that in the context of the present study, only the short narratives of Arabic literature and the terms associated with it are under scrutiny. A more inclusive examination of the problem of *genre* does not belong to the purview of this study. Fortunately, we have a rich ground for examination in this respect and works from the broader field of *adab* are available for such inquiries. Again, it is not the precise definitions and the strict classification that we are after but the more subtle workings of a literary culture that is behind the meaning of the individual terms. It has to be kept in mind, though, that these prefaces are not conscious theoretical works in the strict sense. Nevertheless, indirectly, there are principles laid down in them that play a significant part in understanding the meaning and the applications of these terms in the Mamlūk period.

We can collect many terms from the texts examined that denote some *genre*. This vast number of names suggests a sophisticated system of definitions and classification. However, if there is one, these prefaces do not elaborate on it. The authors seem to only provide random lists without explanation or examples. Comparing the terms used by the authors does not help, either, as it cannot be stated without a doubt that they mean the same thing by the same terms. In this regard, the authors leave a great deal to the readers in terms of generic interpretation, suggesting that the short narratives of pre-modern Arabic literature are strongly contextual. Contextuality implies the existence of a vast background knowledge responsible for literary comprehension. Already this perfunctory observation places the notion of classification into the background in favor of interpretation. Here lies a reason behind the problematic nature of *genre* in pre-modern Arabic literature.

Without a clearly defined and generally accepted and employed system, it is difficult to start any meaningful conversation about the genre conception of pre-modern Arabic literature. May it as it be, let us see what the examination of these terms may reveal. In the prefaces, we are given many terms to work with. However, without a definite guide to define them, it is up

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to the reader to decipher and identify them. As a first step, with rudimentary knowledge, an ordinary reader can create specific groups from the terms provided. This way, it is possible to talk about such works that deal with religious or worldly topics or ones that hit a serious or much lighter tone. We can even guess the time and the place specific stories were told. However, these kinds of classifications of works which may be labeled with one term or another, are always arbitrary. In all these cases, we are bound to concentrate on one specific characteristic, which makes for a very uncertain link between the particular works and the terms associated with them. This arbitrariness leads to the phenomenon that any given story can be considered to belong to various genres. It always depends on the specific characteristic (theme, tone, etc.) one prefers to concentrate on. It goes without saying that this classification does not make for a definite generic classification.[158]

It is, however, something that some of the authors themselves did. They do not make up specific groups, but they indicate the existence of some system that makes that possible – even though they are just as arbitrary as the groups mentioned above. They are very much the same as well. Among other things, al-Ibshīhī refers to serious stories (*al-ḥikāyāt al-jiddiyya*) on the one hand, and amusing anecdotes (*al-nawādir al-hazaliyya*) on the other,[159] making a distinction between serious and humorous material. Furthermore, he specifies his material thematically as well when he mentions Prophetic tradition (*al-aḥādīth al-nabawiyya*), examples of poetry (*al-amthāl al-shi'riyya*), and linguistic expressions (*al-alfāẓ al-lughawiyya*).[160]

For now, it suffices to say that the definition of these terms is not at all set, and their usage is very much arbitrary. Apart from some interesting observations, they can hardly add conclusive information regarding the definition of the particular genres – if such a concept exists. However, a closer examination of these terms can reveal the Arab authors' approach to classifying their material and help understand on what foundation these classifications rest and whether this classification was based on *genre*.

[158] It may be interesting to note the observation Gregor Schoeler makes in connection with poetry. When discussing the classification of poems, he brings attention to the differing approach of "Dichtungstheoretiker" and "Dīwānrezensoren", the former being theoretical and the later practical. (Schoeler, G.: Die Einteilung der Dichtung bei den Arabern, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 123, 1973, 32–33.) It may very well be that these works attest to a theoretical approach that does not oblige the compilers to strict classification of their material.
[159] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 7.
[160] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 7.

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Fortunately, other sources may complement the previous observations and add new perspectives. These is the important dictionary of the time by Ibn Manẓūr (1233–1312), *Lisān al-ʿarab*,[161] and a later work by al-Zabīdī (1732–1791), *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*.[162] What they can give us is a more contemporary understanding of the terms. Here, I will leave the prefaces behind for a while and concentrate on a more varied collection of terms denoting genre. These dictionaries provide definitions for the particular terms, allowing for a more comprehensive examination. My purpose is to draw a picture of how contemporary people might have understood these terms and on what concepts they based their understanding of a literary work. In the following, it will be examined what information the definitions contain and how the information gained can be utilized in the development of a theoretical framework for the genre conception of pre-modern Arabic literature.

After studying the various entries, it became clear that it is possible to talk about the meaning of various genre-denoting terms in an ordered fashion. It is evident that, like our previous categorizations, the entries also concentrate on specific aspects of the words. In keeping with this, we can group the terms according to these specific aspects that, in turn, can be put into two larger categories: those based on some aspects of the text and those based on the text's connection to the world.

As for the ones based on the text, we have terms that describe the theme, tone, and even structure. Terms that denote thematic content can be further divided into groups of single words (*manāqib*, *maʾāthir*, *mafākhir*, *faḍāʾil*, *maḥāsin*, *mathālib,* etc.) and compound words (*ayyām al-ʿarab*, *aḥādīth nabawiyya*, *asāṭīr al-awwalīn*, *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, *sīra shaʿabiyya*, etc.). Naturally, compound words can designate a more exact meaning than single words, which cover such general concepts as commendable or condemnable acts or wondrous and strange things or events (*nādira*).

Poetry first comes to mind when discussing tone in connection with Arabic literature. The words *madīḥ* and *hijāʾ* are familiar to the student of Arabic literature. The expressions denote the poet's stance in addressing the subject of his poem. Although medieval Arabic theoretical works on poetry seem to classify such terms as *madīḥ* and *hijāʾ* as thematic categories,[163] I argue for the differentiation between thematic and tonal categories in prose literature based on the specific nature of the source material. We have the terms *hazal* and *jidd* for describing humorous

[161] Ibn Manẓūr: *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 18 vols. Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), n.d.
[162] al-Zabīdī, Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī: *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, 40 vols, ed. ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj. al-Kuwayt (al-Turāth al-ʿArabī), 1965-2004.
[163] See in detail: Schoeler, 1973, 9–55.

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or serious stories.[164] However, while these terms denote specific subgenres in poetry, in prose literature, they remain simple adjectives describing genres, for example, *maḍḥak*.

The structure remains to be discussed here. Poetry again comes to mind here as it is known that the *qaṣīda*'s most definite feature is its three-part structural composition and lines answering to strict formal criteria. As far as prose literature goes, we have already mentioned the *khabar,* which, as a narrative form, is composed of an *isnād* and a *matn*. There are, however, other terms as well which tell about structural composition. *Aḍdād* and *tabaqāt* are both such terms. There is a significant difference here, however. While both *qaṣīda* and *khabar* indicate a set structural composition in one particular written composition, these two terms project their ordering principle on a grander scale: the collection. *Aḍdād* requires an opposition, themes set against each other in a fashion, while *tabaqāt* restricts the range of stories that can be told within a collection.[165]

An important observation is to be made here: there are levels to consider when discussing *genre*. On the one hand, we can talk about the genres of specific writings and their subgenres; on the other hand, there are the collections that are also determined by specific generic terms. However, it must be stressed that there is a difference between the genre of a written piece and that of a collection of which these pieces are a part. In the following, this differentiation will play an essential role in genre description.

Let us now turn to those aspects of the terms' definition based on the text's connection to the world: value judgment, the occasion, and the persons involved in creating or performing a story. In our case, the first aspect is the most significant because it carries such considerations as style, educational value, entertainment, and the work's relation to reality. The third aspect, the persons involved, is only interesting for us in as much as they are part of some terms' meanings. It is most important in folk and regional literature that is still primarily oral.[166] There

[164] Some studies on the subject of humor in Arabic literature: Pellat, Ch.: Seriousness and Humour in Early Islam (al-Jidd wa'l-Hazl fī Ṣadr al-Islām), *Islamic Studies*, 2, 1963, 353–362; Sadan, J.: Kings and Craftsmen, a Pattern of Contrasts. On the History of a Medieval Arabic Humoristic Form (Part 1), *Studia Islamica*, 56, 1982, 5–49; Sadan, J.: Kings and Craftsmen, a Pattern of Contrasts. On the History of a Medieval Arabic Humoristic Form (Part 2), *Studia Islamica*, 62, 1985, 89–120; van Gelder, G. J.: Arabic Debates of Jest and Earnest, in eds. G. J. Reinink and H. L. J. Vanstiphout, *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures*, Leuven (Peeters), 1991, 199–211; van Gelder, G. J.: Mixtures of Jest and Earnest in Classical Arabic Literature: Part 1, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 23, 1992, 83–108; van Gelder, G. J.: Mixtures of Jest and Earnest in Classical Arabic Literature: Part 2, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 23, 1992, 169–190.

[165] Wadad al-Qadi also discusses the term *ṭabaqāt* under the structural composition of biographical dictionaries: al-Qadi, W.: Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community, in: *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2006, 51–56.

[166] For the folk literature and its various genres, Dwight F. Reynolds' handbook provides a comprehensive study: Reynolds, D. F.: *Arab Folklore – A Handbook*, Westport, Connecticut – London (Greenwood Press), 2007.

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will be no further mentions made of that. Similarly, we will only make perfunctory mention of the occasions at which specific genres were performed in connection with value judgment. In other contexts, this question does not concern my present study. What has to be recognized about a text's relation to the world is that it is closely connected to the previous observations about theme, tone, and structure. It is what I referred to as a contextual relationship earlier.

A story in itself may assume various genres due to the arbitrary nature of classification. When a story gets included in a specific collection whose purpose is determined by the compiler, it becomes possible for the story to become generically defined more precisely. It means that specific generic characteristics are contained in the story itself, but other such characteristics get assigned by the collection in which the story is contained. Interpretation depends on the dialogue between these two levels. *Ḥikāyat al-malik Kisrā Anūshirwān ma'a al-jāriya* (*Alf Layla*, II, 397–398. *King Kisra Anoushirwan and the Village Damsel* (Payne, IV, 227–228.)) will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4. Currently, it is only used as an example of how a story changes genre in accordance with the purpose of the collection in which it is included. It may be regarded as *nādira* in the work of al-Ibshīhī (d. after 1446), *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*, where it describes a curious event connected to the righteousness of a ruler. It may also be considered a *nādira* in the collection of al-Damīrī (1341–1405), *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, but, in this case, connecting the central theme to the animal mentioned in the story rather than to the righteous ruler. In *Fākihat al-khulafā' wa-mufākihat al-ẓurafā'* by Ibn ʿArabshāh (1392–1450), it fulfills the role of a *mathal* in the context of the mirror for princess form, while it is a biographical account in *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān* by Ibn Khallikān (1211–1282). But what are the requirements to determine these various readings regarding the contextual relationship between collection and story?

In classical and pre-modern Arabic literature, there is particular emphasis on whether a story tells the truth or something that has been made up. This differentiation can be found in many definitions in dictionaries. For instance, both *Lisān al-'arab* and *Tāj al-'arūs* put the term *bāṭil* in opposition with "ḥaqq" (truth), and as such, they consider it worthless (*hadr*).[167] Just like *khurāfa,* which is considered a lie ("al-ḥadīth al-mustamlaḥ min al-kidhb").[168] Their opposite is, in this respect, *khabar*, which *Lisān al-'arab* equates with "ḥaqq".[169] In both dictionaries, the synonym for *bāṭil* is *khuza'bala*, also denoting a frivolous, vain story. Although

[167] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, II, 103; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'arūs*, XXVIII, 89.
[168] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, V, 52.
[169] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, V, 10.

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it is said to make people laugh, it is also described as "mustaẓraf".[170] It shows well that something being funny is not exclusively considered negatively. In this case, as opposed to *bāṭil*, which is equated with *hazl* (joke) in *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, the term "uḍḥūka" is used. Thus, to make people laugh, the work must be clever, elegant, and witty, expressions covered by the Arabic term "ẓarf" mentioned by both dictionaries.[171] In contrast to *bāṭil*, these additional characteristics provide *khuzaʿbala* with a higher standing.

"Ẓarf," the root for "mustaẓraf," is also an essential characteristic of Arabic literature of the Mamlūk era. As mentioned above, it means elegance, cleverness, wittiness, characteristics without which no work is considered respectable. In many cases, it is closely connected to the ability to make someone laugh, as was shown in the case of *khuzaʿbala*. It can be said, then, that the ability of a work to make someone laugh is not considered degrading by any means. It is a sign of wittiness which is an admirable quality. It also seems, however, that a work need not belong to the learned literature to be able to possess these qualities and thus be considered respectable. As Stefan Leder puts it in connection with the truth-value of the stories: "the acceptance of a 'well fabricated lie' shows that *kidhb* is not absolutely banned and that narrative qualities may match the demand for truthfulness".[172]

In connection with value judgment, we have to make a perfunctory mention of the occasions at which specific genres were performed. It concerns us only in as much that certain occasions called for serious works, others for more frivolous ones. That way, the night was always considered the time for stories for the sole purpose of amusement (*samar*).

Regarding the terms used to describe specific genres, we can conclude that they cannot provide exact definitions. Their definitions are much like the criteria for creating arbitrary groups: there is always a specific aspect of the written material emphasized, and it can very well be that, given that another aspect of the work comes into focus, it will be referred to by another term. Of course, this uncertainty is not unfamiliar to Western literature, either. However, it gains special significance in connection with the short narratives of pre-modern Arabic literature since this literature is heavily based on pre-existing material. It means that stories are likely to appear in various collections, an example of which is the story of Anūshirwān, where they may regain new generic denominations. In this case, it is not a

[170] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, V, 61; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, XXVIII, 408.
[171] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, IX, 183–184.
[172] Leder, S.: Features of the Novel in Early Historiography: The Downfall of Xālid al-Qasrī, *Oriens*, 32, 1990, 75.

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theoretical question of how we can classify stories but a practical one: some stories have to be classified differently depending on the context.

However, before drawing the conclusion that terminological examination based on contemporary works cannot yield any useful results, one specific term needs to be discussed in more detail. Incidentally, the term *khabar* may provide us with some more concrete pointers concerning the present inquiry since it is in general use throughout the prefaces. That is mostly due to the fact that these collections, for the most part, contain short reports (*akhbār*). On many occasions, *khabar* seems devoid of any literary connotations and remains to designate a piece of information that is then put into literary form. Ibn Fahd, for example, claims to contain in his work *akhbār* of poets, which are later referred to as *nawādir* and *musāmara*.[173] Similarly, al-Ṣafadī (1297–1363) talks about reports of those who came before (*akhbār man taqaddama*), which is used in the form of *tawārīkh* and *tarājim*.[174] Although Ibn Khallikān does not use the term *khabar*, when talking about the pieces of information he intends to report, the sources from which they are taken are given as *makrama*, *nādira*, *shi'r,* and *risāla*.[175] In this respect, *khabar* is, first and foremost, determined by its function to provide information. This information, *khabar*, is then associated with specific genres according to the intention of the compilers. The same is expressed by al-Ibshīhī when he uses such terms as *tawārīkh, akhbār, nawādir*, *ḥikāyāt*, *laṭā'if* when talking about the literary output of authors who preceded him.[176] Once again, these terms express certain attitudes towards the material. *Khabar*, grouped together like this, still retains its informative function but also gains a literary dimension in the context of the other terms. The nature of the information is also greatly specified by the cultural value of the content.

Khabar may also mean a particular piece of writing, in which sense it is synonymous with *ḥadīth*, as in a "tradition; or a narrative relating, or describing, a saying or an action of Moḥammad".[177] It is a tradition that comes from the Prophet as opposed to *athar,* which comes from the Companions. Ibn ʿArabshāh, when talking about the content of his book in his preface, uses such terms as *nuqlat al-akhbār*, *ḥamlat al-āthār*, *ruwāt al-asfār*.[178] In this instance, in the context of the three terms, *khabar* means tradition coming down from the Prophet. In this case, *khabar* may be considered a generic category that specifies its thematic content, the Prophetic

[173] Ibn Fahd, *Manāzil al-aḥbāb,* 1–2.
[174] al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān al-'aṣr*, I, 36–37.
[175] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, I, 20.
[176] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 7.
[177] Lane, E. W.: *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, Beirut (Librairie du Liban Publishers), 1997, II, 696.
[178] Ibn ʿArabshāh, *Fākihat*, 29.

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tradition, thus limiting the possible inclusion of various *akhbār* as pieces of information in this specific generic category.

Despite this example of Ibn ʿArabshāh, *khabar* is generally used in a specific terminological context in these works. It is neither function nor content that determines this third meaning of *khabar* but the literary form into which function and content are poured. It is through the form of *khabar* that the content is described, and the information is shared. Al-Sakhāwī (1427–1497), in his *al-Jawāhir al-majmūʿa wa-l-nawādir al-masmūʿa* claims to collect in the book traditions of the Prophet and the Companions (*al-ḥadīth al-nabawī wa-l-athar*).[179] Then he divides his material into *aḥādīth*, *akhbār*, *ḥikāyāt*, *āthār,* and *shiʿr,* a grouping in which the only constant seems to be that *ḥadīth* is handled separately from other prose forms, and *shiʿr* (poetry) is put into opposition to prose forms in general. This way, the terms *khabar, ḥikāya,* and *athar* are handled together as a specific type of prose writing which is separated from *ḥadīth*. Al-Nuwayrī makes it even more apparent when he writes after describing the chapter-by-chapter organization of his book, "[t]his is all of which this book is comprised – from the disciplines (*fann*), the classes/sections (*qism*), the supplements (*dhayl*) and the chapters (*bāb*). Every chapter (*bāb*) is divided into subsections (*faṣl*) and reports (*khabar*) which, then, include events (*waqīʿa*) and traditions (*athar*)".[180] Here, *khabar* is understood as a level of textual manifestation in which function and content gain a specific meaning by the text exhibiting a specific discourse through having been molded into a specific narrative form.

All in all, implicit it may be, but we can differentiate three kinds of meaning as far as *khabar* is concerned. First, there is the lexical meaning which understands *khabar* as a report, a piece of information without any further context or specialized cultural values. Secondly, it refers to a particular kind of writing which alludes to specialized content of the *khabar* and a specialized field where it may appear. And last but not least, it may refer to *khabar* as a collective term that collects certain types of writings under its semantic range by providing a physical form to these writing. In other words, it is a narrative form.[181]

[179] al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawāhir*, 13.
[180] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, I, 16.
[181] Stefan Leder refers to this general meaning of *khabar* as it being "narration". (Leder, Stefan: The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form of Historical Writing, in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East – Problems in the Literary Source Material*, eds. A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1992, 279.)

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At this point, we can conclude that *khabar* does not always mean a simple report or denote genre, but it may also refer to a literary form that many genres share. The definition of *khabar*, however, is more complex than that.[182] This question will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter. As far as the prefaces go, however, the previous statement may be considered a working concept. We can say, then, as a rather general statement, that the collections at hand are collections of *akhbār*:

> The historiographical and biographical compilations, works on poets and poetry, and those which treat linguistic matters, are to a great extent compilations of short texts. These include simple statements, utterances of authoritative scholars, saints, or statesmen, reports of events, and – sometimes rather complex – stories about historical events and personalities. These texts, which may vary in length from one line to several pages are designated by the term *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*).[183]

It is a rather general statement, of course, as most of the collections do not exclusively include *akhbār,* but, given the previous examination of the term's meaning, *khabar* obtains a recognizable set of characteristics that set it apart from other materials. Accordingly, *khabar* is recognized as a specific form of writing that, with its particular narrative discourse, can assign further functional or thematic roles to the narrative.

The information we gain from examining the term *khabar* cannot be so easily gained from examining other terms. It shows that *khabar* somehow stands out from this group of genre-denoting terms. What are the reasons behind that? The three-part division in the meaning of the term shows that *khabar* does not only mean genre in the Western sense. It is only one part of its meaning, just like being a narrative form is. In its meaning of a narrative form, *khabar* is not to classify but to help interpretation even before a work is labeled by a specific name that Western research identifies with a genre. This observation regarding *khabar* supports the idea that the terms under discussion may not fall under the same category. It may be that not all of them signify a genre but a narrative form. The above observation raises the question of what aspects of a terminological meaning are associated with genre, what is associated with the narrative form, and how the terms can be recognized as one or the other.

To sum it up, many aspects of genre definition were mentioned and elaborated upon in this chapter. We dealt with them in different contexts, from their lexicographical roots to more complex occurrences. The conclusion we can draw here is that every aspect contributes to our understanding of *genre*. They put some problems into context while bringing up further questions regarding others. What is common in all of them is that they cannot provide a detailed

[182] „Das Erscheinungsbild der mit *ḫabar* bezeichneten Textformen entzieht sich einer eindeutigen begrifflichen Bestimmung." Leder, S.: Prosa-Dichtung in der *aḫbār* Überlieferung Narrative Analyse einer Satire, *Der Islam*, 64, 1987, 6.
[183] Leder, 1992, 278.

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description of a particular story as far as genre definition goes. It became apparent here that it is impossible to describe a story by a single term and even to describe it according to one of the criteria enumerated above. Just like the simple terms, the aspects according to which we define a story as belonging to a genre are not all-encompassing and not exclusive. When we talk about a text regarding its genre, we have to be aware of the complex and quickly changing relationship between these aspects, not one of them, but all of them.

Even though the examination of the terms did not bring us closer to the exact nature of genres in the Mamlūk period, from all of the above observations, we can conclude that some genre classification did exist in this era. Despite the authors not being overly concerned with providing a precise division of them, it is clear from their writings that they knew about certain differences that made the differentiation among the terms possible. This genre classification, however, was different from that of Western literature in that special attention was laid on the work's relationship to reality, whether it was fact or fiction, in the sense that it was authoritative or not. Value judgment was based on this criterium, and further classification could only be done after that. However, this classification was arbitrary, and interpretation was highly dependent on contextual relationships, which, in turn, were fairly flexible.

All in all, interpretation seems not to be based on generic denominations but on this value judgment of being true or false. Every other aspect that may have genre-denoting roles played only a secondary role, and as opposed to the Western approach, it only plays a descriptive role in evaluating a text, not a prescriptive one.

1.3. *Short Narratives of* The Thousand and One Nights

1.3.1. Preliminary Remarks to the Narrative Forms in *The Thousand and One Nights*

Speaking about narrative presupposes discussing all of these characteristics under one general term. In the context of the present study, three such narrative forms will be discussed to various degrees: 1) *khabar*, 2) *qiṣṣa*, and 3) *ḥikāya*. In the following, it will be clarified how these groups may be distinguished based on their narrative forms and how this distinction may be utilized during the informed discussion of the generic interpretation of the stories of the *Nights*.

Khurāfa is conspicuously absent from the above list of narrative forms, which seems to be incomplete in this way, even more so that it is the term with which the content of the *Nights* is equated in Arabic sources. Chraïbi dedicates a considerable part of the *Introduction* to the definition of *khurāfa,* which is based on studying several classical texts from *adab*. At the end of his examination, he arrives at the conclusion that it is the *ʾajab* (the astonishing) that

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characterizes this kind of story.[184] Based on his observations and the etymology of the term, I understand *khurāfa* as the wondrous stories which exhibit a complex form of story-telling that is set apart from *qiṣṣa* and *ḥikāya* by elements that are foreign to Arabic story-telling. These longer stories do not concern us at present except for comparative purposes.

In the *Nights*, the two main categories of narrative are *qiṣṣa* and *ḥikāya*. When one attempts to find the logic behind this distinction, they realize that it is based solely on structural foundations. Structural on the level of the collection: they signify the level of narration. In this meaning, *ḥikāya* refers to the stories on the main level of narration, while *qiṣṣa* indicates a framed story within the *ḥikāya*. In this meaning, not much would indicate a narrative form since any kind of narrative is present on both levels of narration. Terminological examination of these two terms also supports the idea that they may be regarded as synonyms.[185]

However, in the framework of *The Thousand and One Nights,* it raises some problems. In connection with the *khabar*, we saw that understanding it as narrative renders it a *story* that is related during an act of *narrating* in the form of *narration*. Due to their nature of fictitiousness, neither the *qiṣṣa*, nor the *ḥikāya* may claim such a complex understanding. As they are not required to show an authenticating source, the *narrating* component is missing from their definitions as far as the mode of their discourse is concerned. As opposed to this observation, in the framework of the *Nights, qiṣṣa* seems to assume the narrating aspect of the *khabar* through its being a recounted story within the *ḥikāya*. However, due to the special nature of the collection, the stories referred to as *ḥikāya* are also recounted stories since the collection's premise is based on Shahrazād's telling entertaining stories to the king to save her life. However, it would be premature to claim that the distinction between *qiṣṣa* and *ḥikāya* in the *Nights* is not based on any definitions other than them being used as stories. There seems to exist a strict line between the frame-story of Shahrazād and her stories, and if her story is regarded separately, the original distinction between frame- and framed story may be sustained.

Discussing the problem of *genres* or, more precisely, that of the narrative forms in *The Thousand and One Nights* as a literary work, there cannot be such concessions made. As for a definition, for the time being, I refer to R. Marston Speight description of *qiṣṣa*:

> Some texts in narrative-form lack the structures described previously, or else they combine several such structures into adapted forms. These may be called composite or run-on narratives. They are probably the type of narrative used by the *quṣṣāṣ* (story tellers) to entertain and edify their hearers. They were also told in the *khuṭba* (sermon). They use more descriptive material than the shorter forms

[184] Chraïbi, 2016, 26–42.
[185] Pellat, Ch.: Ḳiṣṣa 1. The semantic range of *ḳiṣṣa* in Arabic, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, II, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs, Ledien (E. J. Brill), 1986, 187.

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> and often contain a long series of conversational exchanges that do not build up to a climactic pronouncement as do the shorter, well-structured narratives.[186]

In his study, Marston Speight explores the structural composition of *ḥadīth* as a narrative form, referring to discourse as well. According to him, *qiṣṣa* is a more complex form. It has to be mentioned that his observations and his use of terms do not comply with my own entirely. He is talking about *qiṣṣa* – and *khabar*, too – as a kind of *ḥadīth* narrative. I do not recognize *ḥadīth* as a narrative form. It is the *khabar* form that informs *ḥadīth* itself; thus, *ḥadīth* is but one among many embodiments of the *khabar* form among which *khabar* as a text also belongs. These texts written in the *khabar* form share the form and the content but differ from one another in the exact function they fulfill.

Besides *qiṣṣa* and *ḥikāya*, although not explicitly mentioned in the *Nights*, the already mentioned *khabar* also has to be mentioned. It is unavoidable for this term to be discussed in Arabic literature. It is the nature of pre-modern Arabic literature to collect the existing material to spread knowledge among contemporaries and preserve that knowledge for future generations. This preservation and dissemination of knowledge is the focal point of *adab*, and it is *khabar* through which this knowledge is recorded and preserved: "*Ḫabar*s formed, informed, and defined the Muslim community's social memory since the early days of the Arabic historical tradition, and they continued to represent the basic building blocks of that memory through the centuries".[187] Although *khabar* is a fundamental term in literary studies, it is hard to grasp its exact meaning.[188] In order to be able to examine the material of *The Thousand and One Nights* and be able to discuss genre recognition in the context of Arabic literature, it is pertinent for us to deal with the question of *khabar* since, in the comparative examination of generic characteristics, it will be the collections of short narratives to which we will turn.

Khabar is a piece of information, as any scholar is wont to call it, but there is more to it.

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[186] Marston Speight, R.: Narrative Structures in the Ḥadīth, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 59, 2000, 270.
[187] van Steenbergen, J.: *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage: al-Ḏahab al-masbūk fī ḏikr man ḥağğa min al-ḫulafā' wa-l-mulūk*, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2016, 84.
[188] Many scholars took up the subject of *khabar* in various contexts: Leder, S.: Features of the Novel in Early Historiography: The Downfall of Xālid al-Qasrī, *Oriens*, 32, 1990, 72–96; Leder, S.: Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature: The Akhbār Attributed to al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī, *Oriens*, 31, 1988, 67–68; Rosenthal, F.: *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1968, 11, 66–71; Leder, S.: The Literary Use of the *Khabar*: A Basic Form of Historical Writing, in: ed. A. M. Cameron, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, vol. 1, Problems in the Literary Source Material*, Princeton (The Darwin Press, Inc.), 1992, 277–316; Lauré al-Samarai, N.: *Die Macht der Darstellung: Gender, sozialer Status, historiographische Re-Präsentation: zwei Frauenbiographien aus der frühen Abbasidenzeit*, Wiesbaden (Reichert Verlag), 2001, 16–18. Samer M. Ali provides a useful summary of the present state of research concerning the *khabar*. (Ali, Samer M. *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages – Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010, 218–220. fn.11.)

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> The historiographical and biographical compilations, works on poets and poetry, and those which treat linguistic matters, are to a great extent compilations of short texts. These include simple statements, utterances of authoritative scholars, saints, or statesmen, reports of events, and – sometimes rather complex – stories about historical events and personalities. These texts, which may vary in length from one line to several pages are designated by the term khabar (pl. *akhbār*).[189]

This statement of Stefan Leder provides us with not only the definition of *khabar* but the most characteristic occurrences of it.

Let us start our discussion with this latter observation and make some remarks on the occurrences of *khabar*. As I understand it, *khabar* is primarily present in the writerly culture of *adab*, that is, the field of literature that concerns itself with general knowledge and moral values. With this observation, we are enabled to determine the underlying function of these writings: to share information, to edify, and to do so in an entertaining fashion, "the anthologists' aim always being to stress the curious, the entertaining, and, above all, the linguistic and *literary* merits of the material presented".[190]

Although the function is not at the center of the present discussion, some remarks must be made. The function of the *khabar* determines its relation to the world it describes. With its informing drive, *khabar* is – in theory at least – hard-pressed to adhere to reality. In other words, it is fact, not fiction which it depicts. At present, however, we are not concerned with the factual content of *akhbār*, nor their ideological one, and how the recognition of these views influences our historical or ideological understanding of Arabic society at the time. Instead, what is of interest to us is how the text is manipulated for these purposes.

Turning to the second part of the description about statements and utterances, reports of events, and stories, Leder, a couple of paragraphs later, writes that *khabar* "constitutes a self-contained narrative unit which depicts an incident or a limited sequence of occurrences or conveys sayings".[191] They provide a piece of information in one short narrative unit. This narrative form is how the acts of the Prophet had been handed down, and the discourse of this narrative form influenced the historical consciousness of the Arabs. Information is, then, irrevocably connected to this literary form of expression.

If form informs function, function also informs form, as can be depicted by the presence of *isnād* at the beginning of *khabar*. Later authors indeed tend to skip indicating the whole chain of authorities, essentially making the presence of authority a simple reference,[192] but it does not

[189] Leder, 1992, 278.
[190] Bonebakker, S. A.: Adab and the Concept of Belles-Lettres, in: *ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres*, eds. J. Ashtiany, T. M. Johnstone, J. Derek Latham, R. B. Serjeant, and G. R. Smith, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2008, 28.
[191] Leder, 1992, 279. Also, Fahndrich, H. E.: The *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān* of Ibn Khallikān: A New Approach, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 93, 1973, 443.
[192] Fahndrich, 1973, 440.

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change the fact that the reference stands as a testimony to factuality. I would say it stands true for any *khabar*, whether we are talking about a historical or an anecdotal one, as Leder refers to them. The truth-value of these short pieces is not diminished by the shift of emphasis in meaning.

Khabar is, then, the interaction of form and function. It is a literary form with various applications into which various content is poured. It is governed by a set of rules which simultaneously allows for artistic expression – a self-contained narrative unit that is the building block of the literary tradition of *adab*. Considering the prefaces of works claiming affinity with *adab*, we find the same claim, if not explicitly but implicitly. Terms like *nawādir*, *faḍā'il*, *awā'il,* and the like are used in an attempt to specify the thematic content of collections[193] , but when it comes to form, it is predominantly *khabar, qiṣṣa,* and *ḥikāya* which is used[194] no matter the kind of collection (historiographical, biographical, *adab* literary) in which they are found. Accordingly, differentiation of historiographical and anecdotal *akhbār*[195] seems to disappear when one concentrates on *khabar* as a form and sets to examine the narrative techniques being at play within this literary form.

What exactly does it mean to refer to *khabar* as a literary form?[196] Recalling the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, *khabar* is a short text that includes reports of events and stories about events and personalities recounted in one narrative unit.[197] This summary tells us much about the formal nature of *khabar*. It is a narrative, for one, in the sense that it tells us about an event. On the other hand, it is a narrative in the sense that it is the recounting of an event during an act of narrating. It has to be noted here that the act of narrating is not outside of the *khabar* itself – as Genette's theory would imply – but it forms an integral part of it in the sense that it is always related in the form of a witness account. Thirdly, it is a narrative that tells us about an event in a narrative form. Following Gérard Genette, I will use the terms *story, narrating,* and

[193] For example: Ibn Khallikān, Abū al-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr: *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, I, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1972, 20; al-Ibshīhī, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*, I, Bayrūt (Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt), 1992/1412, 7.

[194] This idea was explained in the third part of the previous chapter when the term *khabar* was described through the examination of the prefaces of contemporary Arabic collections: Ibn ʿArabshāh: *Fākihat al-khulafā' wa-mufākihat al-ẓurafā'*, al-Qāhira (Dār al-Āfāq al-ʿArabiyya), 2001/1421, 25; al-Sakhāwī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān: *Jawāhir al-majmū'a wa-l-nawādir al-masmū'a*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf, Bayrūt (Dār Ibn Ḥazm), 2000/1421, 13; al-Nuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb: *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, I, al-Qāhira (Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya), n.d., 16.

[195] About this typology of historiographical and anecdotal *khabar*, see Leder, 1992, 310–311.

[196] Rosenthal in his work on Muslim historiography actually uses the term *khabar* form although in an admittedly narrower sense than I intend to use it. In his understanding, the term refers more to the whole concept of historical writing than to the individual pieces of writings. Form in this meaning refers to the form of the collection not the form of the *khabar*.

[197] Leder, 1992, 278–279.

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narration, respectively, for these different notions of narrative in the *khabar* form.[198] *Khabar* form is, then, determined by how these three notions of narrative interact.[199] The result of this interaction will be referred to as *khabar*, under which I understand the physical embodiment of the *khabar* form without any further thematic or generic connotations the term usually carries.[200] It means that *khabar* is not understood as a genre but as a literary expression. Through this notion, I will discuss the problem of the concept of *genre* in pre-modern Arabic literature, and through the discussion of the *khabar* form in *The Thousand and One Nights*, I will prepare the way for a new kind of approach that will facilitate the reading and closer understanding of the stories of the collection without the constraints of generic classification.

For the time being, suffice it to say that there are two narrative forms to consider when discussing the *Nights*: the *khabar* form and the *ḥikāya*/*qiṣṣa* form. In the absence of substantial evidence against the contrary, in the following, I will adhere to the observation that *qiṣṣa* and *ḥikāya* are synonyms as far as their meaning of "fictional story" is concerned. Although short narratives generally are at the center of the following discussion, *khabar* may seem predominant. Its predominance is because *khabar* is the most defined among the terms in contemporary sources and modern research. As such, it provides the perfect point of comparison and a starting point for discussion.

1.3.2. Notes to the Material Under Discussion

As for the material under discussion, it is pertinent to define the group of stories under discussion. As stated above, the short stories of the *Nights* are singled out for study. However, this vague statement does not strictly set apart those stories under discussion, nor does it provide an explanation for the inclusion of the particular narratives. For this reason, the criteria for inclusion have to be described, and the list, or lists, of stories discussed, has to be provided. The lists below are not representative of a strict division and classification of the short narratives of

[198] I follow Gérard Genette in his use of the term *narrative* according to which there are three distinct meaning to the term: 1) "the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events"; 2) "the succession of event, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse"; 3) "the event that consists of someone recounting something: the act of narrating taken in itself" (Genette, 1980, 25–26.) This is also the approach which Daniel Beaumont takes in his study of the narrative discourse of early Muslim traditions. (Beaumont, 1996, 5–31.)

[199] See the article of R. Marston Speight about the narrative structures of *ḥadīth* in which only those forms of *ḥadīth* text are regarded as narratives which contain "conversational exchanges and/ or dramatic action in the process of communicating whatever prophetic word or deed is the subject of any given report". (Marston Speight, 2000, 265.)

[200] A prevailing view of this kind of distinction is the distinction between *ḥadīth* and *khabar* on basis of the claim that while *ḥadīth* refers to such narratives which contain the traditions of the Prophets and his Companions, *khabar* contains narratives of historical, biographical and anecdotal nature. See Leder, 1992, 277–279; Marston Speight, 2000, 271.

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the *Nights*. They only serve as an aid in delineating the material which share certain characteristic features which facilitates the meaningful discussion of the proposed questions and makes it easier to navigate the enormous material at hand. Other considerations may result in different lists and still be able to fulfill their purpose in the present study.

First, I intend to examine those short stories which exhibit the general characteristics of the *khabar*; that is, they are the first-person accounts of an eyewitness of an event. There are two kinds of such stories. First, there are the stories that are accounts in themselves and start with Shahrazād quoting a historical personality or an anonymous source as the first-person narrator/witness of the story. These are the following:

I.	**Narratives with a source provided**	
1.	*Ḥikāyat Isḥāq al-Mughannī al-Mawṣilī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 147–152.)	*Isaac of Mosul's Story of the Lady Khedijeh and the Khalif Mamoun* (Payne, III, 339–345.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī qāla: Kharajtu laylatan min ʿinda al-Maʾmūn…	(Quoth Isaac of Mosul) "I went out one night from Mamoun's presence…"
2.	*Ḥikāyat Abī Ḥassān al-Ziyādī maʿa al-rajul al-khurāsānī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 305–308.)	*Abou Hassan Ez Ziyadi and the Man from Khorassan* (Payne, IV, 129–132.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Abā Ḥassān al-Ziyādī qāla: Dāqa ʿalayyā al-ḥāl fī baʿḍ al-ayyām ḍīqan shadīdan…	Quoth Abou Hassan ez Ziyadi, 'I was once in very needy case…
3.	*Ḥikāyat Saʿīd b. Sālim al-Bāhilī maʿa al-Faḍl wa-Jaʿfar waladā Yaḥyā b. Khālid* (*Alf Layla*, II, 403–405.)	*The Sons of Yehya Ben Khalid and Saïd Ben Salim El Bahili* (Payne, IV, 234–235.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Saʿīd b. Sālim al-Bāhilī qāla: Ishtadda bī al-ḥāl fī zaman Hārūn al-Rashīd wa-ijtamaʿa ʿalayyā duyūn kathīra…	(Quoth Said ben Salim el Bahili), I was once, in the days of Haroun er Reshid, in very narrow case and greatly oppressed with debts…
4.	*Ḥikāyat ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb maʿa al-shāb* (*Alf Layla*, II, 408–412.)	*The Khalif Omar Ben Khettab and the Young Bedouin* (Payne, IV, 239–243.)
	Wa-ḥakā al-sharīf Ḥusayn b. Rayyān anna Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb kāna jālisan fī baʿḍ al-ayyām li-l-quḍāʾ bayna al-nās wa-l-ḥukm bayna al-raʿāyā wa-ʿindahu akābir aṣḥābihi min ahl al-raʾy…	The sheriff Hussein ben Reyyan relates that the Khalif Omar ben Khettab was sitting one day, attended by his chief counsellors, judging the folk and doing justice between his subjects…
5.	*Ḥikāyat muʿallim al-ṣubyān wa-qillat ʿaqlihi* (*Alf Layla*, II, 423–425.)	*The Schoolmaster Who Fell in Love by Report* (Payne, IV, 255–256.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā ʿan baʿḍ al-fuḍalāʾ annahu qāla: Marartu bi-faqīh fī al-maktab wa-huwa yuqriʾu al-ṣubyān fa-wajadtuhu fī hayʾa ḥusna wa-qumāsh malīḥ…	(Quoth one of the erudite), I passed once by a [school, in which a] schoolmaster, comely of aspect and well dressed, was teaching children…
6.	*Ḥikāyat Diʿbil al-Khuzāʿī maʿa al-marʾat wa-Muslim b. al-Walīd* (*Alf Layla*, II, 433–435.)	*Dibil El Khuzaï with the Lady and Muslim Ben El Welid* (Payne, IV, 265–268.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Diʿbil al-Khuzāʿī qāla: Kuntu jālisan bi-Bāb al-Karkh…	(Quoth Dibil el Khuzaï), I was sitting one day at the gate of El Kerkh…

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7.	*Ḥikāyat Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī al-Mughannī maʿa al-tājir* (*Alf Layla*, II, 435–439.)	*Isaac of Mosul and the Merchant* (Payne, IV, 268–272.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī qāla: Ittafaqa annanī ḍajartu min mulāzama dār al-khalīfa wa-l-khidma bihā fa-rakabtu wa-kharajtu bukrat al-nahār…	(Quoth Ishac ben Ibrahim el Mausili), One day, being weary of assiduous attendance upon the Khalif, I mounted my horse and went forth, at break of day…
8.	*Ḥikāyat al-ʾUtbī fī amr al-ʾishq maʿa al-shaykh al-badawī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 439–440.)	*The Three Unfortunate Lovers* (Payne, IV, 272–273.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna al-ʿUtbī qāla: Jalastu yawman wa-ʿindī jamāʿa min ahl al-adab…	(Quoth El Utbi), I was sitting one day with a company of men of culture…
9.	*Ḥikāyat al-Qāsim b. ʾAdī fī amr al-ʾishq* (*Alf Layla*, II, 440–441.)	*The Lovers of the Benou Tai* (Payne, IV, 273–274.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna al-Qāsim b. ʿAdī ḥakā ʿan rajul min Banī Tamīm annahu qāla: Kharajtu fī ṭalab ḍālla…	Quoth a man of the Benou Temim (cited by Casim ben Adi), I went out one day in search of a stray beast…
10.	*Ḥikāyat Abī al-ʾAbbās al-Mubarrad fī amr al-ʾishq* (*Alf Layla*, II, 441–443.)	*The Mad Lover* (Payne, IV, 274–276.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Abā al-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrad qāla: Qaṣadtu al-Barīd maʿa jamāʿa ilā ḥāja…	(Quoth Aboulabbas el Muberred), I set out one day with a company to El Berid on an occasion…
11.	*Ḥikāyat Abī ʾĪsā b. al-Rashīd fī amr al-ʾishq maʿa jāriyat ʾAlī b. Hishām ismuhā Qurrat al-ʾAyn* (*Alf Layla*, II, 447–454.)	*The Loves of Abou Isa and Curret El Ain* (Payne, IV, 281–288.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna ʿAmr b. Masʿada qāla: Kāna Abū ʿĪsā b. al-Rashīd akhū al-Maʾmūn ʿāshiqan li-Qurrat al-ʿAyn jāriyat ʿAlī b. Hishām…	(Quoth Amr ben Mesaadeh), Abou Isa, son of Er Reshid and brother to El Mamoun, was enamoured of a girl called Curret el Ain, belonging to Ali ben Hisham …
12.	*Ḥikāyat al-marʾa al-wāʿiẓa fī Hamā ismuhā sayyida al-Mashāʾikh* (*Alf Layla*, II, 456–464.)	*The Man's Dispute with the Learned Woman of the Relative Excellence of the Male and the Female* (Payne, IV, 290–298.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna baʿḍ al-fuḍalāʾ qāla: Mā raʾaytu fī al-nisāʾ adhkā khāṭiran wa-aḥsan fiṭna…	(Quoth a certain man of learning) I never saw a woman sharper-witted, more intelligent…
13.	*Ḥikāyat Abī Suwayd maʿa al-ʾajūz* (*Alf Layla*, II, 464–465.)	*Abou Suweid and the Handsome Old Woman* (Payne, IV, 299.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Abā Suwayd qāla: Ittafaqa annanī anā wa-jamāʿa min aṣḥābī dakhalnā bustānan yawman min al-ayyām…	(Quoth Abou Suweid), I entered a garden one day, I and a company of my friends…
14.	*Ḥikāyat Abī al-ʾAynāʾ maʿa al-marʾatayn* (*Alf Layla*, II, 465–466.)	*The Woman Who Had a Boy and the Other Who Had a Man to Lover* (Payne, IV, 300–301.)
	Wa- qāla Abū al-ʿAynāʾ: Kāna ʿindanā fī al-darb imraʾatān iḥdāhumā taʿshaqu rajulan wa-l-ukhrā taʿshaqu amradan…	(Quoth Abou el Ainaä), There were in our street two women, one of whom had to lover a man and the other a beardless boy…
15.	*Ḥikāyat Mālik b. Dīnār maʿa al-ʾabd al-aswad al-ṣāliḥ* (*Alf Layla*, II, 549–552.)	*The Pious Black Slave* (Payne, V, 16–19.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Mālik b. Dīnār – raḥimahu Allāh – qāla: Inḥabasa ʿannā al-maṭar bi-l-Baṣra fa-kharajnā nastaqā marāran…	(Quoth Malik ben Dinar, on whom God have mercy), We were once afflicted with drought at Bassora and went forth repeatedly to pray for rain…
16.	*Ḥikāyat Abī al-Ḥusn al-Darrāj maʿa Abī Jaʿfar al-majdhūm* (*Alf Layla*, II, 579–582.)	*Aboulhusn Ed Durraj and Abou Jaafer the Leper* (Payne, V, 49–52.)
	Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Abā al-Ḥusn al-Darrāj qāla: Kuntu kathīran mā ātā Makka…	(Quoth Aboulhusn ed Durraj), I had been many times to Mecca…

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17.	*Ḥikāyat ʾAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar al-Qaysī maʿa ʾUtba b. al-Jabān* (*Alf Layla*, III, 367–371.)	*Otbeh and Reyya* (Payne, VI, 181–186.)
	Wa-ḥukiya ayḍan anna ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar al-Qaysī qāla: Ḥajajtu sanatan ilā Bayt Allāh al-Ḥarām…	(Quoth Abdallah ben Maamer el Caisi), I went one year on the pilgrimage to the Holy House of God…
18.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd maʿa Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʾUdhrī wa-ḥikāyatuhu quddāmahu ʾan fatā min Banī ʾUdhrī* (*Alf Layla*, III, 391–398.)	*The Lovers of the Benou Udhreh* (Payne, VI, 208–215.)
	Wa-ḥukiya ayḍan anna Masrūran al-khādim qāla: Araqqa Amīr al-Muʾminīn Hārūn al-Rashīd laylatan araqqan shadīdan fa-qāla lī…	(Quoth Mesrour the Eunuch), The Khalif Haroun er Reshid was very wakeful one night and said to me…
19.	*Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. Isḥāq maʿa al-fatā* (*Alf Layla*, III, 411–414.)	*The Lovers of Medina* (Payne, VI, 229–232.)
	Wa-ḥukiya ayḍan anna Ibrāhīm b. Isḥāq qāla: Kuntu munqaṭiʿan ilā al-Barāmaka fa-baynamā anā yawman fī manzilī wa-idhā bi-bābī yaduqqu…	(Quoth Ibrahim Abou Ishac), I was once in my house, when one knocked at the door…

The second group includes such stories which contain eyewitness accounts. This is not a homogenous group by any means. By default, characters are frequently telling stories in the collection, so it is pertinent to make a distinction regarding these stories. Recognizing these narratives is important in including or excluding specific stories in the present discussion. Here, we have to distinguish between framed stories and stories told within the same narrative. To the first group belong such stories that may include either independent narratives such as those embedded in *The Merchant and the Genie* or *The Fisherman and the Genie*, or those which may also include the so-called life stories of the characters in which they relate the events of their lives which led them to their present predicaments such as those in *The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad*. Although these narratives are also related in the framework of a narrative instance, they are not to be confused with the other group whose narrative instance is not part of an independent story but constitutes part of the same narrative. This second group will be included in the following discussion, while the framed stories are excluded.

II.	**Narratives of first-person accounts (one narrative instance)**	
1.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ḥashshāsh maʿa ḥarīm baʿḍ al-akābir* (*Alf Layla*, II, 152–157.)	*The Scavenger and the Noble Lady of Baghdad* (Payne, III, 345–349.)
2.	*Ḥikāyat ʾAlī al-ʾajamī quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd* (*Alf Layla*, II, 176–180.)	*Ali the Persian's Story of the Kurd Sharper* (Payne, III, 367–371.)
3.	*Ḥikāyat Khālid b. ʾAbd Allāh al-Qashayrī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 182–186.)	*The Lover Who Feigned Himself a Thief to Save His Mistress's Honour* (Payne, IV, 4–8.)
4.	*Ḥikāyat ʾAlī b. Manṣūr al-Khalīʾī al-Dimashqī quddāma al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd – Qiṣṣat ʾishq Jubayr b. ʾUmayr al-Shaybānī wa-Budūr* (*Alf Layla*, II, 251–268.)	*The Loves of Jubeir Ben Umeir and the Lady Budour* (Payne, IV, 75–92.)
5.	*Ḥikāyat Muḥammad al-Baṣrī quddāma al-khalīfa al-Maʾmūn – qiṣṣa al-jawārī al-ṣitta wa-munāẓaratihinna maʿa baʿaḍihinna* (*Alf Layla*, II, 268–282.)	*The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls* (Payne, IV, 92–106.)

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6.	*Ḥikāyat al-wulāt al-thalātha quddāma al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (*Alf Layla*, II, 292–296.)	*El Melik En Nasir and the Three Masters of Police* (Payne, IV, 116–120.)
7.	*Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī ma'a al-tājir* (*Alf Layla*, II, 298–302.)	*Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi and the Merchant's Sister* (Payne, IV, 122–126.)
8.	*Ḥikāyat al-Aṣma'ī 'an thalāth banāt quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd* (*Alf Layla*, III, 385–388.)	*El Asmaï and the Three Girls of Bassora* (Payne, VI, 201–205.)
9.	*Ḥikāyat Ḥusayn al-Khalī' quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd min 'ishq imra'a kānat bi-Baṣra* (*Alf Layla*, III, 403–408.)	*The Lovers of Bassora* (Payne, VI, 220–226.)

Of course, the presence of the narrative instance does not guarantee the *khabar* form. Nevertheless, the requirement of the *khabar* being told provides a decisive aspect of division among the short narratives. It also has to be noted that the number of stories falling under these criteria represents only a fraction of the total number of short narratives. For this reason, additional material has to be added to these two lists.

For other narratives to be included, those stories will be considered whose title either mentions a historical figure or persons representing a social class. Consequently, short narratives having titles with such generic descriptions as "the man who…" or "the king who…" will be excluded from the discussion. Titles with historical persons indicated in them can typically be divided into three types: 1) historical figure + historical figure; 2) historical figure + stock character; 3) historical figure. The most common case is that the title includes a name – and another person or other persons involved in the action. It goes as follows: *Ḥikāyat Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Zubayda ma'a Ja'far b. Mūsā al-Hādī* (*Mohammed El Amin and Jaafer Ben El Hadi*). The second person may also be unknown, like *Ḥikāyat Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik ma'a ṣabīy al-'arab* (*The Khalif Hisham and the Arab Youth*). Alternatively, it may involve a known person and an unknown one.

III.	**Narratives about historical personalities**	
1.	*Ḥikāyat karam Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 125–127.)	*Hatim Et Taï: His Generosity after Death* (Payne, III, 316–317.)
2.	*Ḥikāyat Ma'an b. Zā'ida* (*Alf Layla*, II, 127–129.)	*Maan Ben Zaïdeh and the Three Girls* (Payne, III, 317–318.)
		Maan Ben Zaïdeh and the Bedouin (Payne, III, 318-320.)
3.	*Ḥikāyat Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik ma'a ṣabīy al-'arab* (*Alf Layla*, II, 131–133.)	*The Khalif Hisham and the Arab Youth* (Payne, III, 322–324.)
4.	*Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 133–141.)	*Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi and the Barber-Surgeon* (Payne, III, 324–333.)
5.	*Ḥikāyat 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Qilāba* (*Alf Layla*, II, 141–147.)	*The City of Irem* (Payne, III, 334–339.)
6.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd fī amr al-jāriya ma'a al-imām Abī Yūsuf* (*Alf Layla*, II, 180–182.)	*How the Imam Abou Yousuf Extricated the Khalif Haroun Er Reshid and His Vizier Jaafer from a Dilemma* (Payne, IV, 1–3.)

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7.	*Ḥikāyat karam Ja'far al-Barmakī ma'a bā'i' al-fūl* (*Alf Layla*, II, 186–187.)	*Jaafer the Barmecideand the Bean-Seller* (Payne, IV, 8–10.)
8.	*Ḥikāyat karam Khālid b. Yaḥyā ma'a Manṣūr* (*Alf Layla*, II, 204–207.)	*The Generous Dealing of Yehya Ben Khalid the Barmecide with Mensour* (Payne, IV, 27–29.)
9.	*Ḥikāyat karam Khālid b. Yaḥyā ma'a al-rajul alladhī 'amila kitāban muzawwaran* (*Alf Layla*, II, 207–210.)	*Generous Dealing of Yehya Ben Khalid with a Man Who Forged a Letter in His Name* (Payne, IV, 30–33.)
10.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-'ālim ma'a al-khalīfa al-Ma'mūn* (*Alf Layla*, II, 210–212.)	*The Khalif El Mamoun and the Strange Doctor* (Payne, IV, 34–35.)
11.	*Ḥikāyat Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a al-jāriya wa-Abī Nuwās* (*Alf Layla*, II, 282–287.)	*Haroun Er Reshid and the Damsel and Abou Nuwas* (Payne, IV, 106–111.)
12.	*Ḥikāyat Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Mutawakkil 'Alā Allāh ma'a al-jāriya ismuhā Maḥbūba* (*Alf Layla*, II, 310–312.)	*The Khalif El Mutawekkil and His Favourite Mehboubeh* (Payne, IV, 135–137.)
13.	*Ḥikāyat Abī Nuwās ma'a al-ghilmān al-thalātha* (*Alf Layla*, II, 376–380.)	*Abou Nuwas with the Three Boys and the Khalif Haroun Er Reshid* (Payne, IV, 205–210.)
14.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul wa-l-jāriya ma'a 'Abd Allāh b. Ma'mar* (*Alf Layla*, II, 381–382.)	*Abdallah Ben Maamer with the Man of Bassora and His Slave-Girl* (Payne, IV, 210–211.)
15.	*Ḥikāyat al-Mutalammis ma'a zawjatihi* (*Alf Layla*, II, 386–387.)	*El Mutelemmis and His Wife Umeimeh* (Payne, IV, 215–216.)
16.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a al-sayyida Zubayda fī al-buḥayra* (*Alf Layla*, II, 387–388.)	*The Khalif Haroun Er Reshid and the Princess Zubeideh in the Bath* (Payne, IV, 216–217.)
17.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a jāriyatihi* (*Alf Layla*, II, 388–389.)	*Haroun Er Reshid and the Three Poets* (Payne, IV, 217–219.)
18.	*Ḥikāyat Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr ma'a 'Izza wa-zawājihi ma'a 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalha* (*Alf Layla*, II, 390–391.)	*Musab Ben Zubeir and Aaïsheh Daughter of Telheh* (Payne, IV, 219–220.)
19.	*Ḥikāyat Abī al-Aswad ma'a jāriya ḥawlā'* (*Alf Layla*, II, 391.)	*Aboul Aswed and His Squinting Slave-Girl* (Payne, IV, 220.)
20.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a al-jāriyatayn Dunya wa-Kūfiya* (*Alf Layla*, II, 392.)	*Haroun Er Reshid and the Two Slave-Girls* (Payne, IV, 221.)
21.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a al-sayyida Zubayda* (*Alf Layla*, II, 394–396.)	*The Imam Abou Yousuf with Haroun Er Rashid and Zubeideh* (Payne, IV, 225–226.)
22.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh ma'a al-tājir* (*Alf Layla*, II, 396–397.)	*The Khalif El Hakim and the Merchant* (Payne, IV, 226–227.)
23.	*Ḥikāyat al-malik Kisrā Anūshirwān ma'a al-jāriya* (*Alf Layla*, II, 397–398.)	*King Kisra Anoushirwan and the Village Damsel* (Payne, IV, 227–228.)
24.	*Ḥikāyat al-malik Khusraw and Shīrīn ma'a ṣayyād al-samak* (*Alf Layla*, II, 400–401.)	*Khusraw and Shirin and the Fisherman* (Payne, IV, 230–232.)
25.	*Ḥikāyat karam Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī ma'a al-rajul al-faqīr* (*Alf Layla*, II, 401–402.)	*Yehya Ben Khalid the Barmecide and the Poor Man* (Payne, IV, 232–233.)
26.	*Ḥikāyat Muḥammad al-Amīn b. Zubayda ma'a Ja'far b. Mūsā al-Hādī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 402–403.)	*Mohammed El Amin and Jaafer Ben El Hadi* (Payne, IV, 233–234.)
27.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd wa-l-wazīr Ja'far ma'a al-shaykh al-badawī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 407–408.)	*Jaafer the Barmecide and the Old Bedouin* (Payne, IV, 238–239.)
28.	*Ḥikāyat al-Ma'mūn b. Hārūn al-Rashīd fī hadm al-ahrām* (*Alf Layla*, II, 412–414.)	*The Khalif El Mamoun and the Pyramids of Egypt* (Payne, IV, 244–245.)
29.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a Ibn al-Qāribī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 416–418.)	*Mesrour the Eunuch and Ibn El Caribi* (Payne, IV, 247–249.)

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30.	*Ḥikāyat al-Amīn ma'a 'ammihi Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī fī amr jāriyatihi* (*Alf Layla*, II, 455.)	*El Amin Ben Er Reshid and His Uncle Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi* (Payne, IV, 288–289.)
31.	*Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa al-Mutawakkil 'Alā Allāh ma'a al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān* (*Alf Layla*, II, 456.)	*El Feth Ben Khacan and the Khalif El Mutawekkil* (Payne, IV, 289–290.)
32.	*Ḥikāyat al-amīr 'Alī b. Muḥammad ma'a al-jāriya ismuhā Mūnis* (*Alf Layla*, II, 465.)	*The Amir Ali Ben Tahir and the Girl Mounis* (Payne, IV, 299–300.)
33.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-tājir fī Baghdād wa-qiṣṣat ibnihi ismuhu al-Ḥasan wa-bay' Abī al-Ḥasan jāriyatihi ismuhā Tawaddud ma'a al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd wa-munāẓaratuhā ma'a al-'ulamā' quddāma al-khalīfa wa-ghalabatuhā 'alayhim* (*Alf Layla*, II, 489–537.)	*Aboulhusn and His Slave-Girl Taweddud* (Payne, IV, 324–378.)
34.	*Ḥikāyat Iskandar Dhī al-Qarnayn ma'a qawm ḍu'afā'* (*Alf Layla*, II, 541–543.)	*Iskender Dhoulkernein and a Certain Tribe of Poor Folk* (Payne, V, 6–8.)
35.	*Ḥikāyat 'adl al-malik Anūshirwān fī mamlakatihi* (*Alf Layla*, II, 543–544.)	*The Righteousness of King Anoushirwan* (Payne, V, 8–9.)
36.	*Ḥikāyat al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf ma'a al-rajul al-ṣāliḥ* (*Alf Layla*, II, 556–557.)	*El Ḥejjaj and the Pious Man* (Payne, V, 23–24.)
37.	*Ḥikāyat Hind bint al-Nu'mān ma'a al-Ḥajjāj* (*Alf Layla*, III, 372–374.)	*Hind Daughter of En Numan and El Hajjaj* (Payne, VI, 186–188.)
38.	*Ḥikāyat Yūnus al-kātib ma'a al-Walīd b. Sahl walī al-'ahd* (*Alf Layla*, III, 379–382.)	*Younus the Scribe and the Khalif Welid Ben Sehl* (Payne, VI, 194–198.)
39.	*Ḥikāyat Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a al-banāt* (*Alf Layla*, III, 382–385.)	*The Khalif Haroun Er Reshid and the Arab Girl* (Payne, VI, 199–201.)
40.	*Ḥikāyat al-a'rābī 'inda Mu'āwiyya 'an jawr Marwān b. al-Ḥakam* (*Alf Layla*, III, 398–403.)	*The Bedouin and His Wife* (Payne, VI, 215–220.)
41.	*Ḥikāyat Abī 'Āmir al-wazīr ma'a al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (*Alf Layla*, III, 414–416.)	*El Melik En Nasir and His Vizier* (Payne, VI, 233–234.)

As we can see, this is a considerable number of stories, stories which share only one thing in common: there are historical figures in them. Of course, these historical personalities are not portrayed as such; they are only representatives of specific human characteristics similar to their nameless counterparts in the following list. Nevertheless, their characters originate in historical and biographical literature, and as such, their representation and the literary form this representation takes retains many characteristics of that literature, mainly the *khabar* form. Again, that is not to say that these stories are in the *khabar* form. We will see that the short narratives are just as varied in literary expression as in theme. However, they provide the perfect material for the comparative study of the *khabar* form in Arabic literature in general and for the transformation of that form in the *Nights* in particular.

The list of the stories, which include stock characters of the different social strata, is not long.

IV.	**Narratives with stock-characters**	
1.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-shāṭir fī al-Iskandariyya quddāma al-wālī Ḥusām al-Dīn* (*Alf Layla*, II, 290–292.)	*The Sharper of Alexandria and the Master of Police* (Payne, IV, 114–116.)

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2.	*Ḥikāyat al-liṣṣ maʿa al-ṣayrafī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 296–297.)	*The Thief and the Money-Changer* (Payne, IV, 120–121.)
3.	*Ḥikāyat ʾAlāʾ al-Dīn wālī Qūṣ maʿa al-rajul al-muḥtāl* (*Alf Layla*, II, 297–298.)	*The Chief of the Cous Police and the Sharper* (Payne, IV, 121–122.)
4.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ʾāshiq fī Banī ʾUdhra maʿa maʿshūqatihi* (*Alf Layla*, II, 382–383.)	*The Lovers of the Banou Udhreh* (Payne, IV, 211–212.)
5.	*Ḥikāyat baʿḍ al-mughaffalīn maʿa al-shāṭir* (*Alf Layla*, II, 393–394.)	*The Simpleton and the Sharper* (Payne, IV, 223–224.)
6.	*Ḥikāyat al-liṣṣ maʿa al-rajul al-tājir* (*Alf Layla*, II, 414–416.)	*The Thief Turned Merchant and the Other Thief* (Payne, IV, 246–247.)
7.	*Ḥikāyat qillat ʾaql muʿallim al-ṣubyān* (*Alf Layla*, II, 425.)	*The Foolish Schoolmaster* (Payne, IV, 257–258.)

In addition, I will also mention such stories which cannot be considered a part of either of the above lists. The reason behind the inclusion of these short narratives is that they represent parallels in theme or discourse and provide examples of either similarity or difference for certain aspects of narrative discourse, which is worth mentioning for a fuller understanding. This is the same consideration behind including *The City of Brass* in the discussion of the narrative discourse of *khabar* and *ḥikāya*. These short narratives are the following:

V.	**Miscellaneous narratives**	
1.	*Ḥikāyat baldat Labṭayṭ* (*Alf Layla*, II, 129–131.)	*The City of Lebtait* (Payne, III, 320–322.)
2.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ghanī alladhī iftaqara wa-baʿda al-faqr ṣāra ghaniyyan* (*Alf Layla*, II, 308–309.)	*The Ruined Man Who Became Rich Again Through a Dream* (Payne, IV, 134–135.)
3.	*Ḥikāyat Badr al-Dīn wazīr al-Yaman maʿa akhīhi wa-muʿallimihi* (*Alf Layla*, II, 383–384.)	*The Vizier of Yemen and His Young Brother* (Payne, IV, 212–214.)
4.	*Ḥikāyat ʾishq al-ghulām maʿa al-jāriya fī al-maktaba* (*Alf Layla*, II, 384–386.)	*The Loves of the Boy and the Girl at School* (Payne, IV, 214–215.)
5.	*Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-saqqāʾ maʿa zawjat al-ṣāʾigh* (*Alf Layla*, II, 398–400.)	*The Water-Carrier and the Goldsmith's Wife* (Payne, IV, 229–232.)
6.	*Ḥikāyat ʾAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maghribī al-Ṣīnī min farkh al-rukh* (*Alf Layla*, II, 428–430.)	*Abdurrehman the Moor's Story of the Roc* (Payne, IV, 261–262.)
7.	*Ḥikāyat rajul fī Baghdād min awlād ahl al-Naʿam maʿa jāriyatihi* (*Alf Layla*, IV, 357–365.)	*The Ruined Man of Baghdad and His Slave Girl* (Payne, VIII, 175–185.)
8.	*Ḥikāyat madīnat al-nuḥās* (*Alf Layla wa Layla*, VI, 343–401.)[201]	*The City of Brass* (Payne, V, 219–260.)

We have already mentioned certain groups of stories that are excluded from the discussion. Such stories are, naturally, the longer pieces which, although they contain accounts that can be considered pertinent as far as the narrative instance is considered, they are not

[201] *Alf Layla wa Layla, Breslau's Edition by Maximilian Habicht*, 12 vols, Cairo (National Library and Archives Press), 2016. (= *Tausend und Eine Nacht, Arabisch, Nach einer Handschrift aus Tunis*, ed. M. Habicht, 12 vols, Breslau (Josef Max & Comp.), 1825–1843.) Henceforth: *Alf Layla wa Layla*.
Although I chose the Calcutta II edition as the basis for my study, when discussing *The City of Brass*, I will refer to the Breslau edition since it offers the most complete version of the story. In the Calcutta II edition, this story is under several consecutive titles, each describing the individual episodes of the story. (*Alf Layla*, III, 83–115.)

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considered to belong to that narrative form on the grounds of them being included in another kind of narrative with another set of characteristics to consider. Besides these longer narratives, other shorter forms also have to be mentioned as excluded from examination. These narratives include anonymous or even named characters that do not represent any particular social class. The difference between these characters and those listed above is that they do not represent a general group; they provide examples for particular situations. These stories mainly belong to exemplary tales. Similarly, animal tales are not discussed, just like tales of religious content, be they Muslim, Christian, or Jewish.

These are the short narratives of the *Nights,* on which the following discussion is based. Not all of the narratives are mentioned by title and definitely, not all of them are examined in detail; there is neither room nor need for that. The examined examples are representative enough and if need be, the other narratives could be added as further examples.

Although the initial criterium was based on the *khabar* form, it is not to say that these narratives correspond to that narrative form. As stated earlier, the *khabar* form can provide the starting point for discussing short narratives in the *Nights*. As such, its definition was used as a basis point for selection. The stories listed above only show certain characteristics that allow the reader to associate it with that form. It is the purpose of the study to examine to what degree individual stories may be read as *khabar* and, more importantly, to describe the method of reading to recognize and interpret the cooperation of various literary forms in the collection in regard to the short narratives. In the following, when stories are referenced without quotation, only the number of the table (Roman numeral) and their number (Arabic numeral) in the table will be provided. References in the footnotes will only be provided when quotations are referenced.

1.4. Concluding Remarks Regarding Genre in Pre-Modern Arabic Literature and Modern Research

The previous chapter, dealing with the contemporary conceptions of genre and the generic terms of short narratives, could not provide a satisfactory description of *genre* or an exact definition of the particular Arabic terms. The terms themselves are so varied, and their application is so arbitrary that defining them based on contemporary works is not possible. Drawing up a general idea of how *genre* was conceived in the pre-modern era would have provided some help, but doing so needs further consideration of the matter.

Accordingly, the aim of the present inquiry, on the one hand, is to supplement the previous terminological examination with results of modern research with the specific purpose

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of understanding how the pre-modern Arabic genre is understood on the conceptual level. Of course, the two are not independent of each other, but by comparing the results, it may become possible to point out those aspects that might not have gotten enough attention so far and examine the merit of these neglected observations. On the other hand, discussing the problems concerning our genre conception mentioned in the previous chapter will also be taken up, and a solution will be proposed to overcome these shortcomings.

Apart from encyclopedic entries, there was not much attempt made at a systematic generic description of the short narratives in pre-modern Arabic literature. ʿAbdel-ʿAziz ʿAbdel-Meguid gives a comprehensive study of terms used in Arabic for narrative and story in which he describes such terms as *qiṣṣa*, *sīra*, *ḥadīth*, *ḥikāya*, *samar*, *khurāfa*, *usṭūra*, *riwāya*, *nādira*, *khabar*, *mathal* and *maqāma*.[202] Abdelfattah Kilito wrote a short chapter on *qiṣṣa*.[203] Joseph Sadan also spares some space to give definitions to such terms as *nawādir*, *laṭīfa,* and *fā'ida*.[204] Shosh Ben-Ari takes up the *awā'il* stories in an article,[205] and Aboubakr Chraïbi discusses the *khurāfa* in a book dedicated to the manuscript-study of *The Thousand and One Nights*.[206] Stefan Leder makes use of the context of fact and fiction to make mention of *khabar*, *qiṣṣa*, *ḥikāya*, *khurāfa*, *aṣāṭīr,* and *asmār*.[207]

However, trying to make a system out of these seemingly random lists that only share the fact that we are dealing with prose literature, we are left exactly where we left off with discussing the concept of *genre* in the Mamlūk period. Classification is based on arbitrary associations of topics, be it the general concept of rare, astonishing stories (*nādira*) or the more particular ones, such as the commendable acts of personalities of early Islam (*fadā'il*).

While there is not much common ground regarding the approach of these genre-denoting terms, they do share one aspect: these terms are primarily defined either by their belonging to *adab* or by being set apart from it. Their function, artistic quality, and the information they carry

[202] ʿAbdel-Meguid, ʿA.-ʿA.: A Survey of the Terms Used in Arabic for 'Narrative' and 'Story', *Islamic Quarterly*, 1, 1954, 195–204. See also: Malti-Douglas, F.: *Structures of Avarice – The Bukhalā' in Medieval Arabic Literature*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1985, 17–19.
[203] Kilito, A.: Qiṣṣa, in *The Novel, Vol. 1, History, Geography, and Culture*, ed. F. Moretti, Princeton – Oxford (Princeton University Press), 2006, 262–268.
[204] Sadan, J.: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Brewer: Preliminary Remarks on the Adab of the Elite Versus Ḥikāyāt: The Continuation of Some of the Traditional Literary Models, from the "Classical" Arabic Heritage, up to the Emergence of Modern Forms, in *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*, eds. S. Ballas and R. Snir, Toronto (York Press), 1998, 5.
[205] Ben-Ari, Sh.: The *Awā'il* Stories: Legitimization of Norms and Customs, *Quaderni di Studi Arabi, Nuova Serie*, 2, 2007, fn.103.
[206] Chraïbi, A.: Introduction, in *Arabic Manuscripts of the* Thousand and One Nights*: Presentation and Critical Editions of Four Noteworthy Texts; Observations on Some Osmanli Translations*, dir. A. Chraïbi. Paris: espaces&signes, 2016, 26–42.
[207] Leder, S.: Conventions of Fictional Narration in Learned Literature, *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. S. Leder, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz Verlag), 1998, 39.

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(fact or fiction) determine these pieces of writing. This statement brings us back to the last observation we made above and reinforces our claim that truth-value primarily determines the understanding of a work. When discussing narratives that claim factual validity, Stefan Leder mentions *khabar*, *qiṣṣa,* and *ḥikāya,* while imaginary content and fundamentally entertaining nature are attributed to *khurāfa*, *aṣāṭīr,* and *asmār*. This division is again an example of delimitating the learned literature from the other levels of literary expression based on its fictional character in the case of the later one. Aboubakr Chraïbi is not so ready to draw such a strict line between these two areas. In connection with *khurāfa*, he says, quoting al-Masʿūdī, that it is "fiction crafted for a carefully chosen audience".[208] The significance of al-Masʿūdī's words is, claims Chraïbi, that the author places *khurāfa* in a category that falls between high and popular literature. Chraïbi dedicates a considerable part of the *Introduction* to the definition of *khurāfa,* which is based on studying several classical texts from *adab*. At the end of his examination, he arrives at the conclusion that it is the *ʿajab* (the astonishing) that characterizes this kind of story.[209] This observation gives thematic and certain discursive characteristics to this kind of literature which is, in some manifestations, not entirely distinct from the literature of *adab*.

Theoretical considerations, however, do not go further than this and show great affiliation with the pre-modern Arabic works. There is nothing objectionable in that since these works are based on Arabic sources. The problem is that they cannot provide a theoretical framework for the description of how the system works; that is, they cannot reconcile the descriptive nature of the pre-modern concept of *genre* with the prescriptive nature of Western understanding. As a result of this failure in reconciliation, a gap is created between the theoretical approach to *genre* and its practical application. This gap is difficult to bridge when no generally accepted system exists on either side of the gap. On the one hand, the already-mentioned arbitrarily assigned genres are expected to work as in Western literature. On the other hand, truth-value is accepted as a determining factor in classification (which is clearly attested by contemporary sources). In other words, theoretical discussions remain descriptive, while scholars, taking a more practical approach to *genre*, assume a prescriptive stance, which results in their research being classificatory.

This duplicity is from which the *Nights* research is suffering. While theoretical works concerning Arabic genre-conception remain descriptive and, thus, highly general in terms of definitions, scholars are looking at methods that are more definite but, at the same time, more

[208] Chraïbi, 2016, 23.
[209] Chraïbi, 2016, 26–42.

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alien to pre-modern Arabic literature. That is not to say that *genre* in the Western tradition is solely defined by its classificatory value. On the contrary, there are many examples of a more comprehensive and less rigorous understanding of the term in literary theory. However, the application of the terms of pre-modern Arabic prose literature demonstrates such an approach. The result of such classificatory endeavors is, on the one hand, the varied definitions and, on the other, the confusing translations of the individual terms.

This dichotomy of descriptive and prescriptive approaches is the basic hindrance to understanding Arabic short prose in the pre-modern era. As stated above, in Western research of pre-modern Arabic literature, *genre* is predominantly used to classify. Whether it is with the purpose of familiarization or description, *genre* is used to prescribe a specific category to a text according to which it can be examined. This approach is fundamentally prescriptive and requires a definite set of terms to work with. The problem is that when Arabic literature does not allow for a set list of such terms, it becomes possible for several such perceived lists to be determined, none of which represent the actual state of affairs.

Another problem arises when Western scholars try to translate Arabic terms. Translation always implies appropriation; in this case, it is inevitably misleading. Consider the example of *khabar* translated as *anecdote*. According to Hilary Kilpatrick, *khabar* "should certainly not be interpreted simply as denoting anecdotes, since it can cover anything from terse statements of fact with no narrative element beyond the process of transmission expressed in the *isnād* to lengthy historical accounts and the saga-like *Ayyām al-'arab*".[210] Although it does not provide us with any specific information apart from reference to length, this is a reasonable observation. We have already seen that the term *khabar* has a multi-layered meaning which cannot be expressed by one generic term that can cover its full semantic range. Approaching the problem from a different direction, Fedwa Malti-Douglas discusses the problem of using *anecdote* to denote a short narrative unit with various names in Arabic, one of which is *khabar*.[211] Although she chooses to label the stories she is discussing as anecdotes, she stresses the point that our definition of the term has to be adjusted.

Fahndrich, in his article on *Wafayāt al-A'yān* of Ibn Khallikān, makes a distinction between *khabar* and *nādira* based on their truth-value. However, this conclusion is drawn based on a not-so-convincing argument supported by Western definitions of such genres as *anecdote*, *legend,* and *joke*. The discussion concludes with a diagram that has to be imagined like a line

[210] Kilpatrick, H.: Context and the Enhancement of the Meaning of *Aḫbār* in the *Kitāb al-Aġānī*, *Arabica*, 38, 1991, 352.
[211] Malti-Douglas, 1985, 17–21.

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with *khabar* at one end and *joke* on the other, while *nādira* stands in the middle. In a certain respect, it is a reasonable conclusion on the ground that *khabar* represents historical figures with particular attention to one aspect of their person. At the same time, *nādira* also represents historical figures but only as archetypal figures for one specific characteristic, and the joke leaves any historical pretense behind, featuring a general type of people it makes fun of. In other respects, however, this conclusion disregards other considerations.[212] The essential difference between these two forms, whether historical and anecdotal *khabar* or *khabar* and *nādira,* will become evident when we discuss the narrative discourse of the *khabar* form. For now, suffice it to say that Western and Arabic traditions grasp the essence of *genre* on two different levels, for lack of a better word.

The difficulty of finding a corresponding term for *khabar* in the Western tradition highlights the fact that the fundamental approach of literature towards *genre* is different. We should recognize that it is not the final term with which we refer to a piece of writing which is important but the reading of it; the process of interpretation through which its intended meaning is decoded.

The relevance of clarifying how genre definition works (as in: is it descriptive or prescriptive, for example, and how it relates to our understanding of the text) in the case of pre-modern short prose becomes evident when we recall that the same narratives may be encountered in different works from the different fields of *adab*. As seen earlier, *adab* has a much broader connotation than *literature* itself. What does it mean for our understanding of *genre* that the same works are utilized in this varied field? Does the text change its genre depending on the field of literature it belongs to? Does it retain it? Does the text itself remain the same, or does it change? All these questions may be answered if we leave behind our understanding of *genre* as a strict classificatory device and accept the hypothesis that the terms which we consider genre-denoting terms are, in fact, in their pre-modern Arabic conceptions, only words with a certain descriptive value which is the result of a complex process of interpretation. By no means are they the starting point for understanding a work; they are the result of the understanding itself.

In the framework of the present study of short narratives, the collections have a significant role in understanding since they are the starting point for interpretations. The nature of the

[212] Fahndrich, H. E.: The Wafayāt al-Aʿyān of Ibn Khallikān: A New Approach, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 93, 1973, 432–445. Referring to Fahndrich, Nicola Lauré al-Samarai chooses the same approach when translating *nādira* as *anecdote*: Lauré al-Samarai, N.: *Die Macht der Darstellung: Gender, sozialer Status, historiographische Re-Präsentation: zwei Frauenbiographien aus der frühen Abbasidenzeit*, Wiesbaden (Reichert Verlag), 2001, 17–18.

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collection (historical, biographical, *adab* literary, etc.) informs the reader about the purpose of the work and provides the framework for interpretation. Thus, I argue – as opposed to the main current of modern research – that collections do not represent genres but only the context in which the works contained should be read, the *purpose* on the author's part that aids the reader's interpretation. However, the role of the collections in genre description is limited. There are aspects of the individual pieces of writings which are not assigned to them by the collections. Nevertheless, there is an interesting cooperation between the collections and the texts included in them, giving genre description a definite contextual quality. Individual short narratives cannot be interpreted in themselves. Or, more precisely, there are a lot of ways they can be interpreted.[213] It is the context of the literary convention, the purpose of the author, on the one hand, and the context within a specific collection, the organization and arrangement of material within a collection, on the other, that help limit the possible interpretations.

This said, the collection may provide the particular stories with a purpose, but they cannot support their function because compilers were prone to mix their serious material with more frivolous ones since it was a widely held concept that such diversions helped keep up attention. In this respect, the purpose may be defined as the author's intention to involve his work in a specific literary convention. However, this purpose does not necessarily affect the stories' relationship to reality and, thus, their function.

Supported by both contemporary sources and modern research, it can be stated that Arabic literature is primarily defined by its relation to reality (or authenticity), and genre description has to be viewed in this light. In the case of short narratives, this relation is coded in the narrative form. Keeping the distinction between *adab* and the lower levels of literature, be it popular or folk, we can observe that it is the *khabar* form that dominates the domain of *adab*, while it is the more complex story-telling that is characteristic of lower kinds of literature, that is *qiṣṣa, ḥikāya,* and *khurāfa*. These are different forms of narratives that can utilize and appropriate the available material, which, put into a specific narrative and literary context, may be interpreted or described by one of the terms mentioned above.

Regarding the *khabar*, Samer M. Ali observes that "the narrative report (*khabar*; pl. *akhbār*) itself constituted the basic unit of many genres of writing outside of our modern

[213] The idea of contextuality is brought up by S. R. Burge in connection with *ḥadīth* collections. (Burge, S. R.: Compilation Criticism: Reading and Interpreting *Ḥadīth* Collections through the Prism of Fragmentation and Compilation, in: *The Making of Religious Texts in Islam: The Fragment and the Whole*, eds. A. Hilali and S. R. Burge, Berling (Gerlach Press), 2019, 90–93, 101–103.)

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categories of literature".[214] He gives these categories as the genealogy of tribes (*ansāb*), genealogy of horses (*ansāb al-khayl*), speeches (*khutab*), tales (*qiṣaṣ*, *ḥikāyāt*), prosopography (*ṭabaqāt*), hagiography (*ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*), cosmological-natural history (*'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*), geographic-archaeological lore (*'ajā'ib al-buldān*), zoological lore (*'ajā'ib al-ḥayawān*), battle history (*maghāzī*), biography/heroic epic (*sīra*), proverb (*amthāl*), periodized history (*tārīkh*). These categories provide the literary context for a work in which it may appear in different forms, one of which is the *khabar* form. Being interpreted in one of these contexts, the text in the *khabar* form can be interpreted as belonging to one of those works which may be designated as *nawādir* or *faḍā'il*, for example. This observation is in accordance with our previous claim that the terms we consider genre-denoting result from interpretation. A text must go through a definite process before it can be fully interpreted. The terms examined above only represent one of the last stations in this interpretational process.

There have to be further remarks about the literary contexts mentioned above since they include many such terms designated as *genre* in modern research. Such terms are, for example, *ṭabaqāt*, *faraj ba'da al-shidda*, *'ajab* (*mudhik*, *faraj ba'da al-shidda*, *akhbār wa-ash'ār*, *'ajā'ib al-bahr*).[215] These terms do not refer to individual works but groups of works or collections. They help specify the interpretation of the individual works since they provide a literary context with thematic, structural, etc. connotations, but they do not form a genre in themselves and do not assign a genre to the individual works, either. They contribute to the purpose of the work specified by the field of literature, of which the collection in which it is included is a part.

It shows that in pre-modern Arabic prose literature, *genre* is expressed on different levels, and the contribution of these levels provides the final interpretation of the individual works. This observation supports the contextuality of Arabic short narratives. This statement is, of course, true for Western literature as well, but while in Western literature, a single term can encompass all these levels, in Arabic literature, these levels are expressed by separate terms. It means that not every aspect that a Western genre-denoting term would cover is expressed in one single word. The different terms come together to account for the full meaning of a literary work, and, as a result, many terms can satisfactorily describe a work while, at the same time, no term is able to describe a work in its entirety. This characteristic of pre-modern Arabic literature makes it necessary to assume a descriptive and not a prescriptive approach when talking about Arabic short narratives.

[214] Ali, S. M.: *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages – Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010, 35–36.
[215] Chraïbi, 2016, 49.

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Although there are indeed examples of a kind of classification in the case of short narratives, it is not the primary concern of Arabic literature. It is why grasping genre as a concept is so challenging. Based on its strict adherence to reality and the distinction between truth and fiction, it can be stated that this literature is more intentional than classificatory. The function defines the work, but this function is not coded in genre-denoting terms. The narrative form defines function since it is in the narrative form that the additional information necessary for the applications of the particular terms, and not covered by the definition of the terms themselves, can be expressed. This statement is especially true for the *khabar*, which makes it an excellent candidate to study in connection with the genre conception of pre-modern Arabic literature.

As stated above, the function is not coded in genre-denoting terms; the narrative form expresses it. In the case of the *khabar*, we have seen that function, that is, conveying information, is one of the layers of its meanings. However, for *khabar* as a piece of information, being authoritative presupposes a specific narrative form. This narrative form, it has been shown, forms one of the other levels of meaning of the *khabar*. It serves to verify the content of the information. It is a very strict form that contrasts with the freedom of other narrative forms that do not claim veracity and belong to another layer of literature.[216] Genre recognition, then, seems to be working on two different levels: first, there is the level of the narrative form (structure and discourse) which informs the reader about the literary work's relation to reality and its authoritativeness; only after that can the additional characteristics of specific genres be recognized.

John Frow describes *genre* as being in a dynamic relationship with the text. This approach also leaves the classificatory nature of *genre* behind in favor of a more flexible system. However, *genre* cannot be completely dispensed with since it provides the prerequisite knowledge for the text's interpretation. The reader has to know what kind of text he is reading to be able to interpret it. There is a contradiction here which Thomas Kent describes as follows, using the reading experience as an example: "To understand a sentence, we must understand the words that constitute it, but to understand the full meaning of the words, we also must understand the sentence".[217] Since, in the case of the short narratives in Arabic literature, a text

[216] In connection with this, it is noteworthy that the differentiation between what we call learnt literature (*adab*) and popular literature is completely absent from these works. There are terms that would indicate this separation between these two kinds of literature, it is not clear, however, whether the authors consider this a dividing factor at all. It is not a negligible question. Especially not when one wishes to discuss *The Thousand and One Nights*, one of the most prominent representatives of Arabic popular literature.

[217] Kent, Th.: *Interpretation and Genre: The Role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts*, Lewisburg (Bucknell University Press), 1986, 15.

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may exist in multiple collections, this approach cannot work. The genre-denoting terms are not carrying sufficient information, which enables the reader to interpret the text. The narrative form provides this information through its direct relation to reality. While genre-denoting terms do not have extratextual references, the narrative form does, and thus, it is able to form a bridge between the context and the text.

According to Kent, *genre* in the Western concept carries these two meanings in its two differing aspects: the formal and the extratextual.[218] Although extratextual has a spatio-temporal component to its meaning in his theory, I use it to indicate the contextual understanding of *genre*, which is not necessarily defined by temporal or spatial dimensions. Nevertheless, it can be said that narrative form connects a text's formal and extratextual elements. In the case of the *khabar*, we saw the three layers of meaning recognizable in one single term: function, content, and form. The relationship among these three may be summed up as follows: the relationship between form and function determines the content, that is, the thematic specification of a given work.

Nevertheless, contextuality, in this case, requires determining the purpose of the work before any further judgment is made concerning its genre, and thus, I find that establishing the presence of different narrative forms as a level of genre description in this literature provides the necessary step for us to be able to observe the genre recognition process more comprehensively.

In short, it can be said that there are different levels of genre description in pre-modern Arabic prose literature, and the cooperation of these levels provides a deeper understanding of a work that is not so much classificatory as contextual. Arabic literature is more concerned with the function of a work than prerequisite generic characteristics, which means that, first and foremost, the work's relation to reality determines the interpretation of a work. The relationship is expressed in the narrative form, for which the *khabar* form is an excellent example since the informative drive of the *khabar* is closely related to its narrative form, which stands both on the structural and the narrative level for veracity.

It supports the idea that the textual level of generic expression is independent in Arabic literature and is a prerequisite for recognizing other generic characteristics (on the semantic and lexicographic levels) coded in the individual terms of genre denomination. Accordingly, the *khabar* form has to be examined on the textual level to see how this genre description works on this level – how the relationship to reality is expressed through the form.

[218] Kent, 1986, 15–20.

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2. *The Short Narratives of* The Thousand and One Nights*: Recognizing the* Khabar *Form and Its Transformations*

The present chapter takes the *khabar* form as its main subject. This will be the focal point of all further remarks regarding the short narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights*. According to the final argument of the previous chapter, *khabar* form will be examined on the textual level, more precisely, through its narrative discourse. It will be shown how modern narrative theory may be utilized for a more complex understanding of this much-discussed literary form of pre-modern Arabic literature. I will argue that *khabar* form is not present exclusively in the literature of *adab* but it can be detected in the literary output of the popular culture, in this case, in the *Nights* as well. Its narrative structure makes *khabar* a versatile form of literary expression which can be employed and adapted in- and outside of its intended context. Of course, it implies that *khabar* form loses its informative drive at the cost of entertainment, but I hope to show that it gains something else in the process as well.

The short narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights* show some striking similarity with the *khabar* form while, at the same time, they also present such deviations from it that makes it difficult for the average reader to recognize the form. I will argue that *khabar* form, being such a fundamental form of Arabic literary expression, is still present in these narratives though in an admittedly altered fashion. Furthermore, I will demonstrate the process[219] through which a complete alteration takes place and will address the consequences of the presence of *khabar* form in popular context in genre recognition. As a conclusion, the main argument of the present study will be made, and a new avenue will be proposed for the examination of short narratives not only in *adab* but in pre-modern Arabic literature in general as well.

In selecting the material for discussion, I will use the following criteria: *khabar* form is the literary form of the act of *narrating* through which it relates a *story* (piece of information) in the form of a *narration.*[220] This chapter will examine how *khabar* form is present in its basic form in the collection and in what respects does it differ from the original form of the *khabar*. The problem will be discussed through the examination of the *khabar* narrative as *story*,

[219] Under the term "process" I do not mean a chronological and gradual process of change that would be not only impossible but also misguided to assume in connection with the *Nights*. Nevertheless, the general authorial attitude to the material at hand can be confidently ascertained.

[220] Based on Gérard Genette's use of the term *narrative*. (Genette, G.: *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Ithaca, New York (Cornell University Press), 1980, 25–26.) This is also the approach which Daniel Beaumont takes in his study of the narrative discourse of early Muslim traditions. (Beaumont, Daniel: Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions, *Studia Islamica*, 83, 1996, 5–31.)

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narration and *narrating* through the examination of which the underlying problems of generic classification concerning *khabar* will be brought to lights.

2.1. The *Khabar* as Story: The Structure of the *Khabar* Revisited

In the present chapter, we address the questions which arise when we try to define the general structure of *khabar* since it is not only the most commonly recognized feature of the form, but it is closely connected to the *khabar* as *story*, that is, the related material. The purpose of this line of inquiry is to find out how the *khabar* form is adapted into *The Thousand and One Nights* on a formal level. In this respect, there is a definite difference between what we understand under the term "form" and "structure". Under form I mean the specific processes which determine the exact relationship among *narration*, *story* and *narrating* while structure means the overall composition of the work.

Concerning the question at hand, we are discussing a group of stories in the *Nights* which share the motif of "slave-girl lost and regained". Geert Jan van Gelder has already discussed this same motif in his article[221] and a version of it is discussed by Julia Bray,[222] however, I hope to provide another angle for discussing the matter. There are three stories which make use of the motif of the "slave-girl lost and regained" in the Calcutta II Edition of the *Nights*:

1. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul wa-l-jāriya ma'a 'Abd Allāh b. Ma'mar* (*Abdallah Ben Maamer with the Man of Bassora and His Slave-Girl*), henceforth: *'Abd Allāh b. Ma'mar* (III.14.)
2. *Ḥikāyat rajul fī Baghdād min awlād ahl al-Na'am ma'a jāriyatihi* (*The Ruined Man of Baghdad and His Slave Girl*), henceforth: *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* (V.7.)
3. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-tājir fī Baghdād wa-qiṣṣat ibnihi ismuhu al-Ḥasan wa-bay' Abī al-Ḥasan jāriyatihi ismuhā Tawaddud ma'a al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd wa-munāẓaratuhā ma'a al-'ulamā' quddāma al-khalīfa wa-ghalabatuhā 'alayhim* (*Aboulhusn and His Slave-Girl Taweddud*), henceforth: *Tawaddud* (III.33.)

However, before we turn to examining the *khabar* form as it goes through changes in the *Nights*, it is important to see how that narrative form exists in *adab* literature in order for us to be able to evaluate these changes within the collection. For this purpose, reports of various authors with the same motif are brought into the discussion for the sake of comparison in the study of the

[221] van Gelder, G. J.: Slave-Girl Lost and Regained: Transformation of a Story, *Marvels & Tales*, 18, 2004, 201–217. With special attention to the story of Tawaddud, the motif is also discussed in Sadan, J.: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Brewer: Preliminary Remarks on the Adab of the Elite Versus Ḥikāyāt: The Continuation of Some of the Traditional Literary Models, from the "Classical" Arabic Heritage, up to the Emergence of Modern Forms, in: *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*, eds. S. Ballas and R. Snir, Toronto (York Press), 1998, 19–21.

[222] Bray, J. A.: *Isnād*s and Models of Heroes: Abū Zubayd al-Ṭā'ī, Tanūkhī's Sundered Lovers and Abū 'l-'Anbas al-Ṣaymarī, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 1, 1998, 7–30.

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stories in the *Nights*. Stories with the same motifs may be found in Ibn Ḥijja's *Thamarāt al-awrāq*,[223] al-Ghuzūlī's *Maṭāliʿ al-budūr fī manāzil al-surūr*,[224] al-Suyūṭī's *al-Mustaẓraf min akhbār al-jawārī*,[225] al-Ibshīhī's *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*[226] and Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*.[227]

The generally accepted fact concerning the structure of the *khabar* is that it is made up of an *isnād* (chain of authorities) and a *matn* (body of text) and I do not attempt to dispute that here. There are a couple of interesting remarks to add, however, which will help understand the transformation of the *khabar* form in the *Nights*. I will argue that it is an overly simplified understanding of the structural composition of the *khabar*, which is just as able to relate simple statements and utterances as it is to tell more complex narratives, just to refer back to Stefan Leder's already quoted passages, attempting to define *khabar*.[228] It may be enough for religious, legal and even historical studies, but to be able to handle the texts as narratives, some clarification is needed.

Isnād is a chain of transmitters on the authority of whom the authenticity of the *matn* rests. However, the presence of this chain of transmitters carries more relevance than that of authentication: it implies orality, and, with it, it ensures the reported nature of the *khabar*, even after the *isnād* itself had been deemed unnecessary to indicate. In keeping with this recorded form of the *khabar*, the *instance of narrating* has to be mentioned since the *matn* is always something that is related by someone.

In the case of the present sources, a clear process of erosion of the *isnād* can be observed. While al-Suyūṭī in his *al-Mustaẓraf* starts as follows: "Qāla Ibn al-Muʿtazz: Ḥaddathanī Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Maymūn, qāla…" ("Ibn Muʿtazz reported the following: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Maymūn related to me, saying…")[229] and Ibn Khallikān refers to an actual book, Ibn al-Qādisī's *Akhbār al-wuzarāʾ* as a source,[230] Ibn Ḥijja opens with a more general "Wa-min gharīb al-manqūl anna…" ("Among the strangest that they are telling is that…")[231] and al-

[223] Ibn Ḥijja, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad: *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. Bayrūt (al-Maktabat al-ʿAṣriyya), 2005/1426, 173–174.
[224] al-Ghuzūlī, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bahāʾī: *Maṭāliʿ al-budūr fī manāzil al-surūr*, al-Qāhira (Maktabat al-Ṭaqāfa al-Dīniyya), 2006/1426, I, 209–214.
[225] al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn: *al-Mustaẓraf min akhbār al-jawārī*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjad. Bayrūt (Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd), 1976, 32–34.
[226] al-Ibshīhī, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad: *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*, Bayrūt (Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt), 1992/1412, I, 245–246.
[227] Ibn Khallikān, Abū al-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr: *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1972, I, 328–341.
[228] Leder, 1992, 278.
[229] al-Suyūṭī, *al-Mustaẓraf*, 32.
[230] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, I, 332.
[231] Ibn Ḥijja, *Thamarāt*, 173.

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Ibshīhī and al-Ghuzūlī are satisfied with a simple "Qīla"[232] and "Ḥukiya",[233] respectively. Despite the various degree of exactitude, what these examples share is the reference to the reported nature of the *khabar*, however implicit it might be. This implicit reference is what the *Nights* shares with these works as well, with that distinction that in the case of these implicit references, it is always Shahrazād, who is implied since it is her who is relating the stories to Shahriyār. This steadfast presence of Shahrazād is what essentially makes these stories narratives in the same sense we call the *khabar* a narrative: a report. That is, a piece of information is reported through a person who had heard the reported event from someone else. At the moment, the veracity of the account, which is highly dependent on the source of said account, is not important. What matters is the fact that there is a person who is relating the event through an *instance of narrating*.

Only after the establishment of the *instance of narrating* can the *matn* be related. The *matn* carries the piece of information the *khabar* is meant to report. As stated above, this piece of information may be expressed by a simple statement, essentially, the quotation of an authority, like it is the case in many of the Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*). Or, it can also be elaborated in a complex narrative, which is more characteristic of the *Nights*' stories but can also be found in *adab* in general. As we will see, this is an important distinction which the simple term of *matn* cannot make. It rests on the differentiation between statement and narrative, that is, a simple utterance and a *story*. It also presupposes the further division of the *matn*. As relating information is the main purpose of the *khabar*, the statement which carries that information remains an independent part of the *matn*: it may remain a simple statement quoted, or it may be a narrative in which the main information is expressed. It is the description of the circumstances of the telling of that information that has to be recognized as an independent part of the *matn*. It is, that is, the establishment of an *instance of narrating* within the *matn*, what makes the differentiation between utterance and *story*.

In accordance with the previous observations, then, the two-part division of the *khabar* is maintained. Thus, there is the *isnād*, which is responsible for the expression of the inherent reported nature of the *khabar* through the establishment of the *instance of narrating*, and there is the *matn*, which carries the information content of the *khabar*, either as an utterance or as a narrative. In the latter case, it is through the establishment of another *instance of narrating* that the simple quotation becomes a narrative, that is, a *story*. Compare the following examples from al-Nawawī's *ḥadīth* collection:

[232] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 245.
[233] al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāli' al-budūr*, 209.

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1.	ʿAn Abī Hurayra (raḍiya Allāh ʿanhu) qāla: Qāla Rasūl Allāh (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama): Min ḥusn islām al-marʾ…[234]	On the authority of Abū Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "From the excellence of one's islām is…"
2.	ʿAn Amīr al-Muʾminīn Abī Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (raḍiya Allāh ʿanhu) qāla: Samiʿtu Rasūl Allāh (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama) yaqūl: Innamā al-aʿmāl…[235]	On the authority of the Commander of the Faithful, Abū Ḥafs, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: "Indeed, the actions…"
3.	ʿAn Abī Hurayra (raḍiya Allāh ʿanhu): Inna rajulan qāla li-l-Nabīy (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama): Awṣinī. Qāla: Lā taghḍab! Fa-raddada mirāran, qāla: Lā taghḍab![236]	On the authority of Abū Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: A man said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): "Counsel me." He said, "Do not get angry." The man repeated [his words] several times. He said, "Do not get angry."
4.	ʿAn Abī ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (raḍiya Allāh ʿanhumā) qāla: Kuntu khalfa al-Nabīy (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama) yawman fa-qāla lī: Yā ghulām, innī uʿallimuka kalimāt: Iḥfaẓ Allāh yaḥfaẓka…[237]	On the authority of Abū ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: One day I was riding behind the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he said to me, "Young man, I will teach you some words: Keep Allah in mind…"

Although these examples are simple in terms of the *isnād*, they exhibit well the general concept. No. 1 is the example of only a saying being quoted while the rest of the examples establish an *instance of narrating* after providing the chain of authorities for the *matn*. Nos. 2 and 3 simply indicate the person who is being quoted by the last person in the *isnād* and No. 4 describes a scene in which the quoted passage is delivered. Whether simply a person is indicated to tell something, or a whole scene is developed around the saying of someone, the relevance of this feature of the *matn* is that it makes a narrative, that is, a *story* out of a simple quotation. For this change to be interpretable, the structural composition of the *matn* has to be adjusted.

This is the general concept of the *khabar* form, structurally speaking, I am proposing for the present study. On the one hand, this allows for a more concise form which is characteristic of the more factually oriented fields of pre-modern Arabic writerly culture while, on the other hand, it also allows for considerable elaborations which are present not only in the popular collection of the *Nights* but other *adab* literary, not to mention in *ḥadīth* collections as well. While it does not bear much significance in the case of the latter, it will regain an important role in literary discussions.

[234] al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf: *Sharḥ Matn al-arbaʿīna al-Nawawī fī al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa al-nabawiyya*, Dimashq (Dār al-Fatḥ), 1984, 47.
[235] al-Nawawī, 1984, 6.
[236] al-Nawawī, 1984, 55–56.
[237] al-Nawawī, 1984, 61.

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The relevance of this more nuanced division of the constituent parts of the *khabar* becomes clear when we consider another important aspect of this literary form: it is one single event that the *khabar* relates. We have defined *khabar* as a piece of information earlier and it is indeed one single piece, so to say. We do not have complex narratives in *khabar* as far as the plot is concerned. As Rosenthal also states, "by its very nature it does not admit of the establishment of a causal nexus between two or more events. Each ḫabar is complete in itself and tolerates no reference to any kind of supplementary material".[238] From a structural and narratological point of view, it means that the event described in the report is neatly concluded by the end. One event does not lead to another. (Another event would require another chain of authorities which would attest to its authenticity.)[239]

Returning back to the *Nights*, the narrated report in *ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar* is the narration of one single event: due to the master's being financially broke, his beloved slave-girl is offered for sale but finally is allowed to stay with her master. This is how the story appears in most of the other works as well, even though the plot may vary. The recognition of *khabar* form is a little bit more difficult in the other two stories, *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* and *Tawaddud* which seemingly lose all that would connect them to this literary form. They are the more elaborate narrations of the same motif both on structural and textual levels.

They are, however, both handled in different ways on the structural level. It is the story itself which is more complex in the case of *The Ruined Man of Baghdad*, and the introductory part of the story is worked out in more details in *Tawaddud* while the main body of the story essentially retains the *khabar* form by relating one single event. This is not undermined even by the fact that *Tawaddud* is astonishingly long for having a *khabar* form. Its length is due to repetition not combination. Both of the stories start with Shahrazād starting a new story by establishing the *instance of narrating* with "Ḥukiya ayḍan". As stated above, this corresponds to the *isnād* part of the *khabar* form. There is no great difference in the *matn* part, either since both stories seem to consist of a single narrative without establishing a new instance of narrating within the *matn*. This is exactly where the difference lies, however. While the story of Tawaddud, despite its great length, is indeed a single narrative, *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* consists of more than one narrative.

[238] Rosenthal, 1968, 66.
[239] There exist combined reports with various events following one another but the idea behind them remains the same: they can be combined because they share the same *isnād*. In effect, they do relate one single event under one *isnād*.

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It is characteristic of the *Nights* that, although the structural composition of the *khabar* form remains recognizable in many cases, the structural constituent themselves exhibit considerable elaboration in contrast to the original form. There are, however, limits to the nature of elaborations as *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* excellently shows. While, as far as the *instance of narrating* in the context of the collection (both in the *Nights* and al-Ghuzūlī's work) and the following background information allows for the story to be regarded as a *khabar*, it loses its *khabar* form due to the structure of its main part. It is the quite embellished story of a young man who falls in love with a slave-girl then buys her and spends all of his inheritance on her. In their bleak situation, the girl suggests that the boy should sell her. He finally does so but both of them fall into despair upon parting. From then on, the plot follows the man as he tries to cope with his loss as he sets out for Bosra. The ship which would take him there, however, belongs to the man who bought his slave-girl; thus, they meet again. The plot seems to conclude with a happy ending with the lovers reunited when they are forced to part again. The story concludes with the lovers reunited again and living a prosperous life. This kind of narrative does not relate the report of a single event. It tells a story.

In contrast with that, *Tawaddud* does relate a single event. It has several episodes while her education is tested but all of these episodes have the same function, for the caliph to realize her worth and, through that, the worth of his master, and thus can be considered one single unit. In this respect, all the lengthy disputes between Tawaddud and the scholars of the court can be understood in the same way that the reciting of poems by the slave-girl and his master is understood in *ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar*. They both have the same outcome as well: both slave-girl and master are rewarded and granted a life together in prosperity. In contrast, in *The Ruined Man of Baghdad*, the events that take place between selling the girl and reuniting with her at the end cannot be taken as a unit. Actually, there are two different stories told: one is the boy getting broke and selling his slave-girl and the other is the lovers getting separated and finally reunited. Both of these parts have their resolutions and could have stood as *khabar* had they both have a separate instance of narrating. As it stands, they share the *instance of narrating* which makes them a recounted story indeed but also makes them lose that aspect of the *khabar* form which calls for the telling of one single event.

Let us give this observation some more thoughts and consider another story from the *Nights* which also displays the *khabar* form. *Ḥikāyat Amīr al-Muʾminīn al-Mutawakkil ʿAlā Allāh maʿa al-jāriya ismuhā Maḥbūba* (*The Khalif El Mutawekkil and His Favourite Mehboubeh*) (III.12.) has actual correspondence with *adab* which provides us with a new perspective on the importance of the *instance of narrating* in the *khabar* form. As evidenced by

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the available *adab* material, the story should be composed of several independent *akhbār*. However, that is not the case. None of the short pieces possesses the *instance of narrating*. The story itself is narrated as much as all the stories are narrated in the *Nights* but neither the story can claim the *khabar* form due to its various independent contents, nor the separate pieces can do so due to their lack of *instance of narrating*. The story, which should be considered the vehicle for various *akhbār* like in biographical or historical works, combines the originally independent pieces into a whole. Once again, it does not tell the independent reports of single events, it tells a story, in a different manner but with the same effect as *The Ruined Man of Baghdad*. In this respect, we can add to our understanding of the *khabar* form that, in the *Nights*, reports told in the *khabar* form appear in two contexts within which they constitute an independent unit: they are either independent reports of Shahrazād in which she is referencing other sources (Chapter 1.3.2: Fig. 1.), or they are embedded reports told within the framework of a story in which an instance of narration is represented (Chapter 1.3.2: Fig. 2.). When more *akhbār* material are brought together in one single unit, they do not retain their *khabar* form on the structural level but come to form a structurally more complex story.

In Arabic literature, there are examples of combined reports. It means that several reports are related under the same *isnād*. This merger becomes possible because the role and significance of the *isnād* makes it so. In these examples, the *isnād* still retains its authenticating role which means that none of the reports can stand without the collective *isnād*. As opposed to this, in the *Nights* and in other literature more popular in nature, the role of the *isnād*, or the authenticating nature of the *instance of narrating*, is significantly weaker. As a result of which, it cannot hold together the reports as separate entities. It merges them into one story with one *instance of narrating*. And as a consequence of this transformation from report to story, the narrative loses its *khabar* form.

As a conclusion, we can state that *khabar* form has such a wide-ranged utilization in the different fields of Arabic literature where it assumes various functions and expresses just as many themes that it cannot be understood simply in structural terms. Rather, it is indeed a literary form which is able to collect all these differing aspects of literary writing and provide them with a unified formal expression. However, how this formal expression appears beyond the structural level is another question. Narrative discourse is also subject to changing aspects of the *khabar* form. It will be the subject of the following chapter to elaborate on these changes.

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2.2. The *Khabar* as Narration

In the previous part, we considered the situation in which the structure, and with that, the content of the *matn* influences our recognition of the *khabar* form. Now, we turn to the narrative discourse of these short writings of the *Nights* and examine to what degree the narrative form of the *khabar* is manifested in their discourse and how they may differ from it.

2.2.1. *Mood* of Discourse in the *Khabar* Form

We saw that there were some definite correlations between *isnād* and *matn* which had an influence on the transformation of structure and our understanding of whether that structure can still be considered belonging to the *khabar* form. That is not the only kind of influence *isnād* has on the *matn*. It affects the *mood* of the narrative discourse as well, that is, it affects "the regulation of narrative information".[240]

In the context of narrative discourse, *mood* consists of *distance* and *perspective*. *Distance* is concerned with the *mode* of narrative discourse: how the narrator shares narrative information. At the same time, *perspective* is more concerned with narrative information shared through certain characters' knowledge and points of view. *Distance*, then, regulates how the narrator and information relate to each other. In this respect, we are talking about a purely mimetic discourse when the presence of information is at its maximum while that of the informer is at its minimum. Conversely, we find diegetic discourse in those cases in which the presence of the narrator is predominant. Simply speaking, we have mimetic discourse when dialogues are given back word by word and diegetic discourse when events – among them dialogues – are summarized.

However, even from this preliminary remark, it becomes clear that a strictly mimetic discourse is impossible. What do we call a strictly mimetic discourse? To answer this question, we have to refer back to Plato's theory of mimesis, according to which mimesis is one of two narrative modes. It means that the narrator pretends to be someone else and speaks through that person. As opposed to this, there is the pure narrative in which the narrator himself is the speaker. Later, in Aristotle's theory, these two modes (pure narrative and direct representation) are gathered under the concept of mimesis, essentially rendering the opposition between the two modes void. This – as Genette points out[241] – also leads us to the idea that mimesis presupposes the imitation of speech. This problem, which was already present in Plato's theory, became more prominent in Aristotelian thought, and much later, Anglo-American narrative

[240] Genette, 1980, 162.
[241] Genette, 1980, 162–164.

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theory picked up the idea. What happens, Genette poses the question, when one does not only speak of imitation of speech but also the imitation of events and actions? He concludes that one can only talk about mimesis in a literary work when it is the imitation of actually uttered words. In every other case, we can only talk about "degrees of diegesis" as there is a change in quality between what has to be imitated and how it is imitated. In other words, when actions and events are imitated, non-verbal events have to be transferred into verbal representation. This transfer is what Genette calls "narrative of events". Mimetic representation is, thus, only possible when speech is imitated, that is, repeated.

Mimesis is "an 'imitated' discourse – that is, discourse fictively *reported* as it supposedly was uttered by the character".[242] The diegetic mode, on the other hand, contains "a *'narratized'* discourse – that is, discourse treated like one event among others and taken on as such by the narrator himself".[243] Genette distinguishes three kinds of characters' speech in connection with narrative *distance*: narratized speech, transposed speech, and reported speech. In this schema, even in the most mimetic mode, the narrative is not considered fully mimetic.[244] *Khabar*, however, is inherently mimetic: it is the word-by-word report of an eyewitness repeated by a person who heard it from that eyewitness.[245] Let us consider the following example:

> (2317) Ḥaddathanā Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Nīsābūrī wa-ghayr wāḥid, qālū: Ḥaddathanā Abū Mushir ʿan Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Samāʿa ʿan al-Awzāʿī ʿan Qurrah ʿan al-Zuhrī ʿan Abū Salama ʿan Abī Hurayra, qāla: Qāla Rasūl Allāh (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama): Min ḥusn islām al-marʾ tarkuhu mā lā yuʿnīhi.[246]
>
> Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Nīsābūrī and others reported to us, saying: Abū Mushir reported to us on the authority of Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Samāʿa who knows it on the authority of al-Awzāʿī who heard it from Qurrah who knows it from al-Zuhrī who heard it from Abū Salama who knows it on the authority of Abū Hurayra who said: The Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said: "Among the excellence of one's islām is that he leaves what does not concern him."

It is a *ḥadīth* in which the *khabar* form appears in its most basic representation: the word-by-word quotation of the Prophet's sayings by an earwitness. Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī was present when

[242] Genette, 1980, 170.
[243] Genette, 1980, 170.
[244] Genette, 1980, 171–173.
[245] For this observation to be maintained, one has to go back to the genesis of the *khabar* form at the beginning of Islam and have to be familiar with the way material had been transmitted at the time. Although times were changing and the role of the chain of authorities slackened, the original circumstances of transmission remain discernible in the *khabar* form which makes it an essentially oral transmission which does not only presupposes the presence of the eyewitness at the events described but the personal contact between the subsequent transmitters. Hence, in its later forms, *khabar* may still be considered essentially mimetic. About the oral and written transmission in Islam, see: Schoeler, G.: *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press), 2011;
[246] al-Tirmidhī, Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā: *al-Jāmiʿ al-kabīr*, IV, ed. Hishām ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, Bayrūt (Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī), 1996, 148.

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the Prophet said the very words recorded in the *matn* of the *khabar*. It is mimetic discourse in its basic form as the *matn* does not consist of anything but a particular saying, the Prophet being the very first link of the *isnād*. This is not always the case, however, and there are more complex examples of narrative discourse even in the Prophetic tradition.

> (4102) Ḥaddathanā Abū ʿUbayda b. Abī al-Safar: Ḥaddathanā Shihāb b. ʿAbbād: Ḥaddathanā Khālid b. ʿAmr al-Qurashī ʿan Sufyān al-Thawrī ʿan Abī Ḥāzim ʿan Sahl b. Saʿd al-Sāʿidī, qāla: Atā al-Nabīy (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama) rajul fa-qāla: Yā Rasūl Allāh! Dullanī ʿalā ʿamal idhā anā ʿamaltuhu aḥabbanī Allāh wa-aḥabbanī al-nās. Fa-qāla Rasūl Allāh (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama): Azhad fī al-dunyā, yuḥibbaka Allāh. Wa-azhad fī-mā fī aydī al-nās, yuḥibbūka.[247]
>
> Abū ʿUbayda b. Abī al-Safar related to us: Shihāb b. ʿAbbād related to us: Khālid b. ʿAmr al-Qurashī related to us on the authority of Abī Ḥāzim who knows it on the authority of Sahl b. Saʿd al-Sāʿidī who said: A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: "Oh, Messenger of Allah, tell me of a deed which if I do, will make Allah and the people love me." The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Renounce the world and Allah will love you. Renounce what people possess and people will love you."

In accordance with Prophetic tradition, it is the saying of the Prophet, which is reported but, in this case, it is framed within a narrative of events: there is a man and the Prophet in dialogue with each other. Furthermore, this *ḥadīth* is not introduced with an *isnād* going back to the Prophet but the Prophet himself becomes a character in the narrative even though his words remain quoted word by word. This narrative may be even more elaborate:

> ʿAn ʿUmar (raḍiya Allāh ʿanhu) ayḍan qāla: Baynamā naḥnu julūs ʿinda Rasūl Allāh (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama) dhāt yawm idh ṭalaʿa ʿalaynā rajul shadīd bayāḍ al-thiyāb shadīd sawād al-shaʿr lā yurā ʿalayhi athar al-safar wa-lā yaʿrifuhu minnā aḥad, ḥattā jalasa ilā al-Nabīy (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama) fa-asnada rukbatayhi ilā rukbatayhi wa-waḍaʿa kaffayhi ʿalā fakhidhayhi wa-qāla: Yā Muḥammad, akhbirnī ʿan al-islām?! Fa-qāla Rasūl Allāh (ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama): Al-islām an tashhad an lā ilaha illā Allāh wa-anna Muḥammad rasūl Allāh wa-tuqīm al-ṣalāt wa-tuʾtiy al-zakāt wa-taṣūm Ramaḍān wa-taḥujj al-bayt in istaṭaʿta ilayhi sabīlan. Qāla: Ṣadaqta. Fa-ʿajabnā lahu yasʾaluhu wa-yuṣaddaquhu. Qāla: Fa-akhbirnī ʿan al-īmān?[248]
>
> It is also related on the authority of ʿUmar (may Allah be pleased with him), he said: One day, we were sitting in the company of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) when a man, whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black and on whom no signs of journeying were to be seen, and whom none of us knew, appeared in front of us. He sat down by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Then he rested his knees against his and placed the palms of his hands on his thighs, then he said: "Oh, Muḥammad, tell me about Islam." The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, to perform the prayers, to pay the *zakāt*, to fast in Ramaḍān, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so." He said: "You have spoken rightly." We were amazed at him asking him and saying that he had spoken rightly. He said: "Then tell me about *īmān*."

[247] Ibn Mājah, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yazīd: *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, III, ed. Khalīl Maʾmūn Shīḥan, Bayrūt (Dār al-Maʿrifa), 1998, 228–229.
[248] al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf: *Sharḥ Matn al-arbaʿīna al-Nawawī fī al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa al-nabawiyya*, Dimashq (Dār al-Fatḥ), 1984, 17–18.

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The conversation goes on like this for some time. Just like in the first case, in these two examples, it is the Prophet's words that are directly quoted. In these reports, however, this saying is included within a narrative of events: the Prophet is conversing with another man. In fact, this kind of elaboration will become typical of the *khabar* form in historical writing and learned literature in general. As Franz Rosenthal points out, among the three characteristics of *khabar*, the "action is often presented in the form of a dialogue between the principal participants of an event".[249] In any case, what is of importance here is that it may seem that in the above examples, it is the diegetic mode that is predominant, with only the conversation being quoted word by word, which includes the saying of the Prophet as well. However, this is not the case. It is true that primary purpose of *ḥadīth* is to preserve the teachings of the Prophet through his acts and sayings but the report itself gains its authenticity through its chain of transmitters. In other words, the teachings of the Prophet are always reported through the direct quotation of an eyewitness.[250] In this case, ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb is quoted by the authority following him. This way, even a highly diegetic narrative becomes essentially mimetic.

Through the example of *ḥadīth* literature, it can be stated that the *khabar* form displays a highly mimetic discourse. On the one hand, this is due to its structure since the *isnād* requires an eyewitness at the end of the chain of authorities, making it possible to quote speech directly. The reason why the mimetic mode is necessary is to prove veracity. Through the mimetic mode, the information contained within the report becomes authoritative since the direct transmission – i.e., transmission from person to person – safeguards the veracity of the *matn*.[251] On the other hand, the presence of the chain of authorities provides for a more complex narrative of the eyewitness to be rendered mimetic through the process of quotation. As I see it, the eyewitness is also quoted, making his narrative of events entirely mimetic.

Mimetic Mode and the Transformation of the Khabar *Form*

Mimetic mode, then, is interconnected with the structure of *khabar* and its relationship with reality. The function of its relationship with reality, however, varies in the different kinds of literature of medieval Arabic culture. This variation means that while authenticity in *ḥadīth* literature has theological, juridical, and ideological consequences, elsewhere, this relationship shows more flexibility. Let us now discuss how this flexibility influences the mode of the narrative.

[249] Rosenthal, 1968, 67.
[250] About the role of *isnād* and the significance of the person of the transmitter in *hadīth*, see: Makdisi, G.: "Ṭabaqāt"-Biography: Law and Orthodoxy in Classical Islam, *Islamic Studies*, 32, 1993, 375.
[251] On the relationship of discourse and veracity, see: Leder, 1992, 307–309.

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We return here to the motif of the "slave-girl lost and regained" which we have already touched upon in connection with structure. Presently, we focus on those texts which can be found outside of the *Nights* in the various fields of *adab*, that is, historiography and *adab* literature. We also reach a little wider and use sources older than the Mamlūk period in order to show an earlier state of the employment of *isnād*. The plot of these stories varies (versions are indicated by numbers in the table below) but it is of no main concern at the moment. It is their underlying similarity which serves to further highlight the differences in the relationship between *isnād* and *matn* in these cases.

1st story	
Historiography	
Akhbaranā Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad: akhbaranā Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, qāla: ḥaddathanī ʿUbayd Allāh b. Abī al-Fatḥ, qāla: **ḥaddathanā Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraqṭanī, qāla:** *Kāna Abū Ḥāmid al-Marwurūdhī qalīl al-dukhūl ʾalā Abī Ḥāmid…*[252]	Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad said: Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī related: ʿUbayd Allāh b. Abī al-Fatḥ told me: **Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraqṭanī said**: *Abū Ḥāmid al-Marwurūdhī used to be present in front of Ibn Abī Ḥāmid…*
***Adab* literary work**	
Akhbaranā Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad, qāla: akhbaranā Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, qāla: ḥaddathanī ʿUbayd Allāh b. Abī al-Fatḥ, qāla: **ḥaddathanā Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraqṭanī, qāla:** *Kāna Abū Ḥāmid al-Marwurūdhī qalīl al-dukhūl ʾalā Abī Ḥāmid…*[253]	Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad said: Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī related: ʿUbayd Allāh b. Abī al-Fatḥ told me: **Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraqṭanī said**: *Abū Ḥāmid al-Marwurūdhī used to be present in front of Ibn Abī Ḥāmid…*
2nd story	
***Adab* literary work**	
Akhbaranā ʿAlī b. Abī ʿAlī al-Maʿdal: **ḥaddathanī abī, qāla:** *Rawā Abū Rawaq al-Harrānī ʾan al-Rayyāshī anna baʿḍ ahl al-Baṣra…*[254]	ʿAlī b. Abī ʿAlī al-Maʿdal said: **My father related to me the following**: *Abū Rawaq al-Harrānī said on the authority of al-Rayyāshī that there was a man of Basra…*
Rawā Abū Rawaq al-Hazzānī ʿan al-Rayyāshī anna baʿd ahl al-niʿam bi-l-Basra…[255]	**Abū Rawaq al-Hazzānī said** on the authority of al-Rayyāshī that one of the wealthy men of Basra…

[252] Ibn al-Jawzī, Abū al-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad: *al-Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-mulūk al-umam*, eds. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā and Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, Bayrūt (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya), 1992/1412, XIII, 319. (In the footnote, the editor suggests the reading *kathīr al-dukhūl* instead of *qalīl al-dukhūl* based on the manuscript found in the Köprülü Library, Istanbul. I use this version in this translation just like in the translation of al-Tanūkhī's passage in *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*.)

[253] al-Tanūkhī, Abū ʿAlī al-Muḥassin b. ʿAlī: *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara wa-akhbār al-mudhākara*, ed. ʿAbbūd al-Thaljī, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1995, VII, 270.

[254] al-Sarrāj, Abū Muḥammad Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn: *Maṣāriʾ al-ʾushshāq*, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 2007, II, 184.

[255] al-Tanūkhī, Abū ʿAlī al-Muḥassin b. ʿAlī: *Faraj baʿd al-shidda*, ed. ʿAbbūd al-Thaljī, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1978, IV, 328.

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3rd story	
***Adab* literary work**	
Akhbaranā al-Qāḍī ʿAlī b. al-Muḥassin: ḥaddathanī abī: ḥaddathanā ʿUbayd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Ṣarawī: ḥaddathanī abī: **ḥaddathanī ṣadīq lī thiqa:** *Innahu kāna bi-Baghdād rajul…*[256]	Al-Qāḍī ʿAlī b. al-Muḥassin said: My father related: ʿUbayd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Ṣarawī said: My father related the following: **A trusted friend of mine said**: *There lived a man in Baghdad…*
Ḥaddathanī ʿUbayd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣarawī, qāla: **ḥaddathanī abī, qāla:** K*āna bi-Baghdād rajul…*[257]	ʿUbayd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣarawī said: **My father related the following**: *There lived a man in Baghdad…*
Ḥukiya annahu kāna bi-Baghdād rajul…[258]	**It is related** that there lived a man in Baghdad…

Through the example of the first variation of the story, we can observe that – as far as discourse is concerned – the characteristics of the *khabar* form are the same as in the case of *ḥadīth* literature, both in historical writing and *adab* literary works. The report goes back to a reliable source (Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraqṭanī), who is then quoted by the following person in the chain of authorities. The second example also attests to the fact that in *adab* literary works, there is a tendency that *khabar* form retains its original structural composition and, through that, its discursive characteristics. However, it cannot be denied that the *isnād* is employed more flexibly than in *ḥadīth* literature and even in historical writing. Despite al-Sarrāj and al-Tanūkhī's being very similar, the difference between them is tangible. Al-Tanūkhī omits all of the *isnād*, only indicating the last person of the chain (al-Rayyāshī), who, however, should have been quoted in a normal case. It does not happen, though, and as a consequence, the *matn* becomes highly diegetic as opposed to that of al-Sarrāj, who retains other levels of the *isnād*.

The third example highlights a process that may occur in *adab* literary works: the *isnād* is transformed for one reason or another.[259] In the present case, this transformation is due to the fact that the same report can be found in two different works of the same compiler. While in *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, al-Tanūkhī claims to collect such reports that had not been recorded so far,[260] in *Faraj baʿad al-shidda* he can use his previous works as a reference point and does not consider it necessary to give the full *isnād*. This does not influence the narrative mode in the report as the *isnād* is not missing, nor is it completely transformed – it is only abridged. This kind of abridgment is a common phenomenon that relies on the reader's background knowledge

[256] al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, V, 274.
[257] al-Tanūkhī, *Faraj baʿd al-shidda*, IV, 316.
[258] al-Ghuzūlī, ʿAlā al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bahā'ī al-Dimashqī: *Maṭāliʿ al-budūr fī manāzil al-surūr*, al-Qāhira (Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya), 2006/1426, I, 209.
[259] Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila defines the lack of *isnād* as a major difference between literary and religious material. (Hämeen-Anttila, J.: Multilayered Authorship in Arabic Anecdotal Literature, in: *Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts*, eds. L. Behzadi and J. Hämeen-Anttila, Bamberg (University of Bamberg Press), 1995, 172, f13.)
[260] al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, 1995, I, 1–14.

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to know the *isnād* and accept its implied presence in front of the *matn*.[261] Even among *ḥadīth* scholars of later times, it is likely for the *isnād* to be only partially given since, due to the solidification of the Islamic schools of law, the association of one author or another with these schools of law provided authorization enough for their person, rendering the listing of the chain of authorities redundant.[262] What remains in the cases of these reduced *isnād*s is the eyewitness and somebody to quote him, thus preserving the mimetic mode of the report. However, the *isnād* may at times be changed entirely. This is what happens in al-Ghuzūlī's report, where the *isnād* is exchanged for the passive "*ḥukiya*" (it is related), which changes the mode completely, even though it retains the structural role of the *isnād*. Thus, the discourse becomes highly diegetic.

It can be concluded that the relationship between *isnād* and *matn* has a profound effect on the mood of the narrative discourse, that is, it affects "the regulation of narrative information".[263] It is the *isnād* that determines the mode of the narrative in *khabar* form. It might well be that the different kinds of literary works employ the *isnād* in different ways but generally, it can be stated that the presence of the *isnād* supports the mimetic mode of the narrative in the *matn,* while its absence results in a highly diegetic mode of representation.

2.2.2. *Mode* and *Voice* in the Discourse Analysis of *The Thousand and One Nights*

Mimetic Mode vs. Diegetic Mode

We have to note that despite the mimetic mode being predominant in the *khabar* form, in one way or another, the diegetic discourse is also present, sometimes even more so in *adab* literature, where the handling of the *isnād* is freed from the strict rule of *ḥadīth* literature. This statement stands true for popular literature to an even higher degree since it represents a markedly different attitude to the material it shares with *adab* literature. In the following, I will show that this attitude allows for another kind of approach to these texts, which also allows for a different kind of reading as well.

It is pertinent to continue discussing the relationship between *isnād* and *matn* since, by widening the scope of the source material under discussion, new observations can be made which may further specify the answers to the already raised questions. Some of these questions consider the *isnād* and how it appears in the stories of the *Nights*. Furthermore, we have to bring

[261] About the shortening of *isnād*, see: Fahndrich, 1973, 440–441.
[262] Makdisi, 1993, 388. For a more general discussion of the role of transmission and authentication in the various fields of pre-modern Arabic literature, see: Hoyland, R. G.: History, Fiction and Authorship in the First Centuries of Islam, in: *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*, ed. J. Bray, London – New York (Routledge), 2006, 19–25.
[263] Genette, 1980, 162.

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the voice of the narrative into the discussion to understand more closely how this relationship influences the narrative mode of the *matn*. In Genette's theory, *voice* describes the relationship between the narrator and the narration; more precisely, it covers questions concerning the stance the narrator takes on the narrated material, including "the temporal relations between story and narrating" and the "relationship of subordination" that exists between two narratives located at different narrative levels.[264]

In the course of the present section, several shorter pieces will be discussed. Their specific narrative characteristics can aid us in describing the various ways in which the *khabar* form may appear in the collection. These stories are the following:

1. *Ḥikāyat Abī Ḥassān al-Ziyādī ma'a al-rajul al-khurāsānī* (*Abou Hassan Ez Ziyadi and the Man from Khorassan*), henceforth: *Abū Ḥassān al-Ziyādī* (I.2.)
2. *Ḥikāyat al-'Utbī fī amr al-'ishq ma'a al-shaykh al-badawī* (*The Three Unfortunate Lovers*) (II.8.)
3. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul wa-l-jāriya ma'a 'Abd Allāh b. Ma'mar* (*Abdallah Ben Maamer with the Man of Bassora and His Slave-Girl*), henceforth: *'Abd Allāh b. Ma'mar* (III.14.)
4. *Ḥikāyat Abī Aswad ma'a jāriya ḥawlā'* (*Aboul Aswed and His Squinting Slave-Girl*), henceforth: *Abū Aswad* (III.19.)
5. *Ḥikāyat Qāsim b. 'Adī fī amr al-'ishq* (*The Lovers of the Benou Tai*), henceforth: *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy* (I.9.)
6. *Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī ma'a al-tājir* (*Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi and the Merchant's Sister*), henceforth: *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister* (II.7.)
7. *Ḥikāyat al-Aṣma'ī 'an thalāth banāt quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd* (*El Asmaï and the Three Girls of Bassora*), henceforth: *al-Aṣma'ī and the Three Girls* (II.9.)
8. *Ḥikāyat Ma'an b. Zā'ida* (*Maan Ben Zaïdeh and the Three Girls*), henceforth: *Ma'an b. Zā'ida and the Three Girls* (III.2.)
9. *Ḥikāyat Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Mutawakkil 'Alā Allāh ma'a al-jāriya ismuhā Maḥbūba* (*The Khalif El Mutawekkil and His Favourite Mehboubeh*), henceforth: *Mutawakkil and Mahbūba* (III.12.)
10. *Ḥikāyat Muḥammad al-Baṣrī quddāma al-Khalīfa al-Ma'mūn - Qiṣṣat al-jawārī al-sitta wa-munāẓaratuhunna ma'a ba'aḍihinna* (*The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls*) (II.5.)
11. *Ḥikāyat karam Khālid b. Yaḥyā ma'a Manṣūr* (*The Generous Dealing of Yehya Ben Khalid the Barmecide with Mensour*), henceforth: *The Generous Dealing of Khālid b. Yaḥyā* (III.8.)
12. *Ḥikāyat Abī al-'Aynā' ma'a al-mar'atayn* (*The Woman Who Had a Boy and the Other Who Had a Man to Lover*) (I.14.)
13. *Ḥikāyat Abī Suwayd ma'a al-'ajūz* (*Abou Suweid and the Handsome Old Woman*), henceforth: *Abū Suwayd and the Handsome Old Woman* (I.13.)

[264] Bal, M. – Lewin J. E.: The Narrating and the Focalizing: A Theory of the Agents in Narrative, *Style*, 17, 2, 1983, 236.

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14. *Ḥikāyat Saʿīd b. Sālim al-Bāhilī maʿa al-Faḍl wa-Jaʿfar waladā Yaḥyā b. Khālid* (*The Sons of Yehya Ben Khalid and Saïd Ben Salim El Bahili*), henceforth: *The Sons of Yaḥyā b. Khālid* (I.3.)

As far as the *isnād* is concerned, in the *Nights*, we cannot talk about a chain of authorities in the traditional sense. Except for a handful of cases, there are no sources indicated and even there, the list is cut short with only one single name mentioned,[265] just like in the following passages: "Quoth Abú Hassán al-Ziyádi", or "Quoth Al-'Utbí". As far as I can tell, there is only one example in the *Nights* which closely resembles the example of the *isnād* of a *ḥadīth* if not in length but in the relationship between *matn* and *isnād* and between the person who is quoting and who is quoted. *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy* starts as follows: "Inna al-Qāsim b. ʿAdī ḥakā ʿan rajul min Banī Tamīm annahu qāla: Kharajtu…" ("Quoth a man of the Benou Temim (cited by Casim ben Adi), I went out…").[266] In this example it is the unnamed man of the Banū Tamīm whose story is reported through a direct quotation by Qāsim. These cases are the example of mimetic discourse in the *khabar* form in the *Nights* as Shahrazād gets an authority to quote.

What is more characteristic of the *Nights*, however, is that the structural role of the *isnād* is taken over by a general statement of the narrator, Shahrazād, like "I heard", "it is told". The same transformation happens in the other two stories (nos. 3 and 4). In fact, this is the general tendency of the collection whether we examine the *khabar* form or other longer narratives. As mentioned above, although these general statements can assume the structural role of the *isnād*, they cannot exert the same influence on the narrative discourse as the chain of authorities does. Like earlier in al-Ghuzūlī's case, these narratives are related in a highly diegetic mode told by Shahrazād, who is by no means connected to the events in the stories and does not rely on an authoritative figure as a source for these stories, either.

Stories of the *Nights* are narrated by Shahrazād, which would in itself lead to the conclusion that these stories are highly diegetic. To an extent, this is true. However, it has already been mentioned that pre-modern Arabic literature tends toward the mimetic mode, and this tendency can be observed in the *Nights* as well. Besides Shahrazād's characters being likely to narrate their own stories in a highly diegetic mode, too, the message of the story is mostly expressed through a direct quotation. Despite becoming more diegetic than mimetic, popular literature recognizes the importance of words as they are uttered. This recognition can be seen in the way texts from popular literature still employ direct quotations when the message of the story is concerned.

[265] See: Chapter 1.3.2, Fig. 1.
[266] *Alf Layla*, II, 440–441. In translation, see: Payne, IV, 273.

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Nevertheless, the *matn* part of the *khabar* form seems to lose its strong connection to the *isnād*, which results in the formerly predominant mimetic mode giving space to a diegetic form of expression. With *isnād* losing its significance, it also becomes more challenging to determine who the actual narrator of a given story is. This is the point where the voice of the narrative has to be brought into the discussion. Only in relation to the person of the narrator and his stance to the narrated material can we fully understand how the narrative mode works in these stories.

The Narrative Voice

Narrative *voice* refers to the person of the narrator, or more precisely, to the way the narrator chooses to narrate his story. It may be in the first-person or the third-person. The person of the narrator and the stance they adopt towards the narrative have a significant impact on the mood of the narrative as well. Genette generally refuses the notion of the third-person and first-person narrative on the grounds that first-person narration can refer to two very different things depending on whether the author is telling his own story or he has a character to tell a story in the first person singular.[267] Nevertheless, I retain the usage of these two terms in describing the narrators in as much as they describe the presence of them in the narrating instance.

Therefore, the examination that follows is dependent on the *isnād* and the person of the narrator, whose relation to the events related determines the mode of the narrative. In his discussion of scene and summary – in other words, the mimetic and diegetic representation – in the *khabar*, Daniel Beaumont provides three reports to show how the *isnād* influences the narrative mode.[268] *Isnād* is informative about the person of the narrator in that it tells whether the person who is relating the narrative was an eyewitness of the events or not. As such, it has a great deal of influence on whether a story is narrated in the first-person singular or the third-person singular since it is only the eyewitness report that employs the first-person singular narrator, while all other cases are left with the third-person singular[269] However, the narrative structure of the *Nights* is extremely complex, with frame-stories containing multiple embedded ones. Story-telling, after all, is the central topic of the main frame. It means that every story is linked to an instance of narrating. How do we determine, then, who is narrating a story?

[267] Genette, 1980, 243–245.
[268] Beaumont, 1996, 9–13.
[269] Beaumont claims that, in Medieval Arabic literature, there is no such thing as a truly third person narration. Everything is related through the narration of another person. (Beaumont, 1996, 13.) I agree with that but I do not think that it has any relevance on the textual level. This statement will gain more significance when we are dealing with the question of literary communication in connection with the *khabar* form.

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For instance, in *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy*, it is Shahrazād who is recounting the story, but it is not her words which are recounted. "Inna al-Qāsim b. ʿAdī ḥakā ʿan rajul min Banī Tamīm annahu qāla: Kharajtu…" ("Quoth a man of the Benou Temim (cited by Casim ben Adi)"),[270] Shahrazād starts her report by providing an *isnād* at the end of which there is an eyewitness whose words are repeated in the first-person singular. Similarly, in *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister*, we read the following: "Inna Amīr al-Muʾminīn al-Maʾmūn qāla li- Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī: Ḥaddithnā bi-aʿjab mā raʾayta. Qāla: Samʿan wa-ṭāʿatan, yā Amīr al-Muʾminīn. Aʿlam annī kharajtu yawman…" ("The Khalif El Mamoun once said to [his uncle] Ibrahim ben el Mehdi, 'Tell us the most remarkable thing that thou hast ever seen.' 'I hear and obey, O Commander of the Faithful,' answered he. 'Know that I went out one day…'").[271] From the structural analysis earlier, it is evident that the two stories are introduced by describing the instance of narrating. In both cases, Shahrazād is the narrator but the narrative itself is related in the words of one of the characters of Shahrazād's story. There is no story related in the first-person singular by Shahrazād. There are, however, reports related in the first-person singular within Shahrazād's stories. What differentiates them is the instance of narrating. The narrating instance of Shahrazād is outside of her story, while her character's narrating instance is within. Effectively, her narrative performed in a specific instance of narration is narrating an instance of narrating. First-person singular narratives, thus, appear in the *Nights* in this context only.

Shahrazād, then, only relates stories of which she has knowledge through unspecified channels. Accordingly, they are told in the third-person singular. Occasionally, however, she relates the story of somebody else who is reporting something that happened to them or to which they bore witness. These stories are narrated in the first-person singular. There is an interesting relation between the narrative of the story and whether it was heard or seen as a personal experience or only recalled from an undefined source. Let us consider two stories: *al-Aṣmaʿī and the Three Girls* and *Maʿan b. Zāʾida and the Three Girls*. We see here how the persons of the narrator change according to the instance of narrating. al-Asmaʿī's story is reported in the *khabar* form in which he himself narrates something he had witnessed. "La-qad samiʿtu kathīran wa-lam yuʿjibnī siwā thalātha abyāt anshadahunna thalātha banāt" ("I have heard great store of women's verses; but none pleased me save three lines I once heard from three girls."),[272] he starts the report and, accordingly, proceeds to relate the event in that style as well. (Note that

[270] *Alf Layla*, II, 440–441. In translation, see: Payne, IV, 273.
[271] *Alf Layla*, II, 298. In translation, see: Payne, IV, 122.
[272] *Alf Layla*, III, 385. In translation, see: Payne, VI, 202.

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by "samiʿtu" he refers here to the poems and not the event he himself experienced.) The second story starts with "Mā yurwā ʿan Maʿan b. Zāʾida annahu kāna yawman min al-ayyām fī al-ṣayid wa-qanṣ […]" ("It is told of Maan ben Zaïdeh that, being out one day a-hunting…").[273] Through the passive "Mā yurwā ʿan", it becomes possible for Shahrazād to narrate the event through her own words without quoting an eyewitness, and it is narrated in the third-person singular accordingly.

And there is yet another interesting example of the transformation of the person of the narrator. We have already discussed how different little pieces of narratives can be recognized in *Mutawakkil and Mahbūba* and why they have lost their *khabar* form in the context of the *Nights*. These little narratives, however, do live in the *khabar* form in the literature of *adab*. In those instances, these narratives are introduced by a reference to the source they have been taken from and in several cases, these narratives are eyewitness reports. "Akhbaranā Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, qāla: Ḥaddathanī Jaʿfar b. Qidma: Ḥaddathanī Ibn Khurdādhabī, qāla: Ḥaddathanī ʿAlī b. al-Jahm, qāla: Kuntu yawman…" ("Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī related to us, saying: Jaʿfar b. Qidma told me: Ibn Khurdādhabī told me, saying: ʿAlī b. al-Jahm told me, saying: One day, I was…"),[274] starts one of the reports in Ibn al-Sāʿī's entry about Maḥbūba, al-Mutawakkil's slave-girl. And accordingly, it is narrated in the first-person singular. What happens in the *Nights* is that, while independent reports lose their *khabar* form and are formed into one single narrative, the presence of the oft-present eyewitness of the *adab* works is also lost. And as a consequence of that, the person of the narrator shifts into the third-person singular.

There are also examples of confused narrating instances, as is the case in Muḥammad's report about the six slave-girls, narrated in the third-person singular in *The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls*. Although Muḥammad's story is a report told on the request of the Caliph who wishes to hear something Muḥammad himself had heard, it is related in the third-person singular like Shahrazād's narratives in which she stays outside the events of her story. However, in the end Muḥammad declares: "Fa mā raʾaytu yā Amīr al-Muʾminīn fī makān wa-lā zamān aḥsana min hāʾulāʾi al-jawārī al-ḥisān" ("And never, O Commander of the Faithful, in any place or time have I seen fairer than these six fair damsels."),[275] which implies his presence in the narrative events. There is some confusion in *The Ruined Man of Baghdad*, which is originally narrated by Shahrazād and, as such, it starts off with the third-person narrator. However, during the telling of the story and without any discernible reason as to why, the

[273] *Alf Layla*, II, 127. In translation, see: Payne, III, 317.
[274] Ibn al-Sāʿī: *Nisāʾ al-khulafāʾ*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād, al-Qāhira (Dār al-Maʿārif), 1993, 92.
[275] *Alf Layla*, II, 281. In translation, see: Payne, IV, 105.

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narrative switches into the first-person singular perspective of the main character. From that point on, it is narrated as the personal report of the young man.

There are certain consequences to this switch in the person of the narrator within the narrative to which *The Generous Dealing of Khālid b. Yaḥyā* is an excellent example. In the narrative, the point of view does not change once but several times. The story starts with the account of Ṣāliḥ, a guard of Hārūn al-Rashīd, being tasked with the job of collecting a debt from Manṣūr. It is related in the third-person singular narrative of Shahrazād and, although Manṣūr's plight can be felt through this narration, it becomes truly poignant when the narrative switches into the first-person account of Ṣāliḥ: "Fa-maḍaytu maʿahu ilā baytihi fa-jaʿala yawduʿu ahlihi irtafaʿa al-ḍajīj fī manzilihi wa-ʿalā al-bukāʾ wa-l-ṣiyāḥ wa-l-istighātha bi-Allāh taʿālā" ("So he carried him to his house, where he fell to bidding his family farewell, and the house was filled with a clamour of weeping and lamentation and calling on God for help."),[276] relates the guard how he witnessed the happenings by which he is finally moved to help the man. From this point on, it would make no difference whether the narrative is from his point of view or from that of Shahrazād as the narrator had it not been for an important detail: neither Ṣāliḥ nor Manṣūr are initiated into the dealings of Yaḥyā as he tries to help Manṣūr and the expression of this requires the person of the narrator to switch again. "Wa-Ṣāliḥ wa-Manṣūr lā yaʿlamāni bi-hādhā al-amr" ("But the latter and Salih knew not of this"),[277] goes the story and the narrative only returns to the first-person narrative of Ṣāliḥ when the plot requires it. The justifiable indignation and anger that Ṣāliḥ feels at the shameless ungratefulness of Manṣūr is best expressed through his point of view. There is no apparent reason for the final switch in the narrative. What is more, it would have remained more powerful, had it preserved the first-person accounts. But be it as it may, the story is concluded by Shahrazād herself just as it was started.

All in all, these shifts between points of view remain irregularities most probably due to faulty transmission or mistakes during copying. The general characteristic of *khabar* narrative pointed out by Beaumont is still a decisive feature of the *akhbār* material of the *Nights*: only eyewitness reports get to present their story in the first-person singular.

[276] *Alf Layla*, II, 205. In Payne's translation the first-person account is dropped and the previous third-person account is retained: Payne, IV, 28.
[277] *Alf Layla*, II, 205. In translation, see: Payne, IV, 28.

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Narrative Levels: The Relationship between Mode and Voice

As a result of the complex framing structure of the *Nights*, which relies on presenting embedded stories within the frame-stories, the narrator of the *akhbār* material is constantly changing: it is either Shahrazād herself or one of her characters, who, in turn, either relate a story as a narrator or may pass on the role to their characters who relate a story. This constant movement makes the narrative structure of the collection a multi-layered one, employing narrators on at least three different levels. This observation has an essential role in discourse analysis since it is crucial to establish whom we consider the narrator of the story. A three-layered *khabar* like *The Three Unfortunate Lovers* provides an especially complex case: while the narrative of the old man is a highly diegetic one as it is an account of a curious event he had witnessed, observing that same narrative from the level of al-ʿUtbī or even that of Shahrazād, it becomes considerably more mimetic on account of it turning into a *khabar* par excellence, the report of an eyewitness account.

This statement seemingly stands at odds with that of Beaumont, who, in his essay, has defined the close relationship between the *isnād* and how the narrative is presented, that is, whether it is mimetic or diegetic. According to his observation, the *isnād* needs an eyewitness at the end of the chain for the narrative to be mimetic (described in a scene through dialogue), or the narrator himself has to be placed at the end of it. Otherwise, the narrative description tends to be more diegetic, i.e., summarized by narrative.[278] Upon closer inspection, however, these two claims are not in opposition. The reason for the confusion is that Beaumont only considers one possibility: the narrator is the person who is relating an event of which he is not an active part; he is only an observer repeating the words of one of his characters, whether it is only a particular saying or a full-fledged narration. But what happens when there can be more than one person recognized as the narrator in the same story? This often occurs as Shahrazād is all too ready to allow her characters to tell their own stories. This distribution of the role of the narrator requires us to regard the stories in the *Nights* not necessarily as single narratives but to examine the different levels of narrative within the *khabar* form.

From the stories that are presently discussed, let us now concentrate on the ones where Shahrazād gives the role of the narrator to one of her characters: *Abū Ḥassān al-Ziyādī* and *The Three Unfortunate Lovers*. As opposed to the other two stories in which Shahrazād is the narrator and, as such, the diegetic mode is predominant, in these cases, the relationship between the mode of the narrative and the person of the narrator is much more complex since the person

[278] Beaumont, 1996, 7–13.

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of the narrator does not remain the same during the narration. We have to proceed with due consideration for the always-changing person of the narrator when we are to determine the mode of the narrative. The first story begins as follows: "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Abā Ḥasān al-Ziyādī qāla: *Ḍāqa ʿalayī al-ḥāl fī baʿaḍ al-ayyām ḍayyiqan shadīdan ḥattā annahu qad alaḥḥa ʿalayī al-baqqāl wa-l-khabbāz wa-sā'ir al-muʿāmilīn. Fa-ishtadda ʿalayī al-karb wa-lam ajid lī ḥīlat.*" ("Quoth Abou Hassan ez Ziyadi, *'I was once in very needy case, and the baker and grocer and other purveyors importuned me, so that I was in sore straits and knew of no resource nor what to do.*").[279] The second one goes as follows:

> Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna al-ʿUtbī qāla: *Jalastu yawman wa-ʿindī jamāʿa min ahl al-adab. Fa-tadhākarnā akhbār al-nās wa-nazaʿa binā al-ḥadīth ilā akhbār al-muḥibbīn, fa-jaʿala kull minnā yaqūl shay'. Wa-fī al-jamāʿa shaykh sākit wa-lam yabqa ʿinda aḥad minhum shay' illā akhbara bihi. Fa-qāla dhālika al-shaykh: Hal aḥaddithukum ḥadīthan lam tasmiʿū mithlahu qaṭṭu? Qulnā: Naʿam! Qāla:* ***Aʿlamū annahu kānat lī ibna wa-kānat tahwā shāban wa-naḥnu lā naʿalimu bihā.***
>
> (Quoth El Utbi), I was sitting one day with a company of men of culture, telling stories of the folk, when the talk turned upon anecdotes of lovers and each of us said his say thereon. Now there was in our company an old man, who remained silent, till we had all spoken and had no more to say, when he said, 'Shall I tell you a thing, the like of which you never heard?' 'Yes,' answered we; and he said, 'Know, then, that I had a daughter, who loved a youth, but we knew it not.'[280]

In the first example, two narrative levels can be distinguished, while there are three such levels in the second one. The persons of the narrator can be established in the following way: on the first level, there is Shahrazād, who is, by default, the narrator of the whole collection; on the second, there are Abū Ḥasan and al-ʿUtbī, who are both relating a report of the events at which they were present, and on the third level (in the second example), it is the old man who is doing the actual narrating. If we give it some more thought, it will become apparent that this is precisely how the simplest *ḥadīth* is structured: with a transmitter at the beginning of the *isnād* and an eyewitness at the end of it while there is a person in the *matn* whom the eyewitness directly quotes. In this respect, these two examples share more in common with the original form of the *khabar* and its narrative mode than the other two, where there is only Shahrazād's narrative to speak of.

The reason behind this is that purely third-person narration is non-existent in the original *khabar* form – or at least, it does not exist in itself. Where it does occur, it is within a first-person narration, signaling the diegetic mode of the first-person narrator, whose main message, nonetheless, is expressed in a mimetic fashion by directly quoting the person who is in the focus of his report. Even though the reporter of an event is never the main character of the story, he

[279] *Alf Layla*, II, 305. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 129.
[280] *Alf Layla*, II, 439. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 272.

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is always there as an ever-present "I". In contrast, Shahrazād's stories are not so directly linked to a figure of authority, which is also attested by the lack of *isnād*s. The lack of a figure of authority results in the weakening of the mimetic mode in the narrative as – instead of quotation – it is description that becomes predominant in the representation of words and events. Even though words are still directly quoted, the circumstances also gain significance since they still carry the main message.

These last two examples attest to the fact that *khabar* form possesses a rather complex narrative structure, especially in the case of the short reports in the *Nights*. In light of this observation, it becomes evident that determining the person of the narrator is a crucial factor for the narrative analysis. Keeping our focus on *The Three Unfortunate Lovers*, recognizing the three narrative levels allows for certain observations as far as the narrative mode is concerned. The story that the old man relates in his own words is predominantly diegetic, while the same story told by al-ʿUtbī with the old man indicated as the source is highly mimetic in that it is the old man who is quoted by al-ʿUtbī. At the same time, al-ʿUtbī's story is also mimetic in the retelling of Shahrazād as she had indicated him as the source of the story and directly quotes his words. Thus, the story of the old man assumes the role of the *matn* of the *khabar* form as it is related as a "witness account" by al-ʿUtbī, who is, in turn, quoted by Shahrazād, who, in this case, can provide a kind of *isnād* for her story.

This observation provides further significance to our claim, according to which it is the relationship between the *isnād* and the *matn* that is responsible for the narrative mode in the *matn*. The examples at the beginning of this study, taken from *ḥadīth* literature, served to showcase that in any report which is understood as an eyewitness account, this relationship has a profound influence on the narrative mode of the *matn*: it is highly mimetic since the eyewitness is quoted by the following authority in the *isnād*. Regarding the examples taken from the *Nights*, however, we pointed out that the *matn* itself may contain a narrative that stands in its own right, with a narrator of its own (the story of the old man). We also suggested that this narrative is highly diegetic. By recognizing the eyewitness as the narrator of his own story, the highly mimetic narrative of the words of an authority becomes a highly diegetic narrative of events of the eyewitness. (In this regard, Beaumont's observation regarding the relationship between the eyewitness and the mimetic discourse is not entirely correct; it needs adjusting according to the literary context of any given narrative.)

This phenomenon exists in *ḥadīth* literature as well since the quoted narrative might stand independent of the whole of the *isnād*. However, this interpretation of the narrative independent of the *isnād* is hindered by generic reasons. Due to its role in theology, jurisprudence, and other

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auxiliary sciences, there is a sharp line between *isnād* and *matn* in *ḥadīth* literature: the *matn* is a report related by a reliable authority and is passed on by other reliable authorities in the same manner and form. Thus, it is a highly mimetic discourse. In this respect, it is only of secondary importance what the *matn* is about. If the chain of authority is respectable, it is worth preserving and teaching. As opposed to this, there is a definite shift toward the content of the *matn* in *adab* literature and even more so in popular literature. The strict divide between *isnād* and *matn* ceases to exist, and it becomes possible for the person in the *matn* to be regarded as the narrator of their own story. This is a significant change in the *khabar* form in popular literature.

Focalization

We have already discussed the *distance* in narrative discourse, that is, the mode of narrative which is primarily concerned with the narrative information as it is expressed through the narrator in relation to his text. The other aspect of *mood* is yet to be examined in more detail. The narrative perspective is, too, responsible for transmitting narrative information. It works in a different context, however. *Perspective*, in this sense, refers to the relation of the narrator to the characters and the knowledge the narrator bears in relation to these characters. Genette calls this relation *focalization* and defines three types of it: 1) zero focalization, 2) internal focalization, 3) external focalization.[281] As a consequence of the highly mimetic mode of the *khabar* form, it is claimed by many scholars that the tone of this narrative form is exceptionally objective[282] and thus externally focalized. This means that the narrator always tells what he sees or hears, he does not have the knowledge to add anything to it.[283] The narrator of the *khabar* form is not omniscient which would imply that he knows more than the characters. This is not possible in the case of the narrator who supposedly bears witness to a real event. Furthermore, the narrative is never internally focalized as the thoughts and feelings of the characters are only known through another person, the narrator. In the *khabar* form, external focalization is employed even if we have an eyewitness account. In that case, it is not the narrator who is focalized but the person he is relating a story about.

That is not the case in the *Nights* where, although there are no examples of non-focalized narratives, there are instances when focalization turns internal. In fact, in the *akhbār* material of the *Nights* when people are relating events that happened to them, the narrative is internally focalized as the narrators are the protagonists of their stories not someone else, as it is

[281] Genette, 1980, 189–194.
[282] Beaumont, 1996, 8.
[283] Leder, 1992, 307.

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characteristic of the *khabar* form in the fields of *adab*. There is a group of stories in which such accounts are given and there is a story among the three we are examining in this part of the chapter. In *The Ruined Man of Baghdad*, the narrative starts, as any of the other two, with an objective description of events which led to the selling of the slave-girl. However, at some point, the third-person singular narrative gives place to the first-person narrative of the young man:[284] "Fa-aṭlaʿahā ilā al-sūq fa-kāna awwal man raʾāhā rajul hāshimī min ahl al-Baṣra. Wa-kāna dhālika al-rajul adīban ẓarīfan karīm al-nafs fa-ishtarāhā bi-alf wa-khamsamiʾa dīnār. Qāla dhālika al-fatā ṣāḥib al-jāriya: Fa-lammā qabaḍtu al-thaman…" (So he carried her to the market and the first who saw her was a Hashimi of Bassora, a man of taste and breeding and generosity, who bought her for fifteen hundred dinars. (Quoth the young man, the girl's owner), When I had received the price…).[285] The internal focalization can happen because, in these cases, the narrator is the protagonist or, at least, the person through which a story is focalized. Again, this example is quite removed from the *khabar* form because of reasons elaborated in an earlier chapter.

This observation shows that external and internal focalization is not the only aspect of the problem that needs to be discussed but the character through which a narrative is focalized. In the case of internal focalization, as we saw in the last example, the narrator is the character through which the narrative is focalized. The story of the narrator is related in these cases. We will see that these are the narratives related in the first-person singular. However, first-person singular narration does not need to be exclusively internally focalized. In fact, most of the *akhbār* which go back to an eyewitness account are externally focalized while being narrated in the first-person singular. This means that narrator and character are not the same. The narrator tells the story of another person. Narratives in the third-person singular are inherently externally focalized in *khabar* form as they are even farther removed from the original events than the eyewitnesses who are, we saw, also authorized to give an externally focalized account of the events they witness as far as they are not the main characters in it. Using Genette's terms, we may summarize the discourse of the *khabar* form as follows: the *khabar* form is essentially an extradiegetic narrative form with an intradiegetic perspective and external focalization.

[284] Other examples of this abrupt change of narrator: *Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* (*Alf Layla*, II, 133–141; Payne, III, 324–333. *Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi and the Barber-Surgeon*); *Ḥikāyat karam Khālid b. Yaḥyā maʿa Manṣūr* (*Alf Layla*, II, 204–207; Payne, IV, 27–29. *The Generous Dealing of Yehya Ben Khalid the Barmecide with Mensour*)
[285] *Alf Layla*, IV, 358. In English translation, see: Payne, VIII, 176.

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This is not always the case in the *Nights*. As it was observed earlier, although first-person narrative is not predominant in the shorter narratives of the *Nights*, there are a significant number of them in the collection. According to the previous description and with special emphasis on the *focalization*, they may be divided into three groups: one which retains the external *focalization* together with the extradiegetic narrative and the intradiegetic perspective; one which retains the extradiegetic focalization but changes to intradiegetic narrative with an intradiegetic perspective; and one which is internally focalized intradiegetic narrative with intradiegetic perspective. Let us see what these descriptions entail in practice.

The first group comprises those stories which retain the *khabar* form as much as the context allows for it. One such example is *The Woman Who Had a Boy and the Other Who Had a Man to Lover*. "Wa- qāla Abū al-ʿAynāʾ: Kāna ʿindanā fī al-darb imraʾatān iḥdāhumā taʿshaqu rajulan wa-l-ukhrā taʿshaqu amradan…" ("(Quoth Abou el Ainaä), There were in our street two women, one of whom had to lover a man and the other a beardless boy…"),[286] starts the story. It is the report of Abū al-ʿAynāʾ about the conversation of two women he overhears as they are talking on the terrace-roof of a neighboring house. The conversation is quoted verbatim, so the narrative mode corresponds to the mimetic mode of the "witness-account" of the *khabar* form. It is an extradiegetic narrative since the narrator is not partaking in the action, he is only an observer. The perspective is intradiegetic as it is through the narrator's experience that the reader gets to know the event described. Consequently, the focalization, which is focused on the two women, remains external. The same happens in *al-Aṣmaʿī and the Three Girls* where the narrator stays outside of the events described. This is not the typical point of view the narrators take in these short narratives.

The second group includes such stories whose first-person narrator is an active character of his narrative but who is not the center of action or attention. *Abū Suwayd and the Handsome Old Woman* provides a good example of this group. Abū Suwayd's report gives the account of his meeting with an old woman whose face, in spite of her white hair, is stunningly young. It is not the report of a conversation witnessed, or overheard, like in the previous case, the narrator actively engages in it as one of the parties. Because of this, the narrative turns intradiegetic, naturally retaining its intradiegetic perspective. However, the focalization does not change to internal, it remains external as the woman – the focus of the report – is only described as the narrator perceives her.

[286] *Alf Layla*, II, 465–466. In English translations, see: Payne, IV, 300.

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The third group consists of such stories where the first-person narrator is the protagonist of his own story. This is the most typical of the short narratives in the *Nights* where a first-person narrator tells the story. *The Sons of Yaḥyā b. Khālid* may be mentioned here. The narrator, al-Bāhilī, gives an account of a time when he was in a financially difficult situation and describes the events surrounding his being rescued from this situation. He is not only actively participating in the action, but he is the protagonist. This means that he is focalized. And since he is the narrator of his own story, he is internally focalized with, of course, an intradiegetic narration and an intradiegetic perspective.

The last question in connection with focalization is whether it changes during an account. Multiple focalizations are not characteristic of the *Nights*. It can happen in such stories where the person of the narrator changes during the narration. It is not the change of narrators which results from stepping over narrative levels which concerns us here, but those cases in which the person of the narrator changes within the given narrative level. We saw this happen in two cases: *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* and *The Generous Dealing of Khālid b. Yaḥyā*. In both of the stories, at one point, the narrator changes from the third-person singular into the first-person singular as one of the characters in the story takes over the narration. This does not mean, however, that the external focalization changes. Even in the first case when the main character takes over the role of the narrator, his narrative remains externally focalized, the reader does not get to know his feelings through his words but through his actions. The person of the character who is focalized does not change, either. The story is about one man, no matter who is telling the story.

2.3. The *Khabar* as Narrating

So far, we have discussed the concept of narrative in its two manifestations: *story* and *narration*. What remains for us is to examine narrative as *narrating*, that is, how the narrative works in the context of the *instance of narrating*. The act of narrating is at the heart of *The Thousand and One Nights* the premise of which is based on Shahrazād's ability to entertain her husband with stories for one thousand and one nights. In an attempt to do so, she also exploits her characters who do not remain mere actors in their respective stories, but they take up the mantel of the narrator as well and tell their own stories.

Khabar form, more than any other form of literary expression discussed in the present study, is communication. It mediates between the source (*sender*), the author in a matter of speaking, and the *receiver*. The message which is communicated between these two agents are related through the author himself or a mediator who is bound by convention to transmit the

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exact words of the former by means of bearing witness to the instance of the utterance, or, by providing a reliable chain of transmitters at the end of which there is a person who had been present at the instance of enunciation. In this respect, *khabar* is understood as *narrating*, that is, as a *speech-act*.[287] It means that *khabar* is placed in the context of a communicational situation and has to be dealt with accordingly. This kind of communication, which, at the formation of the Muslim society, sprung from a collective need to preserve the teachings of the Prophet in an authentic form which came to inform the legal and societal aspects of life, had been poured into the form of *isnād* and *matn* and came to represent the transfer of knowledge up until the modern period.

These are the socio-historical aspects of the *khabar* form. However, as it has already been discussed from various angles, the same instance of narrating can be traced back in *The Thousand and One Nights* as well. In *adab*, *khabar* form represents the communication between the authorities of the *isnād* and the receiver of the information contained in the *matn*. In the *Nights* and, in some respects, in *adab* literature as well, the range of this communication is widened. Communication does not only serve to pass on information, but it gains a literary dimension which transform communication between *sender* and *receiver* into literary communication between *author* and *reader*. The consequence of this transformation will be addressed in Chapter 3, for now, the discussion focuses on communication in the general sense since that is how it is originally understood in the case of the *khabar*. Only after understanding how communication changes in the *Nights* and why these changes are possible at all in the popular collection, can we start to discuss the significance of literary communication in reading of the *Nights*.

To illustrate how the adaptation of the *khabar* form from *adab* to popular is executed on the textual level in regard of communication, I singled out a group of stories which share the same motif: someone is asked to relate a story. What makes this group so interesting in connection with the inquiry of the present chapter is the way how the *instance of narrating* influences the narration. Signaling out these stories, however, also attests to another aspect of communication within the *Nights*: communication takes place between the characters of Shahrazād. Besides her characters, the role of Shahrazād as narrator cannot be ignored, either, so her influence on the narrative will be examined as well.

[287] Wolfgang Iser, following contemporary research, defines the *speech-act* as a unit of communication and as such a linguistic action the success of which is based on certain criteria. See: Iser, W.: *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Baltimore – London (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, 54–62.

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In the *Nights*, there are various situations in which person A asks person B for a story. These situations correspond to the *instances of narrating*. Typologically, they can be divided into three groups. One, of course, is when someone tells stories to save their or somebody else's lives. A second one is when someone wishes to know the life history or the happenings resulting in the current situation of the other person. And the third group is when someone asks for a story simply for the sake of entertainment.[288] In the following, the third group, which is concerned with stories told for entertainment, will be in the focus of attention. The discussion will deal with only those stories which can be considered to be in the *khabar* form and as such, the following nine stories will be examined in more minute details:

1. *Ḥikāyat ʾAlī al-ʾAjamī quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd* (*Ali the Persian's Story of the Kurd Sharper*), henceforth: *ʾAlī, the Persian* (II.2.)
2. *Ḥikāyat Muḥammad al-Baṣrī quddāma al-Khalīfa al-Maʾmūn - Qiṣṣat al-jawārī al-sitta wa-munāẓaratuhunna maʿa baʿaḍihinna* (*The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls*) (II.5.)
3. *Ḥikāyat al-wilāt al-thalāth quddāma al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (*El Melik En Nasir and the Three Masters of Police*), henceforth: *al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (II.6.)
4. *Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī maʿa al-tājir* (*Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi and the Merchant's Sister*), henceforth: *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister* (II.7.)
5. *Ḥikāyat al-Khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd maʿa Ibn al-Qāribī* (*Mesrour the Eunuch and Ibn El Caribi*), henceforth: *Masrūr and Ibn al-Qāribī* (III.29.)
6. *Ḥikāyat al-ʾUtbī fī amr al-ʾishq maʿa al-shaykh al-badawī* (*The Three Unfortunate Lovers*) (I.8.)
7. *Ḥikāyat al-Aṣmaʿī ʾan thalāth banāt quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd* (*El Asmaï and the Three Girls of Bassora*), henceforth: *al-Aṣmaʿī and the Three Girls* (II.8.)
8. *Ḥikāyat Ḥusayn al-Khalīʿ quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd min ʾishq imraʾa kānat bi-l-Baṣra* (*The Lovers of Bassora*), henceforth: *The Lovers of Baṣra* (II.9.)

As we have seen, the communication is a strictly formalized process between receiver and sender. What needs to be further clarified is the question of who exactly the participants of this exchange are. The three groups of stories had been based on the relationship between characters and were determined by the kind of narrative the *sender* is required by the *receiver* to tell. In the present case, the story-tellers are either required to relate something their listeners has never heard before or to tell something marvelous in order to lighten the somber mood of the listener. The active presence of the *receiver* in the frame-story is a decisive agent in determining the nature of the narrative. This active presence of the *receiver* diverts somewhat

[288] Daniel Beaumont, when discussing the framing technique of the *Nights*, refers to two kinds of situation in which a story is told: "Either it explains how a character who is part of the preceding story arrived in that situation, or it is in response to the question 'Has anyone ever heard a more amazing story?'" (Beaumont, Daniel: Literary Style and Narrative Technique in the *Arabian Nights*, in: *The Encyclopedia of the Arabian Nights*, I, ed. U. Marzolph and R. van Leeuwen, Santa Barbara – Denver – Oxford (ABC-CLIO), 2004, 3.)

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from the original *khabar* form since the attitude to the material reported is determined from within. While in the *khabar* form the nature of the report is determined from without, that is, according to the convention of authentication, and the communicational situation depicted in the *matn* only serves as description of the circumstances of the transmission, in the present case, the communicational situation is a self-contained situation without any influence from or reference to the world outside of the narrative. Every participant of the communicational situation plays an active role in the formation of the narrative. It is the listener who determines the nature of the narrative which will be presented to him but the way it is executed in order for the communication to be considered a success, it greatly depends on the story-teller. This is the context in which the following stories are discussed.

A shared feature of all of the above-listed short pieces is that they can be divided into two parts: one is a frame-story which provides background and describes the communicational situation, the other one is the framed one, that is, the report itself. In this respect, these short stories mirror the underlying structure of the collection as well. The frame-story depicts the circumstances of the story-telling, or, the instance of enunciation, while the framed story is the enunciation itself.

Even though, the present chapter is more interested in how the framed story is handled in the narrative context, a couple of words has to be made about the story as a whole as well. In their entirety, not all of the above-listed stories display the *khabar* form. Indeed, the only one which does, it starts with an albeit rather vague but nonetheless present reference to its source. "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna al-ʿUtbī qāla" ("(Quoth El Utbi)"),[289] Shahrazād introduces *The Three Unfortunate Lovers*. As far as form is concerned, this is in keeping with the requirements of the *khabar* form. The rest of the stories, however, completely omits this formula. This alone, however, does not exclude any of the works from being read as a *khabar*. We have already established that the *matn* carries the information of the *khabar* either as an utterance or a narrative. This does not change in these cases, either. What is more, these examples represent that group of stories in the *Nights* which maintain their close connection to the *khabar* form through their description of an *instance of narrating* within the *matn*. This means that, after Shahrazād's establishment of the *instance of narrating*, which corresponds to the *isnād* part of the *khabar* form, the *matn* starts with the establishment of another *instance of narrating*, this time, within the *matn*. It is in this context of *narrating* and *narration* that the *story* develops.

[289] *Alf Layla*, II, 439. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 272.

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The *matn*, then, begins with a scene which describes the circumstances leading up to the actual act of story-telling. Absent of a source, all of these stories are told in the third person, only the account of *The Three Unfortunate Lovers* preserves the eyewitness report. "Jalastu yawman wa-ʿindī jumāʿa min ahl al-adab fa-tudhākirunā akhbār al-nās" ("I was sitting one day with a company of men of culture, telling stories of the folk"),[290] starts the report of al-ʿUtbī while the other stories tell about certain prominent men and why they wish to hear a story. In keeping with the *Nights*' compilers' fascination with Hārūn al-Rashīd, most of these narratives start with the caliph being restless at night and wishing for some diversion. The figure of the caliph Ma'mūn also appears but his character is not surrounded with the *topos* of nightly entertainment.

What follows this description is the depiction of how the communication takes place and how it works between the two agents. There is a significantly formalized element in this communication which attests to the shared context of *sender* and *receiver*: the *receiver* expresses his wish to hear a story, then the *sender*, acknowledging this wish, relates one appropriate to the wish of the *receiver*, who, being satisfied, expresses his delight in the story.[291] "Fa-lammā samiʿa al-Khalīfa hādhihi al-ḥikāya min ʿAlī al-ʿAjamī istalaqā ʿalā faqāt min al-ḍaḥk" ("When the Khalif heard Ali's story, he laughed till he fell backward"),[292] concludes *ʿAlī, the Persian*. Or concludes the story of al-Aṣmaʿī: "Fa-qāla al-Khalīfa: Aḥsanta ya al-Aṣmaʿī. Wa-dafaʿa ilayhi thalāthami'at dīnār" ("'Thou didst well, O Asmaï,' said the Khalif and gave him other three hundred dinars, in payment of his story.").[293] This is the schema of a successful communication where requirements are met on both sides. Unfortunately, it is not always the case that the positive conclusion of the communication is described in such satisfactory or straightforward fashion.

There are cases when the conclusion is missing. It is the case in *al-Malik al-Nāṣir* where the three related incidents are put one after the other without any further reactions on the part of the listeners. Not unlike at the end of *The Three Unfortunate Lovers*. In the latter case,

[290] *Alf Layla*, II, 439. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 272.
[291] This system is, however, not only applicable in the case of the *khabar* form. In fact, exchange, be it verbal or actual exchange of physical objects, was the foundation of social interaction in medieval Muslim society in which the patronage system determined the well-fare of the subjects of lower social status. Poems were frequently composed in hope of gaining the goodwill of a powerful patron but more mundane things could be also accomplished through a successful exchange of any kind. Jocelyn Sharlet, for example, discusses such gift-exchanges in which slave-girls are involved. While her study primarily concentrates on role of the slave-girl in the transaction between two free men, she neatly describes how such exchanges work. (Sharlet, J.: Educated Slave Women and Gift Exchange in Abbasid Culture, in *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History*, eds. M. S. Gordon and K. A. Hain, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2017, 278–296.)
[292] *Alf Layla*, II, 180. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 371.
[293] *Alf Layla*, II, 388. In English translation, see: Payne, VI, 205.

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however, the story is not told in front of a high-ranking person. Also, there are cases when reward is not bestowed upon the story-teller but on whom the story is about. Both in *The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls* and *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister*, the satisfaction of the listener is evident and, yet the story-teller remains without reward. Instead of Muḥammad al-Baṣrī and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, it is the six slave-girls and their master, in the first case, and the merchant, in the second, who are generously rewarded. The implications of this transfer of bestowment will be addressed later.

The communication also seems to fail in one case: al-Qāribī fails to make the caliph laugh and, accordingly, he is hit with a sack of stones. "Idhā anta lam tuḍḥaknī ḍarabtuka bi-hādhā al-jirāb thalāth marrāt" ("If thou do not make me laugh, I will give thee three blows with this bag."),[294] turns the request of the *receiver* in the other stories into a threat in the present one. In this case, however, it is not specified that the caliph wishes to hear a story. He simply wants to laugh. And he does when the greed of Masrūr and the wittiness of al-Qāribī presents a comedy of manners, successfully concluding the exchange after all.

Let us now return to the question of the successful conclusion of verbal exchanges in these stories and make some observations regarding content and discourse. As said earlier, there are two things which are required of the story-teller depending on the wish of the listener: either he tells an entertaining story fit to delight a restless heart, or he tells a remarkable one. That is, he either relates something humorous or something edifying and more serious. Let us consider the two kinds of material separately.

What is of main concern here is the relationship among request, the nature of the narrative, and the reaction to that narrative at the end of the story. To sum up what had been said so far, it can be stated that there is a definite relationship between how the request is worded and the nature of the narrative. That is to say, when something remarkable is requested which has never been heard before, or something marvelous someone had witnessed, *adab* material will be related. Such is the request of Hārūn al-Rashīd when he tells al-Aṣmaʿī, "Yā al-Aṣmaʿī, urīdu minka an tuḥaddathanī bi-ajwad mā samaʿta min akhbār al-nisā' wa-ashʿārihinna" ("O Asmaï, I wish thee to tell me the best thou hast heard of stories of women and their verses.").[295] Or, when al-ʿUtbī relates the recounting of an event to a group of man belonging to the "ahl al-adab" and the man recounting the event is asked to tell something they have never heard before. When something marvelous or delightful is asked without further specifications as of witnessing or hearing, humorous material is expected.

[294] *Alf Layla*, II, 417. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 248.
[295] *Alf Layla*, III, 358. In English translation, see: Payne, VI, 201–202.

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Of course, this is a general observation, not a rule, so there are exceptions, the most obvious one being the story of Masrūr and al-Qāribī where no explicit request is made of story-telling. Then there is the question of the story of al-Malik al-Nāṣir in connection to which just the opposite of this observation may be noticed. Although al-Malik al-Nāṣir wishes to hear the most marvelous thing that befell to the chiefs of police, he is told some amusing stories; amusing in that sense that they are humorous and not unique in an edifying way. The explanation of this anomaly may be found during a closer reading of the text of the frame-story. Two things stand out in the text which can provide explanation. In the case of *The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls* and *The Three Unfortunate Lovers*, the would-be listeners are in the presence of the caliph where "aḥḍara ruʾasāʾ dawlatihi wa-akābir mamlakatihi jamīʿan wa-kadhālika aḥḍara al-shuʿarāʾ wa-l-nudamāʾ bayna yadayhi" ("[al-Maʾmūn was sitting] surrounded by his grandees and officers of state, and there were present also before him all his poets and minions"),[296] or in the company of educated men belonging to the "ahl al-adab", a company which provides for the telling of more edifying material. In the other two stories, the reports are credited to well-known personalities such as Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and al-Aṣmaʿī, both of them well-respected in the *adab* circles of their time and in later generations. None of this stands true for the story with the chiefs of police which can account for its humorous material. Even more so that this observation is also applicable for *ʾAlī, the Persian* as well. This shows well the fact that context has an enormous influence in the communication.

There is a further observation to be made concerning the person who is rewarded after the telling of the story. We have mentioned the curious cases of those being rewarded whom the story is about, instead of the one who relates the story. Once again, if we pay closer attention to the text, an answer may be found. Let us consider *al-Aṣmaʾī and the Three Girls* on the one hand, and *The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls* and *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister* on the other. These are three out of the four stories which deal with *adab* material, and it has significant bearing on the narrative as well. This leads us back to the wording of the request once again. "Yā al-Aṣmaʿī, urīdu minka an tuḥaddathanī bi-ajwad mā samaʿta min akhbār al-nisāʾ wa-ashʿārihinna" ("O Asmaï, I wish thee to tell me the best thou hast heard of stories of women and their verses."),[297] the poet is asked and is rewarded when he delivers.

On the other hand, however, both Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and Muḥammad al-Baṣrī are asked to relate to the caliph the most remarkable thing they have ever witnessed or heard. Muḥammad al-Baṣrī actually asks for clarification whether the caliph wishes to hear something Muḥammad

[296] *Alf Layla*, II, 268. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 92.
[297] *Alf Layla*, III, 358. In English translation, see: Payne, VI, 201–202.

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himself witnessed or only heard. “Yā Amīr al-Mu’minīn, a-turīd an uḥaddithaka bi-ḥadīth samiʿtuhu bi-udhunī aw bi-amr ʿāyantuhu bi-baṣarī” (“’O Commander of the Faithful,’ answered Mohammed, ‘shall I tell thee a thing I have heard with my ears or a thing that I have seen with my eyes?’”),[298] he asks before starting, then concludes with the following line: “Fa mā ra’aytu yā Amīr al-Mu’minīn fī makān wa-lā zamān aḥsana min hā’ulā’i al-jawārī al-ḥisān” (“And never, O Commander of the Faithful, in any place or time have I seen fairer than these six fair damsels.”).[299] So, even though, the caliph leaves the choice to Muḥammad, he relates a story about people he had actually met. And that is the main difference between these two stories and that of al-Aṣmaʿī. While the poet, too, relates an event of his life, he is only asked about poems and not the occasion on which he heard that poem. In contrast, the other two story-tellers are specifically asked about events which have – in the context of the story – real persons as characters. And these characters touch the listener in a way which makes them the center of his appreciation. “Wa-taʿajjaba al-Ma’mūn min karam hādhā al-rajul wa-qāla: Lillāhi darruhu, mā samiʿtu qaṭṭ bi-mithlihi. Wa-amara Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī bi-iḥḍār al-rajul li-yushāhidahu. Fa-aḥḍarahu bayna yadayhi wa-istanṭaqahu wa-aʿjabahu ẓarfuhu wa-adabuhu fa-ṣayyarahu min jumlat khawāṣṣihi” (“The Khalif marvelled at the merchant’s generosity and said, ‘Gifted of God is he! Never heard I of his like.’ And he bade Ibrahim bring him to court, that he might see him. So he brought him and the Khalif conversed with him; and his wit and good breeding so pleased him, that he made him one of his chief officers.”),[300] concludes the story of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī. It is the possession of qualities – generosity and poetic talent – which come under the umbrella of *adab* that are rewarded in these stories. This observation aligns with a previous one concerning these stories containing *adab* material.

This observation informs us about another important feature of these narratives. Communications they may be in the context of their individual stories, but they are also part of a larger narrative context as well. And accordingly, they are not only influenced by the requirements of communication within the narrative but by the narrative discourse of the frame-story as well. In this respect, we have to make a distinction between the communication that were previously discussed and the communication in which Shahrazād is engaged with Shahriyār. The situations, that is, the instances of narrating are radically different. Shahrazād is telling stories to save her life. What is expected of her is entertainment and what she hopes to

[298] *Alf Layla*, II, 268. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 92.
[299] *Alf Layla*, II, 281. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 105.
[300] *Alf Layla*, II, 302. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 126. (In the Arabic text, there is a misspelling of *istanṭaqahu*. I corrected it in the transcription.)

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achieve is education through entertainment. That is why it is very rare in the *Nights* that a story is related in the *khabar* form in the strictest sense of the term. Shahrazād tells stories and only her characters relate events. The relationship between *sender* and *receiver* is not the same.

It is a very significant differentiation when we consider the terms used to name the stories. It is *ḥikāya* or *qiṣṣa* which is used in the titles given to the stories. And true enough, most of her stories are introduced along the line of "Ḥukiya ayyuhā al-Malik al-Sayyid" or "balaghanī ayyuhā al-Malik al-Sayyid", and even "Wa-mā hādhā bi-aʿjab min ḥikāya […]". *Khabar* cannot be found in this context. Although there are a handful of examples to the contrary. Generally, where we find *khabar* in any form, it is in the context of communication within Shahrazād's stories. *Khabar* and *ḥadīth* are used to denote the eyewitness report told in an *instance of narrating* recounted in the *khabar* form. In that instance of narrating that report has an actual reference in its own world. And this world is depicted in the *ḥikāya* of Shahrazād. In other words: the *ḥikāya*, as understood in the framework of the *Nights*, provides the *instance of narrating* in which a report is told in the *khabar* form.

Recalling the definition of *qiṣṣa* provided by Marston Speight,[301] using the above terms according to their narrative connotations, it may be stated that those stories are closest to the *khabar* form which are related at the lowest narrative level, that is, in a chain of framing stories, they are the last one: the framed story without a framed story of its own. The stories on the higher level of narrative become composite narratives not in the sense that their plot is more elaborate than that of the *khabar* form but, in the sense that their structure is more complex due to the communicational situation depicted in them.

There comes again the significance of hearing and seeing in connection with the *khabar* form. Shahrazād relates stories from an unspecified source while those who recount reports in her stories are either ear- or eyewitnesses to the event they recount. This shows for the fact that having Shahrazād narrate a story which she knows from an unspecified source is not strong enough a context to change our literary understanding of the text. Short pieces like this, narrated in the third-person singular, are the weakest forms of *khabar* in the *Nights*. However, if a story is placed into the context of an instance of narrating other than that of Shahrazād's, the text is more easily understood as a "piece of information" related in the *khabar* form. On the one hand, this instance of narrating may be determined through the naming of Shahrazād's "source", that is, a particular historical figure. This is how the *isnād* determines the instance of narrating. On the other hand, the *instance of narrating* may be determined within the *ḥikāya* in which case

[301] Marston Speight, R.: Narrative Structures in the Ḥadīth, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 59, 2000, 270.

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the context informing the discourse comes from within the story in which the *khabar* is related and not from outside, that is, from the frame-story of the collection. However, it has to be kept in mind that communicational situation and the *instance of narrating* are not the same. There are examples of communication without any *instance of narrating* being established, etc. dialogues which involve the same information that a *khabar* would but do not create a new narrative level within the story.

2.4. Concluding Remarks

As a conclusion to this chapter, it can be stated that *khabar* is employed as a narrative form, the various aspects of which being preserved in the short pieces of the *Nights*. Although it is just as thematically diverse as it is in *adab*, structure and discourse keep informing this literary form. In most of the cases the two-sided division of *isnād* and *matn* is still perceivable even though with different references as they are in *adab*. Discourse is still recognizable though, admittedly, the *Nights* handles the material more freely. What is more important, the function of communication, the role of which *khabar* form fulfills is discernible throughout the collection. It is present in Shahrazād's stories, and it is definitely present in the stories her characters tell. Communication is one of the main features of these stories and not just the ones related in the *khabar* form.

There is certain advantage to handle the *khabar* as a narrative form, that is the interrelation of *story*, *narration* and *narrating*. Being exceptionally accommodating to different kinds of prose narratives both historical and fictitious it is a versatile form of expression and, maybe, there is no wonder that it had remained such an important part of Arabic literature through the centuries and through various literary fields. It might not have been understood as a genre but through its various expressions, it did play a role in classification of texts, or at least in understanding the differences among various texts, among them the more complex narrative forms of the *qiṣṣa* and the *ḥikāya*.

In conclusion, in the context of the present study, *khabar* is understood as a narrative form which can be defined in three different, yet interconnected meanings: *story*, *narration* and *narrating*. As a story, *khabar* means a single event – a piece of information – which is told in a specific structural form that consists of *isnād* and *matn*. With the *isnād* as an integral part of the *khabar* form, the story aspect of the *khabar* connects to both narrating and narration. As narrating, *khabar* is understood as communication in which aspect it is a piece of information, an event transmitted between two agents and as such, it is characterized by a particular narration. Thus, as a narration, *khabar* can be described through a very specific set of narrative

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techniques which in accordance with its being a story and a narrating. I found Gérard Genette's narrative categories of *time*, *order* and *voice* very useful in this regard.

However, even though the definitions provided through the three understanding of narrative seem to be clear-cut, and their application may provide a simple and unified treatment of the *khabar* form, it has to be kept in mind that there cannot be a unified method of the application of the *khabar* form discerned in pre-modern Arabic literature. The establishment of a clear definition of the *khabar* form only aids us in our further investigations, it cannot stand as a rule without exceptions. It was necessary to outline the most basic appearance of this narrative form to use the available definition as a guiding line not only in describing *khabar* as it appears in particular works but to attempt a description of other narrative forms in comparison to this definition.

In this respect, *khabar* form appears to be quite fluid. The boundaries between narrative form still remain not so readily defined. Nevertheless. I believe that the definition of an ideal form of the *khabar* supplements our knowledge of *khabar* and its various manifestations on the one hand, and that of other short narrative forms, on the other. Some narratives will adhere to the proposed definition, others will depart from it. My aim is to describe how and to what degree these deviations occur and whether they result in the transformation of the narrative form.

In the following, *khabar* form will be examined not in itself but as an integral part of larger narratives. As it has been stated at the beginning of the chapter, *khabar* form is present in the *Nights*. The collection, however, is not a collection of *akhbār* as those which are used as comparative material from other fields of *adab*. As I observed earlier, Shahrazād tells stories. But within these stories, individual events are reported in different literary forms, one of which is the *khabar*. This form is highly adapted in most of the times, and, at other times, it may also be transformed into a more complex narrative form. Careful textual analysis of these stories helps us to recognize different literary expressions within a diverse collection of materials.

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3. *The Framework for Reading Pre-Modern Short Narratives and the Role of Literary Communication in Their Interpretation*

In the previous chapter, structural and discursive characteristics were discussed in detail, and the observations made led to the conclusion that *khabar* cannot be understood as *genre* but as a narrative form utilized for various purposes. This observation is significant because *khabar* is a fundamental part of pre-modern Arabic literature. It means that the *khabar* form is only a vehicle for other generic expressions, which are then determined by various considerations (theme, tone, etc.). Form and these other considerations work together in providing the terms examined in Chapter 1 with a definition. However, this definition is still not definitive because it fails to establish clear borders between terms. It is more like a guide to reading the texts whose purpose can be fully grasped not in their generic designations but their interpretation.

The previous chapter's textual analysis proved insufficient to provide a definition or a guide born from the cooperation between form and the other aspects. Textual analysis is a tool for bringing attention to certain aspects of the text. It is a method for pointing out similarities and differences, but it fails to provide the reasons behind these changes. The purpose of the text may be deciphered by structural and discursive analysis, and it can be determined whether the text relates factual information or fiction. Furthermore, strictly textual analysis is helpful in source criticism.[302] However, it cannot be determined what information it contains precisely, that is: What is the message it tries to convey?

This observation gains more weight when we realize that while it was pointed out that *khabar* form lives in the various fields of Arabic literature, it was not mentioned how the message of the individual narratives is to be found. It is not an insignificant question, even more so that one of the more characteristic features of medieval Arabic literature is that it works from a common stock of material. As a consequence, one is bound to meet the same stories – or versions of them – in different collections ranging from historical works to popular collections. This widespread presence of certain stories throughout the various fields of Arabic literature

[302] There are many scholarly works which use this method in their approach to source criticism in collected works: Leder, S.: Features of the Novel in Early Historiography: The Downfall of Xālid al-Qasrī, *Oriens*, 32, 1990, 74–74; Leder, S.: Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature: The Akhbār Attributed to al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī, *Oriens*, 31, 1988, 67–68; Leder, S.: The Literary Use of the *Khabar*: A Basic Form of Historical Writing, in: ed. A. M. Cameron, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, vol. 1, Problems in the Literary Source Material*, Princeton (The Darwin Press, Inc.), 1999, 277–316. Julia Bays examination of the models for heroes is also based in the *isnād*: Bray, J. A.: *Isnād*s and Models of Heroes: Abū Zubayd al-Ṭā'ī, Tanūkhī's Sundered Lovers and Abū 'l-ʿAnbas al-Ṣaymarī, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 1, 1998, 7–30.

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raises the question of whether these stories were meant to be interpreted differently according to context or had a common meaning that could be reused repeatedly for specific purposes.

Here, the discussion arrives at the problems of genre classification brought up in the first chapter during the terminological examination of genre-denoting terms in pre-modern Arabic literature: the limitation of these terms in genre classification. There is a distinction to be made between the purpose behind choosing a story for telling and the meaning that the story expresses. Let us consider the definition Aziz al-Azmeh gives of *awā'il* in his work, in which he states that its

> main purpose seemed to have been to provide gems of recherché knowledge of an unusual and exotic character, a knowledge that formed part of courtly urbanity, but which also figures predominantly as example in the large body of Arabic Fürstenspiegel, conceptually equivalent to the paradigmatic sayings and actions attributed to the Prophet of Islam, which had legal, behavioural and moral consequences.[303]

As we have seen in the description of story-telling as an act of communication, there is a purpose for every telling of a story. It may set an example, like the *awā'il* stories in the quotation; they may amuse and entertain like the stories of Shahrazād's characters. However, purpose, in the present context, is a general term. Although it helps connect stories to the Arabic literary tradition, it fails to fully account for a comprehensive interpretation of a story. The meaning of a story is more than its purpose to entertain, explain, or educate. This additional meaning is the reason for the stories to be able to circulate from one field of literature to another. If they could not assume meanings that differ from one another, there would be no use of them in various fields, only in one particular one in the context of which it fulfills its purpose. Fortunately, it is not the case; there is more to story-telling than entertainment, explanation, or moral education.

There is indeed a purpose for which a story has been singled out from the common stock, but there is also a meaning to be expressed for that specific purpose. As Boaz Shoshan points out in the *Introduction* to his discussion of Islamic historiography, "the significance of the historiographical text, as of any text, […] resides, to a considerable extent, in the manner whereby the writing engages the reader, in the means to which it resorts in order to produce meaning and effect; in other words, in its *textuality*."[304] Fahndrich also claims that there is more to a text than its factual meaning: "The factual presentation of historical material results in sources, whereas both the arrangement and the illustrative presentation of historical material

[303] Al-Azmeh, A.: *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography*, Budapest – New York (Central European University Press), 2007, 28.
[304] Shoshan, B.: *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Ṭabarī's* History, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2004, xviii.

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implies meaning, which is given to this material by the author and has to be interpreted by the critic".[305] Meaning is, then, a shared endeavor between *author* and *reader*. Accordingly, the purpose is not the full extent of a text's meaning. Within the meaning-making process, it is the author who assigns a purpose to his work; final meaning is given to a text through reading and the reader's interpretation. This meaning makes every single story, even if we are talking about essentially the same story, a unique one meant to be understood in a specific context. This observation, however, raises further questions. If these stories were meant to be interpreted according to context, what enabled the *reader* to make this interpretation, or, from a different point of view: What kinds of devices were available for the *author* to facilitate these interpretations?[306]

3.1. Literary Communication and Pre-Modern Arabic Literature

An important point is brought to light here: the meaning of a text does not exist in itself. The meaning, that is, the message has a point of origin and a point of destination; the text only serves as a vehicle through which it is transferred. These two points are the *author* expressing his intention through the text and the reader interpreting this message in the text, that is, he is making meaning. Even though Shoshan stresses the significance of the *textuality* of any historical text, he also implicitly acknowledges the existence of both *author* and *reader* when, apart from talking about meaning, he also points out the literary and aesthetic character of these works. Literary creation and aesthetics presuppose a conscious mind behind the creation of a work, while meaning requires a conscious mind behind interpreting that work. Between the two of them, the author and the reader, there is a shared context – a literary tradition and some background knowledge –, which makes the text's message decipherable.[307] It is in this context that the author can define the purpose of his work and it is against this context that the reader can make meaning of it.

[305] Fahndrich, H. E.: The *Wafayāt al-A'yān* of Ibn Khallikān: A New Approach, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 93, 1973, 439.

[306] The use of the terms such as *author* and *compiler* (here used interchangeably) on the one hand, and *reader* on the other, is for the sake of simplicity and it is meant to signify the two points between which literary communication takes place. By no means are they meant to refer to the actual person(s) behind the particular works.

[307] See: the definition of utterance meaning by Jerrold Levinson: "the meaning a linguistic vehicle has in a given context of presentation or projection, a context that arguably includes, in addition to directly observable features of the act of utterance, something of the characteristics of the author who projects the text, something of the text's place in a surrounding oeuvre and culture, and possibly other elements as well." Levinson, J.: Intention and Interpretation in Literature, in: Jerrold Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Ithaca, New York (Cornell University Press), 1996, 178.

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This process just described is what we refer to as literary communication. As W. John Harker argues, "the process of reading literature is better approached through a notion of literary understanding which recognizes the interacting contributions of the author, the text, and the reader within a communicative framework".[308] This kind of communication, I argue, is the key to genre recognition since *genre* was shown to be one kind of message which is coded in a text. It is, however, interconnected with many other elements the text contains, and, as such, it will be examined in connection with these other aspects of the text's meaning. As John Reichert explains it, arguing for the recognition of the roles of both author and reader in interpretation: it is necessary to study the text in itself, that is, only in its relation to a system of conventions (textual analysis),[309] but it cannot be sufficient for a comprehensive understanding.[310]

As I see it, in the case of the short narratives of pre-modern Arabic literature, meaning does come from the text, which has a specific structural construction and a specific narrative discourse. These characteristics place the text into the literary convention according to the author's purpose. Recognizing this purpose is the first step toward understanding the work. It will tell us whether we read history or literature. Besides purpose, however, the author also has a specific intention with that text.[311] According to his intention, the *author* may change certain things in the known narrative, which would further transform our understanding of it. Through the *author*, the text receives its form – its structure and discourse – while its content receives a meaning to be interpreted by the *reader*. The *reader* has only the text to work with. Through its form, he can place it in the literary convention he is familiar with, and through that, he can decipher its purpose (its place within the literary convention). This purpose is constant, unlike the meaning. As the meaning the *author* gives to a text is only interpretable meaning, it will be interpreted. However, no two readers will interpret it in the same way. Any reader's interpretation is based on differing knowledge, experience, etc., than that of the author and other readers. Nevertheless, as long as the text allows for that interpretation, it is valid.

[308] Harker, W. J.: Literary Communication: the Author, the Reader, the Text, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 22, 1988), 6. Similarly: Hermerén, G.: Intention and Interpretation in Literary Criticism, *New Literary History*, 7, 1975, 75–79.

[309] There are various schools which advocate a strict focus on the text itself, dismissing the role of the author in understanding a text and, to a degree, dismissing the reader as well.

[310] Reichert, J.: *Making Sense of Literature*, Chicago (The University of Chicago Press), 1977, 69.

[311] Talking about authorial intention is still a controversial issue in literary theory. Wendell V. Harris sums up in a comprehensive manner the reasons for objecting the existence of authorial intention: Harris, W. V.: *Interpretive Acts – In Search of Meaning*. Oxford (Oxford University Press), 1988, 58–62. I intent to justify its existence by making strict distinction among the terms *intention*, *purpose* and *meaning* and by defining both *author* and *reader* as such concepts which allow for authorial intention to play its part in interpretation.

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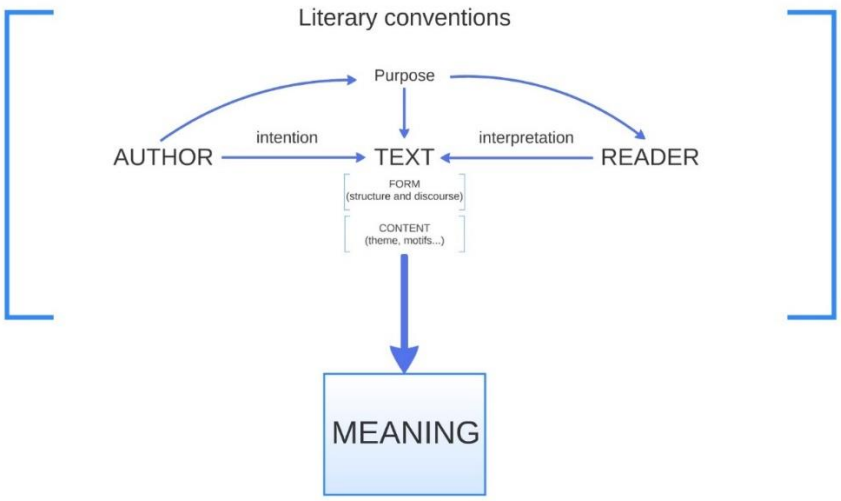

Literary communication in the short narratives of pre-modern Arabic literature

3.1.1. Genre Revisited

In the earlier discussion of *genre*, it was pointed out that, in *Nights*' research, *genre* is primarily employed as a classificatory device, which aids familiarization. However, it also fails to fit into the system of pre-modern Arabic literature for various reasons, including the conception of genre itself and the fact that Western research prefers its own terminology to Arabic.

Nevertheless, it is not so easy to dispose of the term *genre*. It is so engraved into our sense of order and comprehensibility that it is unavoidable to use. However, to be able to use it correctly, a change of approach is necessary. No classification is needed to understand pre-modern Arabic short narratives; it is the workings of these narratives and their relation to one another within Arabic literature that needs to be understood and examined more closely. For this purpose, I propose looking beyond the genre's classificatory role and investigating how it works within the communicational framework.

Genre is "a system of codifiable conventions".[312] In this respect, *genre* is, on the one hand, that set of devices available for the author to determine the purpose of his work and express his intentions with it. As James Phelan says: "Genre, then, is another resource at the author's disposal".[313] On the other hand, *genre* is also a resource at the reader's disposal, for whom it is an aid for interpretation. "Genre reduces the complexity of the background knowledge required and enable cognitive focusing"[314] since it provides the reader with a set of expectations that are

[312] Kent, Th.: *Interpretation and Genre: The Role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts*, Lewisburg (Bucknell University Press), 1986, 15.
[313] Phelan, J.: Authors, Genres, and Audiences: A Rhetorical Approach, in: *The Cambridge Handbook of Literary Authorship*, eds. I. Berensmeyer, G. Buelens and M. Demoor, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 2019, 255.
[314] Frow, J.: *Genre*, London – New York (Routledge), 2015, 92.

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met or transcended during the reading. Thus, *genre* not only aids interpretation when a text is conveniently placed between generic boundaries but when it transgresses these generic boundaries as well.[315] Amy J. Devitt stresses the dynamic nature of *genre* when she compares literary genres to rhetorical genres.[316] This dynamic nature of *genre* is an important point in the shift from classification to interpretation. It underlines the "interactive nature of textual meaning, the rhetorical triangulation of writer-reader-text, and the embeddedness of those relationships within context or culture".[317]

In this respect, *genre* is integral to interpretation. However, I believe that in the case of the short narratives of pre-modern Arabic literature it does not exclusively determine it. In other words, genre classification is not a prerequisite for interpretation. On the contrary, it is during interpretation that generic perception happens. This is how *genre* is pre-modern Arabic literature should be understood and examined. As interpretation does not necessarily coincide with generic perception, classification is rendered secondary as opposed to the meaning-making process of the author and the reader. Thus, a text proves to be more than its genre. It is meaning. It is purpose, authorial intention, and context[318] (literary, social, etc.), which all play a role in the dynamic relationship between author and reader during the act of reading. It is, indeed, communication. As Phelan puts it when he talks about narrative in a rhetorical context, it is "somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened".[319] It is the basis for the interpretation of a literary work, and, interestingly enough, among all the literary forms discussed in the present study, the *khabar* form fits this description perfectly.

3.1.2. *Khabar* as Communication

From our previous discussion of the *khabar* form and its being regarded as a form of communication, it did not become clear how the shift from communication to literary communication may happen. Despite communication having been discussed earlier, it remained strictly in the field of textual analysis. The examination centered on the relation between form and content, that is, between the *story* and the *narration*. The act of communication between

[315] Kent, 1986, 16.
[316] Devitt, A. J.: *Writing Genres*, Carbondale (Southern Illinois University), 2004, 165–169.
[317] Devitt, 2004, 165.
[318] Although I argue for the contextual nature of the *khabar* form, in the present study, I do not look further than the context of literary convention. It is not my purpose to examine the short narratives under discussion in any of their social, historical or any other contexts. In this respect, my study remains intrinsic, only suggesting the possibility of such further studies which are more extrinsic in nature.
[319] Phelan, 2019, 254.

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characters has been seen as a self-contained event regulated by the characters themselves. There were no conventions regulating this process other than that which communication presupposes concerning its two participants.

Literary communication is, however, regulated by a broader range of relations that go beyond the individual expectations of the two participants. When talking about literary communication, we are not referring to a fictional event in the framework of a literary work; it is an event that takes place between *author* and *reader*, with the literary work as the conveyer of message between them. The expectations of *author* and *reader* are not solely shaped by personal knowledge and experience but by the literary convention in which they are partaking.

Returning to the structural considerations of the *khabar* form, we can clarify how the shift between communication and literary communication may happen. It has been stated that the *khabar* form is composed of two structural units, the *isnād* and the *matn*, of which the *matn* may be further divided into two parts, one which describes the background information of the report told and the report itself. In the context of communication between characters in the *Nights*, the report is the framed story, and the background information is given in the frame-story. These two parts make up a story. However, in the context of the collection, this story is told by Shahrazād. Shahrazād, in turn, is placed into an instance of narrating by the frame-story of the collection. Thus, whether a source is given for the origin of the narrative or not, even her most general statements like "it is told" may be regarded to fulfill the same function as *isnād* fulfills in *adab* works: the instance of narrating is placed into the framework of a communicational situation. However, it is still not literary communication. While, in the case of the *khabar* form in *adab*, *isnād* does provide the instance of narrating with the framework of literary communication, Shahrazād's narratives are still missing a link to the real world. It is because Shahrazād is not the author of her stories as far as the collection as a literary work is concerned. She is the *narrator*. The *author* is the one capable of providing the link between *text* and *literary convention* through which the literary work becomes interpretable for the *reader*.

Using this seemingly complicated paradigm, we can draw up the following concept of *khabar* in literary communication:

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Adab		The *Nights*	
Communication between	Structure of *khabar*	Structure of *khabar*	Communication between
			Instance of Narrating No. 1 (*author – reader*)
Instance of Narrating No. 1 (*author – reader*)	creating the instance of narrating to the *matn* (*isnād*)	creating the instance of narrating to the story	Instance of Narrating No. 2 (Shahrazād – Shahriyār)
Instance of Narrating No. 2 (character – character)	*Matn* (background information)	creating the instance of narrating to the report	Instance of Narrating No. 3 (character – character)
	Matn (report)	report	

To understand how this layered relationship between the instances of narrating works, I will refer to one of Ulrich Marzolph's articles in which he examines the relationship between frame-story and embedded story.[320] Although he does not make the connection to literary communication, his analysis is based on the narrative techniques employed in the examined story, *Ghānim ibn Ayyūb, the Slave of Love*. What is important in connection with the present discussion is Marzolph's remarks regarding the role of the embedded stories in the overall narrative. First, there is the question of why the characters tell stories. In this case, we have three eunuchs who, after carrying a chest outside the city and before burying it, as their command is, sit down and tell their stories of their castration. In the framework of the communication, the workings of which had already been drawn up in the previous chapter, these stories are exchanged to pass the time. These exchanges represent Instance of Narrating No. 3, which is placed into the framework of the instance of narrating of Shahrazād (No. 2), the purpose of which is to amuse and educate Shahriyār.

The Instance of Narrating No. 1 happens when the story is received by a reader who can recognize the work's author (not the narrator). In this context, it is neither passing the time nor education through entertainment which is the purpose of the exchange of the eunuchs' stories but the building of suspense: "they serve as a narrative device to delay the action and keep the readers or listeners in suspense by diverting them with a number of strange and amusing short narratives."[321] In some respect, the Instance of Narrating Nos. 2 and 1 are very much alike. The difference lies in the context. Shahrazād only recognizes the context of her own communicational situation; in this situation, she is the author of her story. In this respect, creating suspense can be understood as her keeping the king's attention. On the other hand, however, her telling of the story belongs to a broader context, the literary communication of the

[320] Ulrich M.: Making Sense of the *Nights*: Intertextual Connections and Narrative Techniques in the *Thousand and One Nights*, *Narrative Culture*, 1, 2014, 239–258.
[321] Marzolph, Making Sense, 243.

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author of the *Nights*, and in this context, Shahrazād loses her role as author, thus creating suspense falls out of her capabilities. Creating suspense becomes a literary device employed by the author and recognized by the reader within the framework of literary communication.

Something similar happens in connection with the missing story of the third eunuch. Whereas in the context of the Instance of Narrating No. 3, the missing story is the example of the third eunuch's going against expectations laid down by the participants of the exchange, the missing story is yet another literary device in the hand of the author, this time to "add to the literary work's attraction by encouraging the readers to communicate with and respond actively to the text they are reading".[322] As the above examples show, there are observations concerning a literary work that may be interpreted on the different levels of the narrative; the context determines this interpretation, and this context is called a literary convention in the case of literary communication.

As said before, literary communication occurs between *author* and *reader* in the context of a particular literary convention. Thus, the field of literature (the purpose determined by the author) has a significant role in determining whether literary communication is possible or there is only communication. Not every reading of a narrative is literary communication. However, every narrative may be placed in the context of literary communication. It means that a *ḥadīth* or a historical *khabar*, for example, may not provide for a literary reading in its original context, but a reader with a specific literary interest may handle the narratives of such texts as literary works. In his study, S.R. Burge also argues for the reading of *ḥadīth* collections as literary works, claiming that "meaning is not simply given through the statements included in the individual *ḥadīth* themselves"[323] but within the context of the whole work. Reaching beyond the scope of the collection, the close reading of the individual reports may also provide additional meaning to the text.

Concerning the table above, there is no need to analyze the text of the *khabar* of the *ḥadīth* and the historical work, or to recognize communicational situation No. 2 in the *matn*, and discuss its characteristics. Other questions concern the reader of *ḥadīth* and historical works. In this case, we are talking about simple communication of information. With a strict theological or historical approach, the *khabar* is determined, on the one hand, by the authenticating role of the *isnād* and, on the other hand, by the authenticated information the *matn* carries. In this

[322] Marzolph, Making Sense, 244.
[323] Burge, S. R.: Compilation Criticism: Reading and Interpreting *Ḥadīth* Collections through the Prism of Fragmentation and Compilation, in: *The Making of Religious Texts in Islam: The Fragment and the Whole*, eds. A. Hilali and S. R. Burge, Berling (Gerlach Press), 2019, 87.

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respect, no further textual examinations are required regarding the message in the given context. However, when the text is read for more than the mere meaning of its words, the reading becomes literary and the text becomes a literary work and thus, the interpretation of the narrative levels of the *akhbār* material becomes possible. It is in the framework of literary communication that the interpretation of the text as a literary work is achieved.

This conception of the *khabar* as literary communication brings to full circle our observation in Chapter 2 concerning the three understandings of the term *narrative*: 1) *narration*, 2) *story*, and 3) *narrating*. Narrative, in its three manifestations, is put into an instance of narrating by the communicational situation inherent in the *khabar* form. This communication becomes literary when the sender and the receiver are extrinsic to the narrative and the narrative is examined in the context of the literary exchange of author and reader. The collaboration among the three concepts of narrative I have proposed to study in connection with the *khabar* form can only be meaningfully described in the framework of literary communication in which all three concepts are given equal treatment.

3.2. Literary Communication and Its Terminology

Through the example of *The Thousand and One Nights* itself, we have described how communication works. It is a strictly regulated process with clearly defined expectations on the side of both the *sender* and the *receiver*. However, the type of communication we are talking about in the case of a literary work is somewhat different. This difference is due to the nature of its participants, *author*, *reader*, and *text* and the conventions governing this kind of communication.

Indeed, pre-modern Arab writerly culture is predominantly centered on collecting and preserving materials on the foundation of its culture, and, as a result, collections and compilations of these materials are the most expected outputs of this literature. However, the author's presence in these works cannot be denied.[324] Even though authorship in these cases does not consist of creating something new, the compiler is not only gathering material and putting them one after the other. As Ulrich Marzolph points out in defense of al-Ibshīhī's work in the light of Western judgments, "the individual contribution of an author often did not consist

[324] Gregor Schoeler argues for the differentiation between *transmitter* and *writer* when talking about the difference between the literature of the *'ulamā'* and that of the *kuttāb* citing the differing method of their literary production. (Schoeler, G.: *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press), 2011, 59.) Similarly, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila lists four layers of persons who represent different kinds of authorship: protagonist, chain of oral transmitters, anonymous authors, and early codifiers. (Hämeen-Anttila, 2015, 169–173.)

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in what was presented, but rather in how he presented it".[325] The same thought is put in a more general way in Bilal Orfali's words: "The material included in an anthology, though not the original work of the compiler, substantiates a vision that is strictly his own".[326] Indeed, modern scholars stress the consciously structured nature of the works when talking about an authored work: "the originality of a particular anthology consists precisely in the choice and arrangement of the reproduced texts".[327] Andreas Görke echoes the same sentiment when, in connection with the Arabic terms that may indicate any kind of authorship, he observes that "connotations here are less focused on authority or the act of creating something new but rather on compiling and bringing into order".[328] Fahndrich goes further than that when he observes in his literary study of the *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*:

> Although much of the material that the historiographer or, in this case, the biographer, incorporates into his work is part of his literary heritage, his literary tradition, all this material is filtered through the author's mind, is tinged by his interests and propensities. He may deem changes necessary:

[325] Marzolph, U.: Medieval Knowledge in Modern Reading: A Fifteenth-Century Arabic Encylopaedia of Omni Re Scibili, in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996*, ed. P. Binkley, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 1997, 416.

[326] Orfali, B.: *The Anthologist's Art: Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī and His* Yatīmat al-dahr, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2016, 4.

[327] Orfali, B.: A Sketch Map of Arabic Poetry Anthologies up to the Fall of Baghdad, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 43, 2012, 32. See the same understanding in various studies: Konrad Hirschler uses al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā'* as a consciously edited work which facilitates easy reading and orientation in the material. (Hirschler, K.: *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press, 2012, 18.) Similarly, Gregor Schoeler elaborates on, among others, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868-869), Abū ʿUbayd (d. 838), Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) and al-Sībawayhī's (d. 796) method of writing and how their works differed from earlier compilation put together without any specific concept. (Schoeler, G.: *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, transl. U. Vagelpohl, ed. J. E. Montgomery, London – New York (Routledge), 2006, 34–36, 49–53, 72–73; Schoeler, G.: *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press), 2011, 85–98, 99–110.) When discussing the difference between encyclopedia and anthology, Ulrich Marzolph describes the conscious structural decisions of both the encyclopedists (al-Damīrī and al-Ibshīhī) and the anthologists (al-Amāsī and an anonymous author). (Marzolph, U.: Coining the Essentials: Arabic Encyclopaedias and Anthologies of the Pre-Modern Period, in *Collector's Knowledge: What Is Kept, What Is Discarded*, eds. A-S. Goeing, A. Grafton and P. Michel, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2013, 34–37.) Marzolph writes about al-Ibshīhī in more details in another article. (Marzolph, 1997, 407–419.) In an article, Fedwa Malti-Douglas examines the semiotic role of the dream in al-Ṣafadī's biographical dictionary of the blind, bringing attention to the fact how the placement of the dream anecdote within a biographical entry influences its interpretation. (Malti-Douglas, F.: Dreams, the Blind, and the Semiotics of the Biographical Notice, *Studia Islamica*, 51, 1980, 137–162.) Hilary Kilpatrick concentrates on arrangement during her discussion of the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and stresses the point that the context of the individual *akhbār* within the collection adds to the meaning. (Kilpatrick, H.: Context and the Enhancement of the Meaning of *Aḫbār* in the *Kitāb al-Aġānī*, *Arabica*, 38, 1991, 351–368.) In a recent article, Boutheina Khaldi discusses al-Ghuzūlī's role in his *Maṭāliʿ al-budūr fī manāzil al-surūr* as that of the author, claiming that his choice of material reflects his taste. (Khaldi, B.: A House in Words: Al-Ghuzūlī as Author's Alternate, in *Approaches to the Study of Pre-Modern Arabic Anthologies*, eds. B. Orfali and N. M. El Cheikh, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2021, 95–97.) Furthermore, monographic critical works of Arabic collections devote detailed accounts to the organization and the structure. See, among others: Malti-Douglas, F.: *Structures of Avarice – The Bukhalā' in Medieval Arabic Literature*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1985, 42–66; Orfali, 2016, 97–138.

[328] Görke, A.: Authorship in the *Sīra* Literature, in: *Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts*, eds. L. Behzadi and J. Hämeen-Anttila, Bamberg (University of Bamberg Press), 1995, 67.

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> insertions, inversions, omissions. He includes facts which he considers important; he excludes facts which he considers negligible.[329]

Lale Behzadi's examination of al-Tanūkhī's *Kitāb al-faraj ba'd al-shidda* also stresses the author's role and the importance of organization, arrangement and selectivity: "Among the methods he wants to apply is a sorting of the stories (*an unawwi'a al-akhbār*) and a grouping of them into different chapters (*wa-aj'alahā abwāban*), a rearranging of existing material, and an omission of parts that could cause distraction".[330] Similarly, in his support of the social and cultural dimensions of the *ḥadīth*, Mohammad Gharaibeh argues for the collections of *aḥādīth* being "distinct scholarly pieces" and as such, being the result of conscious creative processes such as composition, selection, omission, structuring, and comments.[331] Thus, it is not only the organization of the collection and the arrangement of the material which are available for the compiler but selectivity as well. Through these three methods, the compiler of the *akhbār* material is enabled to express his views and ideas with a specific intention in mind.[332] As S. R.

[329] Fahndrich: 1973, 433.

[330] Behzadi, L: Standardizing Emotions: Aspects of Classification and Arrangement in Tales with a Good Ending, *Asiatische Studien – Études Asiatiques*, 71, 2017, 816. Or, elsewhere: Donner, F.: ʿUthmān and the Rāshidūn Caliphs in Ibn ʿAsākīr's *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*: a Study in Strategies of Compilations, in: *Ibn 'Asākīr and Early Islamic History*, ed. J. E. Lindsay, Princeton, New Jersey (The Darwin Press), 2001, 47; Pauliny, J.: Die Anekdote im Werke Ibn Ḫallikāns, *Asian and African Studies*, 3, 1967, 146; Leder, S. – H. Kilpatrick: Classical Arabic Prose Literature: A Researchers' Sketch Map, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 23, 1992, 16–18; Lauré al-Samarai, N.: *Die Macht der Darstellung: Gender, sozialer Status, historiographische Re-Präsentation: zwei Frauenbiographien aus der frühen Abbasidenzeit*, Wiesbaden (Reichert Verlag), 2001, 21. Schoeler also points out the literary tendency of the so-called transmitters when he talks about Ibn Isḥāq's (d. 767) *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. (Schoeler 2011, 61.)

[331] Gharaibeh, M.: Introduction, in: *Beyond Authenticity: Alternative Approaches to Hadith and Hadith Literature*, ed. M. Gharaibeh, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2023, 6; Gharaibeh, M.: The *'awālī* Genre and Its Social Dimension, in: *Beyond Authenticity: Alternative Approaches to Hadith and Hadith Literature*, ed. M. Gharaibeh, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2023, 162. See also: Burge, 2019, 87–110; Burge, S. R.: Compilation Criticism: Exploring Overarching Structures in the *Six Books*, in: *Beyond Authenticity: Alternative Approaches to Hadith and Hadith Literature*, ed. M. Gharaibeh, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2023, 20–59.

[332] Malti-Douglas, through the examination of one person's biography, shows how a person may be described in different ways through the authors' careful and conscious handling of the available material. (Malti Douglas, F.: Controversy and Its Effects in the Biographical Tradition of Al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādī, *Studia Islamica*, 46, 1977, 115–131.) Julia Bray discusses the authors' literary creativity in the process of meaning-making in connection with biographical dictionaries. (Bray, J.: Literary Approaches to Medieval and Early Modern Arabic Biography, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. Third Series*, 20, 2010, 237–253.) Hilary Kilpatrick focuses on the role of chronology in "adab biographies". (Kilpatrick, H.: Time and Death in Compiled *Adab* "Biographies", *al-Qanṭara*, 25, 2004, 387–412.) Konrad Hirschler mentions authorial intention in connection with historiography. (Hirschler, K.: Studying Mamluk Historiography. From Source-Criticism to the Cultural Turn, in: *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies – State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann, Goettingen (V&R unipress), 2013, 167.); Fahndrich also emphasizes that the material of biographical writing is not put one after the other without any conscious reason. (Fahndrich, 1973, 438.) The same statement is made by Malti-Douglas in her study on al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's work on the *ṭufaylī*s (party-crashers). (Malti-Douglas, F.: Structure and Organization in a Monographic *Adab* Work: *Al-Tafṭīl* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 40, 1981, 231–232.) "…in the hands of a sophisticated writer a compilation can approach the individuality of an original work." Leder, S. – H. Kilpatrick: Classical Arabic Prose Literature: A Researchers' Sketch Map, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 23, 1992, 3.)

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Burge concludes, "compilation becomes authorship, albeit not authorship of the words themselves, but authorship of a message or discourse".[333]

As I mentioned, the compiler does not remain hidden behind his text; he has a specific purpose and method to express that purpose. Ibn Khallikān specifically emphasized that he wished to organize the available material as he found that organization was lacking so far.[334] His organization is alphabetical in order to make navigating the collection easier.[335] Furthermore, he also expresses his intent to apply selectivity concerning the material when he opts for dispensing with that part of the material of early Islam, which is well-known to everybody. At the same time, he does not wish to limit his discussion of personalities to a particular social stratum.[336] However, he is not the only one keen to express his method of writing. Al-Nuwayrī, for one, is quite preoccupied with elaborating his method of writing with particular attention to how he selects his material.[337] And the list goes on, seeing that if a preface is attached to a collection, it is to express the author's views regarding his work. Even if it is as short as Ibn Ḥijja's preface, in which he only mentions the reasons behind the title he had chosen.[338] These views will be elaborated on later, but for the moment, suffice it to say that these views make a compiler an author as well: he is creating something new from a common stock through interpretation and presentation with a specific purpose in mind. This expression of intent and its realization is what Ulrich Marzolph means by *how* in the above quotation, and this is what I will refer to as authorial intention.

Stefan Leder also supports the idea of authorship of historiographical collections, but he denies the author's presence in the narrative. He claims him to be invisible, hidden behind the characters of the narrative.[339] He proposes structural and narrative reasons for the absence of the author, claiming that if an author's creativity can be traced in a *khabar* narrative, it goes against the whole convention of the *khabar* form since the *isnād* stands as an authenticating

[333] Burge, 2019, 90.
[334] Ibn Khallikān, Abū al-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr: *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, I, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1972, 20.
[335] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, I, 20. This is what al-Damīrī claims, too. (al-Damīrī, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mūsā: *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, I, Dimashq (Dār al-Bashāʾir), 2005/1426, 37.)
[336] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, I, 20. As far as selectivity goes, al-Ṣafadī in his *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr* talks about how he wishes to make this work differ from his great collection, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, and as opposed to that work, he now concentrates on his contemporary history. (al-Ṣafadī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak: *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, I, Dimashq (Dār al-Fikr), 1998/1418, 38.) Ibn Fahd, like Ibn Khallikān, bases the criteria of inclusion on personal merits. (Ibn Fahd, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥmūd b. Sulaymān: *Manāzil al-aḥbāb wa-manāzih al-albāb*, ed. Muḥammad al-Dībājī, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 2012, 1.)
[337] al-Nuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb: *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, I, al-Qāhira (Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya), n.d., 3–17.
[338] Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad: *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Bayrūt (al-Maktaba al-ʿAsriyya), 2005/1426, 11.
[339] Leder, 1990, 73; Leder, 1992, 284, 304–306.

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force at the beginning of the *khabar* against which the author has no right to go if he wishes to keep up authenticity.[340] I do not wish to deny the veracity of this statement, as it was made in connection with the historiographical material. Furthermore, the observation does not deny the possibility of change within the *matn*.[341] It simply attributes much more significance to the chain of authorities than a literary approach would. I have to make some additional observations that pertain to the present study of the *Nights* and explain my view on the author's presence in the literary work.

First of all, it has to be remembered that the author is absent only in as much as his personal thoughts and opinion of the content of his material are concerned. He is very much present during the creation of the work; as was shown during the discussion of the prefaces, there is a conscious effort behind the compilation. This statement draws attention to our second observation: there are levels of literary expression where literary creativity may manifest. The level of the individual *khabar* is not such one. Leder talks about *narrative* and *narration*, that is, the individual *khabar* in the latter case and the sequence of those *akhbār* in the former. I would add the compilation to this division of narrative levels, and, indeed, so does Julia Bray when she uses the terms *text* and *metatext* to distinguish between a larger narrative made up of smaller independent items. In this context, metatexts are "works which, on an individual and *ad hoc* basis, make up their own rules for reading the smaller texts of which they are formed: in this instance, biographies (*tarājim*, sing, *tarjama*) and their components, items of information (*akhbār*, sing, *khabar*), which may take both narrative and non-narrative forms, e.g. names, dates, definitions, classifications, evaluations, bibliographies, quotations, anecdotes".[342] Either way, Leder's claim stands true: the narrative of the *khabar* (the text handed down through a chain of transmitters) cannot be meddled with without losing authenticity. The overall narrative, however, is not subjected to such restraints. As long as the individual *akhbār* retain their authenticity, the arrangement of these *akhbār* within the narrative – and the compilation, too – is up to the author.

However, the presence of the *isnād* does not only affect authenticity; it has a profound influence on the narrative as well. If discourse is affected – whether by the transformation or complete lack of *isnād* –, certain generic characteristics may be observed, which aids interpretation. Interpretation, in turn, presupposes the presence of the *author* and the *reader*, making the author very much present even on the narrative level of the *khabar*. That is the

[340] Leder, 1990, 73–74.
[341] Leder, 1988, 77.
[342] Bray, 2010, 244.

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primary concern of the present study. The short narratives of the *Nights* leave even the pretense of the *isnād* behind; the only thing they preserve from that part of the narrative structure of the *khabar* is the implicit presence of an act of narrating. In this form, the creative presence of the author is even more prominent. Indeed, in the following, the stories of the *Nights* are discussed individually; when grouped together, it is only to highlight certain characteristic features – corresponding or different – not to express narrative continuity among them. They do not form narratives; as Leder refers to the sequences of *akhbār*, they are the narratives.

That the author is part of a kind of communication is evidenced by its definition. "To treat writers as authors, […], is to take a particular attitude toward their texts: it is to ask of them a certain type of question and to expect a certain type of answer",[343] claims Alexander Nehamas. What is more relevant at the moment is that, during his investigation of the term *khabar*, Lakhdar Souami also pointed out the role of communication in the conception of the term.[344] The previous statements do not only imply that the author expresses his intention in the framework of certain expectations (literary convention) but also point to the participation of the reader (his interpretation) in the process. This mutual relationship between author and reader is what Lassner emphasizes in his discussion of the study of Islamic history when he says:

> the author, ever so conscious of his audience […] preferred a less direct mode of discourse. He held back explication and merely directed the reader to a given position. Leaving behind traces of a subtle pattern that had been woven into the text, he relied on an inquisitive reader to discover the traces, make the necessary connections, and reconstruct the broader design that explains the central meaning of the account.[345]

It is not only modern literary theory that recognizes this relationship between *author* and *reader*. There is a long and complicated history of authors and readers in Islam, even before that. In his works, Gregor Schoeler draws up the transformation of this relationship in early Islam,[346] while Konrad Hirschler discusses the relationship in the late Middle Ages.[347] What is of significance for the present study is that with the appearance of books and writerly culture, there was a change in the relationship between author and reader (or teacher and student in the earlier periods),[348] which gave more freedom for the reader and put a distance between the

[343] Nehamas, A.: What an Author Is, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 83, 1986, 685.
[344] Souami, L.: Introduction a la théorie du ḫabar chez Ǧāḥiẓ: définition et constitution, *Studia Islamica*, 53, 1981, 48.
[345] Lassner, J.: "Doing" Early Islamic History: Brooklyn Baseball, Arabic Historiography, and Historical Memory, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114, 1994, 7.
[346] See: Schoeler, G.: *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, transl. U. Vagelpohl, ed. J. E. Montgomery, London – New York (Routledge), 2006; Schoeler, G.: *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press), 2011.
[347] Hirschler, 2012.
[348] In early Islam, oral transmission was deemed the most respected way of transferring knowledge preserved in memory and, later, in written works. Emphasis was on the presence of the author (teacher) either as he was

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author and his work. Consequently, interpretation, independent of the author, became possible, and the author became the reader of his own work. This change is especially true for the pre-modern period.

We have seen that the author as the creative force behind a literary work is an existing concept in pre-modern Arabic literature. Similarly, the existence of the reader and the author's awareness of this reader are also alluded to in contemporary works. Al-Ibshīhī does not only hope that he can facilitate for the reader whatever he would look for in his collection, but he also defines his goal to delight ears and eyes alike and to make the reader's heart lighter.[349] Ibn Khallikān also alludes to the fact that he has considerations for his reader when, after giving the title of his book, he explains that he had chosen a title that is informative of the content of the book.[350] Elias Muhanna in his monograph on al-Nuwayrī's enormous work of *Nihāyat al-arab*, stresses the author's awareness of his readers and describes those methods which were implemented to aid reading.[351] As a whole, there are apparent considerations toward the reader on the author's part when organizing his material. Providing information in an aesthetically pleasing and entertaining way is a clear indication of this intent, which is then embodied in how the author treats his material regarding organization and selectivity.

The relationship between authorial intention and reader's interpretation has to be considered since the relationship between the two is not absolute. To read a text with the exact psychological processes of the author – the historical figure – is impossible even in the case of contemporary works, not to mention those which originate in a distant historical era. Interpretation highly depends on the circumstances of reading,[352] of which writing is only a variant. It depends on the state of mind, historical circumstances, dispositions, and the reader's background knowledge. Interpretation, both writing and reading, is so circumstantial that not even the author can be regarded as an authoritative figure in interpretation. Nevertheless, there is an author behind every work.

presenting his knowledge or as a student of his was reading his work. In the absence of the author, an authorized transmitter took his place, who could either claim that he had read the author's work in his presence, or he could provide a chain of authorized transmitters traced back to the author himself. This way the complete and exact understanding of the text was ensured.

[349] al-Ibshīhī, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad: *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*, Bayrūt (Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt), 1992/1412, I, 7.

[350] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, I, 21.

[351] Muhanna, E.: *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*, Princeton – Oxford (Princeton University Press), 2018, esp. 29–55.

[352] Iser, W.: The Reading Process – A Phenomenological Approach, *New Literary History*, 3, 1972, 285–286.

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However, this author has to be regarded as a construct. It is impossible to know the actual historical figure of the author, that is, the actual writer of the text. The works do not provide the means for that. Nevertheless, they provide the means to get to know "a plausible historical variant of the writer"[353] who might have written the work. It is a postulation only, that is, what we do in the absence of concrete historical and biographical facts (which would still be short of giving a complete picture of the individual): we construct history. We construct a piece of the puzzle that fits the larger picture. This piece cannot stand independently and cannot be forced into the picture. It has to be supported by what we know so far. In this respect, the *postulated author*[354] is the result of the interpretative process of the reader. Nevertheless, he is also the one who is considered the creative force behind the literary work.[355]

As such, we have to address the problem of authorial intention as well. Even more so that the term will be an integral part of the following discussions. We have just established that the notion of the author is only an ideological construct, a postulation. It is something that the reader creates during the process of interpretation. Consequently, the same stands true for the intention of this ideological construct: the intention of the author is perceived by the reader during his construction of the author of the text. This intention is not the writer's explicit intention but a hypothetical one that comes into being during the reader's interpretation of the literary work and, with that, the postulated author. This interpretation is not entirely free of the writer's intention as it is based on the written text, but it does not align with it completely, either,[356] since it is colored by the reader's personal knowledge and experience. The text the author had written is not the same text the reader is reading; there are only potential texts, as Wolfgang Iser refers to the possible readings of a literary work.[357] This collaboration between author and reader frees the idea of authorial intent from being an "intentional fallacy".[358]

[353] Nehamas, 1986, 689.
[354] Further readings on the postulated author: Nehamas, A.: The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal, *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 1981, 133–149; Nehamas, 1986, 685–691; Kindt, T. – H.-H. Müller: Six Ways Not to Save the Implied Author, *Style*, 45, 2011, 69–74; Nelles, W.: A Hypothetical Implied Author, *Style*, 45, 2011, 109–118.
[355] Nehamas, 1981, 145.
[356] See: Levinson, 1996, 175–213. See the criticism of hypothetical intentionalism in Iseminger, G.: Actual Intentionalism vs. Hypothetical Intentionalism, *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, 54, 1996, 319–326; Carroll, N.: Interpretation and Intention: The Debate between Hypothetical and Actual Intentionalism, *Metaphilosophy*, 31, 2000, 75–95; Kindt – Müller, 2011, 69–74.
[357] Iser, 1972, 285, 290. From a different perspective but E. D. Hirsch also claims that a text does not have one single meaning but possible implications which the reader generates. (Hirsch, E. D.: *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven – London (Yale University Press), 1967, 24–67.)
[358] Wimstatt, W. K. – M. C. Beardsley: The Intentional Fallacy, *The Sewansee Review*, 54, 1946, 468–488. See the criticism of it: Hermerén, 1975, 57–75.

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This view needs some explanation on my part. I support the idea of the postulated author and, with it, hypothetical intentionalism because of two reasons. First, the person of the actual writer of texts is such an uncertain idea when one considers pre-modern Arabic literature. Even philologists struggle with the notion of the writer. As it stands, the existence of various scattered manuscripts of one single work and the lost manuscripts of such works that now can only be constructed from various mentions in other collections do not help the endeavors to construct the actual writer of a work. If anything, the various hands of copyists and compilers make this notion of the writer a fallacy. However, philologists have a different set of questions and handle the available material differently.

Leder talks about divergency and convergency on the textual level in connection with the different versions of a *khabar*.[359] These terms denote different types of adaptations of a text. In the first case, the adaptation shows such a great degree of variation regarding the version compared to it that they cannot be regarded as having the same source. In the second case, the degree of adaptation does not make this separation of the versions necessary: they can still be considered to come from the same source. Leder uses discourse to determine authorship, the source of the material at hand. Here, he presupposes an original text (the source material) to which later authors refer back in the chains of authorities they use. By identifying divergent and convergent variants, he can name the author of the original source and the original version of the text. This is the philologist's way. The literary critic poses different questions and uses different methods of approach. In literary analysis, the different versions, divergent or convergent, tell us about that particular text. There is no need for pinpointing the original version because every version is the original one in that respect that it is the result of the author's creative process. These versions do not need to be in a chronological link to carry information. Again, the literary critic is searching for different information than the philologist.

For a philologist, "authorship mingles with transmission in a twofold manner: first, through the process of adaptation and the reshaping of *akhbār*, and, secondly, through the arrangement of materials which fashion the *akhbārī*'s repertoire over time".[360] For the philologist, authorship means being part of a tradition that assigns authentication to the texts the author reports. For the literary scholar, authorship ignores the line of transmission and the authenticating process. For the literary scholar, the author is the sole creative force behind the literary work, mindful of the literary convention but not strictly bound by them. It may even be said that the writer's product is a text while the author's product is a literary work. While a text

[359] Leder, 1988, 67–81.
[360] Leder, 1988, 81.

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is discussed in a purely textual context by philologists, the literary work's contextuality is wider and necessitates the involvement of other aspects of literary analysis, which I conceptualize in the framework of literary communication. That may also explain the different conceptions of writer and author in philology and literature. It is still the text in the center of attention, but the consequences of certain textual changes are not interpreted only in connection to other texts but in connection with the process of how it is brought about by the author and how meaning is attached to it by the reader. It is through these processes that a text becomes a literary work. In this respect, the changes are not examined diachronically but synchronically.

Although the previous line of thoughts may seem a digression, it brings an important problem to the fore: not only the definition of author and writer is relevant to the present study, but the definition of text and literary work as well. There is a significant difference between handling a text[361] as a literary narrative or a historiographical one. In their appropriate literary contexts, some texts are more open to interpretation than others. A legal document cannot mean more than what is intended by the words written down. In contrast, the material of *adab* is more accommodating to different interpretations depending on the literary conventions they are a part of, that is, the purpose of the author.[362] In this respect, *text* is the material that, placed in different literary contexts according to specific purposes, can communicate a meaning which is in accordance with the purpose assigned to the text by assuming the characteristics required for that purpose in order for the reader to be able to decode the message. However, to be able to do that, it requires an author who can reinforce the meaning through the application of various literary devices. The short narratives in the *Nights* are even more susceptible to interpretations.

This approach to author and writer, on the one hand, and text and literary work, on the other, is even more valid in the case of the *Nights*. It is a work without a complete manuscript, and no writer can be named as the sole source of its text. This state of affairs renders regarding

[361] On the difference between *text* and *literary work*, see: Levinson, 1996, 197; Iser, 1978, 21; Harker, 1988, 8–10.

[362] Purpose is, then, the literary convention into which the author places his work to obtain a meaning according to his authorial intention. Authorial intention and purpose are not the same thing. Purpose gives the framework for the authorial intention to be able to be expressed. Nicola Lauré al-Samarai makes an interesting observation in the *Introduction* of his monography on biographical writing concerning women according to which the various forms of historical writing (from the more specialized writings of *ayyām al-ʿarab*, *sīra al-nabawiyya*, *al-maghāzī* etc. to the general histories on the one hand and the more localized histories on the other) represented such a literary environment in which the author had the opportunity to handle the available material in a creative way. (Lauré al-Samarai, N.: *Die Macht der Darstellung: Gender, sozialer Status, historiographische Re-Präsentation: zwei Frauenbiographien aus der frühen Abbasidenzeit*, Wiesbaden (Reichert Verlag), 2001, 7.) This statement, applying to literature in general, implies that choosing a field of literature and a specific form of expression (on the level of the collection) are the first steps in the author's expression of intent. As said above, it provides that fixed framework (the literary convention) for the expression of authorial intention in which later the interpretation of the reader can take place.

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the *Nights* as a literary work especially problematic. That is why talking about the concept of the *Nights* and the existence of its versions (manuscripts, edited volumes, and translations) is vital in a literary approach. The text handled as a literary work cannot be regarded either as the original text from which other versions originate or as the version which is in an intrinsic relationship with the original one and every other version in-between and beyond those versions. It has to be recognized as an independent version connected to the work called *The Thousand and One Nights*, not by temporal and genealogical constraints but by ideological ones. Accordingly, Calcutta II is just as much representative of the *Nights* as any other manuscript or edition.

Furthermore, every single version has a rich line of collaborators from whom neither can be taken as the writer of any text considered the *Nights*. However, taken together, they can stand as the postulated author of a literary work. It is not the writer we have to suppose as the creator of the various versions but a hypothetical, or postulated author, who may very well not be one person in reality but whose work is actually in front of us. It is not the writer we get to know through the text but the author.[363]

The second reason for supporting the idea of postulated author and hypothetical intentionalism is that they give room to both author and reader in interpretation while other theories like actual intentionalism emphasize the author to such a degree that it actually coincides with the actual writer of a text. In these cases, there is only one intention expressed, and that is the writer's. However, interpreting a work is much more than finding the writer's actual intention (if such a thing is possible), and the reader has an especially creative role in it. The text the reader is reading is not the same text the writer had written. It becomes severed from the writer and becomes an author's literary work. As John Reichert puts it: "The author makes the poem and leaves it for the reader to do with it what he will: contemplate it, read it, experience, judge it."[364] This author cannot be the writer, however. At least, not entirely. There

[363] The question of authorship in connection with the *Nights* has been brought up implicitly or explicitly in various studies: Muhawi, I.: The Arabian Nights and the Question of Authorship, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 36, 2005, 323–337; Irwin, R.: *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London – New York (Tauris Parke Books), 2005, 43–62; Pinault, D.: *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*, Leiden (Brill), 1992, 16–24; Marzolph, U.: Making Sense of the *Nights*: Intertextual Connections and Narrative Techniques in the *Thousand and One Nights*, *Narrative Culture*, 1, 2014, 240, 244; Gerhardt, M. I.: *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1963, 39–41, 58–59. Authorship in connection with translation: Reynolds, D. F.: A Thousand and One Nights: a history of the text and its reception, in: *Arabic Literature in the Post Classical Period*, eds. R. Allen and D. S. Richards, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 2006, 270–291; Sallis, E.: *Sheherezade through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of the Thousand and One Nights*, London – New York (Routledge), 1999, 43–64.

[364] Reichert, 1977, 60. The same thought is expressed by Richard van Leeuwen in his discussion of the European translations of the *Nights* and how they influenced European literature and its generic system from the 18th century. (van Leeuwen, R.: European Translations of the Thousand and One Nights and Their Reception: Oriental

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are aspects of this author the reader creates by interpretation. This is the postulated author: the writer and the author. The hypothetical interpretation of the reader is not false as far as the text and his background knowledge support it, but it necessarily, cannot coincide precisely with the writer's intention, that is, the writer's interpretation of his text as a reader. As it was said, no two readers can read the same text in the same way. It does not mean that it cannot happen, however.

It is not only the author, then, who has an active role in shaping the interpretation of the text. As W. John Harker summarizes, the reader also "actively participates in the text in order to make meaning of it".[365] The concept of a reader may seem strange in the context of Arabic literature, given the emphasis on its predominantly oral nature, even despite the significant output of written works. However, the fact that the authors of the Arabic collections wrote with the reader in mind had already been shown when discussing their prefaces. Scholarly research also starts to recognize the reader's existence by implication or focused discussion. In his work about reading practices in medieval Arabic societies, Konrad Hirschler states that he is not as concerned with the making of a text as with its reception.[366] When discussing the readings of *Tārīkh Dimashq* by Ibn al-ʿAsākir, Hirschler makes mention of the layers of meaning that the readers might have found appealing.[367] In her article on Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, Lale Behzadi discusses the author's awareness of his readers.[368] Robert G. Hoyland recognizes the interconnected role of author and reader in the differing readings of history and fiction when he says: "the intention of the writer and the reception by the audience will often differ in each case".[369]

The term *reader* does not have to be understood strictly, since it does not imply the act of reading itself but the consumption of a literary work in general and the processes this consumption entails, that is, the meaning-making process. The meaning the reader creates is not only semantic but encompasses all aspects of literary creativity, from the most mundane to the most creative.[370] It includes recognizing vocabulary, certain structural features, and, of

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[365] Harker, 1988, 11.

[366] Hirschler, 2012, 2.

[367] Hirschler, 2012, 58.

[368] Behzadi, L.: The Art of Entertainment: Forty Nights with Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, in: *The Weaving of Words: Approaches to Classical Arabic Prose*, eds. L. Behzadi and V. Behmardi, Orient-Institut (Beirut), 2009, 165–166, 168–172.

[369] Hoyland, R. G.: History, Fiction and Authorship in the First Centuries of Islam, in: *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*, ed. J. Bray, London – New York (Routledge), 2006, 19.

[370] Levinson distinguishes between categorical intention and semantic intention (Levinson, 1996, 188–189) E. D. Hirsch talks about something similar in connection with generic expectations. (Hirsch, 1967, 71–77, esp. 72.)

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course, a deeper meaning to the text. All these activities are what I refer to as the meaning-making process. Similar to the concept of the author, the reader is not an actual person, either. As it has been pointed out, numerous interpretations are possible through the interpretative processes of just as many readers. It will not do to try to give an account of all. Instead, we can create the concept of the *appropriate reader* as Levinson describes it in his essay: "one versed in and cognizant of the tradition out of which the work arises, acquainted with the rest of the author's oeuvre, and perhaps familiar as well with the author's public literary and intellectual identity or persona".[371] I will refer to this kind of reader as the *informed reader* whose interpretation, that is, whose concept of the postulated author, is as close to that of the actual writer as possible. In this case, the meaning-making process of the informed reader closely coincides with the creative process of the *postulated author*, making the understanding of the work a unified effort on both parts. Accordingly, in the following, interpretation will refer to both the author's creative process in expressing his intention and the process of meaning-making on the reader's part.

The meaning-making process, that is, interpretation on the reader's part is neither definite nor complete. There are no absolute answers to the questions posed, and there might as well not be one good answer to them.[372] As such, we have to agree with Nehamas' observation: "Interpretation, therefore, places a text within a perpetually broadening context, not within a continually deepening one".[373] Every interpretation a reader makes gives something more to the understanding of a work but does not make the understanding of the work more exact.

However, at this point, the reader of Arabic literature encounters difficulty. Harker talks about "the infinitude of possible meanings" in literary texts, which, ultimately, differentiates them from everyday texts, "from texts whose objective is to describe a positivistic, determinable reality".[374] The difficulty to align pre-modern Arabic literature with this understanding of literature lies in our understanding of literature itself. In the Western conception of the term, the literary text creates a "separate, self-referential world"[375] of which pre-modern Arabic literature is not capable. In Arabic literature, the world of the literary work is much more intervened with the real world than the modern conception of the term. This fact is well-attested,

[371] Levinson, 1996, 183. See also the concept of *competent reader* of Thomas Kent: Kent, 1986, 16–20. W. Daniel Wilson gives an excellent overview of a great number of concepts which tend to describe the reader and his relationship to the text. (Wilson, W. D.: Readers in Texts, *PMLA*, 96, 1981, 848–863.)
[372] Harker, 1988, 13. This is also Hirsch's observation and his main point of departure of the penultimate chapter of his book, attempting to show how interpretation works and how the various interpretations may "deepen our understanding". (Hirsch, 1967, 127–163.)
[373] Nehamas, 1986, 688.
[374] Harker, 1988, 12.
[375] Harker, 1988, 7.

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on the one hand, in the manifold meaning of *adab* and the difficulty to translate it, and, on the other, by the strong tendency to judge a work by its truth-value, which is a recurring motif in the terminological definition of any piece of writing. That is not to say that interpretation is fixed in this literature. It is not. However, it is more limited and can be understood differently than in modern theory.

This observation brings us back to the terminological examination in Chapter 1. The discussion of the various terms found in the contemporary dictionaries highlighted the significance of the texts depicting fact or fiction. The main aspect of this differentiation is whether a text is authorized; that is, whether it tells the truth or a lie. This aspect of pre-modern Arabic literature is succinctly presented by Robert G. Hoyland, who describes the differing attitudes of the *muḥaddith*, the *akhbārī*, the *adīb*, and the *qāṣṣ* towards truth and falsity.[376] This relation to reality is a pivotal characteristic of pre-modern Arabic literature and the acknowledgment of its role in the system of literature is essential in the understanding – and appreciation – of these works.

This is exactly where the present study proves useful. From the original question of generic classification, it became apparent that the fundamental problem lies in the general disregard of the differences between the source and the target culture and their literature. There is a system in our literature that had been developing during our history; a system which, in the case of genre classification, may be considered old-fashioned in the quickly evolving theory of literature, still remains interpretable because its indigenousness. This connection is missing when Arabic literature is discussed within this same system. Arabic literature went through its own development and worked out its own theory of literature and did it with a markedly different result. The gap mentioned in Chapter 1 is the result of the divergence between the two theories. I find that literary communication with the above-described theoretical constructs is able to bridge the gap, enabling us to discuss pre-modern Arabic prose literature in a more comprehensive and a decidedly less extraneous manner while, at the same time, the concepts are not alienated from our familiar system, either.

In the light of all of the above, I intend to show that pre-modern Arabic prose literature can express various authorial intents and, for that, relies heavily on the interpretative abilities of the reader. What is of crucial importance here is the conventions that govern this interpretation. The followers of hypothetical intentionalism set a strict divide between everyday communication and literary communication, a divide that does not exist in pre-modern Arabic

[376] Hoyland, 2006, 19–25.

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literature. The real world is pervasive in every aspect of literature, even when discussing the most wondrous tales of the *Nights*. With such firm reference to the real world, especially in the *akhbār* material of Arabic literature, communication, though not exclusively ordinary, preserves a strong tie to it. This observation links the interpretative process of the reader more to the theory of actual intentionalism, where the everyday and literary communications are dealt with in the same way in that respect that the reader needs to discover the real intention of an actual writer since, as Iseminger claims, "failure to grasp the actual semantic intentions of an interlocutor is a conversational failure".[377]

Nevertheless, I maintain my support for the veracity of the hypothetical internationalist claim of the reader not being able to discover "the actual semantic intentions" of an author. Even though we cannot talk about literary communication here as we may do in modern literature, the fact remains that this communication is not an ordinary conversation, either. It may very well be that what pre-modern Arabic literature expresses differs from what modern literature expresses, but it does express something more than idle chat about the weather, for example. The conventions that regulate this kind of communication are not the conventions of everyday talk but ones that are part of a literary tradition. This tradition understands literature and its relation to the world differently than modern literature.

3.3. Concluding Remarks

The theoretical framework I am proposing for studying *The Thousand and One Nights* and the problems concerning the generic interpretation of its stories strives for a kind of inclusiveness of theoretical approaches of the last decades. This framework is based on a kind of communication that stresses the importance of its participants and their influencing factors. It emphasizes the relationship among all the aspects that determine this communication.

In my understanding, one does not need to talk about genres in order to be able to understand the short narratives of pre-modern Arabic literature. On the contrary, using generic terms significantly restricts understanding. Pre-modern Arabic literature is more about contextual interpretation than the recognition of genre-specific elements. It is well-attested by the haphazard use of generic denominations by the writers concerning the short narratives. It seems that names of genres are only secondary to the actual utilization, that is, the appropriate expression and interpretation of specific meanings.

[377] Iseminger, 1996, 324.

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Of course, we must handle any observation resulting from this fact carefully. Even without the distance in time and the difference in cultures, the reader's interpretation of a work is prone to errors.[378] It is substantially more so in the case of the present material. What we have to keep in mind is that: 1) the author in question is a constructed idea, 2) the texts under scrutiny are only one fixed version of those texts which various writers had written, and 3) the reader in question is an ideal, informed reader, not the contemporary reader, neither the modern reader. I maintain that, with the observations of these facts and with the application of the appropriate historical, cultural and literary context, we may get as close to a contemporary reading, or at least, as close to an unbiased (as in free from modern Western projections) reading as it is possible.

In general, I argue for the interpretation of a literary work outside of the generic constraints; this interpretation is only possible through the interrelation of purpose, form, and meaning, which becomes manifest through the process of interpretation in a given literary context. This literary context is, on the one hand, part of the author's knowledge and is the context in which his purpose is expressed; on the other hand, it belongs to the meaning-making process of the reader with his background knowledge. *Genre* in the classificatory sense is something we, the Western audience, try to stick to the Arabic literary works, but Arabic literature is more intentional than classificatory in that regard that it can express different things with the same material, with the same form and it does not need new forms, new genres to tell what they want to tell.

[378] Reichert, 1977, 63.

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4. *Author, Reader and Text in Interpretation: Reading the Short Narratives of* The Thousand and One Nights *in the Framework of Literary Communication*

Previously, I argued for the compiler being the author of his own work on the basis of the creative work he does when selecting, organizing and appropriating his material to make up one cohesive unit. This argument, however, needs some revisions and explanations. Although Stefan Leder also supports this idea of authorship, he also seems to contradict the point when he states that "*akhbār* do not denote any involvement on the author's part".[379] To understand this dichotomy of the concept of author in pre-modern Arabic literature, we have to understand the strict conventions which govern this literature. We have already mentioned the relationship between these narratives and reality and the close relationship between the presence of the *isnād* and the narratives' veracity as authoritative texts in Islamic scholarship and historiography. As Leder continues, "[t]he alleged realism of these texts is due to two important elements: first, the chain of transmitters, which supports the reliability of the narration, and second, narrative technique, which enables the narrator to remain in the background and even to hide behind the characters of the narrative".[380] From a different point of view but the same conclusions have been drawn during our discussion of narrative modes in the *khabar* form.

The Arab authors work with a version or versions of a given text which has a tradition of transmission. In this respect, these texts are indeed copied. They have to be because of the chain of authorities which attest to their authenticity. Scholars who are talking about authorship in connection with this material, do not claim that authors manipulate the text of the material itself. What they argue for is the authors' creative process in selectivity, organization and arrangement. In this respect, what they choose to report and how they arrange the chosen material has more informative value than the narratives themselves. In this frame of tradition, the primary meaning of the reported accounts belongs to a group of *akhbār* not one singular narrative. As it was stated: there are narrative levels to consider when the interpretation of a work is considered. The question with which the present chapter is preoccupied is to what extent the collection and other organizational features can influence the understanding of the individual stories.

[379] Leder, S.: The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form of Historical Writing, in: *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, eds. A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad. Princeton (The Darwin Press), 1992, 307.
[380] Leder, 1992, 307.

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In the following we will discuss the different narrative levels and how they influence generic interpretation. The role of the collection and the grouping of *akhbār* will be examined in connection with organization, arrangement and selectivity. The question will be examined first in the wider context of Arabic prose literature and the construction of collections, then the focus will turn to the *Nights* and inquiries will be made regarding the appropriation of the material and relating interpretational issues.

4.1. Organization, Arrangement and Selectivity

4.1.1. Narrative Levels of Interpretation: The Collection

The Mamluk period is considered the heyday of these literary collections.[381] These collections are considered literary not in the strict sense, though. They are not only works belonging to *belles lettres*, or *adab literary works*, as we started to refer to them, but they belong to the more inclusive group of *adab*. This, of course, means that there are biographical and historiographical collections as well to be considered here.

Collections and compilations are, then, a characteristic feature of this literature and as a result, materials always found ways to wander from collection to collection, from one field of literature to another. The aim of this chapter is to describe how this migration influences the way a certain story is dealt with in different collections. Or, to put it in another way, to describe how a particular story is adapted into different collections from the various fields of Arabic literature with special attention to the popular collection of the *Nights*. At the moment, we are exclusively interested in those changes which affect the relationship between collection and story, on the one hand, and the relationship between the various stories of the collection on the other. That is to say, we are interested in those changes that have an effect not on the story itself but how it relates to other stories and the collection in general. To be able to do that, I will refer back to our discussion of genre description and I will point out the most important features which aid genre recognition either on the level of collection or that of the individual stories.

[381] Bauer, Th.: Literarische Anthologien der Mamlūkenzeit, in*: Die Mamlūken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur*, eds. S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam, Hamburg (EB-Verlag), 2003. (See also: fn. 73.) Ulrich Marzolph gives a short but insightful description of encyclopedias and anthologies of the pre-modern period: Mazolph, U.: Coining the Essentials: Arabic Encyclopaedias and Anthologies of the Pre-Modern Period, in *Collector's Knowledge: What Is Kept, What Is Discarded*, eds. A-S. Goeing, A. Grafton and P. Michel, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2013, 31–40. Elias Muhanna discusses the subject in connection with al-Nuwayrī's work: Muhanna, E.: *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*, Princeton – Oxford (Princeton University Press), 2018, 5–28.

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In connection with the definitions of terms, we have already touched upon the question of the different levels of genre description. It was implied during the discussion of *aḍdād* and *tabaqāt*, *qaṣīda* and *khabar* that there are levels to consider when we are talking about genre in pre-modern Arabic literature. This suggests that Arabic literature was indeed aware of the difference between these levels. As it stands, this observation also coincides with our observation regarding the narrative levels of interpretation which further supports our claim that generic recognition is only one aspect of interpretation. Let us now consider it more closely and discuss the relationship between collections and how they may influence the interpretation of the individual stories in them.

For this purpose, I singled out one group of stories which is represented in various works of the Mamlūk era. In this particular instance, my establishment of a group was defined by one tale-type which is based on Hans-Jörg Uther's typological index of folktales and Hasan El-Shamy's work that is the application of this same index for Arabic works. It is tale-type 0779D§, which is given the heading of *Nature Changes According to How People Treat One Another* by El-Shamy[382] and is described by Uther as one "comprises various tales dealing with divine rewards and punishments from God".[383] This tale-type is represented by *Ḥikāyat al-malik Kisrā Anūshirwān ma' al-jāriya* (*King Kisra Anoushirwan and the Village Damsel*), henceforth *Anūshirwān* (III.23.). Similar stories are found in such works as Ibn ʿArabshāh's *Fākihat al-khulafā' wa-mufākihat al-ẓurafā'*,[384] al-Ibshīhī's *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*,[385] al-Damīrī's *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*,[386] and Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*.[387]

The stories belonging to this group show some variations that seemingly make them differ from one another but fundamentally they are just the same. The general story-line goes as follows: a ruler is faced with a curious natural phenomenon – cows give plenty of milk, the sugar cane yields a lot of sugar, at some places fish are jumping into the net or date palms bear many fruits. With this knowledge, he decides upon exploiting the strange phenomenon, but his

[382] El-Shamy, H. M.: *Types of the Folktale in the Arab World: A Demographically Oriented Tale-Type Index*, Bloomington – Indianapolis (Indiana University Press), 2004, 436–437.
[383] Uther, H.-J.: *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, Helsinki (Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica), 2004, I, 436.
[384] Ibn ʿArabshāh: *Fākihat al-khulafā' wa-mufākihat al-ẓurafā'*, al-Qāhira (Dār al-Āfāq al-ʿArabiyya), 2001/1421, 54–58.
[385] al-Ibshīhī, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*, Bayrūt (Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt), 1992/1412, I, 160–161.
[386] al-Damīrī, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mūsā: *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, Dimashq (Dār al-Bashā'ir), 2005/1426, I, 488–491.
[387] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Bayrūt, 1972, V, 285–286.

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idea is almost immediately followed by a negative turn. This turn is explained: the ruler had an unjust, selfish idea that is punished by nature itself. The ruler repents his behavior and as a result, everything is back to normal – his subjects are content, and he learned his lesson.

Having outlined the plot of the stories, it became clear that the structure can be drawn up with a general model. Naturally, there are differences between various examples, ranging from the names and significations of characters or objects to such significant deviations like the functions of characters. These are interesting deviations, but they have no effect on the fundamental structure of the story or its relationship either to the collection or to other stories. Since at present this relationship is exactly what we are discussing, the above-mentioned differences bear no consequence in the present study.

At present, I will mention one example of those changes which are outside of our purview – the changing functions of the characters – only to prove that in the context of the various relationships in the collection, it has no significant effect. Let us consider the story in Ibn ʿArabshāh's work. It differs from the others in the group in various respects and these differences are not only due to naming or the content of motifs. These differences can best be grasped by defining the *function* of motifs.

There are definite differences in this story as opposed to the others: the order of motifs is interchanged, and certain motifs are missing altogether their places taken by new ones. For example, the strange phenomenon ceases to be the reason for the ruler's bad intention, and it is brought about by the village leader's ill manners when he fails to give Bahrām Jūr the respect he deserves. The strange phenomenon is revealed only after that, when, at the close of the day, the shepherd arrives dismayed that the cow yielded little milk. Cause and effect are shifting, and, in this case, the ruler's behavior is more founded, and the resolution is more deserved since it requires active participation on the part of the subjects. It is the village leader's behavior that causes the ruler's negative thoughts concerning them, and it is the leader's change in attitude and the ruler's subsequent change of heart that resolves the situation. The subject of the divine punishment also changes here since it is not the ruler who is punished for his unjust intentions but the people of the village whose leader is the one who has to learn his lesson in this version of the story.

It is also important to note that this story is the longest among all. In itself it would not seem particularly significant, but its elaborateness makes it stand out with its style as well. This can be explained by the origin of the collection: it is the translation of a Persian mirror-for-

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princes, the *Marzūbān nāmeh* by Saʿad al-Dīn Warāwīnī.[388] It had been translated and reworked by Ibn ʿArabshāh.[389] It means that the story stands apart from the others in origin as well.

Interesting as these differences are, however, they do not have any influence on the general structure of the story which becomes more evident if we take a look at the short pieces in al-Ibshīhī's collection.[390] These pieces are the shortest ones in the group, their total length amounting to a couple of lines at best. Their shortness is mirrored in their structure as well which makes them seem to lose the structure that is shared by the members of this group, just like Ibn ʿArabshāh's seemed to lose its own. At the same time, however, with a careful examination, we can realize that these are exactly those stories that exhibit the simplest structure of this tale-type: there is a strange natural phenomenon → it changes because of human behavior → the cause of this change is explained → the wrongs of somebody's ways are realized → the original situation is restored. This is the fundamental structure that is shared by all stories in the group regardless of the differences that may be.

With these examples, I hoped to show that the differences that manifest themselves in the stories but bear no relevance to others fall outside the scope of my present investigation. Consequently, in the framework of the present study, *difference* means those changes that happen during the re-working of stories to fit the particular collections and those which, in spite of not having any significant influence on the plot, do have effects on the story's relationship to others in the collection.

In the following, then, I will concentrate on the method of how compilers work with similar stories and how they adapt them according to their purposes. In this regard, we have to examine the collections' material, their structure, the relationship between the stories contained in the particular collections and we have to study the way all of these things influence the formation of the particular stories.

The first observation concerns the nature of the collections. We have already talked about the problem of *adab*. It was determined then that there is a difference between what we call *adab* and *adab literature*. In accordance with that, we can divide the collections into different categories of which *adab* is only one. Every field of knowledge has its collected works. At

[388] About the Persian work, see: K. C. Williams: *Marzbān-nāma, in: Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2014, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/marzban-nama (last accessed on 10th September, 2023)
[389] Pedersen, J.: Ibn ʿArabshāh, in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, III, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1986, 711–712; Irwin, R.: *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London – New York (Tauris Parke Paperbacks), 2005, 85.
[390] Ulrich Marzolph, in his study about al-Ibshīhī's work, gives a detailed description of the collection's structural composition. The study also provides an exhaustive bibliography of critical studies of this Arabic collection. (Marzolph, U.: Medieval Knowledge in Modern Reading: A Fifteenth-Century Arabic Encylopaedia of Omni Re Scibili, in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996*, ed. P. Binkley, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 1997, 407–419.)

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present, however, we are only concerned with those of *adab*. Evidently, it is *adab* of which *adab* literary collections are a part of, but it shares the field with numerous other works such as historical and travel writings, or biographical works. This, of course, poses the question of whether these groups can be considered the genres of the collections, or simply the results of some kind of thematic classification without any concern for genre on the level of collections.

As I can determine from contemporary research, the former is the predominant conception: scholars in their studies are referring to genres of collections in the same way as they are referring to the genres of various written pieces. Unfortunately, there is no theoretical background provided for this treatment of *genre*. Furthermore, as it was the case with the terms referring to individual pieces of writing, the terminology assigning genre to collections is not agreed upon. The most general way to talk about these works is using encyclopedia or anthology but the usage of the terms is not agreed upon.[391] There are more specialized names applied to these collections which would suggest the later approach of thematic classifications. However, it is not always so, and, in many cases, they are also used as generic denominations. Bilal Orfali provides a list of such terms, concerning *adab* anthologies,[392] while Wadād al-Qāḍī provides one concerning biographical dictionaries.[393]

Keeping with the idea that generic recognition is part of the interpretational process, I will argue for the latter approach and regard collections as integral parts of the interpretational process but not as representing genres themselves. Instead, I maintain that the compilation is the realization of the author's *purpose* which was defined in Chapter 1.4. as the context in which the works contained in it should be read, that is the literary convention. This purpose includes a general objective regarding the reasons behind recording of a story in particular, or a

[391] For an overview of the problem, see: van Gelder, G. J.: Compleat Men, Women and Books: On Medieval Arabic Encyclopaedism, in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996*, ed. P. Binkley, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 1997, 241–259; van Ess, J.: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Islamic World: A Few Questions, and No Answers, in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2006, 3–19; Marzolph, U.: Coining the Essentials: Arabic Encyclopaedias and Anthologies of the Pre-Modern Period, in *Collector's Knowledge: What Is Kept, What Is Discarded*, eds. A-S. Goeing, A. Grafton and P. Michel, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2013, 31–40; Orfali, B.: *The Anthologist's Art: Abū Manṣūr al-Tha'ālibī and His* Yatīmat al-dahr, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2016, 1–33; Muhanna, 2018, 7–13.

[392] Orfali, 2016, 10–33.

[393] The problem of attributing genres to collections is well represented by Wadād al-Qāḍī's study of the biographical dictionaries. Although she provides a valuable list of works specializing in biographical information, the list itself cannot provide any essential information about the biographical dictionary as a genre. The common link between these works is structural, the works belonging to this genre being defined at the beginning by al-Qāḍī as being "of a series of biographies". The problem of such a general description is well highlighted by the fact that al-Qāḍī needs a lengthy explanation of what is not considered a biographical dictionary and by the arbitrary nature of the list of groups of such dictionaries provided, which is based on unrelated concepts which cannot hold together a united concept of genre regarding the biographical dictionaries. (al-Qāḍī, W.: Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance, in: *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed. G. N. Atiyeh, Albany, NY (The State University of New York Press), 1995, 93–122.)

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collection in general. It is an approach the author takes to the material according to whether he wants to preserve said material or wants to teach and entertain with it. It determines the whole concept of his work, that is, whether it is considered historical, biographical, literary, or outside all of these categories, popular. I refer here to Bilal Orfali's definition of the *adab* anthology which he understands "as an *adab* work of literary building blocks that the compiler has put together for a specific purpose, following particular selection criteria".[394]

Regarding the purpose of the compilation, we have to consider the stories that had been chosen to be involved in the collections and the reasons behind that choice. As defined earlier, purpose is the author's choice of literary tradition in which he places his work, and which gives the framework for interpretation. Of course, the collections under scrutiny all belong to the inclusive field of *adab*. As such, they all share the underlying aim of education and preservation of information. However, the main focus of a collection is significantly influenced by how the author defines his purpose within the *adab* traditions.

If there is a preface in the collection, the compiler of an *adab* literary work always claims that the stories in his work are useful, aesthetically pleasing and, of course, entertaining. Al-Ibshīhī puts it nicely when he says that his work is such that "ears delight in it by hearing it and eyes gladden by seeing it, and by reading it, the despondent heart rejoices".[395] This standard becomes some kind of a *trope* in the prefaces which shows that at least the idea of it played a significant role in pre-modern Arabic literature. Similarly, the author of a bibliographical work or a zoological work may place his collection into a more exact literary tradition by mentioning the current state of their field and how he wishes to contribute to it by his newly compiled work. These pieces of information shared in the prefaces imply the range of material selected. Al-Damīrī, for example, complains about the sources dealing with animals being less than thorough which results in the fact that, on many occasions, these sources include false information.[396] Ibn Khallikān, after placing himself in the tradition of those who had been preoccupied with the lives of eminent personalities, laments that the works compiled so far lack any organization.[397]

As noted during the terminological examination, an author may also name the kind of narratives which are to be found in the collection. Although these names seem to be genre denoting terms, it was concluded in Chapter 1 that they do not fulfill such roles. Nor there are definitions provided for them in the prefaces to provide the reader with an idea as of what kind

[394] Orfali, 2016, 9.
[395] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 7.
[396] al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*, I, 35–36.
[397] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, I, 19–20.

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of narratives he will encounter. Nevertheless, they are informative enough to provide some idea in the mind of the reader who is familiar with the literary tradition the collection belongs to. Among the examined works, al-Ibshīhī gives a fairly detailed list of such terms, indicating such terms as *al-aḥādīth al-nabawiyya*, *al-amthāl al-shi'riyya*, *al-alfāẓ al-lughawiyya*, *al-ḥikāyāt al-jiddiyya*, *al-nawādir al-hazaliyya*.[398]

The titles can also shed some light on important information concerning the purpose of the author. Al-Ibshīhī's title of choice, *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf* tells a lot about the nature of the collection: it is an *adab* literary work. Its *adab* nature is further emphasized by the titles of the individual chapters that include all the recommended character-traits which a man of *adab* should possess. There is no doubt about the subject of al-Damīrī's work, either. In this case, though, it is during the reading of the stories that it becomes clear that it is more a work of *adab* literature than a work of science. Finally, the biographical work of Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān* also makes sure that its readers know what they are reading, just as well *The Thousand and One Nights*, with the word "nights" in its title belying its entertaining nature.

We are talking about different kinds of collections here: there are *adab* literary works, biographical works and popular story-collections. Having determined the nature of these collections, the reader sets to reading the stories with predetermined expectations. Of course, these expectations can change during the reading, as with *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*, but they provide a starting point in interpretation because without that point which provides the connection between reader and work, interpretation would be impossible.

There is a second aspect to purpose, though. Purpose may also express a certain kind of concept the collection represents. It mostly results from the approach the author is taking to the work, and it manifests itself in the structure of the work, on the one hand, which may be divided into chapters, entries or individual stories. On the other hand, it also influences the thematic range which may be monothematic or polythematic.

As a next step, we shall take a closer look at the structure of the collections. Even the preliminary examination of how collections are constructed sheds light on how the stories contained should be interpreted. Ibn Khallikān and al-Damīrī divide their collections in a simple manner: in the first case there is a biographical work with its chapters centering on various personalities whose lives and deeds are depicted. In the second case a zoological work is intended and as such, the particular animals are heading the sections. It had been stated,

[398] al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 7.

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however, that out of the two, only the first one can be interpreted as indeed a biographical work,[399] while al-Damīrī's work, in spite of its title and organization, and really, in spite of his own claim to set straight his contemporaries' imperfect knowledge of animals,[400] is more a work of *adab* literature than anything else. This problem clearly shows that there is indeed more to interpretation than the title and organization.

But staying with the question of composition, in some respects, it can be said that the work of al-Ibshīhī is similar as well: he uses chapter titles that reflect their content.[401] Using chapter titles as guidance in interpretation is somewhat more complicated in the case of the *Nights* and Ibn ʿArabshāh's work since these titles cannot stand as general topic descriptions. It is mostly because, in these cases, they are not groups of stories that are named but individual ones. Regarding the *Nights*, it does not seem to be a great problem as it is the nights that provide the most important organizational principle. Other than that, the stories in the collection seem to be following one another displaying no particular organizational system.[402] Not so much in the other collection where the titles mostly tell us only about the characters.

As mentioned earlier, there are other things to consider when talking about the interpretation of stories. Let us now, then, examine the ways these stories are linked together. In the case of the last two examples, it became clear that titles cannot always guide us in the understanding of stories. It is true that titles may possess theme-defining qualities (thematic collections) but if they do not, we have to turn to the context of the stories.

[399] Ibn Khallikān explains in detail how he organized his work and how he selected the material included in it. (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, I, 19–20.)

[400] al-Damīrī complains about the sources dealing with animals being less than thorough which results in the fact that, on many occasions, these sources include false information. (al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*, I, 35–36.)

[401] In his preface, al-Ibshīhī touches upon the structure of his work and the distribution of the material within it. (al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf*, I, 8–10.) Thomas Herzog argues for logic in al-Ibshīhī's arrangement of material. (Herzog, Th., Composition and Worldview of Some *Bourgeois* and *Petit-Bourgeois* Mamluk *Adab*-Encyclopedias, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 17, 2013, 110–112.)

[402] Ferial J. Ghazoul, in her *Nocturnal Poetics*, is in support of this observation, however, she claims a common thematic link between the frame-story and those stories which are framed in the collection. (Ghazoul, F. J.: *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context*, Cairo (The American University in Cairo Press), 1996, 29–31.) I find this point hard to maintain since we are talking about an enormous amount of material whose final form is the result of many hands. Even in the case of regarding the collection as one single literary work, it is difficult to prove that all the stories share this thematic link with the frame-story. Considering the fact that *The Thousand and One Nights* as we know it today is the result of the rising interest of the European readership, it is more likely that it was more the endeavor to complete the collection which led to the inclusion of most of the stories than a careful observation of the main theme of the frame-story. That is not to say that there are no stories in the *Nights* which attest to this thematic link, especially in the first part of the collection. (Mahdi, M.: *The Thousand and One Nights (Alf Layla wa-Layla): From the Earliest Known Sources*, Leiden – New York (E. J. Brill), 1994, III, 140–163.) However, thematic selectivity must have been more concerned with the individual narratives than their connection to the theme of the frame-story. That said, I do maintain that the *Nights*, as it stands today, is one single literary work united in the framework of literary communication.

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In the absence of an informative title, it is the relationship of a particular story to others in the collection that can lead us to a closer understanding of it. This is especially true for the *Nights* and the *Fākihat al-khulafā'* where, in many cases, we are dealing with framed stories that cannot be properly interpreted without the stories that are framing them. It is true that in the *Nights*, mostly due to its enormous size and the number of its compilers, this connection between frame-story and embedded story seems to weaken after a time, the fundamental concept of telling stories to save one's life is strong till the end. It is important, then, that we pay attention to this relationship among stories. We have to, however, consider the following in connection with a story: 1) is it an independent story, or 2) a framed one, or 3) one belonging to a group of stories?

The changes are most prominent in the case of framed stories since, apart from the requisite thematic connection, there are constant reminders that they are part of a larger unit. In the *Nights*, a framing structure can be observed that is, like a structural motif, running through the collection, with varying frequency, drawing attention to the succession of the nights. It is, of course, the choice of the compiler how much attention he pays to these successions. In any case, in the edition of MacNaghten, these structural motifs are remarkably present. "Wa-adraka Shahrazād al-ṣabāḥ fa-sakatat ʿan al-kalām al-mubāḥ," ("Here Shehrzad perceived the day and was silent.") can be read in similar fashion at the end of every night, then the new one begins with a short quotation from the previous night. Similar, too, in this respect, Ibn ʿArabshāh's work where the stories are concluded by the narrators with similar expressions that stand as structural motifs at the end of stories. "Wa-innamā awradtu hādhihi al-khabar li…" ("I wanted to relate this story because…") says the narrator of our present story, then he explains the moral of it. This is how the main frame-story is connected to the stories framed.

Defining the subject of a chapter, added with the relationship among them, whether they contain a single story or more, shows conscious thought behind the compilation: it shows the compiler's purpose and an organizing principle that also determines the circle of stories included. This is further emphasized by the fact that, in many cases, the compilers themselves elaborate on the arrangement of the collection.

As we have seen, the same story can be found in a collection of *adab* literature, in a bibliographical work, and in the *Nights* as well.[403] These three stories deal with the same subject, have the same tone and even the same structural composition. And yet, there is something very different in all of them that makes them stand apart. This difference can be

[403] This phenomenon will be in the center of my inquiry in the next chapter.

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explained by the very fact that they are part of three different collections all of which have different requirements just like the individual genres found in them. This means that individual stories that can be defined by a certain term denoting a specific genre are given further characteristics that are projected on them by the collections they are a part of. So, as a second observation, it may be said that there is an active relationship between story and collection that determines the interpretation of the individual stories as well.

Considering all of the above, it can be surmised that stories belonging to the same story-type can be read and presented in numerous ways. However, the role of the compilation is rather limited in the process of interpretation. The collection expresses the purpose of the author, his approach to and concept of his material. In this respect, it can place the stories in a wider group than that of the genre such as *adab*, *adab* literature or popular literature. It cannot make up the whole meaning-making process, though. It aids interpretation but there are such aspects of the meaning-making process that cannot be expressed by the collections. Considering our observation concerning the limited role of the author in recording the individual stories, those aspects which remain unaccounted for would not make much difference in interpreting the individual stories. With the chain of authorities attached to them, they are established in the tradition of Arabic literature and are accepted as authentic sources of information on events, people, moral values etc. However, assuming a more literary approach to these individual texts, this kind of interpretation is lacking. What is missing in the actual meaning, not a purpose, not a theme this purpose may assign to the text but the way it is interpreted by the intended receiver, the meaning of the text which can be fully formed by the active role of the reader.

It means that both the intention of the compiler and the reader's interpretation affect the way a story is read (works of history, zoology, or literature, for example). A story's meaning is then determined, on the one hand, by the compiler's purpose (education, entertainment…) and the way he is able to realize it, on the other hand, it also depends on the reader's ability to recognize this purpose and be able to interpret the story accordingly. Or to put it in Thomas L. Kent's words there is a relation between generic perception and interpretation.[404] And in this process, in my opinion, the structure of the collections, that is, the organization of its material, plays a significant role.

[404] "Different interpretations of the same text are sometimes generated because that particular text cannot be 'fixed' as a specific generic type." Kent, Th.: *Interpretation and Genre: The Role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts*, Lewisburg (Bucknell University Press), 1986, 22.) Or in our case, the interpretations are generated exactly because that particular text is fixed in different generic types – in different collections that bear their mark on the genre description of the stories.

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4.1.2. Narrative Levels of Interpretation: Groups of Narratives

In the present chapter the inquiry into the nature of meaning-making is being continued. Previously the limits of the role of complication have been examined in this process and it had been shown that this role could not traverse the boundary between the narrative level of compilation and groups of *akhbār* and that of the individual *khabar*. Meaning-making in the sense of literary approach ends on the level of individual texts. The present discussion crosses this boundary and examines how the reading of a particular story is affected by the changes brought upon by the collection. In other words, it will be discussed how organization, arrangement and selectivity may impact the interpretation of a story. During this examination, the further steps of the meaning-making process are pointed out in order for them to be further elaborated upon in the following chapter.

The Thousand and One Nights abounds in stories whose main characters – or even secondary characters – are well known from the history of Islam. Caliphs, viziers, poets, and even slave-girls are likely to show up in one story or another. This feature of the *Nights* makes it a good candidate to examine its stories in the framework of the present inquiry since some of its material can be found in different fields of *adab*, such as historiographical and biographical literature, and *adab* literature. Finding corresponding stories in the *Nights* and other *adab* works is not an easy task, considering the fact that most historical figures had morphed into clear-cut heroes of tales in the popular collection. A careful scrutiny of the content of the *Nights*, though, can yield results. Accordingly, the discussion of the *Nights* is in the center of my study but other important observations concerning the *adab* material will be mentioned as well.

For my purpose of studying all these changes, I singled out *Ḥikāyat Amīr al-Muʾminīn al-Mutawakkil ʿAlā Allāh maʿa al-jāriya ismuhā Maḥbūba* (*The Khalif El Mutawekkil and His Favourite Mehboubeh*), henceforth: *Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba* (III.12.). The list of sources mentioned here is by no means exhaustive. On the one hand, my study focuses on texts originating in the Mamlūk period (1250–1517), on the other, they only represent the present state of my research. Accordingly, reports can be found in Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*,[405] al-Dhahabī's *Siyar al-aʿlām al-nubalā'*,[406] al-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*,[407] Ibn al-Sāʿī's

[405] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, I, 350–356.
[406] al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUthmān: *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, 30 vols, Dimashq (Muʾassasat al-Risāla), 2014/1435, XII, 30–41.
[407] al-Ṣafadī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak: *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, eds. Aḥmad al-Arnā'ūṭ and Tazkī Muṣṭafā, Bayrūt (Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī), 2000/1420, XXV, 85–86.

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Nisā' al-khulafā',[408] al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*,[409] as well as in two works by al-Suyūṭī (*al-Mustaẓraf min akhbār al-jawārī*,[410] *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*[411]). Through the comparative examination of this *Nights* story and other variations of it, I will discuss the ways authors can express their intention within a specific generic framework and how this intention can be appropriately interpreted in the process of reading. I find that structural considerations allow for considerable freedom both in expression and interpretation and, accordingly, that will be the focus of my discussion. Nevertheless, other observations, more concerned with narrative discourse but not independent of questions of structure, such as *mood* and *voice* will also be elaborated upon.

Since structure is in the center of my discussion, some general observations have to be made before a comparative examination of the texts. First of all, all the material under discussion is written in the *khabar* form by which, in the framework of the present study, I refer to its dual structure of *isnād* and *matn* on the one hand, and its short, concise manner of presentation as an eyewitness account on the other. Secondly, it has to be pointed out that these short reports are found in the *adab* collections in groups within a larger frame. In the following, I will refer to these framing units as *entries* and their content as *account*s. Although the story of the *Nights* itself resembles an *entry* as well with various *accounts* in it, I will retain referring to it by *story* because of reasons elaborated later.

As the content of the entries in question varies, let us first sum up what is recounted in connection with the caliph and his slave-girl. There is a report in which Maḥbūba receives an apple from the caliph, who receives a beautifully composed poem in return (No. 1). In another one, she puts to shame the caliph's companion, ʿAlī b. al-Jahm when he is asked to compose a poem about an event previously described to him by the caliph. He needs time for composing while Maḥbūba is quick to respond to al-Mutawakkil's challenge (No. 2). In another account, al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba are at odds with each other. It is a poem sung by her that finally leads to reconciliation (No. 3). The fourth report mentions the passing of al-Mutawakkil and how Maḥbūba mourns him and what befalls her (No. 4).

[408] Ibn al-Sāʿī: *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād, al-Qāhira (Dār al-Maʿārif), 1993, 92–98.
[409] al-Nuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb: *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, 33 vols. al-Qāhira (Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya), n.d., V, 109–111.
[410] al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn: *al-Mustaẓraf min akhbār al-jawārī*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Bayrūt (Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd), 1976, 63–67.
[411] al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn: *Tārīkh al-khulafā*', ed. Ibrāḥīm Ṣāliḥ, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 2008, 544–545.

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Having mentioned the varying content of the entries, let us start with this very question and examine the distribution of the various accounts and all that it implies. It has to be kept in mind that, in some of the corresponding cases, the correspondence is not absolute: variations in length and narrative can be observed in some cases. Nevertheless, the distribution of the accounts can guide the *reader* in his interpretation since selectivity on the *author*'s part, or the decision to include or exclude certain material is telling of his intention.

			Intro.	**No. 1**	**No. 2**	**No. 3**	**No. 4**
Popular literature		*Alf Layla*	+		(+)	+	[+]
Biographical literature	Biographical dictionaries	AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar*	+				+
		AL-ṢAFADĪ, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*	+	+		+	[+]
		IBN KHALLIKĀN, *Wafayāt*	+			+	+
	Ṭabaqāt works	AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *al-Mustaẓraf*	+	+	+	+	+
		IBN AL-SĀʿĪ, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*	+	+	+	+	+
Adab literature		AL-NUWAYRĪ, *Nihāyat al-arab*	+		+	+	+
Historical writings		AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *Tārīkh*	+			+	+

() - different version
[] - not a whole report, just a mention

Historical works and biographical dictionaries are meant to share pertinent information on the individuals mentioned in them concerning their place in the history and culture of Islam. As Wadād al-Qāḍī says in connection with specialized biographical dictionaries, they are remarkably focused. It means that the *compiler* enumerates factual data and actual events that have to be noted and remembered regarding the person in question and the field of Arabic culture the dictionary concentrates on.[412] Although general dictionaries, like Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt* or al-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, are not so focused, they share the same informative drives. In contrast with that, the *Nights* does not claim factuality. In fact, its main focus is on entertainment that does not concern itself with real events and factual data. Interestingly enough, these two sharply differing attitudes seem to be making historical, biographical and popular works akin in that they seem to be more selective. There are some exceptions, though: both al-Suyūṭī and Ibn al-Sāʿī's works about slave-girls and concubines (the ones that include

[412] al-Qadi, W.: Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community, in: *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2006, 56–67.

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all accounts mentioned), although seemingly works of *ṭabaqāt* literature, are more closely aligned to *adab* literature than to biographical. They are both dedicated to reporting about the members of a particular social class but the handling of the material proves that neither of the authors is interested in individuals but in the type of persons they each represent.[413] Together with the fact that besides these two works, it is *Nihāyat al-arab*, an *adab* literary collection, which is the most inclusive, it can be concluded that a more *adab*-minded approach yields a more inclusive handling than a historical, biographical, or even a popular one.

Selectivity is then the basis for structural composition which further emphasizes authorial expression and supports interpretation. But there is more to be said about it. As far as the question of structural composition is concerned, three levels have to be distinguished: the organization of *entries* within the collection, the arrangement of *accounts* within the *entries*, and the structure of the individual *accounts*. In the following, we are especially concerned with two of these levels: that of the organization of *entries* and the arrangement of *accounts* within these *entries*. As we are dealing fundamentally with the same accounts in the various collections, the structure of these accounts shows no significant changes. There is one case in which the *Nights* differs significantly from the other versions, but it has implications not on the structural but the textual level and will be treated later in the discussion of thematization.

As far as the organization of the collection is concerned, the structure of the *Nights* is a haphazard one. Sometimes logical reasoning can be discerned among the sequential stories, sometimes they are put one after the other without rhyme or reason.[414] Nevertheless, they are part of a frame that requires the telling of entertaining or educational stories to fill up what came to be a thousand and one nights. As opposed to this, the structure of the biographical collections is stricter. The conscious work of the *compiler*s – which, in many cases, cannot be disputed in the *Nights*, either – is more apparent. That is mostly due to the organization of the collection. The biographical dictionaries in question are alphabetically ordered the basis of which are the names of various historical figures. The historical work of al-Suyūṭī shows a similar concept in that it devotes a lengthy entry to al-Mutawakkil's caliphate, even though its underlying organization is chronological. The *adab* compendium *Nihāyat al-arab* employs thematic organization which, nevertheless, in this case, preserves the *entry* form within a given thematic range.

[413] Bray, J.: Literary Approaches to Medieval and Early Modern Arabic Biography, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. Third Series*, 20, 2010, 242.
[414] See Gerhardt on the grouping of stories: Gerhardt, M. I.: *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights*, Leiden (E. J. Brill), 1963, 27–36.

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Before discussing the arrangement of *accounts* within an *entry*, we have to make mention of the structure of an *entry* itself. No matter whether we are talking of entries of a biographical, historical or *adab* nature, it can be observed that names are heading these entries. The person who is heading the entry, al-Mutawakkil or Maḥbūba, will influence the structure of the whole entry and the placement of the accounts mentioned within. In al-Suyūṭī and Ibn al-Sāʿī's case, based on the titles of their collections, it is evident that it is Maḥbūba whose name heads the entry. And such is the case with al-Nuwayrī's *adab* compendium, and surprisingly enough, with al-Ṣafadī's biographical dictionary. In al-Dhahabī and Ibn Khallikān, we can find the accounts in al-Mutawakkil's entry just like in al-Suyūṭī's historical work. This differentiation between entries will not only influence the structure of the whole entry and the placement of the accounts mentioned within it but it will also determine the *focalization* of the individual *accounts*.

In keeping with this, there are two kinds of *entries* in the *adab* material which are pertinent to our present discussion: one that includes a considerably greater number of accounts and covers the most important events of the subject's life, and one that only concentrates on one particular aspect of the subject's life. It is rather easy to establish which entries belong to one and which to the other. It is al-Mutawakkil's life which is depicted in its entirety while Maḥbūba's life is only known in relation to his.[415]

In the *Nights*, evidently, the attitude to the material, which is expressed through the entries' headings, cannot be applied. The group of accounts that can be found in the *Nights* cannot be referred to as an *entry* as in the case of the *adab* material under discussion since these narratives are grabbed out of the historical context and they stand alone as a single unit the context of which is outside of that of its subjects. Henceforth, I will refer to this unit as *story*. Accordingly, this story is not provided with a heading that would specify the person to whom an entry is related, but it is given a title that determines its theme. It does not have a subject in the person of al-Mutawakkil or Maḥbūba but a general idea which is represented through these characters. In this respect, the same happens here that we have seen in connection with al-Suyūṭī and Ibn al-Sāʿī's works, and even in al-Nuwayrī's work, namely, that the story is not about its characters but a specific concept. It is about talent and beauty in general; characters are only secondary and only serve to represent these highly valued features. Nevertheless, the underlying structure remains remarkably similar.

[415] This observation has already been made in connection with various slave-girls whose entries can be found in biographical collections: Bray, 2010, 240.

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In the *adab* tradition, an *entry* typically starts with an introductory part in which the subject's name, place and date of birth are given. Even here an interesting dichotomy can be observed which is in close relation to our previous observation regarding the different handling of al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba. The entries about Maḥbūba are not concerned with such things. In accordance with her person being regarded only in connection with her master and her talent, every detail that is provided about her is understood in this relation. Maybe only her origin is the one thing that exclusively belongs to her. Otherwise, she is an excellent poetess, a talented singer, and, last but not least, a beautiful woman.[416] It is emphasized that she belongs to al-Mutawakkil because otherwise she could not be identified, no other familial lineage being provided for her.[417]

The accounts follow this introductory part and, once again, it is important to keep in mind that, in the case of the entries about al-Mutawakkil, not all accounts are concerned with his relationship with Maḥbūba. Also, it is not the same introductory part that introduces the accounts in this case and in those where Maḥbūba is the subject of the entry. In this respect, the accounts in Maḥbūba's entries form a more closely-knit unit with an introduction, a body and a conclusion that effectively closes Maḥbūba's life. In the entries about al-Mutawakkil, despite the accounts being linked together through the person of Maḥbūba, they only form a part of the whole. They are just one segment of a life. In the *Nights*, we can discern an entirely different case since, in the popular collection, the present *story* stands as a single interpretative unit. It is not whole in the sense that it depicts a life, and it is not part of a whole in that it does not form a building block in a larger narrative of life.

[416] There was a specific skillset a slave-girl had to possess: Jocelyn Sharlet mentions the Arabic language, the Qur'ān, poetry and music (Sharlet, J.: Educated Slave Women and Gift Exchange in Abbasid Culture, in *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History*, eds. M. S. Gordon and K. A. Hain, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2017, 279.) while Matthew S. Gordon say "[t]heir careers entailed the provision to a mostly male cohort of companionship; sexual intimacy, although perhaps as often in the promise that the deed; witty and informed repartee, both verbal and written; a variety of entertainment, including chess and backgammon; and, above all, engaging verse and music performance, instrumental and vocal alike". (Gordon, M. S.: Abbasid Courtesans and the Question of Social Mobility, in *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History*, eds. M. S. Gordon and K. A. Hain, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2017, 28.)

[417] This attitude is not surprising if we consider that a well-educated and talented slave-girl – apart from not being her own person – was regarded as the sign of her owner's status (Sharlet, 2017, 279.). It is also worth mentioning that while this kind of description of the slave-girl belongs to the discursive characteristics of the *khabar* form in biographical writing, it is the result of real socio-historical circumstances. Being torn from her family and country, the slave-girl had no genealogical relations to speak of; essentially, she has become an object to possess (Caswell, F. M.: *The Slave Girls of Baghdad: The* Qiyān *in the Early Abbasid Era*, London – New York (I. B. Tauris), 2011, 51–54.). Also, they were almost exclusively described by men and such men at that who met them at public or semi-public events, rendering their accounts centered on the talent of the girls (Myrne, P.: A *Jariya*'s Prospects in Abbasid Baghdad, in *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History*, eds. M. S. Gordon and K. A. Hain, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2017, 53, 62.).

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The arrangement of the individual accounts within the entries is yet to be discussed. Let us consider this question through the example of the report of al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba's death which is mentioned in all the collections under scrutiny. The caliph's death and the subsequent events concerning Maḥbūba do not always warrant a complete account. In many cases, they only merit a short mention. "Wa-lammā māta al-Mutawakkil salāhu jamīʿ man kāna lahu min al-jawārī illā Maḥbūba",[418] goes the text of the *Nights* which is almost word by word repeated by al-Ṣafadī.[419] It is not only in length that these reports vary, however. There are considerable differences in content and their place within the entry as well. But no matter the length and content, the placement of the event remains telling about authorial intention and a key factor in interpretation.

In connection with the biographical tradition, the first thing that comes to mind for the informed *reader* is chronology and the lineal composition. And true enough, most of the writers of the collections, be it biographical or not, and even those of the *Nights* seem to uphold this approach either on the level of entries in the case of Maḥbūba, or on that of a section of entries in case of al-Mutawakkil by placing the mention of the characters' deaths at the very end. That is not always the case, however. In fact, chronology seems not to be the primary concern of Arab biographical literature, for instance. As Hilary Kilpatrick points out, chronology – and as a consequence, lineal composition – is not a concern of Arab biographical literature.[420] It is not the year-by-year depiction of an individual's life that is in the center of biographical writing but other considerations whose expression requires a much more flexible approach to the arrangement of material. In fact, even in a chronologically constructed historiographical work like al-Maqrīzī's *al-Dhahab al-masbūk fī dhikr man ḥajja min al-khulafā' wa-l-mulūk*, chronology does not seem the primary concern. According to Jo van Steenbergen, there are other considerations other than chronology which define the general organization of the work.[421] However, this does not mean that chronology is completely forgotten. On the contrary,

[418] *Alf Layla*, II, 312. In translation, Payne embellishes the statement, emphasizing Maḥbūba's attachment to the caliph: "When El Mutawekkil died, all his women forgot him, save Mehboubeh, who ceased not to mourn for him, till she deceased and was buried by his side" (Payne, IV, 137.)
[419] al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, XXV, 85.
[420] Kilpatrick, H.: Time and Death in Compiled *Adab* "Biographies", *al-Qanṭara*, 25, 2004, 389–400. Concerning the chronology of the biographical dictionary and the chronicle, see: al-Qadi, W.: Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community, in: *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2006, 25–27. In connection with historical writing, see: Shoshan, B.: *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Ṭabarī's* History, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2004, 61–84.
[421] van Steenbergen, J.: *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage: al-Ḏahab al-masbūk fī ḏikr man ḥağğa min al-ḫulafā' wa-l-mulūk*, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2016, 68–69.

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"chronology continues to figure as an organizing principle to hold on to for the author and his audiences. Years, dates, and chronography continued to be important tools on the micro-structural level of *al-Ḏahab al-masbūk* too, and al-Maqrīzī pursued a chronological arrangement of his stories wherever the available material allowed for such a set-up".[422]

In the present material, it is only al-Ṣafadī in his biographical dictionary and al-Suyūṭī in his historical work who break form and give this information between two accounts or in a separate account respectively. Al-Suyūṭī makes similar mention of the event in the introductory part of his entry but in the end, he also provides a fully elaborated account of the actual events that took place after al-Mutawakkil's death. It has to be remembered that al-Suyūṭī's entry belongs to Maḥbūba and thus, closing the account with al-Mutawakkil and then her death gives closure to a well-structured entry. In al-Ṣafadī's case, whose entry is also about Maḥbūba, this placement can be explained by context. The last account in the entry is the story with the apple whose main point is Maḥbūba's talent which is recognized by everyone in the court. In contrast, the account that precedes this mention is the one in which al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba reconcile after a long period of quarrel. Thus, it can be assumed that the fact that Maḥbūba is mourning the caliph until her death is meant to underline their affection for one another. Thematic considerations seem to be at work in this case.

Similarly, there seems to be a good reason for al-Suyūṭī in his *Tārīkh* to break up the unity of the accounts concerning al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba and to give the two accounts of them in two different places. His entry about the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil is divided into three sections: one which accounts the important events of his life in chronological order, one that provides additional reports, and another one which records al-Mutawakkil's sayings. Due to these compositional considerations, his death is given at the end of the first section while an account of him and Maḥbūba is given in the second one.

Paradoxically, both al-Dhahabī and Ibn Khallikān seem to be upholding the chronological order because they consider the accounts dealing with the caliph's relationship with Maḥbūba as a unit within the entry and as such, they conclude it with the death of the girl. Interestingly enough, in Ibn Khallikān, the report about al-Mutawakkil's death is also the account which closes the whole entry of the caliph. And similarly, it is related after an independent account of al-Mutawakkil's death in al-Dhahabī. This way, it seems that both authors are conscious of some kind of chronological ordering both within the entry as a whole and within one single unit.

[422] van Steenbergen, 2016, 77.

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Although, in the *Nights*, the mention of the death of the characters is reported at the end of the story as well, and a definite structural reasoning can be given for that, the situation is quite different. It is an independent *story* that has lost its context in the biographical tradition so its drive to close the story with the mention of al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba's death is not due to the same considerations that might have led the other authors. In my opinion, it is the structural unity of the text – and again, not the life of an individual – that requires this kind of conclusion. With these accounts losing their biographical intent, the story lacks a frame that would hold together its material. In this case, this frame is provided by the mention of the characters' deaths. That is why it cannot be mentioned anywhere else but at the very end.

To emphasize the significance of arrangement and organization in interpretation, let us now turn to the textual level of examination and highlight some observations connected to narrative *mood* and *voice*, as Gérard Genette refers to them.

Mood is, according to Genette, the "regulation of narrative information"[423] which consists of two things: *distance* and *perspective*. *Distance* is concerned with the *mode* of narrative discourse, that is, how narrative information is shared through the text itself while *perspective* is more concerned with narrative information shared through the knowledge of certain characters, their *point of view*. *Voice*, in the framework of the present study, concerns us here in its capacity to contribute to the regulation of narrative information. In other words, what the relationship is between the knowledge of the *narrator* and that of the characters. This relationship is divided into three categories: 1) when we have an omniscient *narrator*, 2) when the narrative is told from a particular point of view, and 3) when the narrative is objective.

Pre-modern Arabic literature is not familiar with the concept of the omniscient *narrator*.[424] The *narrator* is not privy to the innermost thoughts of the narrated person and he does not add his personal thoughts on the matter, except within the context of the narrative.[425] This stands true for the second kind of *narrator* as well who only says what the characters know. Being an eyewitness to the events recounted, the *narrator* of a *khabar* cannot know what his characters know, he is only allowed to relate what he witnesses. In the case of the *khabar*, this makes for a strictly objective recounting of events by a strictly objective *narrator* of the third kind.

[423] Genette, G.: *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Ithaca, New York (Cornell University Press), 1980, 162.
[424] Beaumont, D.: Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions, *Studia Islamica*, 83, 1996, 13.
[425] About the *narrator* in *khabar*, see Leder, S.: The Literary Use of the *Khabar*: A Basic Form of Historical Writing, in: *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, vol.1, Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. M. Cameron, Princeton (The Darwin Press), 1992, 307–309; Beaumont, 1996, 13–19.

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The *khabar* form is preserved in the *Nights*' story as well. The story is reported by Shahrazād but in contrast to the first-person narration of the other accounts which, in this case, rely heavily on the eyewitness who reports the events, Shahrazād tells her story in the third-person. She remains outside the events she narrates, that is, her narration is *extradiegetic*,[426] to use Genette's term, in contrast to the *intradiegetic* narration of the *khabar* form. The voice of her narration, however, is identical to that of ʿAlī b. al-Jahm in the other accounts of al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba. She does not add anything to the story that is not expressed by the characters themselves. There is an interesting duality in the narrative discourse of the *Nights*: the first-person *narrator* disappears but the narrative technique that is associated with him remains. Not unlike an eyewitness, Shahrazād recounts the events not in a purely diegetic mode (through narrated speech) but she preserves a great degree of mimetic mode as well.[427]

The interrelation of *mood* and *voice* determines how al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba are handled in the discussed material. The *narrators* of the *accounts* only share what they see. Correspondingly, the *reader* is only allowed as much information as is available to the *narrator* himself. As a result, neither of the characters is known outside of the events of the particular accounts, not even the introductory parts providing information additional to that which is already known about them. In fact, in the framework of their story, al-Mutawakkil is not described at all. Maḥbūba gets descriptive passages in the introductory part of her biographical accounts, but it is only told which is later shown. Personality is subordinated to archetypal character-traits and to events that are meant to highlight them. *Mode* and *voice* of narration, then, play a significant role in supporting realism and objectivity which are such dominant features of the *khabar* form[428] and they seem to be preserved in the *Nights* as well.

But everything is in the arrangement, as we have seen, and the *compiler*s have the means to express something that points beyond the factual recounting of events. This is how al-Ṣafadī and the compiler of the *Nights* were able to give gravity to the affection between al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba by the tactful arrangement of the selected material, individualizing the characters in the process.

To provide the relationship between *mood* and *voice* with more significance in connection with authorial intention and *reader* interpretation, two more observations have to be made concerning *focalization*, on the one hand, and *thematization*, on the other.

[426] Genette, 1980, 227–234.
[427] About the mimetic and diegetic mode of narration, see: Genette, 1980, 162–189.
[428] Leder, 1992, 307–309.

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Focalization is the term Genette uses to grasp the narrative function of *perspective*, that is, to determine whose point of view orients the narrative. We have already mentioned *focalization* in connection with the heading of an *entry*. Examining the introductory part, it can be claimed that *focalization* is pretty straightforward in all cases. When al-Mutawakkil is heading the entry, he is focalized, when Maḥbūba is heading the entry, she is. This division remains constant even despite the obvious differences between the ways in which authors are handling this part in regard to character depiction. Let us consider the following examples:

"Malakahā al-Mutawakkil […] **ahdāhā ilayhi** ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir fī jumlat arbaʿamiʾat jāriyatin"[429]	"She was in the possession of al-Mutawakkil […] ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir **gifted her to him** in the company of four hundred slave-girls"
"**Ahdāhā** ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir **li-l-Mutawakkil ʿAlā' Allāh** lammā wullā al-khilāfa fī jumlat arbaʿamiʾat jāriyatin qiyānin wa-sawādhij"[430]	"ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir **gave her to al-Mutawakkil** when he became caliph, as one of a group of four hundred slaves, some of them musically trained, others not"[431]
"al-Mutawakkil […] **ahdāhā ilayhi** ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir fī jumlat arbaʿamiʾat jāriyatin"[432]	"al-Mutawakkil […] ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir **gifted her to him** in the company of four hundred slave-girls"
"Kānat Maḥbūba li-ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir **ahdāhā ilā al-Mutawakkil** fī jumlat arbaʿamiʾat jāriyatin"[433]	"Maḥbūba was one of the four hundred **slave-girls that** ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṭāhir **gifted to al-Mutawakkil**"
"**Uhdiya ilā al-Mutawakkil jāriya** yuqālu lahā: Maḥbūba"[434]	"A slave-girl, whose names was Maḥbūba, **was gifted to al-Mutawakkil**"
"**Ahdā** Ibn Ṭāhir **ilā al-Mutawakkil waṣā'if ʿuddatan** – fīhā Maḥbūba"[435]	"Ibn Ṭāhir **gifted many slave-girls to al-Mutawakkil**, among them, Maḥbūba"
"**Ahdā ilayhi** Ibn Ṭāhir min Khurāsān **hadīyatan jalīlatan** fīhā jawārin fīhinna jāriya yuqālu lahā Maḥbūba"[436]	"Ibn Ṭāhir **presented him with a generous gift** which included slave-girls, one of whom was called Maḥbūba"

The passages describe the same event: Maḥbūba is given as a present to al-Mutawakkil. It is apparent, however, that the *focalization* of the texts is different. When Maḥbūba is focalized in the first four cases, she is given to the caliph. She appears as the object of the sentence. When al-Mutawakkil is focalized, in the case of al-Dhahabī and Ibn Khallikān, he is given a present which includes Maḥbūba, or, as in al-Suyūṭī's *Tārīkh*, she is subordinated to al-Mutawakkil by not referring to her directly but through the passive voice. It will help to understand the changes

[429] al-Suyūṭī, *al-Mustaẓraf*, 63.
[430] Ibn al-Sāʿī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, 92.
[431] Ibn al-Sāʿī: *Consorts of the Caliphs: Women and the Court of Baghdad*, transl. Sh. M. Toorawa, New York (New York University Press), 2017, 46.
[432] al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, XXV, 85.
[433] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, V, 109.
[434] al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh*, 415.
[435] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XII, 40.
[436] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 355–356.

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in the *Nights* if we realize the fact that in the case of the first four cases, this passage is part of the introductory section of the entry about Maḥbūba, while in the others, these passages open an account about al-Mutawakkil and his slave-girl, Maḥbūba, well into his entry. In other words, they are part of two different sections of the entries and as such, they have different functions. In the introductory part, they belong to the description of Maḥbūba. With that passage, the *reader* is given a fuller picture of the person behind the name. In the *accounts,* this passage becomes an event that happened in the life of al-Mutawakkil. The fact that Maḥbūba is part of that event is only incidental.

The situation is very different if we consider the *Nights*' version of the same passage: "Kāna fī qaṣr Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Mutawakkil" ("There were in the palace of the Khalif El Mutawekkil ala Allah"),[437] begins the story in the *Nights*. Everything is mentioned in the section that follows which is mentioned in the other works, but the emphasis shifts from both al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba as we are met with a general description of the caliph's harem. This part of the narrative is not focalized which is due to the fact that this passage cannot be interpreted in the framework of either the introductory section of an *entry* or the opening section of an *account*. This is an introduction to a *story*. Furthermore, in the rest of the story, *focalization* is shifting which is indeed expected when the title of the story is taken into consideration: *Ḥikāyat Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Mutawakkil 'Alā' Allāh ma'a al-jāriya ismuhā Maḥbūba*. It is not "The Story of al-Mutawakkil", or "The Story of Maḥbūba", and not even "The Story of Maḥbūba, al-Mutawakkil's Slave-Girl". They are equal as far as the characters of a story are concerned.

Of course, *focalization* does not remain constant in the *adab* entries, either. However, it is shifting in a more ordered fashion. This means that in the case of al-Mutawakkil's entries, al-Mutawakkil is focalized throughout the entry while in Maḥbūba's entries, the initial *focalization* of the girl shifts to al-Mutawakkil as soon as the introductory part is over, and it remains on the caliph. There is an exception, because of obvious reasons, and that is the account following his death. All in all, it can be stated that, in the *adab* material of the present study, it is al-Mutawakkil who is focalized in the accounts regardless of the introductory part of the entry.

A perceptible shift in thematic emphasis also has to be mentioned when authorial intention is concerned. As it has been shown during the discussion of the account of Maḥbūba's mourning of al-Mutawakkil, thematic considerations are at play in certain cases. Let us consider another example which has more bearing on the *Nights*.

[437] *Alf Layla*, II, 310. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 135.

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The account No. 2 which is related in al-Suyūṭī, Ibn al-Sāʿī and also al-Nuwayrī, is mentioned in the *Nights* with significant deviations from the narrative of these three authors. These versions go as follows: al-Mutawakkil relates to his companion that once he stepped into the chamber of al-Qabīḥa and found her having written on her cheek his name with musk and that he had never seen anything more beautiful, then he asks ʿAlī b. al-Jahm to compose a poem describing that event. He hesitates so Maḥbūba starts to recite her own poem, putting ʿAlī b. al-Jahm to shame. The *Nights* recounts the event of the writing itself, but it goes differently: it is Maḥbūba who is doing the writing on her own cheek, and it is al-Mutawakkil who recites exactly the same poem. It is not only that the narrative of the writing steps up to the first level of narrative, that is, it becomes *extradiegetic* (happening in the main plot of the account and not being reported), but it turns out to be a completely different narrative in spite of its shared content with the other two versions. It either suggests another source for this narrative, or a very creative *compiler* who, placing Maḥbūba's poetic talent in the background, wanted to emphasize al-Mutawakkil's affection for her. A different device but the same purpose as the one we had observed earlier in connection with al-Ṣafadī when the arrangement of the accounts was discussed. Through the manipulation of narrative voice (changing the level of narration and the person of *narrator*) a new layer of meaning had been added to the account.

In conclusion, it can be said that, in spite of working from a common stock of material, pre-modern Arabic prose literature shows considerable flexibility in employing said material. It is not mindless copying that *author*s did in collecting their material but there is indeed a creative process discernible in their workings. As pointed out by many scholars before, the creative process can be shown on the narrative levels of both collection and groups of *akhbār* but it cannot be denied, either, that the changes which are affected on those levels have an influence on the reading of the individual stories as well. We have seen how the *Nights*' compiler works with material taken from other fields of literature and how this foreign material is incorporated into the popular collection with the necessary changes. These changes, however, are not only due to these texts crossing boundaries from high to popular literature and, thus, acquiring different values. It is the *author*'s conscious mind and his artistic talent which can be observed in his handling of his material: structural organization on different levels and the manipulation of the narrative at hand in order to express something different from what the same narrative expresses in another field of literature.

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4.2. The Transformation of the *Khabar* Form into *Ḥikāya* in *The Thousand and One Nights*

Chapter 2 was devoted to the discussion of various aspects of the *khabar* material of the *Nights*. It proved to be an especially rewarding approach in that respect that, since it makes up the essential Arab material of the *Nights*, it reveals many a relevant point in connection with the relationship between *adab* literature and the popular literature. The material under scrutiny was discussed in connection with questions concerning structure, discourse and communication, that is, narrative was examined in its manifestations as *story*, *narration* and *narrating*. These three aspects, in turn, were also able to shed light on important concerns of genre theory and the way it can be adapted in the *Nights*.

The present chapter aims at continuing that line of inquiry but through an essentially *Nights*-centric approach. Using the results of the earlier chapters, the present discussion will add to our understanding of how the *khabar* form can be transformed into a story, that is, into a more complex narrative form than the *khabar* form. As stated earlier, regarded as narrative forms, *qiṣṣa* and *ḥikāya* are treated as synonyms and as such, I will prefer using the latter when referring to complex narrative forms.

Leder discusses the subject of *qiṣaṣ* elements in *akhbār* material and claims that no distinction can be made between *qiṣaṣ* and *akhbār* based on the study of historiographical collections.[438] He is talking from the aspect of the sources (how the source of certain material can be determined) of these materials, though, and seems to make use of textual analysis in relation to source criticism. Closer inspection of the discursive elements in the text may reveal important points concerning the division between the narrative form of *khabar* and that of *qiṣṣa*/*ḥikāya*.

Furthermore, even if, regarding the source of these differing materials in historiographical writing, discourse analysis cannot be conclusive, by placing textual analysis in the framework of literary communication, and thus, in the framework of literary inquiry, such examinations may yield results concerning such characteristics which may inform us about fundamental differences between *khabar* and *ḥikāya* and not just on the narrative level. In *The Thousand and One Nights* not diachronic but synchronic transformations may be traced through the analysis of the short narratives. With the help of revisiting the questions of structure, discourse and communication, now placed in the context of literary communication, it will be explained in detail how certain elements of the *khabar* form may be utilized in a completely new way with the result of the report becoming a story, that is, how interpretation is formed through the

[438] Leder, 1992, 311–312.

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changes.[439] This transformation is all the more interesting as a story is bound by different criteria in all the discussed fields of analysis.

4.2.1. The Narrative as Story: Structural Considerations

As far as structure is concerned the main inquiry will concern two questions. The first one deals with the gradual transformation of the *khabar* form into the structurally more complex form of story while the second one will address the problem of the relationship between independent reports and how they may or may not form a story within one structural unit.

In order to be able to answer the first question, three stories have been singled out which will represent three stages in the transformation. These are the following:

1. *Ḥikāyat ʾAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maghribī al-Ṣīnī min farkh al-rukh* (*Abdurrehman the Moor's Story of the Roc*), henceforth: *ʾAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maghribī* (V.6.)
2. *Ḥikāyat baldat Labṭayṭ* (*The City of Lebtait*), henceforth: The City of *Labṭayṭ* (V.1.)
3. *Ḥikāyat madīnat al-nuḥās* (*The City of Brass*) (V.8.)

Structurally *khabar* was earlier defined as consisting of an *isnād* and a *matn* with the additional observation that *isnād*, in effect, stands to provide the instance of narrating while *matn* can be further divided into two parts: a kind of background description to the actual *matn* part which can also be referred to as an instance of narrating in the context of the *matn* which is followed by the *matn* itself. And, indeed, this is the structural composition of the first story, *ʾAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maghribī*. It is Shahrazād who is reporting an account, introducing her report as follows:

> Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna rajulan min ahl al-Maghrib kāna sāfir al-aqṭār wa-jāba al-qifār wa-l-baḥār. Fa-alqathu al-maqādīr fī jazīra wa-aqāma fīhā mudda ṭawīla. Thumma rajaʿa ilā baladihi wa-maʿahu qaṣaba rīsha min janāḥ farkh al-rukh wa-huwa fī al-bayḍa wa-lam yakhruju minhā ilā al-wujūd. […] Wa-kāna al-nās yataʿajjabūna min tilka al-qaṣaba ḥīna raʾuhā. Wa-kāna hādhā al-rajul ismuhu ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maghribī wa-ushtaharu bi-l-Ṣīnī li-kuthrat aqāmatihi hunāka. Wa-kāna yuḥaddithu bi-l-ʿajāʾib minhā mā dhakarahu min annahu sāfara fī baḥr al-Ṣīn…
>
> There was once a man of the people of Morocco, called Abdurrehman the Moor, and he was known, to boot, as the Chinaman, for his long sojourn in Cathay. He had journeyed far and wide and traversed many a seas and deserts and was wont to relate wondrous tales of his travels. He was once cast upon an island, where he abode a long while and returning thence to his native country, brought with him the quill of the wing-feather of a young roc, whilst yet unhatched and in the egg […]. The folk marvelled at this quill, when they saw it, and Abdurrehman related to them the following adventure. He was on a voyage in the China seas…[440]

[439] Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila made a similar examination in connection with the story of Khālid and Umm Salama in which he analyzed the story, a short story, in relation to other historical and *adab* material. (Hämeen-Anttila, J.: Short Stories in Classical Arabic Literature: The Case of *Khālid* and *Umm Salama*, in: *The Weaving of Words: Approaches to Classical Arabic Prose*, eds. L. Behzadi and V. Behmardi, Orient-Institut (Beirut), 2009, 35–54.)
[440] *Alf Layla*, II, 428–429. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 261.

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However, she does not start the report right away as it has got a background story which provides the reasons behind and the circumstance in which that account had been originally told. Even though the form is not conventional, and the content of the report belongs to the geographical lore, the *khabar* form, as far as the structure is concerned, is easily discernible when we recall our previous observation regarding the role of the *isnād* as establishing the instance of narrating. This is exactly what happens here.

In a very simplistic way, it can be said of the other two stories as well that they show the *khabar* structure. By having claimed that, in all cases, it is Shahrazād who is relating a story, it is by default that these stories – and, indeed, every story in the *Nights* – may boast the *khabar* structure. It is not, however, enough for these stories to be recognized as belonging to the *khabar* form. It is true that there are other considerations in connection with *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maghribī* which may put its belonging to the *khabar* form into question but, structure-wise, there is an instance of narrating established in which a simple report is told. This cannot be told of the other two stories. Length cannot be considered a determining factor in this question, either, as, in the case of the story of Tawaddud, it had been shown that an extremely long story might also be considered to be in the *khabar* form if it adheres to other criteria. In this case, it was not length but plot which determined the form in the framework of structural examinations. And it is also the plot which informs us about the nature of these two stories.

In *The City of Labṭayṭ*, a fairly simple plot can be discerned: there is a door in the city which must not be opened and when, finally, it is opened by the present ruler, only destruction awaits the city and its inhabitants in the form of a particularly cruel Muslim conquest. This would be easy enough to be accepted as being recorded in the *khabar* form. The author, however, employs such other techniques which make this acceptance questionable. First of all, the story is placed into a historical context, be that fictional or not, on such a grand scale which is impossible in the *khabar* form which only recognizes the simplest of temporal relations. This story implies the history of twenty-four kings before the beginning of the plot. The complication of the plot is also explained by historical changes. There is a new house in power whose representative is not respectful of or concerned with the ways of the old one.

Khabar form is, of course, not unfamiliar with historical context. It is only concerned with it in a different way. In *ḥadīth* literature, it was not the historical context of the *matn* which determined its authenticity but the veracity of the *isnād* and in historical literature it was more the organization which provided the historical context and not the content itself. In contrast to this, the present story is first and foremost concerned with the history within, with a couple of historical names thrown into the mix for more the sake of maintaining the illusion of historicity

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than actually providing veracity to the events. Before the final conclusion, there is a digression in the form of an exhaustive list of all the values that were found in the city and were taken by the Arabs. It also seems that the beginning of the story and the conclusion of it are not in accordance as far as their focus is concerned. The introductory part and the complication are concerned with the city and its inhabitants which ends in their downfall which would have neatly concluded the story with an added warning concerning heeding the old ways or something along that line. Instead, the focus shifts to the Arabs and the story ends with the celebration of their successful conquest of Andalusia.

This is not the simple-focused redaction of a single event of the *khabar* form. This is a more complex story-telling of a *story* which allows the author to shift his attention during the story-telling and to create new lines of events which are running either simultaneously or, as in the present case, consecutively. This is a *story*, then, which combines two events into a coherent narrative which also retains the historical continuity of the events described in the reports. There is more to say about the depiction of time in these stories, but it is the subject of a future chapter.

The third story, *The City of Brass*,[441] also exhibits all the above-mentioned characteristics of a *story* while also turning it into a more complex narrative with layered meanings. It is a very grateful story to discuss from various approaches such as its geographical and historical accurateness[442] or its allegorical meaning,[443] for example. What concerns us here, however, is the way it works structure-wise in order to achieve the coherence of narrative and meaning within a structural unit.

The introductory part of the story seems to be exhibiting the characteristics of the *khabar* form. Related by Shahrazād, Ṭālib b. Sahl's report of his grandfather's account of a journey is introduced by an elaborate description of the narrative instance in which Ṭālib b. Sahl's account, which, in spite of its content, is strikingly resembling the *matn* part of a *khabar*, is related. This narrative instance is, then, concluded by the caliph expressing his desire to possess one of those bottles which hold the jinns captive and the resolution to start on a journey in order to bring back such a bottle. There is an interesting duality which this concluding section displays: first, it is the concluding section of a narrative which bears close resemblance to the *khabar* form,

[441] For the close examination of the Arabic text, I have chosen the version in the Breslau edition as it is the most extant. (See: Gerhardt, 1963, 196; Pinault, D.: *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*, Leiden (Brill), 1992, 231.)
[442] Borchardt, P.: Die Messingstadt in 1001 Nacht – eine Erinnerung an Atlantis?, *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, 73, 1927, 328–331; Henninger, J.: Der geographische Horizont der Erzähler von 1001 Nacht, *Geographica Helvetica*, 4, 1949, 214–229; Gerhardt, 1963, 210–230; Pinault, 1992, 180–186, 210–226.
[443] Hamori, A.: An Allegory from The Arabian Nights: The City of Brass, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 34, 1971, 9–19.

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second, it fulfills the function of complication in the plot development from the point of view of the whole story, that is, it is decided that a group of men sets on the road with a specific quest in mind.

In the remainder of the story, the various parts of the plot correspond to the different stops in the journey: Cairo – Upper Egypt – (after getting lost) the Black Palace – the horseman of brass (only giving direction) – a pillar of black stone with the jinn in it – the hilltop in front of the City of Brass – the City of Brass – al-Karkar sea.

What connects these scenes on the road is not only their role as signaling distance and attesting to the wonders of the world but the admonitions the content of which is, in essence, the main theme of the story: "it is an admonition to those who will be admonished", the text constantly reminds the reader of this point. What is more, the whole text is built on repetition which is discernible in the very structure of it. At every stop on their journey after leaving Upper Egypt, the company comes upon an astonishing structure that is meant to represent the main point of the story. The black castle is lavishly equipped but empty and, every step of the way inside the castle, the company is warned against the vanity of this world and their attention is directed toward the other world and the faith in the one God. In a way, the place foreshadows the City of Brass. The Jinn imprisoned in the black pillar is meant to remind the reader of the power of Almighty Allah. These points are finally brought together in the events of the City of Brass.

It is worth recalling that there was repetition mentioned in connection with the story of Tawaddud and then, it was concluded that it is that repetition which renders it to be understood as a *khabar* form. In the present case, the situation is markedly different. The repetition is not to prolong the same scene, i.e., the competition between Tawaddud and the learned men, but the scene itself is repeated upon several occasions which are chronologically ordered and separate from one another. They belong to the plot, drawing it to its final conclusion which all culminates in the City of Brass. However, there are examples of the prolongation of the scene in this story as well. When trying to get into the City of Brass, Mūsā has a ladder made to climb over the city-wall but whenever one of his men climbs up, the man claps his hands, cries out in wonder, then jumps down into his certain death. This is repeated a dozen times before the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ṣamad volunteers to climb up himself, breaks the deadly cycle, and finally opens the gate to the city.

There is also an interesting microstructure to the individual parts of the story which mirrors the structure of the whole story (macrostructure). For one, similar repetitions can be discerned in the plot of these individual parts as the main message is elaborated. The tablets on

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which the admonitions are recorded represent this temporal elaboration as they are read one after the other both in the black castle and in- and outside of the City of Brass. On the other hand, the motif of the narrative instance is also found in one form or another. The Jinn tells his own story but in the other instances, in the absence of the inhabitants of the castle and the city, the tablets take the place of the interlocutor and tell the story of the people. There are not only admonitions on these tablets but full-fledged stories as well which may stand on their own right (Shaddād b. ʿĀd and Tadmurah's story).

As for the parallels between the black castle and the City of Brass, we can mention the grandiose built of the structures which both belie the vast richness and prosperity of their inhabitants which, in fact, had been taken to the extremes. Both of these places are, however, deserted. It is said about the city upon Mūsā, Ṭālib b. Sahl and ʿAbd al-Ṣamad glancing at it from a hilltop that:

> Fa-lammā ṣārā aʿlāhā raʾayā madīna lam yara al-rāʾūn aḥsan minhā wa-fīhā dūr shāmikhāt wa-quṣūr ʿāliyāt wa-abrāj sāyibāt wa-anhār jāriyāt wa-aswāq muqassimāt. Wa-hiya khāliya lā ins fīhā wa-lā anīs wa-lā ḥiss wa-lā ḥasīs illā ṣaghīr al-būm fī ajnābihā wa-ṣiyāḥ al-ṭuyūr fī arṣātihā wa-qad ammanat al-nawāyib wa-aṭmaʾanat min al-maṭālib fudūruhā tandubu ʿalā man kāna fīhā wa-qaṣruhā yabkā ʿalā man kāna bānīhā.
>
> When they reached the top, they turned and beheld beneath them a city, never saw eyes a greater or goodlier, full of lofty palaces and glittering domes and fair-builded mansions and running streams and orchards laden with fruit and flowered pleasaunces, a gated city and an inexpugnable; but it was silent and deserted, without sound or movement or sign of life, except the hooting of the owl in its market-places and the wheel of the birds over its gardens and the croak of ravens in its streets and thoroughfares, bewailing those that had been therein.[444]

Also, lacking the people to relate their story, there are tablets to convey the message that has to be received in these places: "qad naqasha fīhā kalam malīḥ wa-lafẓ faṣīḥ fīhi waʿẓ wa-iʿtibār li-dhawī al-ʿuqūl wa-l-ibṣār" ("they contained matter of admonition and warning and restraint to those of understanding").[445] There can be a kind of accumulation observed in the case of the City of Brass since it is not only inside the city-walls that the messages are laid but outside, on the hilltop as well. Mūsā's reaction to these admonitions is also repeated every single time as he cries and moans and invokes Allah's name.

Despite the sophisticated structure of the story, the main message is not slowly built up through these separate parts, but it is almost forcefully stressed. It is not at the end of the journey that Mūsā and his group learn something valuable. On the contrary, from the very start in the black castle, Mūsā is very much aware of the truth behind these admonitions. What is more, he

[444] *Alf Layla wa Layla*, VI, 376–377. In English translation, see: Payne, V, 239.
[445] *Alf Layla wa Layla*, VI, 377. In English translation, see: Payne, V, 239.

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is copying at least some of the messages to preserve them. Repetition and accumulation are not to lead someone to a slow realization of the futility of accumulating worldly possessions and the inevitability of death as Allah had ordained it. These devices seem to be used to highlight these points over and over again. I would say that it is wonder which is sought after in this story more than the conclusion drawn from what they had seen or read through this journey. It is a foregone conclusion, what remains is wonder at Allah's design. That is why Ṭālib's sudden greed in front of the richly adorned corpse of Tadmurah is somewhat out of place here. It is not only that never before had he been the direct receiver of these admonitions but no one in the company was described as a sceptic regarding the message. The content of the messages was evident; it was not something to accept but something that is and the warning to heed the messages was not an order or an advice but a reminder.

That it is wonder over Allah's design and not the gradual acceptance of it which is in the focus here becomes clear when we realize that finding the City of Brass was not the objective of the journey. However, after all the marvel that the company had seen on its journey and all that insistent repetition of the admonitions, the conclusion seems rather rushed at the end. After leaving the City of Brass, the company has no more difficulty in reaching the sea where Solomon's bottles are fished out of the water. They do not encounter any difficulty in acquiring them and the journey home is described with half a sentence. The plot is concluded by distributing the riches among the people and Mūsā gives up his position as emir and travels to Jerusalem to worship Allah.

In spite of the main part of the story showing such premeditation on the author's part with the utilization of such devices as repetition and accumulation, and providing such a multi-layered narrative, the conclusion falls short of expectations and, in fact, its conclusion misses its mark. By moving the riches of the City of Brass into the possession of the caliph, it is as if all the warning throughout the story had been in vain. This is not surprising, however, if we recall the original purpose of the journey: to find some of the bottles in which Solomon had imprisoned the jinns and to bring them back to the caliph. In that respect, the mission is accomplished, and the story is successfully brought to its conclusion. The journey itself, it seems, from the moment the company gets lost up until they leave the city, can be considered a digression which do not have any influence on the main plot. It seems surprising only because it is such an elaborated and such a lengthy part of the story. Of course, the title given to this story helps to misdirect the reader as well.

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Mia Gerhardt distinguishes three elements in the story which, she claims, are not of the same origin.[446] These are the quest for the bottles, finding the City of Brass and the theme of the transitoriness of life. These are mostly thematic denominations but, nevertheless, they play an important role in the structural composition of the story as well since the plot, which is developing through the structural elements, is defined by these thematic groups. David Pinault and Andras Hámori argue that Gerhardt's dismissal of the story as a coherent whole is undeserved[447] while they both lay great emphasis on proving the thematic unity of the work.[448] Be it as may, these approaches represent such different attitudes that judging them one way, or another would be unfair. What is important is that the various elements, be they considered thematic or structural, which are originating from different periods and different hands have finally found one unified literary form through the artistic creativeness of an author. As Gerhards puts it, although approaching from a different angle, the author "finally made a story" from the scattered accounts.[449]

As mentioned above, this all is quite misleading. Although the English title is *The City of Brass* and the one provided by the Breslau edition also conforms to this, the Arabic version in the Calcutta II edition gives 10 titles which makes up the story referred to by that title. The ten Arabic titles correspond to the individual episodes: 1) the report of the Solomonic bottles, 2) sending Ṭālib b. Sahl to Egypt, 3) journey to the West to Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, 4) the journey of Ṭālib b. Sahl, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr and the shaykh ʿAbd al-Ṣamad to the Black Castle, 5) the horseman of brass, 6) the jinn in the stone, 7) arrival to the city of brass, 8) attempts to scale the wall of the city, 9) ʿAbd al-Ṣamad enters the city and opens the gates, 10) the death of Ṭālib b. Sahl, arrival to the Karkar island, the acquisition of the bottles and the return to Damascus. This composition is reminiscent of how the *khabar* is enabled to express more complex causal relations between events: placing them into a consciously constructed group.

This brings us to the second question: the problem of the relationship between independent reports and how they may or may not form a story within one structural unit. For the discussion of this problem, a thematically related story has been chosen, which is *Ḥikāyat*

[446] Gerhardt, 1963, 196–210.
[447] Pinault, 1992, 231.
[448] There is indeed great thematic cohesiveness within the story but both Hámori and Pinault render everything dependent on the English title, which is so persistent on the City of Brass, and neglect to acknowledge the role of the introductory part and thus, the role of the structural composition. As we have seen, from a structural point of view, the coherence of the story is not an example of perfection. Nevertheless, other considerations, like the thematic considerations represented by Hámori and Pinault, provide that additional element, which renders the story coherent despite its other deficiencies.
[449] Although approaching from a different angle, Gerhardt, too, points out the integrity of the story and the role of the author who, out of the scattered accounts, "finally made a story". (Gerhardt, 1963, 230.)

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ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Qilāba (*The City Irem*), henceforth: *Abū Qilāba* (III.5.). The story is an interesting, if not very artful, representation of the mixing of *story* and the *khabar* form. But it is exactly the clumsiness with which it handles these two forms that is informative about how these forms behave in a shared framework.

Naturally, the story is related by Shahrazād in the third-person singular but soon after, the role of the narrator is relegated to Abū Qilāba who is telling his own story. In this respect, we have the clear structure of the *khabar* form with Shahrazād quoting the words of Abū Qilāba. The *khabar* form is disrupted, though, later in the story when Abū Qilāba returns to his own country and after a time, when the caliph al-Muʿāwiyya hears about his story, he is summoned first to al-Hijāz then to the caliphal court. It is a rather large expanse of both space and time for the story to be still referred to as belonging to the *khabar* form. It is true that all of this first part, which is relatively elaborate, may be recognized as the introductory part of the *matn* in which the instance of communication is established. There certainly is an obvious connection between the wonders Abū Qilāba had seen and why the caliph wants to see him, but the story is not repeated in the presence of the caliph as it would be expected when the instance of communication is given in the *khabar* form. The story which should have been told had already been told at the beginning of a story. In this respect, this part from the adventure of Abū Qilāba in the wondrous city up until he appears in front of the caliph with evidence of the existence of the city, it can be considered a *ḥikāya*.

There is a report in the *khabar* form, however, in this story. After seeing the gems Abū Qilāba presents to him, al-Muʿāwiyya sends for Kaʿab al-Aḥbār to verify the story of Abū Qilāba. When Kaʿab al-Aḥbār mentions the city of Iram, the caliph wishes to hear more about it and what follows is the report of Kaʿab al-Aḥbār in the *khabar* form. It shows how accommodating the *story* is to the *khabar* form and why *khabar* is so versatile a form in Arabic literature. It can be adjusted into the plot of the story without the *khabar* form losing its fundamental structural characteristics. This is what happened at the beginning of *The City of Brass* in which Ṭālib b. Sahl reports the account of his grandfather which, then, gives the occasion for the lengthy story of the quest for the Solomonic bottles to take place.

However, what is even more curious is the two reports given at the end of the story. They are given in the *khabar* form, for both al-Thaʿālabī given as the source. They feel disjointed, however, as if added to the story as an afterthought due to their shared content with it. Their presence in the story become more understandable when we recall that it is a characteristic of Arabic literature recorded in the *khabar* form to give separate accounts one after the other only on the ground of thematic resemblance. This is what happens here: after giving the story of Abū

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Qilāba about the wondrous city of Iram, the author of this story – maybe driven by the consideration of an *adīb* – feels compelled to share the following two accounts as well. With this addition, the story feels more like a historiographical entry than a *story* which makes it rather unique in the *Nights*.

This story is a great example of how *khabar* may be presented in the *Nights*. First, here, as earlier in connection with the story of al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba, the observation stands that if two *akhbār* were placed in a shared framework of communicational situation, they would combine to form a story. That is what happens in the case of the reports of Abū Qilāba and Kaʿab al-Aḥbār. They are placed into the shared context of Shahrazād telling a story to the king in which context the two reports are put into a causal relationship: Kaʿab al-Aḥbār is telling a report because of Abū Qilāba's report (which is not told word by word). Taken together, they form a story. That is what happened in al-Mutawakkil's story with Maḥbūba. However, Kaʿab al-Aḥbār's report still retains its *khabar* form since it is told in a communicational situation within the story. In this case, this account creates a new narrative level and as such, it is still considered being in the *khabar* form. All in all, there are two occasions on which a report retains its *khabar* form in the *Nights*: either it is an independent report of Shahrazād in which she refers to a source and lets the source relate his own account, or it is framed within a larger narrative unit as a communicational situation, effectively creating a new narrative level within. In other cases, like in the case of the story of al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba, the possible reports are placed in a shared communicational situation (that of Shahrazād and the king) and they form an independent story. What does not happen is the incidental placing of *akhbār* one after the other simply based on a shared theme.

We have seen how the workings of an author can transform *khabar* form into a full-fledged story. Such simple devices as adding a wider range of temporal or spatial extensions to a simple story can render the most *khabar*-like text into a *story*. Not to mention such devices as repetition and accumulation which not only lengthen the story but enable it to express a more layered meaning than it may do in the *khabar* form. In spite of this tendency of *khabar* form transforming into story, the reason why we can talk about the presence of this narrative form is that such stories may contain accounts reported in the *khabar* form in the framework of a communicational situation. Communicational situations within a story, however, only involve the *khabar* form if that situation involves an instance of narrating. Communication will be the focus of the following section since its presence and exact role in a story raises some questions regarding the *khabar* form itself and its application in the *Nights*.

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4.2.2. The Narrative as Narration: Discourse Analysis of a Changing Form

Discourse analysis has already been employed and discussed in detail in connection with the *khabar* form. In Chapter 2, the main emphasis was on showing that the *khabar* form is still recognizable even in such an "untraditional" work as *The Thousand and One Nights*. However, that approach – although the tools are the same – was restricted to the study of the text and thus, it remained strictly formal. The present chapter strives to broaden the scope of discourse analysis and discusses the already raised points of narrative discourse in the framework of literary communication, concentrating on the transformation of the *khabar* form in the *Nights* and how that transformation is affected by the author and how it influences the interpretation of the reader.

The analysis follows Gérard Genette's categories of *mood*, *voice* and *time*.

Narrative Mood

As it has been mentioned in connection with the depiction of communicational situation and the mode of narration, narrative discourse is an important aspect of the *khabar* form, so it is unavoidable to explore its role in the transformation of that literary form into that of the *ḥikāya*. As far as discourse is concerned, the *khabar* form is essentially an extradiegetic narrative form with an intradiegetic perspective and external focalization. It is told by an eyewitness which results in its highly mimetic mode of representation and its simultaneous narration. This is the mood of the *khabar* form.

To examine the discourse and the process of its transformation from *khabar* form to *ḥikāya*, once again, four such stories have been chosen which share a common motif; that of the tragic lovers.

1. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ʿāshiq fī Banī ʿUdhra maʿa maʿshūqatihi* (*The Lovers of the Banou Udhreh*), henceforth: *The Lovers of the Banū ʿUdhra* (IV.4.)
2. *Ḥikāyat al-Qāsim b. ʿAdī fī amr al-ʿishq* (*The Lovers of the Benou Tai*), henceforth: *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy* (I.9.)
3. *Ḥikāyat Abī al-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrad fī amr al-ʿishq* (*The Mad Lover*) (I.10.)
4. *Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd maʿa Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī wa-ḥikāyatuhu quddāmahu ʿan fatā min Banī ʿUdhrī* (*The Lovers of the Benou Udhreh*), henceforth: *Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī* (I.18.)

As a shared plot, all of these four stories depict the tragic story of unrequited or unapproved love and, as such, all of them end in death. The way, however, how this love is depicted and how the plot develops to its tragic end varies in all cases.

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The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy is a representative of the *khabar* form in the *Nights*. It begins with the depiction of a narrative situation: "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Qāsim b. ʿAdī ḥakā ʿan rajul min Banī Tamīm annahu qāla" ("Quoth a man of the Benou Temim (cited by Casim ben Adi)").[450] With this the narrative situation of the *khabar* form is established since it is stated that a report is related. By continuing with a first-person narrative, the *khabar* form is further emphasized as the related report is the account of an eyewitness. The story is intradiegetic, then, as the narrator is part of the events depicted.

It also retains its *khabar* form by the persons recounting the events being quoted by Shahrazād. Both Shahrazād and Qāsim's narrations are thus highly mimetic as it is the case in the original *khabar* form. The narrative is also externally focalized. This is characteristic of Arabic literature which is limited by its first-person eyewitness account to the depiction of things which can be observed. What would be internal to the characters other than the narrator, who himself does not play an active role in the plot, remains expressible only through the narrator's observations.

The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy keeps up the *khabar* form nicely. It is the report of an incident that the man who is relating the account had actually witnessed. He is not part of the plot unfolding in front of his eyes and, when he finally steps into the plot, it is only to inquire after the reasons behind the events and to give the message of the report through the words of the shaykh: "Khashiytu min al-ʿār wa-l-faḍīḥa wa-qad waqaʿtu alān fīhimā" ("I feared reproach and dishonour; and now I am fallen upon both.").[451]

In contrast to the first example, *The Mad Lover*, *Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī* and *The Lovers of the Banū ʿUdhra* are an interesting cross between the *khabar* form and *story*. The former two still retain their *khabar* form by Shahrazād quoting a specific source, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrad in the former and Maṣrūr the Eunuch in the latter case, and, thus, creating the instance of narrating for the *matn* part.

In the case of *Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī*, using a palace slave as a source for a report in itself is indicative of its nature as a story. As far as narrative discourse is concerned, however, the *khabar* form still cannot be disputed as it is not the person of the source that matters but the instance of narrating in which his report is involved. A narrative instance is evoked in which another instance of narrating is described. As usual, the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd is wakeful one night and he wishes for distraction. Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī is brought in front of him where the caliph asks him for a new story. "Ayyumā aḥabb ilayka mā ʿāyantuhu wa-raʾaytuhu aw mā

[450] *Alf Layla*, II, 440. In translation, see: Payne, IV, 273.
[451] *Alf Layla*, II, 441. In translation, see: Payne, IV, 274.

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samiʿtuhu wa-waʿaytuhu?" ("Whether wouldst thou liefer hear, that which I have seen with mine eyes or that which I have [but] heard tell?")[452] asks Ibn Maʿmar to which the caliph answers by wishing to hear something he had witnessed. In this way, the *khabar* form is established for the actual report which is the tragic love story of a young man Ibn Maʿmar meets in the desert.

The case is very similar regarding *The Mad Lover* since it also shows a strong resemblance to the *khabar* form at the beginning: al-Mubarrad is quoted as he tells the story of him meeting a lover who had gone mad because of love. At first sight, it would seem that discourse-wise, there is no problem with regarding this narrative as being in the *khabar* form since the report is al-Mubarrad's account of him meeting an unfortunate young man who dies because of love.

It would seem that narrative discourse is supported by structural composition in these cases and both of the stories may be regarded as being in the *khabar* form since they depict an instance of narrating and the actual narrative of an eyewitness. This is not the whole story, however, and both of the stories show some resemblance to one another in this respect. On the one hand, against all appearances, the narrative discourse of these two stories is not in compliance with the *khabar* form. In spite of being the first-person accounts of their respective narrators, which is characteristic of the *khabar* form with its extradiegetic narrative, their narratives do not retain their extradiegetic nature. Extradiegetic, in this sense, means that although the narrator is part of the narrative as an eyewitness, he is not part of the action. In the present case, both al-Mubarrad and Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī are telling an intradiegetic narrative since the events they are recounting happened to them; they are not just eyewitnesses anymore.

Neither of the two stories consists only of the narrative of the person telling it, either. In both of the narratives, there is a second narrative embedded. It means that there is the report of the narrators meeting an unfortunate lover and there is also the story of these young men told in these narratives. The question is whether these embedded narratives disrupt the *khabar* form of the original narrative. The methods with which the authors fit the second narratives into the main ones are different. In *The Mad Lover*, the story of the young man is artfully added to that of al-Mubarrad without it disturbing the narrative flow of the *khabar* form. The tragic history of the man is related through verse which, in the absence of the narrative instance which would require the man to tell his story, does not break up the linear continuity of the *khabar* form but,

[452] *Alf Layla*, II, 391. In translation, see: Payne, VI, 208.

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at the same time, it does provide his history. The narrative is embedded without it creating the second narrative level. Something similar happens in *Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī* in which, although a narrative instance is created for the young man to relate his story, the story does not create a second narrative, it remains a part of the first one in the form of a conversation. In these cases, the communicational situation does not create an instance of narrating.

In *The Mad Lover*, there is also a scene added to the story which, essentially, breaks up the plot into two. In the end, al-Mubarrad relates his story to the caliph al-Mutawakkil who is disappointed in him for treating the mad lover as he did, if not directly causing but hastening his death. Had this scene been forming a part of a frame in which the report of al-Mubarrad is told, the account, the framework of a new narrative instance, would have retained its *khabar* form. As it is, the possible narrative instance turning into a new independent plot, renders this report a story, albeit with many discursive elements retained from the *khabar* form.

Something similar happens in *Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī* where there is also more than one plot in the report. Ibn Maʿmar himself is a tortured lover and he says so that much at the beginning of his story. He had lost his love and is pining away for her until, one day, he decides to seek her out. In spite of the claim of his quest, it is not the story the reader will get to know. The report which he recounts is, in fact, about his meeting another tortured lover whose plight and final tragedy he is witnessing.

In *Jamīl b. Maʿmar al-ʿUdhrī* there is an additional aspect of narrative discourse the handling of which is causing a further rift from the *khabar* form: the temporality of the plot is in sharp contrast with the conventions of the *khabar* form. *Khabar* form is striving for brevity and one way for it to achieve it is the succinct manner in which it handles its subject matter. It is time which can effectively vouchsafe for this brevity. As it was stated earlier, *khabar* is mainly concerned with the present of the narrative. It knows the "before" as long as it is concerned with the present of the narrative, and it only recognizes the passing of time in a limited sense.

This is the point at which the present story diverges from the *khabar* form. While it handles the past in accordance with the *khabar* form, its handling of the passing of time is radically different. The events are unfolding through several days during which even the times of day are distinctly depicted. What is more, the future is presented in this narrative in a way which is alien to the *khabar* form. The demise of the lady is foreshadowed at the first meeting of Ibn Maʿmar and the young man when the latter warns Ibn Maʿmar: "Yā akhā al-ʿarab inna baladanā hādhihi musbiʿa wa-hādhihi layla muẓlima muwaḥḥisha shadīdat al-ẓulma wa-l-bard. Wa-lā amn ʿalayka min al-waḥsh in yaftarisaka. Fa-anzil ʿindī ʿalā al-ruḥb wa-l-sabʿa. Fa-idhā

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al-ghad arshadtuka ilā al-ṭarīq" ("O brother of the Arabs, […] of a truth this our land is infested with lions and the night is exceeding dark and cold and dreary, and I fear lest the wild beasts tear thee in pieces; wherefore do thou alight and abide with me this night in ease and comfort, and to-morrow I will put thee in the right way.").[453] The way in which this foreshadowing is employed in the narrative is more characteristic of the story-telling technique of the story. Through the establishment of temporality in the narrative and, with that, through the creation of a link between the past and the present of the narrative plot, the author is able to create tension in the scene in which the young man is waiting for his lover who is, as later turns out, attacked by a lion on her way to his camp.

The story's counterpart, *The Lovers of the Banū 'Udhra*, sets itself apart from the *khabar* form in exactly that point in which these former two stories are similar to the *khabar* form: the narrative instance. Structurally, it relates to the *khabar* form. However, the discourse the author employs sets it apart from it. The story is told in the third-person singular which, in itself, would not matter, were it embedded in a narrative instance which would provide it with an invisible narrator who, nevertheless, is part of the plot. As it is, it is only Shahrazād who is narrating the story without any reference to a specific source. As it was established, Shahrazād's story-telling is also an instance of narrative but it is not enough to provide the *khabar* form for a narrative.

The Voice in Narrative Discourse

Considerable time has already been spent emphasizing the narrated nature of *khabar* in the framework of communication. *Author, narrator* and *character* have been discussed from one point of view or another in that communication. The present chapter aims to bring those dispersed observations together to describe how the distribution of the roles and the relationship among them change in accordance with the literary context they are interpreted in and how these changes influence the narrative discourse, primarily of the *khabar* form. The examination centers on *The Thousand and One Nights*, but for comparison, examples from the various fields of *adab* will be mentioned in detail.

It is the term *voice* of Gérard Genette under the umbrella of which these roles may be discussed. While *mood* in the previous chapter referred to the person who sees in a narrative, *voice* refers to the one who talks. Although the narrator is at the center of the discussion of *voice*, the relationship among these three agents is not insignificant since both the author and any of the characters may take on the mantel of the narrator. The narrative discourse is subjected

[453] *Alf Layla*, III, 393. In translation, see: Payne, VI, 210.

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to specific changes depending on who does the talking and how they relate to the events described. In this respect, the narrative may be heterodiegetic, homodiegetic, or autodiegetic. These changes then play an essential role in how the author may express authorial intention, on the one hand, and how the reader may interpret the work, on the other.

Regarding the short narratives of pre-modern Arabic literature, analyzing the roles of author, narrator and character within the narrative becomes relevant when we consider the basic structure of the *khabar* form and how these roles are distributed there. In the *khabar* form, the roles are assigned through the *isnād*. The author is at the end of the *isnād,* from which all the other transmitters can be enumerated. At the other end of the chain is the eyewitness, who assumes the role of the narrator. This eyewitness narrates the event described in the *matn* and played out by the characters. In the *khabar* form, these three roles are strictly divided, and no person plays two roles. According to this observation, the *khabar* form is a homodiegetic narrative: the narrator is part of his narrative. However, this observation needs additional remarks. For one, the author will never be the narrator. He does not relate the event; he simply quotes somebody. Secondly, although the narrator is a character in his narrative, he is never the main character. The narrator does not tell us about events that happened to him; he describes events as they happen to someone else. A *khabar* will never be autodiegetic.

However, when the *isnād* is manipulated, and the relationships change, the roles become less defined. Blurring the boundaries between roles may provide a new kind of narrative discourse for the author and may create new ways for interpretation for the reader. In the following, the changes in the distribution of the roles and the relationship among them will be discussed. It will be pointed out how these changes affect the discourse of the *khabar* form as it appears in the *Nights*, on the one hand, and how they influence interpretation, on the other.

For this purpose, three stories from the *Nights* had been singled out; stories that are connected through the person of their protagonist, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī. These stories are the following:

1. *Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* (*Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi and the Barber-Surgeon*), henceforth: *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* (III.4.)
2. *Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī ma'a al-tājir* (*Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi and the Merchant's Sister*), henceforth: *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister* (II.7.)
3. *Ḥikāyat al-Amīn ma'a 'ammihi Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī fī amr jāriyatihi* (*El Amin Ben Er Reshid and His Uncle Ibrahim Ben El Mehdi*), henceforth: *al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* (III.30.)

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First, the last scene of *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* will be discussed for the sake of describing the relationship between the roles of author, narrator and character in connection with the *khabar* form as it appears in pre-modern Arabic literature. I have not found corresponding accounts in *adab*, but, at present, that is not a detrimental factor since the relationship in question can be examined by handling a group of material more loosely connected than in other cases. For the sake of variety, works with different purposes are examined. Thus, from the field of historiography, Ibn Khallikān's biographical dictionary, the *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*[454] , and al-Dhahabī's similar work, the *Siyar aʿlām*[455] are considered while the chronicle of Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*[456] is also examined. *Adab* literature is represented by Ibn Ḥijja's *Thamarāt al-awrāq*.[457] After this comparative examination, the three stories of the *Nights* will be discussed, the narrative technique will be analyzed, and the resulting interpretational differences will be pointed out.

According to the previous observation concerning voice, the *khabar* form only appears in the biographical dictionaries of al-Dhahabī and Ibn Khallikān, while it is transformed both in Ibn Ḥijja's work and in the *Nights*. It is entirely dispensed within the chronicle of Ibn Kathīr, in which the year-by-year depiction of events forgoes the temporally restricted witness accounts. These changes attest to the crucial role *isnād* plays in the distribution of the roles of author, narrator and character. With the alteration of the *isnād* or its omission, the distinction between the roles of the author, narrator and character loses its rigidity, resulting in the change of these agents' relation to the described events. Consequently, the narrative form of the *khabar* is abandoned, and the narrative discourse is transformed. These changes, in turn, greatly influence the interpretation of the story.

The last scene of *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* concerns the relationship between Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī (779-839) and al-Maʾmūn (786-833). The distribution of the roles and the resulting changes in narrative discourse will be examined first in the relation of author-narrator, then in that of narrator-character. Sources tell about the antagonistic relationship due to Ibrāhīm's opposition to his nephew's rule. Ibrāhīm was proclaimed caliph in Baghdad in 817, during the reign of al-Maʾmūn. Eventually, Ibrāhīm was forced to resign, but his nephew spared his life,

[454] Ibn Khallikān, Abū al-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr: *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, I, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1972, 39–42.
[455] al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUthmān: *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, X, Dimashq (Muʾassasat al-Risāla), 2014/1435, 557–561.
[456] Ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī, Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar: *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, X, Bayrūt (Maktabat al-Maʿārif), 1990/1410, 247–251.
[457] Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad: *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Bayrūt (al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya), 2005/1426, 160–165.

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and he lived the rest of his life as an accomplished singer and musician. It is the end of Ibrāhīm's reign and al-Ma'mūn's pardon which is at the center of the present discussion. The scene in question is described in some detail in the works under scrutiny.

The author is a straightforward matter to determine: he is the creative force behind the work's composition. The relationship he bears to the events described is more complicated. As stated above, in connection with the *khabar* form, the author constitutes a part of the transmission of information; he is the most contemporary link in a long line of transmitters. As such, he is part of the literary form he is using. Due to his fixed place in the *isnād*, he cannot play any other role but that of the author. In this respect, al-Dhahabī's entry is the most straightforward. All the accounts in the entry start with the author mentioning the narrator by name, as it does in the case of the accounts which concern us here: "Qāla Thamāmat b. Ashras" ("Thamāmat b. Ashras relates"),[458] or "Qāla Abū Muḥallam" ("Abū Muḥallam relates").[459] Interestingly enough, it is Ibn Ḥijja's work that shows similar features. It can be stated that the author's participation in the *khabar* form highly depends on the *khabar*'s informative function and how that function is coded in the narrative form itself. It becomes more apparent when we examine cases when the author is not part of a chain of transmission.

In Ibn Kathīr's work, we see that, in the absence of the chain of authorities that provide the narrator for the account shared, the author takes up the mantel of the narrator. "Thumma dakhalat sana arbaʿ wa-mi'atayn" ("Then followed the year of 204."),[460] begins Ibn Kathīr this section and proceeds to tell the events himself. Despite Ibn Khallikān's work being classified as a biography, the present entry resembles Ibn Kathīr's chronicle more than al-Dhahabī's biography. There are three accounts in the entry, but none quotes any sources. Without any source, there is no one to be recognized as the narrator but the author himself. The previous examples verify the earlier observation concerning the role the *isnād* plays in the distribution of the roles of author and narrator in the *khabar* form. When the author is not bound by his role in the *isnād*, his relationship to the reported events is changed, which allows him to assume additional roles.

However, in the biographical dictionaries, there are other instances when the author may assume the role of the narrator. Suppose we regard the works in a broader context than that of the short narrative. In that case, the biographical works are divided into entries consisting of an introductory part and a collection of accounts. The accounts are in the *khabar* form; thus, the

[458] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, X, 561.
[459] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, X, 560.
[460] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, X, 250.

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eyewitnesses of the events described, or the authorized sources are the narrators in these cases. This is the way how accounts are presented in al-Dhahabī's entry. It is in the introductory part where the author acts as a narrator. Before providing the accounts, which make up the bulk of the entry, the author tells the pertinent background information. In some cases, this part is short, only giving name, ancestry, and occupation; in other cases, however, the author may provide a more elaborate narrative. Al-Dhahabī's introductory part provides an example of the former by only describing basic information concerning Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī. Through his enumeration of certain facts regarding Ibrāhīm's person, like his name, occupation and most known characteristics, this introductory part resembles more of a simple list than a narrative. Unlike Ibn Khallikān's introductory part, in which he is generous with the background information to the degree that it can be considered a narrative on its own, a narrative of which Ibn Khallikān is the narrator.

As far as narrative discourse is concerned, the introductory part of an entry is narrated by the author, given that it can be considered a narrative. In this respect, it shares much with the chronicle's narrative. Indeed, Ibn Kathīr's account of what transpired between Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and al-Ma'mūn shares a great deal of similarity, and both authors can be considered the narrator of their works. In contrast, the narrator of an account given within an entry is not the author, but the eyewitness of the event recounted or a reliable source. It is shown clearly in al-Dhahabī's work in which, in contrast to Ibn Khallikān's entry, all of the accounts are narrated by an eyewitness or, at least, quoted by a reliable source. It is through their narrative that the relationship between uncle and nephew is elaborated.

The stories on the list under scrutiny, the one in the *Nights* and the one in Ibn Ḥijja's work, add to the previous observations. Curiously, in neither of the cases is it the author who narrates the events. In the *Nights*, it is Shahrazād who narrates the events. After the opening words of "Wa-min laṭā'if al-manqūl min al-mustajād" ("And among the nice stories which are told about excellent people"),[461] Ibn Ḥijja gives the word to al-Wāqidī, who, then, passes the role of the narrator to Ibrāhīm. While the latter example shows Ibn Ḥijja's connection to the *adab* material, the *Nights* represents an entirely new way of discourse.

Plot-wise, a story could be inserted into this framework of introductory part and accounts. *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* begins with the description of the initial situation of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, which, in some respects, resembles the introduction of Ibn Khallikān. Ibrāhīm had fallen out with the caliph al-Ma'mūn, refusing to acknowledge him as the rightful ruler. In Ray, he even

[461] Ibn Ḥijja, *Thamarāt*, 160.

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proclaimed himself caliph. Although al-Ma'mūn was waiting for his uncle to change his mind, he had lost his patience and set out to Ray to find him. Ibrāhīm, fearing for his life, fled to Baghdad, after which the caliph set a price on his head. That is where the plot begins. In a historically more accurate way, this is what is narrated by Ibn Khallikān as well. He describes the state of affairs between Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and al-Ma'mūn, giving the reasons for Ibrāhīm being in Baghdad and the caliph going after him. Only after the descriptions of these events says Ibn Khallikān that "[w]a-akhbār Ibrāhīm ṭawīla shahīra" ("and the reports concerning Ibrāhīm are numerous and well-known")[462] and sets out to provide some of those *akhbār*.

However, when narrative discourse is concerned, it becomes evident that the difference between the two modes of representation is significant. It has to be acknowledged that the sections describing the events behind the antagonistic relationship between uncle and nephew fulfill two markedly different functions in the text. The accounts in Ibn Khallikān's entry represent separate incidents. In a narratological way, they cannot be brought into relation. It is a characteristic of the *khabar* form. Similarly, the introductory part also stands alone. In contrast, the events in the *Nights* are described in one unified story. Thus, the narrative discourse in the *Nights*' story is closer to the *khabar* form of the accounts than to the narrative of the entry.

Concerning the accounts, the author of a biographical dictionary is similar to that of the *Nights*. The authors of the biographical dictionaries, due to their role in the *isnād*, cannot bear multiple roles. Similarly, the author of the *Nights* is also incapable of doing so. With the introduction of Shahrazād into his work, he is restricted to the single role of the author. Similarly, Shahrazād's role as the narrator of the stories is also markedly different from that of the narrators of the *khabar* form. She is not connected to the narrative through the chain of transmitters whose rank she is joining by quoting them. Although there are examples of Shahrazād quoting certain personalities, she is, first and foremost, a narrator who tells stories. She may give the role of the narrator to one of her characters in the short narratives, but, in a narratological way, they are two different kinds of narrators. Her characters relate accounts of events that happened to them, while Shahrazād does not claim any personal connection to her stories. Only in a handful of cases does Shahrazād's role as a narrator of stories coincide with that of the narrator of events of the *khabar* form. Mostly, it is Shahrazād's characters who retain that role.

[462] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, I, 40.

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The narrator's relationship to the events described is elaborated in more detail in the following. Having examined the relationship between the author and the narrator, let us discuss how the roles of the narrator and character are distributed, depending on the narrative form. Voice can be examined in connection with the narrator. Since he or she is the one telling the story, their relation to the described events determines how it is narrated.

Khabar form usually assumes that narrator and character do not coincide since the narrator does not tell his own story but something remarkable that had been witnessed. This assumption is further strengthened when it is not an eyewitness but only a reliable source. In that case, the other author cannot quote something he had been a part of, much less narrate it as his own story. In the first case, the narrative is homodiegetic, while in the second, heterodiegetic. The third category, autodiegetic narration, is not represented in the *khabar* form as no narrator will tell his own story. Because the narrator of the *khabar* is usually part of the event narrated, it is pertinent to pay attention to the distinction between character and protagonist.

This distinction is especially relevant since the stories, both in the *Nights* and Ibn Ḥijja's work, are told in the first-person singular of the *khabar* form. However, in these cases, the person of the narrator and the protagonist coincide, making the narrative autodiegetic. It is Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī who is narrating his own story, the previous narrator giving the word to the protagonist through the use of the verb *qāla*. Ibn Ḥijja refers to al-Wāqidī, who then claims that he heard the story from Ibrāhīm himself: "Wa-lahu akhbār kathīra, aḥsanuhā ʿindī mā ḥakāhu lī. Qāla […]" (There is a lot of report about him [Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī], the best that I know is the one he told me. He said […]).[463] After making the introduction to her story, Shahrazād passes the role of the narrator to Ibrāhīm with a simple "Qāla Ibrāhīm" (Ibrāhīm said). However, it is not only in the stories where we can find autodiegetic narration. Ibn Khallikān's biographical entry is unusual because he does not provide sources for his accounts. Mention has already been made about how this omission results in Ibn Khallikān's being regarded as the narrator. Merging the author and the narrator would mean, in a biographical dictionary, that the narration becomes heterodiegetic since the author-narrator tells us about events of which he could not be a part. However, there is an autodiegetic narration in this entry where Ibn Khallikān, much like Shahrazād, passes on the role of the narrator with a "Qāla Ibrāhīm" (Ibrāhīm said).

[463] Ibn Ḥijja, *Thamarāt*, 160.

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In the other cases, the roles are more categorically divided. In Ibn Kathīr, where the author does not relinquish the role of the narrator, it is the most evident. The complete lack of the *khabar* form in the annalistic narrative does not provide for anybody, especially for Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, to assume the role of the narrator. Other authorities are only mentioned, not quoted. "Wa-qad dhakara Ibn al-Jawzī wa-ghayruhu anna Salman tuwaffā qabla dhālika" ("Ibn al-Jawzī and others mentioned that Salm [al-Khāṣir] had died before that"),[464] says, for example, Ibn Kathīr after introducing the events concerning Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī in the year 201 AH. He does not quote anybody; he simply states a fact with which other authors concur. Accordingly, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī remains a character in the narrative of Islamic history.

In the biographical dictionaries, the case is not so straight-cut. Ibrāhīm's autodiegetic narration of Ibn Khallikān has already been mentioned. According to the *khabar* form, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī could not be the narrator of his own story. Nevertheless, similar to the author-narrator question, al-Dhahabī's entry also provides examples of the more straightforward *khabar* narratives concerning this case. There is an example of words being put into Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's mouth, but it is only the words quoted that are told by Ibrāhīm; the narrative itself is narrated by Abū al-Muḥallam: "Qāla Abū al-Muḥallam: Qāla Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī ḥīna udkhila ʿalā al-Maʾmūn: Dhanbī aʿẓam min ʿudhr wa-ʿafūka aʿẓam min an yutaʿāẓamahu dhanb" (Abū al-Muḥallam said: Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī said when he was led in front of al-Maʾmūn: "My sin is greater than [my] excuse but your pardon is so great that [my] sin cannot compare to it.").[465] In this respect, this concise account which amounts to two lines, represents a simpler form of *khabar* in which only utterances are quoted and not whole narratives are given. Other narratives concerning Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's defeat and al-Maʾmūn's subsequent pardon are told through the accounts of other authorities like al-Khaṭīb, al-Khuṭabī, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarabī and Thamāma b. Ashras. They are the narrators to whom the author gives the task of narrating, and it is in these narratives that Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī appears as a character around whom the events are centered. This way, the roles of *author*, *narrator* and *character* are unequivocally differentiated.

Exceptions, of course, exist, which shows that the distribution of the roles of *author*, *narrator* and *character* is flexible. The first-person narrative of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī in al-Dhahabī is a good example of that. There is also the passive use of *qīla* in one of the accounts, rendering the author, once again, the narrator. Even though the two methods seem different, something similar happens in Ibn Khallikān. Although he claims that many accounts exist

[464] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, X, 248.
[465] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, X, 560.

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concerning Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, he only provides three of them. The low number is primarily due to the fact that Ibn Khallikān is rather selective in the material related and, given that most of these accounts must have been well known among the people, he chooses not to tell them. What is of concern here is that among the three accounts recounted, one is told by Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī himself, and the other two are not provided with any indication of sources and, thus, they are without the narrator with which the *khabar* form and its chain of authorities would have provided them. In the absence of such a narrator, the author assumes the role, much like in the case of the passive *qīla* in al-Dhahabī's entry. All these changes are due to the author's deviation from the *khabar* form, which may result in two things: either the relationship between author and narrator or between narrator and characters is affected.

We have seen that, while the *khabar* form of the biographical accounts has a rather strict system of the distribution of the roles of *author*, *narrator* and *character*, it is not only the individual story that may divert from this system but the biographical accounts themselves. Consequently, either the author assumes the role of the narrator, or the narrator assumes the role of the character – his protagonist. In the following, we will examine how the changing distribution of roles affects the discourse of the works, with particular attention to the *khabar* form and how it is transformed into the more complex form of the *ḥikāya*. First, the narrative mood is examined. It is interlinked with the voice, so the shifting of the roles influences how the narrative is told. Secondly, the narrative levels will be discussed. The distinction between narrative levels is alien to the *khabar* form, which tells about a single event in a highly fixed narrative form. In contrast, the more complex form of the *ḥikāya* allows for multiple levels of narration which is exploited in the *Nights*. In this context, the distinction between communication and literary communication will be discussed, and interpretational changes will be examined more closely.

Recalling how the *khabar* form has been defined in the context of the narrative mood, we said that it is an essentially extradiegetic narrative form with an intradiegetic perspective and external focalization. Let us consider the most basic appearance of the *khabar* form in al-Dhahabī's entry: "Qāla Abū al-Muḥallam: Qāla Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī ḥīna udkhila ʿalā al-Maʾmūn: Dhanbī aʿẓam min ʿudhr wa-ʿafūka aʿẓam min an yutaʿāẓamahu dhanb" (Abū al-Muḥallam said: Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī said when he was led in front of al-Maʾmūn: "My sin is greater than [my] excuse but your pardon is so great that [my] sin cannot compare to it.").[466] It recalls the *khabar* form in *ḥadīth,* where the *isnād* is followed by a short description in which

[466] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, X, 560.

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the saying of the Prophet is uttered. This short example exhibits the well-defined distributions of the roles in the *khabar* form. In this case, the *isnād* is very short, but at one end of the chain, there is al-Dhahabī, the author, who is quoting Abū al-Muḥallam, who is at the other end of the chain and who is authorized to quote Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's words as they were uttered. In this case, the *matn* and the short background information provided by Abū al-Muḥallam form a narrative that is narrated by the man, Abū al-Muḥallam, whose role as a narrator is established by the author, al-Dhahabī.

In al-Dhahabī's entry, a more extended account is quoted by Thamām b. Ashras. Once again, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī is in the caliph's presence after having been captured, and his fate is decided.

> Qāla Thamāma b. Ashras: Qāla lī al-Maʾmūn: Qad ʿazamtu ʿalā taqrīʿ ʿammī fa-ḥaḍḍartu. Fa-jāʾa[467] bi-Ibrāhīm maghlūlan qad tahaddala shaʿruhu ʿalā ʿaynayhi. Fa-sallama. Fa-qāla al-Maʾmūn: Lā sallama Allāh ʿalayka. A-kufran bi-l-niʿma wa-khurūjan ʿalayyī? Fa-qāla: Yā Amīr al-Muʾminīn, inna al-qudra tudhhibu al-ḥafīẓa wa-min mudda lahu fī al-ightirār hajamat bihi al-anāt ʿalā al-talaf. Wa-qad rafaʿaka Allāh fawqa kull dhanb kamā waḍaʿa kull dhī dhanb dūnaka. Fa-in tuʿāqiba, fa-bi-ḥaqqika. Fa-in taʿfu, fa-bi-faḍlika. Qāla: Inna hādhayn – yaʿnī ibnahu al-ʿAbbās wa-l-Muʿtaṣim – yushīrāni bi-qatlika. Qāla: Ashārā ʿalayka bi-mā yushāru bihi ʿalā mithlika fī mithlī. Wa-l-mulk ʿaqīm wa-lakinna taʾabbā laka an tastajilba naṣran illā min ḥaythu ʿawwadaka Allāh. Wa-anā ʿammuka wa-l-ʿamm ṣinw al-ab. Wa-bakā. Fa-taghargharat ʿaynā al-Maʾmūn wa-qāla: Khallū ʿan ʿammī. Thumma akhḍarahu wa-nādamahu wa-mā zāla bihi ḥattā ḍaraba lahu bi-l-ʿūd.[468]
>
> Thamāma b. Ashras said: "Al-Maʾmūn told me: "I had decided upon rebuking my uncle." So I had him brought [to him]. They brought Ibrāhīm [to him], shackled, his hair covering his eyes. Ibrāhīm greeted al-Maʾmūn and al-Maʾmūn replied: "Allāh do not give peace to you! Are you not ungrateful and are you not forsaking me?" Replied Ibrāhīm: "O, Amīr al-Muʾminīn, the power makes the resentment disappear and those who are persisting in this belief, those are overcome by patience instead of destruction. Allāh did raise you above all sin just like He made all sinners apart from you. So, if you want to punish me, that is within your right but if you choose to forgive, that is from your grace." Al-Maʾmūn said: "These two – that is, Ibn al-ʿAbbās and al- Muʿtaṣim – advised that I should kill you." Ibrāhīm replied: "They advised what others had advised regarding the case of ones like you and me. But your sovereignty is in vain if it means that you cannot refuse help unless it is reinforced by Allāh. I am your uncle and an uncle is like a father." Then he began to cry. And tears appeared in al-Maʾmūn's eyes as well, and he said: "Release my uncle!" And they brought him to al-Maʾmūn and they drank and remained so until they brought an ʿūd to Ibrāhīm.

Again, this account is in the *khabar* form, this time with an eyewitness at the end of the chain of transmitters who not only quote a specific passage but can narrate the events that had taken place in his presence. Here, as in the previous example, the roles are distributed straightforwardly. Al-Dhahabī is the author who is referring to Thamāma b. Ashras as an

[467] In the Arabic edition, the verb is spelled فجيء but with the preposition *bi-*, that form does not make sense.
[468] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, X, 561.

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authority in transmitting the happenings he had witnessed. He is the last link in the chain of authorities, and thus, he is the narrator of the events in which, although he is partaking, he does not assume an active role. He remains in the background while the characters of his narrative, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and al-Ma'mūn, act out their roles as characters. There is no overlap between these roles.

Accordingly, the mood of the narrative conforms to the previously provided definition. It is extradiegetic since the narrator recounts the event as witnessed from the outside. Whether the narrative is heterodiegetic, like in the first example, or homodiegetic, like in the second, it retains its extradiegetic form. Although the perspective may change depending on the narrator's person (eyewitness or authorized transmitter), it does not influence the overall mood of the narrative. Focalization also remains external since neither the eyewitness, nor the authorized transmitter can see the inner workings of the characters' minds.

The matter is markedly different in *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*. Although this narrative exhibits some characteristics of the *khabar* form, it is more closely aligned to the form of the *ḥikāya* and its more complex discourse. This story shares a lot with the other examples from *adab*. It is put into a historical framework established by Shahrazād's introductory narration. Historicity is further provided by appointing a historical figure as the narrator of the events. Paradoxically, by making Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī the narrator of his own story, the work loses its veracity which would have been provided by an eyewitness account just like it has been done in Thamāma b. Ashras' case.

Through the change in the narrator's person, the narrative loses its extradiegetic form and becomes intradiegetic since the narrator actively partakes in the event; he ceases to be an observer. Although the intradiegetic perspective remains as the narrator still describes the events as he witnesses them or experiences them in this case, the focalization also changes due to this very shift from witnessing to experiencing. The narrator is privy to one of his characters' inner thoughts and feelings since he is one of the characters. These changes in the narrative mode transform the other aspects of the narrative discourse as well, and this transformation results in the gradual loss of the *khabar* form and the assuming of the more complex narrative discourse of the *ḥikāya*. After examining the previous three examples, it can be said that the three narrative characteristics of the text, which describe the mood of the narrative, can only be maintained if the roles of *author*, *narrator* and *character* are differentiated from one another. If the borders begin to blur, the narrative starts to lose its *khabar* form.

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With the change of the narrative form, another concern arises. In a collection that is so decisively based on the technique of framing, interpretation has to consider, first and foremost, the determination of the story to be interpreted. It means that within a single story, the various narrative levels have to be differentiated and discussed individually. Here, communication comes to play an important role and not only because the multi-layered short narratives are typically the ones with a communicational situation described in them, but because determining the layer of the narrative also helps to understand how the communication within the story and the literary communication without the story work.

Let us now concentrate on the *Nights* and discuss those three stories in which Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī appears: *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*, *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister*, and *al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*. These three stories represent three different kinds of narrative as far as the narrator's person is concerned. Shahrazād narrates the third story, while in the other two stories, the role of the narrator is shared between her and Ibrāhīm. Although Ibrāhīm narrates the first two stories, the relationship between Shahrazād and him is different.

The relationship between *author*, *narrator* and *character* is varied in the *Nights*, which, although it makes interpretation a challenge, renders the *Nights* a much more interesting specimen of pre-modern Arab narrative than it is usually credited for. There are two aspects of the texts on which we have to concentrate. First, it has to be examined how the discourse of the story narrated by Shahrazād and the one narrated by Ibrāhīm relate to one another in each story. Secondly, in terms of the three stories taken together, it has to be discussed how the author handles the narrative in the framework of literary communication. The first part of the discussion will reveal how interpretation works between the narrative levels and what role the transformation of the *khabar* form into a less strict literary form plays in this interpretation. The second line of inquiry will explain how interpretation works within the framework of literary communication.

First of all, to establish the narrative levels, the relationship between Shahrazād and Ibrāhīm has to be discussed since all the three stories provided represent a different kind of relationship between *narrator* and *character* and even between *narrator* and *narrator*. The first story, which was also discussed above, is narrated by Ibrāhīm much like a *khabar* is narrated by an authority: the word is given to Ibrāhīm through the chain of author–Shahrazād–Ibrāhīm. In the second story, *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister*, Ibrāhīm, once again, narrates his own story. However, the situation is markedly different. While the narrative level is not split in the first case due to the chain of attribution, here, there are two levels of narrative to speak of since Ibrāhīm tells his own story within the framework of Shahrazād's narrative

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where a communicational situation is described. Among the three stories, the last one, *al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*, is the simplest as far as narrative discourse is concerned: it is the third-person narrative of Shahrazād in which Ibrāhīm remains confined to the role of a character.

In that third story, the roles are well defined. "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā", begins the story with Shahrazād's familiar words, "anna al-Amīn akhā al-Maʾmūn dakhala dār ʿammihi Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī fa-raʾā bihā jāriya taḍrubu bi-l-ʿūd" ("El Amin, son of Er Reshid, once entered the house of his uncle Ibrahim ben el Mehdi and saw there a slave-girl playing upon the lute.").[469] In this introductory sentence, Shahrazād introduces all three of her characters whose actions and interactions she is recounting. *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* starts with a more elaborate introductory part told by Shahrazād, but, after the necessary background information is provided, the role of the narrator is passed on to Ibrāhīm when Shahrazād says: "Qāla Ibrāhīm" after which the first-person narrative of the protagonist begins. Ibrāhīm is not only the story's protagonist; he is its narrator. Just like he is the narrator and protagonist of the remaining story, *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister*. This one starts with a simpler version of the description of the communicational situation: "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā anna Amīr al-Muʾminīn al-Maʾmūn qāla li-Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī: Ḥaddithnā bi-aʿjab mā raʾayta" ("The Khalif El Mamoun once said to [his uncle] Ibrahim ben el Mahdi, 'Tell us the most remarkable thing that thou hast ever seen.'").[470] Ibrāhīm obliges the caliph's request and relates some events that had happened to him.

The last two stories, which Ibrāhīm narrates, seemingly have many things in common. However, they could not be more different regarding the relationship between the two narrators. In *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*, Shahrazād does not have a story to tell. She is only providing the framework in which Ibrāhīm's story may be told. That is why this work, despite its apparent differences, may be brought into connection with the *khabar* form. In the *khabar* form, more precisely, in the *isnād*, the only one with a narrative to share is the last person of the chain, irrespective of him being an eyewitness or only a source quoted. Every other member of the chain, including the author on the other end, is only quoting that narrative. Something similar happens in Shahrazād's case as well in *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*. In both cases, whether there is an *isnād* or only the chain of Shahrazād and Ibrāhīm, there is something in common: there is only one communicational situation as far as the narrative is concerned. It means that there is only one narrative level.

[469] *Alf Layla*, II, 455. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 288.
[470] *Alf Layla*, II, 298. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 122.

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As opposed to this, in *Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister*, through the introduction of a communicational situation in which Ibrāhim's story is told, Shahrazād and Ibrāhīm are partaking in two different communicational situations. On the one hand, there is the situation in which Ibrāhīm is asked to tell a wondrous story. On the other hand, there is the situation in which Shahrazād is telling a story to Shahriyār about Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī telling a story to al-Maʾmūn. In this case, both Shahrazād and Ibrāhīm have their own stories to tell, whereas, in the previous example, Shahrazād was only quoting Ibrāhīm as he was telling his story. In this case, we have two narrative levels, meaning that there are two narratives to interpret.

It has already been mentioned that to be able to talk about different levels of narrative, the work has to be considered a literary work. Keeping to the observation that Shahrazād's "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā" fulfills the role of the *isnād*, it suggests that a chain of authorities is alluded to.[471] This statement is, of course, only hypothetical; I do not wish to suggest that this is what happens. As far as function goes, however, this postulation is acceptable. In this case, then, we are allowed to draw up the following parallel between the stories of the *Nights* and other accounts in the *khabar* form: there is an author who is quoting other people in order to be able to provide an account of a specific event. In the case of *adab* works, these other persons include actual historical personalities whose authority is recognized in transmitting an account whose content is considered, if not exactly true, but verified at least by the presence of the authorities in the *isnād* the author is quoting or, at the very least, alluding to. In the case of the *Nights*' stories, the emphasis is not on authority. There might be historical personalities mentioned here and there, but what determines the "isnād" of the *Nights* is Shahrazād's presence and that, by saying "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā", she is referring to a source she is quoting. Of course, without an actual person to quote, quotation in the strictest sense is not possible. Nevertheless, the function of Shahrazād and the passive phrase remains: one single narrative is quoted. (Of course, how this influences the narrative discourse is an entirely other question.) To verify the piece of information transmitted in the *matn* is the restriction that the *isnād* poses on the narrative of the *khabar* form. A literary approach can forego this function of the *khabar* form by concentrating on the text, the literary text, and not the content.[472]

[471] This observation raises the question of whether it is really Shahrazād who is the narrator of the events of the third story, for example, which is told in a simple third-person singular narrative. I would suggest that, although the "Wa-mimmā yuḥkā" alludes to a chain of authorities, by the persons in this hypothetical chain remaining nameless and not being able to be quoted verbatim, by default, Shahrazād remains the narrator.

[472] This kind of approach does not only have to concern the stories in the *Nights*. Any work may be approached with a literary mind in which case, even a strictly historical or legal account could be examined in this way. But then again, there are not many things in connection with the *khabar* which could be considered strict.

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Up until this point, I have not mentioned the author in this chain when discussing the communicational situation and how the narrators may share it. This omission is because there is another kind of communication to consider when the author is involved. The communication in which the author participates is a specific kind of communication: literary communication. In fact, literary communication facilitates the recognition of narrative levels. Without the convention which governs literary communication, regarding a text as a literary work would not be possible. This step from communication to literary communication happens in those historiographical inquiries where narrative techniques are analyzed. The text is not regarded as the container of factual data to which the *isnād* stands as a validating force. Instead, it is considered the conscious literary effort of an author. The historical text does not need to be taken as a literary work in the strictest sense; it only has to be recognized that conscious literary efforts had been made in constructing it. With such a shift in approach, the text's message opens to a broader range of interpretations.

Let us now return to the three stories under discussion and examine how the author influences interpretation through manipulating narrative discourse. *Al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* provides a pretty straightforward case. Although the distribution of and the relationship between the roles of *author*, *narrator* and *character* does not play a decisive role in this case, the author is still discernible through discursive changes in relation with the *khabar* form. What we have here is the simple plot structure of the *khabar* form. Although the story does not consist of a single scene, the plot is simple enough not to warrant any great distance from the *khabar* form. The extradiegetic narrative of the *khabar* form is also retained through the narrative of Shahrazād. The roles of the *author*, *narrator* and *character* are clearly set apart, further facilitating the *khabar* form.

However, there are specific changes that affect interpretation. For one, the intradiegetic perspective cannot be maintained without an eyewitness who is part of the events described. The narrative is heterodiegetic as far as voice is concerned: the narrator bears no relation to the events described. Thus, the perspective of Shahrazād is extradiegetic; she is describing an event completely independent of her. Although external focalization can be traced in the simple discourse of the work, the extradiegetic perspective of the narrator allows for a more diegetic mode of narrative than a mimetic one. This change results in a more internally focalized description of the characters. Not being bound by describing an event she is witnessing, Shahrazād is free to provide a more insightful account of the events. It is not words and actions which dominate this story but the description of thoughts. Al-Amīn, for example, thinks that Ibrāhīm had already slept with the girl when she was sent to him. The diegetic mode of the

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narrative is also shown by describing events in a summarized fashion, not as a scene happening in front of the narrator. "Fa-lammā ẓahara lahu dhālika min ḥālihi" ("Ibrahim, seeing how it was with him"),[473] says Shahrazād. That is, after the feelings of al-Amīn towards the girl had become apparent for Ibrāhīm, a process to which the reader is not privy, does Ibrāhīm act and sends the girl to his nephew. Similarly, after the girl is returned to him, Ibrāhīm is said to know what al-Amīn suspected regarding the girl through the account of a servant, which is not quoted in any form.

Although the roles of *author, narrator* and *character* are clearly determined and set apart from one another, *al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* bears such discursive characteristics that set it apart from the *khabar* form in a more decisive way than it would be suspected at first glance. One of the most apparent reasons for this separation is the person of Shahrazād as the narrator, who not only separates herself from the events narrated but also from the author. While in the *khabar* form, the author is part of the same chain of transmitters the narrator is; here, their mutual independence results in a less restricted narrative discourse in which the author can give more freedom to the narrator to describe the characters and give insight into their motivations in a different way than that of the *khabar* form. The more diegetic mode of this *ḥikāya* and its extradiegetic perspective of its narrator provides a more internally focalized narrative in which the characters are not only externally but internally described. In this respect, Shahrazād is more closely aligned with the omnipotent narrator than any of the narrators of the biographical accounts could be.

Based on its shared material with the other *adab* works, *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* is a perfect story to discuss interpretational differences in a more exact way than the previous story allows. Compared to the rest of the *adab* works, *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* exhibits a somewhat superfluous narrative with repetitive events and copious insertions of poems. Despite claiming historicity, it is a literary work that means that the author is free to work with his material without the rebuke of falsifying history. The author appropriates the available material depicting the relationship between Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and his nephew to satisfy the need for entertainment. Hence the colorful backstory of Ibrāhīm hiding from the caliph. It is brought to a satisfying conclusion in a scene highly reminiscent of the biographical accounts describing al-Maʾmūn granting pardon to his uncle.

[473] *Alf Layla*, II, 455. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 288.

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In the *Nights*, the final scene is fraught with poems recited by Ibrāhīm, the caliph, and even a third party, and a conversation is also depicted, echoing the sentiment of the historical accounts. Ibrāhīm greets the caliph according to Muslim custom, but al-Maʾmūn refuses him the same courtesy: "Lā sallamaka Allāh wa-lā ḥayyāka" ("May God neither give thee peace nor bless thee.")[474], just like in Thamāma b. Ashras' account. Similarly, in the subsequent reaction of Ibrāhīm, his sin and the caliph's mercy are compared: "Wa-qad jaʿala Allāh ʿafūka fawqa kull ʿafū kamā jaʿala dhanbī fawqa kull dhanb" ("God hath set thy forgiveness above all other, even as He hath made my sin to excel all other sin.").[475] He also assures the caliph that punishing him is well within his rights but showing mercy may also be prudent: "Fa-in tuʾākhidha fa-bi-ḥaqqika, wa-in taʿifu fa-bi-faḍlika" ("So, if thou punish, it is of thy right, and if thou pardon, it is of thy bounty.").[476] Later the idea is repeated by Ibrāhīm, and this time, his words echo the words attributed to him by Abū Muḥallam: "Dhanbī, yā Amīr al-Muʾminīn, aʿẓam min an atafawwaha maʿahu bi-ʿudhr wa-ʿafūka aʿẓam min an anṭuqa maʿahu bu-shukr" ("O Commander of the Faithful, my offense is too great for me to attempt to extenuate it and thy pardon is too great for me to speak a word of thanks for it.").[477] It is also mentioned that, although his advisors support Ibrāhīm's execution, the caliph is undecided. These are, however, only superficial similarities. What matters is the way these lines are integrated into the narrative and what the mode of integration tells us about the narrative and its possible interpretation.

Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī was well known for his eloquence, as the biographical works attest to it. The scene in front of the caliph is an excellent example of that. He humbles himself in front of al-Maʾmūn without repenting his transgression. He appeals to his faith and belief in the one God and flatters him without being too forthright. While Abū Muḥallam singles out only a sentence to exemplify his eloquence, Thamāma b. Ashras describes a whole scene, the focus of which is the speech of Ibrāhīm and its effect on the caliph. Ibrāhīm's eloquence and al-Maʾmūn's mercy are at the center of the *Nights*' story as well. However, the roles of the characters are more equally distributed. Although it is Ibrāhīm's story, by no means is he in the spotlight exclusively. It is not his biographical entry, and thus, the author is allowed to play with his characters more freely. Eloquence is shared between three characters: Ibrāhīm, al-Maʾmūn, and Aḥmad b. Khālid, who is invited into the conversation. Ideas are expressed more colorfully than in the accounts and are repeated for good measure even after the pardon has

[474] *Alf Layla*, II, 138. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 330.
[475] *Alf Layla*, II, 138. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 330.
[476] *Alf Layla*, II, 138. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 330.
[477] *Alf Layla*, II, 139–140. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 331–332.

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been granted. The arguments and observations are also supported by poetry. The scene seems to be drawn out as it loses its central character.

However, not only are the central themes losing their relevance, but thematically speaking, the story also gains something due to the different handling of the material than that of the *adab* works. The additional meaning discernible in the story is due to the change in the narrative discourse enabled by the fusion of narrator and protagonist. What is only described in such details available for an outside observer in the biographical accounts becomes amended by the personal insight of Ibrāhīm's first-person narrative. That is to say that the autodiegetic narrative renders the extradiegetic narrative intradiegetic. What we see of Ibrāhīm's inner feelings and thoughts already at the beginning of Ibrāhīm's account of the events – the fear for his life – is also expressed in this final scene. It is not only for the reader to deduce that Ibrāhīm is playing the caliph; it is explicitly expressed by Ibrāhīm when he observes: "Fa-lammā samiʿtu minhu hādhā al-kalām istarwaḥtu rawā'iḥ al-raḥma min shamā'ilihi" ("When I heard this, I scented the odour of mercy, knowing his disposition to clemency.").[478] Ibrāhīm's comments supplement the eloquence with wit, which supplements thematic interpretation as opposed to the examples from *adab*.

As seen through the example of the *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*, Shahrazād is quite willing to pass the role of the narrator onto a third person. However, this second narrator is nothing like the narrator of the *khabar* form, who keeps his distance from the events narrated, witnessing them (in the most optimal case) but not partaking in them. In the *Nights*, these stories are personal accounts of the narrator. This personal aspect of the narrative does not only affect the discourse but interpretation as well. It was mentioned above how the scene of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī receiving the caliph's pardon is transformed as the event is appropriated into the *Nights*. The historical event of granting pardon to a rebel on the merit of his eloquence is reinterpreted in the framework of eloquence and wit, which shows well that the story's central theme may shift during the appropriation process.

While the previous two examples showed how narrative discourse is manipulated in one single narrative, the *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister* provides an example of the author's working with two narrators on two different narrative levels. The story opens with Shahrazād's description of a communicational situation in which Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī assumes the role of the narrator. On the first level of the narrative, Shahrazād describes an occasion when al-Ma'mūn asks his uncle to relate an amazing story. In this context, Ibrāhīm's story is only

[478] *Alf Layla*, II, 138. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 331.

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interesting in that respect whether it fulfills its role in the communication, that is, whether the caliph finds it indeed amazing. He does so, and Shahrazād concludes her story thus: "Fa-taʿajjaba al-Maʾmūn min karam hādhā al-rajul wa-qāla: Lillāhi darruhu, mā samiʿtu qaṭṭ bi-mithlihi" ("The Khalif marvelled at the merchant's generosity and said, 'Gifted of God is he! Never heard I of his like.'").[479]

The story of Ibrāhīm itself does not differ much from the one of *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*. It is again an intradiegetic discourse with both an intradiegetic perspective and focalization. Ibrāhīm is both the narrator and the protagonist. Accordingly, it is his perspective of the events that the reader gets to know through his observations and thoughts, which are given in a more diegetic than mimetic mode. Occasional descriptions of scenes like when he or the slave-girl is singing and expressing their opinion, in turn, are overwhelmed by such summarized descriptions which, for example, follow this mimetic passage: "Fa-nadimtu ʿalā mā kāna minnī wa-raʾaytu al-qawm qad ankarū ʿalayyā. Fa-qultu: Qad fātanī jamīʿ mā amaltu wa-lam ara ḥīla li-dafʿ al-lawm ʿannī illā annanī ṭalabtu ʿūdan" ("Then I repented of what I had done, seeing that the others were vexed with me, and said in myself, 'My hopes are at an end,' and I saw no way of quitting myself of reproach but to call for a lute.").[480] Here, Ibrāhīm's thoughts are internally expressed so that he is only privy to them. In another passage, the singing itself is substituted by a diegetic description when Ibrāhīm summarizes the events: "Thumma akhadha al-qawm fī akrāmī wa-tabjīlī baʿda mā ṭarabū ghāyat al-ṭarab wa-saʾalanī kull minhum al-ghinā'. Fa-ghanaytu nawba muṭriba" ("And they all extolled me and made much of me, being beyond measure delighted, and besought me to sing again. So I sang a lively air").[481] Also, a whole conversation is rendered into a summary when Ibrāhīm reveals his identity to his host: "Fa-aqsamtu ʿalayhi an yajlisa fa-jalasa wa-akhadha yaʾsilunī ʿan al-sabab fī ḥuḍūrī ʿindahu bi-alṭaf maʿnā. Fa-akhbartuhu bi-l-qiṣṣa min awwalihā ilā ākharihā wa-mā satartu minhā shayʾan" ("I conjured him to be seated; so he sat down and began to question me, in the most courteous terms, as to the cause of my visit. So I told him the whole matter, concealing nothing").[482] Although these summaries are not lengthy, in terms of the plot, they do make up a significant part of the story. Like in *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī*, this shifting emphasis on summary rather than scene is the result of the merging of the person of the narrator and the character, which allows a more inclusive discourse which is not solely based on outer observations of others.

[479] *Alf Layla*, II, 302. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 126.
[480] *Alf Layla*, II, 300. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 124.
[481] *Alf Layla*, II, 300. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 124.
[482] *Alf Layla*, II, 301. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 125.

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Furthermore, it is interesting to compare this kind of narrative with that of *al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* in connection with which a similar observation was made concerning descriptions. Both examples are internally focalized, that is, besides being described from the outside, the characters are described from within. The difference is the perspective. While *al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* has an external perspective through the person of Shahrazād, both stories of Ibrāhīm have internal perspective since the narrator is the protagonist. This merger of the two roles gives a more personal flavor to the narrative. And, if Shahrazād as a narrator was compared to the omniscient narrator, Ibrāhīm may be the example of the unreliable narrator.

Another observation may be made when considering the story as a single unit: the communicational situation not only creates a new narrative level but also influences the narrative form. While none of the above-examined examples perfectly showcase the characteristics of the *khabar* form, some may be considered closer to it than others. This closeness is primarily dependent on whether the narrative is based on a communicational situation or not. As we have seen, *al-Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* is closer to the complex narrative of the *ḥikāya*. This observation stands true for Shahrazād's narrative in *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and the Merchant's Sister* as well, while the narrative of Ibrāhīm in that same story and *Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī* retains more of the *khabar* form. *Khabar* form is based on a communicational situation. However, this situation is quite specific in which the roles of the author (the compiler), the narrator (the source) and the character in the related account are strictly regulated. Any kind of derivation from this regulated system results in the transformation of the narrative form and, with that, the interpretation.

All in all, it can be concluded that the distribution of the roles of *author*, *narrator* and *character* has a profound effect on our understanding of the work since it affects not only the narrative form but the interpretation itself. Blurring the boundaries between these roles makes it possible for the narrative discourse to adapt and, through that adaptation, for the narrative form to adjust to the discourse. The distribution of these roles may claim a decisive role in transforming the *khabar* form into the more complex form of the *ḥikāya*. However, it is not only the distribution of these roles that influences our understanding of the works but their relation to one another. While the *khabar* form maintains a strict relationship between *author*, *narrator* and *character* by the presence of the *isnād* and its role of authorization, the more *ḥikāya*-like narratives keep these roles more independent of each other. The lack of a strict regulative system also results in the ability of these roles to blend. This shift in their relationship has a significant effect on the interpretation of the narrative as well.

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Interpretation and the three roles discussed brings up the question of communication. Through the communication of characters, the relationship between *narrator* and *character* can be further explored, while the relationship between *author* and *narrator* widens the scope of inquiry into the field of literary communication. It is in the framework of literary communication that the significance of the changes brought on by the distribution of and the relationship between the roles of *author*, *narrator* and *character* can be fully grasped, and the most significant difference between the interpretation of historical texts and literary works can be understood.

The Temporal Categories of Narrative Discourse

The question of time has already come up in two different contexts: that of the structure of the *khabar* form and that of narrative discourse. These discussions handled the concept of time in relation to historical time and story-time. However, one important aspect of the narrative had not been mentioned: the time of the narrative, henceforth, discourse-time. Since it has more to tell about the narratological change that takes place in the stories of the *Nights* – as it had been shown through the above example of *Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd ma'a Jamīl b. Ma'mar al-'Udhrī wa-ḥikāyatuhu quddāmahu 'an fatā min Banī 'Udhrī* (*The Lovers of the Benou Udhreh*), henceforth: *Jamīl b. Ma'mar al-'Udhrī* (I.18.) and it had been mentioned in passing in connection with *Ḥikāyat baldat Labṭayṭ* (*The City of Lebtait*), henceforth: *The City of Labṭayṭ* (V.1.) – I will give more consideration to the matter here with special regard to the connections among historical time, story-time and discourse-time.

In discourse analysis, *time* is a concept of various levels of meaning. As far as the text is concerned, *story-time* and *discourse-time* have to be taken into account. Although Günther Müller and Eberhard Lämmert stressed the importance of the distinction between narrating time and narrated time, it was Gérard Genette who provided a more nuanced concept of narrative time. According to Genette's theory, *narrative time* is to express the relationship between *discourse-time* and *story-time*.[483] This relationship is grasped through the concepts of *order*, *duration* and *frequency*, terms which are meant to describe how the story is narrated, that is, how the narrative discourse tells the story. Since authors frequently choose to manipulate the sequence of events that make up the story, the analysis of temporal relations is pertinent for a more closer understanding of the literary work. Even more so that "it is a basic structural law of narrative art that already one of its elementary forming processes, the representation of time

[483] Genette, 1980, 33–130. See the summary of the theory of narrative time: Chatman, S.: Genette's Analysis of Narrative Time Relations, *L'Esprit Créateur*, 14, 353–368.

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periods in a tension between time of narrating and narrated time, has an interpreting effect",[484] proving its relevance in the context of the present study.

Discussing time, then, takes us back to the differentiation among the various meanings of narrative we have proposed in connection with *khabar*: namely, *story*, *narration* and *narrating*. This narratological aspect of time is, however, only one possible way to discuss time. Before being able to examine through specific examples how *story-time* and *discourse-time* relate to each other and how their changing relationship forms our understanding of the text, we have to make mention of the notion of time in general. In this respect, time as history has to be mentioned since literary works can only be understood when placed in a referential framework of historical time. For this reason, it is not only the concept of historical time that has to be discussed but, also, the notion of historical time as grasped by pre-modern Arab writers has to be examined to determine how certain texts may relate to historical time and how they express time within the narrative framework.

The concept of time is linked to history and the understanding of people of history. In this respect and, in its most ancient form, time is repetitive. It is understood through the acts of people, their rituals which define periods. This is the kind of time which Mircea Eliade is talking about and this is that notion of time the traces of which can be found in the Muslim understanding of time. As Aziz Al-Azmeh writes when discussing time in history,

> time is achronic, its rhythm being that of the sheer relation of precedent and consequent. The time of each series of events, like the time of myth, is one with neither continuous duration nor chronometric regularity, but one which results in configurations of identical content, divided by boundaries akin in their mode of division to musical bars.[485]

This perception of time is closely linked to the purpose of specific literary fields, though. In this case, it is linked to writings with close affiliation with religion and its organizing principle. In these cases, there is little room left for meaning. There is only purpose and, based on religious conventions, it is quite clear.

In historical and biographical literature, however, we meet another kind of time conception. In this concept of time, it is not repetitive but continuous: it starts from one point and leads up to another. This sense of chronology, however, though present in the cultural consciousness, is not necessarily maintained by authors. In fact, Shahzad Bashir warns that chronological perception of Islam as a unifying historical concept is the byproduct of outdated

[484] Müller, G.: The Significance of Time in Narrative Art, in: *Time: From Concept to Narrative Construct: A Reader*, eds. J. Ch. Meister and W. Schernus, Berlin – Boston (Walter de Gruyter), 2011, 79.
[485] Al-Azmeh, A.: *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography*, Budapest – New York (Central European University Press), 2007, 28.

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methods of scholarly investigations of Muslim culture. He proposes that "[t]he whole notion of a single timeline as the central repository of Islam needs to be jettisoned in favor of a thoroughly pluralistic view in which all internal Islamic proportions with respect to the validity and authority of the past are appraised with an eye toward the ideological and affective intentions of the individuals and classes that had a hand in producing them".[486] He goes on explaining his theory by showing that Muslim authors themselves did not conceive of time strictly in a linear fashion but they, too, made good use of manipulating it for their own purposes. His examination centered on three Persian authors from the 15–16th centuries but similar endeavors can be spotted in the classical and pre-modern periods of Arabic literature as well.

Time may be disrupted because of various considerations, various intentions of the authors. As Boaz Shoshan summarizes at the end of the chapter dealing with the question of chronology in Ṭabarī's *History* that in connection with the manipulation of chronology it is "the teleological mould, the ironic mode, the moralistic dimension, the ideological intention as well as other ends that the sources of the *History* had in mind while purporting to write history as it actually was"[487] are worth detailed discussions. Similarly, Hilary Kilpatrick recognizes ideological intentions behind the disruption of chronological events in *adab* biographical works.[488] When chronology is disrupted this way, however, historical time becomes narrative time.

Discussing historical time in its entirety is outside the purview of the present study. However, for the sake of exploring narrative-time, its mention has been unavoidable. In the following, historical time will be understood as time in the context of which the events can be placed; i.e., the events relation to past, present and future. Thus, it will also be understood as a chronologically continuous line of events. Nevertheless, focus will be on narrative time; historical time will be mentioned only in relation to the narrative and its expression of time. As we are primarily dealing with collections of *akhbār*, the discussion of the proposed questions will start with the discussion of the concept of time in the *khabar* form; only after that will shift our focus to the changes in handling of narrative time in the transformation of the *khabar* form in the *Nights*.

[486] Bashir, Sh.: On Islamic Time: Rethinking Chronology in the Historiography of Muslim Societies, *History and Theory*, 53, 2014, 522.
[487] Shoshan, 2004, 84.
[488] Kilpatrick, 2004, 389–400.

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Khabar form, in its most basic manifestation, does not allow for that kind of handling of time for which the collections allow. *Khabar* does not know historical time in the traditional sense. It does not try to place itself in the context of historical events. Its action exists in an isolated temporal frame where the only connection to historical time, the presence of an *isnād*, only refers to its authenticity not its place in the grander scheme of history. It is narrative time in itself, that is, *discourse-time* and *story-time*, which exist in the *khabar* form and any traces of a historical time that may be perceived in the *khabar* form is only created historical time, only applicable in the context of the *khabar*, it has no outside relevance. *Khabar* knows the "before" as long as it is concerned with the present of the narrative and even in that case, the presentation of that "before" is highly restricted, as we will see. Conversely, it only recognizes the passing of time in a limited sense, both in expression and scope. Essentially, the only temporality *khabar* knows, it is the sequential development of events that make up one single linearly developing plot. As Franz Rosenthal sees it: "by its very nature it does not admit of the establishment of a causal nexus between two or more events. Each ḫabar is complete in itself and tolerates no reference to any kind of supplementary material".[489]

Although it is true that in its most basic form, neither chronology as historical time nor narrative time created by the disruption of chronology can be discussed on the level of the individual *khabar*s, certain fields of literature allow for more freedom than others. While, in most of the cases when collections of *akhbār* are concerned (historical writing, biographical writing, for example), temporal ordering can only be done on the level of the compilation where the organization of the collection and the arrangement of the *akhbār* material provides for artistic expression, certain fields of Arabic literature (*adab* literature, for example), allows for the *khabar* form itself more flexibility of narrative expression.

Of course, historical time is, in a way, encoded in the *khabar* form. The *akhbār* material of historical and biographical writings, for example, and to a degree, *adab* literature, too, bears the historical connotations of the persons depicted in them. What we have to keep in mind in this case – just like in the case of *isnād* – is that the presence of a particular historical figure does not strive to place the given story into historical context. It is true that historical and biographical works are divided into historical eras or lives of personalities which are meant to give certain historicity to the stories told but these stories as narratives remain isolated. It is the collection of narratives that assumes historical context, not the individual narratives. What the narrative of the *khabar* means is to express ideas, describe events, not to put them into historical

[489] Rosenthal, 1968, 66.

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context. That aspect of historical writing in the *khabar* form remains the responsibility of the reader. It is rare for the author to explain certain events in a wider historical context. Furthermore, in *adab* literature, the appearance of historical figures is more symbolic than anything else. They represent character-traits, classes of people, not the actual historical figure. This observation stands true for the *Nights* to a much greater degree.

Although the *Nights* is even less concerned with the literary conventions of the *khabar* form than *adab* literature, constructing time through the arrangement of the material, that is, expressing narrative time through a group of stories, can be observed in this collection as well. The collection is a narrative of one thousand and one nights. This definition of time in the title is not only an organizing principle of the author, but it also provides a time-frame for the narrative to unfold. And it is a narrative that follows a linear line from night one to night thousand and one. There is, however, no historical time and no chronology of events to speak of in this case. The story of King Shahriyār is taken out of historical context and the chronology, that is, the numbered nights following one another is independent of the content of the collection. The temporal conception of the *Nights* is completely different from that of other collections. What connects the *adab* literary material and the material of the *Nights* is the possibility of talking about narrative time on the level of the individual stories.

Despite all of the above observations concerning narrative time in the *khabar* form, it has to be recognized that – just like historical time – narrative time exists in every narrative, no matter their form or genre. It is the relevance of narrative time in interpretation that sets apart the *adab* literary material and the material of the *Nights* from other more strictly regulated narratives. It is the interpretation through which the relationship between historical time and narrative time on the one hand and *story-time* and *discourse-time* on the other informs the reader about the intention of the author and the meaning of the text. Thus, depicting time is instrumental in the closer understanding of a literary work. Let us now examine how this depiction of time changes in the narratives of the *Nights*.

The first point that needs to be considered is the way how time may be expressed in the *khabar* form and how the *Nights*' narratives conform to this kind of expression. As stated above, *khabar* is not without time but the time it represents is isolated from historical time. Strictly speaking, there is only narrative time to speak about. Under narrative time, here, *discourse-time* and *story-time* are considered, and their relationship is examined in the term of Genette's temporal categories: order, duration and frequency. Ideally, *discourse-time* and *story-time* coincide in the *khabar* form when duration is concerned. This means that the eyewitness relates a scene that had taken place in front of him in a short period of time without significant

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disruptions, that is, a sequence of events is told exactly the way it was experienced by the witness. This correspondence between *discourse-time* and *story-time* also ensures that there are no discrepancies in regard to order and frequency, either. Concerning order, there are no *analepsis* or *prolepsis* in these cases and the narrative is singulative as far as frequency is concerned. This is how narrative time appears in *Ḥikāyat al-Qāsim b. ʿAdī fī amr al-ʿishq* (*The Lovers of the Benou Taï*), henceforth: *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy* (I.9.) up until the moment the narrator, Qāsim himself, gets involved in the narrative. The story starts as follows:

> Inna al-Qāsim b. ʿAdī ḥakā ʿan rajul min Banī Tamīm annahu qāla: Kharajtu fī ṭalab ḍālla fa-waradtu ʿalā miyāh Banī Ṭayy fa-raʾaytu bi-farīqayn aḥadahumā qarīb min al-ākhar wa-idhā fī aḥad al-farīqayn kalām mithl kalām ahl al-farīq al-ākhar fa-taʾammaltu…
>
> Quoth a man of the Benou Temim (cited by Casim ben Adi), I went out one day in search of a stray beast and coming to the waters of the Benou Tai, saw two companies of people, near one another, and those of each company were disputing among themselves. So I watched them…[490]

Referring back to Rosenthal's statement about the inability of *khabar* to express causality between two events, it stands true for both outside and inside events. As established before, *khabar* does not recognize historical time and the created historical time it employs is limited in function. Earlier, when I brought up *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy*, I mentioned that the narrative complying with the requirements of *khabar* form regarding time until the narrator gets involved in the events and gets into a conversation with one of the characters. In that exchange, a past is referred to, which would seem to be contradictory to the *khabar* form. However, this past appears in the form of a dialogue and as an explanation directly pertaining to the events previously describes. As such, it cannot be considered disruptive of the linear composition. The reference to the past happens in a scene that is part of the sequence of linear events; it does not create an independent scene. Furthermore, it has a strong explanatory value which makes the previous events interpretable. In this case, the story does have a sense of historical time but that historical time has its only reference in the narrative. This way, the narrative can retain its *khabar* form.

The passing of time is a related question which is worth examining in more detail. As the *khabar* form describes a singular event which takes place in a short period of time, the passing of time does not seem a relevant feature of the narrative. Yet, the *Nights* provides us with examples of how it may be expressed within the confines of the short narrative form of the *khabar*. These examples attest to great authorial creativity in expressing temporal movement within the limited timeframe that the *khabar* form provides.

[490] *Alf Layla*, II, 440. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 273.

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Let us compare two stories that share their theme of the value of knowledge. Both *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-tājir fī Baghdād wa-qiṣṣat ibnihi ismuhu al-Ḥasan wa-bayʿ Abī al-Ḥasan jāriyatihi ismuhā Tawaddud maʿa al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd wa-munāẓaratuhā maʿa al-ʿulamāʾ quddāma al-khalīfa wa-ghalabatuhā ʿalayhim* (*Aboulhusn and His Slave-Girl Taweddud*), henceforth: *Tawaddud* (III.33.) and *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ʿālim maʿa al-khalīfa al-Maʾmūn* (*The Khalif El Mamoun and the Strange Doctor*), henceforth: *The Strange Doctor* (III.10.) depict an unassuming person who proves to be in possession of impressive knowledge. Both Tawaddud and the strange doctor's knowledge is so impressive in fact that it is richly rewarded. The theme might be similar in these two cases then, but the way the narratives convey their final message is markedly different. While the plot of *Tawaddud* is based on repetition, which renders time suspended in the narrative and makes it possible for the story to stretch infinitely without affecting the plot development, the passing of time is implicitly expressed in the story of the strange scholar.

Consider the following passage, taken from the story of *The Strange Doctor*:

> al-Maʾmūn istaḥsana kalāmahu wa-amara an yarfaʿa min dhālika al-makān ilā aʿlā minhu fa-lammā waṣalat ilayhi al-masʾala al-thāniyya ajāba bi-jawāb aḥsan min al-jawāb al-awwal fa-amara al-Maʾmūn an yarfaʿa ilā aʿlā min tilka al-rutba fa-lammā dārat al-masʾala al-thālitha ajāba bi-jawāb aḥsan wa-aṣwab min al-jawābīn al-awwalīn fa-amara al-Maʾmūn an yajlisa qarīban minhu.
>
> the Khalif approved his speech and bade advance him to a higher room. When the second question came round to him, he made a still more admirable answer, and the Khalif ordered him to be preferred to a yet higher place. When the third question reached him, he made answer more justly and appropriately then on the two previous occasions, and El Mamoun bade him come up and sit near himself.[491]

The gradual ascent of the scholar near to the caliph implicitly expresses the passing of time. Here, what leads to the final appreciation of the caliph is not the result of a point in time or the repetition thereof, but a gradual process that shows toward the creative stance an author may take towards the *khabar* form in the *Nights*. This creative process, however, does not yet sever the ties of this story with the *khabar* form. There is, of course, more explicit ways to express the passing of time but its exploration belongs to our next point of discussion regarding those methods of the handling of time which may render a narrative not belonging to the *khabar* form.

All in all, it can be said about the *khabar* form in the *Nights* that, although there are stories which show some deviations from the *khabar* form in regard to its handling of time, these deviations are not so significant as to set apart these stories from the narrative form of the *khabar*. It may seem that I am giving much freedom to the narrative form of the *khabar*. It has

[491] *Alf Layla*, II, 211. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 34.

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to be kept in mind, though, that there are no general and over-reaching rules which would determine without a doubt what may be called belonging to the *khabar* form and what may not. Although it is customary to look for such rules in literary research, literature itself is seldom about sticking to the rules. In this respect, these rules we can talk about are more descriptive than prescriptive, authors always aspiring to express ideas in their own unique ways. The discussion up until this point stands to prove that this stands true for pre-modern Arabic prose literature as well.

Be as it may, it is now time to discuss what changes can be observed regarding such works which, through their manipulation of time, cannot be considered belonging to the *khabar* form anymore. There are four short narratives that will be discussed here in relation to the three temporal categories of *order*, *duration* and *frequency*:

1. *Ḥikāyat karam Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī* (*Hatim Et Taï: His Generosity after Death*), henceforth: *Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī* (III.1.)
2. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ghanī alladhī iftaqara wa-ba'da al-faqr ṣāra ghaniyyan* (*The Ruined Man Who Became Rich Again Through a Dream*), henceforth: *The Ruined Man* (V.2.)
3. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-saqqā' ma'a zawjat al-ṣā'igh* (*The Water-Carrier and the Goldsmith's Wife*), henceforth: *The Water-Carrier* (V.5.)
4. *Ḥikāyat baldat Labṭayṭ* (*The City of Lebtait*), henceforth: *The City of Labṭayṭ* (V.1.)

As far as order is concerned, seemingly, neither of the stories show significant deviations from the lineal composition of the *khabar* form. Events are narrated in a lineally developing manner. The plot of *Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī* depicts Dhū al-Kurāʿa as he is camping by the mountain in which Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī is buried. The man is well-known for his generosity, so Dhū al-Kurāʿa calls out to him jestingly, claiming he is his guest and expects to be hosted generously. Then he sees Ḥātim killing his camel in his dream and when he wakes, he does have to kill the animal. Dhū al-Kurāʿa continues on his journey and meets a man, leading a camel. He turns out to be Ḥātim's son, who was instructed by his dead father to bring the camel to Dhū al-Kurāʿa in exchange for his dead one. The story concludes with the affirmation of the generosity of Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī.

The Ruined Man provides the story of a wealthy man who become broke. Through a dream. he is told that he will find his fortune in Cairo. The rest of the plot describes his journey to Egypt and his misfortunes there until he returns to Baghdad and, indeed, is restored to his wealth. *The Water-Carrier* tells how a wife realizes the unfaithfulness of her husband through the actions of another man and how the strange events are finally explained by the husband. *The City of Labṭayṭ* describes the conquest of the city and the reasons behind it.

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All of the plot descriptions provide the summaries of narratives whose events are developing in a linear manner. However, there are certain aspects of the narratives which suggest that the linear order is disrupted. It is when we examine order in relation to duration and frequency that we realize that the linear order is not exactly maintained in all of these narratives. Strictly speaking, it is only in two of the four stories that the linear order is maintained: *Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī* and *The Ruined Man*. These two narratives represent the linear development of one single plot which is characteristic of the *khabar* form. The other two, on the other hand, represent more complex relations between *story-time* and *discourse-time*. While *The Water-Carrier* has an especially complex story-telling due to its manipulation of frequency, *The City of Labṭayṭ* has duration to set it apart from the other narratives as far as time is concerned.

As for duration, it was said that in the *khabar* form *story-time* and *discourse-time* coincide. For *discourse-time* and *story-time* to be able to coincide, not only the narrative order has to follow a normal sequence, but the time it takes to tell the narrative and the time it takes for the events in the narrative to unfold have to coincide as well. Ideally, the *khabar* form only employs *scenes*, that is, the completely mimetic mode of representation of events.[492] Of course, the mimetic mode is difficult to maintain during narration and *summary* is likely to happen in many cases. And with summary come the manipulation of time which, in the case of these short narrative, comes in the form of *ellipses*. While all of the stories show some degree of manipulation of time – all of them elongate the story-time in some degree –, it is *The City of Labṭayṭ* in which this elongation has a profound effect on the narrative form. But before the examination of that specific story, it has to be discussed how this change is affected in the narratives under discussion and for that, we have to resume the discussion of the passing of time. It is explicitly expressed in all four narratives.

In the first story, we have the sequence of Dhū al-Kurāʿa camping near the mountain on the top of which Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī is buried, he passes the night there and goes on the next morning. Such expressions are used to express the passing of time as "fa-lammā aṣbaḥa al-ṣabāḥ" and "fa-lammā kāna wasaṭ al-nahār". In the second story we have a man journeying from Baghdad to Cairo and back again, spending three days in jail in-between. As in the example of *The Strange Doctor*, the movement of time is interconnected with the physical movement of the main character. Although this is the main expression of time, other significations are also given: "adrakahu al-masā'" or "makatha thalātha ayyām fī al-sijn". The third story describes the events

[492] In this case, my statement refers to the narrative as independent of the *isnād*. As it was observed earlier, *isnād* is making any narrative mimetic.

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of a day which are concluded only the following day but besides the already familiar turns of expressions expressing time, i.e., "fa-lammā kāna min al-ghad", this story also makes frequent mentions of a temporal nature: "thalāthūn sana", "ʿalā ʿādatihi", "fī yawmī hādhā". The fourth one depicts the events taking place through generations. As opposed to the other three stories, this one employs more subtle ways to express time: "fa-kullamā māta malik wa-tawallā baʿadahu malik ākhar min al-Rūm ramā ʿalayhi [ʿalā bāb al-qaṣr] quflan muḥkaman ijtamaʿa ʿalā al-bāb arbaʿa wa-ʿishrūn quflan min kull malik" ("Whenever a King died and another King of the Franks took the Kingship after him, he set a new and strong lock on the tower, till there were four-and-twenty locks upon the gate").[493] It is evident that our previous statement according to which *khabar* describes a sequence of events in a short period of time is not applicable in these cases. Time is depicted here in a wider context than that of the present moment.

Of course, these stories are not the traditional reports of eyewitnesses. They can only be considered reports as far as they are placed into an instance of narrating of Shahrazād. This lack of an eyewitness makes this stretching of time possible. For now, suffice it to say that this elongation of story-time and, thus, its deviation from discourse-time does stand these narratives apart from the *khabar* form but does not make them completely separate from it, either.

We have a completely other situation in the case of the fourth story. *The City of Labṭayṭ* is a relatively short narrative which alone would not suggest that it deviates from the *khabar* form. In a way, it also depicts events developing in a consecutive fashion. However, upon closer reading, this deviation is evident. A kind of historical time can be traced in this narrative; constructed historical time which only have temporal references within the story. As pointed out above, the events of the story encompass generations as the successive rule of 24 kings are mentioned at the beginning. More importantly, the development of the plot depends on historical changes, that is, temporal relations. After 24 kings of the same royal house, a change of rulership happens and the customs previously respected are ignores. Consequently, the city falls as the Arabs conquer it. What the author can achieve by organizing *khabar*s in a specific order, thus creating a kind of temporality, it is achieved here within the narrative. With the creation of the constructed historical time, temporal relations may be expressed within one narrative unit and with that, this short narrative is set apart from the *khabar* form.

[493] *Alf Layla*, II, 129. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 320.

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Furthermore, this created historical time gives the opportunity for the plot to diverge and in this case, we can see how the singular plot of the *khabar* form is split into two. First, we have the story of the city. It may be depicted in a longer span of time than it is typical of the *khabar* form, but it still corresponds to that narrative form in a high degree. However, then comes the second plot and a new point of view is introduced with the arrival of the Arabs. The events concerning the city are concluded as it is conquered. However, the story is not completed as the Arabs take the centerstage and a new plot begins. This second plot, as opposed to the first one, does not reach back to the past but it hints at a future; a bright and successful future for the Arabs in Andalusia. This is why, despite the story maintaining a linear composition, it cannot be considered linear in the same sense as a *khabar* is considered linear: this story is not the linear depiction of one single event but the depiction of two events, each of them depicted in a linear way.

The third temporal category is frequency. Just like the other two, it cannot be discussed in itself but in its relation to the other categories. *Frequency* refers to events happening only once within the plot or several times in one form or another. In this respect, we can talk about singular (narrating one time what happened only once), repetitive (narrating more times what happened only once) and iterative (narrating one time what happened on more occasions). *Khabar* form naturally only depicts singular events, except for cases when events are repeated. We have seen the example of a repetitive event in *Tawaddud* where the scene of Tawaddud answering various questions is repeated. While it has been argued that repetition may not always have the capacity to develop the plot, in terms of time, it certainly stretches the narrative. In doing so, however, it does not affect the relationship between *story-time* and *discourse-time*.

It is iterative representation which more relevant to the present discussion. Let us consider the following two passages taken from *Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī* and *The Water-Carrier*.

> Min karam Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī annahu lammā māta dufina fī ra's jabal wa-ʿamalū ʿalā qubra ḥawḍayn min ḥajarayn wa-ṣuwar banāt muḥallalāt al-shuʿūr min ḥajar wa-kāna taḥta dhālika al-jabal nahr jārin fa-idhā nazalat al-wufūd yasmaʿūna al-ṣurākh fī al-layl min al-ʿashā' ilā al-ṣabāḥ fa-idhā aṣbaḥū lam yajidū aḥadan ghayr al-banāt al-muṣawwara.
>
> It is told of Hatim et Taï, that when he died, they buried him on the top of a mountain and set over his grave two troughs hewn out of two rocks and stone figures of women with dishevelled hair. At the foot of the hill was a stream of running water, and when wayfarers camped there, they heard loud crying in the night, from dark till daybreak; but when they arose in the morning, they found nothing but the girls carved in stone.[494]

[494] *Alf Layla*, II, 125–126. In English translation, see: Payne, III, 316.

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Kāna bi-madīnat Bukhārā rajul saqqā' yaḥmalu al-mā' ilā dār rajul ṣā'igh wa-maḍā lahu ʿalā tilka al-ḥāl thalāthūn sana.	There was once, in the city of Bokhara, a water-carrier, who used to carry water to the house of a goldsmith and had done thus thirty years.[495]

What is seen here is a kind of repetition of events which can be described as *iterative*, that is, they are expressed in one single statement but are referring to repetitive events. The result of this *iterative* mention of events is that the narratives create historical time with internal reference within the story. The interesting aspect of this observation is that it is narrative time, that is, the relationship between *story-time* and *discourse-time* which creates the self-referential historical time. It is not the same kind of repetition that is employed in the story of Tawaddud. *Iterative* description of a single event renders the *story-time* longer than *discourse-time* by making that event historical as part of a regularly happening occurrence.

The iterative description, however, does not only create historical time, it has significant influence on interpretation as well. Consider the following passage from *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy*: "I went out one day," starts his account the man from the Banū Tayy. It is the introduction to the description of a singular event which renders the event depicted event a strange, wondrous event the narrator witnesses one day. As opposed to this, the iterative description in the passages quoted above renders the event either less wondrous by indicating its recurring nature, or it outright transforms an event average. In the first example, the event in question is something that happens to everyone who spends the night by the mountain Ḥātim is buried on. In the second one, it is something the water-carrier does on a daily basis as belonging to his daily routine. Although the event becomes one among many, it is still something wondrous in the first case while it turns into a repetitive, mundane task in the second. In any case, this kind of manipulation of narrative frequency makes a clear statement about the intention of the author concerning the main topic of the story.

As a final point, let us discuss two motifs in the stories which will connect all the above-mentioned observations and show that considered separately, they may not be enough for a narrative to be regarded as being separate from the *khabar* form, but taken together, in certain cases, they may attest to such a narrative variation which renders our understanding of the given narrative as belonging to the *khabar* form invalid. Let us now examine the narrative function of dreams and warning signs, which widen the scope of time normally represented in the *khabar* form.

[495] *Alf Layla*, II, 398. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 229.

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Dream has got a plot-developing role *The Ruined Man* and *Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī* while the recognition of a warning sign moves the plot in *The Water-Carrier*. However, dream and warning sign fulfill these functions in markedly different ways since they refer to different events: the former one refers to the future while the latter one to events parallel to the events of the story. What they share in nature is that they both give occasion for an event that happens outside of the linear sequence of the plot. Concerning narrative time, the nature of this event has far-reaching consequences in relation to narrative order.

In the first story, Dhū al-Kurāʿa dreams of Ḥātim slaughtering his camel and as he wakes, he finds that his camel indeed needs to be slaughtered. At the end of the story, the son of Ḥātim approached Dhū al-Kurāʿa with a camel in exchange for his lost one, explaining that his father appeared to him in a dream and asked him to compensate Dhū al-Kurāʿa for his loss. In the second story, the ruined man is given a prophecy according to which he shall go to Cairo to find his fortune. After some hardship, he learns about another man's dream which prophesied that man's fortune in Baghdad, more precisely, in the house of the ruined man. It turns out that the other man's dream is also the ruined man's prophecy, who goes home and, finding great treasure in his house, indeed finds his fortune. In the third story, the goldsmith's wife has a premonition of her husband being unfaithful when the water-carrier quite inappropriately takes her hand and squeezes it. It turns out that the uncharacteristic behavior of the water-carrier was indeed due to the husband's untowardly manner towards another woman.

Both dream and warning sign may be seen as creating *analepsis* or *prolepsis* in the plot, that is, they break up the linear development of the plot. However, doing so would imply the disruption of the narrative order. And it will be shown that this is not always the case. Actually, breaking up the straight line of the plot is not so much perceptible in the first two stories as it is in the case of the third one, *The Water-Carrier*. In the first two cases, the dream sequences cannot stand on their own; their interpretation rests on the story they are embedded in. In a way, they fulfil the same role as the old man's explanation fulfils at the end of *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy*: they explain the context of the story.

There is a significant difference in *The Water-Carrier*. While in the first two cases, the dreams remain the organic part of the plot, in the third one, the reason for the warning sign and the recognition of its meaning creates an individual plot-line. Not one but two sequences of events are described in this case: one describing the story of the wife, the other that of the husband. (This splitting up the plot-line is the reason this story had not been discussed earlier concerning the singularity of the plot. What happens here is more understandable in connection with the present discussion.) Here, the husband's narrative, despite its obvious connection to

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the wife's story, is an independent one with its own focus and characters. As a matter of fact, it is the husband's story in the sense that he is the main character. This is mainly possible because, while dreams can be described with words, the warning sign and its description alone are not enough for the full understanding of the happenings. They come with an explanation which includes a new set of characters and creates the opportunity for a new narrative to begin.

This is in contradiction with the nature of the *khabar* form in which there may be more characters depicted but only one stands as the main character of the plot. In the other stories, involving the one from the beginning of this chapter, with the star-crossed lovers, the stories related do not make this individuation of their characters. The reason for the story of "a man of the Benou Temim" is the report of his witnessing a strange event not to relate the reasons behind those strange events. Accordingly, the account of those reasons remains explanatory, not descriptive in the sense that the story of the lovers does not gain an independent plot-line. Similarly, the reason for the account of Dhū al-Kurāʿa is to demonstrate the hospitality and generosity of Ḥātim. Again, the two dreams themselves do not constitute an independent story in that demonstration; it is part of the plot of Dhū al-Kurāʿa's story, which is to exemplify Hatim's commendable character-traits. Just like they remain an integral part of the ruined man's story, no matter who was doing the dreaming.

It is not only order which is affected by the presence of either dream or warning sign but frequency as well. In this case, however, the use of different kinds of frequencies is not the result of the presence of dream and warning sign but it is a tool which supports interpretation. As shown earlier, there is an *iterative* description at the beginning of *The Water-Carrier*. "Kāna bi-madīnat Bukhārā rajul saqqāʾ yaḥmalu al-māʾ ilā dār rajul ṣāʾigh wa-maḍā lahu ʿalā tilka al-ḥāl thalāthūn sana" ("There was once, in the city of Bokhara, a water-carrier, who used to carry water to the house of a goldsmith and had done thus thirty years"),[496] starts the story, establishing the routine of the water-carrier. As pointed out earlier, the recognition of the warning sign by the wife cannot be explained at the moment of experiencing it; the warning sign can only be described in a way so that it can be understood as such. It is to this end that the iterative description is employed. The routine of the water-carrier is established to show that his actions that follow are a deviation from this routine, giving the wife the sense of warning. This tells something about the difference between dream and warning sign, apart from their availability for verbal expression or lack thereof. They provide for a different relationship between the act of dreaming and that of the recognition of the warning sign, and the verbal

[496] *Alf Layla*, II, 398. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 229.

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descriptions belonging to them. It means that while dreams are summarized in that verbal description, it is not the description of the warning sign that is poured into words by the husband. What he relates is the reasons behind that sign. He is the one giving the explanation for it not the wife who recognized it at the first place. Further, it also means that while, in connection with dreams, the agent who is doing the dreaming and the summarizing is the same, in the case of the warning sign, the persons of the agents differ. This further proves that the husband is an independent character in an independent plot-line in *The Water-Carrier*.

In this understanding of dream and premonition, it can be concluded that the order of the story is not necessarily disturbed in a meaningful fashion by the appearance of dreams in them. Order is only disrupted in the case of *The Water-Carrier* in which the husband's story creates an analepsis in the wife's story when it relates a sequence of events that has happened prior to that moment.

All in all, it can be said that time as a narrative device is rather particular in the *khabar* form. It has a specific representation in the short narratives of the Arabic tradition, which is based on eyewitness accounts and with that, is strongly linked to the present. As opposed to this, with the transformation of the *khabar* form and the slackening of the traditional characteristics of that narrative form, the representation of time in narrative discourse, on the one hand, begins to show great variety and give place to the creative freedom of the authors. On the other hand, these changes also affect interpretation.

4.2.3. The Narrative as Narrating: The Short Narratives and Communicational Situations

As the short narratives of the *Nights* are discussed in relation to the *khabar* form, it is in relation to the *khabar* which the present issue is approached. In the non-literary aspect of the *khabar* form – as it is the case in *ḥadīth* literature or historiography – *khabar* is a communication, the simple transfer of information between the *sender* to the *receiver*. Literary communication is involved when the nature of the information contained in a text goes beyond that of the factual and involves the creative processes of both the *author* and the *reader*. This is when communication between characters becomes available for discussion. As it had been pointed out during the discussion of communication in the *khabar* form, with a literary approach, the strict division of *isnād* and *matn* loosens and *matn* opens up for a more comprehensive examination. In this situation, it is not only the person of the narrator that is open to interpretation but the nature of the communicational situation as well.

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As it had been established, the *khabar* form in the *Nights* is a very direct way of communication on many levels. It is communication between *author* and *reader*, between Shahrazād and Shahriyār, and, in many cases, between Shahrazād's characters. The last case has already been examined in Chapter 2. In the following, the scope of this examination is widened and the narrative as narrating is discussed in relation to literary communication. It is not only the isolated cases of communicational situations which are under scrutiny, but their depiction and interpretation are discussed in the literary exchange between *author* and *reader*.

Although the communicational exchange between Shahrazād and Shahriyār does not strictly belong to the present discussion of short narrative, it cannot be ignored since its significance in the overall understanding of the role of communication in literary interpretation is undeniable. Communication is the basis of the *Nights*: Shahrazād's life depends on the successful outcome of it.

We may return to the original question: Does Shahrazād fail in her communication? Mahdi claims that, on the basis of Galland's manuscript, she does. The content of the stories she tells does not support her goal. And yet, the king spares her at the end of all known manuscripts and editions. The problem is that Mahdi does not judge the stories in the context of Shahrazād and Shahriyār's communication, but he does so in that of his own interpretations. The two are not the same. While, as a whole, Shahrazād does succeed in her goal and the king spares her and abandons his killing spree, it is on the level of the individual stories that these works can be judged by their merit within the collection. However, that judgement is not passed between Shahrazād and Shahriyār but the *author* and the *reader*. If one finds these stories lacking, it bears no consequence on the relationship between Shahrazād and Shahriyār. The frame-story of the collection is concluded satisfactorily regardless as far as the two characters are concerned.

The example of Shahrazād and Shahriyār shows well the intricated nature of communication within or without the *Nights*. It is especially true in the case of the short narratives whose form relies on that of the *khabar*. Communication within (between characters) and without (literary communication) are interwoven and it is difficult to speak about one without the other. Things are made even more complicated considering that the *Nights* operate on multiple levels of narration. It means that communication between characters may be involved in the *khabar* form but communication itself may also involve the *khabar* form. This raises the question whether it is possible for the *khabar* form to involve a *khabar* form. Originally, the answer is no. *Khabar* form in its role of transferring information can only consist

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of the chain of authorities and the *matn* containing the information in which context it is the *isnād* which establishes the instance of narrating and the *matn* is the report narrated.

This situation changes, however, when we approach a text with a literary mind. During the discussion of the *Nights*, it had been pointed out that the establishment of an instance of narrating, which was the sole responsibility of the chain of authorities, may be expressed by other means, such as whole descriptive passages. This is the reason why it would seem possible for the *khabar* form in the *Nights* to contain further *khabar* forms. With further considerations, however, it becomes clear that it is still not possible for the *khabar* form to contain another *khabar* form. What happens is an accumulation of narrative instances – which is very much like the accumulation of the authorities in the *isnād* – to which only one report belongs. In this case, however, only this last report can be considered to be in the *khabar* form with its instance of narrating established through a chain of other narrative instances. However, taken individually, all these other instances of narrative contain a narrative, several layers of narrative, in fact, depending on their places in the chain. This fact then renders them to be stories and not *akhbār*.

This is the most common appearance of the *khabar* form in the *Nights*: it does not stand independently (although it can happen that Shahrazād's stories retain the *khabar* form) but it is part of a larger narrative in which the report forms a part of an instance of narrating within the story. The instance of narrating is a form of communication which involves the telling of a report. However, it does not always happen in the stories and communication between characters may lack the narrating aspect.

This is exactly the question which concerns us here: how the presence of the instance of narrating or the lack thereof within the communicational situation influences our interpretation of the narrative form. In the chapter about communication in the *khabar* form, the exact workings of such communications had been explained. This exchange of stories in return for a reward is a significant device in the hand of the author to draw out the plot of the whole collection. These stories, of course, do not always assume the *khabar* form but they are just as likely to turn into lengthy *stories* of adventures. At the moment, we are not concerned with this aspect of these stories. The nature of these related narratives can be determined individually through a close examination of the texts. What is of importance in connection with the present inquiry is how the presence of these instances of communication alter our perception of the particular texts in which they are included. There are two points to consider here. First, it has to be examined how the act of communication is depicted in the story. Then the lack of communication also has to be addressed in the evaluation of a story.

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In *Ḥikāyat ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Qilāba* (The City of Irem), henceforth: *Abū Qilāba* (III.5.), we are given an example of how the handling of an instance of communication may change the reader's understanding of the text. The description of the communicational situation is a turning point in the structure of the story since it is the part where it can be definitively decided whether we are talking about a *khabar* form or a *story*. As it was pointed out, it could be argued both ways. There is enough connection between what is depicted at the beginning of the story and what the caliph wants to hear for the first part to be considered the introductory section of the second. Indeed, the account which the caliph wants to hear is described in detail in the first part of the story. The confusion lies in the author's handling of the material. It is in the first part where the content of the account is described, in the context of Shahrazād's narrative, in a decidedly *khabar* form. The report of these events given to the caliph, however, is not related by the words of Abū Qilāba. It is given by the author in a highly diegetic mode, that is, the communication between Abū Qilāba and the caliph is not told as it happens, only the fact of the communication is stated in a narrative.

The instance of communication is, then, not missing from the story, it is simply not related word by word. Yet, this change in the narrative mode has a profound effect on the nature of the story. Had the author repeated the events of the first part through the words of Abū Qilāba when he is asked to tell them, that account would have been placed into the frame of a communicational situation. In turn, it would have rendered that report the main part of the story, the reason for the whole instance of communication, and everything else in the story could have been read in connection with that communication. As it is, with the author's decision to give the full report at the beginning of the story and just to refer to it when the events are asked about, the focus is shifted in the narrative. It is the events which are in the focus of the narrative and not the instance of communication in which the events are narrated. Lessening the importance of the communicational situation in which a story is told results in the narrative form transforming into a story.

There is another example of the instance of communication becoming diegetic. In *Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd maʿa Ibn al-Qāribī* (Mesrour the Eunuch and Ibn El Caribi), henceforth: *Maṣrūr and Ibn al-Qāribī* (III.29.), the communicational situation is once again narratized. This is how the scene plays out:

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> Fa-lammā dakhala ʿalā Amīr al-Muʾminīn ḥayyāhu bi-taḥīyat al-khilāfa wa-waqafa bayna yadayhi. Fa-qāla lahu Amīr al-Muʾminīn: Idhā anta lam tuḍḥaknī ḍarabtuka bi-hādhā al-jirāb thalāth marrāt. Fa-qāla Ibn al-Qāribī fī nafsihi: Wa-mā ʿasā an takūna thalāth ḍarbāt bi-hādhā al-jirāb maʿa anna ḍarb al-siyāṭ lā yaḍurrunī. Wa-ẓanna anna al-jirāb fārigh. Thumma takallama bi-kalām yuḍḥiku al-mughtāẓ wa-atā bi-anwāʿ al-sukhriyya. Fa-lam yaḍḥak Amīr al-Muʾminīn wa-lam yatabassam. Fa-taʿajjaba Ibn al-Qāribī minhu wa-ḍajira wa-khāfa.
>
> When Ibn el Caribi came into the Khalif's presence he saluted him, as became his rank, and stood before him; whereupon said Er Reshid to him, 'If thou do not make me laugh, I will give thee three blows with this bag.' Quoth Ibn el Caribi in himself, 'Three strokes with that bag were a small matter, seeing that beating with whips irketh me not;' for he thought the bag was empty. Then he clapped into a discourse, such as would make a stone laugh, and gave vent to all manner of drolleries; but the Khalif laughed not neither smiled, whereat Ibn el Caribi marvelled and was chagrined and affrighted.[497]

Once again, the report that should have been reported by Ibn al-Qāribī is missing, the author being satisfied by mentioning the fact of narration. But, unlike in the previous example, this fact does not necessarily render this text a *story*.

We have previously handled *Maṣrūr and Ibn al-Qāribī* as being in the *khabar* form. What explains then that in this case, the lack of the word-by-word depiction of the instance of narration does not render this text immediately a story like it does in the case of the previous example? The answer to this, once again, needs to be looked for in the structural composition of the story.

The story itself starts like the rest of its kind in which the caliph finds himself wary and needs a distraction. He is told about a man who is able to make people laugh so the caliph has this person brought in front of him. Once there, the above-quoted scene unfolds. It can be added that the communication depicted here is not only diegetic on the narrative level, but it also fails to fulfill its role in the plot: the caliph does not laugh. What happens here, though, is that the communicational situation is expanded just like sometimes it happens in the *ḥadīth* of which we have seen examples in those texts where the Prophet is in a conversation with another man. And the caliph does laugh at the end of this communication, finally concluding it successfully.

It has to be realized, however, that, just like in the previous example, the actual related content – or supposedly related content – loses its relevance in the context of the story. It is actually not the report's job to make the caliph laugh but this task is transferred to the wit of Ibn al-Qāribī whose resourcefulness enables him to escape punishment for the failed communication. It is further emphasized by both the caliph's initial threat of "[i]f thou do not make me laugh"[498] which does not mention that Ibn al-Qāribī should relate a story and the fact

[497] *Alf Layla*, II, 417. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 248.
[498] Payne, IV, 248.

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that he is, together with Maṣrūr, actually rewarded at the end of the story. This story, that is, the account of Shahrazād (there is no account related within her story), is much more founded on actions than words.

Lack of communication may also have an influence on the *khabar* form and its possible transformation into a story. In *Ḥikāyat Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qashayrī* (*The Lover Who Feigned Himself a Thief to Save His Mistress's Honour*), henceforth: *The Lover Who Feigned Himself a Thief* (II.3.), the young man's refusal to participate in a communicative act with Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qashayrī results in a more complex story-telling than the *khabar* form possesses. The man's reluctance to speak, or, to speak the truth, stirs the curiosity of the emir and raises mystery. What happens between the man and the emir is not the straightforward transaction of the communicative act of the *khabar* form but the gradual building of anticipation and the final climax of the revelation of a story. The supposed partner in communication, the young man, does not even have an active role in the plot. It is his beloved who finally tells their story.

From the above examples concerning the role of communication in the *khabar* form and the way how its handling by the author may influence the reader's understanding of a text belonging to that form or another, it can be concluded that communicational situation between two characters may not be the most decisive feature of the *khabar* form but, nevertheless, its handling by the author may lead to interesting results which also have influence on the reader understanding the text as belonging to a particular literary form.

4.3. Interpretation and Appropriation of the Material in *The Thousand and One Nights*

The previous chapter dealt with the question how narratives in the *khabar* form may be manipulated in order for the author to be able to express unique ideas. It has been shown that the purpose of the individual works is mainly expressed through the concept of the collection and the approach of the author to the material. In this respect, the organization of the collection, the arrangement and selectivity of the material play an important role in interpretation. We have examined how this process works in the collection in general and in one group of *akhbār* in particular. The observations made are significant concerning the meaning-making process.

During the examination, it has also been described how, in the *Nights*, the material, which had originally been made up of a group of *akhbār*, is turned into an independent story through the manipulation of certain structural and discursive characteristics of the *khabar* form. The rules which seem to be holding together a group of *akhbār* in the tradition of *adab* are changing in the *Nights* which makes it possible to consider certain narratives in themselves. Through this

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process of interpretation of particular *akhbār*, meaning is not only attached to a group of *akhbār* but one single *khabar* as well. This process can be observed in the *adab* literary works as well, but it is more prominent in the popular collection under scrutiny. Accordingly, in the following, the individual stories will be discussed in the frame-work of the meaning-making process which includes the authorial intention and reader's interpretation. The subject will be approached from various angles (theme, narrative discourse…) but the main path of inquiry remains the same: How does the meaning-making process work in the *Nights* and how does it change our appreciation of the collection?

4.3.1. Thematic Shift: Changing Interpretations of Literary Texts

The thematic variety of the *Nights* is commonly known, and that is true for the short narratives as well. *Theme*, here, is defined as the main point of focus of a narrative. Among these themes are wit, learning, generosity, and love. These themes can also be constantly encountered in *adab*, whether in the broader sense or in *adab* literature in particular. As *adab* literary collections are mostly thematically organized, it is easier to identify the underlying theme of the collections. However, other *adab* works, such as historiographical or biographical works, are also greatly specified as far as the theme is concerned. In keeping with the nature of *adab*, the themes are characterized mainly by various character-traits commonly associated with a particular historical figure or a class of people.

There is a specific material that both *adab* and popular literature share, and thus there are particular stories that can be found both in *adab* collections and in the *Nights*. In many cases, these stories are taken over with minor adjustments which do not affect any aspect of the story which would change its meaning and interpretation. This is what we have seen in the case of the group of stories discussed in the previous part. In the stories relating the actions of an unjust ruler who, realizing the error of his way, begins to treat his subjects fairly,[499] the story retains the underlying theme in all of its variants. The central theme of these short pieces is the justice of a ruler.[500]

[499] See the list of titles in the chapter "Organization of the Material and the Role of the Collection in Generic Interpretation".

[500] This story can also be defined as belonging to the tale-type (0779D§) which is based on Antti Aarne's typological index of folktales (Uther, H.-J.: *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, Helsinki (Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica), 2004, I, 436.) and Hasan el-Shamy's work that is the application of this same index for Arabic works (El-Shamy, H. M.: *Types of the Folktale in the Arab World: A Demographically Oriented Tale-Type Index*, Bloomington – Indianapolis (Indiana University Press), 2004, 436–437.).

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In some of the cases, however, certain changes can be discerned in handling the material, which can result in a thematic shift in stories that seem identical at first glance.[501] This is what happened in the case of the narratives about al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba. This chapter examines how the thematic shift may occur between the *adab* and popular material on the one hand and within the popular material itself on the other. In the first case, it means studying a particular group of stories in the different fields of Arabic literature, how the theme may be determined in each case, and how the thematic shift may be explained among the different fields. In the second case, one theme is chosen to describe how it may change within the popular convention, that is, how that theme is handled in the *Nights*.

To examine the thematic shift in the various fields of *adab*, I will return to the group of stories dealing with the motif of the "slave-girl lost and regained". The stories are the following:

1. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul wa-l-jāriya ma'a 'Abd Allāh b. Ma'mar* (*Abdallah Ben Maamer with the Man of Bassora and His Slave-Girl*), henceforth: *'Abd Allāh b. Ma'mar* (III.14.)
2. *Ḥikāyat rajul fī Baghdād min awlād ahl al-Na'am ma'a jāriyatihi* (*The Ruined Man of Baghdad and His Slave Girl*), henceforth: *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* (V.7.)
3. *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-tājir fī Baghdād wa-qiṣṣat ibnihi ismuhu al-Ḥasan wa-bay' Abī al-Ḥasan jāriyatihi ismuhā Tawaddud ma'a al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd wa-munāẓaratuhā ma'a al-'ulamā' quddāma al-khalīfa wa-ghalabatuhā 'alayhim* (*Aboulhusn and His Slave-Girl Taweddud*), henceforth: *Tawaddud* (III.33.)

Corresponding stories may be found in the works of Ibn Khallikān,[502] Ibn Ḥijja,[503] al-Ghuzūlī,[504] al-Suyūṭī,[505] and al-Ibshīhī.[506]

As we saw earlier, the organization of the collection is an essential tool in the author's hand to express specific ideas or to give a particular purpose to the stories he is handling. In the present chapter, the discussion of the organization is mainly centered around the question of the mode of organization. It means that it has to be examined whether a collection is arranged into chapters or entries or whether the stories therein stand independently. Organization, however,

[501] The same observation is made by Julia Bray in connection with the material of *adab* literature. During the discussion of the motif of the lost slave-girl, she points out that even though, al-Tanūkhī collects into one chapter the reports containing this motif, the handling of the shared material is not unified which results in, among other things, a thematic shift among these narratives. (Bray, 1998, 15.)

[502] Ibn Khallikān, Abū al-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr: *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, Bayrūt (Dār Ṣādir), 1972, I, 328–341.

[503] Ibn Ḥijja, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad: *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. Bayrūt (al-Maktabat al-ʿAṣriyya), 2005/1426, 173–174.

[504] al-Ghuzūlī, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Bahāʾī: *Maṭāli' al-budūr fī manāzil al-surūr*, al-Qāhira: Maktabat al-Ṭaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2006/1426, I, 209–214.

[505] al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn: *al-Mustaẓraf min akhbār al-jawārī*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjad. Bayrūt (Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd), 1976, 32–34.

[506] al-Ibshīhī, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad: *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*, Bayrūt (Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt), 1992/1412, I, 245–246.

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does not work in isolation, and for the appropriate interpretation of stories, the organization has to be discussed in a broader context.

The organization of a collection is highly dependent on the nature of the collection, that is, the organization determines whether we are talking about entries or chapters in a collection or whether the individual pieces are referred to as accounts or stories. In the list above, three kinds of collection can be distinguished: popular collection, collection of *adab* literary works, and biographical dictionary. The organization of the particular collections and the divisions of the material included are determined based on this definition of the nature of the collection. Collections of *adab* literary works are not only thematically determined in themselves, but the distribution of the material within the collection also shows thematic considerations. This is what happens in al-Ibshīhī and al-Ghuzūlī's works: they are divided into chapters that are devoted to specific themes. As opposed to this, biographical dictionaries follow alphabetical order in their principal organization based on names. The basis of this structural composition is the entry concerned not with a theme but with the person it is dedicated to. Ibn Khallikān and al-Suyūṭī apply this method in their works. Though not a biographical dictionary in the strict sense, the latter adheres to the conventions of this kind of biographical writing. The collections of *adab* literary works and biographical dictionaries are then divided into sections – chapters or entries – which consist of the accounts that the author wishes to share. In contrast, the *Nights* does not share this kind of division. It does not have chapters or entries but consists of individual stories.

This organization also influences how titles or headings are handled. Chapters and stories have titles, while the biographical entries get headings. Individual accounts do not receive either: they belong to a chapter or are recounted within an entry. As opposed to accounts, individual stories do have titles. These are simple observations but important ones to make because of various reasons. First of all, a plot or a shared motif within the plot is not enough to correctly recognize the dominant theme in a story. In the present group of stories, the main motif centers around a financially broke young man and his slave-girl. It would only seem natural to make this couple the main characters of their stories. Often, this is not the case, however. In these cases, the title or the heading provides directions concerning the recognition of the main theme and, through it, the appropriate interpretation of the work. The title or heading is decisive in recognizing the dominant theme due to its inclusion of names or characters in them. Because they are so name- or character-centric, the author can assign predetermined functions to the characters in any given story, ultimately determining its interpretation. This assignment of function is, however, highly dependent on the nature of the collection, on the one

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hand, and its organization, on the other. Thus, the role of the heading or title is to bring together the organization of the collection, which is closely related to the nature of the collection and the interpretation of the individual stories through adjusting the functions of characters of the individual stories to the purpose of the collection itself. Thus, both the heading and the title profoundly affect the interpretation of a story since it stands as a signal post of the author's intention.

In the *Nights* a simple agreement between plot and title can be made. As observed before, the organization of the *Nights* is haphazard, with no determining thematical consideration being at play in the collection other than its entertainment value and the purpose to complete the 1001 nights. Accordingly, title and plot are in synchronicity both in *ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar*[507] and *The Ruined Man of Baghdad*. The young man in both of the titles is the *hero* of the story, while the slave-girl fulfills the functions of the *heroine*.[508] Both of the stories begin with a description of the couple's situation, introducing their plight, and, finally, they end with the resolution of their difficulties through the generosity of a benefactor, the *donor*. In this context of title and plot, the main theme of the story is love.

It is somewhat more difficult to define the theme when only one of the characters is mentioned in the title. It has two variants: either the slave-girl is named like in al-Suyūṭī's work and in the case of *Tawaddud*, or it is the donor, the person whose generosity makes the lovers' reunion possible like in Ibn Ḥijja and Ibn Khallikān's works. A distinction must be made between the title of a story and the heading of an entry. Only the story of Tawaddud and Ibn Ḥijja's account have titles. Ibn Khallikān's work is a biographical dictionary, and as such, it consists of biographical entries headed by the names of important personalities. Al-Suyūṭī's work, although it is an *adab* literary work, is constructed like a biographical dictionary with various entries in it.

The title of *Tawaddud* is rather long and confusing as it gives a full description of the various events recounted in it and the names of the characters involved. However, after the introductory part, it becomes clear that Tawaddud is the heroine of the narrative, and this narrative is not primarily of love but knowledge and erudition. As Geert Jan van Gelder points out in connection with this story: knowledge is power.[509] Tawaddud is a widely read person,

[507] In this respect, the English title is somewhat misleading, the Arabic title being *Ḥikāyat al-rajul wa-l-jāriya maʿa ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar*.

[508] Of course, Propp's functions cannot be understood here as fulfilling the same roles as in a fairy-tale. (Propp, V.: *Morphology of the Folktale*, Austin (University of Texas Press), 2009.) Nevertheless, they can be applied here as well to represent general functional categories in a story.

[509] Van Gelder actually uses the example of *Tawaddud* to introduce his essay on encyclopedism and the role of universal knowledge in medieval Arabic culture. (van Gelder, G. J.: Compleat Men, Women and Books: On

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who puts to shame the scholars at the caliph's court without any particular difficulty. To her story, the love story with the young man is only a framing device which is further emphasized by the final exclamation of the caliph: "Bārik Allāh fīki wa-raḥim man ʿallamaki" ("May God bless thee and receive him who taught thee into His mercy!").[510] It is not their future life together which is celebrated, but Tawaddud's master is praised for his having taught her so well. Although less elaborated, the case is very similar in al-Suyūṭī's collection where, in accordance with the tradition of the biographical lexicon, Sakan, the slave-girl's entry serves no other purpose but to report her eloquence.

Something similar happens in Ibn Khallikān's work as well. The fundamental plot of the story does not change. Its theme does. In this case, the situation into which the man is forced provides the occasion for the person heading the entry, Jaʿfar al-Barmakī, to prove his generosity. Similarly, in Ibn Ḥijja's account, it is Ibn Maʿmar who reunites the lovers. Indeed, he is the *hero* of the story. Two different processes take place here, however. While in Ibn Khallikān's case, it is due to the nature of his collection that Jaʿfar al-Barmakī assumes the function of *hero*, in Ibn Ḥijja's case, it is the title of the account which may influence the reader in the interpretation of the story.

This latter one is the same story as in the *Nights*. However, while in the *Nights*, there is a definite *function*, to use Vladimir Propp's term again, to every action in the plot, in Ibn Ḥijja's story, everything is subordinated to the generosity of the main character. In the context of the *Nights*, the structure of the story's plot can be drawn up like this: there is an initial situation where the love of the young man and his slave-girl is established, together with the girl's education; then there is the complication when the man goes bankrupt and is forced to sell the girl. This unfortunate situation leads them to the donor, where they must face a difficult task. This difficult task is implicit as nothing is expected of the two of them, but when they express their love for one another in an exceptionally eloquent way, the donor is emotionally moved and refuses to break them up. In this version of interpretation, there is an explicit causality between the events missing from Ibn Ḥijja's account in which the same structural points can be observed without their function in the plot. There is no hero, heroine, or donor. There is only Ibn Maʿmar whose generosity has to be remembered. Again, it is not love which is the focus but generosity. It is interesting to note that in both of these cases, a known historical figure is in the center of the story, and they are figures who are customarily associated with generosity

Medieval Arabic Encyclopaedism, in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996*, ed. P. Binkley, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 1997, 241–259.)

[510] *Alf Layla*, II, 536. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 377.

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in Arabic culture. Remarkably, the author of the *Nights* is able to change this solidified cultural convention by simply placing the same story in a different organizational structure, which, supported by a new context, the popular convention, gains new meaning.

Turning back to the role of the titles, two works remain to be discussed: those of al-Ibshīhī and al-Ghuzūlī. Their case is pretty straightforward as it is not some of the characters who are named in their titles but a theme. Al-Ghuzūlī's title, *Fī musāmarat ahl al-naʿīm*, seems to have characters in the center of the chapter but *ahl al-naʿīm* refers to a social class and, as such, it does fulfill the role of thematic designation. It is unambiguously generosity that al-Ibshīhī means to depict according to his chapter title: *Fī al-jūd wa-l-sakhā' wa-l-karam wa-makārim al-akhlāq wa-iṣṭinā' al-maʿrūf wa-dhikr al-amjād wa-aḥādīth al-ajwād*. They do not give one single story under the title of the relevant chapter, but they collect stories that can be brought together by the same heading.

We have seen, then, how the author is able to express different things with the same story. The example of the motif of the "slave-girl lost and regained" showed how the organization of the collection and the plot of the individual stories within may affect the theme of the stories. In the following, we will change the focus of attention and, instead of concentrating on a specific story or a group of stories and how the theme changes in them, we will pay attention to the theme itself. The purpose of this line of inquiry is to show that one single theme can also change; through this change, the story is also changing.

The theme of eloquence, wit, and trickery will be examined here in the form as they appear in the *Nights,* with special attention to the progress of change from eloquence to wit and, finally, trickery. What they share as a character-trait is a person's ability to speak and act according to a specific situation with a specific intent in mind. In connection with these traits, however, it is not only these traits and the situation in which they are employed that can be examined but other interesting aspects, like function and tone, as well.

Eloquence and wit are part of *adab*. They are traits constantly expressed and stressed in connection with a person's life. *Adab,* as education and training, is a decisive feature of anybody's life, be they political figures, learned men, or slave-girls. In fact, in connection with *Tawaddud* and *Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba,* it was already mentioned how the training of a slave-girl expresses his master's wealth and high-standing. This feature of *adab* is also retained in the *Nights,* where numerous narratives are centered on these two character-traits, concerning not only slave-girls but various other personalities.

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The situations in which eloquence and wit may manifest are mainly specific to the individual character-traits. Eloquence is shown either spontaneously or by the demand of someone. In either case, the possession of this character-trait is rewarded. Wit surfaces in different situations: It may be a source of criticism as it is in the case of *Ḥikāyat Hind bint al-Nuʿmān maʿa al-Ḥajjāj* (*Hind Daughter of En Numan and El Hajjaj*) (III.37.) and *Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd wa-l-wazīr Jaʿfar maʿa al-shaykh al-badawī* (*Jaafer the Barmecide and the Old Bedouin*) (III.27.). Both Hind and the old Bedouin use their sharp-wittedness to express their opinion of another person.

Wit may also save a life in stories like *Ḥikāyat Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik maʿa ṣabīy al-ʿarab* (*The Khalif Hisham and the Arab Youth*) (III.3.), *Ḥikāyat Abī Nuwās maʿa al-ghilmān al-thalātha* (*Abou Nuwas with the Three Boys and the Khalif Haroun Er Reshid*) (III.13.), *Ḥikāyat al-malik Khusraw and Shīrīn maʿa ṣayyād al-samak* (*Khusraw and Shirin and the Fisherman*) (III.24.), and *Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd maʿa Ibn al-Qāribī* (Mesrour the Eunuch and Ibn El Caribi) (III.29.). In these cases, the main characters find themselves in a situation in which they can only rely on themselves to save their lives. They have only one recourse, their wit, to sway the opinion of the ruler whose wrath they have invoked. If they use their words right, they are richly rewarded.

Wit may also be the source of humor. In these cases, like in *Ḥikāyat ʿAlī al-ʿajamī quddāma Hārūn al-Rashīd* (*Ali the Persian's Story of the Kurd Sharper*) (II.2.) and *Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd fī amr al-jāriya maʿa al-imām Abī Yūsuf* (*How the Imam Abou Yousuf Extricated the Khalif Haroun Er Reshid and His Vizier Jaafer from a Dilemma*) (III.6.) humor is for the reader to understand and appreciate. Finally, trickery embodies all of the above: it is the demonstration of intelligence, but its one simple aim is personal gain, while the situations in which it arises intend to make the reader laugh. These characteristics are well illustrated in such stories as *Ḥikāyat al-liṣṣ maʿa al-ṣayrafī* (*The Thief and the Money-Changer*) (IV.2.) and *Ḥikāyat ʿAlā' al-Dīn wālī Qūṣ maʿa al-rajul al-muḥtāl* (*The Chief of the Cous Police and the Sharper*) (IV.3.). Both of these stories show the sharp mind of the thieves which is put into good use when acquiring someone else's wealth is concerned.

From the preliminary description of eloquence, wit, and trickery, a general conclusion can be drawn: all of them emerge in the context of an exchange. This exchange exists between two participants, which I will refer to as the *sender*, on the one hand, and the *receiver*, on the other. This exchange is very similar to communication, but since communication is based on oral exchange, it cannot be correlated with this kind of exchange which, on occasion, is based on other kinds of transactions. However, it is not only the method in which the exchange is

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conducted that makes the distinction between communication and this exchange necessary but the situation in which these exchanges occur. We are talking about a broader range of social exchange, of which communication is a part.

In the following, we will examine in more detail how handling these character-traits works within the context of this exchange and how it influences the function of these traits within the narrative. Further examination will also be made concerning how these changes influence the discourse of the narrative, as in how the narrative's tone is affected.

First to be discussed is the nature of the relationship between the sender and the receiver and on what basis this relationship lies. Both eloquence and wit are based on oral communication, and, as such, the relationship between sender and receiver may be determined in that context. Accordingly, the success of the exchange depends on a shared context between the two participants in the framework of which the communication becomes interpretable for both of them. The successful conclusion presupposes, on the one hand, a shared background knowledge and, on the other hand, a standard system of expectations. The collaboration between these two provides both participants with a working knowledge of how communication works in a given situation. In the case of eloquence, it is the meeting of expectations that makes the exchange successful, while, in the case of wit, it is the deviation from these expectations, that is, the unexpected, which finally successfully concludes an exchange gone wrong. This event, however, places the solution outside the initial communicational situation.

We have already seen how slave-girls are rewarded for their eloquence in *ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar* and other stories sharing the same motif. Similar is the case in *Ḥikāyat ʿishq al-ghulām maʿa al-jāriya fī al-maktaba* (*The Loves of the Boy and the Girl at School*) (V.4.) in which the boy and the slave-girl's love is expressed through poems, and it is after reading these poems that the owner of the girl has them married. It is also the slave-girls' poems that entertain their master in *Ḥikāyat Muḥammad al-Baṣrī quddāma al-khalīfa al-Maʾmūn* (*The Man of Yemen and His Six Slave-Girls*) (II.5.). In this example, the eloquence of the girls is further emphasized by placing their story into the framework of another communicational situation in which Muḥammad al-Baṣrī is asked to relate a story. Moreover, it is not even Muḥammad who is rewarded after telling his story, but the girls are called before the caliph, and they are rewarded.

Besides the slave-girls, learned men are rewarded for their learning and eloquence. The young lovers of the slave-girls are just as able to express themselves in an eloquent way as their female counterparts, for which not only wealth but the slave-girl is their reward as well. In *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ʿālim maʿa al-khalīfa al-Maʾmūn* (*The Khalif El Mamoun and the Strange Doctor*) (III.10.), it is a strange man who is able to rise in the ranks simply by proving his

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knowledge in an eloquent manner. In *Ḥikāyat 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb maʿa al-shāb* (*The Khalif Omar Ben Khettab and the Young Bedouin*) (I.4.), it is also a strange young man who is able to turn public opinion in his favor through eloquence and honor. In *Ḥikāyat al-khalīfa Hārūn al-Rashīd maʿa jāriyatihi* (*Haroun Er Reshid and the Three Poets*) (III.17.), it is two known poets, al-Raqqāshī and Abū Muṣʿab, who are rewarded for their poems.

This last narrative is also an excellent example of wit. After reciting a poem, the third poet, Abū Nuwās, is ordered to be executed. When the caliph orders his courtiers to compose a poem to the line "The Promise of Night is effaced by Day", al-Raqqāshī and Abū Muṣʿab succeed in satisfying the caliph's wish, and they are rewarded according to the conventions involved in this communicational situation. Abū Nuwās, on the other hand, incites the wrath of the caliph by reciting a poem that describes minutely the events that motivated the caliph's desire to hear the poems. It is a communicational situation gone wrong, the consequences of which the poet is able to avoid by a comment which originates from outside the initial situation. It is, nonetheless, enough to pacify the caliph, and Abū Nuwās is not only forgiven but rewarded as well.

Concerning trickery, two kinds of exchange occur: one is an oral one followed by an actual exchange of material things. According to Fedwa Malti-Douglas' morphological examination of the classical Arabic crime narratives, this group of stories belongs to the "Theft = *Dakhā'* anecdote" in which theft and wit are closely related.[511] As opposed to the exchange involved in the previous two cases, this is a one-sided exchange, and accordingly, the context is not based on shared background knowledge and a system of conventions recognized and accepted by both parties.[512] At least it is not based on these things as far as the sender is concerned. For this kind of exchange to work, it still has to be based on these things on the part of the receiver, who recognizes and accepts them. They have to be acknowledged by the sender as well. However, he does not accept them but exploits them to further his own goals. In the oral part of the transaction, the shared knowledge and convention are recognized, but the actual exchange of goods goes right against this context by the content of that exchange not being in accordance with the oral one.

[511] Malti-Douglas, F.: Classical Arabic Crime Narratives: Thieves and Thievery in *Adab* Literature, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 19, 1988, 111–112.

[512] Trickery is characteristically employed in the crime stories in which thievery is not primarily committed by violence but by cleverness and wit. When discussing the crime stories in classical Arabic literature, Malti-Douglas refers to the relationship between thief and victim as a "game played according to its own rules and in which the sides could be potentially changed". This game, however, can be only understood in a strictly literary context in which thievery is lifted out of its social context and granted a literary category in classical Arabic prose literature. (Malti-Douglas, 1988, 123.)

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Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-shāṭir fī al-Iskandariyya quddāma al-wālī Ḥusām al-Dīn (*The Sharper of Alexandria and the Master of Police*) (IV.1.) provides a good example of how trickery works in the framework of the exchange. There are men accused of thievery and are brought before the Chief of Police to be flogged until they confess the crime. At the last moment, a man comes forth and confesses to the crime, carrying the stolen purse. The wrongly accused men are released, and the purse is returned to its owner when the thief starts to brag. He claims that he has stolen the purse twice from its owner. What follows in the narrative is a communicational situation in which a confession is expected but what happens is the actual stealing of the purse for the second time. The Chief of Police and the owner of the purse are under the impression that they hear a confession, and the thief is well aware of that. Exploiting the two men's compliance in the demonstration of the act of stealing, he seizes the chance to steal the purse and runs away.

In most cases, just like in the previous one, the deceived party realizes only too late that the other party did not apply the rules of exchange. There are, however, examples of the deceived party remaining ignorant of the failure of exchange. In *Ḥikāyat ba'ḍ al-mughaffalīn ma'a al-shāṭir* (*The Simpleton and the Sharper*) (IV.5.), a theft is described in the guise of a communicational situation highly reminiscent of the fundamental theme of the *Nights*. Two sharpers steal the ass of a simpleton by one of them taking the place of the ass in the halter while the other leads the animal away undetected. When the simpleton notices the man, his question of "What art thou?" prompts the sharper to tell a tale. It is a tale of wonder about how the man had been turned into an ass and was, at present, redeemed and turned back into a man. It is a lie the sharper hopes to sell. And sell he does because, for the simpleton, it is a completely plausible story. Here, again, there are two different sets of expectations on the part of the participants of the exchange, the result of which is the reader's astonishment at the sharper's cleverness. In contract to the previous story, however, the main source of the humor is not the way the sharper manipulates the exchange but how the character of the simpleton is depicted. He is not left befuddled by the sharper's action. In fact, he is utterly unaware of the deceit. At the end of the story, he sees his ass on the market, and instead of realizing what has happened, he laments the fate of the man he thinks has been turned back into an ass again.

According to the above-elaborated examples, it becomes clear how purpose and meaning are not the same. By examining the same stories – or stories employing similar plots or sharing the same motif – appearing in different collections compiled with different purposes in mind, it has been pointed out how theme may shift according to the author's intention. However, this additional meaning to the purpose of a work is only interpretable on the level of the individual

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stories since, on that level, the text can gain additional context, which can specify the purpose of the collection by giving meaning to the stories. Furthermore, regarding the stories individually opens up new opportunities for new interpretations through the process of which plots and motifs may gain new meanings. So, while organization, arrangement, and selectivity significantly influence the interpretation of narrative in the broader sense (as in the narrative of a group of individual stories), it is possible to determine a more relevant meaning of a text only on the level of the individual stories.

4.3.2. Interpretation and the Role of Description in the Short Narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights*

Having discussed the different aspects of the *mood* of the narrative or, as Genette put it, "the regulation of narrative information" in Chaper 2, we have the means to discuss one specific aspect of the *akhbār* material of the *Nights* which is interconnected with these regulations in a great deal. It has been established that, as far as narrative mood is concerned, the *khabar* form is an extradiegetic narrative form with an intradiegetic perspective and external focalization. In other words, events are narrated by a narrator who is not an active participant in the events recounted (extradiegetic) but he is in the action which is expressed through his point of view (intradiegetic perspective) and the way he describes the events through one of his characters but without special insights into that character's mind (extradiegetic focalization). Mood is pertinent to the present discussion since, being responsible for how information is shared within a narrative, it has significant influence of how description may be employed. That said, the above-mentioned aspects of the narrative provide for an objective tone[513] which, at first glance, renders character depiction not a decisive feature of the *khabar* form. Indeed, Wadād al-Qāḍī laments the general approach to biographical dictionaries according to which scholars finds the accounts in them repetitive, formulaic, impersonal.[514]

However, these are general observations, and it is clear from previous discussions of the *khabar* form that it is likely to steer away from the general and provide something unique for the reader. As Leder observes it, "the complexity of human personality"[515] is represented in the Arabic narrative. Al- Qāḍī also sets to contradict the general opinion as she points out that, on the one hand, a certain degree of similarity of description is needed in the biographies to

[513] Leder, 1992, 307. Leder, 1990, 92.
[514] al-Qadi, W.: Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community, in: *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2006, 56–57.
[515] Leder, 1990, 72.

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strengthen a sense of belonging but, on the other hand, a certain differentiation can also be observed since the compilers exhibited a great deal of selectivity when putting together their material.[516] Her observations concern selectivity and arrangement the influence of which on interpretation had already been discussed in the first part of this chapter. In the following, I will concentrate on individual stories as I make an argument for the opposite of this claimed objectivity in the *khabar* form. I intend to show that character depiction does have an instrumental part in literary expression in the *khabar* form as it appears in the *Nights*. It does not only describe but it also has definite informative value regarding thematic considerations as well.

Khabar form does allow for some kind of description in its most basic form. Certain things even seem to be required by an author to be shared. These requirements are mostly defined by the author's intentions with his text. Historical and biographical works, for example, call for the recording of data which add to the reader's understanding of a character such as genealogy, geographical origins and, according to more special intentions, other sociological networks of the person described. These pieces of information, however, are handled separately from the actual *khabar* and, thus, do not directly concern us at the present moment. In addition, there are other possible descriptions which are required in certain cases. For example, particular motifs require certain descriptive elements like slave-girls being handled in *akhbār*. As it was pointed out during the discussion of the person of Maḥbūba, the person of the slave-girls is so interlocked with the character-traits they are representing that these descriptions of their beauty, learning, and musical and poetic talent is unavoidable. Not to mention the phenomenon of *ṭarab*, "the emotional response to music",[517] which is also closely connected the singing slave-girls and can contribute to description within a narrative. In a similar vein, even the depiction of particular historical figures may call for such a description.

These inquiries raise the question of what kind of descriptions we are talking about concerning the *khabar* form. Are only human beings described or are there any other kinds of descriptions as well? Generally speaking, we can describe living things, physical objects and places in connection with their physical appearance and other factual data. There are also human conditions, social situations to speak of. In the case of living things and, especially human beings, there is an additional angle: the description of inner thoughts and emotions. Since, in

[516] al-Qadi, 2006, 56–67.
[517] Imhof, A.: "If Music Be the Food of Love?" The Singing-Girls and the Notion of *Ṭarab* as Part of an *Adab*-Ideal, in: *Knowledge and Education in Classical Islam: Religious Learning between Continuity and Change*, ed. S. Günther, Leiden – Boston (Brill), 2020, II, 870.

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the following, the discussion will concentrate mostly on the description of this category, that is human beings, I will elaborate more on that subject. The first aspect of description, the physical and factual description of human beings is a rather straightforward aspect. What is more interesting is the second aspect, the inner thoughts and emotions of persons to which I also add such character-traits which cannot be discerned with the eyes (generosity, wit…) and the circumstances in which they are displayed.

It seems contradictory to the nature of *khabar* but, given it more thought, there is quite a rich repertoire of devices available for the author to describe characters which, in turn, provide for a deeper understanding of the reader of the narrative. Barring actual descriptions of inner thoughts and emotions, there are three more or less implicit ways of expressing the inner state of mind of a character and its general disposition. For an extradiegetic narrator who employs external focalization there are a couple of possibilities for interpreting the emotions and thoughts of another character: 1) description of acts, 2) description of physical manifestations of emotions and 3) characters reciting poems. These manifestations of inner thoughts and emotions highlight another important point: in *khabar* form, there is no description of the self; the narrator describes what he is witnessing not what he is experiencing.

Again, all the above are general statements which are likely to be contradicted and disproved if the available material is given some more considerations. It is not the aim of the chapter to show the transformation process of the utilization of descriptions in *adab*,[518] its purpose is to describe, through the discussion of character depiction, the interpretative process of the reader when encountering different forms of description in closely related narrative forms in the *Nights*. In the following, I will approach character depiction from three different angels. First, I will discuss the question of physical descriptions then I will turn to the more common topics of *adab* material, wit, generosity and love, to describe how they are handled in terms of psychological characterization and how emotions are expressed through the discussion of these topics. Finally, I will examine how the humorous works in these short writings and what role character depiction plays in its expression.

Concerning the physical descriptions of the characters, it can be said that it is not a concern for the writers. When talking about classical Arabic biographies, Michael Cooperson claims that they lack illustrations and that "a description of 'character and disposition' was

[518] For such studies, see: Beaumont, D.: *Min Jumlat al-Jamādāt*: The Inanimate in Fictional and Adab Narrative, in: *On Fiction and Adab in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. Ph. F. Kennedy, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz Verlag), 2005, 55–68.

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supposed to produce a visual image".[519] There were certain figures, however, who were an exception to this. Starting from the Prophet, companions, imams, caliphs and other well-known personalities' biographies show some sign of physical description. These are, however, descriptions of the environment of these personalities, not their appearances, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions.[520] And, indeed, conclusion can be drawn. Let us consider the opening passage of *Ḥikāyat Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Mutawakkil 'Alā Allāh ma'a al-jāriya ismuhā Maḥbūba* (*The Khalif El Mutawekkil and His Favourite Mehboubeh*), henceforth: *Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba* (III.12.), which has been previously discussed in connection with its discourse. Now, we examine what this descriptive passage may tell us in connection with the characters.

> Kāna fī qaṣr Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Mutawakkil ʿAlā Allāh arbaʿa ālāf surriyya, mi'atān rūmīyāt, wa-mi'atān muwalladāt wa-ḥabash. Wa-qad ahdā ʿUbayd b. Ṭāhir ilā al-Mutawakkil arbaʿami'a jāriya, mi'atān bīḍ wa-mi'atān ḥabash wa-muwalladāt. Wa-kāna min al-jumla dhālika jāriya min muwalladāt al-Buṣra yuqālu lahā Maḥbūba wa-kānat fā'iqa fī al-ḥusn wa-l-jamāl wa-l-ẓarf wa-dalāl. Wa-kānat taḍrubu bi-l-ʿūd wa-tuḥsinu al-ghinā' wa-tanẓimu al-shiʿr wa-taktubu khaṭṭan jayyidan.
>
> There were in the palace of the Khalif El Mutawekkil ala Allah four thousand concubines, whereof two thousand were Greeks [and other foreigner] and other two thousand native Arabians and Abyssinians; and Obeid ibn Tahir had given him two hundred white girls and a like number of Abyssinian and native girls. Among these latter was a girl of Bassora, Mehboubeh by name, who was of surpassing beauty and elegance and voluptuous grace. Moreover, she played upon the lute and was skilled in singing and making verses and wrote excellent well…[521]

There are three characters mentioned here: al-Mutawakkil, ʿUbayd b. Ṭāhir and Maḥbūba. From the three of them, it is only Maḥbūba who gets a descriptive passage of her own, the two men seem to remain in the background. Against all appearances, though, they do not remain undescribed. While the information about Maḥbūba is in compliance with the tradition of this kind of material in which the beauty, the learning and the musical skills of the girl are to be praised, the information we get regarding the men are more implicit. Al-Mutawakkil can boast of a great harem which is not only great in number but varied in the origins of the girls as well. It tells not only of his wealth but the empire he rules as well. Similarly, ʿUbayd b. Ṭāhir is implicitly described as a man of wealth and generosity whose gift to the caliph is worth recording. Not to mention that all the gifts Maḥbūba is possessing both in physical and intellectual capacity are further testaments to her master's wealth which is, at the beginning of the story, transferred from ʿUbayd b. Ṭāhir to al-Mutawakkil. In this respect, all the descriptions of the harem and the girls given as a gift to the caliph, among them, Maḥbūba, are the

[519] Cooperson, M.: Images Without Illustrations: The Visual Imagination in Classical Arabic Biography, in: *Islamic Art and Literature*, eds. O. Grabar and C. Robinson, Princeton (Markus Wiener Publishers), 2001, 8.
[520] Cooperson, 2001, 12–13.
[521] *Alf Layla*, II, 310–311. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 135.

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descriptions of the two men and their social standing. This is not the only way to depict social standing in these stories, however.

Besides descriptions of the environment, detailed descriptions of the physical appearance are likely to show up in these biographies when a narrator describes the person that he meets for the first time.[522] Interestingly enough, this does not change in the *akhbār* material of the *Nights*, either. But, instead of a known person being described whom the narrator meets for the first time, it is always a stranger whose physical appearance is depicted either by the narrator himself or by a prominent person in front of whom this person appears. In *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ʿālim maʿa al-khalīfa al-Maʾmūn* (*The Khalif El Mamoun and the Strange Doctor*) (III.10.), the stranger, who appears in front of the caliph Maʾmūn, is describes as "rajul gharīb wa-ʿalayhi thiyāb bīḍ riththa" ("stranger, clad in worn white clothes").[523] These are descriptions of the character's physical appearance which tells about his social standing and his status as an outsider. Or, in another story, when a young boy is brought in front of the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb in *Ḥikāyat ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb maʿa al-shāb* (*The Khalif Omar Ben Khettab and the Young Bedouin*), henceforth: *ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the Young Bedouin* (I.4.), he is described as "shāb min aḥsan al-shabāb, naẓīf al-thiyāb" ("a third youth perfectly handsome and well dressed").[524] In these cases of description, it may be observed that the physical description of the strange person at the beginning of the story has an interpretative role in the discourse since it is only employed when the description is to foreshadow the personality of an unknown character, a special character-trait which has an important role in the plot. More will be said about the subject later.

There is a notable exception to physical description both in the tradition of *adab* and the material of the *Nights*. Slave-girls and young boys tend to be described in relatively greater detail compared to other characters in these stories. The following description is given when a young man is brought before Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qashayrī in *Ḥikāyat Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qashayrī* (*The Lover Who Feigned Himself a Thief to Save His Mistress's Honour*), henceforth: *The Lover Who Feigned Himself a Thief* (II.3.): "shāb dhī jamāl bāhir wa-adab ẓāhir wa-ʿaql wāfir wa-huwa ḥusn al-ṣūra wa-ṭayyib al-rāʾiḥa" ("a youth of exceeding beauty and lofty bearing, whose aspect expressed good breeding and dignity and abundant wit").[525] This description has a similar function to that of the strange scholar in the previous example.

[522] Cooperson, 2001, 11.
[523] *Alf Layla*, II, 211. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 34.
[524] *Alf Layla*, II, 408. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 239.
[525] *Alf Layla*, II, 182. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 4.

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Nonetheless, descriptions of young boys appear in the context of love since they are so beautiful that others cannot help falling in love with them. In *Ḥikāyat Badr al-Dīn wazīr al-Yaman maʿa akhīhi wa-muʿallimihi* (*The Vizier of Yemen and His Young Brother*) (V.3.), the brother is described as being "badīʿ al-jamāl" ("of singular beauty")[526] and accordingly, his tutor falls in love with him. Nevertheless, the entirety of the *akhbār* material seems to remain void of colorful descriptions of persons which are only used when it has a definite function concerning the theme of the story.

There are other ways in this material to provide for character description. The stories which deal with wit, generosity and love have a very sophisticated manner of character depiction which does not rely upon mere description. It utilizes depictions of acts and speech. Here I refer to Lale Behzadi's study on emotions in which she defines four kinds of emotional performances: 1) vocabulary, 2) images and metaphors, 3) physical reactions, and 4) actions.[527] Although she uses these categories to discuss how emotions are expressed, they are also useful as categories of methods of description, since characterization through act and speech is basically depiction of the expressions of emotions. In the following, I retain the bipartite division, with the additional observation that these two groups maybe further divided to reflect the above classification.

This kind of character depiction is in line with the *khabar* and its being an eyewitness report. As mentioned before, this eyewitness is an objective narrator whose account is externally focalized. He does not know more than what he sees. Accordingly, it is exactly the acts and speeches which can inform him about the person he is narrating about. Although, in the *Nights*, most of the narratives do not have the eyewitness to their stories, they mostly retained this objective stance. However, there is an important difference here. While the narrator of the *khabar* is obliged to report what he witnesses, the narrator in the *Nights* has the freedom to prioritize between events and employ description accordingly. This is especially true for those narratives which stand closer to *ḥikāya* than to *khabar*. Andras Hamori claims that when something is described in more detail, that event or thing is bound to have an important role in the narrative.[528] A similar observation is made by David Pinault, who uses the expression of "dramatic visualization" when he discusses the descriptions of scenes which have special

[526] *Alf Layla*, II, 383. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 212.
[527] Behzadi, L: Standardizing Emotions: Aspects of Classification and Arrangement in Tales with a Good Ending, *Asiatische Studien – Études Asiatiques*, 71, 2017, 819.
[528] Hamori, A.: A Comic Romance from the Thousand and One Nights: The Tale of Two Viziers, *Arabica*, 30, 1983, 48.

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significance in the interpretation of the narrative.[529] Let us now see in more detail how this mode of description, which is typical of the *khabar* form, is utilized and transformed in the *Nights*.

Most characteristically, it is wit which is depicted exclusively through speech. As it has been observed earlier, if wit is described through an act, it turns into trickery. Wit is held in high esteem in *adab* and its regard does not change in the *Nights*, either. Intelligence is a sign of good breeding and fine education and wisdom as it is so eloquently expressed in *Ḥikāyat al-mar'a al-wā'iẓa fī Hamā ismuhā sayyida al-Mashā'ikh* (*The Man's Dispute with the Learned Woman of the Relative Excellence of the Male and the Female*), henceforth: *The Man's Dispute with the Learned Woman* (I.12.): "Mā raʾaytu fī al-nisāʾ adhkā khāṭiran wa-aḥsan fiṭnatan wa-aghzar ʿilman wa-ajwad qarīḥatan wa-aẓraf akhlāqan min imraʾa wāʿiẓa min ahl Baghdād yuqālu lahā sayyida al-Mashāʿikh" ("I never saw a woman sharper-witted, more intelligent, better furnished in learning, more excellent of faculties or pleasant of ingredients than a female preacher of the people of Baghdad, by name Sitt al-Meshayikh").[530] It is also a sign of an honest life as it is attested in *The Lover Who Feigned Himself a Thief*. After the youth is imprisoned, Khālid cannot leave his case rest as there is an apparent controversy between how the boy behaves and what is claimed of him: "Fa-raʾahu ʿāqilan adīban faṭinan ẓarīfan labīban" ("He found him well-bred and intelligent and of a pleasant and vivacious wit").[531] So, he presses on for the truth of his story. It is a virtue, however, which has not only intellectual value but monetary as well. "Fa-lammā samiʿa al-khalīfa al-Maʾmūn minhu hādhā al-qawl madaḥahu wa-shakarahu wa-ajlasahu fī rutbatihi wa-waqqarahu wa-amara lahu bi-miʾa alf dirham" ("When the Khalif heard his speech, he praised him and thanked him and making him sit down again in his place, showed him high honour and ordered him a present of a hundred thousand dinars"),[532] concludes the story of the scholar after he eloquently explains the reasons why he refuses to drink wine in the company of the caliph. In all of these cases, it is the person's verbal manifestations which support their intellectual capacity.

There are various situations in the *Nights* in which generosity is shown. Unfortunate lovers are reunited, desolate men are given financial support, even convicted men are pardoned through an act of generosity. In contrast to wit, generosity is not described through words but through deeds. However, these deeds may be connected to the actions or words of others. In the

[529] Pinault, D.: *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*, Leiden (Brill), 1992, 25–29.
[530] *Alf Layla*, II, 456. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 290.
[531] *Alf Layla*, II, 183. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 5.
[532] *Alf Layla*, II, 212. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 35.

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tradition of *adab*, it is this benefactor whose commendable act of generosity is in the center of the story. On many occasions, however, the display of generosity is also accompanied by other elements that play a central role within the narrative.

Generosity is the main theme in both *Ḥikāyat karam Khālid b. Yaḥyā maʿa al-rajul alladhī ʿamila kitāban muzawwaran* (*Generous Dealing of Yehya Ben Khalid with a Man Who Forged a Letter in His Name*), henceforth: *The Generous Dealing of Yaḥyā b. Khālid* (III.9.) and *Ḥikāyat karam Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī maʿa al-rajul al-faqīr* (*Yehya Ben Khalid the Barmecide and the Poor Man*), henceforth: *Yaḥyā b. Khālid and the Poor Man* (III.25.). While the former is short and succinct, the latter is a more elaborated description of the theme. However, both of them exhibit a predominant reliance on action in describing the act of generosity. An interesting difference between them, which is due to the form of the narrative they are presented in, is the reasons for showing generosity on the parts of the benefactors. While in *Yaḥyā b. Khālid and the Poor Man*, it is a simple request of mercy which spurs Yaḥyā into action, in *The Generous Dealing of Yaḥyā b. Khālid*, there is an intricate reasoning provided for his actions regarding the man, who forged a letter in his name.

As for sharing the spotlight with other themes, we have seen during the discussion of thematic shift how easily the theme of generosity turns into the theme of love in the *Nights* when the motif of the slave-girl lost and regained is concerned. In these stories, the customary characteristics of the slave-girl are described and, later, demonstrated similarly to *Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba*. Although, while in that story, these characteristics are feathers in the caliph's cap, so to speak, in the stories about lost slave-girls, these characteristics are the reasons behind the master's losing his money and being forced to sell his beloved. At the same time, however, they are also the reason behind the young man gaining the girl back since it is not primarily the love the young man and the girl feel for each other which drives the benefactor to pity but the way they express that love through reciting poems. "Fa-lammā samiʿa ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar shiʿrahumā wa-raʾā kaʾbatahumā qāla: Wallāhi, lā kuntu muʿayyanan ʿalā firāqikumā wa-qad ẓahara lī annakumā mutaḥābbān. Fa-khudh al-māl wa-l-jāriya ayyuhā al-rajul. Bāraka Allāh laka fīhimā. Fa-inna iftirāk al-ḥabībayn min baʿaḍihimā ṣaʿb ʿalayhimā." ("When Abdallah heard these verses and saw their affliction, he exclaimed, 'By Allah, I will have no hand in separating you; for it is manifest to me that ye indeed love one another. So take the money and the damsel, O man, and may God bless thee in them! For parting is grievous to true lovers'"),[533] concludes *Ḥikāyat al-rajul wa-l-jāriya maʿa ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar* (*Abdallah Ben Maamer*

[533] *Alf Layla*, II, 381–382. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 211.

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with the Man of Bassora and His Slave-Girl) (III.14.). In this respect, the manifestation of the previously given description of the girl gains a plot-developing role in these stories.

As stated above, a conviction may be lifted due to generosity. There are several examples of that in the *Nights*, one of the most stunning of them is *ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the Young Bedouin*. The story goes as follows: two men carry a third one in front of the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and tell him that the captive man had killed their father, and they demand retribution. The man does not deny anything but asks for three days before the execution to put his affairs at home in order. He is granted the three days and, when asked, Abū Dharr, who happened to be in the crowd when the man was brought in, accepts to be surety for the young man when he asks him. When the third day comes, the young man takes his time to appear and Abū Dharr gets worried. Finally, the young man shows up and everybody is amazed by his courage and faith. He is pardoned at once when the two sons forgive him. Generosity is not the main theme of this story, at least, not the only theme. It appears in the words of Abū Dharr after the young man arrives back for his execution as promised:

> Wallāhi yā Amīr al-Muʾminīn, la-qad ḍamintu hādhā al-ghulām wa-lam aʿrifhu min ayy qawm wa-lā raʾaytuhu qabla dhālika al-yawm. Wa-lakinna aʿraḍa ʿamman ḥaḍara wa-qaṣadanī wa-qāla ʻHādhā yaḍmanunī wa-yakfilunī', lam astaḥsin raddahu. Wa-abat al-murūwa an tukhayyiba qaṣdahu idh laysa fī ajābat al-qaṣd min baʾs kay-lā yuqāla 'Dhahaba al-faḍl min al-nās'.
>
> "By Allah, O Commander of the Faithful," said Abou Dherr, "I became warrant for this young man, without knowing to what tribe he belonged, nor had I seen him before that day; but when he turned away from all else who were present and singled me out, saying, 'This man will answer for me and be my surety,' I thought ill to refuse him, and humanity forbade to baulk his expectation, there being no harm in compliance with his desire, that it be not said, 'Benevolence is gone from among men.'"[534]

Generosity, in this case, is the fulfillment of the wish of a stranger even if it means going to the extreme and accept death in his stead. But generosity is the sons' forgiveness of their father's death who claims to do so, so as "it be not said, 'Humanity is gone from among men'".[535]

Again, certain commendable characteristics and their manifestations are closely connected to the act of generosity even though, in the case of Abū Dharr, this generosity is shown in advance and the young man's worthiness is only proved afterward. But it is not only Abū Dharr's generosity which has to be discussed here. The sons' forgiveness is as much an act of generosity as fulfilling the wish of a stranger. Their forgiveness is nicely foreshadowed in the speech they give at the beginning of the story:

[534] *Alf Layla*, II, 412. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 243.
[535] *Alf Layla*, II, 412. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 243.

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> Naḥnu ikhwān shaqīqān wa-bi-ittibāʿ al-ḥaqq ḥaqīqan. Kāna lanā ab shaykh kabīr ḥusn al-tadbīr, muʿaẓẓam fī al-qabāʾil, munazzah ʿan al-radhāʾil, maʿrūf bi-l-faḍāʾil. Rabbānā ṣighāran wa-awlānā minnā kibāran […] jamm al-manāqib wa-l-mafākhir ḥaqīqan bi-qawl al-shāʿir…
>
> we are two brothers by one mother and known as followers of the truth. We had a father, a very old man of good counsel, held in honour of the tribes, pure of baseness and renowned for virtues, who reared us tenderly, whilst we were little, and loaded us with favours, when we grew up; in fine, a man abounding in noble and illustrious qualities, worthy of the poet's words[536]

The sons' description here, which is further emphasized by a poem, does not only refer to the father's commendable character but it also reflects the values the sons should adhere to. And they do live up to their upbringing when they pardon the young man. There is also another kind of description regarding the young one which is alien to the narrative techniques of the *khabar* form: the young man is described by the narrator. "Wa-kāna dhālika al-ghulām thābit al-janān, jarīy al-lisān, khalaʿa thiyāb al-halaʿ wa-nazaʿa labās al-jazaʿ" ("Now he was stout of heart and ready of speech, having doffed the wede of faint-heartedness and put off the apparel of affright"),[537] goes the description which is meant to emphasize what is soon to be expressed by the young man's words and conduct. In this respect, this description of the narrator seems redundant.

Generally, it can be stated that generosity is expressed through acts. Descriptions of physical appearance and showcasing character-traits are not directly connected to the person of the benefactor but to the persons who will be the reasons for him showing generosity. Thus, generosity may be reinforced through the speech of the ones who are at the receiving end of the generosity. In *Ḥikāyat Maʿan b. Zāʾida* (*Maan Ben Zaïdeh and the Three Girls*) (III.2.), the generous act of Ma'an is followed by the praise of him and his generosity put into verse by the three girls who had been given valuable gifts for giving water to Ma'an and his men. Generosity can further be emphasized by the creative act of the author as it is shown in *Ḥikāyat karam Khālid b. Yaḥyā maʿa Manṣūr* (*The Generous Dealing of Yehya Ben Khalid the Barmecide with Mensour*) (III.8.) where generosity is described in opposition to greed.

In the previous examples, we saw how love is interconnected with generosity. However, this relationship between these two is not exclusive. Love may be associated with grief as well for which the stories about star-crossed lovers attest to a great degree. As in the previous examples of love and subsequent generosity, in these cases, love is also expressed through poems, linking its description to verbal manifestations. That is not surprising knowing the history of unfortunate lovers whose representatives come from the ranks of the so-called poet-

[536] *Alf Layla*, II, 409. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 239.
[537] *Alf Layla*, II, 409. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 240.

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lovers. There are a great many sources keeping the tradition of this tragic love alive in the tradition of *adab*.

Whether they are the hopeless lovers of the Banū ʿUdhra or the desperate ones who are just about to be separated, the couple's reactions and their poetry attest to the genuineness of their feelings. Although love, as expressed through poems, is primarily linked to speech, it is also connecting to action. As it had been observed earlier, in the case of the lovers who are to be separated, reciting poems – as an ac is itself – is an integral part of them reaching reunion. In the case of the tragic lovers, poems have a more descriptive role in the sense that they do not have the same effect on a third party than the previously mentioned ones. They do have effect on the lovers, though. The confession of love, which is mostly followed by the death of the reciter of the poem, moves the receiver into grief and, finally, death. In *Ḥikāyat al-rajul al-ʿāshiq fī Banī ʿUdhra maʿa maʿshūqatihi* (*The Lovers of the Banou Udhreh*), henceforth: *The Lovers of the Banū ʿUdhra* (IV.4.), the girl shuns and ridicules the love of the young man only to realize her mistake at the death bed of the distraught lover who, after reciting a poem, dies in her arms with her following shortly after. Similar to this event is the one which takes place in *Ḥikāyat al-Qāsim b. ʿAdī fī amr al-ʿishq* (*The Lovers of the Benou Tai*), henceforth: *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy* (I.9.) in which the poem of the young man drives the lovers to action and finally, after being in each other arms, they die together.

In these cases, the poems only provide a deeper understanding of the love of the lovers for a third party, but it does not have the chance to move the listener to action. What is left on the listener's part is regret or wonder at the peculiarity of the events. As the old man expressed in *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy*, "Khashiytu min al-ʿār wa-l-faḍīḥa wa-qad waqaʿtu alān fīhimā" ("I feared reproach and dishonour; and now I am fallen upon both").[538] Being questioned of why he did not marry the lovers, he admits to his mistakes and regrets it. As opposed to this, the old man in *Ḥikāyat al-ʿUtbī fī amr al-ʿishq maʿa al-shaykh al-badawī* (*The Three Unfortunate Lovers*) (I.8.) concludes his story in the following way, "Fa-dafannā al-thalātha fī yawm wāḥid wa-hādhā aʿjab mā sumiʿa min akhbār al-ʿushshāq" ("So we buried them all three on one day, and this is the rarest story that ever was heard of lovers").[539] Narrative-wise, *Ḥikāyat Abī al-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrad fī amr al-ʿishq* (*The Mad Lover*) (I.10.) takes this description of grief of a third party outside the realm of the *khabar* form when first the narrator – who could be the first-person narrator of the *khabar* although he is more involved in the events than a mere eyewitness would be – first describes the events as he witnessed them then returns home where

[538] *Alf Layla*, II, 441. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 274.
[539] *Alf Layla*, II, 440. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 273.

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recounts the event to al-Mutawakkil who not only can witness the grief on the narrator's face but he himself falls to mourning the fate of the dead man.

Another deviation from the *khabar* form can be observed in *Ḥikāyat rajul fī Baghdād min awlād ahl al-Naʿam maʿa jāriyatihi* (*The Ruined Man of Baghdad and His Slave Girl*), henceforth: *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* (V.7.). The story starts as any of this kind: a man of wealth falls in love with a slave-girl and spends his money on her after which he is forced to sell her. However, the discourse of the story is markedly different from that of the other versions. Although, at the beginning, it is narrated by Shahrazād who retains the high degree of mimetic mode in her narration, the role of the narrator is quickly passed over to the young man who uses diegetic mode in the descriptions of events according to which the separation of the lovers goes as follows: "Fa-lammā qabaḍtu al-thaman nadimtu wa-bakaytu anā wa-l-jāriya wa-ṭalabtu al-iqālat fa-lam yarḍa. Fa-waḍaʿtu al-danānīr fī al-kīs wa-anā lā adrī ayna adhhab." ("When I had received the price, I repented me and wept, I and the damsel; and I sought to cancel the sale; but the purchaser would not consent. So I took the money in a bag, knowing not whither I should go").[540] There is no reciting moving poems on the part of the lovers, and there is no reunion here. The events are summed up in a concise manner and the despair and grief the man feels in expressed in retrospect through the description of events.

Regarding the stories both of reunited and tortured lovers, it is not only uttered words which are connected to the expression of love but certain actions as well. These are mostly stock expressions meant to emphasize passions, despair and grief. Lovers are moved to tears, groans and wailing: "Fa-lammā faraghat min shuʿūrihā[541] bakat bukāʾan shadīdan wa-lam tazal tabkī wa-tanūḥu ḥattā waqaʿat mughshiyyan ʿalayhā wa-istamarrat fī ghashyatihā thalātha ayyām wa-mātat" ("Then she fell again to weeping and ceased not from tears and lament, till she swooned away"),[542] or, "Fa-ishtarāhā bi-khamsamiʾa dīnār wa-dafaʿa dhālika al-mablagh ilā sayyidihā. Fa-lammā qabaḍahu sayyiduhā wa-arāda al-inṣirāf, bakat al-jāriya wa-anshadat hādhayn al-baytayn […] Fa-lammā samiʿahā sayyiduhā ṣaʿʿada al-zafarāt wa-anshada hādhihi al-abyāt […]" ("So he bought her, for five hundred dinars, of her master, who took the money and was about to go away when the girl burst into tears and repeated the following verses […] When he heard this, he sighed heavily and replied thus […]").[543] They may be even driven into madness as *The Mad Lover* attests to it. One of the more dramatic manifestations of this despair

[540] *Alf Layla*, IV, 358. In English translation, see: Payne, VIII, 176.
[541] In the text, it is "shuʿr" which is written.
[542] *Alf Layla*, II, 383. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 212.
[543] *Alf Layla*, II, 381. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 210–211.

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is the lovers' desperate attempt to be together in *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy* in which they actually fight their tribe in a final attempt to be united at last if not in life, then in death:

> Fa-samiʿat kalāmahu jāriya min al-farīq al-ākhir fa-bādarat naḥwahu wa-tabaʿahā ahluhā wa-jaʿalat tuḍāribuhum. Fa-aḥassa bihā al-shāb fa-wathaba naḥwahā fa-bādara ilayhi ahl farīqihi wa-taʿallaqū bihi. Fa-jaʿala yajdhibu nafsahu minhum wa-hiya tajdhibu nafsahā min farīqihā ḥattā takhallaṣā wa-qaṣada kull wāḥid minhumā ṣāḥibihi ḥattā iltaqiyā bayna al-farīqayn wa-taʿānaqā thumma kharrā ilā al-arḍ mayyitayn.
>
> A damsel in the other company heard his words and hastened towards him. Her people followed her, but she repelled them with blows. Then the youth caught sight of her and ran towards her, whilst his people ran after him and laid hold of him. However, he struggled, till he freed himself from them, and she in like manner loosed herself; and they ran to each other and meeting between the two parties, embraced and fell down dead.[544]

Of course, in the case of the tortured lovers, death is the ultimate expression of love. In *The Three Unfortunate Lovers*, death is depicted as something that happens at the will of the lovers: "Fa-qāla lahā al-shāb: Aḥsanti, wallāhi, yā sayyidatī. A-fa-taʾdhanī lī an amūta? Fa-qālat al-qayna min warāʾa al-sitr: Naʿam in kunta ʿāshiqan. Fa-waḍaʿa al-shāb raʾsahu ʿalā al-wisāda wa-aghmaḍa ʿaynayhi. Fa-lammā waṣala al-qadaḥ ilayhi ḥarraknāhu fa-idhā huwa mayyit" ("'By Allah, thou hast said well, O my lady!' exclaimed the youth. 'Dost thou bid me die?' 'Yes,' answered the girl from behind the curtain, 'if thou be in love.' So he laid his head on a cushion and closed his eyes; and when the cup came round to him, we shook him and found that he was dead").[545]

Again, *The Ruined Man of Baghdad* provides an example of the story-telling technique outside of the *khabar* form. As observed earlier, the events are summarized in this story not described as they happen. The young man, as the narrator of his own story and not that of others, is enabled to express his own thoughts. His narrative is intradiegetic both concerning *point of view* and *focalization*. Although, the descriptions gain additional depth by the narrative becoming intradiegetic, the descriptions remain the same:[546] "Fa-waḍaʿtu al-danānīr fī al-kīs wa-anā lā adrī ayna adhhab li-anna baytī mūḥish minhā. Wa-ḥaṣala lī min al-bukāʾ wa-l-laṭm wa-l-naḥīb mā lam yaḥṣul lī qaṭṭ" ("So I took the money in a bag, knowing not whither I should go, now my house was desolate of her, and buffeted my face and wept and wailed as I had never done").[547] Apart from the obvious despair which is manifested through the acts of weeping and wailing, there is an emotional depth to the feeling of loss through the conjured picture of a home

[544] *Alf Layla*, II, 441. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 274.
[545] *Alf Layla*, II, 439–440. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 272–273.
[546] Julia Bray is of the same opinion concerning general descriptions of loss and despair then points out the nuanced description of behavior in the episode in which the man and his beloved recognize each other. (Bray, 1998, 13–14.
[547] *Alf Layla*, IV, 358. In English translation, see: Payne, VIII, 176.

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without the girl in it and the man's reluctance to return home.[548] This is a story of love and reunion, however, and it is well expressed in the handling of death in this section. The death of the tortured lovers is reward for their sufferings, here, it is simply suicide:

> Wa-zāda bī al-ḥāl fa ji'tu ilā al-Dijla wa-ḥamaltu thawbī ʿalā wajhī wa-alqaytu nafsī fī al-baḥr. Fa-faṭanat bī al-muḥāḍirūn wa-qālū anna dhālika la-ʿaẓīm hamm ḥaṣala lahu. Fa-ramū arwāḥahum khalfī. Wa-aṭlaʿūnī wa-saʾalūnī ʿan amrī fa-akhbartuhum bi-mā ḥaṣala lī fa-taʾassafū li-dhālika. Thumma jāʾanī shaykh minhum wa-qāla: Qad dhahaba māluka wa-kayfa tatasabbabu fī dhahāb rūḥika fa-takūna min ahl al-nār? Qum maʿī ḥattā arā manzilaka. Fa-faʿaltu dhālika. Fa-lammā waṣalnā ilā manzilī qaʿada ʿindī sāʿatan ḥattā sakana mā bī. Fa-shakartuhu ʿalā dhālika thumma inṣarafa. Fa-lammā kharaja min ʿindī kidtu an aqtala rūḥī fa-tadhakkartu al-ākhira wa-l-nār fa-kharajtu min baytī hāriban ilā baʿd al-aṣdiqāʾ fa-akhbartuhu bi-mā jarā lī.
>
> Then, of the excess of my chagrin, I betook myself to the Tigris and wrapping my face in my gown, cast myself into the river.
>
> The bystanders saw me and said, 'Sure, [he hath done] this because of some great trouble that hath betided him.' So they cast themselves in after me and bringing me ashore, questioned me of my case. I told them what had befallen me and they condoled with me. Then an old man of them came to me and said, 'Thou hast lost thy money, but why goest thou about to do away thy life and become of the people of the fire? Arise, come with me, that I may see thine abode.' So I went with him to my house and he sat with me awhile, till I became calmer, when I thanked him and he went away. When he was gone, I was like to kill myself, but bethought me of the life to come and the fire; so I fled forth my house and fled to one of my friends and told him what had befallen me.[549]

Love has physical manifestations as well.[550] Aside from weeping and lamentation, the lovers fall into sickness and slowly waste away, just like the man whose love is not reciprocated by his beloved in *The Lovers of the Banū 'Udhra*: "Aḍarra bihi al-gharām wa-l-wajd wa-l-hiyām fa-maraḍa marḍan shadīdan wa-alzama al-wasād wa-jafā al-ruqād" ("for stress of passion and longing and distraction, he fell exceeding sick and took to his bed and forswore sleep").[551] The man of the Banū Tamīm in *The Lovers of the Banū Ṭayy* tells of a young man whose countenance is described as follows: "Qad nahakhu al-maraḍ […] mithl al-shann al-bālī" ("wasted with sickness, as he were a worn-out waterskin").[552]

There is a peculiar description of love in the *Nights*. In *The Lover Who Feigned Himself a Thief*, the element of self-sacrifice appears as the genuine expression of love on both the man and the woman's side. A young man is accused of thievery the sentence for which is cutting off his hand. In spite of Khālid not believing his admission, the young man insists upon his crime. As it turns out, he was not found in the men's house because he intended to steal but because

[548] This is a good example of how images may support description, corresponding to Lale Behzadi's second category. (Behzadi, 2017, 821.)
[549] *Alf Layla*, IV, 358–359. In English translation, see: Payne, VIII, 177.
[550] Although I connect this category to actions, it is nicely corresponding to Lale Behzadi's third category. (Behzadi, 2017, 821–823.)
[551] *Alf Layla*, II, 382. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 211.
[552] *Alf Layla*, II, 440. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 273.

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he was meeting with the daughter of the owner. However, instead of admitting to the real reasons for his visit, he felt it more appropriate to accept the punishment of thievery than to bring shame to his beloved. At last, the boy is saved by the girl's confession. This story has a converse way of handling generosity regarding love. While in the previous examples, it was a wealthy patron who showed benevolence by uniting two lovers, here, the lovers themselves are in possession of that same character-trait which is finally the means of their union.

Here, we also encounter a specific element of physical description. It is closely connected to character. As in the previous stories where young men appeared, the young man is described in a flattering manner: "shāb dhī jamāl bāhir wa-adab ẓāhir wa-ʿaql wāfir wa-huwa ḥusn al-ṣūra ṭayyib al-rāʾiḥa" ("a youth of exceeding beauty and lofty bearing; whose aspect expressed good breeding and dignity and abundant wit").[553] This is exactly what makes Khālid inclined not to believe the accusations leveled against the youth. His intuition is proven right as the young man's conduct lives up to his positive description as it had been described above. In this story the opposition between what is expected of the youth and what he actually admits to creates suspense in the story. This is a decisive breaking point from the *khabar* form in which the building of suspense is not possible.[554]

After the discussion of how physical description and the description of character-traits and emotions are interpreted during the meaning-making process, we turn to the third point mentioned in the introduction of this chapter and examine how humor is created or recognized through the interpretation of description. Previously, we have seen how the communicational exchange involving eloquence, wit and trickery worked and what kinds of function it might fulfill. In the following, focus will be on tone and characterization and the way these two aspects of discourse correlate with each other in order to create humor.

Humor in connection with wit and trickery has already been mentioned in the previous chapter and it was pointed out that both are likely to create humor. The kind of humor they generate, however, is not the same. Wit is more amusing than being simply a cause for laughter and accordingly, it has a recognized place in Arabic *adab*. Wit presupposes learning and a sharp mind and the fact that a person possesses it, it is cause for respect. Trickery, on the other hand, does not have anything to do with the mind in the manner wit does. It is resourcefulness in a purely practical way, not in an intellectual one. It is, however, not despised or condemned on moral grounds. As Fedwa Malti-Douglas observes in connection with thievery: "Cleverness,

[553] *Alf Layla*, II, 182. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 4.
[554] About suspense vs. surprise in the *khabar*, see: Fahndrich, 1973, 443.

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dhakā', legitimizes the theft" as far as it is not the sole appropriation of goods but an exchange of goods for wittiness.[555]

This short description of the different nature of humor created by with and trickery shows well how humor is described in general. Just like the descriptions which pertain to physical and mental characteristics, humor is also described through action and speech. However, humor is highly circumstantial, that is, dependent on the situation in which it is described.[556] Elaborating on the differing expectations within a communicational situation in which humor arises, it has to be added that the situation and the unexpected way in which a character acts in that situation is the foundation on which humor is based.

The opposition of wit, foolishness is also a source for humor. While certain class of people such as police officers and half-wits are being made fun of in relation to others' wits, other classes of society is represented on their own rights. One such class is the teachers. The discussion of school-teachers gives the opportunity to examine foolishness outside the context of exchange. Unlike wit and trickery in which cases foolishness is expressed in relation to its opposite character-trait, foolishness, in these cases, stands alone which may provide additional observation as to how humor may be depicted through description.

Ḥikāyat mu'allim al-ṣubyān wa-qillat 'aqlihi (*The Schoolmaster Who Fell in Love by Report*) (I.5.) is a good example of how the author may utilize literary conventions to express humor. The story opens according to the convention of the *khabar* form: "'An ba'd al-fuḍalā'" ("Quoth one of the erudite"),[557] starts Shahrazād, giving the role of the narrator to one of her characters who continues in a slightly altered *khabar* form. We have observed that first-person narration of the *khabar* form which are extradiegetic tends to turn intradiegetic in the *Nights* and it is what happens in this case as well. In spite of this, the description he gives of the schoolmaster at the beginning of the story is in keeping with the tradition of the *khabar* form.

> Marartu bi-faqīh fī al-maktab wa-huwa yaqra'u al-ṣubyān wa-wajadtuhu fī hay'a ḥasana wa-qumāsh malīḥ. Fa-qabaltu 'alayhi fa-qāma ilayyā wa-ajlasanī ma'ahu. Fa-mārastu fī al-qirā'a wa-l-naḥw wa-l-shi'r wa-l-lugha fa-idhā huwa kāmil fī kull mā yurād minhu. Fa-qultu lahu, 'Qawā Allāh 'azmaka, fa-innaka 'ārif bi-kull mā yurād minka.' Thumma 'āshartuhu muddatan wa-kull yawm yuẓhiru lī fīhi ḥusn…

[555] Malti-Douglas, 1988, 122.
[556] In his study about the various versions of the anecdote about Abū Dulāma and al-Manṣūr, Hartmut Fahndrich examines how the various descriptions of the situation in which a certain exchange is depicted between the two characters influences the humor in the anecdote. (Fahndrich, H.: Compromising the Caliph: Analysis of Several Versions of an Anecdote about Abū Dulāma and al-Manṣūr, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 8, 1977, 36–47.)
[557] *Alf Layla*, II, 423. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 255.

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> I passed once by a [school, in which a] schoolmaster, comely of aspect and well-dressed, was teaching children; so I entered, and he rose and made me sit with him. Then I examined him in the Koran and in syntax and poetry and lexicography, and found him perfect in all that was required of him and said to him, 'God strengthen thy purpose! Thou art indeed versed in all that is sought of thee.' So I frequented him awhile, discovering daily some new excellence in him…[558]

The schoolmaster is not only respectable in his physical attributes, but his intellectual capacity also renders the narrator awestruck. The narrator's next statement regarding the consensus that schoolmasters generally lack intelligence, makes the reader wonder together with the narrator at this unexpected controversy. The author utilizes this controversy in order to create humor. In a tradition which is familiar with the stock-character of the foolish schoolmaster, the author gives a description which goes against the expectations of the reader. Moreover, the narrator's continued wonder at the intellect of the schoolmaster pushes the reader to accept this uncommon phenomenon. From controversy, there grows expectation. Earlier, it has been established that if someone was described in detail at the beginning of the story, the characteristics highlighted would play an important role in the plot. In accordance with that and with the establishment of the schoolmaster's character, the expectations of the reader shift. The author's final play with controversy creates the humor of the story. Through the description of the improbable love of the schoolmaster towards a woman he has never saw, the reader's expectations shift again, and the narrative is placed back into the literary convention where amusing stories are told about foolish schoolmasters. The first-person narration also helps with influencing the reader. The intradiegetic perspective of the narrator gives credence to the description at the beginning and the events unfolding at the end. This is how the author is able to play with the expectations of the reader creating humor in the process.

It is not only certain characteristics which are made fun of but common literary themes as well. We have seen how love might be expressed through various kinds of descriptions. The plight of the separated lovers and the sufferings of the tortured lovers are recurring motifs in Arabic literature and as such, they appear in the humorous material as well. There was an element of love in *The Schoolmaster Who Fell in Love by Report* and there is one, too, in *Ḥikāyat 'ishq al-ghulām ma'a al-jāriya fī al-maktaba* (*The Loves of the Boy and Girl at School*) (V.4.). The first one takes up the subject of idealized love and paints the schoolmaster as the tortured lover while the second one utilizes the motif of the separated lovers and their final reunion. The motif of the tortured lover collaborates well with the stock-character of the foolish schoolmaster. While the character of the schoolmaster stresses the absurdity of unrequited love, the motif of tortured love plays well under the foolish character of the schoolmaster. In the

[558] *Alf Layla*, II, 423. In English translation, see: Payne, IV, 255.

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second story, the familiar presence of poems seems to establish the story as a love story. At first, there are no indications of third parties being involved in the love affair of the boy and the girl. Their passion moves them to communicate with each other through poems in which they lament the impossibility of their love. This communication is intercepted by the schoolmaster who, moved by pity for the lovers, writes his own poem reassuring the couple that he will not rebuke them. Finally, the master of the girl joins this exchange of poems and expresses his support while, at the same time, makes a side-remark about the schoolmaster expressed his willingness to enable the young lovers' secret affair. As opposed to the first story, this one's main topic is love, the teacher only seems to be part of the social context into which the story is cast. It is not the depiction of the grand love the boy and the girl feel for each other, not exactly the exceptional generosity with which the master treats them. This love is depicted as mundane with an overly simple solution. In the development of the events, the schoolmaster provides a kind of comic relief but not the main point.

As far as meaning-making goes, description is an indispensable tool in interpretation since it decisively clarifies the overall theme of the stories. As it has been pointed out, description helped keeping the focus on the schoolmaster in the first story, while description of love through poems placed the focus on love itself in the second one.

Let us now turn to another aspect of character depiction and discuss how historical figures turn into stock-characters in the *Nights*. The earlier differentiation between the nature of wit and trickery (as in, what is commendable and what is amusing) may be observed in the handling of characters as well. Eloquence as wit, being part of Arabic *adab*, is more likely to be represented through known personalities. It is the nature of *adab* literature which has a large segment dedicated to what Fedwa Malti-Douglas calls "character literature".[559] This means that there are certain persons in Arabic literature whose personality has come to represent one character-trait or another. They are archetypical characters. It is enough to call to mind the strong and tragic love of the ʿUdhrī poets, the generosity of the Barmakīs' and ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿmar; or the sharp-wittedness of Abū Nuwās, just to mention a few. Malti-Douglas describes al-Muʿtaḍiḍ's character as "the literary personification of the detective", that, a person who uses his *dhakā'* to investigate a crime and discover the unknown perpetrator.[560] This is mostly the reason why these historical figures remain so popular in the *Nights* as well. However, a tendency may be observed in Arabic literature in general and in the *Nights* in particular concerning the characters of the stories: known personalities transform into anonymous stock

[559] Malti-Douglas, F.: The Classical Arabic Detective, *Arabica*, 35, 1988, 72.
[560] Malti-Douglas, The Classical Arabic Detective, 71.

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characters. The place of historical figures is taken over by nameless characters who are, however, not representing a particular character-trait but the main characteristics of a given social group.[561] The focus shifts from the particular to the general, from one person to a group of people. By exchanging the historical figures with types of characters, it becomes possible for humor to dominate.

Mikhail Bakhtin provides an explanation for this shift in character depiction. In his description of the epic and the novel, he sees the turning point from one genre to the other in "popular laughter". Neither of these genres concerns us her, what is of significance is the way how the material is handled in these two instances. On the one hand, epic is distanced, placed into an idealized "absolute past" which is exempt of any critics. It is a revered, sacred past: "it is impossible to change, to re-think, to re-evaluate anything in it. It is completed, conclusive and immutable, as a fact, an idea and a value".[562] In contrast to this, the novel is placed into historical time and is susceptible to constant re-evaluation. What made this shift possible is the comical origin of the genres from which novel developed. This is exactly what is of significance here. As Bakhtin observes, "[a]s a distanced image a subject cannot be comical, to be made comical, it must be brought close. […] Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it".[563] The same transition can be observed here as the serious material transform into humorous. The historical figures who demand respect originally for a historically attested deed or characteristic and then only by association are disappearing as soon as a critic is made of one character-trait and action or another. Similar to the case of the epic of the ancient cultures, respect for the historical past does not allow for any kind of criticism in a literature which is based on authenticated reports that attest to the idealized and, really, commendable way of life.

This progress can be observed in the present material as well. In the group of stories about eloquence, the presence of historical figures is predominant and while it remains significant in the group of stories about wit, there a tendency towards unanimity may be observed. It is the group of stories about tricksters in which characters become completely generalized. The characters appearing in these stories are from the lower levels of society: thieves, money

[561] Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila describes this shift in connection with the historicity of anecdotal literature, which he places into three categories: historical, pseudohistorical and ahistorical. (Hämeen-Anttila, J.: *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz Verlag), 2002, 75–76.) This three-fold distinction is used to describe the characters in the *maqāmāt* al-Hamadhānī. (Hämeen-Anttila, 2002, 40–45.

[562] Bakhtin, M. M.: *Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. M. Holquist, Austin (University of Texas Press), 1981, 17.

[563] Bakhtin, 1981, 23.

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changers and swindlers. It is, however, not these people who are laughed at in these stories but their counterparts who are being deceived by them: simpletons, police officers, merchants. As opposed to the stories about wit, the relationship between these two poles of the exchange is not equal. The deceived ones are not laughing together with their deceivers. The reward of a successful deceiver is the loss of the deceived.[564] Humor is outside of the story. It is the reader who laughs when correctly interpreting the duality of the situation presented to him. It is humor for humor's sake.

In general, it can be said that description in the *Nights* adheres to the convention of the *khabar* form. Most of the material given as an example belongs to the *khabar* form or deviates from it only in minor narrative details. More significant changes in the usage of description may be observed in the longer pieces of the collection which does not have any relation to the narrative form of the *khabar* but belong to the *story*. In the *akhbār* material of the *Nights*, the function of direct description is closely linked to the theme of the story, it never stands for its own sake as it does in the longer works. In this respect, Bonebakkers statement according to which

> [d]escriptions of people and things in the *Nights* involve a similar sort of economy. If heroes and heroines are described at all, they are beautiful. But the description of their handsome features leaves the reader with no sense of them as individuals. Images and cliches reflecting the norms of beauty are constantly reused, and every pretty face in the *Nights* looks like every other pretty face. Indeed, when it is a matter of youthful beauty, there is hardly any distinction between males and females; they all have eyes like gazelles, cheeks like anemones, and so on.[565]

seems to be ignoring the fundamental nature of the *Nights* as a repository of various texts not only from the different fields of Arabic literature but from various cultures as well.

Furthermore, the interchangeability of the characters is also undermined by various studies which, in spite of their evident objectivity and their inability to truly describe characters in a diegetic fashion, are in support of the view that *akhbār* narratives are indeed capable of character depiction and complex psychological description.[566] As it has been shown, it stands true in a greater degree for the material of the *Nights* which is not restricted by the boundaries of the *khabar* form and its requirements which stem from the *adab* literary tradition. Description of human beings is an integral part of these narratives, reflecting genuine authorial intention

[564] This is not an absolute loss, however. Fedwa Malti-Douglas observes in her study about the classical Arabic crime stories that cleverness, which the thief employs in acquiring something, is a means of legitimization of his act. (Malti-Douglas, 1988, 122–126.)
[565] Bonebakker, S. A.: Literary Style and Narrative Technique in the *Arabian Nights*, in: *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, I, eds. U. Marzolph and R. van Leeuwen, Santa Barbara – Denver – Oxford (ABC-CLIO), 2004, 3.
[566] Kilpatrick, H.: Context and the Enhancement of the Meaning of *Aḫbār* in the *Kitāb al-Aġānī*, *Arabica*, 38, 1991, 353.

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and enabling the reader to interpret the text more closely. This all becomes possible because authorial intention and reader's interpretation does not stop at the level of the compilation and the groups of *akhbār* organized into chapters or entries and arranged according to a specific intent but both authorial intention and reader's interpretation penetrate the level of the individual *khabar* or *ḥikāya*. By this step into this more exact level of interpretation, meaning-making is made possible.

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Conclusion

The Thousand and One Nights has fascinated people ever since its appearance in 18th century Europe. For its new readership, the collection represented the unfamiliar and the exotic that the Near East embodied in their minds. The collection was a link between the dull every-days and the curious novelty of Oriental life depicted on the pages. However, no matter how alien it was considered, it was soon integrated into the Western culture. Not only did diverse cultural fields reach to it for inspiration for artistic and ideological expression, but it was also treated as belonging to this cultural milieu. While a new genre, the Oriental tale, sprung up in the wake of its first appearance, the collection was discussed within the framework of European culture. Fairy-tales, epics, and fables were recognized within its rich material, and the stories were discussed accordingly. The strangeness of the material was grasped through the familiarity of the form through which it is expressed. For all the efforts of familiarization, though, it remains strange.

These confusing approaches to the collection provided the primary aspect from which the present study attempted to tackle the phenomenon of *The Thousand and One Nights*. The dichotomy of attitudes towards the material is not only striking in *Nights*-research but problematic as well. Among other things, it becomes apparent when generic concerns are expressed. Although some research concentrates on indigenous Arabic genres, concerning the *Nights*, mostly Western genres are discussed, whether for purposes of classification or examination. This state of affairs leaves the collection outside the context of Arabic literature as far as literary studies are concerned, which, in turn, causes much to be desired regarding the results of other fields of cultural interest as well. The present study attempted to fill the gap that Western research creates between *The Thousand and One Nights* and pre-modern Arabic literature.

The most challenging aspect of the research was finding the proper method and suitable tools for discussion, that is, the theoretical framework in which the relevant questions may be asked and the answers do not fall short of credibility. It may seem that opting for a way of creative and interpretive process backed by modern literary theory is not the path to take, but it turns out that it is precisely these processes and the connection between the agents of these processes which characterize pre-modern Arabic literature. These processes represent a kind of exchange through language between *sender* and *receiver*, which determines how the communication goes and whether it is recognized as successful. As a *qaṣīda* was composed in

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exchange for patronage and support, stories are exchanged within the *Nights*. Furthermore, as in real life and the fictional world of the *Nights*, the communication between author and reader also ensures the appropriate interpretation of literary works. Not the only interpretation, but one which is supported by the text in which the reader is enabled to decipher the authorial intention within a shared literary context.

This literary communication is a game between two ideological concepts: the *postulated author* and the *informed reader*. By placing the process of interpretation on such a theoretical plane, it becomes possible to talk about the *Nights* in such a way that is not independent of its original pre-modern Arabic context, but it does not only depend on a foreign concept, either. Thus, the rigor of genre classification is replaced by a more flexible system of interpretation which seems to coincide with the workings of pre-modern Arabic literature. This method, I find, covers a middle ground between the currents of modern research removed from Arabic context and a kind of research that supposes discussions within a contemporary Arabic theoretical framework.

When talking about *The Thousand and One Nights* in terms of genre classification, Western research fails to account for the differing view which pre-modern Arabic literature takes on *genre* in general and *genre* regarding short narratives in particular. Although the literary theory of recent times tends to understand genre as a flexible concept, literary criticism, especially in the case of the *Nights*, still clings to the notion of a static system whose primary function is to classify. However, *genre* is a more complex phenomenon than "a codifiable system of conventions"[567] that can organize literary works according to a pre-existing generic system. Literature does not work and has never worked that way. Indeed, some genres lend themselves to such rigorous classification, but, overall, the system of generic classification only serves as a guide to recognizing what a literary work is not, genre-wise. Thomas Kent refers to this nature of the literary work as it being formulaic or unformulaic, depending on the degree to which it corresponds to prescribed generic characteristics. On an entirely textual level, it is true. I, however, would instead refer to this flexibility of the text as the intellectual power of *author* and *reader* and envision generic understanding in the framework of literary communication in which purely textual considerations are only a part of a more complex interpretational process.

[567] Kent, Th.: *Interpretation and Genre: The Role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts*, Lewisburg (Bucknell University Press), 1986, 15.

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Pre-modern Arabic short narratives exhibit similar flexibility as far as *genre* is concerned. It is due mainly to the fact that *genre* is not conceived in the same way as it is in Western literary theory. In terms of the short narrative, what informs genre recognition can be found on two levels of genre description. It is not only the literary work that determines its genre but the collection in which it is included. On the one hand, certain characteristics are the text's own. On the other, other additional aspects of *genre* are gained during the insertion of the text into a collection. The collection expresses the *purpose* of the literary work, that is, the author's intention as to how he wishes his work to be read (historical, literary, etc.). This purpose is what determines the further reading of the text. In this respect, short narratives are contextual. Based on the highly functional aspect of Arabic literature and the fact that short narratives are taken from a common stock and thus may appear in various literary contexts in the same or slightly altered forms, no viable interpretation is possible without recognizing the literary context.

Purpose, however, does not exclusively determine context; it is also highly dependent on authorial intention. Determining the *purpose* of the literary work, and thus determining the literary context – the literary convention – the work belongs to, is only the first step towards its closer understanding. *Purpose* is assigned by the author and corresponds to his intention. Thus, pre-modern Arabic literature is not only contextual but also intentional. This contextuality and intentionality is crucial in how we understand genre in pre-modern Arabic literature and how we apply modern literary theory to it. Scholarly practice in connection with the *Nights* ignores this emphasis, rendering genre classificatory and not intentional. The two levels of genre description, which are defined by purpose and authorial intention, necessitate the literary work being interpreted before a generic designation may be attached to it. In this respect, in the case of pre-modern Arabic short narratives, the designation is not as important as interpretation. Modern literary theory places much more emphasis on designation, which is evident in the way how prescriptive characteristics are attributed to it. In this understanding, *genre* is indeed a system to which literary texts correspond while, in the case of the Arabic short narratives, the designation is only an additional characteristic that describes the literary work.

So, the initial observation regarding pre-modern Arabic prose literature is that it is descriptive, intentional, and contextual. This observation led to the conclusion that genre as a classificatory device cannot substantiate any further discussions regarding the various narratives of pre-modern Arabic prose literature in general and those of the *Nights* in particular. A new basis for discussion had to be found, which was determined as the *literary form*. The literary form was defined as narrative in the sense of *story*, *narration*, and *narrating*, a definition which, as opposed to rigorous and most of the time ambiguous genre classification, allows for

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such a complex system of description that can facilitate most of those varied approaches pre-modern Arab authors seem to have taken to describe a literary work. It means that a literary work is first and foremost definable as a literary form, the recognition of which aids interpretation in the course of which a particular generic designation can be added to the description of said work.

The method of approaching literary works as literary forms was demonstrated through the narrative analysis of the *khabar* form. Based on contemporary sources, *khabar* was shown to be definable in three ways in contemporary Arabic sources, one of which was as a narrative form. According to this idea, the widely-recognized structural definition of *khabar* was supplemented with a definition connected to the narrative form. Based on Gérard Genette's understanding of narrative, *khabar* was discussed as *story*, *narration*, and *narrating*, all three terms highlighting a different aspect of the Arabic term. As a result, not only structural but discursive and communicational attributes could also be discussed. With this approach, a considerably wider range of short narratives can be considered for analysis within the *Nights* which allows for a closer understanding of the *khabar* itself and how it is represented and appropriated within this popular collection.

Although textual analysis is a fundamental part of examining any narrative form, it became apparent that it cannot account for certain aspects of pre-modern Arabic literature. As mentioned earlier, Arabic prose literature is contextual and intentional, which, by default, presupposes active participation on the author's part for expression and that of the *reader* for interpretation. Recognizing the author and reader's role in interpreting a text is why literary communication is essential in meaningful discussions about pre-modern Arabic literature. The interpretation of an Arabic literary text is thus understood as the interplay between the author's creative force and the reader's meaning-making process, based on the text and playing out in a shared literary convention.

In light of the above observation, the process of literary communication was elaborated in detail, with all the essential terms defined and their role explained. In addition, *khabar* was described in terms of this communication process, and it was pointed out how communication and literary communication relate to one another and how these relationships influence interpretation, with added observations regarding the *Nights*.

It was important to clarify that neither author nor reader is supposed to be a real historical person. This study is not meant to examine how communication worked between the writer of a text and an actual receiver of it. It is not a socio-historical study. It is purely literary, based on the conviction that a literary text is not a finished product but a living thing. It only strived to

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provide a theoretical framework and did not claim completion. While exploring the theoretical framework for research, such terms were introduced as *postulated author* and *informed reader* while important differentiations were made between *author* and *writer* on the one hand and *text* and *literary work* on the other. The latter proved to be instrumental in defining the present research as literary as opposed to philological, while the former supported the availability of this kind of theoretical approach regarding pre-modern Arabic short narratives. I find this division between literary and philological approaches important because the two disciplines, although their material is the same and they do share certain analytical devices, do not concern themselves with the same questions, the first being theoretical the second more practical in their approaches.

It was in Chapter 4 that all of the above remarks came together in various case studies. The specialized analyses of particular groups of stories from specific aspects provided the opportunity to describe literary communication, the relationship between *author*, *reader,* and *literary work,* and how interpretation is formed during the reading process. As the main path of inquiry of the present study, interpretation was discussed regarding the *khabar* form and in what respects the short narratives of the *Nights* may or may not be considered to be representing that literary form. Representation here is not understood in absolute terms as it was pointed out that *khabar* form, although defined with exact characteristics at the onset of the present study, is not represented according to those strict terms. *Khabar* is a lively narrative form with many possible representations. All this study can do is to examine to what degree a particular work adheres to the *khabar* form and how it deviates from it, all the while weighing the possibility of the narrative turning into another narrative form due to the exhibited degree of deviation.

While the first part of Chapter 4 concentrated on the relationship between the various parts of a collection (chapters, entries, accounts, stories), the remaining two provided a more in-depth analysis of particular narratives. Based on the results of earlier research, first, it was shown how the more or less fixed narrative tradition of the *khabar*, which relies on authentication, can be used to express the various intentions of the authors and can be applied in the different fields of literature, all the while influencing the meaning-making process of the readers. These results were supplemented with additional information regarding the short narratives of the *Nights*. It was explained how the organization of this collection and the arrangement of certain materials support the reading of the short narratives in question as stories (*ḥikāya*) rather than *khabar*.

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Following this line of thought, the transformation from the *khabar* form into the more complex form of the *ḥikāya* was elaborated upon in the following section. Although the main focus remained on the process of literary communication, this second part was organized along the lines of narrative analysis, that is, the stories examined in this part were discussed according to Genette's definition of the narrative as *story*, *narration,* and *narrating*, already picked up in Chapter 2. The reason for this kind of organization is that, while it maintains the presence of both *author* and *reader* in the meaning-making process, it also provides a systematic way of discussion by focusing on the text. This chapter focused on individual narratives instead of the broader focus of the previous section. It examined how they can be interpreted according to specific textual characteristics implemented by the author and expected to be understood by the *reader*. The analysis of narratives as *story*, *narrating*, and *narration* provides a general view of the methods with which the short narratives in general, and that of the *Nights* in particular, can be read and interpreted within the context of pre-modern Arabic literature.

The third part of Chapter 4 offered a more particular view of the meaning-making process through two specialized analyses. As opposed to the previous chapter, it did not explain how the form is changing and how this change facilitates interpretation, but it concentrated on the meaning-making process itself and explained how specific characteristics of the text – the creative choices the author makes – influence the interpretation of it. It is not only the evaluation of the literary form but the meaning as well. This transformation of meaning was treated in the first part of Chapter 4 in the context of the collection and certain groups of *akhbār*. This part examines individual stories in which certain textual changes can be observed.

The two chapters discussing the thematic shift in interpretation and the role of descriptions in interpretation stress the active role of both author and reader during interpretation. Interpretation depends on the correspondence between these two processes in the framework of literary communication, which provides the context to interact with the text as a literary work. This communication is the focal point of pre-modern Arabic literature in which the dependence on an established tradition, which rests on authentication, can make allowances for individual expression while supporting the interpretation of these individual expressions within the literary tradition. Here we find why reports may wander from one field of literature to another, which is why narratives may evolve and transform.

All in all, the present research provides a literary context for examining the *khabar* form and the short narratives of the *Nights*. It is, by no means, exhaustive. Neither the scope of the present research nor the nature of the *Nights* allows for it to be so. Nonetheless, it offers such an approach to studying the short narratives in the *Nights* and their relationship to Arabic

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literature, which is yet lacking in research. The research also provides a theoretical background for examining these short narratives, an approach which in itself is quite rare in the study of pre-modern Arabic literature, not to mention that of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Despite all the interest in *The Thousand and One Nights*, it is yet to be appreciated for what it is: a literary work in its own right. It may defy classification by medieval Arabic and modern Western standards, but it is, without a doubt, a work of literature. The modern literary theory proved that we do not have to cling to the notion of a well-definable historical person as a writer to be able to appreciate the stories in the collection. Neither do we need a well-dated complete manuscript to be able to read the collection as a literary work. Every manifestation of every part of this collection is a literary work that any reader can read with any cultural background and information available to them. During the reading of the short narratives in the *Nights*, the reader gets into contact with the text of the literary work and, through the literary work, the author of that work. Their combined impression on the work makes up the interpretation of the literary work. In the modern research of the *Nights*, this interpretation has been colored by the lenses of Western tradition and a need for familiarization (hence genre classification). However, equipped with the necessary knowledge, the reader may complement these interpretations with ones that go beyond the familiar traditions and terms and help to situate the *Nights* into its original Arabic context.

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Abstract

The present dissertation has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it places pre-modern Arabic prose literature in a theoretical framework, most specifically, the short narratives of this literature; on the other hand, it performs the critical analysis of the short narratives on *The Thousand and One Nights* based on this theoretical framework. The starting point for the discussion is the problems concerning the concept of genre in pre-modern Arabic literature. To be able to overcome the restrictions imposed upon our understanding of these narratives by the definition of genre in modern research, the present study proposes the application of the term *narrative form* instead. The applicability of narrative form and its advantages are discussed through the examination of the *khabar* form. It is through the definition of *khabar* form then that literary communication is introduced and applied as the theoretical framework in which interpretation of the short narratives becomes possible without the restrictions that genre imposes on them.

The first chapter includes such essential discussions which provide both historical and literary context for the present inquiries and, at the same time, highlight those problems which are inherent in the proposed examination. Accordingly, the chapter includes the short history of the *Nights*, a general historical introduction of the era under discussion and the relevant questions of literary history in which the *Nights* has flourished.

Following the introductory chapter, *khabar* is discussed in more details. Apart from proving the validity of the application of *khabar* as a narrative form, and drawing attention to the advantage of such approach, the chapter also raises further questions. All the questions and observations are discussed and brought together in the third chapter, in which such a theoretical framework is worked out which allows for the critical reading of the short narratives of the *Nights*, stepping beyond the limitations of generic classification.

The main part of the dissertation consists of various critical examinations of the short narratives of the *Nights*. It aims to describe, within the previously proposed theoretical framework, the dynamic relationship which exists between *author*, *reader*, and *text* and to highlight how this relationship influences interpretation.

The dissertation brings attention to the problems inherent in genre classification in connection with pre-modern Arabic literature in general and the short narratives of the *Nights* in particular. To overcome these difficulties, a set of terms are defined which may be integral part of modern literary theory, but applied with caution, can aid our critical understanding of these short narratives in a new way that is conscious of these narratives' original literary context.

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Összefoglalás

A disszertáció kettős célt fogalmaz meg: egyrészt elméleti keretbe helyezi a középkori arab prózairodalmat, különös tekintettel a rövid elbeszélésekre, másrészt pedig ezen elméleti keret alkalmazásával *Az Ezeregyéjszaka meséi* című gyűjteményes kötet rövid elbeszéléseinek elemzését végzi el. A vizsgálat kiinduló pontja a műfaj fogalmának kérdése a középkori arab irodalomban. A *műfaj* definíciójából adódó megszorításokon túlmutatva, amely idegen az arab irodalomban, a tanulmány az *elbeszélőforma* fogalmát vezeti be, amelyet az ún. *khabar* formán keresztül mutat be. A *khabar* forma definíciójából kiindulva pedig az irodalmi kommunikációt állapítja meg, mint azt az elméleti keretet, amelyen belül a történetek elemzése a műfaji kötöttségek nélkül is elvégezhető szem előtt tartva a középkori arab irodalomi hagyományt.

A dolgozat első, bevezető fejezete olyan elengedhetetlen értekezéseket tartalmaz, amelyek egyrészt történeti és irodalmi kontextusba helyezik a jelen vizsgálódást, másrészt pedig felveti azokat a kérdéseket, amelyekből a téma tárgyalása elkezdődhet. Ennek megfelelően a fejezet tárgyalja az *Ezeregyéjszaka* történetét, valamint egy általános történeti áttekintést is ad, hogy az *Ezeregyéjszaka* elhelyezhető legyen az arab irodalom és kulturális élet kontextusában. Továbbá a kor irodalmi hagyományának vizsgálatára is sor kerül a műfajelméleti kérdések vonatkozásában.

A bevezető fejezet után a *khabar* fogalmának vizsgálata következik, amely amellett, hogy bemutatja, miért érdemes a *khabar*t mint elbeszélőformát kezelni, további kérdéseket is felvet. A felmerült kérdések tisztázására a harmadik fejezetben kerül sor, amely az előzőleg tett megfigyelésekre alapozva azt az elméleti keretet dolgozza ki, amelyen belül az *Ezeregyéjszaka* rövid elbeszéléseit értelmezni lehet, hátrahagyva a műfaji megkötéseket.

A dolgozat hátralevő része az előbbiekben megfogalmazott elméleti tárgyalások mentén különböző történetcsoportokat elemez az *Ezeregyéjszaka* rövid elbeszélései közül annak érdekében, hogy bemutassa a *szerző, olvasó* és a *szöveg* közötti dinamikus kapcsolatot és leírja ennek a különböző műveknek az értelmezésére gyakorolt hatását.

A dolgozat rámutat azokra a problémákra, amelyek a műfaji megnevezések alkalmazása során felmerülnek a középkori arab rövid elbeszélésekkel kapcsolatba, valamint kifejti, hogy ezek a problémák kifejezetten az *Ezeregyéjszaka* rövid elbeszéléseivel kapcsolatban hogyan jelennek meg. Ezeknek a problémáknak az áthidalása céljából a dolgozat egy olyan fogalomrendszert állít fel, amely, bár része a modern irodalomelméletnek, kellő odafigyeléssel egy olyan elméleti keret alapjait adja, amelynek segítségével lehetővé válik ezen rövid elbeszélések értő elemzése a középkori arab irodalmi hagyomány keretein belül.