

SYLLABUS: Introduction to Arabic Literature

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to introduce students to Arabic literature, from the pre-Islamic period until the present day. The course will focus on three broad categories: 1) classical Arabic literature, including poetry, belles-lettres, and *maqamat*; 2) more popular medieval literature, including the Arabian Nights; 3) modern Arabic literature. The course will attempt simultaneously to give an overview of the historical development of Arabic literature, to cover some of its most famous pieces, representative works by authors recognized for their literary genius, and to learn the main forms and genres of Arabic literature while gaining a sophisticated understanding of their literary conventions.

Classical Arabic literature. In addressing the classical period the course will touch on “the Suspended Odes” or *Mu`allaqat*, the equivalent of Shakespeare’s plays for the Arabic literary tradition, as well as poetry of the next four centuries, particularly the poetry of al-Mutanabbi, perhaps the most famous poet of the Abbasid period (750-1258CE). It will address the main modes of the classical *qasidah*, or ode – *fakhr* “boasting”, *madh* “praise”, *hija’* “satire”, *ritha’* “elegy” – as well as poems of love, the hunt, and wine, and discuss their literary conventions. It will also treat major classical prose works, including *The Book of Misers* by al-Jahiz and the *Maqamat* of Badi` al-Zaman al-Hamadhani,

Influence on European literature. The second section of the course will focus on literature of the medieval period and discuss its influence on the west. We will examine *The Neck-Ring of the Dove*, a work on the theory of love by the Andalusian Ibn Hazm, which is particularly important for an understanding of the theory and conventions behind love poetry, the *1001 Nights*, and the influence of medieval Arabic literature on Sicily, Spain, and France, including the poetry of the Troubadours.

Modern transformation. The third section of the course will treat the transitional period of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, during which Arab readers became familiar with Western European institutions such as European-style missionary schools, high schools, and universities; newspapers, radio, and television; theatre, the opera, and cinema; translated works primarily from French and English; and new literary genres. We will examine the fascinating period of transition and the creative importation and adaptation of the western European literary genres of the play, the novel, the short story, and free verse, which were firmly established as features of

modern Arabic literary culture. Attention will be paid to the relationship between literature, politics, and nationalism, the use and modification of European generic conventions as well as references to particular works of European and American literature as models, such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* or William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To gain an overview of the history of Arabic literature in pre-modern and modern times, to understand its main forms, and to gain an appreciation for the artistry of a number of the best known and most interesting exemplars.
- To gain a detailed understanding of the conventions of the various forms of Arabic literature, including in particular pre-modern forms such as the *qasidah* and *maqamat*.
- To gain an understanding of the influence of Arabic literature on medieval and modern European literature, including the love poetry of the troubadours and the stories of the Arabian Nights.
- To gain an understanding of the effects on literature of the transformation that occurred in Arab politics, society, culture, and thought in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries as a result of the influence of western European political and economic domination, institutions, education, culture, and literature.
- To improve composition skills.
- To improve skills of textual analysis.

REQUIREMENTS

- Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and to complete written answers to two or three out of a set of questions for each week. In many cases, there is no correct answer to each question. Students should aim to formulate their own opinions on the material and will not be expected to agree with the professor or the authorities whose studies we read. Their focus should be on explaining their points clearly and in a logical manner, supported by examples from the text. Arguing from the text is absolutely essential for success in this course. For the question sets, footnotes are not required. Citations from the particular works we are reading for that week may be parenthetical, e.g.: (al-Mutanabbi, p. 54). Students are encouraged to explore areas and ideas that may be tentative, unfamiliar, or unusual.
- Two assigned papers, 10 pages each. The first will be due at Week 7, and the second at Week 15. The papers will be judged first on argument, originality of thesis, and the use of textual evidence; second on proper form, structure, and documentation; and third on mechanics, clarity of expression, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and so forth. Footnotes and bibliography are required for the assigned papers and should follow the conventions of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

GRADING

Weekly writing assignments: 40%

Paper #1: 30%

Paper#2: 30%

TEXTS

Cachia, Pierre. *Arabic Literature: An Overview*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Farrin, Raymond. *Abundance from the Desert: Classical Arabic Poetry*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011.

Al-Mutanabbi. *Poems of al-Mutanabbi*. Selected and Edited by A.J. Arberry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Al-Jahiz. *The Book of Misers*. Trans. R. B. Serjeant. London: Ithaca Press, 2000. Available on line.

al-Hamadani, Badi` al-Zaman. *Al-Maqamat*. Trans. W. Prendergast. Madras, 1915. Available online.

Ibn Hazm. *The Neck-Ring of the Dove*. Trans. A. J. Arberry. London: Luzac and Co., 1955. Available on line.

[<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hazm/dove/index.html>]

Menocal, Maria. *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights. Trans. Richard Burton. With introduction by A.S. Byatt. London: Modern Library Classics, 2004. Other versions available on line.

Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. *The Essential Tawfiq al-Hakim: Plays, Fiction, Autobiography*. Ed. Denys Johnson-Davies. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2013.

Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. *Modern Arabic Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Mahfuz, Naguib. *Miramar*. Trans. Fatma Moussa Mahmoud, Maged el Kommos, and John Rodenbeck. New York: Anchor Books, 1992.

Salih, Al-Tayeb. *Season of Migration to the North*. Trans. Denys Johnson-Davies. New York: New York Review of Books, 2009.

Mosteghanemi, Ahlam. *Memory in the Flesh*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2003.

Idris, Yusuf. *The Cheapest Nights*. Trans. Wadida Wassef. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1989.

FURTHER READING

General Histories of Arabic Literature:

Allen, Roger. *Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000.

Allen, Roger. *The Arabic Literary Heritage: Development of its Genres and Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005.

Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature. Ed. Julia Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey. London: Routledge, 1998.

The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature:

- *Arabic Literature until the end of the Umayyad Period*. Ed. A.F.L. Beeston, T.M. Johnstone, R.B. Serjeant, and G. Rex Smith. 2012.
- *Abbasid Belles-Lettres*. Julia Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant, and G. Rex Smith. 1012.
- *The Literature of al-Andalus*. Ed. Maria Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells.
- *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. Ed. Roger Allen, D. S. Richards
- *Modern Arabic Literature*. Ed. M.M. Badawi. 1992.

On Classical Arabic Literature:

The Mu`allaqat: Medieval sourcebook: Pre-Islamic Arabia: The Hanged Poems, before 622 CE. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/640hangedpoems.asp>

Gelder, Geert Jan Van. *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature Anthology*. New York: New York University Press 2013.

Gelder, Geert Jan Van. *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Irwin, Robert. *Night, Horses, and the Desert: An Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature*. London: Anchor, 2002.

Jayyusi, Salma Khadra (ed.). *Classical Arabic Stories: An Anthology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

al-Tanukhi, al-Muhassin ibn Ali. *The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge*. Trans. D.S. Margoliouth. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1922. Available online.

[<http://archive.org/details/tabletalkofmesop00tanu>]

- al-Ma`arri, Abu al-`Ala'. *The Epistle of Forgiveness*. Trans. Geert Jan van Gelder and Gerhard Schoeler. New York: New York University Press, 2013.
- El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Stetkevych, Suzanne Pinckney. *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muhammad*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Vrolijk, Arnoud. *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face: A Study and Critical Edition of the Nuzhat al-nufus wa-mudhik al-`abus by Ali Ibn Sudun al-Basbughawi (d. 868/1464)*. Leiden: CNWS Publications, 1998.
- Wright, J.W. and Everett K. Rowson. *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

On Modern Arabic Literature:

- Allen, Roger. *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994.
- Allen, Roger. *A Period of Time: A Study and Translation of Hadith `Isa ibn Hisham by Muhammad al-Muwaylihi*. London: Ithaca Press, 1992.
- Hafez, Sabry. *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature*. London: Saqi Books, 2001.
- Moosa, Matti. *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997.
- The Anchor Book of Modern Arab Fiction*. Trans. and ed. Denys Johnson-Davies. London: Anchor Books, 2006.
- Shidyaq, Ahmad Faris. *Leg over Leg*. Trans. Humphrey Davies. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

COURSE OUTLINE

SECTION I: OVERVIEW (WEEK 1):

Week 1: Overview of Arabic Literature

Reading: Pierre Cachia, *Arabic Literature: An Overview*.

The Scope of Arabic Literature. Arabic literature, even when narrowed down to belletristic texts with literary aspirations and not a blanket term for all texts written in Arabic, is an enormous field, covering more than fifteen centuries (since it is older than Islam, which began in 622 CE) and an enormous area in the North Africa and the Middle East which now comprises the modern Arab nations. In addition, since Arabic served in the pre-modern Islamic world the function Latin served in medieval Christendom, the reach of Arabic literature went far beyond the lands inhabited by native speakers of Arabic. It is interesting not only intrinsically as a major world literature endowed with its unique aspects, forms, and contributions, but also for its complex relationships with other literatures. Arabic absorbed literary influences from

India and Iran and transmitted them westward — *Kalila wa-Dimna* and the *The 1001 Nights*, the best-known examples, probably represent the tip of an iceberg. Both folk and high literary traditions from Arabic influenced medieval European literature through, Sicily, Spain, and the Crusader states of Outremer. In addition, the Arab world is the major non-Western region of the world that interacted with Western Europe most intensely throughout the medieval period and through the colonial and post-colonial periods as well. Arabic literature thus provides an excellent example of the development of a non-Western literary tradition that was confronted with new literary forms from the colonial powers' national literary traditions, particularly British and French literature.

Cachia's Survey. Pierre Cachia's survey differs from the older introductions to Arabic literature in its relatively even coverage of the various periods. The older works are weighted heavily toward the early period, and some ignore everything after 1000 C.E. nearly completely. His work is overall clear, concise, and insightful, and he also has many interesting observations to make about popular literature and the use of the vernacular, his particular areas of expertise.

Questions:

Think about the following questions as you read, and write up the answers to two.

1. How old is Arabic literature? How were the earliest texts recorded?
2. Is Arabic one language or several? What is the evidence on either side of this question? How does it affect our view of Arabic literature?
3. Arabic literature has traditionally been divided into historical periods corresponding to dynasties or regimes: pre-Islamic, early Islamic, Umayyad, Abbasid, post-Abbasid, etc. What are the assumptions behind such divisions? Why might they be problematic? What are the alternatives?
4. What are Cachia's main divisions of the history of Arabic literature? On what analogy is the structure of his work based? Do you find this useful and convincing? How so?
5. What is the "bifurcation" (Chapter 3)?
6. How is the "Iberian branch" special or distinctive?
7. How do the genres of pre-modern Arabic literature compare with those of English literature or other literatures with which you are familiar?
8. Concerning chapter 6 (The Stunting), why is this period (1256-1798 CE) viewed as one of decadence? Is that a fair assessment? Is there evidence that innovation and creativity continued during this time?
9. Choose one genre and explain how it evolved over time.
10. What are some of the works of Arabic literature that effected European literature? What were the channels of influence, and how was it transmitted?
11. How did the colonial experience and contact with European models change Arabic literature? How are these literary changes related to social, economic, or political changes? (Chapter 7)
12. What authors do you find particularly interesting, and why?

13. Compare and contrast any two works Cachia discusses.

For **Further Reading**, see the general works listed above.

SECTION II: CLASSICAL ARABIC LITERATURE (WEEKS 2-5):

Week 2: Classical Poetry I: The “*Hanging Odes*”, the Dichotomy of Chaste and Not-So-Chaste Love, Wine-Poetry, Mystical Poetry, and other uses of the classical ode (*qasidah*)

Reading: Raymond Farrin, *Abundance from the Desert*.

The pre-Islamic Ode. The pre-Islamic poet `Antarah ibn Shaddad wrote, “Have the poets left a song unsung?” Already in the pre-Islamic period, Arabic poetry had a long and venerable tradition. The most prestigious art form of the Arabs, it served many roles in society. The earliest recorded sources reveal that the most valued form of Arabic poetry was the *qasidah* or ode, a form that is still in use today, having enjoyed a life of over fifteen centuries. The *qasidah* varied in length from about 30 to 100 lines, adopted monorhyme, and consisted of individual verses (*bayt*) made up of two hemistichs (*misra`*), with a caesura in the middle. By convention, the first hemistich in the first verse of the poem also rhymed with the second hemistich – the same monorhyme – in an effect termed *tasri`*. Critics identified sixteen distinct meters, all quantitative, involving set patterns of long and short syllables like the meters of Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit poetry. The *qasidah* was typically tripartite, beginning with an amatory prelude (*nasib*), which portrayed the poet traveling in the desert and coming across the abandoned campsite of a former love; the intensity of the emotion evoked by the traces or ruins (*atlal*) of his loved cause him to compose a poem. The middle section of the poem, the journey (*rahil*), described the hardships the poet went through in order to reach the patron or the audience. The third part presented the main message (*gharad*) of the *qasidah*, often a panegyric addressed to a patron. Also common, but less touted than the *qasidah* form, were short poems termed *qit`ah* “pieces” that adopted the same formal features but had fewer verses. Yet another form of poetry, lower down on the hierarchy of cultural value, was *rajaz*, which adopted simpler meters and was composed of rhyming hemistichs with the rhyme scheme *aa bb cc dd . . .*. The *qasidah* form was divided into traditional sub-types termed *gharad*, *aghrad* “purpose, theme” sanctioned by past usage and the social function that the poetry served: *madh* (praise, encomium), *hija`* (satire, lampoon), *fakhr* (boasting, praise of oneself or of one’s tribe), *ritha`* (elegy). Other categories included hunting poetry, wine poetry, and *wasf* (description, of horses, camels, rain, nature, and so on). The poet played an important social role in the Arab tribe of the pre-Islamic period, preserving its cultural heritage, touting its past and present glories, and defending its reputation. Ibn Rashiq al-Qayrawani reports that the pre-Islamic Arabs did not celebrate birthdays, but would congratulate a tribe when they acquired a new poet. A good poet was a boon for the tribe because he could win a battle merely by embarrassing their opponents with expert invective.

Key Examples of the Classical Ode. Raymond Farrin's work *Abundance from the Desert* does an admirable job of introducing the main types and uses of the *qasidah* in pre-modern Arabic literature, giving an accessible description of some of the most famous poems in Arabic without watering down the material. His book contains thirteen chapters, each focusing on a different poet from the sixth century until the thirteenth century and providing a detailed analysis of one long poem. The exceptional chapter in terms of the poetic form discussed is that which is devoted to Ibn Quzman, who wrote poetry of a new form, the *zajal*, a strophic poem couched in the vernacular language. The figures Farrin includes are Imru' al-Qays (d. ca. 545), Labid (d. 661), Ta'abbata Sharran (d. ca. 540), al-Khansa' (d. ca. 646), Jamil (d. 701), Jarir (d. 728) and Farazdaq (d. 730), Abu Nuwas (d. 814), Abu Tammam (d. 845), al-Mutanabbi (d. 965), Ibn Zaydun (d. 1070), Ibn Quzman (d. 1160), Ibn al-Farid (d. 1235), and Baha' al-Din Zuhayr (d. 1258).

The Suspended Odes: The *Mu`allaqat* or "Suspended Odes" are to Arabic literature what Shakespeare's plays are to English literature. Seven poems of considerable length, by the poets are Imru' al-Qays, Tarafah, Zuhayr, Labid, `Antara ibn Shaddad, `Amr ibn Kulthum, and Harith ibn Hilliza, they date from the century before the advent of Islam in 622 and all won the poetry contest at the Market of `Ukaz, an annual fair held in central Arabia in the pre-Islamic period. Hammad the Rhapsodist is said to have compiled them in the 8th century, and each is referred to as "the *mu`allaqah* of So-and-So". We will read two of these famous poems, the *Mu`allaqahs* of Imru's al-Qays and Labid. Imru' al-Qays, whose poem, the earliest of the seven, dates to the mid-sixth century, was a member of the royal house of the tribe of Kindah which lost power when his ancestor Harith ibn `Amr died in 529. He led the life of a refugee, seeking an opportunity for revenge after his father Hujr was killed by the Banu Asad tribe, and accounts report that he died after seeking military support at the Byzantine court. Labid is the latest of the *Mu`allaqah* poets; he died in 661 after converting to Islam.

Other uses of the *qasidah*. The *su`luk* "bandit" was the punk rocker of pre-Islamic Arabia, and the poetry of the *sa`alik* resembles the songs of modern gangster rappers, celebrating their rejection of societal norms, violence, and the embracement of opposing the ideals of their society. The most famous *su`luk*, known by the epithet Ta'abbata Sharran "He who carries evil under his arm," is featured in chapter two of Farrin's work. Al-Khansa' is the most famous female poet in Arabic. The exacting literary critic Bashshar ibn Burd (d. 784) is held to have commented that in order to be a great poet in Arabic, one must be a "stallion" (*fahl*)—that is, the pinnacle of manliness. When someone remonstrated, "Then what about al-Khansa'?" he replied, "She had *four* testicles!"—meaning that her verse was manlier than that of the greatest male poets. This chapter presents her elegies for her brother Sakhr. Women had a social obligation to mourn for male relatives who died or were killed in battle, and the elegy was a form in which women excelled. Jarir and Farazdaq, the archetypal practitioners of *hija'* "satire, lampoon", carried on a poetic duel for decades in the early eighth century that has been preserved in *al-Naqa'id*. Jamil developed the *ghazal*, a love poem, and is the chief representative of the `Udhri poets, who, after the manner of the Banu `Udhrah

tribe, describe their love in chaste, romantic terms rather than stressing physical, sensual, and sexual aspects of love. Jamil and his beloved Buthaynah become one in a series of famous pairs of lovers immortalized in verse, along with Majnun and Layla, and others, corresponding to Romeo and Juliet in Western traditions. Abu Nuwas adopted a parodic approach to the tradition, and in a revolt against the *`udhri* poetry focused on “licentiousness” (*mujun*), including sex (with both men and women), wine, and drunken revelry. After dealing with some of the most prominent poets of the medieval period, Abu Tammam (9th c., Iraq), al-Mutanabbi (10th c., Iraq and Syria), and Ibn Zaydun (al-Andalus, 11th c.), Farrin turns to Ibn Quzman, the acknowledged expert of the *zajal* form, ending with the well-known mystical poetry of Ibn al-Farid, and Baha’ al-Din Zuhayr’s descriptive poetry about contemporary Egypt in the thirteenth century.

Questions:

Read Farrin’s book and write answers to two of the following questions:

1. How does the form of the *qasidah* constrain the poet?
2. Is there a particular rhetorical function associated with the tripartite structure of the ode? What is the logic behind it, and what ideas does it convey?
3. Compare and contrast any two poets addressed in Farrin’s book.
4. What images appear odd or bizarre to you, and how should you go about interpreting them?
5. What effect did the transition from a primarily oral tradition to a primarily written one probably have on Arabic poetry?
6. How did Arabic poetry change over time? Which elements were stable, and which were not?
7. Compare and contrast the *zajal* and the *qasidah*.

Further Reading:

Bauer, Thomas, and Angelika Neuwirth. *Ghazal as World Literature*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2005.

Gruendler, Beatrice. *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn al-Rumi and the Patron’s Redemption*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Homerin, Emil. *Umar Ibn al-Farid: Sufi Verse, Sainly Life*. New York: Paulist Press, 2001.

Irwin, Robert. *Night and Horses and the Desert: An Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature*. New York: Anchor Books, 2002.

Kennedy, Philip F. *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abu Nuwas and the Literary Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Lyall, Charles James. *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry, Chiefly Pre-Islamic, with an introduction and notes*.

Sperl, Stefan. *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structuralist Analysis of Selected Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Stetkevych, Jaroslav. *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasib*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Stetkevych, Suzanne Pinckney. *Abu Tammam and the Poetics of the Abbasid Age*. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

Stetkevych, Suzanne Pinckney. *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Stetkevych, Suzanne Pinckney. *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Week 3: Classical Poetry II: The Praise Poems and Satires of al-Mutanabbi

Reading: Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbi*.

Al-Mutanabbi. Al-Mutanabbi (915-965) is acclaimed by many as the leading Arab poet of all time. He is famed for his deceptively simple style called *al-sahl al-mumtani* “easy but unattainable”, his economy of expression, his skilful manipulation of the traditional conventions of pre-Islamic poetry, his elegant hyperbole, and his ability to produce eminently quotable individual verses, which even in his own day became proverbial expressions. Equally renowned for his tremendous ego and pride in the Arab tribal ideals of bravery and generosity, he not only praised his patrons for having these qualities but also cultivated a heroic image of himself as a great warrior poet. In fact, this image is said to have caused al-Mutanabbi’s death when, reminded by his son or servant of his martial poetic claims about his own prowess in battle, he turned to face Bedouin attackers rather than fled to safety.

A youthful prophet. Al-Mutanabbi, whose name was Abu al-Tayyib Ahmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Juʿfi, was born into a quite humble Shiite family in Kufa in southern Iraq in 915; his father was apparently a water-carrier. He was a child prodigy with a phenomenal memory and ability to produce poetry. One day when he was at a bookseller’s shop, a man came in to sell a copy of a treatise by al-Asmaʿi, the famous philologist. While the shop owner was busy negotiating a suitable price, al-Mutanabbi memorized the 30-page treatise. The bookseller was so impressed that he bought the book and gave it to the youth as a present. Part of al-Mutanabbi’s poetic skill is said to derive from his experiences living for several years with the Banu Kalb tribe in the Syrian Desert after disturbances in Kufa caused his family to flee the city. Beyond this, little is known of his youth and education, other than that he studied under a certain Abu al-Fadl in Kufa. His mother died when he was young, and his father and his grandmother raised him. By the age of fourteen, already a skilled poet, he went to Baghdad with his father and presented an encomium to a Shiite notable. He subsequently left Iraq for Syria, where the large number of governors and local rulers presented opportunities for ambitious poets. His career took a bizarre twist when, in 934, he claimed to be a prophet and produced a sacred text of revelations that followed Qurʾanic style and contained 114 chapters termed *ʿibrah* “lesson, warning”, parallel to the Qurʾan’s 114 *surahs*. He gathered the support of Arab tribes in the vicinity of Latakia in northern Syria and led a series of revolts. He was eventually captured and imprisoned in 934-36 but later released on condition that he recant his heretical claims. It is this episode that earned him the *nom-de-plume* al-Mutanabbi, literally “the would-be prophet”.

The search for a patron. Al-Mutanabbi engaged in what the medieval critics termed *al-takassub bi'sh-shi'r* "earning a living through poetry." By this point in Islamic history, the tenth century, the Abbasid Caliphs, centered in Baghdad, had lost direct control of most of the Empire; in case after case, the governors of outlying provinces had established themselves as hereditary monarchs of their territories. Smaller centers of power proliferated, in a situation resembling that of the city-states of renaissance Italy, or the petty kingdoms of al-Andalus following the fall of the Umayyad dynasty. Al-Mutanabbi sought his fortune by travelling throughout Iraq and Syria in search of a patron who would reward him abundantly for highly crafted encomia. He was no ordinary poet, however, and was not satisfied with purses of gold coins. He also expected to be treated with tremendous respect and to be rewarded in accordance with his conception of himself as a great and dignified hero; it appears that his ultimate goal was to be made governor of a territory. For a time, he found his ideal patron in Sayf al-Dawlah (945-967), an Arab of the Hamdan tribe who ruled northern Syria from his capital at Aleppo and engaged in constant warfare with the increasingly belligerent Byzantines to the north. This satisfied al-Mutanabbi's conception of a worthy patron, for he was a racial elitist, considering Arabs superior to others, finding it a disgrace for Arabs to be ruled by non-Arabs, and exalting military prowess. He stayed at the court of Sayf al-Dawlah from 948 until 957 and wrote many of his best poems there. Times were not always idyllic, though, because, perhaps as a consequence of his colossal ego, al-Mutanabbi was continually getting into quarrels with the other poets and scholars at court, including Abu Firas al-Hamdani (d. 968), an excellent poet who was also Sayf al-Dawlah's cousin.

Later years. After a falling out with Sayf al-Dawlah, al-Mutanabbi left Syria for Egypt, attaching himself to the court of the Ikhshidids (935-969) in Fustat (Old Cairo). The young Ikhshidid ruler was dominated by the regent Kafur (d. 969), a black eunuch who had been influential in the court of the Muhammad ibn Tughj, the Turkish governor who had founded the dynasty and died in 946. Al-Mutanabbi wrote a number of panegyrics of Kafur, but soon had a falling out with him, accusing the regent of making empty promises and being a stingy ingrate. Upon leaving Egypt in 960, he penned several poems of invective against Kafur that are the most memorable lampoons in the history of Arabic literature. Al-Mutanabbi eventually returned to Iraq. In 965, he accepted an invitation by the Buwayhid vizier Ibn al-'Amid (d. 970) to Arrajan and stayed there for three months, after which he traveled to the court of the Buwayhid Sultan 'Adud al-Dawlah in Shiraz, where he was received with great honor. After returning to Iraq, he was killed while on the way from Wasit in southern Iraq to Baghdad after being ambushed by Bedouin raiders under Fatik ibn Abi al-Jahl, the uncle of Dabba ibn Yazid, whom he had satirized a year earlier.

Commentary on his work. Al-Mutanabbi's large *diwan* has not been translated. It was the subject of a number of learned medieval commentaries, the best of which is that of al-Wahidi (d. 1076), as well as more specialized treatises, including critiques by

detractors who pointed out al-Mutanabbi's flouting of convention and his unacknowledged borrowings from other poets. Arberry's translation includes many of his most famous poems.

Questions:

Read Arberry's translation, think about the following questions, and write answers to two.

1. Compare and contrast any of al-Mutanabbi's poems with the pre-Islamic and early Islamic poems discussed in Week 2.
2. Analyze one of al-Mutanabbi's panegyrics in detail.
3. Analyze one of al-Mutanabbi's lampoons or satires in detail.
4. What do panegyrics and satires reveal about Arab cultural values? Is there any distance between general cultural values and the values idealized in particular literary genres? How are they related?
5. What does the poet say or imply about himself when he is praising, insulting, or lamenting the loss of others? What persona does the poet create for himself?
6. How does al-Mutanabbi play with the conventions of the ode? How does he follow, extend, reshape, or violate them?
7. What features of his poems contribute to their rhetorical power?

Further Reading:

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Week 4: Maqamat:

Reading: al-Hamadani, *Maqamat*.

The parodic mode in Arabic literature. Abdel-Fattah Kilito has called for a more concentrated study of *hazl* "folly" as opposed to *jidd* "earnest" in the history of Arabic

literature. This plea is based on recognition of the conservative nature of Arabic literary criticism and its focus on normative pious and ethical values. While the tendency in Arabic literature to uphold and promulgate standard Arab and Islamic values is certainly strong, mockery of central cultural and religious icons or their portrayal in less-than-serious light also abound. As L.E. Goodman has remarked, "Just as it is false to say that there can be no Christian tragedy ..., so it is false to suppose that there is no Islamic farce, or parody, or satire." For example, through the comical figure of the *nahwi* or grammar expert appears in anecdotes such as those of `Alqamah, a historical figure who is portrayed as addressing illiterate passers-by, common laborers, or donkey-drivers with obscure, archaic, and fully inflected expressions, the sanctity, beauty, clarity, and above all utility of the classical Arabic language is thoroughly mocked if not fundamentally undermined. Just as the sexual exploits of medieval monks have featured prominently in European literature, so too are outwardly pious Muslim *shaykhs* associated with pederasty and other vices in Arabic literary texts. The tendency to parody various established forms of Islamic religious and high literary discourse may also be seen in the genre of the *Maqamat*, invented by Badi` al-Zaman al-Hamadhani (d. 398/1008) in the late tenth century.

The *Maqamat*, a new genre. *Maqamat* are collections of episodic texts couched in *saj`* or rhyming and rhythmical prose. In their classical form, they feature two main characters: a rogue or trickster – Abu al-Fath al-Iskandari in al-Hamadhani's work – who uses his eloquence and ability to disguise himself to beg for money in various artful ways, and a naïve dilettante narrator – `Isa ibn Hisham in Hamadani's work – who is easily impressed by evidence of learning and is consistently duped by the trickster. The episode follows a fairly consistent plot: the narrator arrives in a town and witnesses the trickster, who is disguised and whom he does not recognize, engaging in a performance in front of an audience. The members of the audience and the narrator give him money, either as charity or as a reward or token of appreciation for his performance. Then the narrator realizes that the performer is in fact the same trickster who has duped him before in other cities in the course of his travels. He accosts the trickster and rebukes him, and the trickster justifies his actions, not very convincingly, by claiming that tough times require extraordinary measures or by making other similar excuses.

Influence of the *Maqamat*. The genre has been one of the most distinctive and successful of Arabic literature, spanning a millennium and including hundreds of individual collections. The *Maqamat* also inspired imitations in Persian, Syriac, and Hebrew. It was in Hebrew literature that the *maqamat* genre exerted its greatest influence, producing a flourishing Hebrew genre in its own right. Yahudah al-Harizi (d. 1225) produced a fascinating translation of al-Hariri's collection into Hebrew, and then wrote his own collection of *mahberot*, the Hebrew equivalent of *maqamat*. The result, his famous *Sefer Tahkemoni* (1218-20), counts as one of medieval Hebrew literature's chief masterpieces. Immanuel of Rome (1261-1335) also composed a collection of *Mahberot* that won a place of high esteem in medieval Hebrew literature, and the genre boasts dozens of other important examples.

Not just verbal artistry. While the comic nature of the *Maqamat* has been recognized, standard interpretations have emphasized their verbal artistry and ignored their imitative and satirical references to Islamic religious discourse. The *Maqamat* of al-Hariri (d. 1122), al-Hamadhani's (d. 1008) most famous imitator, have been more assiduously studied in the Arabic literary tradition, as the great number of commentaries devoted to that collection, including the famous commentary of al-Sharishi (d. 1222), indicates. Al-Hariri's *Maqamat* have acquired an important place in the study of rhetoric, serving primarily as an example of high belle-lettristic style, and this has colored perception of the *maqamah* genre as a whole. Later scholars' heightened concern with grammar, rhetorical figures, and obscure vocabulary has drawn attention away from the parodic intent of both al-Hamadhani's and al-Hariri's *Maqamat*, which, though occasionally recognized, has not been sufficiently examined or methodically set forth. *Maqamat* came to be seen as textbooks for aspiring rhetoricians and court secretaries, so that Ibn al-Tiqtaqa (fl. 13th c.) opined that *maqamat* are good only as an introduction to the various types of prose and poetic writing and as part of training in epistolary composition, and the modern Egyptian scholar Shawqi Dayf claimed that one of the main purposes behind the *maqamat* was to teach recondite vocabulary to the youth. We will read Prendergast's translation of al-Hamadhani's *Maqamat*, focusing on the ideological content of the episodes and the parodic elements of the text, while still appreciating his verbal artistry.

Questions: For this week's assignment, think about these questions as you read and write up answers to #7 and one other question (2-3 pages).

1. Who are the two main characters? What information do their names reveal? What are their salient characteristics?
2. What is the typical pattern of a *maqamah*'s plot? What are the distinct steps followed? How do the characters interact?
3. Can you think of any other examples in literature in which set characters repeatedly interact in a similar fashion?
4. Is the author on the side of the narrator or the rogue? What is the evidence of this?
5. What messages do the *maqamat* convey about language and how it can be used?
6. Is the setting of each *maqamah* relevant or important, or is the point merely to change each time? How do the *maqamat* refer to Christians? How do they refer to Shiites?
7. Analyze one *maqamah* in detail. Compare and contrast it with other episodes in the collection. What is distinctive about the place, themes, or issues treated in this episode?

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Week 5: Virtues, Vices, Ideals, and Manners in Medieval Arab Society

Reading: Jahiz, *The Book of Misers*.

Generosity and stinginess in Arab culture. If generosity and hospitality are the greatest virtues in Arab culture, then avarice and stinginess are the most despicable vices. Many modern Arab nations have genres of jokes devoted to the stingy habits of some particular region: in Egypt, the town of Damietta on the Mediterranean coast, in Morocco, the southern region of Souss, in Iraq, the northern city of Mosul, and so on. They all poke fun at the lack of hospitality shown by these minority groups, thereby stressing the idea that "normal" or "ideal" Egyptians, Moroccans, or Iraqis are by nature generous and hospitable. Arabic literature abounds with legendary acts of generosity and also with descriptions of the behavior of champion misers, cheapskates, and freeloaders. A generous man is still referred to as "a Hatim" and his deeds *karam*

Hatimi “Hatim-like generosity” after Hatim al-Ta’i, a legendary member of the tribe of Tayy who was famed for his magnanimity. The story is told that king of Persia, having heard that Hatim owned a fabulous stallion, sent an envoy to request the steed, knowing that Hatim’s generous nature would make it impossible for him to refuse the request. The envoy made the long journey to Hatim’s territory, arriving unexpectedly at night, when Hatim’s liberality had depleted his livestock and stores, making it difficult for him to show the envoy the proper hospitality. Nevertheless, he prepared a feast for his guest and his entourage. After finishing the meal and engaging in polite conversation for some time, the envoy broached the purpose of his mission, revealing that the king had asked for Hatim’s prize stallion. Hatim replied that he would not ordinarily refuse the king’s request, but that the king’s envoy had just eaten the stallion. Hatim is not alone, however; other anecdotes depict great acts of generosity by `Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet’s son-in-law and cousin, al-Hasan, the Prophet’s grandson, and others.

Comic literature on stinginess. On the other end of the spectrum, Arabic literature includes numerous anecdotes and entire works that highlight great feats of stinginess. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 1071), a conservative preacher, jurist, and hadith expert, wrote a fascinating work on the exploits of freeloaders and party-crashers. By far the most famous work of this type, however, is *The Book of Misers* by al-Jahiz. In this book, the material for which must have derived from popular lore as much as from earlier literature, the main group targeted for criticism on account of their stinginess are Persians, so that one must see it as part of the broader anti-Persian, pro-Arab polemic that became prevalent in the ninth century as part of the *shu`ubiyyah* debate, which set Persian cultural chauvinists against their Arab counterparts. Among the highly stingy Persians, the recognized champions of stinginess are the inhabitants of Marv, northeast of Mashhad in what is now Turkmenistan.

Rules of etiquette. Al-Jahiz’s work, however, reveals much more than the prejudices of Arabs against Persians, or ingenious methods for saving every last drop of lamp oil, getting free food, or preventing one’s guests from eating too much. It also reveals the complex system of understood rights and obligations involved in the Arab system of hospitality, as well as the many rules of etiquette and proper behavior to be observed at dinner parties and other occasions. Al-Jahiz’s keen observation and satirical talent make this comic work extremely enjoyable.

Al-Jahiz. Al-Jahiz, meaning “bug-eyed,” was the nickname of Abu `Uthman `Amr ibn Bahr, a descendant of East African slaves. Born in Basra in 781, he studied with leading philologists and theologians in his native town, eventually becoming a scholar of some repute. His fame soared in 816 when he relocated to Baghdad, where he remained a prominent writer until his death in 868. Al-Jahiz is arguably the greatest prose writer of classical Arabic literature. Though a major theologian as well, he was a literary man at heart who took full advantage of the explosion in publishing that followed the importation of pulp-paper technology from China in the late eighth century. By the

beginning of the ninth century, Baghdad was a thriving center of paper production, the booksellers' quarter boasted over one hundred bookshops, and scholars regularly wrote massive works of ten, twenty, thirty or more volumes. As the reading public expanded rapidly, so did the market for works of general interest. Al-Jahiz wrote works for specific patrons, and even boasts of accumulating a fortune in this manner, but he also authored anthologies and short treatises that would bring him income by appealing to a wide audience, and *The Book of Misers* was one of these, like his *Book on Slave-girls*. Jahiz' writing is notable for its elegant, balanced phrases that exhibit artful parallelism and contrast but nevertheless avoid rhyme; his consummate skill at dialectic, which allows him to argue for and against many points so convincingly that one cannot determine his actual view; and his numerous and extensive digressions, which take on a life of their own and often become more interesting than the main train of thought to from which they branch.

A variety of works. Jahiz wrote a number of works on theology, many drawing on those of his teacher al-Nazzam (d. ca. 835), a leading theologian of the Mu`tazili school, whose members applied concepts derived from Greek logic and philosophy to Islamic theology and were later denounced for failing to give scripture the appropriate weight and relying to heavily on human reason. Many of al-Jahiz's theological texts have been lost as a result of the ideological shift away from Mu`tazilism, though some fragments are preserved in later works. Extant works and fragments include a work on the merits of dogmatic theology, a refutation of Christianity, a work on epistemology, a manual of legal interpretation, a treatise on the authentication of hadith reports, another on the createdness of the Qur'an, a refutation of the Shiite view that `Ali deserved to be the first Caliph after the Prophet, and works on prophecy. Perhaps his greatest work – also influenced by Mu`tazili theology – is his *Zoology (Kitab al-hayawan)*, which was clearly drew on Greek models and Aristotle's *Zoology* in particular but which includes digressions on a bewildering variety of topics. Many of his books debate questions: the superiority of blacks to whites, the relative merits of having sex with men or women, the merits and defects of state functionaries, and so on. Many shorter treatises focused on the most various topics, including wine, poetry, and theological doctrines. He also wrote works in support of the Abbasids and argued for the superiority of Arab culture over others. *Elegance of Expression and Clarity of Exposition (Kitab al-Bayan wa'l-Tabyin)* is a large rhetorical work in which he argues, by compiling hundreds of example texts and anecdotes, that Arabs are exceptionally gifted in rhetoric and poetry.

Questions: Think about the following questions as you read, and write up the answers to three.

1. Why, and for whom, did al-Jahiz write *The Book of Misers*?
2. Where do you think Sahl b. Harun's epistle ends?
3. In light of al-Jahiz's politics (and the politics of Abbasid Iraq in general), why might he have been inclined to ridicule Khurasanis?
4. What does al-Jahiz mean when he asserts that certain grammatical inflections are out of place in these stories (p. 32)?

5. List and describe all the types of beggars, rogues, and misers that al-Jahiz mentions.
6. Why do you think al-Jahiz included the section devoted to a typology of eaters?
7. What do you learn about 9th century table etiquette from 'The Tale of Muhammad ibn Abi 'l-Mu'ammal'?
8. Why would the three brothers (p. 98) say that Abu Bakr, Umar, and 'A'isha deviated from the *Sunnah*?
9. At this point, what would you say was the diet of the average Basran?
10. If wine is forbidden in Islam, why are so many people getting drunk in these stories?
11. What is the major argument of Abu al-'As al-Thaqafi's epistle? What are his sources (on what does he base his arguments)?
12. What is the major argument of Ibn al-Taw'am's epistle? What are his sources (on what does he base his arguments)?
13. From context, can you tell why and from whom one would have received a stipend in Abbasid Iraq?
14. List all the kinds of meals al-Jahiz talks about (with definitions).
15. Why do you think al-Jahiz included the section about hunger and the Bedouin?
16. How does the section of poetry at the end of the book seem to be organized?
17. Thinking back over the entire book, how are women portrayed?

Further Reading:

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SECTION III: Arabic Literature's Influence on Europe (weeks 6-8)

Week 6: Arabic Literature in the Andalus

Reading: Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*.

Islam in Europe. The Islamic Empire expanded rapidly after the passing away of the Prophet Muhammad in 632. By the late 630s, Muslim armies had defeated the Byzantines and the Persians in major battles in Jordan and Mesopotamia, conquering most of what is now Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and Iraq. In 640, they invaded and conquered Egypt. They advanced rapidly across the North African coast, and reached the Atlantic before 700. They did not stop there: in 712 Tariq ibn al-Walid, after whom Gibraltar is named (from Jabal Tariq "Tariq's Mountain"), famously crossed into Spain and burned his men's boats, allowing them no choice but to advance. They eventually conquered nearly the entire peninsula, crossed into France, and only turned back when defeated at the Battle of Poitiers by Charles Martel in 732. While the invading armies held territory in the south of France for several decades, they eventually retreated behind a stable border in Spain which accorded to them about three-fourths of the Iberian Peninsula. Muslim rule in parts of the Iberia lasted a very long time, from 712 until 1492, when the Nasrids (1232-1492), the last surviving Muslim dynasty, capitulated to the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand (1479-1516) and Isabella (1474-1504). This period, nearly eight centuries long, witness intense contact among Jews, Christians, and Muslims and between Arabic and Romance speakers. Arabic letters and Islamic culture, along with Hebrew letters and Jewish culture, exerted a very strong influence on Christian-European culture. In some areas this influence is both obvious and clearly documented. At Toledo in the 12th and 13th centuries, important works in mathematics, medicine, and philosophy were translated into Latin and Spanish and went on to become standard texts in the curricula of European centers of learning. Averroes (d. 1198), for example, gained renown in Latin, Christian circles as the most important commentator on Aristotle. Avicenna's (d. 1037) major work on medicine, *The Canon*, became the standard textbook in Europe's medical schools until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In other fields, however, influence is either less well established or has been neglected.

The extent of influence. In *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, a deeply disappointing book, W. Montgomery Watt does not deliver what the title promises, giving some information on influence in mathematics, medicine, philosophy, a few other sciences such as pharmacology, and trade. He ignores huge swaths of scientific, literary, and artistic endeavor in which the influence of Arabic, Islamic, and Middle Eastern material was clearly of great importance. The Arabic influence on European languages is striking, particularly in Spanish, the language most strongly affected. Typically, when languages in contact, nouns are most easily borrowed, but Arabic gave to Spanish adjectives as well, such as *baladí* "of inferior quality" (< *baladi* "rustic, rural, local") and conjunctions such as *hasta* "until" (< Ar. *hatta*) and *ojalá* (*que*) "would that" (< Ar. *in sha' allah*). Spanish borrowed Arabic in cases where the other Romance languages did not: while "olive" derives from Latin in French, Italian, and the other European languages, Spanish has *aceituna* (< Ar. *az-zaytuna*). The Spanish word for "what's his name" is *fulano*, from *fulan*, which serves the same purpose in Arabic. While many Romance specialists deny the influence of Arabic poetry on the songs of the troubadours, it is difficult to deny that the troubadours' instrument of choice, the lute (<

Ar. *al-`ud*), derives from Arab musical traditions. Influence of Arabic and Islamic traditions has been claimed for Spanish music, poetry, epic, folktales, and other genres, but many such claims have not met with general acceptance, in part because of insufficient direct evidence. Nevertheless, a great deal of circumstantial evidence exists; the fact that the pivotal Spanish national epic is titled *El Cantar de Mio Cid*, adopting the Arabic honorific *Cid* (< Ar. *Sayyid* “Master”) instead of the Spanish *Don* is suggestive of the extent of Arabic influence. In some cases, more direct indications of influence exist. *El Conde Lucanor* (1335), a collection of fifty-one *exemplos* or didactic tales by Don Juan Manuel (1282-1348), includes three stories that are explicitly designated as deriving from Arabic tales, and each of these gives an Arabic proverb – transliterated in the Roman alphabet – as the moral of the story. Similarly, the famous collection of didactic tales *Calila e Dimna* was translated from Arabic into Castilian at the court of Alfonso X (1252-84). These few works must be considered the tip of an iceberg.

An overview of literary influence. In the study we will read this week, María Rosa Menocal discusses some of the main types of European literature on which Arabic literary tradition may have exerted substantial influence. Her work is synthetic, and while it does not produce new evidence of influence or discover new paths that influence might have taken, it brings together a great deal of disparate material to make a bold case concerning the importance of Arabic literary background for medieval European literary history, focusing on three areas: courtly love lyrics of the troubadours, the Arabic-Romance hybrid poetry of *muwashshahat*, and the poetry of the *scuola siciliana* and of Dante. Her work has the virtue of alerting scholars willing to learn Arabic in addition to one or more of the Romance languages to many exciting avenues of research. At the same time, she addresses the academic firewalls and prejudiced views that have hindered such work and slowed its acceptance by experts in French, Spanish, Italian, and other literatures.

Questions:

Answer the following question and write up four of the identifications below. You may consult other sources.

1. What is the basic argument of Menocal’s book? Why is this important for an understanding of medieval European literature? What are the opposing views? What are the obstacles to further research in this area?
2. Identify and explain the significance of four of the following:
 - A. Troubadors.
 - B. William IX of Aquitaine.
 - C. Eleanor of Aquitaine.
 - D. Courtly love.
 - E. Andreas Capellanus.
 - F. Peter the Venerable.
 - G. *muwashshaha*.

- H. *kharja*.
- I. *The scuola siciliana*.
- J. The king of Sicily – and Holy Roman Emperor – Frederick II (1215-1250).
- K. The *Mi`raj*.
- L. Dante
- M. Miguel Asín Palacios.
- N. Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina clericalis*.
- O. Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

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Week 7: The Theory of Love in Arabic Love Poetry

Reading: Ibn Hazm, *The Neck-Ring of the Dove*.

Ibn Hazm. Ibn Hazm was the name of a prominent family of Cordoba; the famous Ibn Hazm was Abu Muhammad Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa`id ibn Hazm, who was born in 994 and died in 1064. Both his father and grandfather held positions under the Umayyad Caliph Hisham II (976-1008), and Ibn Hazm grew up among wealthy and powerful circles attached to the Umayyad court in Cordoba, their capital. He himself served under several of the Umayyad Caliphs, including the last one, Hisham III (1026-31). After a prolonged civil war in 1008-1031, he witnessed the collapse of the Umayyad state and its fragmentation into the petty kingdoms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Having suffered imprisonment several times for his support of the Umayyads, he subsequently retreated to his family estate and devoted himself to writing.

Works. Ibn Hazm wrote on a variety of topics, including law, theology, logic, grammar, and literature. Although he was educated according to the Maliki school of Islamic law, later in life he adopted the methods of the Zahiri legal school, which he rescued from near-oblivion. Zahirism had been founded by Dawud ibn Khalaf al-Isfahani (d. 884) in Baghdad in the mid-ninth century. The school was propagated after Dawud's death by his son Abu Bakr Muhammad (d. 910) and other disciples, who spread the school beyond the confines of Iraq, to Syria and Egypt. By the latter half of

the eleventh century, Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi (d. 1083) reports that the school was defunct in Baghdad and survived only in Shiraz. Ibn Hazm's work revived the school in the Islamic West, where it apparently survived for several generations after his death. Ibn Hazm's largest extant work is *al-Muhalla*, a massive compendium of law based on Zahiri principles. He also wrote *al-Ihkam fi usul al-ahkam*, a substantial work on legal theory and interpretation, as well as a number of shorter treatises on matters of legal interpretation, such as the points of law subject to consensus (*ijma`*) and the invalidity of analogy (*qiyas*) as a method of legal interpretation. In theology, he wrote a major doxography or heresiography, *al-Fisal fi al-milal wa'l-nihal*, in which he reveals himself to be a well-informed bigot, highly critical of Jews, Christians, Shiites, and other Islamic sectarians. Other works include an essay on ethics, a taxonomy of the learned disciplines, and a work on logic.

Ibn Hazm's work on lover theory. Ibn Hazm's literary side is most apparent in his work on love theory, *The Neck-ring of the Dove*, which shows him to be sensitive, refined, insightful, frank, and understanding of the foibles of his fellow man. This book, which he wrote after his second or third imprisonment, in 1022 or 1027, belongs to a genre of works devoted to the theory of love and discussing its causes, varieties, the situations to which it gives rise, and the emotional states experienced by the lover. They include Ibn Dawud's (d. 910), *Kitab al-Zahrah* (The Book of the Flower), al-Sarraj al-Qari' al-Baghdadi's (d. 1106) *Masari` al-`ushshaq* (Calamities of Lovers), al-Shayzari's (fl. 12th c.) *Rawdat al-qulub wa-nuzhat al-muhibb wa'l-mahbub* (The Garden of Hearts and the Promenade of Lover and Beloved), Ibn al-Jawzi's (d. 1200) *Dhamm al-hawa* (Censure of Passion), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's (d. 1350) *Rawdat al-muhibbin wa-nuzhat al-mushtaqin* (The Garden of Lovers and the Promenade of Those Who Yearn), Ibn Abi Hajalah's (d. 1375) *Diwan al-sababah* (Collected Poems on Infatuation), Mughulta'i's (d. 1361) *al-Wadih al-mubin fiman ustushhida min al-muhibbin* (Plain and Clear Guide to Lovers Who Have Died as Martyrs), and Dawud ibn Umar al-Antaki's (d. 1599) *Tazyin al-Aswaq bi-tafsil al-ashwaq* (Embellishment of 'The Markets' by Explaining Passions in Detail).

Works on sex. Works on love theory are concerned with the emotional and psychological aspects of being in love and are not to be confused with sex or marriage manuals, which formed a distinct genre focusing on physical and practical matters and in some cases including erotic or pornographic tales, even though these latter works also discuss love. They include Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tijani's (d. ca. 1311) *Tuhfat al-`arus wa-mut`at al-nufus* (Gift of the Bride and Delight of the Soul); al-Suyuti's (d. 1505) *al-Idah fi `ilm al-nikah* (The Clarification, on the Science of Sex); Ahmad ibn Sulayman Ibn Kamal Pasha's (d. 1534) *Ruju` al-shaykh ila sibah fi al-quwwah `ala al-bah* (The Old Man's Rejuvenation, on Gathering One's Strength for Sex); and others. The most accessible is Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn `Umar al-Nafzawi's (fl. 15th c.) *al-Rawd al-`atir fi nuzhat al-khatir*, which was translated – with many additions and embellishments – by Richard F. Burton as *The Perfumed Garden* in 1886 and – without the additions – by Jim Colville in 1999.

The model of Ibn Dawud's *The Book of the Flower*. Ibn Hazm's work draws on Ibn Dawud's *The Book of the Flower*, which has not been translated, and it must be, to some degree at least, because of his obsession with the Zahiri legal school that he decided to write *The Neck-Ring of the Dove*. A striking feature that the two works share is their structure, which follows the life cycle of the love affair. Beginning with falling in love, both works proceed to sending messages to the beloved, revealing one's love, overcoming obstacles, union, breaking off the relationship, and both end, finally, with death. Ibn Hazm's work is an excellent example of *prosimetrum*, the type of composition that characterized most medieval belles-lettres, an artful combination of prose discussions and poems. In this work, unlike the *The Book of the Flower*, Ibn Hazm makes it a point to include examples of his own poetry rather than that of other poets, whether ancient or contemporary. The work is an excellent introduction to the world of medieval Arabic love poetry in genre, because it explains many of this poetry's central concepts and assumptions, such as separation, union, love's pact, secrecy, and so on, as well as love poetry's stock characters, such as the poet-lover, the beloved, the rival or guard, the friend, helping brother or go-between, and the slanderer. A comparison with medieval European works on courtly love such as Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love*, or with the poetry of the troubadours, suggesting that the two literatures are closely related.

Questions: Think of the following questions as you read, and answer three in detail.

1. What causes love? Is it a disease, an imbalance, or something else?
2. How can one tell when someone else is in love?
3. Why must love be kept secret? What are the practical results of this?
4. Practice 'hinting with the eyes'. Be prepared to demonstrate.
5. Who are the characters involved in a love affair (pp. 73-74, 96-117)? Do the same characters exist now?
6. What is the relationship between love and poetry? What role does poetry play in the *Ring of the Dove*?
7. What are the technical terms involved in love theory of Ibn Hazm? What are their modern equivalents?
8. Is this work romantic, idealistic, pragmatic, objective? How would you describe it overall?
9. What does the work reveal about Ibn Hazm's society in the Andalus? How does social class enter into questions of love? What about age? What about gender?
10. How is the book organized, and what message or ideas does the arrangement convey?
11. Is it acceptable to display emotion in Ibn Hazm's society? What are the rules concerning this?
12. What is the relationship between the last two chapters and the rest of the work? Would the work make sense without them? Why did he write these two chapters?

13. If you wrote several chapters in a modern equivalent of Ibn Hazm's book, what would they be about? Can you think of popular songs that would illustrate particular points or capture important situations?

Further Reading:

Bell, Joseph N. *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979.

Capellanus, Andreas. *The Art of Courtly Love*. Available on line.

Giffen, Lois Anita. *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre*. New York: New York University Press, 1971.

Al-Nafzawi, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn `Umar. *The Perfumed Garden*. Trans. Richard Francis Burton. Benares, 1886.

Al-Nafzawi, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn `Umar. *The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight*. Trans. Jim Colville. London: Kegan Paul, 1999.

Week 8: The 1001 Nights

Reading: Selections from *The 1001 Nights*, trans. Richard F. Burton.

Stories move west. Or so it seems. While this rule cannot take the categorical form of a physical law, many collections of tales, particularly those that are bound together by a frame-tale, seem to have traveled west from India, through Persia, to the Middle East, and then to Europe. One indication of this movement is the fact that the standard opening of Arabic folktales, *kan ya ma kan* "There was, or there wasn't", clearly derives from the Persian antecedent *yeki bud, yeki nabud* "There was one, there wasn't one." In addition, there are many examples of east-to-west transmission of particular collections, some well documented and others a matter of speculation. *Aesop's Fables*, famous in Greek already in the 6th c. B.C.E., were likely of Near Eastern origin. The *Pancatantra* of Bidpai, written in Sanskrit ca. 300 C.E., included a series of tales attributed to Karataka and Damanaka, two jackal retainers of the lion king Pingalaka. This work was translated into Middle Persian (Pahlavi) by Burzowayh ca. 570 C.E. under the title *Kalilag va-Dimnag*. In the early Abbasid period (ca. 720-50 C.E.), Ibn al-Muqaffa` (d. 756) translated the work into Arabic with the title *Kalila wa-Dimna*. Ibn al-Muqaffa`s Arabic version was translated into Spanish in 1261 at the court of Alfonso X 'the Wise' (1252-1284) as *Calila e Dimna*. It was also translated from Arabic into Greek in 1080, into Hebrew by Jacob Ben Eleazar (fl. 12th c.), from Hebrew into Latin by Johannes of Capua (fl. 1262-69) under the title *Directorium Vitae Humanae*, and from these last works into many other languages in subsequent centuries. Another such work is the *Disciplina Clericalis*, by Petrus Alphonsi, a Spanish Jew who converted to Christianity in 1106, which includes 33 didactic tales in Latin, derived entirely or mainly from Arabic originals. A collection of tales about the wiles of women called *The Book of Sendeban* or *El libro de los engaños* (Sindbad, but not Sindbad the sailor) was translated from Arabic in 1253 at initiative of Don Fadrique, brother of Alfonso X. In 1335, Don Juan Manuel wrote *El conde Lucanor*, a collection of 51 didactic tales in Spanish, including a number

of tales that derived from Arabic. Other tales of Arabic or Middle Eastern origin found their way into the *Decameron* of Boccaccio (1313-1375) and *The Parlement of Fowls* and the *The Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer (1343-1400). Although the Arabian Nights found its way into European literature at a much later date, it too seems to have traveled a path similar to that of the *Pancatantra*, perhaps starting in India, then moving through Persia to Iraq, then Syria and Egypt, then to France and England, becoming a major work of world literature in the nineteenth century.

Discovery of the Arabian Nights. The history of the discovery and translation of *The 1001 Nights*, as it is known in Arabic, is complex. The pioneering figure in the introduction of *the 1001 Nights* to Europe was the Frenchman Antoine Galland (1646-1715). After studying Latin and Greek in Paris, Galland worked as an interpreter for the French embassy to the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul between 1670 and 1675, becoming well versed in Turkish, Greek, Arabic, and Persian. He then served as a research assistant for the Orientalist Barthélemy d'Herbelot, who was writing an encyclopedic work on the history and culture of the Near East. In 1701, he published a translation of the tales of Sindbad, and between 1704 and 1717, he published 12 volumes of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. His translation was based in part on an old manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, but when the first few volumes were so successful, the publisher clamored for more material, and Galland added stories from other manuscripts from outside the *Arabian Nights'* tradition, and even from oral sources, including a Maronite priest from Aleppo who was living in Paris at the time. Because he did not reveal these sources, and because some of the manuscripts that he used may have been lost or have not been identified, the origins of many of these stories remain obscure, and it is not entirely possible to say which stories belong to the original tradition. Many of the most famous stories, such as those of Sindbad, Aladdin, and Ali Baba, were not in early versions of the *Nights*. Later editors and translators who worked in the nineteenth century adopted similar methods, further complicating the matter. The nineteenth century witnessed a number of Arabic editions of the *Nights*, including stories that only appeared in Galland's collection and not in the Arabic manuscripts, meaning that some of them must have been translated into Arabic from Galland's French version.

English translations. The nineteenth-century saw the popularity of the *Nights* expand outside France, particularly to England and Germany, and a number of translators translated all or part of the text, claiming to be working from the original, but often using Galland's French or one of the other existing translations as a basis. The most important translations from the nineteenth century from the point of view of the reception of the work are those of Edward W. Lane (1801-1876) and Richard F. Burton (1805-88). Lane is lived in Egypt for two extended periods and is well known for *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* and his *Arabic-English Lexicon*. Though he was an excellent Arabist, he was a prudish moralist and thought that *The Arabian Nights* should be presented in a form suitable for children. To that end, he omitted any stories that he thought obscene or vulgar, and bowdlerized the stories he did not omit if they

included risqué references. He also omitted all of the poetry, which formed a significant part of the tales.

Burton's idiosyncrasies. We will read an abridged version of Burton's multi-volume translation. Though it is not exactly a faithful rendition of the Arabic, it is a fascinating part of the history of the literary work's history and deserves attention in its own right. Burton's translation often makes the text more complex and exciting than the Arabic original. He was a quite decent Arabist, though he makes some mistakes (Lane does too), but the fact that he consistently exaggerates his linguistic and cultural expertise is at times annoying. He uses exceedingly recherché and odd vocabulary to render what are often ordinary Arabic words. His prose is on the whole archaic, featuring words like "whilom" and "anent", but he often interrupts this with low slang from his own time. He also exaggerates anything having to do with sex, erotica, or the exotic. His copious footnotes reveal an obsession with sex and racial characteristics, and they include odd bits of irrelevant and obscure information along with personal anecdotes and occasionally useful and insightful discussions of Middle Eastern customs and material culture. His complete translation has the virtues of including all the tales that Lane omitted because they were not suitable for children and of including all the poetry, which he renders into English verse. He also attempts in various ways to convey the 'Oriental' flavor of the text by translating in an overly literal fashion Arabic turns of phrase and grammatical constructions and rendering sections of Arabic rhymed prose into English rhymed prose, often with exoticizing or bizarre results. The abridged version that we are using cannot do justice to the entire collection but nevertheless includes many of the best-known and most influential tales.

Mahdi's critical edition. Since the late nineteenth century there have been many other editions of the work in English, most in the vein of Lane's translation, presenting the work as a collection of fairy-tales for children. The most important development, aside from a great deal of scholarship on the *Nights* and artistic and literary works inspired by the *Nights*, has been the edition of the earliest known manuscript, the one in the Bibliothèque Nationale that Galland had used, by Muhsin Mahdi in 1984. Mahdi took this version, which includes only 271 "nights", as his exclusive basis; he did not include any of the other accretions to the *Nights* that Galland, Burton, and others had added, giving a quite different view of the text. Haddawy produced a reliable translation of Muhsin Mahdi's edition in 1994.

Historical layers in the text. It is clear from the surviving text of the frame tale that it derives from Persian. The names Shahrazad and Shahriyar are clearly Persian, and the setting is Transoxania, for Shahzaman is said to be the king of Samarqand. Kingship is also a favorite topic of Persian stories, as one sees from the great Iranian national epic, the *Shahnameh*. It is possible that this Persian layer was based on a yet earlier, Indian layer, for Indian tales of advice for kings abound, but the evidence for this in the text is extremely slim. The work had already been translated into an Arabic version in the early Abbasid period: a ninth-century papyrus fragment of the work that includes clear

references to Shahrazad and the frame tale has been preserved. The next mentions of the text, by the historian al-Mas`udi (d. 965) and the bookseller Ibn al-Nadim (d. 980), both refer to the frame tale and both recognize that the collection derives from an earlier Persian collection called *Hezar Afsan* (One Thousand Tales). The earliest substantial extant manuscript, from the 14th century, includes 271 nights. The Persian layer includes the frame-tale and a number of the early tales, which presumably derives from the *Hezar Afsan*. A later, Baghdadi layer includes a number of stories set in Baghdad, often in the time of the famous Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786-809), but probably recorded a century or more later. A third layer includes stories from Egypt and Syria, perhaps from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; and, as explained above, a fourth layer consists of the orphan stories added by Galland and others from written sources of various periods and oral sources Galland collected in the early eighteenth century.

Themes. While the themes of the stories vary widely, several dominate. The frame-tale turns on the question of adultery, the comportment of wives, the psychological disturbance of Shahriyar, and correct methods of royal rule, so it is not surprising that these themes feature in many of the stories. Similarly, since the plot of the frame-tale involves the working of a psychological cure through storytelling, the power of storytelling and the skill of storytellers is also prominent in many tales. At times, this feature is exaggerated, as stories are told within stories within stories and so on. Good and bad wives abound, as well as wise and unwise rulers. Beyond this, an extremely prominent theme is sibling rivalry, with many examples of envy among brothers, and among sisters as well. Other common features of the store are magic, treasure troves, genies, travel, and adventure.

Further Reading:

Beaumont, Daniel. *Slave of Desire: Sex, Love, and Death in The 1001 Nights*. Danvers, Massachusetts: Rosemont, 2002.

Gerhardt, Mia Irene. *The Art of Storytelling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963.

Irwin, Robert. *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*. London: Penguin, 1994.

Pinault, David. *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*. Leiden: Brill, 1992.

Reynolds, Dwight F. "The Thousand and One Nights: A History of the Text and its Reception." *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

On-line Resources:

Arabian Nights website:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Thousand_and_One_Nights

Journal of the 1001 Nights:

<http://journalofthenights.blogspot.com/2009/06/beginners-bibliography.html>

This is an extensive website, including a beginner's bibliography, master's bibliography, Dissertations dealing with the Nights, fiction influenced by the Nights, Film/Television and the 1001 Nights, online versions of the nights, and operas based on the Nights.

Questions: Read *The 1001 Nights*. Think about the following questions, and answer five in writing.

1. What are some other famous collections of tales that have frame tales?
2. In framed collections of tales, how is the frame tale related to the rest of the stories in the collection?
3. Who are the main characters in the frame tale of *The 1001 Nights*? Are there any features in the frame tale that suggest where it originated?
4. How and why is Shahriyar's brother cured? Did he need Shahrazad to cure him?
5. Compare and contrast Shahrazad and the figure of Esther from the *Book of Esther* in the Hebrew Bible.
6. What is the relationship between the story of Shahriyar and Shahzaman on the one hand, and that of Shahriyar and Shahrazad on the other?
7. Explain how any of the subsequent tales is related to the frame tale.

On "Sindbad":

1. Why is it necessary for Sindbad the wealthy merchant to tell his story to the porter? What immediate purpose does the story serve?
2. What do we learn about merchants and trade in Baghdad and the Middle East, or how merchants were viewed, from the description of Sindbad's *Voyages*?
3. Are the *Voyages of Sindbad* related to Homer's *Odyssey*? How so?
4. Some elements repeat in this cycle of seven voyages. What is the outline of the typical voyage?
5. Why are the voyages arranged in this order? Is there some principle behind the arrangement?
6. What makes Sindbad undertake another voyage? What is the moral of the story?

On "Aladdin's Lamp":

1. What are the differences and similarities between this story and the Aladdin story in the popular Disney movie or in the classic film "The Thief of Baghdad"?
2. What effect do the differences have on the audience?
3. How does the audience perceive Aladdin in these versions?

On "Judar and His Brothers":

1. Compare and contrast this story with "Aladdin's Lamp".
2. Does this story share a theme with the story of Joseph in the Bible? Explain.
3. How should Judar treat his brothers? Was his behavior proper or wise? What is the message of the work in this regard?

On "Ali Baba":

1. What causes bad things to happen in this story? Who makes errors, what are they, and how is the reader supposed to judge the characters in the story?

2. How are women and family relationships portrayed?
3. What does the character of Morgana reveal? What aspects of her character are surprising or unexpected?

On “Marouf the Cobbler”:

1. Compare and contrast this story with “Aladdin’s Lamp”.
2. Where was this story written? What is the evidence?
3. What does the reader learn about merchants and trade from this story?
4. What does the audience learn from the two characters of Marouf’s wife in Cairo and the daughter of the Sultan whom he marries later?
5. What does the audience learn from Marouf’s character? Is the reader supposed to like him, or not? How is the reader supposed to react to his questionable actions, such as lying?

SECTION IV: Modern Arabic Literature (weeks 9-15)

Overview:

Literatures in contact. As a result of contact with Western institutions of politics, culture, commerce, technology, and education, Arabic literature underwent a profound transformation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Three new forms of literary work, the play, the short story, and the novel, were imported, adapted, and became an integral part of the literary world in Arab nations throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Poetry, though it had a long and venerable history, was also radically transformed and eventually jettisoned many of its traditional conventions. The novel is in many Arab nations now the prestige literary genre; while poetry is still appreciated and plays a more prevalent role in overall literary culture than it does in the United States or Western Europe, the most famous literati of Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and many other nations are decidedly the novelists, so it comes as no surprise that the Arab world’s Nobel laureate for literature is the novelist Naguib Mahfouz (1913-2006) rather than a poet or an author of short stories.

European presence. The beginning of this transformation of Arabic literature is often set in 1798, the year Napoleon invaded Egypt. The French occupied Egypt for three years, and brought not only superior military hardware but also scores of scholars in many fields who demonstrated to the Egyptians some of the results of modern science. The shocking realization that the modern Europeans were far more advanced than their Middle Eastern contemporaries had a profound effect on societies throughout the region. After the French left in 1801, Muhammad Ali, the governor of Egypt for the Ottomans (1805-49), set out to modernize Egypt using European technology and methods. He improved transportation, built roads and rail lines, planted cash crops such as cotton, reformed the military, created a newspaper, and sent young men on study missions to France. The religious leader attached to the first mission, Rifa`ah

Rafi` al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), left a fascinating account of his experiences in France and his impressions of French society and culture. This and other missions trained students in engineering, military tactics, mineralogy, medicine, and so on, but also forced them to learn French and translate French works into Arabic, an activity that continued and expanded back in Egypt. Also during the 19th century, in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and elsewhere, American and other Protestant missionaries as well as various orders of the Catholic church established schools in which the languages of instruction were English and French, exposing local students to English and French literature and other writings. The level of contact was increased by colonial occupation, which occurred in 1830 in Algeria and 1882 in Egypt, 1898 in Tunisia, and just before or after WWI in most of the remaining Arab lands.

The Arab Awakening. Such contact with the colonial powers and the assimilation of European nationalist ideals contributed to the *Nahdah*, the Arab Awakening or Renaissance, an intellectual, cultural, and political movement the main goal of which was to revive the historical greatness of Arabs through modernization and the sloughing off of decadence of all types. One form this took was the rejection of the “decadent” aspects of pre-modern Arabic literature and the attempt to revive the strong, direct, verve of classical Arabic literature. Classics of Arabic literature were published in Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul, and emphasis was placed on introducing the youth to the great tradition of Arabic letters rather than the commentaries and super-commentaries that formed part of the late medieval curriculum designed primarily for the production of specialists in Islamic law.

Stages of development. Most accounts of the history of this transformation present it as occurring in three stages: 1) translation, 2) imitation and adaptation, and 3) assimilation, involving the composition of truly original works in the borrowed genres. Authors first translated mainly from French and English, but also from other literatures such as German and Russian, into Arabic. Arabic versions of the plays of Molière were performed on stage in Beirut and Cairo. *Paul et Virginie* was rendered into Arabic, as it was into dozens of colonial languages around the world. Then, authors rewrote western mysteries, adventures, and other novels, changing the personal names, settings, and other incongruous elements to Arab equivalents. Typical of these pioneering works were the historical novels of Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914), a Lebanese Christian who edited and published in Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Later, authors began writing more original works following the general literary conventions of the western works but telling an original story with roots in the Arab world. The last stage may be said to begin around the first world war, with the publication of works such as the novel *Zaynab* (1914), by Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956), which followed western models but used entirely Egyptian characters and settings and was focused on describing Egyptian culture and society rather than simply applying Arab names to essentially Western characters. As time went on, the European genres became more fully assimilated.

Literary experiments. While this scheme is true in broad terms, it oversimplifies the process by which it occurred and leaves many interesting and fascinating experiments out. A fascinating example is *al-Saq `ala al-saq fima huwa al-Faryaq*, a two-volume rambling, digressive, sometimes autobiographical work by Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1805-1887), a Lebanese Christian author, which is an anthology of rambling anecdotes, short belletristic pieces, discussions of burning issues, and dissertations on odd philological points, interspersed with snippets of the author's accounts of his own experiences, something of a cross between Rabelais' *Pantagruel* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Al-Tahtawi's Arabic translation of François Fénelon's (1651-1715) *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, titled, in rhyming prose, *Mawaqi` al-aflak fi waqa'i` Tilimak* (*The Positions of the Celestial Spheres, on the Adventures of Télémaque*, 1867) is not a straightforward translation but a radical reworking of the text – rendering large parts of it in rhymed prose, among other things – in order to fit it into al-Tahtawi's conception of didactic Arabic literature. In *Hadith Ibn Hisham*, al-Muwaylihi (1868-1930) adapted the form of al-Hamadhani's *Maqamat* – and lifted al-Hamadhani's narrator – in order to compose an original satire of contemporary Egyptian politics and society. Taha Husayn's *al-Ayyam* (*The Days*) is often considered a crucial point in the history of the Arabic novel, but it is a text *sui generis*, an autobiographical work written in the third person, in language showing the influence of both classical Arabic and modern journalistic style, a *Bildungsroman* authored at the cusp of the shift from tradition to modernity. Each of these works is related to pre-modern Arabic literature and to western literature in complex ways that defy simple characterization. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to state that the genres of the novel, the short story, the play, and the modern poem were indeed borrowed and assimilated from Western models, and also that, even though the genres are strongly assimilated in most Arab nations to date, they remain heavily influenced by Western models, especially, now as a century ago, by works in English and French.

In this section of the course, we will read representative works in the main genres of modern Arabic literature, including the play, poetry, the novel, and the short story.

Further Reading:

Badawi, Muhammad Mustafa. *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Cachia, Pierre. *An Overview of Modern Arabic Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990.

Hourani, Albert. *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Lowry, Joseph E. and Devin J. Stewart. *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography II: 1350-1850*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009.

al-Tahtawi, Rifa`a Rafi`. *An Imam in Paris: al-Tahtawi's Visit to France 1826-1831*. Trans. Daniel L. Newman. London: Saqi Books, 2011.

Week 9: Modern Drama:

Reading: The plays contained in *The Essential Tawfiq al-Hakim: The Sultan's Dilemma, The Tree Climber, The Donkey Market, and The Song of Death* (pp. 5-200).

French and Italian influence. Modern Arabic drama has from the beginning been heavily shaped by the influence of the French theater and Italian opera. In all of pre-modern Arabic literature, only a handful of dramatic texts can be identified, such as the shadow plays of Shams al-Din Muhammad Ibn Daniyal (d. 1311). The pioneer of modern Arab drama was the wealthy Lebanese Christian merchant Marun al-Naqqash (1817-1855), who had traveled to Italy and fallen in love with opera and the theater. In 1850, he staged a play titled *al-Bakhil* (*The Miser*), an adaptation of Molière's *L'Avare*, in his house in Beirut. His nephew Salim (d. 1884), continued his work, creating a theater company and traveling to Egypt, where Syrian Christians were entering journalism and other fields and had a profound impact on the development of the modern Egyptian theater. Jacob Sannu` (1839-1912), and Egyptian Jew, also drew on his experience with the theater in Italy to write a dozen plays which he staged for the Khedive Ismail (1863-1879) in 1870-72, including *The Two Co-Wives*, a satire of polygamy. Before Sannu` fell out of favor, the Khedive dubbed him "the Egyptian Molière". The nineteenth-century witnessed the translation and adaptation of many more European plays, and Jurj Abyad (1880-1959) was sent by the Khedive to Paris to study acting. Between the two world wars, the Egyptian National Theater Troups was formed in 1935, and the prominent poet Ahmad Shawqi (1868-1932), tried his hand at drama, authoring plays in verse such as *The Death of Cleopatra* (1929), *Majnun and Layla* (1931), and *The Andalusian Princess* (1932). At the same time, Najib al-Rihani (1891-1949) formed the Comédie Franco-Arabe, which focused on humorous skits rather than high drama and led directly into the modern Egyptian tradition of comedic theater and the cinema, which produced the first short film in 1917 and the first talking picture, *Awlad al-Dhawat* (*Sons of the Wealthy*), in 1932. For most of the twentieth century, Egypt dominated Arab theater, cinema, radio, and television in the Arab world, but this has changed radically since the late twentieth century with the advent of satellite television and the development of strong traditions in Lebanon and elsewhere.

Tawfiq al-Hakim. Tawfiq al-Hakim was born in Alexandria in 1898. He had a strict, sheltered upbringing and was groomed for a career in the law, following the footsteps of his father, who served for many years as a judge in the Beheira province in the Nile delta. Tawfiq studied at the Faculty of Law in the new Egyptian University and was sent in 1925 to study for a doctorate in law in Paris. He returned three years later without having completed his degree but determined to chart a course as an intellectual. He had in his youth become involved by the theater, but because acting was looked upon as a frivolous and low activity associated with street performers and vulgar farces, he had concealed his involvement, writing articles on the theater under a pseudonym and composing plays anonymously. Apparently encouraged by what he saw in Paris, where theater had a quite different status, he began his career as a playwright and writer in earnest, though he continued to work as deputy prosecutor in

Alexandria and in other positions in the judiciary in the provincial cities of Tanta, Damanhour, and Dessouk until 1943.

Al-Hakim's Plays. In 1933 he published his first major play, *Ahl al-Kahf (The People of the Cave)*, 1933). The title refers to the 18th surah of the Qur'an, *Surat al-Kahf*, which includes a version of the story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, a Christian hagiographic tale youths who are miraculously saved from persecution by being put to sleep for over three hundred years, after which they awake and find that their society has changed completely. The Egyptian National Theatre Troupe, founded in 1935, chose this play for their first performance, but it was not successful. Like many of al-Hakim's plays, most of which were never actually staged, the play was too cerebral for most audiences, who preferred more action and light entertainment. Al-Hakim continued to write scores of plays that drew on Arabic and Islamic, Biblical, and world literature in order to make observations either on philosophical questions such as the conflict between everyday existence and ideals or on social and political issues in contemporary Egypt. In *Soft Hands* (1954), he celebrated the success of the 1952 revolution, portraying an idle, pampered prince of the ancient regime who finds that he has no place in post-revolutionary society. *The Perplexed Sultan* (1960) uses the historical figure of a Mamluk sultan to discuss political legitimacy and the rule of law, evidently a commentary on Abdel Nasser's circumvention of the legal process in his creation of a repressive police state in the years after the revolution. The sultan finds out that he, a former slave, has never been legally manumitted and so is legally ineligible to rule unless he undergoes the public humiliation of being freed. Struggling with the tension between the high literary language and verisimilitude in dialogue, he wrote *al-Safqah (The Deal)*, 1956) in what he called a "third language" between literary Arabic and Egyptian dialect: text that could be read as literary Arabic but would nevertheless be understood as near-ordinary speech. The attempt failed, because the actors immediately translated it into ordinary Egyptian dialect when they performed the play. In his later works, he wrote several plays belonging to the theatre of the absurd, including *Ya tali` al-shajarah (Tree-Climber)*, 1966) and *The Fate of a Cockroach* (1966).

Other works. In addition to his plays, al-Hakim wrote many essays and several novels. *Return of the Spirit* (1933) depicts events leading up to the revolution of 1919 from the point of view of a young, patriotic Egyptian while at the same time telling the entertaining story of an extended family's foibles. Naguib Mahfouz described al-Hakim's publication of *Return of the Spirit* (1933) as the true birth of the Arabic novel, and Mahfouz's novels, particularly the trilogy, may be seen as a continuation of this work. In *The Diary of a Country Prosecutor* (1937), al-Hakim draws on his own experience as a bureaucrat, describing the investigation of a murder in the countryside and exposing the corruption, inefficiency, and hypocrisy of the Egyptian judicial system. *A Sparrow from the East* (1938) is a somewhat autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, about an Egyptian, Muhsin, who travels to Paris to study. It treats the divide between Eastern and Western culture in facile terms, describing Easterners as romantic and spiritual, while Westerners are practical and unemotional. In *Return of Consciousness*

(1974), al-Hakim described his initial enthusiasm for the 1952 revolution and then his disillusionment with the oppressive rule that followed. Al-Hakim thought of himself as an intellectual with a mission to reform Egypt following western models. He was evidently disappointed in his later years with his inability to improve Egyptian society in the ways he had hoped. He died in Cairo in 1987. While his works often appear didactic and patronizing, they include distinct moments of brilliant observation and insight and capture a large part of the history of modern Arabic drama.

Questions:

1. What is the dilemma in the *Sultan's Dilemma*, how does it reflect on modern political history, and how is it resolved?
2. How is humor created in *The Donkey Market*?
3. Analyze *The Tree-Climber* and explain its surprising or odd elements. What large ideas does al-Hakim attempt to convey?
4. *The Song of Death* treats the issue of blood vengeance or vendetta in Upper (i.e., southern) Egypt. Can you identify any other works of world literature devoted to this topic? (You may use outside sources.) Is the point of the play only that vendetta should be abandoned, or does it convey a more general message?

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Badawi, Muhammad Mustafa. *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

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Week 10: Modern Arabic Poetry I:

Reading: Jayyusi (ed.), *Modern Arabic Poetry*, introduction and pp. 45-246.

The period of "decadence". Accounts of the rise of modern Arabic literature often dismiss the writings that immediately preceded it as inferior and completely

uninteresting. Pre-modern times were, according to the modern view, a dark age sandwiched in between the heyday of Arabic literary production and the rise of dynamic, educated, and savvy moderns who would revolutionize all aspects of Arab cultural life. In the view of the proponents of the *Nahdah*, cultural production was closely tied to political power: as long as Arabs did not rule themselves, then they would produce inferior literature. This view, echoed by Jayyusi in the introduction to the anthology we will read this week, is not entirely fair or accurate. The centuries between the twelfth and the nineteenth witnessed many interesting experiments and developments in Arabic literature, including the invention and spread of new poetic forms such as the “seven arts” of colloquial poetry, which included strophic poetry quite distinct from the classical *qasidah* and related genres. Poetry of all kinds remained extremely popular, and several large poetic anthologies arranged by regions of the Islamic world were compiled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The literature of the pre-modern period awaits serious investigation, so it should not be dismissed out of hand; we are not paying considerable attention to it in this course only for the practical reason that very little of it has been translated into English.

Neo-classical poetry. The development of modern poetry differs from that of the play, an obvious foreign implant, in that it was not viewed as a new, foreign form. Arabic boasted an extremely long-lived, continuous, and remarkably stable tradition of poetry dating back to the sixth century, if not earlier, and the same forms, particularly the *qasidah*, continued to be written in the nineteenth century and served the same stereotypical functions, including praise of rulers and patrons. The beginnings of modern Arabic poetry may be located in the neo-classical style of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century poets such as Lebanese Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-1871) and Egyptian Mahmoud Sami al-Barudi (1839-1904) – omitted from Jayyusi’s anthology on account of their early dates – who used traditional forms and conventions but were concerned to portray the realities and events of the contemporary world rather than stylized miniatures of life in the desert haunts of the Bedouin. They strove to eschew the elaborate conceits and stereotyped images and ideas of late medieval poetry and to recapture the force and directness of classical poets such as al-Mutanabbi. The chief neo-classical poet after al-Barudi was Ahmad Shawqi (1868-1932), whom Egyptians dubbed “the Prince of the Poets” on account of his elite upbringing. Other prominent poets in this school were the Egyptian Hafiz Ibrahim (1872-1932), dubbed “the Poet of the Nile”, the Syrian Badawi al-Jabal (Muhammad Sulayman al-Ahmad, 1905-1981), and the Iraqi Ma`ruf al-Rusafi (1875-1945) and Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri (1899-1997). The neo-classicists’ involvement in the political events of the day may be seen in Shawqi’s *Wada` al-Lord Cromer* (Bidding Farewell to Lord Cromer) and his lament on the fall of Macedonia in 1912, or Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri’s political poems *Atbiq Duja* (Descend, Darkness) and *Tanwimat al-Jiya`* (Lullaby for the Hungry).

Romanticism. In the early twentieth century, the *Mahjar* (literally, “place of emigration”) poets, a group of writers living abroad in both North and South America, exerted a profound influence on the development of Arabic poetry. Chief among these

were Lebanese Christian writers living in the United States, including Kahlil Gibran (Jibran Khalil Jibran, 1883-1931), Amin al-Rihani (1876-1940), Elia (Ilya) Abu Madi (1889-1957), and Mikhail Nu`aima (1889-1988). Influenced by Walt Whitman, Thoreau, and other English and American romantic poets, they wrote works in a romantic and mystical vein, experimenting with new forms such as the prose poem. Their bold breaks with standard poetic conventions, both in form and content, met with approval, and their new, romantic mode spread in the Arab world. The romantics had their heyday in the period between the two world wars; their number included Egyptians Ibrahim Nagi (1898-1953), Ahmad Zaki Abu-Shadi (1892-1955), Ali Mahmud Taha (1901-1949); Tunisian Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi (1901-1934); and Lebanese al-Akhtal al-Saghir (1885-1968) and Khalil Hawi (1919-1982). The romantics focused on the relationship between nature and one's inner psychology, mystical knowledge, and spiritual enlightenment through introspection. Their poetry was populated by figures and images from Greek and Ancient Near Eastern mythology, particularly that of Tammuz, as well as from the Bible and world literature.

Questions:

1. Analyze any neo-classical poem in detail.
2. Analyze Hafiz Ibrahim's poem "The Suit". Which elements of this poem might be called "classical" and which not?
3. Analyze any romantic poem in detail.
4. Discuss the form of a poem and its effect on the meaning the poem conveys.
5. Compare and contrast any two poems that focus on a similar theme.
6. Discuss a common theme that appears in a number of poems.

Further Reading:

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Adonis. *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*. Trans. Shawkat Toorawa. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004.

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Week 11: Modern Arabic Poetry, II.

Reading: Selections from Jayyusi (ed.), *Modern Arabic Poetry*, pp. 247-488.

Commitment and political poetry. Since World War II, Arabic poetry has witnessed many developments. A major debate was sparked in the 1950s over the issue of *iltizam* (political commitment), and many Arab poets clung to the view that poetry had to serve political goals, since it was the duty of writers and intellectuals to mobilize the masses and to change political realities. A great deal of poetry was written decrying Arab regimes' violence and stifling restrictions on civil liberties, freedom of expression, and political activism. In addition, Palestinian poets both in Palestine and elsewhere, as well as Arabs from many other nations, addressed the Israeli occupation of Palestine

and lamented the defeat of Arab forces in 1948 and 1967. These include in particular Samih al-Qasim (b. 1939) and Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008).

Modernism. This period saw the birth of modernism and realism: the modernist poets rejected romanticism as a flight from reality into nature and illusory dreams and sought to address contemporary concerns more directly. Prominent modernists include Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1926-1964), Nazik al-Mala'ika (1923-2007), Salah Abd al-Sabur (1931-1981), Ahmad Abd al-Mu'ti Higazi (b. 1935), Amal Dunqul (1940-1983), and others. One of the modernists' crucial innovations was formal. Beginning with her 1947 poem *Cholera*, Nazik al-Mala'ika pioneered what became known as "free verse" (*al-shi'r al-hurr*), a form of poetry that involved the repetition of a metrical foot (*tafilah*, pl. *tafa'il*) without keeping to a set number of feet in each line and without following the strict classical meters. This form became extremely popular with the "New Poets" or modernists; al-Sayyab adopted it from the beginning, Salah `Abd al-Sabur introduced it to Egypt in his collection *al-Nas fi biladi* (*The People in My Country*, 1956), and it has since become the most common mode of poetic expression in Arabic.

Recent trends. Over the last five decades, poets in the Arab world have adopted many different ideologies and modes of poetic discourse. Arabic poetry continues to be heavily influenced by English and French poetry and to react to European literary and critical fashions such as surrealism and deconstruction. Significant developments include the increasing number of women poets and the increased publication of colloquial poetry by writers such as Ahmad Fu'ad Nigm (b. 1929). An extremely popular figure of the late twentieth century was the versatile and prolific Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani (1923-1998), whose youthful works reflected the sensual musings of a talented playboy poet, but later turned to political poetry and championed women's rights. Deceptively simple and direct in style, many of his poems have been set to music. Perhaps the most important Arab poet alive today is Adunis (Ali Ahmad Sa'id, b. 1930), a Syrian who lived for many years in Lebanon, where he founded *Majallat Shi'r* (*Poetry Journal*) together with Yusuf al-Khal (1917-1987) and later established another literary periodical titled *Mawaqif* (*Stances*) in which he regularly published experimental poetry. Living in Paris since 1980, he continues to write poetry that draws on many aspects of classical Arabic and European literatures and adopts many different forms and styles.

Questions: Write up answers to two of the following questions.

1. Discuss the relationship between form and meaning in the poetry of Nazik al-Mala'ika or Badr Shakir al-Sayyab.
2. Discuss the relationship between form and meaning in poems by other authors.
3. Compare and contrast any two poems that focus on a similar theme.
4. Discuss a common theme that appears in a number of poems.

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- Jayyusi, Lena. *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*. Dearborn, Michigan: Interlink Publishing Group, 2000.
- Qabbani, Nizar. *One Entering the Sea: The Erotic and Other Poetry of Nizar Qabbani*. Trans. Handal, Nathalie. Dearborn, Michigan: Interlink Publishing Group, 2013.
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Week 12: Nation and Society in the Modern Arabic Novel.

Reading: Naguib Mahfouz, *Miramar*.

The birth of the novel. In 1988, Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz (1913-2006) won the Nobel Prize for literature. In a sense, his career spans most of the history of the novel in Arabic and is exemplary of the rise of the novel as the prestige genre in Arabic literature. In the 1860s and 1870s, Lebanese writers translated works such as Alexander Dumas' *Count of Monte Cristo* (1870), Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul and Virginie* (1872), and Jules Verne's *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. Around the same period, writers such as Salīm al-Bustānī (d. 1884) and Yaqoub Sarruf (1852-1927) wrote original novels inspired by Western works, and usually involving Western settings and characters, apparently because the limited interaction between the genders in Arab societies made it more difficult to tell love stories of the type common in Western novels. Such early works had simple characters, involved adventure and romance, and concluded with a happy ending. In the next stage, authors turned to historical novels in order to write about an Arab or Middle Eastern contexts without having to make difficult decisions about how to portray contemporary reality. One of the most important writers in this regard was Jurji Zaidan (1861-1914), whose twenty historical novels, serialized in his journal *Hilal* between 1891 and 1914, depicted episodes in Islamic history. The next stage involved the writing of novels that involved realistic settings in contemporary Arab societies and involved complex Arab characters. By this stage, the Arabic novel took on a life of its own.

Historical novels. Naguib Mahfouz's work followed similar stages. Born in 1911, he studied philosophy at Cairo University and was influenced by the logical positivism of Auguste Comte. As a student in the university, he began writing articles on philosophy and literature for *al-Majallah al-jadidah*, a journal published by the socialist thinker Salama Musa (1887-1958). His early work was heavily indebted to the conventions of English and French novels. His first major works were three historical novels set in Pharaonic Egypt: *Abath al-Aqdar (Khufu's Wisdom)*, 1939), *Radubis (Rhadopis of Nubia)*, 1943), and *Kifah Tiba (Thebes at War)*, 1944), following in the tradition of Jurji Zaidan but focusing on Egyptian history in particular and on Pharaonic rather than Islamic history. These novels were allegorical, referring to contemporary Egyptian politics indirectly; the tyranny and caprice of the Pharaoh in *Radubis* are clearly intended as a commentary on the rule of King Farouk (1937-1952). It is said that Naguib Mahfouz originally

intended to write a long series of historical novels modeled on Sir Walter Scott's oeuvre, but later abandoned the plan.

Cairene society. In the next stage of his novelistic career, from World War II through the 1950's, Mahfouz treated contemporary Egyptian history, society, and politics, focusing on the city of Cairo, as Dickens had done for London and Balzac and Zola for Paris. *Khan al-Khalili* (1945), *al-Qahira al-Jadida (Cairo Modern)*, 1946), *Zuqaq al-Midaqq (Midaq Alley)*, 1947), *Bidayah wa-Nihayah (Beginning and End)*, 1951) all dealt with Egyptian society immediately before, during, and after World War II. His magnum opus, however, was his Trilogy, published in 1956-57 but clearly written earlier, each part of which bears as its title the name of a street in the traditional quarters of Cairo: *Bayn al-Qasrayn*, *Qasr al-Shawq*, and *al-Sukkariyya*. The trilogy is a grand saga that follows a single family through several generations, beginning with the nationalist fervor that led to the revolt of 1919, and ending in 1944. Combining insightful accounts of Egyptian political history with brilliant characterization and the perceptive treatment of Egyptian societal norms, it established Naguib Mahfouz as a major literary figure and the premier novelist of Egypt.

New approaches. In the late 1950s, Mahfouz turned to more experimental and introspective forms, adopting techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration. In *Awlad Haritna* (literally "The Children of Our Alley," but translated as *The Children of Gebelawi*, 1959) is an allegorical novel about religious history, the 114 chapters of which match the number of surahs of the Qur'an. The inhabitants of the alley represent society as it experiences a series of prophecies, and the heroes of the alley represent prophetic figures such as Adam, Cain and Abel, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and the final prophet, the man of science and rational inquiry. Gebelawi ("Mountain Man") represents God. Published in Beirut in 1959, the work was banned in Egypt as blasphemous. Other works from this period continued to focus on contemporary Egyptian society and politics. In *Al-Liss wa'l-kilab (The Thief and the Dogs)*, 1961), Mahfouz studies in depth of the mind of one protagonist, a disenchanting revolutionary idealist, and makes extensive use of stream-of-consciousness narrative. *Tharthara fawq al-Nil (Chatter on the Nile)*, 1966) describes the escapist and morally questionable character of a group of intellectuals who gather for parties on a Nile houseboat. *Al-Karnak* (1974) treats the fear and oppression caused by the eavesdropping, informing, secret arrests and torture engaged in by Nasser's police state. *Yawm Maqtal al-Za'im (The Day the Leader Was Assassinated)*, 1985), the last of these works, describes the politics surrounding the assassination of Sadat in 1981. Subsequently, Mahfouz wrote novels that drew on key works of Arabic and Islamic literary heritage, such as *Rihlat Ibn Fattuma (The Travels of Ibn Fattuma)*, 1988), which draws on *Rihlat Ibn Battuta (The Travels of Ibn Battuta (d. 1369))*, the the most famous medieval Muslim travel account, to create an allegory about political and economic systems. Similarly, his *Arabian Nights and Days* draws on *The 1001 Nights*. By the 1980s, he was being outstripped in innovation and creativity by younger generations of writers such as Gamal al-Ghitani. Mahfouz was stabbed in the neck in 1994 by a Muslim fundamentalist but continued to write and to

attend literary salons despite declining health and hearing problems. He died in Cairo in 2006 at the age of 94.

Miramar. In Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Miramar* (1967), the reading for this week, the central conceit is the use of a building, a pension house in Alexandria, as a microcosm of Egyptian society. The various inhabitants of this small boarding house represent social types, examples of Egypt's various classes, along with their associated professions, political views, and cultural perspectives, set against the complex historical layers of Egyptian society. *Miramar* portrays Egypt under Nasser's regime in the early 1960s, not long after the 1952 revolution, when revolutionary discourse was alive and well but dissent was evident among those who had witnessed the heavy-handed tactics of the government rule through a one-party system and were disillusioned by corruption and the contrast between ideals and political realities. *Miramar* tells the story from the point of view of multiple narrators, a technique that Faulkner had used it to such effect in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and which subsequently was emulated in Arabic literature not just in *Miramar* but in a number of other Arabic novels such as the Palestinian Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's *The Ship* (1970), just as it was imitated in many other world literatures.

Questions:

Read *Miramar*. Think about the following questions, and answer three in writing.

1. Briefly describe the characters who live in the Miramar hotel. What classes and backgrounds do they represent?
2. Most of Naguib Mahfouz's novels and short stories are set in Cairo, and many in the traditional quarters near where he grew up. Why is this work set in Alexandria?
3. Why is the central setting in the novel a pension house? What does this say about the boarders in the pension?
4. What does the character of Zohra represent in the novel? What does the attention she gets from the male characters represent?
5. What is the overall message of *Miramar* about Egyptian culture and politics?
6. What role does religion play in the work?

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Mahfouz, Naguib. *Three Novels of Ancient Egypt: Khufu's Wisdom, Rhadopis of Nubia, and Thebes at War*. Trans. Raymond Stock, Humphrey Davies, and Nadine Gordimer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

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- al-Aswani, Alaa'. *The Yacoubian Building*. Trans. Humphrey Davies. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.
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Week 13: The Colonial Predicament in the Modern Arabic Novel I.

Reading: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*.

Tayeb Salih. Tayeb Salih was born in a village near El-Debba in northern Sudan in 1929. He attended school in Port Sudan and Omdurman, and the University in Khartoum. After working briefly as a teacher, he traveled to London and completed a degree in international relations at the University of London. Remaining in England, he wrote a literary column for *al-Majalla*, an Arabic-language publication in England and worked for the Arabic Section of the BBC for many years. He subsequently became the director of Qatar's Ministry of Information, and then worked for UNESCO, based in Paris. He retired to London, where he died in 2009.

Works. Tayeb Salih began publishing literary works in the 1960s. He published a collection of stories, *The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid*, in 1960, and the novella *The Wedding of Zein* in 1962. His most famous and accomplished work, the novel *Season of Migration to the North*, was serialized in the Lebanese journal *Hilal* in 1966 and published as a complete work in 1967. He began working on a trilogy of novels but finished only the first two, *Daww al-Bayt* (The Light of the House) and *Mariud* (or *Bandarshah*), in 1971 and 1976. Most of his works are set in his native region in northern Sudan and describe traditional society in villages by the Nile, as well as the effects of outside political decisions and colonialism on such communities.

Season of Migration to the North. This complex work is considered by many critics to be the best Arabic novel. The narrator, a young man who has spent the last seven years in England studying an obscure English poet, returns to his native village of Wad Hamad hoping to work toward the progress of his nation in the post-independence era. He is puzzled by the presence of a stranger among the villagers, the enigmatic Mustafa Sa'eed, who, it turns out, was also educated in England. The bulk of the novel is made up of Mustafa Sa'eed's narration of his story to the narrator. The narration in the novel is quite complex, as is the treatment of time, and the two characters are at some points difficult to distinguish. *Season of Migration to the North* is a commentary on colonialism and its aftermath, and it has rightly been described as an example of Africa's writing back to the colonial powers. Several critics have noted that it reverses, in a sense, Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*: rather than portraying Western colonists going up the

river Congo into the heart of the colony, it portrays a colonist going from the river Nile to the heart of the Empire, London. Mustafa Sa'eed plays upon and exploits the exotic fantasies the English have about Africa and Arabs, and becomes a brilliant lecturer in economics, the science that was supposed to magically cure the ills of the developing world and improve international relations overall. The work draws in innovative ways on a number of European literary sources, in addition to *The Heart of Darkness: Othello* (mentioned explicitly in the text), Thomas Mann's *Dr. Faustus*, and Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*.

Questions:

1. What do the narrator and the character of Mustafa Saeed have in common? What happens to their identities in the course of the novel? What message does this convey to the audience?
2. Describe Mustafa Saeed's relationships with women in Britain. How does this reflect on the relationship between the culture of the colonizers and that of the colonized?
3. The relationship between Mustafa Saeed and Jean Morris is particularly intense and has been likened to that between Othello and Desdemona in Shakespeare's play *Othello*. Compare and contrast the two relationships. What roles do they serve in their respective works?
4. In *Season of Migration to the North* what are the results of colonization? How are Sudan and Britain related during the colonial period and after independence? What is problematic about the relationship?
5. How does the novel portray women and marriage in the village in Sudan? What does the character of Bint Majzoub reveal?
6. Explain the last scene in the novel. Does the narrator drown or not? Why or why not?
7. The colonial experience is described as an infectious disease at several points in the novel. How is this idea borne out in the plot?
8. What roles does education play in the novel? How does the novel differ from a typical European *Bildungsroman*? In many Arabic novels portraying a similar attempt to cross cultures, education provides a miraculous but simple fix, allowing the protagonist to benefit from Western knowledge, cultural advancement, and technology while remaining loyal to his authentic native culture. How does education in this novel differ?
9. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* portrays a young British man's journey up the River Congo into the heart of Africa, the dark continent, while *Season of Migration to the North* depicts the opposite journey of a young Sudanese man to London, the heart of the colonial power. Compare and contrast the two works.

Further Reading:

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Week 14: The Colonial Predicament in the Modern Arabic Novel II.

Reading: Ahlam Mostaghanemi, *Memory in the Flesh*.

Ahlam Mostaghanemi. A female Algerian novelist born in 1953, Mostaghanemi lived in Tunisia as a child, while her father, Mohammed Cherif, in the Algerian resistance against the French, continued to participate clandestinely in the war of independence (1954-1962) across the border. After Algerian independence, her family returned to their native city, Constantine, and she joined the first generation of modern Algerians to complete their education in Arabic. When she obtained a B.A. in literature at the University of Algiers in 1973, she was already a recognized writer, having published the collection of poetry *'Ala Marfa' al-Ayyam (In the Harbor of Days)*. She went on to receive a doctorate in sociology from the Sorbonne in 1982. Her thesis, *Algeria, Women, and Writing*, completed under the supervision of Jacques Berque, was published soon after. Mostaghanemi published her first novel, *Dhakhirat al-jasad (Memory in the Flesh)* in Beirut in 1993 but wrote it earlier. She has published several novels since then, including *Chaos of the Senses* (1997), *Passerby a Bed* (2003), and *nessyane.com (The Art of Forgetting)*, 2009), and most recently *Black Suits You* (2012). She now lives in Beirut, Lebanon, where she settled after marrying a Lebanese journalist.

Memory in the Flesh. Written ca. 1985, this work is considered one of the best Arabic

novels by a woman writer and was awarded the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature in 1998. In it, Mosteghanemi portrays four decades of the history of Eastern Algeria, and the city of Constantine in particular, from the nationalist revolt against the French occupation in Eastern Algeria in 1945 to the 1980s, two decades after independence. The novel has two main characters: Khalid, the narrator, who writes the novel as a memoir, and Ahlam, a younger woman, with whom he has an affair. The two are bound both by the nationalist struggle and art. Ahlam's father, Si Tahir Abd al-Mawla, was Khaled's commander in the resistance, and after Khalid lost an arm in battle, Si Tahir sent him to safety across the border in Tunisia and entrusted him to register his newborn daughter with the name he had chosen: Ahlam (literally "dreams", also the name of the author). Khalid was thus a surrogate father to her in her infancy, something more important because her real father was killed before he could leave the guerillas he was leading to see her. Khalid and Ahlam also share in being creative artists; he is a painter and writer, and she is also a writer. The novel's most obvious—and perhaps surprising—complexity is that it tells Ahlam's story through the narration of Khalid, even though the novel is autobiographical in many aspects.

Colonialism and independence. Algeria's colonial experience was longer and more intense than that of any other Arab nation. France invaded Algeria in 1830, long before the British entered Egypt in 1882, and Algeria remained under French control for over 130 years, gaining independence after a bloody war 1954-1962. The French actually annexed Algeria, declaring it a department of France rather than an overseas colony, and encouraged the settlement of French citizens there. There were many revolts and acts of resistance, including the 1945 revolt in Eastern Algeria which figures prominently in the first chapter of *Memory in the Flesh*. The French crackdown on rebels was quite ferocious, and the war of independence, though eventually successful, produced an enormous number of casualties, causing it to become known as the war of a million martyrs. After independence, Algeria, like many newly independent Arab nations, adopted a single party system that stunted democratization and ensured that the military would remain dominant in the government. The adoption of an isolationist political stance and a socialist economy failed to produce the prosperity and social progress that many Algerians had hoped for. A major theme in *Memory in the Flesh* is the corruption of political appointees and the military officers in the post-independence period.

Themes. *Memory in the Flesh* is complex in its themes, commenting as it does on nationalism, colonialism, language, memory, cultural identity, literature, and art. It refers pointedly to the development of a female writer, describing the novel that Ahlam, the main character, had written by the age of 26, and to the Francophone Algerian poet and novelist, Malek Haddad (1927-1978), who exerted a formative influence on Mosteghanemi. Intertwined with this is the story of Khalid, who turned to painting after losing his arm. Both use their art as a coping mechanism, and through it, they develop a passionate affair that is never consummated but nevertheless is the apparent cause of the novel's existence. The six chapters of the novel move between Constantine

and Paris several times, portraying the life of an exiled Algerian intellectual in the metropole and his conflicted relationship with the homeland. Mostaghanemi succeeds in developing the main characters as rounded individuals while still using them to represent conventional social types.

Questions: Think about the following questions as you read, and write up the answers to two.

1. What is the significance assigned to names in the novel? The heroine was originally given the name *Hayat* ("Life"), she was almost named *Manubiyya* after a Tunisian saint, and her father gave her the name *Ahlam* ("Dreams"). What is the significance of the act of renaming her? What is the significance of each name?
2. Dreams are mentioned continually throughout the novel. What message does the work convey about them?
3. What is special about place in general and the city of Constantine in particular in the novel?
4. What is the work's critique of Algerian nationalism after independence from France in 1962?
5. What is the role of a writer or painter, and what does he or she accomplish by creating a work of art?
6. What does the novel reveal about language? What roles are played by French, literary Arabic, and the Arabic dialect of Constantine?
7. The novel refers several times to the saying "Mountains do not meet, (but people do)." This ordinarily means, "It's a small world," referring to an actual or possible meeting with an acquaintance far from home under unexpected circumstances. How is it used and interpreted in the novel?
8. Bridges appear constantly in the novel. Why? What do they represent, and how are they related to the main plot and characters?
9. How is Algerian nationalism related to Arab nationalism? What role does the character of Ziad, the Palestinian poet, play in the work?

Further Reading:

Faqir, Fadia. *In the House of Silence: Autobiographical Essays by Arab Women Writers*. London: Garnet, 2009.

McDougall, James. "Social Memories 'in the Flesh': War and Exile in Algerian Self-Writing." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 30 (2010): 34-56.

McDougall, James. "Dream of Exile, Promise of Home: Language, Education, and Arabism in Algeria." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43.2 (2011): 251-70.

Mostaghanemi, Ahlam. *The Art of Forgetting*. Amazon Kindle Edition, 2012.

El Saadawi, Nawal. *A Daughter of Isis: The Autobiography of Nawal El Saadawi*, 2nd ed. London: Zed Books, 2009.

El Saadawi, Nawal. *Woman at Point Zero*, 2nd ed. London: Zed Books, 2008.

Al-Shaykh, Hanan. *The Story of Zahrah: A Novel*. New York: Anchor Books, 1996.

Week 15: The Short Story.

Reading: Yusuf Idris, *The Cheapest Nights*.

The short story. The short story was another of the European genres that was adopted into Arabic literature. Certainly, myriad anecdotes and stories existed throughout the history of Arabic literature, but the modern Arabic short story is undeniably related to the tradition of the European short story, of the sort authored by Balzac (1799-1850) and Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893). It only became firmly established as a standard Arabic literary genre in the twentieth century, first in Egypt and Lebanon, especially through the medium of newspapers and journals. One of the leading early practitioners of the genre was Mahmud Taymur (1894-1973), who adopted as his pen-name “the Egyptian Maupassant.” Also important was the gifted humorist and stylist, al-Mazini (1889-1949), who captured with his imaginative and elegant prose the foibles of the Egypt’s middle class in the period between the two world wars. Yusuf Idris, like al-Mazini, excels in insight, economy of expression, and ironic humor, but he adds biting social criticism.

Yusuf Idris. Yusuf Idris was born in 1927 in a village in the Nile Delta of northern Egypt. Since his father worked for land reclamation projects and often moved, he lived in a number of Delta towns and villages, and sometimes with his grandparents, before the family settled in Cairo when he was fourteen years old. He attended medical school at the University of Cairo and worked after his graduation in 1951 as a doctor at Qasr al-`Ayni, the largest public hospital in Cairo. He was politically active as a student and afterwards, protesting against British domination and the corrupt government of King Farouk. He supported the Free Officer’s revolution of 1952, but was soon disillusioned by Gamal Abd el-Nasser’s dictatorial rule and was arrested in 1954 for political dissidence. He joined the Communist party in reaction, but resigned in 1956. While still a medical student, Yusuf Idris began publishing stories in *al-Masri* (The Egyptian), a Cairo newspaper, and in the popular weekly magazine *Rose el Youssef*. His first collection of stories, *The Cheapest Nights*, appeared in 1954, and he published several additional collections in the next few years. He gave up practicing medicine in 1960 in order to devote himself entirely to writing, and fought for six months in the Algerian war of independence from the French in 1961, only returning to Egypt when he was wounded in battle. He worked as an editor of the newspaper *al-Gumhuriyya* (*The Republic*) and continued to write prolifically. From then until his death in 1991, he wrote numerous collections of short stories, which remained his forte, as well as several novels and plays. It is widely reported that Yusuf Idris was surprised and disappointed when the novelist Naguib Mahfouz was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1989 and not he. While he showed some hubris in making this sentiment known, many would agree that Yusuf Idris was a bolder and more innovative writer than Naguib Mahfouz.

Themes and concerns. Yusuf Idris’ stories are characterized by humor, irony, sympathy for the poor and the underdog, and a focus on sex. Many stories portray the everyday hardships of peasants and the working class and denounce political oppression and the corruption and hypocrisy of the upper classes. He addresses with

candor and insight a large number of topics that were considered taboo in Egyptian society, such as sexual frustration, sexual exploitation, adultery, incest, and homosexuality, along with the many injustices and hypocrisies that permeate Egyptian social and sexual mores. This distinguishes his works sharply from those of Naguib Mahfouz, which are much less bold and stick to important, but less controversial, topics. Mahfouz usually addressed problems that everyone recognized and were already discussing in public fora, while Yusuf Idris addressed problems that people did not want to talk about or were afraid to broach. His stories often appear deceptively simple, use direct, forceful language, and rely to a great extent on linguistic, situational, and dramatic irony. The collection of stories that we will read this week is actually a selection of representative stories from six separate collections published between 1954 and 1970, though its title, *The Cheapest Nights* – from the first story in the collection – is the same as that of his first published collection, from 1954.

Questions:

1. Explain the story “The Cheapest Nights” (pp. 1-5). Why is the title ironic?
2. What change occurs in the story “The Errand” (pp. 18-30), how does it occur, and what effect does it have on the audience?
3. “The Dregs of the City” is one of the most effective portrayals of the hypocrisy of the upper classes and their abuse of the lower classes. Explain how Yusuf Idris achieves this.
4. What message does “The Shame” (pp. 156-76) convey about Egyptian social and sexual ideologies?
5. Discuss the treatment of sex in two or more stories.
6. Discuss the use of irony in the stories.
7. Discuss interesting uses of language in the stories.
8. Yusuf Idris was trained and worked as a doctor, and doctors and medicine appear prominently in many of his stories. Do the stories reveal an overall view of medicine or doctors?

Further Reading:

Allen, Roger A. *Critical Perspectives on Yusuf Idris*. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1994.

Bakr, Salwa. *The Wives of Men and Other Stories*. Trans. Denys Johnson-Davies. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Hafez, Sabry. *A Reader of Modern Arabic Short Stories*. London: Saqi Books, 2001.

Idris, Yusuf. *The Essential Yusuf Idris: Masterpieces of the Egyptian Short Story*.

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Johnson-Davies, Denys (trans. and ed.). *The Anchor Book of Modern Arab Fiction*. London: Anchor Books, 2006.

Somekh, Sasson. *Genre and Language in Modern Arabic Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991.

Somekh, Sasson. "Language and Theme in the Short Stories of Yusuf Idris." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 6 (1975): 89-100.

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Instructions for Paper Assignments:

Each paper will be 10-12 pages, double-spaced, and include full bibliography and footnotes, following either Chicago or MLA style. Writing should be formal throughout. The papers will be judged on both content and form: first, on argument, the use of explicit evidence, the marshaling of that evidence in a logical and cogent manner, and correct documentation; second, on the formal structure of the essay; and third, on style, mechanics, and so on.

Assignment for Paper #1:

Paper #1 will be due in Week 9 of the course. The paper may address any issue relevant to the first two sections of the course, classical Arabic literature or medieval Arabic literature and its influence on Western Europe, but the following are some suggested topics:

1. Write a structural analysis of a *qasidah*. What is the main thesis of the *qasidah*, and how is it rhetorically effective? How is the structure related to the meaning?
2. Discuss the different uses to which the *qasidah* was put in classical Arabic literature. Are these distinct genres, or merely sub-genres of the *qasidah*? How does one identify them? What changes from one type to the next? Is the *qasidah* form less suited to some purposes than to others? Why?
3. Perform a structural analysis of one or more *maqamahs*, either by al-Hamadhani or another author, such as al-Hariri.
4. Compare the *Maqamat* of al-Hamadhani with those of al-Hariri, either globally or focusing on one or more paired examples in detail.
5. How does al-Jahiz create humor in *The Book of Misers*?
6. What does *The Book of Misers* reveal about Abbasid social life, etiquette, taste, stereotypes, and prejudices? Is one of the ordinary roles of literature to inculcate proper etiquette and taste?
7. Discuss the influence of some aspect of Arabic literature on European literature.
8. Compare and contrast Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love* with Ibn Hazm's *The Ring of the Dove*.
9. Compare and contrast troubadour poetry with medieval Arabic love poetry.
10. Discuss the use of *The 1001 Nights* in modern European, American, or other literature or film.

Assignment for Paper #2:

Paper #2 will be due in Week 15 of the course and may address any issue relevant to the third section of the course, modern Arabic literature. The following are some suggested topics:

1. Discuss the relationship of modern Arabic poetry or the modern Arabic novel or short story to European models, particularly major works of French and English literature.
2. Discuss the relationship of the modern Arabic poem, short story, play, or novel to pre-modern Arabic literature.
3. Compare and contrast *Memory in the Flesh* and *Season of Migration to the North*. How do they portray the colonial period, the colony after independence, the metropole or relations between the imperial power and the colonized?
4. Compare Alaa al-Aswaany's *The Yacoubian Building* to Naguib Mahfouz's *Miramar*.
5. Compare the narrative technique of *Miramar* to that of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.
6. Analyze any novel by Naguib Mahfouz.
7. Analyze one poem from Jayyusi's anthology.
8. Investigate a major theme in several modern poems from Jayyusi's anthology.
9. Compare and contrast two or more poems of a similar type.
10. Investigate a major theme in Yusuf Idris' short stories.
11. Discuss the use of irony in Yusuf Idris' short stories.
12. How is *Season of Migration to the North* related to the European *Bildungsroman* or the Arab *Bildungsroman*.
13. Compare and contrast *Memory in the Flesh* with *Season of Migration to the North*.
14. Compare and contrast Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Sparrow from the East* with *Season of Migration to the North*.
15. How does politics figure in modern Arabic poetry?
16. How does politics figure in modern Arabic novels?