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0521772303 - An Introduction to Arabic Literature
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Roger Allen provides a comprehensive introductory survey of literary texts in Arabic, from their unknown beginnings in the fifth century AD to the present day. The volume focuses on the major genres of Arabic literature, dealing with Islam's sacred text, the Qur'ān, and a wealth of poetry, narrative prose, drama and criticism. Allen reveals the continuities that link the creative output of the present day to the illustrious literary heritage of the past and incorporates an enormously rich body of popular literature typified most famously by *The Arabian Nights*. The volume is informed by Western critical approaches, but within each chapter the emphasis is on the texts themselves, with extensive quotations in English translation. Reference features include a chronology and a guide to further reading. A revised and abridged version of Allen's acclaimed study, *The Arabic Literary Heritage*, this book provides an invaluable student introduction to a major non-Western literary tradition.

ROGER ALLEN is Professor of Arabic at the University of Pennsylvania. He is author of *The Arabic Literary Heritage* (1998), *The Arabic Novel* (1982) and *A Period of Time* (1992). He has published more than forty journal articles on Arabic literature and translated a number of modern Arabic narratives including Najib Mahfuz's *Mirrors* (1977) and *Autumn Quail* (1985).

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK www.cup.cam.ac.uk
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA www.cup.org
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

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First published 2000

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Monotype Baskerville 11/12¹/₂ pt. *System* QuarkXPress™ [SE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Allen, Roger M. A.

An introduction to Arabic literature / Roger Allen.
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 77657 0 (pbk.) – ISBN 0 521 77230 3 (hbk.)

1. Arabic literature – History and criticism. I. Title.

PJ7510.A43 2000

892.709–dc21 99-053418

ISBN 0 521 77230 3 hardback

ISBN 0 521 77657 0 paperback

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Preface

As a scholar in Arabic literature and the teacher of a university-level course on Arabic literary history, I have for some time been experimenting with different ways of presenting the subject to university students with a broad range of humanistic interests and also to a more general reading public. I have often asked my own students to comment on the merits of previous attempts at writing a history of Arabic literature and to prepare outlines for a new approach to the topic. I am therefore especially pleased to acknowledge here that many of the principles used in preparing this work are as much a reflection of classroom debates and essay responses as of profitable discussions with academic colleagues.

I have written this book without resorting to footnotes, and so I cannot acknowledge in the time-honoured fashion the debt that I owe to numerous colleagues whose critical studies of the Arabic literary tradition are reflected in the pages that follow. I can only express the hope that the guide to further reading listed at the end of the work will convey some idea of the extent to which I am grateful for their insights. I might perhaps take a leaf out of the book of the Middle East's primary jokester, Juḥā, and suggest that those who know what those sources of my inspiration are might tell those who do not.

Several of my colleagues have done me the great service of reading portions of this work in advance of its publication. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their wise counsel and gentle correction, while absolving them of all responsibility for the result: Geert Jan van Gelder, Peter Heath, Salma Khadra al-Jayyusi, Hilary Kilpatrick, Everett Rowson, Yasir Saqr, Michael Sells, and William Smyth.

Note on translation, transliteration, and further reading

A few words need to be said about various aspects of the text and the conventions that it uses. Firstly, translation: except where indicated in the text itself, the translations in the book are my own.

Secondly, on transliteration: the literary works that are the focus of this volume have been composed in Arabic. Thus, in discussing them in English, a system of transliteration is needed whereby the written symbols of Arabic are represented from the repertoire of the English alphabet. Scholars working in Arabic studies have devised a number of different systems for doing this, in part reflecting the conventions of writing and pronunciation within their own language systems. In English scholarly discourse on this field, the system of transliteration that is most widespread is the one devised by the Library of Congress in the United States, also used with minor adjustments by the British Library. The basic outlines of this system are used in this book.

The Library of Congress system uses a written symbol from the English alphabet to replicate an equivalent written symbol in Arabic. It makes no attempt to reproduce exactly the way in which the Arabic words are pronounced. Thus, while the Arabic names and titles transliterated in this book will give some idea of how the written symbols will sound, the equivalence is not (and cannot be) anything approaching complete. Beyond the usual English alphabet set, two other symbols are used: the left-facing single quotation-mark (‘) represents the Arabic glottal stop (called *hamzah*), such as is represented by the hyphen in the word re-enter; and the superscript c (ˤ) represents a sound for which English has no equivalent, but which linguists term a pharyngeal plosive (the name of the Arabic phoneme is ‘*ayn*). Furthermore, the Arabic language makes use of several written symbols and pronounced sounds that are not found in the English language system. To represent these sounds and symbols in transliteration, the Library of Congress system makes use of a series of supplementary markings (usually called diacritics) in

order to indicate the presence of these intrinsically Semitic phenomena: dots under certain consonants to indicate that they are emphatic and elongation signs (macrons) over vowels to show that their pronunciation time is longer than that of the short vowels.

Lastly, regarding the Guide to Further Reading: bearing in mind the nature and breadth of the subject matter of this work, it is obviously impossible to provide anything approaching a complete bibliography on any topic or even sub-topic; I might note that the reasons lie not only in the bulk of what would result, but the extreme inaccessibility of some of the sources involved. The Guide to Further Reading, which is divided into sections relating to the various chapters, is thus intended to give samples of work on the particular genre and subject involved; it is my hope that readers who find their interests aroused by this book may use such studies and translations as a trigger to yet further investigations.

Chronology

Note: In the case of authors, the dates involved are the approximate year of death

Historical events/people	Literary events/people
500	al-Muhalhil
533	Imru' al-Qays
c. 570 Birth of Muḥammad	al-Shanfarā (?)
	Ta'abbata sharran (?)
	al-Muraqqish
	Ṭarafah
600	
	ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm
	al-Ḥarith ibn Ḥillizah
	ʿAmr ibn Qamī'ah
	ʿAdī ibn Zayd
	Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā
	ʿAntarah
622 Hijrah from Mecca to Medina	Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah
632 Death of Muḥammad	Al-Aʿshā
635 Capture of Damascus by Muslims	
636 Battle of Qādisiyyah; defeat of Sāsānī (Persian) army	al-Khansāʾ
637–44 Conquests of Syria, Iraq, Egypt	
640 Establishment of al-Kūfah and al-Baṣrah as garrison cities in Iraq	Qays ibn Mulawwah (?)
650 Standardisation of Qurʾānic text	
656 Murder of Caliph ʿUthmān	
657 Battle of Ṣiffin	
661 Assassination of Caliph ʿAlī; beginning of Umawī dynasty	Labīd
	al-Ḥutayʾah

Historical events/people		Literary events/people
670	Establishment of Qayrawān in Tunisia	Ḥassān ibn Thābit
680	Battle of Karbalāʾ	
685–91	Dome of the Rock built in Jerusalem	
700		Jamīl Laylā al-Akhyaliyyah
705	Building of Great Mosque in Damascus	al-ʿAjjāj
710	Ṭāriq crosses into Spain	al-Akḥṭal
705–15	Capture of Bukhārā and Samarkand	
732	Battle of Tours; Charles Martel defeats Muslims	ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿah Kuthayyir Jarīr al-Farazdaq al-Ṭirimmāḥ ʿDhū al-Rummahʾ al-ʿArjī
747	Beginning of ʿAbbāsī revolt in Khūrāsān	al-Walīd ibn Yazīd
750	Fall of Umawī caliphate; ʿAbbāsī caliphs come to power	ʿAbd al-ḥamīd al-kātib
755–1031	Umawī dynasty in Cordoba	ibn al-Muqaffaʿ
762	Foundation of Baghdād	Abū Ḥanīfah Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ Ḥammād al-Rāwiyah ibn Ishāq Bashshār ibn Burd al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad
785	Work begins on Great Mosque in Cordoba	
786–809	Caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd	Malik ibn Anas Khalaf al-aḥmar Sibawayh
800		Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyyah
803	Fall of Barmakī family in Baghdād	Abū Nuwās ʿAbbās ibn al-Aḥnaf Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī

xii		<i>Chronology</i>	
Historical events/people			Literary events/people
827	Caliph al-Ma'mūn declares Mu'tazilī doctrine to be orthodox; conquest of Sicily		al-Shāfi'ī Muslim ibn al-Walīd
832	Foundation of Bayt al-Ḥikmah library in Baghdād		Abū al-'Atāhiyah al-Aṣma'ī ibn Hishām Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī al-Kindī
836–89	Foundation of Samarrā' as Abbāsī capital		Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal Abū Tammām ibn Sallām al-Jumahlī al-Khwārizmī Ishāq al-Mawṣilī Ziryāb Dhū al-nūn al-Miṣrī
869–83	Zanj rebellion		al-Jāḥiẓ ibn Qutaybah al-Mubarrad
871	Sack of al-Baṣrah by Zanj forces		al-Bukhārī al-Kindī al-Balādhurī ibn al-Rūmī al-Buḥturī ibn Abī al-Dunyā ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfur
900			Tha'lab al-Ya'qūbī
901	Establishment of Zaydī state in Yemen		ibn al-Mu'tazz
908	Ibn al-Mu'tazz is caliph for one day		
909	Fāṭimī caliphate in Tunisia		
922	Execution of mystic, al-Ḥallāj		al-Ṭabarī Qudāmah ibn Ja'far ibn 'Abd Rabbihi
945	Būyids assume control in Baghdād		al-Ash'arī al-Mutanabbī al-Fārābī al-Mas'ūdī

<i>Chronology</i>		xiii
Historical events/people	Literary events/people	
	al-Iṣṭakhrī Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī Muḥammad al-Niffarī al-Qālī Abū Firās Abū al-faraj al-Iṣfahānī	
969	Conquest of Cairo by Fāṭimī general, Jawhar	
973	Foundation of al-Azhar mosque-university in Cairo	ibn Hānī' al-Āmidī al-Ṣāhib ibn 'Abbād ibn Ḥawqal
998–1030	Maḥmūd of Ghaznah rules in Eastern Iran	al-Tanūkhī ibn al-Nadīm
1000		al-Qāḍī al-Jurjānī Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī Badr' al-zamān al-Hamadhānī al-Bāqillānī al-Sharīf al-Raḍī ibn Darrāj ibn Shuhayd Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī
1031	Collapse of Umawī caliphate in Cordoba	Miskawayh al-Tha'alībī ibn Khafājah ibn Sīnā
1052	Migration of Banī Hilāl across North Africa	al-Bīrūnī Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī
1055	Saljuq Turks capture Baghdād	
1071	Battle of Manzikert: Saljuqs occupy Anatolia	ibn Ḥazm ibn Rāshīq al-Qushayrī 'Abd al-qāhir al-Jurjānī Wallādah

xiv		<i>Chronology</i>
Historical events/people		Literary events/people
1085	Christians in Spain capture Toledo	ibn Zaydūn
1091	Loss of Sicily to Normans	
1092	Niẓām al-mulk murdered by Assassins	
1095	Pope Urban calls for Crusade	
1099	Crusaders capture Jerusalem	
1100		al-Ghazālī ʿUmar al-Khayyām al-Aʿmā al-Tuḡlī ibn Ḥamdīs
1147	Second Crusade	al-Ḥarīrī ʿAbd al-qādir al-Jīlānī al-Idrīsī al-Zamakhsharī
1171	End of Fāṭimī caliphate	ibn Quzmān
1174–93	Reign of Ṣalāḥ al-dīn (Saladin)	Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī ibn Ṭufayl
1187	Crusaders defeated by Ṣalāḥ al-dīn	ibn Rushd Usāmah ibn Munqidh Shihāb al-dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī
1200		ibn al-Jawzī al-Qāḍī al-Faḍīl ʿImād al-dīn al-Iṣfahānī Maimonides ibn Jubayr ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk
1219	Mongols under Jingiz Khān invade Islamic lands	ʿAṭṭār
1229	Jerusalem handed over to Christians	Yāqūt Shihāb al-dīn ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī

Historical events/people		Literary events/people
1236	Christians in Spain capture Cordoba	ibn al-Fāriḍ
1248	Christians in Spain capture Seville	ibn al-ʿArabī
1250	Mamlūks come to power in Cairo	
1254	King Alfonso establishes school in Seville	al-Tifāshī
1256–60	Hūlāgū Khān leads Mongol army to Baghdād	
1258	End of ʿAbbāsī caliphate	
1260	Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt; Mongols defeated by Mamlūks under Baybars	
1261–1520	Mamlūk dynasty rules Egypt	Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī al-Shustarī ibn Mālik ibn Ṣayqal al-Jazarī al-Shābb al-Zarīf al-Bayḍāwī
1291	Expulsion of Crusaders from Palestine	ibn Khallikān al-Būṣṭrī
1300		
1303	Mongols defeated by Mamlūks in Egypt	ibn Manẓūr ibn Dāniyāl
1324	Mansā Mūsū, King of Mālī; University of Timbuktū	ibn Taymiyyah al-Nuwayrī
1348	Black Death reaches Egypt	Ṣafī al-dīn al-Ḥillī
1349	Muslim missionaries in Nigeria (Kano)	Ṣalāḥ al-dīn al-Ṣafadī ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah
1369	Tīmūr Lang occupies Khūrāsān	ibn Nubātah
1370–80	Tīmūr Lang conquers much of Central Asia	Lisān al-dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb ibn Baṭṭūtah
1380–87	Tīmūr conquers Īrān	Ḥāfiz
1400		al-Fayrūzābādī

xvi		<i>Chronology</i>
Historical events/people		Literary events/people
1400	Islām reaches Java	ibn Khaldūn
1402	Death of Tīmūr Lang	al-Maqrīzī al-Ghuzūlī al-Qalqashandī al-Ibshīhī ibn ʿArabshāh
1453	Capture of Constantinople by Ottomans	
1499	Ismāʿīl establishes Ṣafavī dynasty in Īrān	
1500		
1508	Ṣafavīs capture Baghdād	al-Suyūṭī ibn Mālik al-Ḥamawī
1516	Selīm the Grim captures Cairo	
1520–66	Reign of Ottoman Sultan Sulaymān the Magnificent	
1521	Ottoman capture of Belgrade	
1522	Ottoman conquest of Rhodes	ibn Iyās
1529	Ottoman siege of Vienna	
1549	Ottoman forces reach Yemen	
1550	Sinan builds Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul	
1556–1605	Akbar assumes power in Mughal India	al-Shaʿrānī
1600		
1622	English capture Hormuz	al-Maqqarī
1653	Tāj Mahal completed by Shāh Jihān	Shihāb al-dīn al-Khafājī
1668	Ottoman conquest of Crete	
1683	Ottomans besiege Vienna	
1699	Treaty of Karlowitz	
1700		ʿAbd al-ghanī al-Nābulusī Bishop Germanus Farḥāt

<i>Chronology</i>		xvii
Historical events/people	Literary events/people	
1745	Wahhābīs established at Dar‘iyyah, Arabia	
1765	English East India Company takes over administration of Bengal	al-Amīr al-Ṣan‘ānī
1770–89	Yūsuf Shihāb, Amīr of Lebanon	al-Idkāwī
1773	Sa‘ūdī dynasty in al-Riyāḍ	al-Zabīdī
1774	Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarjī between Russia and Ottomans	
1783	Russia seizes Crimea	
1789–1807	Reign of Selīm III, Ottoman Sultan	
1798	Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt	
1796	Qajar dynasty in Īrān	
1800		
1803–4	Wahhābīs capture Mecca and Medina	
1805–48	Muḥammad ‘Alī viceroy of Egypt	
1806	Wahhābīs capture Mecca	
1811	Mamlūks massacred on orders of Muḥammad ‘Alī	Aḥmad al-Tijānī
1820–23	Egyptians conquer Sudan	al-Jabartī
1823	Arabic press in Cairo	
1830	French invade Algeria	
1834	Arabic press in Beirut	Shaykh Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār Mārūn al-Naqqāsh
1860–61	Civil War in Syria	
1866	Foundation of Syrian Protestant College in Beirut (AUB)	Nāṣīf al-Yazīrī
1869	Suez Canal opened	Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī
1877	Anglo-French control of Egyptian finances	
1881	French occupy Tunisia; ‘Urabī Revolt in Egypt	
1882	British occupy Egypt	
1885	Mahdī’s revolt in Sudan; General Gordon killed in al-Kharṭūm	Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī

xviii	<i>Chronology</i>	
	Historical events/people	Literary events/people
1893	French arrive in Timbuktu	Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Jalāl
1898	Defeat of Sudanese forces by General Kitchener	Jamāl al-dīn ‘al-Afghānī
1900		‘Abd al-raḥmān al-Kawākibī Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī Muḥammad ‘Abduh Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Barūdī
1908	Ottoman Sultan ‘Abd al-ḥamīd deposed by Young Turks	
1909	Anglo-Persian Oil Company founded	
1912	Franco-Spanish protectorate of Morocco	Ya‘qūb Ṣannū‘
1915	Arab revolt against Ottoman government	
1916	Sykes–Picot Agreement regarding disposition of Middle East following First World War	
1917	Balfour Declaration	Shiblī Shumayyil Shaykh Salāmah al-Ḥijāzī Muḥammad Taymūr
1919	Popular uprising in Egypt; first proclamation of Muṣṭafā Kemāl (Ataturk) in Turkey	
1920	Turkish War of Independence; revolt in Iraq; French capture Damascus	
1921	Reza Shāh Pahlevī assumes power in Iran	
1922	Discovery of Tutankhamūn’s tomb in Egypt	Faraḥ Anṭūn
1923	Declaration of Turkish Republic	
1924	Abolition of the caliphate; first Egyptian parliament	Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī Shaykh Aḥmad Bamba
1927	Beginnings of Muslim Brethren in Egypt	Sa‘d Zaghlūl
1929	Growing unrest in Palestine	Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī

<i>Chronology</i>		xix
Historical events/people		Literary events/people
1932	Foundation of Arab Academy in Cairo	Khalīl Jubrān Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm Aḥmad Shawqī
1933	ʿAbd al-ʿazīz becomes King of Saʿūdī Arabia	Abū al-qāsim al-Shabbī
1935	Italy invades Ethiopia	Rashīd Riḍā Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī
1938	Death of Atatürk	Mayy Ziyādah Muḥammad Iqbāl
1945	League of Arab States created in Cairo	Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfi
1947	Independence of India; creation of Pakistan	Salāmah Mūsā
1948	War in Palestine; State of Israel established	Anṭūn Saʿādah Ḥasan al-Bannā Khalīl Muṭrān Khalīl Baydas ʿAlī al-Duʿājī
1951	Muḥammad Mosaddeq Prime Minister of Īrān; Ḥusayn becomes King of Jordan	
1952	Revolution in Egypt	
1954	Jamāl ʿAbd al-nāṣir (Nasser) comes to power; beginning of Algerian War of Independence; Czech arms agreement with Egypt	Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn
1955	Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia	
1956	Egypt nationalises Suez Canal; Tripartite (British, French, Israeli) invasion of Suez; Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco gain independence	Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal Iliyyā Abū Māḍī
1958	Revolution in Iraq; United Arab Republic (Egypt & Syria) created; Lebanese political unrest	Jūrj Abyaḍ
1961	Kuwait independence; Socialist Laws in Egypt; revolution in Yemen	Bayram al-Ṭūnisī
1962	End of Algerian War; independence	Aḥmad Luṭfi al-Sayyid Mārūn ʿAbbūd

xx		<i>Chronology</i>
Historical events/people		Literary events/people
1964	PLO established; King Sa‘ūd of Sa‘ūdī Arabia replaced by King Fayṣal	‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād Sayyid Quṭb Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb
1967	June War between Israel and Arab states	Muḥammad Mandūr Ḥusayn Muruwwah
1968	Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad becomes President of Syria; Yāsir ‘Arafāt leader of PLO	Bishārah al-Khūrī
1969	General Numayrī seizes power in the Sudan; Libyan revolution led by Mu‘ammar al-Qadhdhāfi	
1970	Aswan High Dam completed; fighting in Jordan (Black September); death of ‘Abd al-nāṣir; Anwar al-Sādāt President of Egypt	
1971	Establishment of United Arab Emirates in Gulf	Tawfiq Ṣāyigh
1973	October crossing (Ramaḍān/Yom Kippur War)	Ṭāhā Ḥusayn Maḥmūd Taymūr
1975–88	Lebanese civil war	
1976	Fall of Tall al-Za‘tar Palestinian refugee camp	
1977	Camp David accords between Egypt and Israel	
1979	Revolution in Īrān brings Imām Khomeinī to power	
1975–88	Lebanese civil war	
1981	Assassination of President Anwar al-Sādāt	Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr
1982	Israel invades Lebanon; Sabra and Shatilah Camp massacres	Khalīl Ḥawī
1987	Palestinian intifāḍah	Michel ‘Aflaq Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm Yūsuf al-Khāl
1988		Nobel Award to Najīb Maḥfūẓ Mīkhā’īl Nu‘aymah Dhū al-nūn Ayyūb Tawfiq Yūsuf ‘Awwād

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Chronology xxi

Historical events/people	Literary events/people
1990–91 Gulf War: Western forces attack Iraq after its occupation of Kuwait	Yūsuf Idrīs Yahyā Ḥaqqī
1994	Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā
1996	Emil Ḥabībī