THE ARABIC THEORY OF ORIGINALITY AND IMITATION IN A NEW LIGHT[1]

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I

One of the reasons why Plato (c. 347 B.C.) would like to ban poets from his Ideal Republic was that he considered them as imitators whose descriptions and portrayal of objects are considerably removed from ultimate reality.[2] This goes to show that interest in the subject of originality and imitation is of high historical value in regard to art in general and literary works in particular. In contemporary scholarship on the Arabic verse, the contributions by Grunebaum, Heinrichs, Broms, Bonebakker, and Peled remain the most important.[3] However, these authors seem to have all but ignored the poets' perspectives or, at least, failed to illustrate their point of view with the thoroughness it deserves. Moreover, the familiar view that a systematic proposition on the subject was achieved at the hands of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/

2   See Plato, *The Republic*, Penguin Classics, Middlesex 1985, part Ten, 421-39.

3   See G.E. von Grunebaum, "The Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory", in: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1944), pp. 234-53; W. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik*, Beirut 1969, 86 ff.; Henri Brooms, "A Historical Review of Imitation in Literature", in: "How does the Middle Eastern literary Taste differ from the European", *Studia Orientalia* 44 (1972), 1-94; S.A. Bonebakker, "*Sariqa* Formula, three Chapters from Ḥātimī's *Ḥilyat al-muḥāḍara*", in: *Annali dell'Instituto Orientale di Napoli* 46 (1986), 367-89; Mattitiahu Peled, "On the Concept of Literary Influence in Classical Arabic Literary Criticism", in: *Israel Oriental Studies*, xi (1991), 37-46.

1078) is not only an overestimation of his contribution but also an in-accurate proposition.

In the literary practice of the pre-Islamic period, imitating older practitioners was a matter of routine, indeed the norm. In support may be cited the case of Imruʾ al-Qays. Although he is generally regarded as the putative father of the Jāhiliyya poets and the pioneer of the qaṣīda scheme, especially its *aṭlāl/nasīb* motifs, Imruʾ al-Qays made reference to one Ibn Judhām as his forerunner in the tradition of wailing over ruined encampments. Essentially, the poetic stereotypes of the Arabic literary tradition concerning idioms, concetti and formulae, seem to have been formalised from the chronologically unspecified period before Islam. ʿAntara b. Shaddād (d. 22 B.H./600) was already complaining about "the burden of the past",[4] wondering whether his predecessors had left any room for him to demonstrate his creativity. This sense of frustration, or at least resignation, was eloquently ex-pressed by Kaʿb b. Zuhayr (d. 26/645) who stated that his generation was only charting well-trodden paths, repeating what had been said or borrowing from the existing stock.[5] In other words, the impression, or rather the strong belief, among the pre-Islamic poet was that the only way to demonstrate originality was by imitating the conventional methods in the treatment of the limited stock of themes established by the tradition. The Umayyad literary arena offers a not too different picture; specific authors from the Jāhiliyya bards were selected as models. In support may be cited the following verse by al-Farazdaq:[6]

4   The expression is borrowed from Walter Jackson Bate's title, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*, Cambridge 1970.

5   ʿAntara: *Hal ghādara 'l-shuʿarāʾu min mutaraddami / am hal ʿarafti 'l-dāra baʿda tawahhumi* "Had (previous) poets left anything to be supplemented (lit. mended) / or did you recognize the abode only after groping?", *Sharḥ Dīwān ʿAntara Ibn Shaddād*, ed. ʿAbd al-Munʿim ʿAbd al-Raʾūf, Cairo 1958 (?), 142. – Kaʿb: *Mā arānā naqūlu illā muʿāran / aw muʿādan min lafẓinā makrūrā* "I do not see us saying other than the borrowed / the oft repeated in our speech", *Sharḥ Dīwān Kaʿb b. Zuhayr – li-'l-Ḥasan Ibn Ḥusayn al-Sukkarī*, Cairo 1950, 154.

6   See *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, ed. Īliyā al-Ḥāwī, Beirut 1983, ii, 323.

Wahaba 'l-Nawābighu liya 'l-qaṣāʾida idh maḍaw
wa-Abū Yazīdin wa-dhū 'l-Qurūḥi wa-Jarwalu.

"The Nawābighs (i.e. al-Dhubyānī and al-Jaʿdī) endowed me with poetry as they passed away
　　so did Abū Yazīd (al-Mukhabbal al-Saʿdī), the man with skin ulcers (Imruʾ al-Qays), and Jarwal (al-Ḥuṭayʾa)."

Further evidence of this relationship is also provided by al-Farazdaq. He likened poetry to a slaughtered huge camel, the main and important parts of which had been consumed by the ancients, leaving behind only the forearms, the intestines and the dregs for the later generation to share.[7] The anecdote illustrates very vividly the view of the Umayyad's poet vis-à-vis his predecessors. He considered himself as "a dwarf perched upon the shoulders of giants", to borrow from Bernard of Chartres, the 12th-century humanist.[8] In other words, the general feeling in the literary tradition of the Umayyad era was that all original ideas, all expressions of value, and indeed the pool of poetry had been exhausted.

Although the ʿAbbāsid poet still recognised the patriarchal role of the Jāhiliyya forerunners, he was willing to demonstrate his individuality and creativity by exploring and using such aspects of poetic technique as are dimly utilized in the preceding traditions. He was willing to show that precedence or lateness in chronological appearance has nothing to do with aesthetic efficiency and was prepared to imitate only specific features from the inherited literary corpora. Thus we see Bashshār b. Burd (d. 167/784), the father of the so-called *muḥdathūn* poets, setting himself the target of producing a *tashbīh* expression that would rival a particular one by Imruʾ al-Qays, which is generally acclaimed as a model.[9] Some of the poets belonging in this period even

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7　Al-Marzubānī, *al-Muwashshaḥ*, Cairo 1343/1925, 363.

8　Quoted in John of Salisbury's (d. 1180) *Metalogicon*, ed. C.C.J. Webb, Oxford 1929, iii, 136.

9　*Aghānī*, Dār al-kutub ed., Cairo 1927-74, iii, 142, 196; al-Ḥātimī, *Ḥilyat al-muḥāḍara*, ed. Jaʿfar al-Kattānī, Baghdad 1979, i, 170; Ibn Abī ʿAwn, *Kitāb al-Tashbīhāt*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim Khān, Cambridge 1950, 152-53;

went as far as challenging the propriety of some of the thematic
stereotypes that had assumed the status of established conventions. For
example, Abū Nuwās (d. 198/814) waged a sustained, albeit unsuccess-
ful, campaign against the *aṭlāl* motifs, and was followed much later in
this tradition by al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) who found the convention
of treating nasīb motifs as a prelude to the *qaṣīda* rather distasteful, if
not altogether oppressive.[10] However, the most illustrious advocate for
the recognition of the *muḥdathūn* poetry as an original contribution
rather than a parodied variation of the tradition was Abū Tammām (d.
231/845). In his view, the pool of poetry is inexhaustible, and poetry is
like clouds of rain that will forever come in succession.[11] The *muḥdath*
poet preferred to look within his own generation for models and to be
inspired only by the great authors of his time. An anecdote involving
Abū Tammām will offer a clearer illustration of the new view of the
muḥdathūn poets concerning the concept of originality and imitation.
A guest was surprised to see Abū Tammām placing the works of Abū
Nuwās and Muslim b. Walīd (d. 208/823) before himself while he was
working on a poem. Abū Tammām confirmed to his bewildered guest
that he had in fact been "worshipping" the works of the two great poets
for some thirty years.[12] The statement reveals the extent of his com-

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Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī, *Sirr al-faṣāḥa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Mutaʿālī al-Saʿīdī, Cairo 1953,
292-93. See also Ibn Wakīʿ, *al-Munṣif fī naqd al-shiʿr*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍwān
al-Dāya, Damascus 1982, i, 50-51; Ibn Rashīq, *Qurāḍat al-dhahab*, ed. Chedly
Bouyahia, Tunis 1972, 24-25.

10   See Ewald Wagner (ed.), *Der Dīwān des Abū Nuwās*, Stuttgart 1988, iii, espe-
      cially ode 215, p. 247; ode 217, p. 250; ode 219, p. 252; ode 231, p. 265-69.
      See also *Dīwān Abī al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī bi-Sharḥ Abī 'l-Baqāʾ al-ʿUkbarī*,
      ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqā et al., Cairo 1956, iii, 350.

11   See *Sharḥ al-Ṣūlī li-Dīwān Abī Tammām*, ed. Khalaf Rashīd Nuʿmān, Baghdad
      1977, i, 286-87, 516-17. See similar sentiments as expressed in the poets work
      in, al-Khālidiyyān, *al-Ashbāh wa-'l-naẓāʾir*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf, Cairo
      1958, i, 2; Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, ed. M.M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo 1963, i, 91.
      See also Ḥātimī, *al-Risāla al-Ḥātimiyya*, q.v. in al-ʿAmīdī, *al-Ibāna ʿan sariqāt
      al-Mutanabbī*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī al-Bisāṭī, Cairo 1969, 287; al-Ṣūlī,
      Akhbār Abī Tammām, ed. Khalīl M. ʿAsākir et al., Beirut u.d., 54.

12   Al-Ṣūlī, *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, 173.

mitment to the literary productions of his own age rather than those of the classical period. Al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897) equally acknowledged modelling his works on those of Abū Tammām rather than that of any ancient author.[13] Thus the ʿAbbāsid poet who found himself struggling against "chronological primitivism" of the philologists, to borrow from Grunebaum,[14] now sought to establish his creativity and originality not by following the antiquated models without investigation, but rather, by looking within his own generation as well as by developping, or perhaps making a telling use of, those poetic techniques that were hitherto used with remarkable moderation.

II

In the literary seances and assemblies of the medieval Islamic culture, identification of the originator and the imitator concerning poetical expressions and motifs was a favourite topic, as can be gleaned from a report in *al-Aghānī* concerning Ḥammād al-Rāwiya (d. 155/771) and certain poets at the court of al-Walīd b. Yazīd (d. 126/744).[15] But the earliest reference to originality and imitation as a theoretical concept was probably made by Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 230/845). According to him, Imruʾ al-Qays earned the leadership of the Jāhiliyya class of poets not by saying what had never been said, but because he invented (*ibtadaʿa*) such techniques that later poets would follow (*ittabaʿa*) out of admiration.[16] But Ibn Sallām fails to develop this further as a proposition that can be applied in a more comprehensive manner to the Arabic verse. Nevertheless, his use of the words signifying invention and imitation within a given historical period, namely, the Jāhiliyya, indicates his sense of theoretical rigour in an analytical tradition that was just evolving. The subject of imitation and originality was often discussed in the literary scholarship within the context of stylistic and

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13   Idem, *Akhbār al-Buḥturī*, ed. Ṣāliḥ al-Ashtar, Damascus 1958, 59-60.

14   G.E. von Grunebaum, "The Concept of Plagiarism", 234-53.

15   *Aghānī*, vi, 71-72; xiv, 17-18.

16   Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo 1952, 46.

thematic borrowings, and the *Kitāb Sariqāt al-shuʿarāʾ* by Ibn Ṭayfūr (d. 280/893) was one of the earliest efforts on the subject. Although the work seems not to have survived for long, its fragmentary bequests that were available to authors of the following generation provide evidence of a tendency towards a model of analysis that was less than methodical. To this I intend to return later. However, it did not take long before a new dimension to the subject crystallized into a systematic pattern of discussion: the rhetorical tropes are illustrated in a chronological setting of the literary culture with the underlining sense that the younger authors were only imitating the older models. For this we are beholden to Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908). The principal motivation for his *Kitāb al-Badīʿ* was to show that the rhetorical artifices in the excessive use of which the new poets had indulged were not invented by them.[17] This undoubtedly contains veiled insinuation that the new poets were only imitating an existing tradition and treading a familiar path. It is however ironical that Ibn al-Muʿtazz could not go further to use his analysis and illustrations as a basis for an articulate theory on the subject of imitation and originality. The *Kitāb al-Tashbīhāt* (the Book of Similes) by Ibn Abī ʿAwn (d. 322/ 934) which illustrates the various types of similes found in the works of both the ancients and the moderns, has an implicit tendency towards demonstrating which particular simile was borrowed from another, but nowhere did the author employ this as an instrument for formulating a concrete proposition on originality and imitation.

But whether we regard the *badīʿ* poetry in the positive sense as new-fangled or fantastic, or in the negative sense as corrupted (assuming that it is related to *bidʿa*), it is obviously from its unfamiliar character which bordered almost on the grotesque that some of the critics were inclined to concede radical originality to its exponents, as did al-Ṣūlī (d. 336/947) when he said:

Know – may God ennoble you – that the idioms of the *muḥdathūn* (modern) poets from the time of Bashshār up to this time of ours had indeed progressed to express more fascinating motifs, more readily comprehensible expressions, and a discourse with a finer texture, although precedence still belongs to the

17 Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Kitāb al-Badīʿ*, ed. I. Kratchkovsky, London 1935, Arabic text, p. 1.

ancients by virtue of their invention and introduction (of those ideas), natural-ness, and self-sufficiency. However, they (the ancients) did not see what the *muḥdathūn* physically saw and used as objects of comparison, just as the *muḥdathūn* did not see what they (the ancients) saw and physically experi-enced... In the former case, the ancients are no match to the moderns, while in the latter case the moderns are below the ancients. Moreover, the moderns sail only with the wind of the ancients, mould on their established forms, draw on their pool, and utilize their discourse material. Hardly would any of them (that is, the moderns) borrow a *maʿnā* (poetical idea) from the ancients without him improving upon it. We have indeed found in the poetry of these (moderns) such *maʿānī* that the ancients never expressed, and such other ideas to which the ancients only alluded but are explicitly and brilliantly expressed by these (moderns). This notwithstanding, their poetry is more in tune with the time, and is more frequently quoted by people at their seances, works, citations and needs.[18]

From the foregoing, it is abundantly clear that the literary legislators and connoisseurs of the post-Classical period were willing to accord priority to the ancients largely from their chronological precedence and on the basis of the fact that the ancients introduced such poetical themes and structural schemata that later poets would follow, other-wise, the ability of the new poets to express old ideas in new forms was taken as an evidence of their originality for which they should be rec-ognized.

The significance of *K. Sariqāt al-shuʿarāʾ* by Ibn Ṭayfūr was men-tioned above. The work may not have survived, but it was most proba-bly available to al-Ḥātimī (d. 338/998), if a long quotation by him from Ibn Ṭayfūr is anything to go by. In any case, the effort of Ibn Ṭayfūr can justifiably be regarded as the first analytical discussion of the issue of imitation and originality in Arabic theoretical discourse. Moreover, the reference by Ibn Ṭayfūr to the Aristotelian concept of artistic imi-

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18 Al-Ṣūlī, *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, 16-17. Cf. al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, ed. Muḥam-mad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm & al-Sayyid al-Shaḥḥāta, Cairo 1956, ii, 1; al-Khāli-diyyān, *al-Ashbāh wa-'l-naẓāʾir*, i, 171. See also Andras Hamori, "Rhetoric" [Arabic], in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer, New York 1982 f., x, 345-47.

tation as an instrument of good style indicates very clearly that the utilization of Hellenic theoretical principles in the Arabic theoretical lore is somewhat earlier than has hitherto been proposed.[19] The synthesis of Ibn Ṭayfūr's proposition is that the Arabic literary tradition is a remorselessly continuous inter- and intra-textual event. The notion of originality through the instrument of imitation is clearly established by Ibn Ṭayfūr, although he falls short of prescribing the modality for this.[20] This was provided by Ibn Ṭabāṭabā (d. 322/934). According to him, the necessary tools (*adawāt*) required in poetic practice consist in a sound knowledge of the classical poetic types and the ability to model on them. Our author refers to another work by him, namely, his *Tahdhīb al-ṭabʿ* (Refinement of Talent/Nature), which contains selections from authoritative poets, an *accessus* of some sort, as well as guide-lines to the prospective poet on how to imitate outstanding productions from the classics and generate new conceits. The new poet is advised to imitate only the good aspects in the works of his predecessors and to resist the temptation of making reckless use of the poetic licenses, which dispensation is found with remarkable frequency in the classical corpus. According to him, imitation does not consist in replacing the wording or metre of a given exemplar; rather, using the hooks and eyes of memory the new poet must stock in his mind the sublime thought and expressions of his forerunners and then allow these to macerate in the deep well of his unconscious cerebration. Only after he having successfully achieved this he should go on to express in his own peculiar style whatever poetic thought occurs to him. His own production would then come out like a composite of various metals that nonetheless bears the distinctive stamp of its new producer. According to him, it is this distinctiveness that would qualify the new product to be considered an original work, regardless of any affinities it may share with the original models that inspired it.[21]

Successors to Ibn Ṭabāṭabā elaborated on his model of analysis, usually with extensive examples on how imitation can be employed as

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19   See, e.g., G.J.H. van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*, Leiden 1982, 4.
20   *Ḥilya*, ii, 28.
21   Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, *ʿIyār al-shiʿr*, ed. Ṭāhā al-Ḥājirī & Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām, Cairo 1956, 4-10.

an instrument for the achievement of originality, and interest in the subject promoted it to a standard topic in works of rhetoric and stylistics.[22] In this regard may be mentioned al-Ḥātimī's extensive analysis of it under the broad title *al-Sariqāt wa-'l-muḥādhāt* (Thievings and Imitation).[23] Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. 396/1005)[24] and Ibn Rashīq (d. 457/1064) are other later contributors to the discussion.[25] Nevertheless, Ibn Rashīq's fine distinction at the levels of phraseology and thought content is noteworthy: he applies the term *ibdāʿ* to *lafẓ* "wording", that is, the presentation of a sublime motif in an unusual but fascinating garb, and *ikhtirāʿ* to *maʿnā* "poetic idea", that is, the creation of unfamiliar conceits (*maʿānī*), or injecting familiar motifs with elements hitherto lacking in them. It is significant to note that, in the latter characterization, he was prominently anticipated by al-ʿAskarī.[26] Other noteworthy contributors were al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015),[27] and ʿAlī Ibn Khalaf al-Kātib (*floruit* 5th/11th) in his *Mawādd al-bayān*.[28] One scholar with whom I like to conclude this investigation is ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078), not least because of his strange, and perhaps confusing, presentation of the traditional view about the concept of imitation. According to him, the notion of imagination as held by poets and *ahl al-ʿilm bi-'l-shiʿr* (those knowledgeable in poetry) is simply that of conscious substitution of wording and adoption of the familiar mould (*uslūb*) in the process of composition (*naẓm*). Illustrating this interpretation of the concept of imitation, al-Jurjānī provides the following examples.

22   See, e.g., Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, 86 ff.
23   *Ḥilya,* ii, 28-92.
24   *Kitāb al-Ṣināʿatayn*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī & Muḥammad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1952, 196-238 (p. 237).
25   *al-ʿUmda*, ii, 280-93.
26   *al-Ṣināʿatayn*, 69.
27   *Rasāʾil al-Ṣābī wa-'l-Sharīf al-Raḍī*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, Kuwait 1961, 82-93 (p. 88).
28   Ed. Fuat Sezgin, Frankfurt 1986, 275-322.

Al-Farazdaq:

> *a-tarjū Rabīʿun an tajīʾa ṣighāruhā*
> > *bi-khayrin wa-qad aʿyā Rabīʿan kabīruhā*
> "Does the Rabīʿa (tribe) hope that her young ones would do any
> > good, while Rabia had already weakened her old ones?"

al-Baʿīth:

> *a-tarjū Kulaybun an yajīʾa ḥadīthuhā*
> > *bi-khayrin wa-qad aʿyā Kulayban qadīmuhā*
> "Does the Kulayb (tribe) hope that her new ones would do any goods
> > while Kulayb had already weakened her old ones?"

Al-Jurjānī instanced al-Baʿīth's verse as an imitation of the prototype
that was provided by al-Farazdaq. According to him, the literary con-
noisseurs would not consider a poet as imitating unless when rendition
would be characterized as having borrowed or stolen from the antece-
dent.[29] I am not aware of any poet or critic before al-Jurjānī who had
cited the examples given here as an illustration of artistic imitation. In
fact, al-ʿAskarī characterizes the line from al-Baʿīth as an instance of
artless borrowing (*qubḥ al-akhdh*) that must be avoided.[30] The kind of
disingenuous and mere substitution words demonstrated in the example
from al-Baʿīth could not have been tolerated when borrowings with far
less obvious infraction had provoked negative reactions and were even
regarded as brazen acts of plagiarism. What al-Jurjānī has actually
done is to misread the tradition, employing the instrument of what
Bloomes calls *tessera*, to promote whatever quality his own interpreta-
tion of the concept might have.[31] His attempt to create another level at

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29 Al-Jurjānī, *Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz*, ed. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Cairo 1366 A.H., 361-
    62. The same view is found in al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338), see *Shurūḥ al-talkhīṣ*,
    Cairo 1318 A.H., iv, 506-7. Cf. *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa li-ʾl-Marzūqī*, ed.
    Aḥmad Amīn & ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn, Cairo 1952, iii, 1479. For the illustra-
    tion from al-Farazdaq, see *Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, Beirut 1960, 272.

30 *Ṣināʿatayn*, 230.

31 See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, Oxford 1973, 14.

which imitation and originality should be sought, namely, that of *ṣūra* (cast/model) which is realisable through the instrument of *naẓm/tartīb* (sentence structure), is an imposition of a model of discourse which he had applied in the discussion of the principle of the inimitability of the Qur'ān. His proposition in this regard is therefore, to say the least, a good case of laboured pedantry. Moreover, his classification of motifs into *takhyīlī* (imaginative) and *'aqlī* (commonsensical) where only the former is open to borrowing, hence vulnerable to the felony of plagiarism, is by no means a new proposition. His elder kinsman, 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Azīz al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1001) had anticipated him in this point in a way that is innocent of the abstruse classification and pedantic subtleties with which we have to deal in 'Abd al-Qāhir.[32] Therefore, any attempt to attribute too much value to the contribution by 'Abd al-Qāhir to the subject of originality and imitation, as Peled may have unconsciously done,[33] is interpretable as an overblowing of al-Jurjānī's analytical ingenuity which is admittedly reflected at some other levels of the intellectual discourse.

In this study, I have tried to illustrate the various understandings of the concept of imitation and originality in the chronological continuum of Arabic theoretical and literary discourse. The irresistible charm and appeal of the *muḥdathūn* poetry earned its exponents the tag of radical originality. The reactions of the literary achorns which found the first theoretical response in Ibn Ṭayfūr indicate an early utilization or at least a recognition, of Aristotelian ideas in the Arabic theoretical locution. The so called intertextual theory, which some modern scholars are trying to apply to the Arabic verse, often in a less than cautious fashion in their effort at placing verbal and thematic correspondences within a scientific context,[34] was in fact known to Ibn Ṭayfūr, and his theoretical formulation apparently derived from his recognition of it. One sig-

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32 See 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Azīz al-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa*, ed. Muḥammad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm & 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, Cairo 1966, 183-88. Cf. al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul 1954, 313-16.

33 Mattitiahu Peled, "On the Concept of Literary Influence", 40-45.

34 E.g. Michael Zwettler, "The Poetics of Allusion in Abū l-'Atāhiya's Ode in Praise of al-Hādī", in *Edebiyāt*, N.S., iii, no. 1 (1989), 1-29.

nificant point on which I would like to conclude is the emergence of a new validity in the discussion about originality and imitation. The question of whether the door of *ijtihād* had been closed or not was a major topic in the medieval juridical scholarly tradition. A similar line of argument was found in the literary arena so much that we see Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239) proclaiming with all seriousness on behalf of literary practitioners that "... *bāb al-ibtidā' li-'l-maʿānī maftūḥun ilā yawmi 'l-qiyāma*" (The door to the generation of new ideas is open till the Day of Resurrection).[35] Was it the *udabā'* (men of letters) that influenced the *fuqahā'* (jurists) or was it the other way round regarding the emergence of this new trend, is a question to which a definitive answer cannot be provided in the present investigation. But pursuing it further might offer some useful insights into the cross currents of the medieval theoretical exertions.

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35   Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥūfī & Badawī Ṭubāna, Cairo 1959-63, iii, 219.