

**The Qur'ānic Narratives Through the Lens of Intertextual
Allusions: A Literary Approach**

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Seminar für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

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Abstract

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2014

Intertextuality, as an overarching concept concerning the interrelations between texts, can be defined as the ways in which texts refer to and build on other texts. The narratives of the Qur'ān are amongst the clearest manifestations of this intertextual phenomenon. This is not only because they are concerned with pre-Islamic figures who have parallels in Jewish and Christian traditions, but also because many verses in these narratives obviously allude to such extra-Qur'ānic traditions.

The present dissertation addresses this issue in Qur'ānic studies, which constitutes a main question in modern research on the intertextual allusions in Islam's revealed scripture. Hence, it deals with the virtual absence of reliance upon a literary approach to these allusions, informed by contemporary allusional studies.

In particular, the dissertation analyzes the intertextual allusions (to such extra-Qur'ānic traditions) evident in three groups of Qur'ānic narrative pericopes. These concern:

(1) The story of the biblical Prophet Jonah (Q 68:48-50, 37:139-48, 21:87-8, 10:98, 6:86, and 4:163);

(2) The creation account on the sin of the first human couple, Adam and Eve, and of God teaching Adam the names of everything (Q 20:120-121, 7:19-22, 2:31-3 and 2:35-6); and

(3) The laughter of Sarah, wife of Abraham, and the story of Abraham's intercession for Lot's People (Q 51:24-30 and 11:69-76).

The main goal of the dissertation is (by means of a systematic application of an approach primarily based on a method developed in allusional studies) to explore the significance of the intertextual allusions contained in the aforementioned narrative pericopes. Thus it will shed new light on the function of intertextual allusions in the narratives of the Qur'ān and highlight the significance of these allusions in forming an "inter-textual conversation" between the narrative pericopes in the Qur'ān and their

Jewish and Christian antecedent traditions. It is hoped that the impact of this dissertation will extend beyond the boundaries of the academic study of religion and that its findings will contribute meaningfully to the contemporary dialogue between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of a number of people. Above all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Sebastian Günther, who has offered me excellent academic guidance and advice at every stage of the development of my work. His support has been indispensable throughout. Also, I owe heartfelt thanks to Prof. Dr. Jens Scheiner and Prof. Dr. Mohammed Rustom for their very useful comments on my dissertation.

This dissertation has been made possible by a three-years doctoral scholarship from Die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and a one-year doctoral fellowship from The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). To these granting institutions I am very grateful.

Finally, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my family, my mother Fatma Attia, my sisters Amal and Amira Ahmed, and my brother Mohammed Ahmed for their unwavering support of me and their unwavering belief in me. I dedicate this dissertation to them.

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Introduction

As an overarching concept concerning the interrelations between texts, intertextuality could be defined as “the ways in which texts... refer to and build on other texts.”¹ The Qur’ānic narratives are indeed amongst the clearest manifestations of the intertextual phenomenon. This is not only because they are concerned with pre-Islamic figures who have parallels in Jewish and Christian traditions, but also because many of the verses of these narratives often seem to allude to such external traditions. The present study is chiefly a response to a significant problem in the scholarship on the intertextual allusions of these narratives, namely the absence of reliance upon a literary approach to these allusions informed by modern allusional studies.²

When scholars postulate intertextual allusions in any text, the text’s meaning is viewed as particularly influenced by the *inter*-textual conversation brought about and shaped by these allusions. The importance of applying a satisfactory approach to the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives thus cannot be underestimated; an inadequate interpretation of these allusions would directly lead to an inaccurate assessment of the significance of these narratives. The ultimate goal of this study therefore is to suggest and apply a systematic literary approach to the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives, primarily based on models developed in allusional studies. It aspires to demonstrate that this approach could remedy much of the current confusion as to the significance of these allusions, which, as I shall argue, mainly results from adopting non-literary and unsystematic methods.

The present work thus proposes to shed new light on the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narrative pericopes³ under examination, the *inter*-textual conversation these pericopes establish with the Qur’ān’s antecedent traditions (through their allusions), and consequently these pericopes’ significance. In addition, it will also bring to light new insights concerning the functions towards which the Qur’ān employs the literary device of allusion. In this regard, so as to ground our analysis in firm theoretical foundations, our investigation will principally rely on one of the most comprehensive classifications of the allusion’s functions to date, Udo J. Hebel’s (to be discussed later in this chapter).

¹ This definition is adapted from Barbara Johnstone. See Barbara Johnstone, *Discourse Analysis*

² ‘Allusional studies’ denote the works concerned with the theorization of allusion in literary theory.

³ A ‘pericope’ is a text unit of scripture, narrative or non-narrative.

The allusions to the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions⁴ in three groups of Qur'ānic narrative pericopes will be analyzed in the present work, specifically the narrative pericopes concerning (1) Jonah (Q 68:48-50, 37:139-48, 21:87-8, 10:98, 6:86, and 4:163), (2) The creation account on the sin of the first couple, Adam and Eve, and on God teaching Adam the names of everything (Q 20:120-121, 7:19-22, 2:31-3 and 2:35-6), and (3) Sarah's Laughter and Abraham's Intercession for Lot's People (Q 51:24-30, and 11:69-76). As the analysis in the following chapters will demonstrate, this narrative selection typifies the range of functions towards which the Qur'ān employs the literary device of the intertextual allusion.

In order to contextualize my suggested approach to and readings of these pericopes' intertextual allusions in relation to previous scholarship, past and contemporary responses to these allusions will lead up to and be contrasted with my readings. As for western studies, an inclusive coverage has been possible. However, due to the vastness of Muslim exegetical literature, a selection had to be made. Four key classical⁵ and modern Muslim exegetical responses to these allusions have been selected, namely the responses of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), Ismā'īl Abū l-Fidā' Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), Burhān al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm b. 'Umar b. Ḥasan al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480), and Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1386/1966). As will be clear in the following pages, each of these responses represents a key development in approaching the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives over the history of Islamic exegesis.

The Intertextual Allusion

Ever since Julia Kristeva coined the term 'intertextuality,'⁶ a variety of analytical tools for the intertextual reading of texts have emerged; but gradually, the literary allusion came to assume the role of "the over-arching category for an interpretation of

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, the term 'antecedent traditions' in this study denotes the Jewish and Christian religious literature redacted prior to the emergence of Islam, including the Bible.

⁵ Herein, 'classical' denotes the period extending from Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). For the purposes of this dissertation, the history of Muslim exegesis is conveniently divided into four periods: formative (early) (11/632 to al-Ṭabarī's work), classical (from al-Ṭabarī's work to 911/1505), pre-modern (911/1505 to the middle of the 19th century) and modern (middle of the 19th century to the present).

⁶ Julia Kristeva, "The Bounded Text," in *Desire in Language: a Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Leon S. Roudiez 35-63 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36-8; idem., "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in *Desire in Language: a Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Leon S. Roudiez 64-91 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66 (both articles were first published in 1969).

verifiable relationships between texts.”⁷ It was intertextuality’s interest in “the interpretive potential”⁸ of the allusion’s *inter*-textual reference that led to new and systematic descriptions of the allusion. These new descriptions indeed far exceeded the allusion’s traditional and limited definition as “indirect or tacit reference,”⁹ which was found to be an extremely inadequate tool for intertextual analysis. Over the past four decades, allusional studies have shown that utilizing methodical literary criteria and procedures is fundamental in order to adequately describe and interpret allusions. For example, Ziva Ben-Porat points out that the first step in actualizing the allusion starts with the identification of the allusive signal, i.e. its marker.¹⁰ And as Carmela Perri contends, “the particular formulation of the marker ... and the meaning of the alluding text previous to the marker’s occurrence, suggest the appropriate property(ies) ... [of the referent-text’s] intension necessary to complete the sense of the allusion-marker in its context.”¹¹ Thus, not only are literary criteria necessary for proper identification of the allusion, but they are also crucial in determining the referent-text’s connotations evoked by the allusion and in contextualizing these connotations within the alluding text.

What Perri sums up in the above quotation, Udo J. Hebel classifies into several distinct categories for describing and interpreting allusions.¹² One of these is the “cotextualization of allusions” within their “immediate lexical surroundings and/or by relation(s) to structural elements such as character or setting.”¹³ In his view, this category of describing the allusion not only “influence[s] the actualization [of the allusion] ... [but also] elucidates the metatextual dimension of the alluding text as it is the dialog between the alluding text ... and the intertextual point of reference ... that evidences the stance the alluding text takes toward the other text [i.e. the referent-text], person, or event.”¹⁴ Indeed, all such recent developments in intertextual theory and allusional studies have increasingly problematized the intertextual readings of

⁷ Cf. Udo J. Hebel, “Towards a Descriptive Poetics of *Allusion*,” in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett, 135-64 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1991), 135. Also, see Hebel’s discussion of the allusion as the overarching literary device that subsumes all other types of intertextual references in *Ibid.*, 135-7.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 136.

⁹ Carmela Perri, “On Alluding,” *Poetics* 7 (1978): 289-307, 289.

¹⁰ Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 105-28, 108-9. Carmela Perri is of the same opinion and so is Udo J. Hebel (Perri, “On Alluding,” 290-5 and 300; Hebel, “Towards,” 135-9).

¹¹ Cf. Perri, “On Alluding,” 300.

¹² Hebel, “Towards,” 142-56.

¹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 156.

texts that do not rely on disciplined literary criteria and procedures in approaching the text's intertextual allusions.

Muslim Exegetes and the Allusions of the Qur'ānic Narratives

Muslim exegetes have long been familiar with the intertextual nature of the Qur'ānic narratives. The terseness, brevity, and allusiveness of many of these narratives' verses¹⁵ ensured that from early time on Muslim exegetes often perceived these narratives against external parallel traditions. Other characteristics such as that the protagonists of these narratives are predominantly designated only by their proper names and many details such as geographical locations are alluded to without full specification engendered the same attitude on the Muslim exegetes' part. As the countless pages of early and classical Qur'ān commentaries (*tafsīrs*) reveal, besides many facets of these narratives' meanings (e.g. legal and didactic), an issue that significantly occupied the attention of Muslim exegetes was to supplement these narratives with external details in order to compensate for what they perceived as 'narrative gaps' or references to historical events in need of further elucidation. The citation of these external details mainly took the form of anecdotal traditions or bits of narrative details formulated as exegetical reports (hereonwards extra-anecdotal traditions or, alternatively, extra-narrative details).¹⁶ Yet, it is fundamentally inaccurate to take these traditions as faithful accounts of the pre-Islamic community's collective memory of pre-Islamic history against which the Qur'ānic narratives record their own version of 'what had really happened' in bygone eras. These extra-anecdotal traditions cannot be ascribed to the pre-Islamic context with any certainty; their composition is manifestly heterogeneous of Biblical, pre-Islamic Arabian, and quite obviously Islamic elements.¹⁷

¹⁵ For example, the verses relating the events of Jonah's participation in a lot and the big fish swallowing him (Q 37:141-2 "He (agreed to) cast lots, and he was condemned: (141) Then the big Fish did swallow him, and he had done acts worthy of blame (142).") and Job's fulfillment of an oath to strike an unspecified person (Q 38:44 "and take in thy hand a little grass, and strike therewith: and break not (thy oath)"). Unless otherwise stated, all Qur'ān translations are according to Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

¹⁶ The proper classical term that designates this sort of traditions is *Āthār* (lit. traces. news concerning historical events) as opposed to traditions (Ḥadīth) that convey the sayings or practices of the Prophet or his companions).

¹⁷ Several recent studies examined groups of these extra-anecdotal traditions. They clearly demonstrate the heterogeneous composition of these traditions in virtually the same categories I listed above. See for instance, Anthony Johns, "Three Stories of a Prophet: Al-Ṭabarī's Treatment of Job in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' 83-4 (Part I)," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3/2 (2001): 39-61; idem., "Three Stories of a Prophet: Al-Ṭabarī's Treatment of Job in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' 83-4 (Part II)," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*

Surveying early and classical *tafsīr* works from the vantage point of modern allusional studies, it is clear that by accommodating these extra-anecdotal traditions Muslim exegetes did not describe or interpret the intertextual allusions of these narratives in the modern sense but have actually reconfigured the Qur'ānic narratives. Early and classical Muslim exegetes 'selectively' filled the 'gaps' these allusions engendered with details that fit the sort of story, history, and/or theology each exegete had in mind as to what the Qur'ānic narratives should convey. In this scheme of things, the significance of the allusions' bi-directional references and the 'gaps' they engender were not *explored* but rather *compensated for* by a closely knitted mixture of pre-Islamic and Islamic elements *formulated and fused together* in the form of extra-anecdotal traditions that, more or less, fit within the limits of the Qur'ān's utterances and worldview. In effect, thus, describing the intertextual conversation of these allusions with the pre-Islamic community's historical memory has largely been circumvented, chiefly by compensating for this memory with pseudo-reconstructions (i.e. extra-anecdotal traditions).

It is in light of the above that modern attempts to understand the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives through early and classical Muslim exegetes' responses to them are essentially specious. Attempts of this sort by scholars of Islam in the west basically do not analyze these allusions *per se*; rather they shed light on the exegetes' subjectivity in treating these allusions with reference to pseudo-referents.¹⁸ On the other hand, attempts of this sort in modern Islamic scholarly

4/1 (2002): 49-60; Brannon M. Wheeler, *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002); Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). The usage of "Biblical" above refers to the scriptures of both Jews and Christians as well as to the whole range of literature revolving around the Bible, i.e. Jewish and Christian apocryphal literature, redacted before the rise of Islam.

¹⁸ See for instance Brannon Wheeler, "'Moses or Alexander?' Early Islamic Exegesis of Qur'ān 18:60-65," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57/3 (Jul., 1998): 191-215; idem., *Moses in the Quran*; Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Some orientalist scholars have also occasionally adopted this approach. Abraham Geiger for instance reads Q 12:42 according to one of the exegetical opinions cited by a certain Muslim exegete named Elpherar. Geiger endorses the view indicating that Joseph has sinned by forgetting to remember to ask for God's help instead of the butler's and therefore he remained in prison for some more years (see Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*, (Bonn: n.p., 1833), 115. Elpherar is possibly an Anglicized form of al-Farrā' (d. 207/822). Yet, by comparing the Arabic citation Geiger offers from Elpherar's exegesis to al-Farrā's *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* they are not identical (see Abū Zakariyya Yaḥyā b. Ziyād al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār and Aḥmad Yusuf Najātī, 3 vols. (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1983), 2:46). A contextual reading of this verse within the whole *sūra* would yield a different result, that *rabbīhi* (i.e. his lord) in the verse refers to the butler's master (the king) not to God (see for instance Q 12:45). For other

quarters have been fundamentally exegetical and have encompassed a significant number of the responses to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. As a result, the majority of modern Muslim *tafsīrs* exhibit a mood of examining these allusions very similar to the classical mood. Undoubtedly, modern Muslim exegetes have generally been skeptic of the veracity of the extra-anecdotal traditions cited in early and classical exegesis. In addition, in their interpretation of the Qur'ānic narratives many modern Muslim exegetes, as opposed to the vast majority of their early and classical forerunners, cite direct excerpts from the Bible or provide their own syntheses of information directly cited from the Bible.¹⁹ Barring the frequent tendency of modern *tafsīrs* towards an anti-intertextual reading of the Qur'ānic narratives,²⁰ the mood by which modern Muslim exegetes deal with the limited set of extra-anecdotal traditions, abbreviated versions of these traditions, or Biblical material they cite remains closely similar to that of their classical peers; whether pronouncing their preference of a particular extra-narrative detail/tradition or not, citing this material often serves as a substitute for an exploration of the intertextual allusion's bi-directional reference. Put differently, a set of somewhat newly formulated extra-narrative material serve to compensate for the 'gap' the intertextual

examples on this mood of reading the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions, see Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 92 (concerning the lineage of 'Ād), 102 (on Sarah's laughter in Q 11:71), and 138-140 (on Jethro and the Prophet Shu'ayb); J. Muehleisen Arnold, *Ishmael or A Natural History of Islamism and its Relation to Christianity* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, n.d.), 162 (on the nature of God's proof mentioned in Q 12:24 that Joseph saw and prevented him from committing adultery with Potiphar's wife). This sort of reading was certainly not dominant in orientalist scholarship. For instance, Henry Preserved Smith, Hartwig Hirschfeld, Josef Horowitz, Charles C. Torrey, and Heinrich Speyer focus in their examination on the Qur'ānic narratives themselves to the exclusion of the Muslim exegetical material. See Charles C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1933); Hartwig Hirschfeld, *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902); Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1961); Henry P. Smith, *The Bible and Islam* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897); Josef Horoviz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, (Leipzig: Walter De Gruyter & Co, 1926).

¹⁹ Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, 26 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduhū, 1946); 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najjār, *Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā': laqad kana fī qaṣaṣihim 'ibra li-ulī al-albāb* 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.); Ḥassan Ayyūb, *Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā': Qaṣaṣ al-Ṣafwa al-mumtāza anbiyā' Allāh wa-rusulihī* (Cairo: Dār al-Tawzī' wa-l-Nashr al-Islāmiyya, 1997); Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ḥakīm al-mashhūr bi-tafsīr al-Manār*, 12 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947); Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Ashūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr*, 30 vols. (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tunisiyya lil-Nashr, 1984).

²⁰ This tendency is most manifest in *tafsīr* works that espouse a scripturalist hermeneutical outlook (see for instance, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, *al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ānī lil-Qur'ān*, 16 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.); Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 30 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003)). It is also frequently manifested in works which cite extra-narratives details or excerpts from the Bible, where the exegetes frequently prefer to stay within the limits of the utterances of the Qur'ān's narratives and resolve their exegetical problems by recourse to the Qur'ān itself (see for instance, Ibn 'Ashūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr*; Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ḥakīm*).

allusion engenders and a modern Muslim study on the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives that espouses a methodical literary approach based on modern allusional studies is yet to be produced.

Western Scholarship²¹ and the Allusions of the Qur'ānic Narratives

Besides the studies that espouse the aforementioned approach, western academia has a long history with the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. Since the 19th century, the significance of the interrelations between the Qur'ānic narratives and their pre-Islamic extant antecedent traditions, particularly Jewish and Christian religious literature, has been the subject of an extended debate in western academia. Orientalist scholarship (herein denotes a specific approach to Islamic texts that dominated western academia from the 19th up to around the middle of the 20th century) was truly shaped by modernity's historicism and thus relied extensively on source-influence criticism as an analytical tool in examining the Qur'ānic narratives. The chief goal of this research enterprise was therefore to offer a detailed genealogy of these narratives; principally by tracing their individual elements to their so-called 'original sources.' Accordingly, based on simple criterion of similarity and content parallelism orientalist scholars perceived the Qur'ānic narratives and their intertextual allusions as evidence of borrowing, on the Prophet Muḥammad's part, from Jewish and Christian traditions.²²

²¹ By Western scholarship it is meant the research work done by scholars of Islam in the West, who include Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Western scholarship is distinguished from scholarship in the Islamic lands by its openness to a more critical assessment of the Islamic tradition and more openness to the application of modern methods of inquiry to Islamic texts.

²² The scholar widely credited to have first advanced a systematic exposition of the borrowing thesis is Abraham Geiger, who advocated that Muḥammad chiefly borrowed from Jewish traditions. See Geiger's articulation of his thesis in Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, I-II. For other explicit articulations of the borrowing thesis, see Arnold, *Ishmael*, 152; C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism. Lectures on its Origin, its Religious and Political Growth, and its Present State* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 39; Gustav Weil, *The Bible, the Koran, and the Talmud, or Biblical Legends or the Mussulmans* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1846), X; Hartwig Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, II; Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen*, X-XIII; Henry P. Smith, *The Bible*, 61-62; Israel Schapiro, *Die haggadisehen Elemente im Erzählenden Teil des Korans* (Leipzig: Buchhandlung Gustav Fock, 1907), 5-6; Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 1-2; John MacDonald, "Joseph in the Qur'ān and Muslim commentary.1" *The Muslim World* 46/2 (1956):113-131, 119; Theodore Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909), 6-9; Julian Obermann, "Koran and Agada: The Events at Mount Sinai" *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 58/1 (Jan. 1941): 23-48, 23-6; Tor Andrae, *Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum* (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1926), 196-7; Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation*, 8, 63 and 125-6; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1922), 19-20; W. St. Clair Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Qur'ān* (New York: E. S. Gorham, 1905), 32.

Today the notion that a text should have neatly identifiable sources is a concept of significantly limited validity than orientalist scholars believed it to be. Indeed, the orientalists were unable to trace any Qur'ānic story to a particular identical version in the Qur'ān's antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions.²³ In addition, over the past few decades serious doubts have been casted over the usefulness of the whole enterprise of influence criticism with its over-concern for the author's intention (not particularly accessible for historical texts) and its disregard for the text and reader's autonomy.²⁴ From the intellectual vantage point of the moment, it could easily be seen that espousing source-influence criticism as the main analytical tool in approaching the Qur'ānic narratives undoubtedly hinders a much richer, and meaningful, description of these narratives' intertextuality. The significance of these narratives' intertextual allusions indeed extends beyond the mere denotation of 'original sources' or authorship intentions (the evidence for both of which is significantly unreliable) to the significance of the literary and hermeneutical conversation these allusions establish with the Qur'ān's antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions.

It was only recently that the application of the modern notion of intertextuality to the Qur'ānic narratives attracted interest in Qur'ānic studies. Nevertheless, it is evident in the few post-orientalist²⁵ studies informed by this notion that scholars apply loose approaches to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives instead of employing systematic criteria and procedures based on modern allusional studies. This sort of 'free' manipulation of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives

²³ This is clear from examining the orientalist works focusing on tracing the so-called 'original sources' of the Qur'ān. The most comprehensive attempt in this regard is Heinrich Speyer's *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, where no single Qur'ānic narrative pericope is possible to be reduced to an identical single version of the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions (see Speyer, *Die biblischen*, passim).

²⁴ See for instance Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, "Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality," in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein 3-36 (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

²⁵ The designation "post-orientalist" reflects a general move in recent studies of Western academia, roughly from the 1970s onward, away from the method and reductive assumptions of orientalist scholarship. Under the "post-orientalist" designation there have been a rich variety of studies that applied various literary methods to the Qur'ān and its narratives. It must be noted, however, that some recent studies on the intertextuality of the Qur'ān's narratives still do not disentangle themselves completely from the method and assumptions of orientalist scholarship. Griffith's study on the Qur'ānic story of the Companions of the Cave is one example (see Sidney Griffith, "Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur'ān: The "Companions of the Cave" in *Sūrat al-Kahf* and in Syriac Christian tradition," in *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds, 109-137 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007) and the discussion of his study in chapter one of this dissertation). Also, still some recent studies represent straightforward examinations in the spirit of source-criticism and the orientalists borrowing thesis, see for instance Kevin van Bladel's study on Q 18:83-102 in Kevin van Bladel, "The Alexander Legend in the Qur'ān 18:83-102," in *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds, 175-203 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

accommodated some post-orientalist scholars' desire to continue examining the Qur'ān and its narratives as historical sources, for the purpose of gaining insights into the historical circumstances of the Qur'ān's (thus Islam's) emergence.

Two examples particularly inspired by this sort of intertextual reading stand out: (1) Sidney Griffith's recent article "Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur'ān: The "Companions of the Cave" in *Sūrat al-Kahf* and in Syriac Christian tradition," and (2) a group of Angelika Neuwirth's recent studies such as "The House of Abraham and the House of Amram: Genealogy, Patriarchal Authority, and Exegetical Professionalism" and "'Oral Scriptures" in Contact. The Qur'ānic Story of the Golden Calf and its Biblical Subtext between Narrative, Cult, and Inter-communal Debate."²⁶ Indeed, both Griffith and Neuwirth offer a largely historical reading of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives situated within the context of the emergence of the Qur'ān: Griffith focuses on the philological and socio-cultural significance of the allusions in the Qur'ānic story of the Companions of the Cave to its antecedent Syriac traditions.²⁷ And Neuwirth focuses on the role the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives played in shaping the pre-canonical history of the Qur'ān, through which the nascent Muslim community evolved into a distinct religious group.²⁸ As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, a systematic literary reading of the intertextual allusion informed by modern allusion models is not only necessary to balance the perceived allusion's historical connotations but also as a corrective of these connotations.²⁹

²⁶ Angelika Neuwirth, "The House of Abraham and the House of Amram: Genealogy, Patriarchal Authority, and Exegetical Professionalism," in *The Qur'ān in Context. Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 499-531 (Netherlands: Brill, 2010); idem., "'Oral Scriptures" in Contact. The Qur'ānic Story of the Golden Calf and its Biblical Subtext between Narrative, Cult, and Inter-communal Debate," in *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild, 71-91 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006). These studies are part of Neuwirth's long-term project whose goal is to reach a finer chronological classification of the Qur'ānic revelations than that achieved by Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally (See Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns*), primarily by establishing the chronological order of the individual passages that make up the Qur'ān's single *sūras*. For an articulation of this research goal, see Neuwirth, "'Oral Scriptures," 73; Nicolai Sinai, "The Qur'an as Process," in *The Qur'ān in Context. Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 407-39 (Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 418-9. Nicolai Sinai was a principle contributor to the research group *Corpus Qoranicum* that Neuwirth leads and aims primarily at achieving the abovementioned research goal. He is currently an associate professor of Islamic Studies at Oxford University.

²⁷ Griffith, "Christian Lore," 131 and *passim*.

²⁸ See Neuwirth, "The House of Abraham"; idem., "'Oral Scriptures'".

²⁹ This is particularly important given the skepticism through which many scholars, including Griffith and Neuwirth, view Muslim historical reports on the emergence of the Qur'ān and Islam whereby in

In contrast with such historical readings of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives, Gabriel Said Reynolds' recent work titled *The Qur'ān and its Biblical Subtext* espouses a hermeneutical perspective that exclusively focuses on the interrelations between texts.³⁰ Yet, regrettably, the space opened up by Reynolds' textual hermeneutics of these allusions is not negotiated by means of a literary approach informed by recent developments in allusional studies. Instead, Reynolds starts with the problems that faced Muslim exegetes in dealing with these allusions and by recourse to the Qur'ān's antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions (the 'Qur'ān's Subtext' in Reynolds' terminology) he deduces solutions for these exegetical problems. The difference between the two reading processes is significant.

The former is a negotiation of the allusion coordinated by the alluding-text (in its entirety and its interconnectedness) and its control over the resulting conversation with, to use Hebel's expression, "the intertextual point of reference."³¹ On the other hand, the second reading process, as manifested in Reynolds' aforementioned work, is primarily controlled by the intertextual point of reference's capacity to supply a solution for an exegetical problem. In Reynolds' analysis, the alluding-text's control over the intertextual conversation subsides in importance in favor of a solution for the exegetical problem under examination and Reynolds does not demonstrate that such solution is confirmed by or aligned with the whole continuum of the alluding text (the Qur'ān). Reynolds' reading of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives thus at times seem not particularly a response to these allusions but largely a response to the Muslim exegetes readings of these allusions.³² The slippage from the former reading process to the latter is virtually unavoidable given the argument Reynolds attempts to prove, namely "that the Qur'ān - from a critical perspective at least - should not be read in conversation with what came after it (*tafsīr*) but with what came before it (Biblical literature)."³³

Theoretical and Methodological Framework of the Study

their readings they usually rely on reconstructions of both not particularly verifiable by independent extant historical evidence.

³⁰ Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and its Biblical Subtext* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

³¹ Cf. Hebel, "Towards," 149 and 154.

³² As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, the resolutions of several allusions that Reynolds offers are not aligned with the alluding-text's intention.

³³ Cf. Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 13.

To speak about the Qur'ānic narratives is indeed to speak about their antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions. Yet, more than seems to be commonly assumed, the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives cannot be reduced to these narratives' interrelations to the pre-Islamic extant Jewish and Christian texts. In casting its own accounts of the lives of pre-Islamic figures, the Qur'ān nowhere in its narratives refers to specific external texts.³⁴ Rather, it seems to allude to and comment on the collective memory of these figures' lives in the cultural milieu of pre-Islamic (late antique) Arabia, which then was preserved and circulated in the form of oral anecdotal traditions.³⁵ Here we are faced with a chronic problem in modern Qur'ānic studies: there is no record, or better said no reliable record (given the presence of Muslim extra-anecdotal traditions), as to these pre-Islamic Arabian oral traditions. Therefore, not only a significant constituent of the background against which the Qur'ānic narratives emerged is unavailable to us but also the relationship of these oral traditions to the Qur'ān's antecedent Jewish and Christian lore remains ambiguous. While it is plausible to assume influence of the Jewish and Christian lore on the pre-Islamic oral traditions, it is also not possible to dismiss the existence of indigenous pre-Islamic Arabic traditions parallel to both Jewish and Christian lore and the Qur'ānic narratives.

It is due to lack of reliable record as to the pre-Islamic Arabic oral traditions that the present investigation is also rendered exclusively a study of the Qur'ānic narratives' allusions as to the pre-Islamic extant Jewish and Christian texts. Nevertheless, in this dissertation we will constantly bear in mind that the Qur'ānic narratives are in conversation with a wider set of 'texts.'³⁶ Between the necessity to

³⁴ There are only several general references to the Torah (*al-Tawrāh*) and the Gospels (*al-Injīl*) as confirming what is revealed in the Qur'ān (see for instance, Q 3:3, 2:97, 4:47).

³⁵ Griffith has pointed to this with regard to the Syriac background of the Qur'ān's narratives (Griffith, "Christian Lore," 116, 124-5). That the pre-Islamic Arabian culture was predominantly oral is a fact widely recognized in Islamic studies. In his recent article in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* Alan Jones writes, "in pre-Islamic Arabia, culture was largely transmitted orally, with writing being used for practical matters of daily life (i.e. trade)" (cf. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. "Orality and Writing in Arabia").

³⁶ The Qur'ān's narratives themselves lend support to this contention. Some of these narratives' elements are clearly responses to the utterances of the text's original interlocutors. Such elements are usually impossible to trace to any pre-Islamic extant source. For instance, Griffith identifies intertextual allusions in Q 18:22, 25-6 to the Qur'ān's antecedent Syriac traditions on the story of the Companions of the Cave, respectively to the disagreement on the number of the Companions of the Cave and the period they stayed in the cave. While Q 18:22 and 25-6 indeed point to this disagreement, the numbers recorded in these verses differ markedly from those recorded in the Syriac traditions. Q 18:22 and 25-6 reflect the numbers the Qur'ān's interlocutors were arguing for (compare these two verses to the excerpts from the Syriac sources in Griffith, "Christian Lore," 129).

exclusively rely on the available extant pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian traditions and the fact that they do not represent the entire gamut of ‘texts’ that the Qur’ānic narratives were initially in intertextual conversation with, correctives must be sought in order to avoid reduction in describing this conversation. These correctives, as this dissertation aspires to demonstrate, are to be found within the Qur’ān itself as an integral whole; in the *intra*-textual relationships of signification that result from the interconnectedness of the text’s utterances, themes, and literary structures. All of which reflect the text’s relationship to its cultural context and simultaneously circumscribe this relationship. Applying a literary model to the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives within a framework sensible to the Qur’ān as an integral discourse and a reading mindful of “the intention of the text”³⁷ should allow us to decipher these *intra*-textual relationships of signification and their bearing on these narratives’ intertextual allusions.

One of the main difficulties in approaching the Qur’ānic narratives has been their unconventional arrangement in the Qur’ān, whereby narrative units concerning a certain figure and brief mentions of his name or allusions to his story are dispersed in the text in different chapters (*sūras*) not according to an immediately recognizable thematic, structural, or chronological order. Orientalist and many post-orientalist scholars have perceived this unconventional composition as a sign of fragmentation, disjointedness, and redundant repetition.³⁸ This perception combined with the desire to facilitate the comparative process of seeking the alleged sources of the Qur’ānic narratives, the orientalist approached these narratives as fragments to be reordered

³⁷ The notion is Umberto Eco’s (Cf. Umberto Eco, “Interpretation and History,” in *Interpretation and Over Interpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini, 23-43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25. This article is one of Eco’s Tanner Lectures delivered in 1990 (Stefan Collini, “Introduction: Interpretation Terminable and Interminable,” in *Interpretation and Over Interpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini, 1-21 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3). For a detailed exposition of this notion see Umberto Eco, “Interpretation and History,” 23-43; idem., “Overinterpreting Texts,” in *Interpretation and Over Interpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini, 45-66 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); idem., “Between Author and Text,” in *Interpretation and Over Interpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini, 67-88 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³⁸ For orientalist scholars’ assessment of the composition of the Qur’ān’s narratives, see for instance Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*, (Bonn: n.p., 1833), III; Charles C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1933), 63, 113 and 126; J. Muehleisen Arnold, *Ishmael or A Natural History of Islamism and its Relation to Christianity* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, n.d.), 152. In late orientalist works, the assessment of the composition of these narratives remained virtually unchanged. See for instance Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 1 (Originally published 1938). For an assessment of the composition of the Qur’ān as a whole see for example *ibid.*, 1; Henry P. Smith, *The Bible and Islam* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 26-27. Such assessments continue in some post-orientalist studies (see for instance Andrew Rippin, “The Qur’an as Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects,” *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 10/1 (1983): 38-47, 39).

prior to examination.³⁹ John Wansbrough's controversial theory of the origins of the Qur'ān has taken this approach to the text's composition to an extreme. By arguing that the different text units (narrative and non-narratives) of the Qur'ān are of independent origins, Wansbrough has purported that there is no genuine interconnectedness in the Qur'ānic discourse.⁴⁰ Such perceptions of the text's composition have too readily precluded an investigation into the literary integrity of the Qur'ān. They have practically embraced a degree of atomism in examining the Qur'ānic narratives that far exceeds the atomism ascribed to early and classical Muslim exegesis.

Early and classical Muslim exegetes in fact approached the Qur'ān as a coherent whole. They explored its composition as it stands in the canonical text (the *Muṣḥaf*) and they, particularly classical Muslim exegetes, did not treat the Qur'ānic verses in isolation of the textual continuum of the Qur'ān as a whole. In their verse-by-verse scheme of exegesis they usually cite and connect several Qur'ānic verses under their interpretation of individual verses.⁴¹ Nonetheless, barring some classical exegetical

³⁹ For instance, Geiger and Arnold examined the Qur'ān's narratives following the historical chronological order of the parallel stories in the Bible. See Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 96-7; Arnold, *Ishmael*, 152. On the other hand, Josef Horowitz followed the Nöldeke-Schwally chronological order closely. See Josef Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, (Leipzig: Walter De Gruyter & Co, 1926), I (Vorwort). Heinrich Speyer examined the narratives of the Qur'ān according to the Bible's chronology but in examining the narratives concerning each figure he followed the four-periods divisioning of the Qur'ānic revelations of Nöldeke-Schwally's chronology: early, middle, late Meccan and Medinan (see Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, XI).

⁴⁰ In articulating this thesis Wansbrough writes, "Muslim scripture lends little support to the theory of a deliberate edition. Particularly in the *exempla* of salvation history [the terminology Wansbrough uses to describe the Qur'ān's narratives], characterized by variant traditions, but also in passages of exclusively paraenetic or eschatological content, ellipsis and repetition are such as to suggest not the carefully executed project of one or of many men, but rather the product of an organic development from originally independent traditions during a long period of transmission." (Cf. John Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), 47. Originally published 1977). See also his analysis of the Qur'ānic narratives on the Prophet Shu'ayb in *Ibid.*, 21-5.

⁴¹ While few of the extant works from the formative period of Qur'ānic exegesis do usually treat the verses of the Qur'ān in isolation (e.g. 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad, 3 vols. (al-Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1989); Sufyān al-Thawrī, *Tafsīr Sufyān al-Thawrī*, ed. Imtiāz 'Alī 'Ashrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983)), others do exhibit the abovementioned approach to the interpretation of the Qur'ān (see for instance, Abū l-Ḥassan Sa'īd b. Mas'ada al-Akhfash al-Awsat, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. Hudā Maḥmūd Qur'ā'a, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1990); al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*; Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān*, ed. 'Abdallāh Shihāta (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Maṣriyya lil-Kitāb, 1983)). Classical exegetical works predominantly reflect this approach (see for instance, Abī l-Faraj Ibn al-Gawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*. ed. Zuhair al-Shāwīsh, 9 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1984); Jār Allāh Abī l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, ed. 'Adel Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad, 6 vols. (al-Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-'Abaykān, 1998); Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ansārī al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 24 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2006)).

works,⁴² it is evident that early and classical *tafsīrs* were neither interested in exploring how the various text units of the Qurʾān relate to each other in a coherent flow nor in assessing the thematic or topical unity of the text's different *sūras*. Early and classical Muslim exegetes thus also did not attempt to vindicate the unity of the Qurʾānic discourse; they however, as opposed to orientalist and many post-orientalist scholars, took it for granted. It is chiefly through the prism of our modern intellectual resources and developments in “coherence-related” and holistic approaches to the Qurʾān over the past century that traditional verse-by-verse exegetical approaches are now assessed as being atomistic.⁴³

In parts of our analysis we will have to make use of the topical and thematic unity of the Qurʾān's different *sūras* in order to accurately decipher the intention of the text. As Umberto Eco asserts, to decipher “the intention of the text” (*intentio operis*), is “to recognize a semiotic strategy [in the text]”⁴⁴ and to validate it is “to check it upon the text as a coherent whole.”⁴⁵ In modern Qurʾānic studies, the notion of ‘the intention of the text’ is to be particularly contrasted with the orientalists’ focus on the text’s authorship which, within the borrowing thesis, led some orientalist scholars to frequently interpret the Qurʾānic narratives divergences from their antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions as mistaken and confused borrowings on Muḥammad’s part,⁴⁶

⁴² See for instance Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Zubayr al-Ghirmāṭī, *al-Burhān fī tartīb suwar al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Shaʿbānī (Morocco: Wazārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1990); Burhān al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-durar fī tanāsub al-ʾayāt wa-l-suwar*, ed. n.a., 22 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.); Muḥammad Al-Rāzī Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī: al-shahīr bi-l-tafsīr al-kabīr wa-mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, ed. n.a., 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981).

⁴³ See Nevin Reda al-Tahry’s discussion leading up to the categorization of classical verse-by-verse exegesis as atomistic (Nevin Reda El-Tahry, “Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qurʾān: Repetition and Narrative Structure in Surat al-Baqara” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, Toronto, 2010), 1-16). See also Asma Barlas, “Believing Women” in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qurʾān (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 8; Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī’s Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qurʾān* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), 1-3; idem, “The Qurʾān as literature,” 50. The impulse of modern coherence-related and holistic approaches to the Qurʾān’s composition principally came from developments in scholarship in the Islamic lands (see for instance, Mustansir Mir, “The sūra as a unity: a twentieth century development in Qurʾān exegesis,” in *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, ed. G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef 211-24 (London: Routledge, 1993). Noteworthy is also the exegetical approach of Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1967) and his student and wife ʿĀisha ʿAbd Raḥmān (penname, Bint al-Shāṭiʿ) which is one of the pioneering modern perspectives to the coherent composition of the Qurʾānic discourse. See ʿĀisha ʿAbd Raḥmān, *al-tafsīr al-bayānī lil-Qurʾān al-karīm*, 7th ed., 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.).

⁴⁴ Cf. Eco, “Overinterpreting Texts,” 64.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁶ See for instance Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 79, 87, and 129; Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, 64; Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit*, 19-20; Smith, *The Bible*, 77-78, and 88; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, 293.

thus effectively interpreting the text by negating its intentionality in articulating its own versions of pre-Islamic history.

Our attention to the intention of the text is not intended to conceal the fact that any reading of the Qur'ān is a particular reader-response. It is however a due attention that must be given to the text's integrity and an appreciation of the delimitations it imposes on the significance of its intertextual allusions. Equally important, it tries to bridge the gap between two research perspectives that often seem, both in Qur'ānic studies and the study of Muslim literature in general, as mutually exclusive. Sebastian Günther has expressed these two positions insightfully:

The first advocates approaches, methodologies, and theories broadly classed as “socio-historical,” while the second is often characterized as “immanence-based” or “immanence-oriented.” While the first position rests on critical and theoretical processes that regard knowledge as contextually based, the second position takes the text itself as its object of analysis, and does so irrespective of such contexts as the author's background, the history of the text's reception, and so forth. In other words, the former view essentially understands literature in a historical context whereas the latter does not and, therefore, occasionally attracts epithets such as “transcendental” and “ahistorical.”⁴⁷

A perception of the text's intention is not possible within a reading solely according to the diachronic order of the Qur'ānic revelations. The modern reconstructions of the chronology of the Qur'ānic revelations have indeed been in part attempts to make sense of the unconventional composition of the Qur'ān. These attempts have offered a largely historical reading of the Qur'ānic text units (narrative and non-narrative) as a sequence reflecting the development of authorship purposes and the emergence of the nascent Islamic community within the original context of Qur'ānic revelations. Yet, despite several attempts, the various postulated chronologies of the Qur'ān are not

⁴⁷ Sebastian Günther, “Introduction,” in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights Into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther, xv-xxxiii (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005), xvi-xvii. Richard C. Martin has pointed to the same problem, yet with regard to the study of the Qur'ān only. He writes, “the unfortunate polemical atmosphere between proponents of textual and contextual studies has discouraged productive integration of both kinds of investigations in Quranic studies” (Cf. Richard C. Martin, “Understanding the Quran in Text and Context,” *History of Religions* 21/4 (May, 1982): 361-384, 361-2).

(necessarily) historically verifiable.⁴⁸ The same observation also applies to the historical readings of the Qur'ān offered by these attempts. In short, a diachronic reading of the Qur'ān cannot be taken as a substitute for a synchronic reading. The former, consciously or unconsciously, partly or wholly, presupposes that the Qur'ān does not possess coherence and literary logic as it stands in the codified text and, thus, that it was not meant to be read synchronically.⁴⁹

The present author is in agreement with Mustansir Mir who observes that “a meaningful literary study of a discourse assumes that the discourse possesses a certain degree of unity and coherence.”⁵⁰ This dissertation therefore suspends any judgment concerning so-called disjointedness in the composition of the Qur'ān and rather deals with the text as an integrated discourse. In order to perceive the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives within the particularity of this discourse, these narratives should not only be viewed in a linear fashion, that is, according to the chronology of their revelation or their sequential order in the canonical text of the Qur'ān. Rather, they are also to be viewed in a non-linear fashion, through a synchronic reading within the canonical text of the Qur'ān that will allow for the bearing of the whole text on the intertextual allusions of its narratives to emerge.

In view of this brief survey of past and present scholarship on our subject matter, it is obvious that there is much need for a systematic literary criticism of the

⁴⁸ See for instance, Gustav Weil, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in den Koran* (Bielefeld: Velhagen und Klasing, 1844); Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns*; Rége. Blachère, *Le Coran*, 3 vols. (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1947-50 (repr. 1957)); idem., *Histoire de la littérature arabe*, 3 vols. (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1952-66). Most recently, Neuwirth's inspired *Corpus Qoranicum* attempts to reach a finer chronological classification of the Qur'ānic revelations than that achieved by Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally, as aforementioned, primarily by establishing the chronological order of the individual passages that make up the Qur'ān's single *sūras*. Besides the aforementioned studies of Neuwirth (see footnote 25) she has published a significant number of studies towards achieving this goal (e.g. Angelika Neuwirth, “Referentiality and Textuality in *Surat al-Hijr*: Some observations on the Qur'ānic “Canonical Process” and the Emergence of a Community,” in *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'ān*, ed. Issa J. Boullata 143-172 (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000); idem., “Negotiating Justice: Pre-Canonical Reading of the Qur'ānic Creation Accounts (Part I),” *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2/1, (2000):25-41; idem., “Negotiating Justice: Pre-Canonical Reading of the Qur'ānic Creation Accounts (Part II),” *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2/2, (2000):1-18). In determining the divisioning of the Qur'ānic revelations into distinct periods (early, middle and late Meccan and Medinan), all of the above attempts have relied on stylistic (e.g. changes in rhyme patterns and vocabulary) and structural (e.g. verse length) criteria in conjunction with consideration of thematic developments over the prophetic career of Muḥammad. The problem with relying particularly on stylistic and structural criteria is indeed some degree of circularity (Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'ān's self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 86).

⁴⁹ Neuwirth was pioneering in arguing for the systematic composition of the Qur'ān, particularly the middle and late Meccan *sūras* (Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien sur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981).

⁵⁰ Cf. Mustansir Mir, “The Qur'an as Literature,” *Religion & Literature* 20/1 (Spring, 1988): 49-64, 50.

intertextuality of the Qur'ān's narratives that employs a theory-informed literary approach to these narratives' intertextual allusions. For the purpose of analyzing the intertextual allusions evident in the narrative pericopes under examination, I will draw on a particular theoretical model developed in allusional studies, namely Udo J. Hebel's description of the allusion.⁵¹ The framework within which this analysis will be conducted is Michel Foucault's conception of the "statement's associated field" and Umberto Eco's interpretive theory.⁵² Foucault asserts, "there is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not surrounded by a field of coexistences, effects of series and succession."⁵³ As is clear from this brief description, Foucault's notion of the statement is essentially intertextual. The verses of the Qur'ānic narratives are perceived in this dissertation as statements and Foucault's articulation of the constituents of the statement's "associated field" of coexistence will serve as the overarching structure within which a comprehensive contextualization of these verses' intertextual allusions is possible, both diachronically and synchronically.⁵⁴ Eco's notion of the intention of the text will serve as the chief interpretive theory within which our analysis of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives will be conducted. The narrative pericopes at hand will be examined according to Nöldeke-Schwally's chronological order of the Qur'ānic revelations.⁵⁵ They will also be examined synchronically with reference to each other, the context of their respective *sūras* (when necessary), the overall canonical text of the Qur'ān, and the relevant pre-Islamic extant Jewish and Christian traditions.

Whether the readings expounded through applying this framework of inquiry pertain to the 'original' meaning of these narrative pericopes is a question that, in my

⁵¹ See Hebel, "Towards a Descriptive Poetics of *Allusion*," in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett, 135-64 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1991). My approach in this dissertation to the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions builds on an approach I adopted in an earlier study of mine on the intertextuality of the Qur'an's narratives, particularly by expanding the allusion model I adopted earlier and by espousing a more holistic approach to these allusions (See Waleed Ahmed, "Lot's daughters in the Qur'ān: An investigation through the lens of intertextuality," in *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān: The Qur'ān in its Historical Context 2*, ed. G. S. Reynolds 409-22 (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁵² See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2004), 74-7.

⁵³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁴ For a description of the statement's associated field of coexistence, see *ibid.*, 76 and chapter two below.

⁵⁵ See Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 1:IX-X. The examination according to this order does not aim at any sort of historical re-construction or verification. It is primarily intended to perceive the narratives interrelationships diachronically, in a sequence that may roughly correspond to the chronological order of their revelation.

view, cannot be answered in absolute terms. Our analysis is primarily literary not historical. This however does not necessarily mean that the readings offered in this study are detached from the meaning imparted to the text's first audience. The canonization of the Qur'ān is neither an amalgamation of the meaning grasped by its first audience nor is it a transformation that entails separation from it. The meaning imparted to the text's first audience is but one layer of the text's new *textus receptus* after its canonization. Indeed, the Qur'ān, thanks to a distinctive style, arrangement, and referentiality (internal and external) reflects to a great degree its relationship to the cultural and historical context of its emergence. It is these very characteristics that prompted, at least partially, Neuwirth's attempt to reconstruct its pre-canonical history.⁵⁶

Scope of the Present Work

Hebel classifies the function of the allusion into three main categories: intratextual, metatextual, and intertextual.⁵⁷ The first category denotes the type of contribution the allusion effects within the alluding text, for instance "characterization of figures" or "setting evocation."⁵⁸ On the other hand, the second category denotes the alluding-text's "metatextual" attitude, engendered by the allusion, towards the referent text: for instance the type of the alluding-text's commentary on the allusion's referent.⁵⁹ The last functional category of the allusion largely pertains to issues of authentication (not to be confused with authorization) which involves "[an appreciation of] the allusion's contribution to the 'reality effect' of the narrative text."⁶⁰ The narrative pericopes examined in this dissertation have been particularly selected because they contain allusions that comprehensively reflect the variety of these functions.

In his work on the modern history of the notion of intertextuality, Graham Allen wrote,

⁵⁶ For instance, in her article "Qur'an and History - A Disputed Relationship: Some Reflections on Qur'anic History and History in the Qur'an," Neuwirth writes "thanks to the striking extent of self-referentiality - the microstructure of the canonical text reflects an extended process of communication, clearly indicating the stages of its pre-canonical emergence." (cf. Angelika Neuwirth, "Qur'an and History - A Disputed Relationship: Some Reflections on Qur'anic History and History in the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5 (2003): 1-18, 3). See also Neuwirth, "Negotiating Justice (Part I)," 27.

⁵⁷ Hebel, "Towards," 156.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 156-7

⁵⁹ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 157.

Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are ... what theorists now call intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates.⁶¹

Intertextuality is not a new phenomenon though; only its theorization is.⁶² Hence, Allen's assertion equally applies to the Muslim exegetes' interpretation of the Qur'ān and its narratives; with no exception they are all intertextual readings of the Qur'ānic narratives (but not necessarily with reference to Jewish and Christian traditions). However, for practical considerations of convenience and manageability of presentation, selection had to be made from among the immense Muslim exegetical literature on the Qur'ān and its narratives. Thus, first, the present work exclusively focuses on mainstream Sunnī exegesis. Accordingly, not only the purview of our investigation does not include Shī'ī exegetical works but also Sunnī legal, philosophical, and Sūfī (mystical) Qur'ān commentaries. From Sunnī exegesis, as already mentioned, only four exegetical works will be examined. Notwithstanding these limitations, the selected four Muslim exegetical works together with the orientalist and post-orientalist responses to the narrative pericopes at hand reflect a certain logic and line of development in approaching the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextuality.

Each of the Qur'ān commentaries examined in this dissertation belongs to the class of *tafsīr musalsal* (serial or sequential *tafsīr*) in which the exegete interprets the verses of the Qur'ān *seriatim* beginning with the first verse and ending with the last according to the verses sequence in the canonical text, not the chronological order of revelations. This is the scholarly format adopted in classical Qur'ānic exegesis. In the modern period different formats have emerged but still this verse-by-verse form of exegesis is widely used, particularly among traditional scholars and many prominent Islamic thinkers. The reason for insisting on this format is that we are interested in the impact of the canonical text as whole on the interpretation of its narratives'

⁶¹ Cf. Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

⁶² Judith Still and Michael Worton, "Introduction," in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. Judith Still and Michael Worton, 1-44 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 2.

intertextuality, thus when dealing with this format we are confident that the exegete whose work is under examination had knowledge of the whole text of the Qur'ān (its style, structures, and content). In addition, each of the selected *tafsīrs* represents a distinctive development in approaching the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives. At this point, it is fitting to briefly introduce each of our four exegetes together with the observations that prompted the selection of their works.

a) Al-Ṭabarī: The first exegete on our list is al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī was a prolific scholar of wide learning. He was not only an excellent Qur'ānic exegete (*mufasssīr*) but also equally an excellent historian, thus he is most known for his encyclopedic commentary on the Qur'ān *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (*The Comprehensive Elucidation of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*) and his universal history *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* (*The History of al-Ṭabarī*) or *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (*The History of the Prophets and Kings*). Al-Ṭabarī's outstanding expertise also included several branches of Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, Ḥadīth (Muslim traditions) sciences, and philology;⁶³ all of which are clearly reflected in his Qur'ān commentary.⁶⁴ Al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* has been always appreciated in modern scholarship for containing one of the most comprehensive, if not the most comprehensive, collection of exegetical traditions from the two and a half centuries preceding him; thus its value as an important source on the scholarship of the formative period of Islamic exegesis of which written evidence is scarce or problematic.⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* has also been rightly considered the work that marks the beginning of the mature classical *tafsīr* tradition, characteristic by the fusion of the exegetical methods developed in the formative period (periphrastic, narrative, legal, and philological exegesis as well as exegesis by relying on traditions “*tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr*”).⁶⁶

The most blatant characteristic of al-Ṭabarī's approach to the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives is the citation of plenty of extra-anecdotal traditions. In the centuries following al-Ṭabarī, the vast majority of these traditions came to be considered of doubtful authenticity and ever since have been generally classified as

⁶³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*, ed. n.a., 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983), 2:112-3.

⁶⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 24 vols. (Cairo: Dār Hagar lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī' wa-l-I'lān, 2001).

⁶⁵ C.E. Bosworth, “al-Ṭabarī.” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-tabari-COM_1133 (June 2, 2012).

⁶⁶ See for instance, Claude Gilliot, “Exegesis of the Qur'ān: Classical and Medieval,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=q3_COM-00058 (December 9, 2009).

deriving from Jewish and Christian lore but primarily from Jewish origins, thus labeled *Isrā'īliyyāt*. Al-Ṭabarī's approach to these traditions is largely unexplored and will only be evident in his own commentary on the Qur'ān's verses not in the fact that he cites these traditions. This contention is supported by the fact that the second exegete on our list, Ibn Kathīr, in spite of his rejection of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* takes al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* as a major source for his Qur'ān commentary. While Ibn Kathīr excludes the vast majority of the *Isrā'īliyyāt*, he still endorses a multitude of al-Ṭabarī's exegetical opinions concerning the same verses or issues under which al-Ṭabarī cites this sort of traditions.⁶⁷

b) Ibn Kathīr: Ibn Kathīr also was a prominent scholar of multidisciplinary expertise, for instance in history, Ḥadīth sciences, exegesis, and jurisprudence. Like al-Ṭabarī, he also is most known for his Qur'ān commentary, titled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm* (*The Interpretation of the Glorious Qur'ān*), and his universal history *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* (*The Beginning and the End*).⁶⁸ Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr* came to be classified among the most authoritative Qur'ān commentaries and still circulates widely in modern-day Islamic communities.⁶⁹ For his exegetical approach, Ibn Kathīr owes much debt to his teacher the renowned Ḥanbalī scholar Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). It is from Ibn Taymiyya that Ibn Kathīr seems to have adopted the basic hermeneutical principles that indeed largely shape his exegesis of the Qur'ān.⁷⁰ As already noted, the most conspicuous characteristic of Ibn Kathīr's

⁶⁷ Jane Dammen McAuliffe translates the traditional position adopted by Ibn Kathīr with regard to the *Isrā'īliyyāt* traditions as follows, "(i) those things [i.e. the *Isrā'īliyyāt* traditions] which are known to be true because they are attested to in the Quranic revelation; (ii) those things whose falsehood is certified from the same source; and (iii) that which falls into neither of the other classes." (See Jane McAuliffe, "Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988): 46-62, 58. Ibn Kathīr's view is that such traditions may be cited only as complementary witnesses (*li-istishhād*) but not to prove or disprove an argument (*li-i'tiḍād*). He also saw no particular benefit in citing these traditions, especially the third category, and considered that arguing about the extra Qur'ānic details cited in these traditions corrupts both the practice of exegesis and the meaning of the text. See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, eds. Muṣṭafā al-Sayyid Muḥammad, Muḥammad al-Sayyid Rashād, Muḥammad Faḍl al-'Agamāwī, 'Alī Aḥmad 'Abd al-Bāqī, and Ḥasan 'Abbās Quṭb, 15 vols. (Giza, Egypt: Mu'assasat Qurṭuba and Maktabat Awlād al-Shaykh lil-Turāth, 2000), 1:10-1.

⁶⁸ As Henri Laoust asserts, Ibn Kathīr's contribution to the sciences of Ḥadīth is also notable. See H. Laoust, "Ibn Kathīr, 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl Ibn 'Umar b. Kathīr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-3237 (October 1, 2010).

⁶⁹ The accounts concerning Ibn Kathīr in medieval Muslim biographical dictionaries consider him an excellent exegete and count his *tafsīr* among the most authoritative. See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-huffāz*, ed. n.a. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983), 533-534; Shihāb al-Dīn Abī l-Falāh b. al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qāder al-'Arna'ūṭ and Maḥmūd al-'Arna'ūṭ, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1993), 8:398.

⁷⁰ Compare Ibn Taymiyya's four exegetical principles (Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayyir, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, nd), 2: 231-237) to Ibn Kathīr's (Ibn

tafsīr in terms of his dealing with the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives is his very circumscribed use of extra-anecdotal traditions. Also important is Ibn Kathīr's extensive use of the traditions attributed to the Prophet in the interpretation of the Qur'ānic narratives.⁷¹

c) al-Biqā'ī: Our third exegete is al-Biqā'ī. A Qur'ān exegete, historian, jurist, Ḥadīth scholar, and a mathematician al-Biqā'ī was indeed a scholar of wide learning and scholarly output.⁷² Al-Biqā'ī flourished in the vibrant intellectual milieu of late Mamluk Cairo and it was there that he wrote the first complete draft of his Qur'ān commentary,⁷³ titled *Nazm al-durar fī tanāsub al-āyāt wa-l-suwar* (*The Stringing of Pearls Concerning the Proportionality of the Verses and the Sūras*). His *tafsīr* came to be at the center of a significant controversy, specifically because of al-Biqā'ī's controversial exegetical approach.⁷⁴ Al-Biqā'ī introduced, probably for the first time in Islam's history,⁷⁵ direct and lengthy excerpts from the Bible into his commentary on the Qur'ān and its narratives. The controversy concerning this innovation (*bid'a*) was intense to the extent that al-Biqā'ī had to write a treatise to defend his position of quoting the Bible in his *tafsīr*.⁷⁶ A major issue for us to probe in al-Biqā'ī's *tafsīr* will thus be how he relates these narrative excerpts from the Bible to the Qur'ānic narratives.

d) Sayyid Quṭb: The last exegete on our list is the modern Islamic thinker Sayyid

Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 1:6-12). Given that many students of Ibn Taymiyya were persecuted after his death and circulation of his books was to some extent restricted (see Abī 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmed b. 'Abd al-Hādī, *al-Uqūd al-durriyya min manāqib shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Abī Muṣ'ab and Ṭal'at b. Fu'ād al-Ḥulwānī (Cairo: Al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 2002), 400), it is probable that Ibn Kathīr did not quote his teacher out of prudence and caution. These four exegetical principles are not unique to Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr. The application of these exegetical principles is attested in earlier Qur'ān commentaries, for instance in al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr*. Yet, to my knowledge, Ibn Taymiyya is the first to offer a systematic formulation of these exegetical principles and his application of them, and Ibn Kathīr's, seem to be the most systematic in classical Muslim exegesis.

⁷¹ In Ibn Kathīr's hermeneutical approach, the Prophet's traditions represent the second source for interpreting the Qur'ān after exhausting the attempt to interpret the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān (See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 1:6).

⁷² See Walid Saleh, "al-Biqā'ī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=ei3_COM-23717 (December 12, 2010). For an assessment of al-Biqā'ī's scholarship see for example, Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 9: 509-510; Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭālī 'bi-maḥāsini man ba'd al-qarn al-Sābi'*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.), 1:22.

⁷³ See Walid Saleh, *In Defense of the Bible* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 21.

⁷⁴ For a detailed account of this controversy see Walid Saleh, "A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist: al-Biqā'ī and His Defense of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qur'ān," *Speculum* 83 (2008): 629-54, particularly 629-36; idem., *In Defense*, 21-33;

⁷⁵ See Saleh, "A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist," 636.

⁷⁶ See *Ibid.*, 631.

Quṭb, more fully Sayyid Quṭb Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn Shādhilī.⁷⁷ Unlike the aforementioned three exegetes who mostly led a life of political quietism, Quṭb, as a member in the Muslim Brotherhood group, was actively involved in politics during Jamal ‘Abdel Naser’s (d. 1970) reign in Egypt in the fifties and sixties of the 20th century.⁷⁸ Quṭb was born into a religious family, had considerable religious education during his childhood and learned the Qur’ān by heart as a child. Nevertheless, he went on to obtain his secondary and post-secondary education from the government’s secular educational institutions.⁷⁹ Quṭb thus did not belong to the traditional scholarly class of the official religious establishment (the *‘ulamā*). Nonetheless, his works, especially his *tafsīr*, have had great impact on modern Islamic thought. The most salient characteristic of Quṭb’s *tafsīr* with regard to approaching the intertextuality of the Qur’ānic narratives is indivisible from Quṭb’s overall approach to the Qur’ān. Quṭb’s approach could be termed “scripturalist”; it fundamentally depends on interpreting the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān, thus pointing up the significance of the carefully-worded title of his Qur’ān commentary, *In the Shadows of the Qur’ān (Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān)*.

Many classical exegetes emphasized that the first source for interpreting the Qur’ān is the Qur’ān itself (for instance, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr as mentioned above). The main difference that Quṭb’s *tafsīr* exhibits in this regard relates to the earnest emphasis Quṭb puts on this approach to the exclusion of other sources of interpretation. Quṭb’s reliance on the Prophet’s traditions seems very minimal if for example compared to al-Ṭabarī or Ibn Kathīr’s. He also seldom recurses to the exegetical traditions attributed to *al-tābi‘ūn* (the generation of the successors to the Prophet’s companions) and a rejection of virtually all the extra-anecdotal traditions on the narratives of the Qur’ān is a hallmark of his *tafsīr*. Quṭb is the only modern exegete on our list particularly because his exegesis of the Qur’ānic narratives is in essence scripturalist, thus represents, at the very least, a methodological break with classical exegesis by shunning the intertextual nature of the Qur’ānic narratives and interpreting them only through their intra-Qur’ānic relations.

These four exegetical works together with orientalist and post-orientalist

⁷⁷ See Ṣalāh ‘Abd al-Fattāh al-Khāldī, *Sayyid Quṭb min al-milād ilā al-istishhād* (Damascus and Beirut: Dār al-Qalam and al-Dār al-Shāmiyya, 1994), 15.

⁷⁸ Quṭb was imprisoned on two occasions during Nasr’s time, the first of which lasted for around nine years and the second ended with his execution by the regime. Al-Khāldī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 7, 16-7; J.J.G. Jansen, “Sayyid Quṭb,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sayyid-kutb-COM_1012 (June 2, 2012).

⁷⁹ See al-Khāldī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 15 and Jansen, “Sayyid Quṭb.”

responses to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives will contextualize our examination of these allusions within five distinctive overarching developments in approaching these narratives' intertextuality: (1) an approach that extensively cites Muslim extra-anecdotal traditions to complement these narratives intertextuality (al-Ṭabarī's), (2) one that largely shuns these traditions in favor of relying on a very circumscribed set of external narrative details in addition to relying on prophetic traditions (Ibn Kathīr's), (3) a third approach that besides extra-anecdotal and prophetic traditions recurses to direct citations from the Bible (al-Biqā'ī's), (4) an approach that examines the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives almost exclusively in relation to the extant Jewish and Christian traditions, including the Bible (orientalist and post-orientalist approaches), and lastly (5) an approach which is Qur'ānic, largely shunning the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextuality by virtually exclusively reading these narratives within the borders of the canonical text (Quṭb's).

Organization of the Present Work

This study comprises three chapters. Chapter One consists of a survey of scholarship on the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives, beginning from early Islamic scholarship up to the present day. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a critique of previous approaches to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives highlighting the problems that this dissertation attempts to overcome.

Chapter Two will outline the theoretical and methodological framework of the analysis in this study. As opposed to the critical stance of Chapter One, here we will point to the contributions of previous scholarship that we will build on in analyzing the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. In Chapter Two, our focus will be on outlining in considerable detail the elements of these scholarly contributions that we will make use of and how they fit within our framework of inquiry. In the first section of Chapter Two, I will address this dissertation's position on the vexed problem of the codification of the Qur'ān. In section two, I will explore Foucault's articulation of the statement's associated field of coexistence as the overarching structure within which I will contextualize the analysis of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. In section three, I will outline the interpretive perspective we will adopt in our examination. Here, we will discuss and delimit the notion of 'the intention of the text' based primarily on Umberto Eco's conception of this notion. In section four, I will differentiate between the diachronic and synchronic approaches to

the Qur'ān. In section five, I will delineate the approach to the intertextual allusion adopted in this study based primarily on the allusion model expounded by Hebel. In the final section of Chapter Two, I will offer a comprehensive summary of my suggested approach to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives on the basis of the various elements outlined in the previous sections.

Chapter Three is dedicated to the examination of our three selected case studies. The structure of these three case studies is identical. Each of them is divided into four sections. In section one, I will introduce the reader to the narrative pericopes at hand. In section two, I will describe the selected exegetes and modern scholars' responses to the intertextual allusions of these narrative pericopes highlighting the exegetical problems they faced. In section three, I will analyze the intertextual allusions identified in those narrative pericopes in light of my theoretical and methodological framework. In section four, I will contrast the various scholars' understanding of these intertextual allusions with my own readings. A final Conclusion will follow Chapter Three in which I will bring together the findings of this dissertation in a comprehensive discussion.

Certainly, a total semiosis of the text of the Qur'ān is not possible. It has been - and will continue to be - the focal point of countless exegetical reflections. Each brought about shades of its meanings but its richness remains undiminished. This dissertation is no exception. It cannot exhaust the spectrum of the Qur'ānic narratives or their intertextuality. It is nevertheless hoped that it will lay the foundation for a more complete study of its subject, if only by drawing attention to the necessity of adopting a disciplined literary approach to these narratives' intertextual allusions informed by modern allusional studies.

Chapter One

Scholarship and the Intertextual Allusions in Qur'ānic Narratives

1. The Cultural Background of the Qur'ānic Narratives: The Available Evidence

The archaeological evidence (e.g. monasteries, sculptural reliefs and epigraphs) as well as the literary evidence (e.g. chronicles, hagiographies, biographical reports, and political documents) point to considerable cultural diversity and cross-cultural interactions in the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam. Pagan, Christian, and Jewish communities existed side by side in many centers of Arabia where inter-communal socio-cultural interactions between diverse religious groups were fostered by trade, political alliances, or, simply, close proximity. Paganism indeed was widespread in late antique Arabia but in many of its centers monotheism also had strong presence: for example, Christianity in Najrān, Yamāma, and the kingdom of Kinda and Judaism in Fadak, Taymā', Khaybar, and Yathrib. It should also be noted that the presence of unorthodox Christian and Jewish sects in Arabia before the advent of Islam is not to be excluded.⁸⁰

Mecca itself, where Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam, was born and lived most of his life, had several pagan cults before Islam but it was by no means an isolated town. For centuries before the emergence of Islam, Mecca was one of the most prominent regional cultic and trade centers of Arabia which ensured the Meccans' constant exposure to the diverse cultural milieu of the Peninsula. In Yathrib,⁸¹ the city to which the Prophet Muḥammad immigrated in the second half of his prophetic career, there was, besides the city's two strong Arab clans, the Aws and the Khazraj, a considerable Jewish community with which the Prophet and the nascent Islamic community interacted on a daily basis.⁸² It was against this heterogeneous cultural

⁸⁰ See for instance Barbara Finster, "Arabia in Late Antiquity," 70; Gordon Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia: From Ancient Times to their Eclipse Under Islam* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 125; Hamilton Gibb, "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia," *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962): 269-80, 271; J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (London and New York: Librairie du Liban, 1979), 68.

⁸¹ It is worth noting that Yathrib is mentioned in the Qur'ān, see Q 33:13.

⁸² The Jews of Yathrib were one of the groups that entered into the Pact of the Medina (*mithāq al-Madīna*), the constitutional document the Prophet established shortly after arriving in Yathrib in order to form a political confederation of the city's heterogeneous groups.

milieu that the Qur'ān and its narratives emerged.⁸³

As Franz Rosenthal notes, “although as a religious and metaphysical document, the Qur'ān is not meant to be a work of history, it deals to an astonishingly large extent with events of the past and is imbued with a deep sense of history in its various dimensions.”⁸⁴ Nowhere is this manifest in the Qur'ān more than in its narratives. Yet, while these narratives indeed offer distinct accounts of pre-Islamic history, many of their verses often seem to simultaneously allude to this history rather than relate ‘full’ accounts of the episodes of which they speak. These distinctive accounts and the intertextual allusions they contain were not particularly, or only, articulated in relation to the Qur'ān's antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions but also in relation to pre-Islamic Arabian cultural lore on these episodes. Yet as Sebastian Günther observes, “[the pre-Islamic Arabs'] knowledge ... was retained almost exclusively in memory and transmitted orally. Writing and literacy played a minor role, even though the “art of writing” was already known among the Arabs and used, for example, by tradesmen and in cities.”⁸⁵ Thus, apart from the pre-Islamic extant Jewish and Christian traditions we are confronted with the complex problem of the evidence from pre-Islamic times concerning the Qur'ānic narratives. First, no pre-Islamic original sources of Arabic literature have survived.⁸⁶ Second, the available epigraphic and archaeological evidence from this period is scant and predominantly does not include accounts of the pre-Islamic community's memory on the figures mentioned in the Qur'ān.⁸⁷ Third, the extra-anecdotal traditions cited in Muslim exegesis are indeed unreliable evidence for the pre-Islamic Arabic oral lore concerning these figures. All of the above arguments are widely accepted in modern scholarship; it is, however, particularly important to explore in more depth the last contention and its implications. Not only because it delimits the purview of the antecedent traditions against which the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives could be examined

⁸³ For a more detailed account of the above summary of the cultural history of Arabia, see for instance Barbara Finster, “Arabia in Late Antiquity: An Outline of the Cultural Situation in the Peninsula at the Time of Muhammad,” in *The Qur'ān in Context. Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 61-114 (Netherlands: Brill, 2010); Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Fred Donner, “The Historical Context,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 23-40 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸⁴ Cf. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. “History and the Qur'ān.”

⁸⁵ Cf. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. “Illiteracy.”

⁸⁶ *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. “Orality and Writing in Arabia.”

⁸⁷ Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 198-228; *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. “Archaeology and the Qur'ān.”

but also because it has direct bearing on the assessment of early and classical Muslim exegetes' approach to these allusions.

Several studies are of interest to us in this regard. For instance, Reuven Firestone's *Journeys in Holy Lands* in which he examines the Abraham-Ishmael extra-anecdotal traditions cited in Muslim exegesis.⁸⁸ Through an intertextual analysis of the literary characteristics of these traditions (motifs, language, plot, symbols, and style) in relation to a variety of texts and different religio-cultural contexts (Jewish and Christian, pre-Islamic Arabia, and Islam),⁸⁹ Firestone concludes that "the various parts making up the Abraham-Ishmael story [i.e. in Muslim extra-anecdotal traditions] can be identified as deriving largely from three sources: communities organized around biblical scripture, pre-Islamic Arabian lore, or Islam."⁹⁰ Also, in his *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis*, Brannon Wheeler's analysis of the extra-anecdotal traditions cited in Muslim exegesis concerning the portrayal of Moses in Q 18:60-82 demonstrates that these traditions exhibit interpolation of clearly Islamic components and elements stemming from a wide range of ancient Middle-Eastern lore, including Jewish literature.⁹¹ Likewise, Anthony H. Johns' examination of the extra-anecdotal traditions on Job's story cited in al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* also shows that "every element [in these traditions] is integrated into the Islamic religious framework."⁹² Yet, "there is in [them] much of the rhythm, the imagery, vocabulary, and something of the movement of ideas of the Biblical Book of Job."⁹³ Similar results could be reached upon a close reading of the extra-anecdotal traditions cited in Muslim exegesis concerning other Qur'ānic figures.⁹⁴ This evidence prompts the following conclusion: given this ostensibly hybrid composition that clearly reflect interpolation of Islamic elements, it is virtually certain that these traditions, in their extant shape, do not belong to pre-Islamic times.

It could be argued that isolating the indigenous pre-Islamic Arabian, Jewish and

⁸⁸ Firestone, *Journeys*, 25-8 and passim.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19 and passim.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 19. See also *Ibid.*, 156.

⁹¹ Wheeler, *Moses in the Quran*, 10-36 and passim.

⁹² Johns, "Three Stories," 56.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹⁴ See for instance, the composition of the extra-anecdotal traditions cited in Fred Leemhuis' examination of four early Muslim exegetes' responses to Lot's story in Fred Leemhuis, "Lūt and his people in the Koran and its early commentary," in *Sodom's Sin: Genesis 18-19 and its Interpretations*, ed. Noort and Eibert Tigchelaar 97-113 (Leiden: Brill, 2004). See also the composition of the extra-narratives details on Adam's story cited in Muslim exegesis in M. J. Kister, "Legends in *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* Literature: The Creation of Adam and Related Stories," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of The Qur'ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin 82-114 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Christian elements from these traditions is possible by way of applying the time-honored method of form criticism (*Formgeschichte*). Nonetheless, even if it is conceded that a precise and sound isolation of these traces is possible⁹⁵ the isolated elements will remain deprived of their original literary context where a reconstruction of these traditions pre-Islamic form is impossible. Alternatively, to examine the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions with reference to these traces in their current traditions is undeniably a flawed process since these elements have acquired new connotations (different from their connotations in their pre-Islamic original literary context) due to their embedding in their new hybrid literary *Sitz im Leben* (Arabian, Biblical, and Islamic).

In view of the preceding discussion, we may conclude the following. First, relying on the Muslim extra-anecdotal traditions in analyzing the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives is essentially problematic. We are indeed in a better position relating in our own analysis of these allusions only on the extant pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian traditions, but within the comprehensive framework briefly outlined in the introduction of this work and which we will expound further in the next chapter. Second, in order to perceive the approach of early and classical Muslim exegetes to the intertextual allusions of these narratives through a modern lens we must think of the Muslim exegetes' reliance on these extra-anecdotal traditions as a form of two-tiered intertextuality. By tracing the exegetes' treatment of the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives as being made to these traditions, we may infer about their approach to the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives to their actual pre-Islamic antecedent traditions.

2. Muslim Exegesis and the Intertextual Allusions of the Qur'ānic Narratives

2.1 Early and Classical Muslim Exegesis

As stated earlier, early and classical Muslim exegetes relied extensively on extra-anecdotal traditions in interpreting the Qur'ānic narratives. Generally speaking, they considered these traditions to merit historicity where, quite obviously, the underlying assumption was that by knowing details about the historical event or characters of

⁹⁵ It should be noted that *Formgeschichte* would primarily trace text units in these traditions that exhibit similarity of vocabulary, motifs, structures and style to the pre-Islamic Arabic, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religio-cultural traditions, a process which is far less reliable in our particularly case given the absence of extant pre-Islamic Arabic literature.

which the Qur'ānic narratives speak it is possible to understand (more) the meaning of the verses of these narratives. The pervasiveness of these extra-anecdotal traditions in the exegesis of the Qur'ānic narratives during the formative period is clearly evident in the *tafsīrs* extant from this period, such as the *tafsīr* works of Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī (d. 150/767), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), and 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī's (d. 211/827).⁹⁶ The multitude of these traditions cited in classical Muslim *tafsīrs* and attributed to scholars from the formative period, such as Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687–8), Qatāda b. Di'āma al-Sadūsī (d. 117/735), Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī (d. 127/745), Abū Ishāq b. Māti' b. Haysu'/Haynū' or Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 32/652-3), and Abū 'Abdallāh Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 101 or 102/719-20), also testifies to this fact.⁹⁷ From this evidence, it is abundantly clear that early exegetes usually offered a limited number of views (one or two extra-anecdotal traditions) under each Qur'ānic narrative element they interpreted. On the other hand, classical Muslim exegetes, with hundreds if not thousands of extra-anecdotal traditions handed down to them, were to cite a multitude of these traditions under each verse of the Qur'ānic narratives in their *tafsīrs* of the Qur'ān, which became encyclopedic works.

Classical exegetes managed this plurality of accounts (contradictory at times) through the convergence of various criteria: e.g. the prominence of the authority with which the tradition originates, the reliability of the transmission of the tradition, whether the traditions are aligned with the Qur'ānic account, and also the exegete's own theological dispositions. The convergence of such criteria, as stated in the introduction, resulted in the sort of story each exegete had in mind as to what the Qur'ānic narratives should convey. So, at times the exegete would approve of a certain extra-anecdotal tradition, or a specific detail therein, as the correct explanation (or referent) of the narrative element under examination. Yet, in many cases classical exegetes would only cite the various extra-anecdotal traditions available to them but would not offer their preference. In such cases, the exegete would either not comment on the variety of extra-narrative details he cites or states that deciding which of them

⁹⁶ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*; Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān*; Sufyān al-Thawrī, *Tafsīr Sufyān al-Thawrī*.

⁹⁷ See for instance Abū Ishāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrahīm al-Naysabūrī al-Tha'labī. *Al-Kashf wal-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. 'Ashūr 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2002); Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī. Ma'ālim al-tanzīl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abdallāh al-Nimr, 'Uthmān Jum'a Damiryya, and Sulaymān Muslim Al-Ḥarsh, 8 vols. (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār Ṭība, 2009); Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ansārī al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 24 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2006).

are acceptable does not contribute to understanding the significance of the narrative element under examination.⁹⁸

Beyond this very general description, modern scholarship does not offer much as to early and classical Muslim exegetes' approach to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'anic narratives.⁹⁹ Modern *tafsīr* studies have thus far been chiefly occupied with describing and classifying the salient features of the early and classical *tafsīr* genre. An exact classification of this vast literature is perhaps unattainable; nonetheless, four major research areas could be mentioned: (1) characterization of the principal exegetical types, e.g. Sunnī, Shī'ī, Sūfī (mystical and allegorical), legal, based on transmitted traditions (*tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr*), based on individual opinion (*tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*),¹⁰⁰ (2) study of an individual exegete's hermeneutics (theoretical or practical)¹⁰¹ or aspects of his method,¹⁰² (3) study of the idiosyncrasies of the *tafsīr* genre, e.g. the

⁹⁸ For examples of these general characteristics, the following exegetical works may be consulted: al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī. Ma'ālim al-tanzīl*; Ibn al-Gawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān*; al-Ṭabarī, *tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*; al-Tha'labī. *Al-Kashf wa-l-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān*; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an ghawāmid al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *al-Dur al-manthūr fī al-tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr*, ed. n.a. (Tehran: al-Maṭba'a al-Islāmiyya, 1957). It should be mentioned that the citation of extra-anecdotal traditions in Muslim exegesis is tantamount to a process of composition. First and foremost, the exegete chooses which extra-anecdotal traditions to cite and which ones to exclude. Furthermore, the organization and commentary on these traditions in *tafsīrs* is often not free of hints as to the exegete's view of their reliability and preference to one tradition over another.

⁹⁹ Norman Calder has offered the most comprehensive characterization of the classical *tafsīr* genre available to date. It applies generally to the classical Muslim exegetes' approach to the Qur'ān's narratives but does not particularly offer us insights as to their approach to these narratives' intertextual allusions. Calder describes the characteristics of the classical Sunnī *tafsīr* genre from al-Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr as follows: "1. The presence of the complete canonical text of the Qur'ān (or at least a significant chunk of it), segmented for the purposes of comment, and dealt with in canonical order..., 2. The citation of named authorities and the consequent polyvalent reading of the text ... and 3. [The] measuring of the Qur'anic text against the following: [a.] Instrumental structures: Orthography, lexis, syntax, rhetoric, symbol/allegory and [b.] Ideological structures: prophetic history, theology, eschatology, law, ṭasawwuf (mysticism)" (cf. Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr," 101-6).

¹⁰⁰ Ignaz Goldziher. *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920); Muḥammad Ḥusayn Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wal-mufasssīrūn : baḥth tafṣīlī 'an nash'at al-tafsīr wa-taṭawwurihī, wa-alwānīhī wa-madhāhibihī, ma'a 'arḍ shāmil li-ashhar al-mufasssīrīn, wa-tahlīl kāmīl li-ahamm kutub al-tafsīr, min 'aṣr al-Nabī ilā 'aṣrinā al-ḥāḍir* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1961); Musā'id Muslim Āl Ja'far and Muḥī Hilāl al-Sarḥān, *Manāhij al-mufasssīrīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1980).

¹⁰¹ 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Wahhāb Fāyid, *Manhaj Ibn 'Atīyya fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-'Āma li-Shu'ūn al-Maṭābī' al-Amīriyya, 1973); 'Afāf 'Abd al-Ghafūr Ḥāmid, *al-Baghawī wa manḥaguhū fī l-tafsīr* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Irshād, 1983); Jane McAuliffe, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics"; Muḥammad b. Sāliḥ al-Uthaymīn, *Sharḥ Muqadimat al-tafsīr li-shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya* (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Waṭan, 1995); Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm al-Lāḥim, *Manhaj Ibn Kathīr fī l-tafsīr* (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Muslim, 1999); Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical tafsīr Tradition: The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

¹⁰² Heath, "Creative Hermeneutics"; Šāliḥ b. Gharm Allāh al-Ghāmidī, *al-Masā'il al-i'tizāliyya fī tafsīr al-Kashshāf lil-Zamakhsharī fī ḍaw' ma jā'a fī kitāb al-intiṣāf*, 2 vols. (Ḥā'il, KSA: Dār al-Andalus lil-Nashr wa-l-tawzī', 1998).

duality of the clear and ambiguous verses (*al-muḥkam wa-l-mutashābih*), abrogation (*naskh*), the occasions of the revelations (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the origins and development of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* categorization of Muslim extra-anecdotal traditions,¹⁰³ and (4) description of the *tafsīr* genre's systems of exegesis; along its intrinsic structures¹⁰⁴ and in relation to other interpretive traditions.¹⁰⁵ Despite of the variety and sheer number of these studies, the modern study of Muslim hermeneutics is still in an early phase of its maturation. This is largely because early and classical *tafsīr* works only gradually became available to modern scholars during the twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ This certainly hindered the development of *tafsīr* studies in comparison to Qur'ānic studies. In addition, the study of the Qur'ān, early Islamic history, and Islamic Law has also consumed the good effort of most modern scholars and it was only in the latter part of the twentieth century that *tafsīr* studies enjoyed considerable and consistent scholarly attention.¹⁰⁷

Tafsīr studies' recent interest in intertextuality did not lead to an examination of Muslim exegesis' treatment of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives *per se*. Rather, it led to an examination of the intertextual characteristic of Muslim extra-

¹⁰³ Leah Kinberg, "Muḥkamāt and Mutashābihāt (Koran 3/7): Implications of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis," *Arabica* 35/2 (1988): 143-72; Andrew Rippin, "The function of "Asbāb al-Nuzūl" in Qur'ānic Exegesis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51/1 (1988): 1-20; Roberto Tottoli, "Origin and Use of the Term Isrā'īliyyāt in Muslim Literature," *Arabica* 46/2 (1999): 193-210; Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt fī l-tafsīr wa-l-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1990).

¹⁰⁴ Jane McAuliffe, "The Tasks and Traditions of Interpretation," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane McAuliffe 181-209 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Norman Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the description of a genre, illustrated with reference to the story of Abraham," in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef 101-40 (New York: Routledge, 1993). The characteristics of the genre's systems of exegesis figure also in modern Muslim works explicitly dedicated to expounding the sciences and principles of exegesis (manuals comparable in purpose, but not entirely in content, to the medieval works of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Maṣriyya al-'Amma lil-Kitāb, 1967) and Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, n.d.)). See for instance, 'Abdallāh Shihātah, *'Ulūm al-tafsīr* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūk, 2001); Musā'id b. Sulaymān al-Ṭayyār, *Fuṣūl fī uṣūl al-Tafsīr* (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Nashr al-Dawlī, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ John Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies*; Yeshayahu Goldfeld, "The Development of Theory on Qur'anic Exegesis in Islamic Scholarship," *Studia Islamica* 67 (1988): 5-27.

¹⁰⁶ For instance, it was only in 2002 that *tafsīr* al-Tha'labī was edited. Similarly, the *tafsīr* attributed to al-Ṣan'ānī was made available in the early 1980s (see Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'ān: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam* 78/1 (2001): 1-34, 15-6). Similarly, Muqātil b. Sulaymān's exegetical works were only edited in the last quarter of the 20th century. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Muslim *tafsīr* works still lie in manuscripts scattered in various archives across the world waiting to be edited.

¹⁰⁷ Goldziher's *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* stands as virtually the only comprehensive introduction to *tafsīr* produced in Western scholarship. In the Muslim lands, while the 'ulamā' were certainly since long familiar with Muslim exegesis the authoritative modern work on the Muslim exegetical genre was to be produced only with the turn of the 1960s (see Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-l-mufasssīrūn*).

anecdotal traditions cited in exegesis (e.g. their various genealogical source layers)¹⁰⁸ or the role of the Muslim exegetes in molding and utilizing these traditions for particular purposes (e.g. for authorizing their positions or for inter-faith polemics).¹⁰⁹ In order to perceive early and classical Muslim exegetes' approach to these allusions in comparison to modern models developed in allusional studies, we must thus do so with an illustrative example. For this purpose let us use early and classical Muslim exegetes' response to the incident of Potiphar's wife failed attempt to seduce Joseph.

Q 12:23-9 reads,

But she [i.e. Potiphar's wife] in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his (true) self: she fastened the doors, and said: "Now come, thou (dear one)!" He said: "Allah forbid! truly (thy husband) is my lord! he made my sojourn agreeable! truly to no good come those who do wrong!" (23) And (with passion) did she desire him, and he would have desired her, but that he saw the evidence of his Lord: thus (did We order) that We might turn away from him (all) evil and shameful deeds: for he was one of Our servants, sincere and purified. (24) So they both raced each other to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back: they both found her lord near the door. She said: "What is the (fitting) punishment for one who formed an evil design against thy wife, but prison or a grievous chastisement?" (25) He said: "It was she that sought to seduce me - from my (true) self." And one of her household saw (this) and bore witness, (thus):- "If it be that his shirt is rent from the front, then is her tale true, and he is a liar! (26) "But if it be that his shirt is torn from the back, then is she the liar, and he is telling the truth!" (27) So when he saw his shirt,- that it was torn at the back,- (her husband) said: "Behold! It is a snare of you women! truly, mighty is your snare! (28) "O Joseph, pass this over! (O wife), ask forgiveness for thy sin, for truly thou hast been at fault!" (29).

Even through a cursory reading of the above verses, it is clear that it is not necessary to identify an allusion to a particular witness in order to understand the Qur'anic verses concerning the incident. A reading on the textual level would suffice to grasp

¹⁰⁸ Firestone, *Journeys*.

¹⁰⁹ Wheeler, "'Moses or Alexander?"; idem., *Moses in the Quran*; Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba*.

the meaning of this narrative pericope, at least for the lay reader. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible to read the pericope intertextually by postulating an allusion to particular texts concerning the witness who suggests the criterion that proves Joseph innocent from this shameful act. It could, for example, be perceived as an allusion to the role of two characters in Joseph's life story in the Qur'ān's antecedent Jewish traditions: the child who witnesses to Joseph's innocence or the judge who declares Joseph innocent, both occurring in Sefer Hayyāshār (*The Book of the Upright*) as quoted in Midrash Yalkut.¹¹⁰

If the referent of this allusion is identified as the infant in Sefer Hayyāshār, the connotations of the witness there are as follows. An infant child of Potiphar's wife who miraculously speaks out while Potiphar's servants were flogging Joseph and when he speaks he relates what had truly happened and belies his mother's version of the events. If the referent of this allusion is taken as the Judge before whom Joseph stood accused by Potiphar in the same text, it is quite clear that the judge suggests a similar, but not identical, criterion to that mentioned in Q 12:26-7 which also proves that Joseph is not guilty of Potiphar's wife accusations. Yet, despite of that, the Judge decides to incarcerate Joseph "because he was the cause of a stain upon Zuleika's [Potiphar's wife] fair name."¹¹¹ Of these two allusion possibilities, identifying the witness as an infant found expression in early and classical Muslim exegesis.

On the one hand, Early Muslim exegetes attached different identities to this witness: for example, a man,¹¹² a wise man,¹¹³ a man with a beard (probably a connotation that he was wise),¹¹⁴ or a cousin of Potiphar's wife.¹¹⁵ Also, several early exegetes did identify the witness as an infant who miraculously spoke at that moment; they however stop at that.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, classical exegetes consistently cite a

¹¹⁰ See Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 143-6; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-13), 2: 56-8.

¹¹¹ Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2:58. For a summary translation of the account concerning the incident as recorded in Sefer Hayyāshār, see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2:56-8.

¹¹² Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 104/722) is consistently cited as having embraced this view (al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:41; Sufyān al-Thawrī, *Tafsīr Sufyān al-Thawrī*, 141; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:108).

¹¹³ Qatāda (al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 1:322; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:109).

¹¹⁴ Ibn 'Abbās (al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 1:322; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:107).

¹¹⁵ Muqātil b. Sulaymān and al-Suddī (see respectively, Muqātil, *Tafsīr Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān*, 2:146; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:109). Muqātil also names this cousin of Potiphar's wife, as Yamlikha.

¹¹⁶ Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714) (al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, 2:41; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:105-6), al-Daḥḥāk (d. 105/723 or 4) (al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:106-7), Ibn 'Abbās (al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:105-7). The exegete to whom are consistently attributed a variety of views is Ibn 'Abbās who is also reported to have asserted that the witness was from among the servants of the king (Sufyān al-Thawrī, *Tafsīr Sufyān al-Thawrī*, 141; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:107).

multitude of these views under their interpretation of Q 12:26-7 and consistently also cite the infant-witness view. Nonetheless, while some classical exegetes offer their preference or seem to imply their preference of a particular view¹¹⁷ most of them refrain from doing so.¹¹⁸

We may first note that the various views cited in exegesis are effectively the possible referents of the allusion at times accompanied by partial connotations of these referents: for instance, in identifying the witness as a man with a beard it is implied that the witness is a wise man and in the case of the infant-witness the connotations become the miracle associated with an infant speaking (thus leaving out the further connotations associated with this infant-witness in *Sefer Hayyāshār*). On the one hand, from the reports attributed to early exegetes in classical *tafsīrs* and from extant early *tafsīrs* it could be deduced that most of the early exegetes have emphatically assigned a particular referent and its partial connotations as the interpretation of the witness allusion in Q 12:26-7. The classical exegetes who cited a multiplicity of their forerunners' anecdotal traditions but declared their preference have also effectively done so. On the other hand, those who opted for not expressing their preference from among the multitude of extra-anecdotal traditions they cited were simply leaving it up to their audience to determine the interpretation of this allusion; yet, also based on the possible referents of this allusion and their associated partial connotations. In order to appreciate this method in relation to modern analysis of the intertextual allusion, we may now turn to a brief examination of the witness allusion in Q 12:26-7 based on modern allusional studies. We only need to focus on three primary tasks in assessing the allusion here: to inquire into the formulation of the allusion-marker, its immediate context in the alluding text (i.e. in Q 12 as a whole), and to reconcile both with the connotations of the allusion in the possible referent text. The summary results of this analysis are as follows.

The particular formulation of the allusion-marker, *wa shahida shāhid* (lit. and a

¹¹⁷ Al-Rāzī and al-Ṭabarī (Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, 18:126; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13:111).

¹¹⁸ Al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, 4:234-5; Abū l-Ḥassan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Māwardī al-Baṣrī, *al-Nukat wa-l-'uyūn: tafsīr al-Māwardī*, ed. al-Sayyid b. 'Abd al-Maqṣūd b. 'Abd al-Rāḥīm, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya and Mu'assasit al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, n.d.), 3:27-8; Abū l-Layth Nasr b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī al-musammā baḥr al-'ulūm*, ed. al-Shaykh 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad, al-Shaykh 'Ādel Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd, and Zakariyyā 'Abd al-Majīd al-Nūfī, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993), 2:158; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, 8:32-4; al-Tha'labī. *Al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*, 5:214-5; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 3:272; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, ed. As'ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib, 10 vols. (Al-Riyāḍ: Maktabit Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997), 6:2128-9.

witness bore witness) insists on the anonymity of this witness. Still, Q 12:23-9 indicates (immediately after the marker) that this witness is from the family of Potiphar's wife. Simultaneously, the pericope refrains from attaching a miraculous stance to this witness' identity. The pericope also articulates the criterion this witness put forward to inquire into the incident's circumstances. From the formulation of the allusion-marker and its literary context, the immediate impression is that the text does not wish to identify the historical character of this witness beyond that he was from among the family of Potiphar's wife. Now, as opposed to Sefer Hayyāshār where the infant narrates the events of the incident as they happened, the witness in Q 12:23-9 suggests a well articulated criterion to discern whose claims are factual, Potiphar's wife or Joseph's. Furthermore, an infant miraculously speaking is an event that doubtless would have deserved more attention in the text. Thus, we may assert that the witness in Q 12:23-9 is not the infant of Sefer Hayyāshār. Turning to this witness as a possible allusion to the judge in Sefer Hayyāshār, we may immediately note that the alluding text uses the term *shāhid* (lit. witness) not judge (lit. "*ḥakam*" or "*qādī*"). Also, Potiphar asks Joseph not to divulge the affair in public (Q 12:29); a story element that contradicts bringing the matter to a court. Moreover, by extending our gaze beyond Q 12:23-9 to Q 12 as a whole we note that it is only at a later point in the events, not in the immediate context of the seduction incident, that the Qur'ān presents a conspiracy to incarcerate Joseph (Q 12:35). The consequences of which seem to imply that Joseph was incarcerated in an official jailhouse and through a sort of official court system (note that one of Joseph's companions in the jailhouse was the king's butler Q 12:36-50). One indeed cannot assume that Joseph was jailed twice since it not only contradicts the narrative in Q 12 in its entirety but also the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions on Joseph's story. We may therefore conclude that the witness in Q 12:23-9 is also not the judge of Sefer Hayyāshār.

Undoubtedly, there is an allusion to a certain witness (a certain 'historical' character) but is this allusion made particularly to Sefer Hayyāshār? As pointed above, Q 12:23-9 could be read quite intelligibly on the textual level. Still, if one wishes to read into this pericope allusions to the infant or the judge mentioned in Sefer Hayyāshār it is abundantly clear that the Qur'ān in fact specifies a new description of this witness and the whole incident: The witness was an adult from among the family of Potiphar's wife and, no less miraculously than an infant-witness speaking, he suggests a criterion for verifying Potiphar's wife and Joseph's claims,

probably thinking that she was truthful in her claims,¹¹⁹ but to his amazement, and Potiphar's, applying this criterion proves that Joseph is innocent. Red against Sefer Hayyāshār, Q 12:23-9, while ascertaining few details (e.g. that the witness is from the family of Potiphar's wife) and leaving out many others (e.g. the flogging of Joseph or that an infant was involved in the incident), seems to modify the characterization of the Joseph's witness and the circumstances surrounding the whole incident.

Sefer Hayyāshār certainly does not represent the entire range of the memory of the pre-Islamic community on this incident; it is only one of the extant traditions on this story from pre-Islamic times. Substituting for this extant tradition, and others, with pseudo-reconstructions of this memory (the extra-anecdotal traditions) does not only circumvents a description of the intertextual conversation between the Qur'ānic narratives and the available pre-Islamic extant evidence but also brings to the text partial elements (connotations) from this evidence that significantly distorts the description of this intertextual conversation. When comparing early and classical Muslim exegetes examination of the witness-allusion to the above brief modern reading, it is immediately patent that they, as mentioned in the introduction, did not explore the significance of the allusions' bi-directional signal and the associated 'gaps' they engender. Rather, they *compensated for* this analysis with the allusions' possible referents and partial connotations, which in their exegesis stand as the significance of these allusions. In retrospect, this process is indeed 'defective' and 'selective,' although its results often, more or less, fitted within the limits of the Qur'ān's utterances and worldview.

It should be mentioned however that classical Muslim exegetes were not always oblivious to all of the above issues. For example, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), and al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) offer discussions of the infant-witness allusion that could be described as an attempt to validate this allusion

¹¹⁹ The insight as to this surprising result has been articulated by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb suggests in 6:1261 but he considers that the witness is none but Potiphar himself who thought that this criterion will substantiate his wife's story ('Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, *al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ānī lil-Qur'ān*, 16 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.), 6:1261. It has been also articulated by Ibn 'Āshūr (Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr* 12:257). Ibn 'Āshūr however stays closer to the text and identifies the witness as a man from among the family of Potiphar's wife not Potiphar himself. It should be mentioned that there is a *ḥadīth* which indicates that Joseph's witness was an infant. This *ḥadīth* has been transmitted in two forms, *mawqūf* (i.e. stopping at a companion of the Prophet) and *marfū'* (i.e. attributed to the Prophet). Ibn Kathīr has transmitted both versions and did not express neither approval or rejection but he also did not endorse the infant-witness view which implicitly indicates his skepticism regarding the reliability of this *ḥadīth* (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, 8:32-4). Muḥammad 'Abduh has explicitly indicated that the version attributed to the Prophet is unreliable (Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ḥakīm*, 12:287-8).

and contextualize its connotations within the alluding text.¹²⁰ Some of those exegetes have rejected that the witness is an infant based on their attempt to reconcile the connotation associated with this identification (*ta'yīn*) with the pericope's composition. In effect, those exegetes have described the intertextual conversation between this pericope and Sefer Hayyāshār using the partial connotations (i.e. an infant miraculously speaking) transmitted in the extra-anecdotal traditions. Such cases nevertheless emphasize that the intertextual reading of texts is not a new phenomenon but an old one. Utilizing modern allusion models, which were not available to early and classical Muslim exegetes, will significantly enhance our analysis and understanding of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives and the intertextual conversation thus formed with their antecedent traditions.

2.2 Modern Muslim Exegesis

Since the late 19th century up till now,¹²¹ Muslim exegesis of the Qur'ānic narratives has no longer been confined to *tafsīr* works proper. Notwithstanding that to date no Arabic study on the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives exists, studies exclusively dedicated to the interpretation of these narratives have been abundantly in circulation.¹²² Also, studies dedicated to exploring the narratology of the Qur'ānic narratives have been frequently published. And despite of focusing on this literary aspect of the Qur'ānic narratives composition, the primary concern of these works has always been exegetical, exploring how the narratology of the Qur'ānic narratives

¹²⁰ See Ibn al-Gawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*, 4:211-2; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 11: 321-3; Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, 18:126-7.

¹²¹ In turning to the modern exegetical works we should mention the exegetical works which were produced during the period from al-Suyūṭī up to the late 19th century (which encompasses virtually all the Ottoman caliphate of the Islamic heartland). These works do not depart from the classical period's approach to the Qur'ānic narratives intertextual allusions but some noteworthy works from this period have been considered as foreshadowing modern exegesis: e.g. Ismā'īl Ḥaqqī al-Brūsawī (d. 1137/1725), *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-bayān*, ed. n.a., 10 vols. (Istanbul: Maṭba'a 'Uthmaniyya, 1330 h); Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī (1270/1854), *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm wa-l-sab' al-mathānī* (Deoband, India: Idārat al-Ṭibā'a al-Muṣṭafā'iya, n.d.); Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Shawkānī (d. 1255/1839), *Fath al-Qadīr al-jāmi' bayn fannay al-riwāya wa-l-dirāya min 'ilm al-tafsīr*, ed. Yūsuf al-Ghawsh, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2007).

¹²² Noteworthy are for instance 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najjār, *Qaṣaṣ al-anbiyā': la-Qad kāna fī qaṣaṣihim 'ibratan li-ulī al-albāb* (Beirut: Dār Iḥya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.); Ḥassan Ayyūb, *Qaṣaṣ al-anbiyā': Qaṣaṣ al-ṣafwa al-mumtāza anbiyā' Allāh wa-rusulihī* (Cairo: Dār al-Tawzī' wa-l-Nashr al-Islāmiyya, 1997); Muḥammad Aḥmad Jād al-Mawlā, *Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Istiḳāma, 1939). These works are to be clearly distinguished from the classical popular genre of *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*. The latter was in essence fictional and non-exegetical (albeit at times quoting Qur'ānic verses), with the exception of Ibn Kathīr's *Qaṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* which is an exegetical work of the Qur'ānic narratives but in a concise form compared to his *tafsīr* proper. The modern works alluded to above are serious exegetical works of the narratives of the Qur'ān.

influences their meaning.¹²³ In addition, expounding new exegetical approaches to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, including its narratives, has been the sole subject of many modern works.¹²⁴ Modern innovations in the interpretation of the Qur'ānic narratives have been coming from *tafsīr* works proper as well as works belonging to these three categories of studies.¹²⁵

As previously mentioned, modern Muslim exegetes have been generally critical of the extra-anecdotal traditions cited in pre-modern exegetical works.¹²⁶ Consequently, as opposed to their early and classical forerunners, modern Muslim exegetes tend to cite a considerably less number of these traditions (often in abbreviated versions as well) and frequently criticize the veracity of the information these traditions convey.¹²⁷ It was already mentioned in the present study that several modern exegetes cite excerpts from the Bible or provide their own syntheses of information directly cited from the Bible. In contrast to the sole classical exegetical work of al-Biqā'ī that contains direct quotations from the Bible, in the modern period we have several examples: for instance, Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā's¹²⁸ *Tafsīr al-manār* (*The*

¹²³ Prominent examples of these studies are Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalaf-Allāh, *al-Fann al-qaṣaṣī fī al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, 4th ed. (London – Beirut - Cairo: Arab Diffusion Company and Sina Publishing, 1999) – originally published 1951; 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, *al-Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ānī fī maḥmūmihī wa-manṭūqihī: ma'a dirāsa taḥbīqiyya li-qisatay Adam wa Yūsuf* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 1975). Less known studies are Muḥammad 'Abdallāh 'Abdū Dabbūr, *Usus binā' al-qīṣṣa min al-Qur'ān: Dirāsa adabiyya wa naqdīyya* (Doctoral dissertation- Al-Azhar University, Munūfiyya-Egypt, 1996); Muḥammad Mishrif Khidr, *Balāghat al-sard al-qaṣaṣī fī l-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Doctoral Dissertation – Ṭanṭa University, Ṭanṭa-Egypt, n.d.).

¹²⁴ See for example Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *al-Qur'ān al-majīd: tanzīluhū wa-ustūbuhū wa-atharuhū wa-jam'uhū wa-tadwīnuhū wa-tartībuhū wa-qirā'atuhū wa-rasmuhū wa-muḥkamahū wa-mutashābihuhū wa-qaṣaṣuhū wa-ghaybiyyātuhū wa-ta'līqāt 'alā manāhij mufasssīrīh wa-l-ṭarīqa al-mūthlā li-fahmihī wa-tafsīrihī* (Sayda - Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, n.d.); Muḥammad Shahrūr, *al-Kitāb wa-l-Qur'ān: qirā'a mu'āṣira* (Damascus: Al-Ahālī lil-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Ṭawzī', n.d.); Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābrī, *Madkhal ilā al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, vol.1 (Beirut: Markaz Dirasāt al-Wiḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2006).

¹²⁵ See for instance, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, *al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ānī lil-Qur'ān*; Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ḥakīm*; Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*.

¹²⁶ This is a continuation of a direction that has been already adopted in the classical period, most famously by Ibn Kathīr in his *tafsīr* as I noted earlier.

¹²⁷ 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, *al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ānī lil-Qur'ān*; Ibn 'Ashūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr*; al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*; Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ḥakīm*; Muḥammad al-Amīn Al-Shanqīṭī, *Aḍwā' al-bayān fī idāḥ al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān*, ed. Bakr b. 'Abdallāh Abu Zayd 9 vols. (n.a. :Dār 'Ālam al-Fu'ād, 1980); Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī, *al-Tafsīr al-wasīṭ lil-Qur'ān al-karīm* 15 vols. (Cairo: al-Fajjāla, n.d.); Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*; Wahba b. Muṣṭafā Al-Zuḥaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-munīr fī l-'aqīda wa-l-sharī'a wa-l-manhaj* 30 vols. (Beirut – Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, n.d.).

¹²⁸ Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1323/1905) is a leading religious reformer of the second half of nineteenth-century Egypt. Several modern innovations in Qur'ānic exegesis find their roots in his pioneering but unfinished commentary on the Qur'ān, entitled *Tafsīr al-manār*. Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354/1935) was a close disciple and friend of Muḥammad 'Abduh around the turn of the 19th century and until the latter's death. Riḍā has revised 'Abduh's *Tafsīr al-manār*.

Minaret in the Interpretation of the Qur'ān), Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī's¹²⁹ *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* (*al-Marāghī's Qur'ān Commentary*), Ḥassan Ayyūb's¹³⁰ *Qaṣaṣ al-anbiyā': Qaṣaṣ al-ṣafwa al-mumtāza anbiyā' Allāh wa-rusulihī* (*The Stories of the Prophets: The Stories of the Excellent Elite God's Prophets and Messengers*), and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr's¹³¹ *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr* (*The Emancipation and Enlightenment Qur'ān Commentary*).¹³² It is important to note however that the majority of modern Muslim exegetes do not cite from Jewish and Christian sources other than the Bible (so did al-Biqā'ī). In other words, they only cite from the holy books of the Jews and Christians (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) when approaching the interpretation of the Qur'ān and its narratives.

Another significant development in the modern exegesis of the Qur'ānic narratives is some intellectuals' treatment of these narratives not as conveying historical accounts but rather as narratives only intended to communicate edifying lessons; prominent examples of this approach are to be found in Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwaza,¹³³ Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalaf-Allāh,¹³⁴ and Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābrī's¹³⁵ works.¹³⁶ This position has nonetheless been heavily criticized in the Islamic world,

¹²⁹ Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī (d. 1371/1952) was a prominent professor of Islamic law and Arabic language in the faculty of *Dār al-'Ulūm* (House of the Sciences) at Cairo University. His Qur'ān commentary is well known and still circulates widely.

¹³⁰ Ḥassan Ayyūb (d. 1429/2008) is a famous Islamic preacher and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. His *Qaṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* is among the well-known modern examples of the genre of the stories of the Prophets.

¹³¹ Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr (d. 1393/1973) is an Islamic thinker and the head of the famous seminary (currently a university) of al-Zaytūna in Tunisia. His intellectual output includes works in Arabic rhetoric and Islamic jurisprudence but he is most known for his encyclopedic Qur'ān commentary entitled *al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr*.

¹³² See Al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*; Ḥassan Ayyūb, *Qaṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*; Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr*; Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ḥakīm*.

¹³³ Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwaza (d. 1404/1984) is a famous modern Arab thinker who wrote over thirty books. His Qur'ān commentary, entitled *al-Tafsīr al-Ḥadīth* (*The Modern Qur'ān Commentary*), is his greatest intellectual achievement. He has written *al-Qur'ān al-Magīd* (*The Glorious Qur'ān*) as a technical introduction to his Qur'ān commentary in which he explicates his approach to the interpretation of the Qur'ān.

¹³⁴ Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalaf-Allāh (d. 1411/1991) is an Islamic modernist thinker. His *al-Fann al-qaṣaṣī fī al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (*The Narrative Art of the Holy Qur'ān*) stirred a considerable intellectual controversy in the late forties of the twentieth century particularly because Khalaf-Allāh suggested that the narratives of the Qur'ān are to be considered allegorical rather than reflecting true historical events.

¹³⁵ Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābrī (d. 1431/2010) was a professor of philosophy and Islamic thought in King Muḥammad the 5th University in Rabāt, Morocco. He is most known for his work *Naqḍ al-'Aql al-'Arabī* (*A Critique of the Arab Intellect*). His *Madkhal ilā al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (*An Approach to the Holy Qur'ān*), in which he expounds an innovative approach to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, is also well known but controversial.

¹³⁶ Darwaza, *al-Qur'ān al-majīd*, 166-185 particularly 167 and 184-5; al-Jābrī, *Madkhal*, 257-300; Khalaf-Allāh, *al-Fann al-qaṣaṣī*, 22-9. Al-Jābrī and Khalaf-Allāh also reject the use of external narrative details to complement the interpretation of the Qur'ānic narratives (Al-Jābrī, *Madkhal*, 258-9; Khalaf-Allāh, *al-Fann al-qaṣaṣī*, *passim*).

for instance by Sayyid Quṭb and Muḥammad ‘Imāra.¹³⁷ The critics do not deny that one of the main purposes of the Qur’ānic narratives is to edify. They however reject that this is their only purpose, emphasizing that these narratives should also be approached as communicating historical accounts of the past.

All of these trends have emerged early on in the modern period; they more or less have their roots in the groundbreaking *tafsīr* of Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905).¹³⁸ Yet, with all these modern developments the situation concerning the study of the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives does not change much. Whether citing extra-anecdotal traditions, material from the Bible, or both, many modern Muslim exegetes often utilize this extra-narrative material in the same manner and for the same purpose as in the formative (early) and the classical periods of Qur’ānic exegesis: to supplement the Qur’ānic narratives. Indeed, in the *tafsīr* works that cite this material and attempt to interpret the allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives through these extra-narrative traditions there has been no disentanglement from perceiving the allusion as ‘a narrative gap’ where its significance effectively becomes the possible referents of the allusion and their partial connotations.¹³⁹ Certainly, by citing Biblical narratives, some modern exegetes bring to their exegesis of the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives their full connotations in the Bible. Yet, whether the Qur’ānic text intended that these connotations be brought to the text or whether the

¹³⁷ Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, 4: 2289-90; Muḥammad ‘Imāra, *Radd iftirā’āt al-Jābrī ‘alā al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām lil-Ṭibā‘a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘ wa-l-Tarjama, 2010), 87-90. Quṭb even goes a step further in asserting the historicity of the Qur’ān’s narratives. He asserts that the historicity of these narratives cannot be judged based on the accounts offered by modern history: First, because many events related in the Qur’ān have occurred prior to recorded history. Second, even if history has recorded events on which there are Qur’ānic narratives, history is a human work which is subjected to limitations “*quṣūr*,” error, and corruption (Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, 4: 2290). It is worth mentioning that Muḥammad ‘Imāra (b. 1931) is a famous modern Islamic thinker. He is a prolific writer who champions the ideas of the unity of the Islamic countries and moderate Islamic religious beliefs.

¹³⁸ Muḥammad ‘Abduh emphasized the contextual interpretation of the Qur’ān, i.e. interpreting the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān. He also emphasized that the narratives of the Qur’ān are primarily intended to edify not to narrate history. In addition, his *tafsīr* is from among the pioneering, if not the first, to quote lengthy excerpts from the Bible. Furthermore, he was skeptic of the Muslim extra-anecdotal traditions, often criticizing their content, and stressed pursuing rational exegesis of the Qur’ān (see Muḥammad ‘Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-ḥakīm*, passim but particularly 1:2-31, 208, 210-3, 271, 361 and 7:480, 533). All of these features of his Qur’ānic exegesis have inspired many subsequent modern exegetes.

¹³⁹ With regard to the above example concerning the witness in Q 12:23-9, see for instance Wahba b. Muṣṭafā Al-Zuḥaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-munīr*, 12:241 and 246; Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī, *al-Tafsīr al-wasīl*, 7:346). Both of those exegetes cite several views from early and classical exegesis but does not offer a resolution for the identity of the witness, as is the case with the vast majority of classical *tafsīrs*. Some modern exegetes opted however to state or imply their preference from among the pre-modern views they cited (Al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, 12:134-5; Muḥammad al-Amīn Al-Shanqīṭī, *Aḍwā’ al-bayān*, 4:83-4).

text's allusions modify these connotations are unanswered questions in those exegetes' works.

This being said, there is a significant modern development in Qur'ānic exegesis that we will build on in approaching the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives, namely modern Muslim exegetes' tendency to turn to the Qur'ān first, often to the exclusion of reports external to the text (narrative and non-narrative), in order to find explanation for its verses. This is the time-honored principle of interpreting the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān but employed in some modern exegetical works to a significantly greater degree. Modern exegetical works exclusively espousing this approach, for instance Sayyid Quṭb's *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān* and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb's *al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ānī lil-Qur'ān* (*The Qur'ānic Interpretation of the Qur'ān*), may be termed scripturalist and they reflect a significant development with regard to the treatment of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. In these works, interpreting the Qur'ān's narratives is carried out with minimum recourse to external narrative details but rather by means of "deductive reasoning" (*istinbāṭ*) from and reconciling the elements of these narratives within the Qur'ān as a coherent semantic whole.¹⁴⁰ Obviously, this particular development is anti-intertextual. Nonetheless, such coherence-related and holistic approaches to the Qur'ān have been bringing insights that are indeed valuable in examining the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives.

3. Western Scholarship and the Intertextual Allusions of the Qur'ānic Narratives

3.1 Orientalist Scholarship

In literary theory, a useful distinction has been made between the notions of influence and intertextuality. In broad terms, "influence has to do with agency, whereas intertextuality has to do with a much more impersonal field of crossing texts."¹⁴¹ Put differently, intertextuality tends to dispense with the role of an author in describing

¹⁴⁰ For our example on Joseph's witness, see for instance the exclusively Qur'ānic reading offered in al-Khaṭīb, *al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ānī lil-Qur'ān*, 6:1261; Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr* 12:257; al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī* 11:6921-3; Quṭb, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 12:1980. In *tafsīr al-Manār*, Muḥammad 'Abduh considers the identity of this witness among the *mubham* (unidentifiable) and he censures earlier exegetes for arguing about this issue. 'Abduh cites many earlier exegetical views on the identity of this witness; yet, he is critical of many of them and prefers not to add anything to the text's description of this witness (see Muḥammad 'Abduh-Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ḥakīm*, 12:287-8).

¹⁴¹ Clayton and Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality*, 4

the interrelations between the text and other texts while influence is concerned with this very role of an author in explaining those interrelations. In their article “Influence and Intertextuality,” Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein aptly summarize the thrust of the critique of influence into four main points:

(1) behind an idea of influence lie dubious normative judgments about originality [discontinuity versus continuity]; (2) the biographical issues [of the text’s author] crucial to influence are at best merely ancillary to texts; (3) a stress on the author’s being influenced or influencing tends to make that author authoritative, thus to brush aside the activity of readers, let alone their freedom of interpretation and response; and (4) a concern about influence promotes an outworn humanism [i.e. excessive emphasis on justification in light of an autonomous rational and intentional human agent, in this case the author].¹⁴²

The critique of influence thus primarily emanates from and focuses on the assumptions and implications of influence’s authorship-centered criticism. I should also add to the third point above that influence, in its over-concern for the intention of the author, tends not only to overlook the reader’s autonomy but also the text’s: the particularity of the text’s content, structures, and their interrelatedness (consciously or unconsciously developed by the author) and their bearing on the reader. Modern Western scholarship on the narratives of the Qur’ān primarily started with depending on the notion of influence and its associated agency question in approaching the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives: in fact, in approaching the Qur’ān as a whole.¹⁴³

Influence criticism was however not the only factor that shaped the orientalist’s perception of the intertextuality of these narratives and the interpretation of their intertextual allusions. As aforementioned, orientalist scholarship perceived the unconventional structure of the Qur’ānic narratives as evidence of disjointed composition. In addition, most orientalist scholars came to the then new discipline of Qur’ānic studies from Biblical studies with a principal focus on historical questions of

¹⁴² Cf. *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴³ As Clayton and Rothstein assert, “tracing influences was an essential element in the rise of nineteenth century historicism, developed as it was under the aegis of idealistic theories that stressed agency” (cf. Clayton and Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality*, 5).

origins and a heavy reliance on source criticism in examining historical documents.¹⁴⁴ It was the fusion of all these factors together with the parallelism between the Qur'ānic narratives and their antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions that led the orientalist to advance the thesis that the Prophet Muḥammad borrowed the vast majority of the Qur'ānic narratives, particularly, from Jewish and Christian sources. This was the main hypothesis concerning the Qur'ānic narratives that orientalist scholarship set out to prove, expounding competing theses on the so-called 'original sources' of these narratives and the ways by which Muḥammad allegedly acquired knowledge of these sources.¹⁴⁵

As has been noted, the search for the alleged sources of the Qur'ānic narratives necessitated that the orientalist espouse an atomistic approach, usually reordering these narratives into the historical chronological order of the parallel Biblical narratives and/or the Nöldeke-Schwally's chronological order of the Qur'ānic revelations.¹⁴⁶ In this process, narrative elements were either treated as fragments or

¹⁴⁴ Like influence, the focus on questions of origins and source-criticism are essential ingredients of modernity's historicism (see for instance Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (Edinburgh: Pearson-Longman, 2005), 15-6; R. L. Marshall, *The Historical Criticism of Documents* (London and New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Macmillan Company, 1920), 7-11)

¹⁴⁵ For arguments in favor of Jewish origins of the Qur'ān and its narratives, see for instance Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 95-97 and *passim*; Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation*, 7-8 and *passim*; Arnold, *Ishmael*, 152-207. A systematic thesis in favor of exclusive Christian origins of the narratives of the Qur'ān seem to have never been articulated but arguments in favor of mixed Jewish and Christian origins, with emphasis on Christianity's influence or flow of oral religious instructions from Christian informants to Muḥammad, found many exponents. See for instance Andrae, *Der Ursprung*, 196-7; Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans*, 9-25, 46-7, and 63-71; Smith, *The Bible and Islam*, 70-3, 77, 314-5; Theodore Nöldeke, "Hatte Muhammad christliche Lehrer?," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 12 (1858):699-708; Karl Ahrens, "Christliches im Qoran. Eine Nachlese," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 84 (1930): 15-68 and 148-90. For works dedicated to tracing the sources of Qur'ānic narrative pericopes concerning specific figures or episodes, see A. J. Wensinck, "al-Kḥaḍīr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-khadir-al-khidr-COM_0483 (accessed November 4, 2012); John MacDonald, "Joseph in the Qur'an and Muslim commentary.1" *The Muslim World* 46/2 (1956): 113-131; idem., "Joseph in the Qur'an and Muslim commentary.2" *The Muslim World* 46/3 (1956): 207-224; Obermann, "Koran and Agada," 23-48; Schapiro, *Die haggadisehen Elemente*; Theodore Nöldeke, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans," *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Classe, Wien* 37.5 (1890): 1-56. The most comprehensive attempt to trace the alleged sources of the Qur'ān's narratives in orientalist scholarship has been that undertaken by Heinrich Speyer. See Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*.

¹⁴⁶ For instance, Geiger and Arnold examined the Qur'ān's narratives following the historical chronological order of the parallel stories in the Bible. See Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 96-7; Arnold, *Ishmael*, 152. On the other hand, Josef Horowitz followed the Nöldeke-Schwally chronological order closely. See Josef Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, (Leipzig: Walter De Gruyter & Co, 1926), I (Vorwort). Heinrich Speyer examined the narratives of the Qur'ān according to the Bible's chronology but in examining the narratives concerning each figure he followed the four-periods divisioning of the Qur'ānic revelations of Nöldeke-Schwally's chronology: early, middle, late Meccan and Medinan (see Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, XI).

grouped into syntheses each represents the sum of different Qur'ānic pericopes concerning a given episode or protagonist. In those schemes, Qur'ānic narrative elements, many of which are intertextual allusions, were not only at times ignored as redundant repetitions but more importantly frequently examined in isolation from their literary *Sitz im Leben* in their respective narrative units, *sūras*, and the whole canonical text of the Qur'ān. Thus, this approach not only effectively decontextualized these narratives elements but also readily precluded an investigation into the bearing of the Qur'ānic text as an integral whole on the elements of these narratives.

Within the borrowing thesis, the *modus operandi* of investigation was one in which intertextual allusions, usually postulated on the basis of simple criterion of content parallelism, represented (1) mere references that denote the sources from which Muḥammad supposedly borrowed this or that bit of narrative, (2) the purposes to which Muḥammad supposedly put these borrowings to use, and/or (3) mere imitations that primarily derive significance from their so-called 'original sources.'

For instance, in addressing the Qur'ānic account concerning the response of the angels to the creation of Adam Abraham Geiger, in his *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*, was content with pointing to the Bible verses which he perceived as the source of the Qur'ānic account.¹⁴⁷ In *The Bible and Islam*, Henry P. Smith proposes the sources from which Muḥammad allegedly borrowed the Qur'ānic account on Abraham's debate with his father and folks concerning idols worship where he also destroys their idols (Q 21:51-67). Smith then interprets the narrative pericope and the variations it exhibits in comparison to these sources as an attempt by Muḥammad to portray Abraham as "a predecessor and a model."¹⁴⁸ These two

¹⁴⁷ Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 98-99. Another example is Hartwig Hirschfeld's identification of an allusion in Q 38:30-2 to Solomon's love of horses, as mentioned for instance in 1 Kings 10:28, but he completely overlooks to contextualize the meaning of this allusion within the context of these verses (Hirschfeld, *New*, 64). Similar is Speyer's treatment of Q 38:30-2. Speyer proposes a wider set of references for this allusion and then proposes that Muḥammad may have confused Solomon for King Josiah in 2 Kings 23:11 (Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, 398-9).

¹⁴⁸ Smith, *The Bible*, 73-4. See the treatment of this Qur'ānic narrative pericope by Smith (Smith, *The Bible*, 72-74). See also Charles Torrey's argument concerning the narrative pericopes that attach the nascent Islamic religion to Abraham and Ishmael in Torrey, *The Jewish*, 86-91. Hartwig Hirschfeld summarizes this purpose of Muḥammad's alleged borrowings as follows: "it is the knowledge of the original sources that can alone throw a light on what often appears at first obscure and meaningless. One of the principal difficulties before us is therefore to ascertain, whether an idea or an expression was Muhammed's spiritual property or borrowed from elsewhere, how he learnt it, and to what extent it was altered to suit his purposes" (Cf. Hirschfeld, *New*, 4). See also Gustav Weil on Muḥammad's tailoring of the story of Abraham and the stories of other prophets to fit his purposes in Weil, *The Bible*, xii-xv.

examples illustrate the orientalists' first and second reading mood of the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions; both are quite obviously intended to serve a historical re-construction of the origins and authorship of these narratives, thus also the Qur'ān's.

Within the borrowing thesis and the associated process of identifying original sources, narrative elements that clearly represent allusions to the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions but were not possible to be explained with reference to particular authorship purposes were treated as mere imitations of their Jewish and Christian counterparts. This led to the third reading mood which represents orientalist scholarship's most distinctive mood in describing and interpreting the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives to their antecedent traditions; namely reading the latter into the former.¹⁴⁹

Orientalist scholars repeatedly saw these allusions as either merely bringing their referent-text(s) connotations to the Qur'ān or as 'gaps' to be filled through narrative details from the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions. For instance, on Joseph's dream in Q 12:4 John MacDonald writes:

The Quranic stories begin, not at the beginning of the life of Joseph as in the Bible, but from Joseph's second dream (Gen. xxxvii. 9), wherein he beheld eleven stars and the sun and moon making obeisance to him. Jacob, to whom he told the story, warns him not to tell his brothers for fear of their anger. Jacob also tells Joseph, his favorite son, that the Lord has chosen him and he [*sic*] will teach him to interpret "dark sayings" and thence bless him and the family of Jacob.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ See for example Hirschfeld's reading of the intertextual allusions in Q 21:79 and Q 34:10 (on the birds' praise of God with David) and in Q 38:21-25 (on the two disputants seeking David's arbitration). Hirschfeld asserts: "the mountains and birds which praise (Allāh) with him [i.e. David] are reflexes of verses like Ps. xcvi. 11 to 12, cxviii. 8, etc. The fable related in 2 Sam. xii. 1 to 6 is reproduced by Muhammed in the light of a real incident, but is evidently confounded with 1 K. iii. 27" (Cf. Hirschfeld, *New*, 64). As is clear from this excerpt, Hirschfeld takes the significance of the aforementioned allusions to be almost exactly that of their connotations in the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions. Similarly, J. Muehleisen Arnold finds in God's command to the angels to prostrate to Adam (Q 20:116, 17:61, 2:34, 7:11, and 18:50) an appropriation of (in our terminology, an allusion to) "Talmudic writings" (see Arnold, *Ishmael*, 154-5). Arnold writes, "some Jewish fables record, that the angels contemplated worshipping man, but were prevented by God; others precisely agree with the Koran that God commanded the angels to worship man, and that they obeyed with the exception of Satan" (Cf. Arnold, *Ishmael*, 154). Obviously, Arnold sees this allusion's significance to be exactly its connotations in some Jewish fables, a prostration of worship.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. MacDonald, "Joseph," 113-4.

Nothing in the Qur'ānic narrative concerning Joseph even hints that God taught Joseph the interpretation of "dark sayings."¹⁵¹ The text is very clear; God bestowed the ability to interpret stories and dreams (*al-ahādīth*) on Joseph (see for instance, Q 12:6 and 36-7), not "dark sayings." Another example of this mood of reading is Charles Cutler Torrey's treatment of Q 12:30-2 and 35. Torrey postulates two allusions to the Midrash literature in these verses: respectively, to the banquet prepared by Potiphar's wife for the women of the town and to the incarceration of Joseph. Torrey perceives these Qur'ānic verses as laconic, and he asserts "it is not evident what the episode of the banquet had to do with the course of events [in the Qur'ānic story of Joseph]; nor why the ladies were provided with knives; nor why Joseph, after all, was put in prison. These things are all made plain in the Midrash."¹⁵² In fact both events are made sufficiently clear in Q 12:30-5.¹⁵³ Only an analysis expecting to read the Midrash stories on Joseph into the Qur'ānic text would judge these verses as laconic.

Defying the borrowing thesis of the orientalists and its mood of reading the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives were the instances of divergence evident in these narratives in comparison to their antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions. These orientalist scholars mostly interpreted as lack of knowledge of the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions, inadvertent mistakes, or confusion on Muḥammad's part. For

¹⁵¹ In a similar manner, Smith takes Abraham's intercession in favor of the Sodomites in Q 11:74-6 as an allusion to the similar incident mentioned in Gen. 18:23-33. For Smith, the significance of this allusion is identical to its connotations in Genesis (Smith, *The Bible*, 69). Likewise, Charles Torrey understands the Qur'ānic story of Jonah (many of its elements are actually allusions) as a summary of the Biblical account (Torrey, *The Jewish*, 115-6). As it will be abundantly clear in chapter four this is not the case.

¹⁵² Cf. Torrey, *The Jewish*, 111. Several instances of this method of interpreting the Qur'ānic narratives intertextual allusions are evident in Torrey's treatment of Joseph's story (see Torrey, *The Jewish*, 109-13).

¹⁵³ Q 12: 30-5 read, "Ladies said in the City: "The wife of the (great) 'Aziz is seeking to seduce her slave from his (true) self: Truly hath he inspired her with violent love: we see she is evidently going astray." (30) When she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them: she gave each of them a knife: and she said (to Joseph), "Come out before them." When they saw him, they did extol him, and (in their amazement) cut their hands: they said, "Allah preserve us! no mortal is this! this is none other than a noble angel!" (31) he said: "There before you is the man about whom ye did blame me! I did seek to seduce him from his (true) self but he did firmly save himself guiltless!...and now, if he doth not my bidding, he shall certainly be cast into prison, and (what is more) be of the company of the vilest!" (32) He said: "O my Lord! the prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me: Unless Thou turn away their snare from me, I should (in my youthful folly) feel inclined towards them and join the ranks of the ignorant." (33) So his Lord hearkened to him (in his prayer), and turned away from him their snare: Verily He heareth and knoweth (all things) (34) Then it occurred to the men, after they had seen the signs, (that it was best) to imprison him for a time. (35)." ...

example, the Qur'ān consistently mentions a certain Haman as a high official in Pharaoh's court (e.g. Q 40:24, 36, 28:6, 8, 38, and 29:39). He builds a tower for Pharaoh (Q 40:36, 28:38) and he is also portrayed as a co-leader of Pharaoh's army (Q 28:6, 8, 39). In *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum*, Wilhelm Rudolph considers that Muḥammad mistook Pharaoh for Nimrod.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, in *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Heinrich Speyer interprets the Qur'ānic episode concerning the twelve wells that Moses struck with his staff for the twelve tribes (Q 2:60 and Q 7:160) as a confusion on Muḥammad's part in which he muddled up Ex. 15:27 and 17:5.¹⁵⁵

While orientalist scholars were at times mindful of the particularity of the Qur'ānic narratives and did interpret some divergences as deliberate,¹⁵⁶ this confused-text thesis is indeed pronounced in orientalist scholarship and has been part and parcel of the borrowing thesis. It should be emphasized that the confused-text thesis is, to use Clayton and Rothstein expression, also based on “dubious normative judgments about originality [discontinuity versus continuity],”¹⁵⁷ whereby orientalists often insisted on reading confusion into the text based on the notion of influence (continuity) rather than reading the text's consistency in articulating its *dissimilis*. As aforementioned, in such cases, they have effectively explained the text by negating its integrity and intentionality. With hindsight, the significant contribution of orientalist scholarship lies in two aspects. First, it has indeed enriched our knowledge of the multitude of texts the narratives of the Qur'ān could be envisioned as in intertextual conversation with. Second, it has generated theses that while controversial yet have elicited subsequent responses that continue to broaden and enrich our horizon concerning the

¹⁵⁴ See Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit*, 19-20. Rudolph here offers a brief list of what he sees as confusions on Muḥammad's part in borrowing the narratives of the Qur'ān from Jewish and Christian sources.

¹⁵⁵ See Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, 293. Speyer corrects Geiger who perceived different sources for the allegedly confused account (Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 164). For additional examples of the confused-text arguments, see for instance Arnold, *Ishmael*, 161; Hirschfeld, *New*, 64 (on Job's Qur'ānic story); Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Koran* (Leipzig: n.a., 1886), 63; Smith, *The Bible*, 77-8.

¹⁵⁶ Torrey, for example, acknowledged that the Qur'ān presents a certain Haman consistently as the vizier of Moses' Pharaoh and the Qur'ānic unique representation of the events in Median (Torrey, *The Jewish*, 117-8). Similarly, Geiger acknowledged the uniqueness of the Qur'ānic characterization of Abraham and some events in his life as well as the uniqueness of the episode of the conversion of Pharaoh's magicians after witnessing the miracles of Moses (Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 121-2 and 160). Arnold also acknowledges the unique Qur'ānic representation of the incident of the magicians' conversion (Arnold, *Ishmael*, 167-8). Smith also acknowledges as purposeful the particular representation of certain episodes in Noah's life (Smith, *The Bible*, 67-8).

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Clayton and Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality*, 12.

nature of the Qur'ānic narratives and their intertextuality. Of these responses are some post-orientalist western studies to which we will now turn.

3.2 Post-orientalist Scholarship

In comparison to orientalist scholarship, post-orientalist studies of the 20th and 21st centuries have been generally skeptic of the validity and usefulness of the whole enterprise of source-influence criticism. Qur'ānic studies have not been isolated from developments in other disciplines, although such developments naturally lag in influencing our discipline. In my view, the post-orientalist skepticism concerning source-influence criticism has been a combined result of the post-modern critique of enlightenment rationality and its positivistic historicism as well as the significant strides in literary theory from the 1930s and 1940s until now (e.g. New Criticism, Structuralism, Deconstruction, and, of course, Intertextuality).¹⁵⁸ Consequently, post-orientalist studies on the Qur'ānic narratives exhibit a variety of approaches in comparison to orientalist scholarship and are generally more interested in literary issues of representation and interpretation.

An exact classification of the post-orientalist studies on these narratives is an unwieldy task and perhaps unattainable; it is also not necessary here since most of these studies do not offer an intertextual reading of these narratives' allusions to their antecedent traditions.¹⁵⁹ And notwithstanding the recent appearance of the term intertextuality in several works in Qur'ānic studies, these studies also do not offer an

¹⁵⁸ For a concise review of the development of literary theory over the 20th century, the reader may consult Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁹ The following studies are but some examples of the sizable post-orientalist literature on the Qur'ān's narratives. Ayaz Afsar, "A Comparative Study of the Art of Jonah/Yūnus Narrative in the Bible and the Qur'ān," *Islamic Studies* 48/3 (Autumn 2009): 319-339 (Afsar offers a comparative study between the Qur'ān and the Bible narratology of the story of Jonah from the perspective of the Labovian model); Ian Richard Netton, "Towards a Modern Tafsīr of Sūrat al-Kahf: Structure and Semiotics," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2/1 (2000): 67-87 (Netton attempts to expand on the significance and function of three *topoi* identified in this Sūrat al-Kahf (Q 18) by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), and he does so by employing structural and semiotic analysis); Ismail Albayrak, "The Qur'anic Narratives of the Golden Calf Episode," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3/1 (2001):47-69 (offers a close contextual reading of the narrative pericopes concerning the worship of the Golden Calf by the Israelites); M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, "The Qur'anic Employment of the Story of Noah," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8/1(2006):38-57 (also a contextual close reading of the narrative pericopes concerning Noah in the Qur'ān, according to Nöldeke-Schwally's chronology. Abdel Haleem concludes his analysis with a comparative assessment of the Qur'ānic accounts (in terms of purposes, styles, and content) and their Biblical counterpart); Mustansir Mir, "The Quranic Story of Joseph: Plot, Themes, And Characters," *The Muslim World* LXXVI/1 (Jan. 1986): 1-15 (a literary reading of Q 12 on Joseph with particularly focus narratology); idem., "Dialogue in the Qur'an," *Religion & Literature* 24/1 (Spring, 1992): 1-22 (focusing on the dialogues in the Qur'ān's narratives as a distinctive feature of Qur'ānic narratology).

analysis of the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives to their antecedent traditions.¹⁶⁰ We may in passing however revisit the approaches, briefly mentioned in the introduction, that attempt to understand these allusions through early and classical Muslim exegetes' responses to them. Brannon Wheeler's *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis* is one recent example of this approach. Wheeler writes, "to understand Biblical allusions in the Quran is not only to identify to what these things were supposed to allude and to whom they were addressed, but it is to see how Muslims understood these allusions to function in polemic and their own self-definition."¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, this approach seems to largely replace the intertextual analysis of these allusions within the Qur'ānic text itself and with reference to the text's antecedent traditions by the Muslim exegetical responses to these allusions. It has not only been evident in studies on the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives in Muslim exegesis, as Wheeler's,¹⁶² but also in post-orientalist studies interested in the representation and interpretation of the Qur'ānic narratives on the textual level.

Anthony Johns' articles "Narrative, Intertext and Allusion in the Qur'ānic Presentation of Job" and "Jonah in the Qur'an An Essay on Thematic Counterpoint" are good examples of this last case.¹⁶³ In order to offer a contextualized literary reading of the narrative pericopes on Jonah and Job within the Qur'ān, Johns had to deal with the intertextual allusions in these pericopes; particularly those which are 'cryptic' or 'elliptical'. To interpret these allusions, Johns takes recourse to Muslim exegesis and the extra-narrative details cited therein. Johns offers the bare minimum of the connotations of these allusions and he does so only to give the bare minimum "context for the events mentioned."¹⁶⁴ Whether the exegetical views or external narrative details cited by Johns match or not the literary significance of these allusions is an issue to be determined by an intertextual analysis of these allusions informed by

¹⁶⁰ See for instance, Abdulla Galadari, "The Role of Intertextual Polysemy in Qur'anic Exegesis," *International Journal on Quranic Research* 3/4 (June 2013): 35-56; Brian M. Hauglid, "On the Early Life of Abraham: Biblical and Qur'ānic Intertextuality and the Anticipation of Muḥammad," in *The Bible and the Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. John C. Reeves, 87-105 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Carl W. Ernst, *How to Read the Qur'ān: A New Guide, with Select Translations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Nevin Reda, "The Qur'anic Talut (Saul) and the Rise of the Ancient Israelite Monarchy: An Intertextual Reading," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 25/3 (2008): 31-51.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Wheeler, *Moses in the Quran*, 3.

¹⁶² A similar approach is attested in Lassner's *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba*.

¹⁶³ Anthony H. Johns, "Narrative, Intertext and Allusion in the Qur'anic Presentation of Job," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1/1 (1999): 1-25; idem., "Jonah in the Qur'an." The same attitude is evident in Afsar, "A Comparative Study of the Art of Jonah/Yūnus Narrative," 325.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Johns, "Narrative," 4.

allusional studies. The purpose of drawing attention to the issue of replacing the contextual literary analysis of the allusion by certain exegetical responses is to point to the probability that they may not be identical and that we must not dissolve the distinction between the text and its exegesis.¹⁶⁵ The former is always subject to renewed reflections that attempt to rediscover and refine its meaning(s).

Turning to the few post-orientalist studies that have as part of their scope an intertextual reading of the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives, it is immediately clear that some of these studies do not disentangle themselves completely from the reductive tendencies, assumptions, and goals of source-influence criticism that fundamentally shaped orientalist scholarship on these narratives and their allusions.¹⁶⁶ Sidney Griffith's study on the Qur'ānic story of the Companions of the Cave (Q 18:9-26) and its relation to the Qur'ān's Syriac antecedent traditions is one example.

As opposed to the orientalist perspective, Griffith emphasizes the oral nature of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives and that the Qur'ānic narratives, in general, "cannot be reduced to any presumed sources."¹⁶⁷ He asserts that the intertextual allusions in Q 18:9-26 are not to texts but are rather to oral traditions on the story of the Companions of the Cave that circulated among the pre-Islamic Arabs and Christian communities of late antique Arabia.¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, despite of these assertions, Griffith's largely historical reading of Q 18:9-26 gravitates towards the reduction associated with the borrowing and confused text thesis characteristic of orientalist scholarship. This will be briefly exemplified in the following instances.

In his study, Griffith identifies allusions to the Qur'ān's antecedent Syriac traditions in Q 18:9, 18, 22, and 25-6. Q 18:9 ("Or dost thou reflect that the Companions [*aṣḥāb*] of the Cave and of the Inscription [*al-raqīm*] were wonders

¹⁶⁵ This approach to the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions is to be distinguished from that of Reynolds', alluded to in the introduction. It is only interested in filling the 'gaps' these allusions engender with minimal extra-Qur'ānic details derived from Muslim exegesis and in order to pursue another research goal; usually, as in Johns' abovementioned studies, to pursue a contextual reading of the Qur'ān's narratives within the Qur'ānic text. In contrast to this approach, as already stated, Reynolds' analysis is in essence intertextual and attempts to resolve the problems Muslim exegetes faced by taking recourse to Jewish and Christian lore.

¹⁶⁶ See for instance, Uri Rubin, "Traditions in Transformation- The Ark of the Covenant and the Golden Calf in Biblical and Islamic Historiography," *Oriens* 36 (2001): 196-214, particularly 198 and 201-2; Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002), 17-65. For an assessment of Tottoli's work and that he does not completely disengage from the orientalist borrowing and confused-text thesis see Walid Saleh, "In Search of a Comprehensible Qur'an: A Survey of Some Recent Scholarly Works," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (BRIIFS)* 5/2 (Autumn/Winter 2003): 143-162, 153.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Griffith, "Christian Lore," 116.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

among Our Signs?") is indeed, as Griffith argues, an intertextual allusion that evokes the memory of the story.¹⁶⁹ In our terminology, it is a titular allusion that functions to bring the memory of the story to bear on the narrative pericope as a whole. For this allusion, Griffith largely offers a philological analysis of the two lexical items *aṣḥāb* (sing. *ṣāḥib*) and *al-raqīm*. He concludes, plausibly it should be noted, that they mirror the terms companion (*habrê*) and (led)tablet (inscription or writing) used in the Syriac sources to refer to the companions of the cave.¹⁷⁰ This analysis of the allusion in Q 18:9 remains however wanting; the significance of this overarching allusion only unfolds through a contextual reading of what the Qur'ān does with the evocation of the memory of this story in the pericope as a whole. Griffith is all too aware of the Islamic rendering of this pericope which he views to have replaced "the historical, geographical and overtly Christian frame of reference, so much a part of the Syriac tradition."¹⁷¹ It is however not only in the Islamic themes of the pericope that the text offers its commentary on the evoked memory of the story but also in what it confirms, disregarded, or modifies in relation to its antecedent traditions. It is in light of this progressive portrayal and commentary that the full significance of the allusion in 18:9 is formed.

Let me illustrate this through the two allusions that Griffith identifies in Q 18:22 and 25-6. Respectively, Griffith perceives these allusions as faithful representations of the disagreement reflected in the Syriac traditions on the number of the companions and the period they stayed in the cave.¹⁷² This assessment in fact largely pertains to the exteriority of the text. A literary analysis of these two allusions reveals that the Qur'ān evokes the intertextual connotations concerning these disagreements not to display knowledge of or affinity to certain traditions but rather to dismiss the disagreement on these numbers as trivial. The whole pericope indeed insists on not specifying the identity of the companions, their number, or the number of years they spent in the cave. This is quite clear from the following verses (*italics* are my emphasis):

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 117.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 125-7.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Ibid., 127.

¹⁷² In his conclusion, Griffith asserts that "reading the Qur'ān's evocation of the legend of the "Companions of the Cave" against the background of the fuller narrative as we have it in the extant, pre-Islamic, Syriac tradition ... enables the scholar of Syriac to recognize the fidelity of the Qur'ān's reprise of a piece of Christian lore as it must have circulated orally among the Arabicspeaking, "Jacobite" Christians of Muḥammad's day in Arabia" (cf. Griffith, "Christian Lore," 130).

Q 18:10-1 (“the *youths* betook themselves to the Cave” and “then We draw (a veil) over their ears, *for a number of years*, in the Cave”), Q 18:13 (“they were *youths* who believed in their Lord”), Q 18:19 (“we raised *them* up (from sleep), that they might question each other. Said one of them, “How long have ye stayed (here)?” They said, “We have stayed (perhaps) a day, or part of a day.” (At length) *they (all) said*, “Allah (alone) knows best how long ye have stayed here,” and Q 18:22, 26 (“(Some) say they were three, the dog being the fourth among them; (others) say they were five, the dog being the sixth,- doubtfully guessing at the unknown...” And “Say: “Allah knows best how long they stayed: with Him is (the knowledge of) the secrets of the heavens and the earth”).

All of these segments indicate clearly that the Qur’ān is not interested in specifying numbers, particularly the segments in the verses that contain the actual allusions to the disagreement on these numbers (Q 18:22, 26). In fact, the whole pericope while offering details of the story’s events is not interested in specifying the names of the companions, the other protagonists of the story, or in specifying geographical locations.¹⁷³

We may entertain the question why the Qur’ān did not specify its own numbers concerning the allusions in Q 18:22 and 25-6? The numbers recorded in these verses are not the numbers the Qur’ān offers as its own but they are those believed by the Qur’ān’s interlocutors. At the same time, the numbers offered in the Syriac traditions are indeed markedly different from those recorded in these verses.¹⁷⁴ Certainly, if the Qur’ān had specified its own numbers they would have been virtually impossible to refute given the wide disagreement on these numbers in the cultural milieu of the emergence of the Qur’ān. The purpose of these two allusions is thus not to express “fidelity”¹⁷⁵ to the Qur’ān’s antecedent Syriac traditions; this is only a historical significance that Griffith identifies and it indeed needs correction in light of the above literary analysis.

The Syriac sources that Griffith identifies only confirm the impression the pericope conveys; namely, that there was disagreement on these numbers in the

¹⁷³ Review Q 18:9-26

¹⁷⁴ Compare the verses above to the excerpts from the Syriac sources in Griffith, “Christian Lore,” 129.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

culture milieu of the emergence of the Qur'ān. Q 18:22 and 25-6 do not reflect the disagreement of the Syriac sources but the disagreement concerning these two issues in the wider context of the oral cultural milieu of late antique Arabia. The particular formulation of the allusions in these two verses and the text before and after these allusions indicate that the pericope only recalls these disagreements to dismiss them as irrelevant and “*doubtfully guessing at the unknown.*” In doing so, the text puts its audience’s focus squarely on the morals the narrative pericope communicates. These morals are what Griffith calls the “Islamicization” or “the Islamic rendition of the legend”: for instance, “the refusal of the youths to adopt the pagan practices of their people (vv. 13– 15), the miraculous signs of God’s providence in their behalf (vv. 16– 17), God’s personal care for the seemingly sleeping youths (v. 18).”¹⁷⁶ Yet, beyond Griffith’s general assertion that “for its own rhetorical purposes and within the context of its own concerns, the Qur’ān evokes the memory of the story,”¹⁷⁷ his analysis stops short from linking these Islamic themes to the pericope’s intertextual allusions and the intertextual conversation with its Syriac antecedents through a literary reading.

Such reading would have precluded the confusion concerning the companions’ dog in Q 18:18. To imply, as Griffith does, that the dog’s place in this verse is possibly a confused reference to a watcher or a guardian angel as recorded in the Syriac traditions is indeed not warranted.¹⁷⁸ First, the pericope does not state that the companions’ souls were raised to heaven and a guardian angel watched over the companions’ bodies in the cave as in the Syriac traditions. On the contrary, it only asserts that God drew “(a veil) over their ears, for a number of years, in the Cave, (so that they heard not)” (Q 18:11). Furthermore, the immediate literary context of Griffith’s postulated allusion in this verse, Q 18:16-8, shows that the dog figures as part of the miraculous state of the companions a sleep in the cave.¹⁷⁹

The literary reading above is an example, albeit brief, of a contextualized analysis

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 127.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 124.

¹⁷⁸ Griffith, “Christian Lore,” 127-8.

¹⁷⁹ Those verses read: “When ye [i.e. the youth] turn away from them and the things they worship other than Allah, betake yourselves to the Cave: Your Lord will shower His mercies on you and disposes of your affair towards comfort and ease. (16) Thou wouldst have seen the sun, when it rose, declining to the right from their Cave, and when it set, turning away from them to the left, while they lay in the open space in the midst of the Cave. Such are among the Signs of Allah: He whom Allah, guides is rightly guided; but he whom Allah leaves to stray,- for him wilt thou find no protector to lead him to the Right Way.(17) Thou wouldst have deemed them awake, whilst they were asleep, and We turned them on their right and on their left sides: their dog stretching forth his two fore-legs on the threshold: if thou hadst come up on to them, thou wouldst have certainly turned back from them in flight, and wouldst certainly have been filled with terror of them.(18)”

of these intertextual allusions within the whole pericope. It emphasizes that these allusions' significance is neither determined by a historical reading alone nor by its connotations in the referent-text(s), and so is the intertextual conversation they bring about. When we grant the text integrity, it is obvious that the significance of these allusions is indeed shaped and delimited by the whole continuum of the alluding text (proceeding linearly and non-linearly) more so than by these allusions' referent-texts. By focusing on philological and socio-cultural significance, Griffith's main conclusions with respect to these allusions have been the Qur'ān's 'fidelity to'¹⁸⁰ or 'detailed awareness of'¹⁸¹ the Syriac antecedent traditions on this story. But this does not add much to our understanding of these allusions' significance within their literary context in the Qur'ān. Such reductive tendencies can, as I showed above, be modulated through rigorous literary analysis which could modify, or even prove baseless, the allusion's historical significance.

In his article "The historical Context" in *the Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, Fred Donner wrote,

That the Qur'ān text crystallised at an early date, and that the *sīra* reports are sometimes exegetical[,] suggest that we must consider the relationship of the Qur'ān to its context in a manner that reverses the procedure normally adopted when studying the relationship of a text to its context. Rather than relying on the *sīra* reports about a presumed historical context to illuminate the meaning of the Qur'ān text, we must attempt to infer from the qur'anic text what its true historical context might have been, and in this way check on the historicity of various reports in the *sīra*.¹⁸²

Griffith's intertextual reading reflects this reverse procedure of reading the Qur'ān as a historical source. More so are Neuwirth's "The House of Abraham" and "'Oral Scriptures'," referenced in the introduction, which aim at an intertextual reading of the Qur'ānic narratives to reconstruct the pre-canonical history of the Qur'ānic revelations (literary, socio-cultural, and political). Neuwirth reads "the Qur'ān as a collection of prophetic communications that document the emergence of a community

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Griffith, "Christian Lore," 130.

¹⁸¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁸² Cf. Donner, "The Historical Context," 34.

and thus, for their full understanding, need to be rearranged chronologically.”¹⁸³ Put differently, Neuwirth offers a diachronic and (largely) historical reading of the Qur’ān within the framework of the communication of its individual text units as a process between “speaker and listeners [or audience]” which over the span of the gradual emergence of these text units led to the formation of a distinct religious community.¹⁸⁴ In this reading process, aptly described by Nicolai Sinai as “reading the Qur’ānic corpus as the literary fallout of a historical process,”¹⁸⁵ Neuwirth pays significant attention to the internal and external referentiality of the corpus of Qur’ānic texts; both, as Neuwirth attempts to show in her work, reflect the process of forming the nascent Muslim community.¹⁸⁶

Neuwirth’s contribution to the intertextual study of the Qur’ānic narratives is undoubtedly valuable. Her keen attention to the self-referentiality of the Qur’ānic discourse, refusal to de-contextualize and de-functionalize the different text units of the Qur’ān,¹⁸⁷ and her emphasis on the exegetical interrelationships between these text units¹⁸⁸ have indeed been a hallmark of her diachronic approach to the study of the Qur’ān and are extremely beneficial for any serious intertextual analysis of the Qur’ānic narratives. It is through this approach that Neuwirth rejects the reductive tendency of orientalist scholarship of perceiving redundant repetitions in the Qur’ānic narratives or seeing their elements as dull echoes of Jewish and Christian lore. In sum, Neuwirth’s intertextual readings are groundbreaking in recognizing the particularity

¹⁸³ Cf. Angelika Neuwirth, “Structure and the Emergence of Community” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur’ān*, ed. Andrew Rippion, 140-58 (USA, UK, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 140.

¹⁸⁴ Neuwirth, “Referentiality,” 145.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Sinai, “The Qur’an as Process,” 430.

¹⁸⁶ See Neuwirth, ““Oral scriptures””; idem., “The House of Abraham”; idem., “Referentiality.” In her article “Form and Structure of the Qur’ān” in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, Neuwirth asserts that her perception of the process of the growth of the Qur’ānic canon before its final codification is “affirmed by the continuous references of later emerging text-units to a text nucleus and by the recurrent instances of intertextuality mirrored in the text-units developing around the nucleus. Even at the point where the genesis of a text conceived as a canonical process has come to a close with the end of the text’s growth, its final form will not be a harmonious presentation but will leave the roughness caused by the organic growth unlevelled” (Cf. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, s.v. “Form and Structure of the Qur’ān.”)

¹⁸⁷ Angelika Neuwirth, “Qur’an and history – a disputed relationship. Some reflections on Qur’anic history and history in the Qur’an.” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 5 (2003): 1–18, 11 and passim; idem., “Referentiality,” 143-7; idem., ““Oral Scriptures”,” 71-4.

¹⁸⁸ For an explicit articulation of this perspective, see Neuwirth, ““Oral Scriptures”,” 72. Many of Neuwirth’s studies on the Qur’an and its narratives demonstrate this perspective in approaching the analysis of the text (Neuwirth, “Referentiality”; idem., “The House of Abraham”; idem., “Negotiating Justice (Part I)”; idem., “Negotiating Justice (Part II)”; idem., “Die Psalmen – im Koran neu gelesen (Ps 104 und 137),” in *Im vollen Licht der Geschichte. Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und die Anfänge der kritischen Koranforschung*, eds. Dirk Hartwig, Walter Homolka, Michael J. Marx, and Angelika Neuwirth 157-90 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2008).

of the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions and in attempting to contextualize these allusions within the Qur'ānic text.

Before discussing Neuwirth's approach to the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions in more detail, we must bear in mind two observations. First, regarding the process of reconstructing the chronological order of the Qur'ānic revelations, Neuwirth herself asserts: "such an endeavor will of course *remain hypothetical to a degree*, relying as it does in some respects on a circular argument [in essence stylistic]"¹⁸⁹ (*Italics* are mine). Neuwirth's chronology is thus *hypothetical to a degree*. Second, in reading the Qur'ān and its narratives Neuwirth mainly does not rely on Muslim historical or exegetical reports. She relies instead on the *Sīra*'s broad outline; for instance "the emergence of a community in Mecca, the *hijra* [immigration from Mecca to Medina], and the continuation or community-building in Medina."¹⁹⁰ In light of this skepticism concerning the veracity of the data transmitted in Muslim reports, Neuwirth has frequently interpreted the external referentiality of the Qur'ān as fulfilling legitimation needs within the polemical environment of the text's emergence, particularly vis-à-vis Judaism and Christianity. Neuwirth's reading thus relies on a basic premise derived from Religious Studies concerning the emergence of new religions, namely new religions' need to establish their authority vis-à-vis older religious traditions.

Like the case with Griffith's study, it is not possible to demonstrate the problems with Neuwirth's reading of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives except with examples; we shall do so with examples from Neuwirth's article on the house of Abraham and the house of Amram. In this article Neuwirth examines the pericope on Mary in Q 3 (Q 3:33-62) as in a stage where the Qur'ānic text, thus Islam, has not fully established itself as the soul inheritor of Abraham and his house's religion.¹⁹¹ According to Neuwirth's postulated chronology, in this intermediary stage a narrative concerning Mary has already been revealed in Q 19:1-33.¹⁹² Neuwirth thus takes Q 3:33-62 as a Qur'ānic "re-reading" of Q 19:1-33,

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Neuwirth, "“Oral Scriptures”," 72. This critique has been originally leveled by Daniel Madigan. See Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'ān's self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 86.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Neuwirth, "“Oral Scriptures”," 72.

¹⁹¹ Neuwirth, "The House of Abraham," 503.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 503.

Serving a double religious-political purpose; to tackle the by then burning issue of christological controversies; so as to achieve a rapprochement to the Christians, i.e., Āl ‘Imrān [the house of Amram]; and to cope with the dominant Jewish tradition represented by the Āl Ibrāhīm [the house of Abraham], whose superiority in terms of scriptural authority needed to be counter-balanced.¹⁹³

Neuwirth also asserts that Q 3:1-32 (the prologue of Q 3) is part of the earlier revealed canonical nucleus against which she will read Q 3:33-62.¹⁹⁴ Quite obviously, if Neuwirth’ hypothesis quoted above is to be proven sound, Q 3:1-32 must be shown relevant to Q 3:33-62 in precisely the terms of Neuwirth’ hypothesis: i.e. that the latter is a re-working of the previously revealed Mary story in Q 19:1–33 in terms of the quoted religio-political motivations.

Neuwirth postulates four intertextual allusions in order to prove her thesis. First, in Q 3:7 (in the *sūra*’s prologue), which reads:

He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book [*Umm al-Kitāb*]: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings [*ta’wīliḥ*], but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:” and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.

Neuwirth sees in *Umm al-Kitāb* (lit. the Mother of the Book) an allusion to the rabbinic exegetical terminology *yēsh ēm la-miqrā*, “a reading “that has a mother,” i.e. in scripture itself.”¹⁹⁵ In Neuwirth’s view, the verse could be read as polemical against the Jews of the Medina concerning some exegetical practices relevant to any inter-faith polemics but she objects to this type of isolated readings and asserts that the

¹⁹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 505.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 506.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Neuwirth, “The House of Abraham,” 517.

dispute must have been centered on the “theological issue perceived as ambiguous par excellence, namely, Christology.”¹⁹⁶

Second, Neuwirth postulates that *Umm al-Kitāb*, as a hermeneutical term has gendered connotations as “a female locus of divine communication” and thus also represents in Q 3:7 an allusion to the *Akathistos Hymnos* (the “Praise of the Virgin”).¹⁹⁷ Third, reading Q 3:33-62 in relation to Q 19:1–33, Neuwirth postulates an allusion in Q 19:16 to the Eastern Gate of the Temple as in the vision of Ezechiel (chapters 43 and 44).¹⁹⁸ It is only after postulating these three allusions that Neuwirth is able to postulate a fourth: in Q 3:26 (in the prologue of the *sūra*) to the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55). We may raise the question why would the first audience of the Qur’ān identify these allusions and could they have been able to grasp the connotations that Neuwirth deciphers?

Allusional studies inform us that one of the conditions for detecting an allusion is a degree of correspondence (echo) in the allusive signal’s syntagmatic form or content to its referent.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, there is a sort of echo between *Umm al-Kitāb* in Q 3:7 and the exegetical term *yēsh ēm la-miqrā*. Yet, Neuwirth’s analysis does not take into consideration the other instances of *Umm al-Kitāb* in the Qur’ān. *Umm al-Kitāb* in Q 3:7 is employed in the exact same sense as in Q 43:4 and Q 13:39, namely the ‘consummate source of the Book.’ Both of these verses are earlier to Q 3:7 according to Nöldeke-Schwally’s chronology and Neuwirth does not comment on these verses or their location in her chronology. It is thus probable that detecting this allusion would have required the first audience of the Qur’ān to depart from the previously established meaning of *Umm al-Kitāb*. Neuwirth does furnish some particular historical and literary context that would have prompted the audience to do so. The Islamic tradition states that Q 3:1-62 together with Q 3:63-4 have been revealed on the occasion of polemics between the Prophet and the Christians of Najrān. Neuwirth follows the lead of this historical episode but it does not figure in her reading beyond that.²⁰⁰ She is focused on the literary qualities of Q 3:1-62 and sees in the whole pericope an implicit discourse specifically on the issue of Christology.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 518-9.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 521.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 523.

¹⁹⁹ Perri, “On Alluding,” 290 and 295. Hebel uses the expression “metonymic fragments of the intertextual *déjà*” to express this idea of an echo between the allusive signal and its referent (Hebel, “Towards,” 138-9).

²⁰⁰ In this, Neuwirth follows the insight of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. She writes, “his [Abu Zayd’s]

Now, if we are to concede that this allusion is valid, i.e. that the reference to the rabbinic exegetical practice particularly concerns a debate on the issue of Christology,²⁰² we are faced with the gendered connotations that Neuwirth then attaches to *Umm al-Kitāb* as equally representing an allusion to the *Akathistos Hymnos*. Neuwirth writes,

The female locus of divine communication...[as in] a central liturgical text of Eastern Christianity, the *Akathistos Hymnos* (the “Praise of the Virgin”) that is recited during Lent. This text focuses on the hermeneutical function of the Virgin Mary in communicating the divine word—just as the Qur’anic *umm al-kitāb* defies the attempts of professional interpreters to decode it, Mary renders mute the professional practitioners of human communication, the rhetoricians.²⁰³

First, there is virtually no correspondence between *Umm al-Kitāb* and its immediate literary context on one hand and the *Akathistos Hymnos* on the other that might enable the audience to identify this allusion. Second, it is not *Umm al-Kitāb* (qualified in the verse by *al-muḥkamāt*, i.e. the basic or fundamental verses of established meaning) but the *Mutashābihāt* (the ambiguous or allegorical verses) that challenges the interpreters. In addition, the connotations that Neuwirth derives from this allusion are indeed foreign to the Qur’ān. Mary’s role in the Qur’ān is limited to the miraculous birth of Jesus: she neither plays a hermeneutical function in the Qur’ānic narratives nor is she entrusted with prophetic communication to her community.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, the connotations Neuwirth derives from *Akathistos Hymnos* are indeed on its peripheries. What perplexes the rhetorician (or the hermeneuticians) in the

interpretation relies, however, on sīra data, involving the Christians of Najrān, who according to Islamic tradition are the addressees in Q 3:63, whereas our approach tries to dispense with data from the Islamic tradition” (Cf. Neuwirth, “The House of Abraham,” 518, n. 41).

²⁰¹ Ibid., 519.

²⁰² Ibid., 518-9.

²⁰³ Cf. Ibid., 521.

²⁰⁴ The divine communications that Mary receives as recorded in the Qur’ān are all limited to the virgin birth of Jesus and to responding to her community with the brief answers when they inquire about this miraculous event (see Q 3:42-7, 19:16-34).

Akathistos Hymnos is not Mary's speech; it is the miracle that she stands for, the virgin birth of Jesus.²⁰⁵

As for the third assumed allusion, Q 19:16 could indeed signify the Eastern Gate of the Temple. There is no justification however to particularly postulate an allusion to Ezechiel 43-44. The Eastern Gate of the Temple is mentioned in countless Jewish and Christian texts and furthermore the reference to this gate occurs in the Qur'ān in a narrative context on Mary, which would have more likely directed the audience to Christian texts on Mary in which the Eastern Gate is mentioned rather than to a text in the Old Testament. Again, even if the validity of this allusion is also conceded, it is hardly plausible that the first audience of the Qur'ān have retrieved the connotations that Neuwirth derives from Ezechiel 43-44. Namely that,

In Q 19:16 she [i.e. Mary] is said to have retreated “to an Eastern place,” *makānan sharqiyyā*, which can be interpreted as an allusion to the Eastern Gate of the Temple, which according to the vision of Ezechiel (chapters 43 and 44) marks the border between the worldly and the eschatological city. The Eastern Gate is a place that in the apocryphal gospels (particularly in the formed Mary, through whose body the Messiah will come forth, into an image of the Temple. Going another step further, it is Mary who, being a representation of the “new Temple,” the Church, after the “old Temple” had become void of priestly presence with the last priest Zachariah's son John not continuing the Temple service but becoming the “forerunner” (*prodromos*) of Christ—is destined to occupy their place in the core space of the cult. Christology thus replaces priesthood. Mary's sojourn in the temple symbolizes the overtaking of religious territory: the Christian church is presented as “inheriting” the most sacred site of Judaism.²⁰⁶

Indeed, in order to grasp these connotations the Qur'ān's first audience need to have been not only deeply familiar with Ezechiel 43-44 but as well with Christian theology.

Turning to the fourth allusion, it is indeed possible to argue that there is a thematic correspondence between Q 3:26 and the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). Q 3:26 reads,

²⁰⁵ See *the Akathistos Hymnos* as quoted in Neuwirth's article (Neuwirth, “The House of Abraham,” 521-2).

²⁰⁶ Cf. Neuwirth, “The House of Abraham,” 523-4.

Say: "O Allah! Lord of Power (And Rule), Thou givest power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: In Thy hand is all good. Verily, over all things Thou hast power.

And Luke 1:46–55 reads,

(1:46) And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, (1:47) And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (1:48) For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. (1:49) For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy [is] his name. (1:50) And his mercy [is] on them that fear him from generation to generation. (1:51) He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. (1:52) He hath put down the mighty from [their] seats, and exalted them of low degree. (1:53) He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. (1:54) He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of [his] mercy; (1:55) As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.²⁰⁷

The theme of Q 3:26 is however a general monotheistic theme that occurs in many Jewish and Christian traditions and various similar versions of it occur in the Qur'ān itself (e.g. Q 2:247, 269, 62:4, and 57:29). The thematic correspondence between Q 3:26 and Luke 1:46-55 is indeed too general to warrant an allusion in the former to the latter unless the alluding text precisely directs its audience to the referent text through additional textual clues. Nonetheless, the immediate literary context of this allusion (the *sūra's* prologue, Q 3:1-32) is particularly shaped in terms of such general monotheistic themes (e.g. Q 3:1-6, 8-18, and 25-32). And although it offers some polemical verses in connection to these general monotheistic themes, these polemics are made towards both Jews and Christians (e.g. Q 3:19-20 and 23). Nothing particular in Q 3:1-32 invites the Qur'ān's first audience to read an allusion in Q 3:26 and a reading of this verse on the textual level seems more likely to had been the case in the context of the revelations. Even if this allusion is valid it is again very difficult

²⁰⁷ According to the King James standard edition of the Bible.

to concede that the first audience of the Qur'ān were able to grasp the connotations that Neuwirth postulates.²⁰⁸

Overall, we may conclude that Neuwirth's postulated allusions and their connotations are largely not warranted: First, because of the weak syntactical and contextual echoes of these allusions to their presumed referent-texts. Second, Neuwirth derives connotations from her postulated allusions that presuppose the first audience of the Qur'ān had extremely broad and extensive knowledge of Jewish and Christian traditions. Given the high degree of complexity of these allusions and their presumed connotations, it would require the community of the first believers to have been sophisticated and erudite thinkers as Neuwirth in order to perceive these allusions and their connotations.²⁰⁹ Third, Neuwirth pays significant attention to contextualizing the narrative pericopes she examines in relation to the corpus of Qur'ānic texts postulated as earlier to them in the sequence of revelations but her reading leaves out those which according to her estimate (not particularly verifiable) are later in this sequence. In this light, her postulated allusions in Q 3:7 revolving around the term *Umm al-Kitāb*, which overlooks other instances of the same term in the text, appear particularly problematic. As already noted, a diachronic reading of the Qur'ān cannot substitute for a synchronic one. As could be easily seen from the preceding analysis, the corrective of all of the problems in Neuwirth's largely historical and diachronic reading of these allusions is twofold: (1) applying a literary approach to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives informed by modern allusional studies, (2) within the framework of a rigorous synchronic reading closely

²⁰⁸ Namely that “the revolutionary tone of the *Magnificat* is well suited for the core message of Sūrat Āl 'Imrān: the toppling of the predominance of the exclusively Abrahamic receivers of revelation, and the elevation of another group of legitimate receivers, the Āl 'Imrān, who are represented not by patriarchs, but by two female protagonists [Mary and her mother] and a conspicuously submissive male figure free of the associations of patriarchal authority. They are, however, credited with the merit of continuing the other Great Tradition, the Israelite temple heritage, the Aaronid lineage. ... However, ... the House of Amram, whose individual figures in spite of their gender are trusted to have been part of the divine-human communication, cannot be accommodated into the Qur'anic discourse except by means of the exegetical professionalism that is cultivated in the House of Abraham, namely, the notion of the multiple “faces” of scripture [which ties to the allusion to the ambiguous theological issue of Christology, referred to above]” (cf. Neuwirth, “The House of Abraham,” 528).

²⁰⁹ An adequate presupposition concerning the text's reader is essential. As Hebel asserts, “the actualization of the evocative potential of allusions depends on the reader's “Resonanzbereitschaft” ... and his/her “Allusionskompetenz” ... because allusions ... always presuppose a certain foreknowledge on the side of the reader” (Cf. Hebel, “Towards,” 140). Neuwirth' perception of the text's first audience diametrically opposes that postulated by the orientalist. The latter have perceived of the first audience of the Qur'ān on “childish” intellectual level and of primitive literary taste (see for instance, Geiger, *Was hat Mohamed*, 73, and 89-91; Torrey, *The Jewish*, 105-6; Hirschfeld, *New*, 59).

delimited by the intention of the text.²¹⁰

To turn to an exclusively literary hermeneutics of the Qur'ānic narratives' intertextual allusions in post-orientalist scholarship, is to turn to Gabriel Said Reynolds' recent attempt to prove that the Qur'ān (its narratives and their intertextual allusions included) should be read in light of its antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions and not Muslim exegesis.²¹¹ Reynolds' study, like Neuwirth and Griffith's, is demarcated historically; in his examination of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives, Reynolds only considers the Jewish and Christian traditions redacted before the emergence of Islam. In addition, he also does not pursue the orientalist's borrowing thesis.²¹² Yet, if only by virtue of the thesis he attempts to prove, Reynolds seems to assume that the Qur'ānic narratives are solely in intertextual conversation with their antecedent Jewish and Christian traditions.²¹³

As aforementioned, in order to proof his thesis, Reynolds attempts to resolve many problems that Muslim exegetes have faced by recourse to Jewish and Christian literature (the 'Qur'ān's Subtext' in Reynolds' terminology). The readings of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives figure in his study in this particular way.²¹⁴ Reynolds starts his analysis by identifying the exegetical problems that faced Muslim exegetes. For instance, the Qur'ānic account on Jonah's flight (Q 37:140) where Muslim exegetes had to deal with the reason of Jonah's flight.²¹⁵ Reynolds finds a solution for this exegetical problem in the connotations of the incident in Jewish and Christian traditions. He concludes that the Qur'ānic account concerning Jonah is but a "homiletic rendering" of the accounts given in the Old and New

²¹⁰ Neuwirth has been pioneering in her attention to the coherent literary composition of the Qur'ān (Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981) and in contextualizing her examination of the text's elements within their literary context in their respective *suras* (see for instance, Neuwirth, "Negotiating Justice (Part I)"; idem., "Negotiating Justice (Part II). Neuwirth has also argued that the *suras* of the Qur'ān represent a distinctive literary genre. See Angelika Neuwirth, "Some Remarks on the Special Linguistic and Literary Character of the Qur'an," in *The Qur'an: Style and Contents*, ed. Andrew Rippin 253-257 (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001)). Despite of this, the diachronic and historical reading that Neuwirth espouses in the absence of an equally rigorous synchronic literary reading results in the pitfalls that I have elucidated above.

²¹¹ Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 13.

²¹² It should also be noted that Reynolds avoids reductive philological arguments based on borrowed foreign vocabulary (ibid., 36).

²¹³ See Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 36. Reynolds also asserts that "[his] book challenges the dominant scholarly notion that the Qur'an must be interpreted through the medieval commentaries shaped by the biography of the prophet Muhammad, proposing instead that the text is best read in light of Christian and Jewish scripture. The Qur'an, in its use of allusions, *depends on the Biblical knowledge of its audience*" (cf. Ibid., 2) (*Italics* are my emphasis).

²¹⁴ Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 2.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 117-25.

Testaments.²¹⁶ Accordingly, by viewing the sequence of events in the Old Testament reflected in the Qur'ān the latter is seen as asserting that Jonah “departs (Q 37.140) [first] ... from wherever he was (presumably Palestine) when God first called him [to preach to Nineveh]”²¹⁷ and that “later Jonah regrets that he preached at all [to Nineveh], and becomes furious when God spares the city (Jonah 4.1-2), furious to the point of death (Jonah 4.3).”²¹⁸

As aforementioned, Reynolds' reading is primarily controlled by the capacity of the intertextual point of reference to supply a solution for the exegetical problems that the Muslim exegetes faced. Reynolds does not rely in his analysis on any literary model for the analysis of the intertextual allusion. In his examination, he indeed overlooks several procedures necessary for an adequate assessment of the intertextual allusion. For example, he does not explicitly specify the allusion-marker nor does he explore its particular formulation.²¹⁹ Moreover, despite that Reynolds asserts that his “concern is how the canonical text of the Qur'ān might best be read,”²²⁰ still he does not contextualize the allusions he identifies within their larger context in the Qur'ān (the *sūra* and the Qur'ān as a whole). As Carmella Perri asserts, “an allusion refers at least doubly: the sign of the allusion-marker refers within its text's world as well as allusively, to some referent outside this text.”²²¹ The significance of the intertextual allusion is equally decided by the context of the allusion in the alluding text as well as the referent text. In Reynolds' analysis, the control of the alluding-text over the intertextual conversation generated by the allusion subsides in importance in favor of the solution the referent text offers for the exegetical problem and, as aforementioned, Reynolds does not demonstrate that such solution is confirmed by or aligned with the whole continuum of the alluding text (the Qur'ān).

We will have the chance to contrast Reynolds' reading of the allusions in the Jonah Qur'ānic story with ours. We will also contrast his reading of Q 11:71 (on Sarah's laughter) with our reading. Our analysis will demonstrate that Reynolds' intertextual readings are in need for much revision.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 129, n. 400.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 127.

²¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., 127.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 39-54 and 117-30.

²²⁰ Cf. Ibid., 13.

²²¹ Cf. Perri, “On Alluding,” 295.

Chapter Two

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

In the above, we situated our topic in relation to previous scholarship on the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. In this chapter, we will set out a detailed exposition of the theoretical and methodological framework within which we will read these allusions. As indicated in the introduction, we will tackle the description of the allusion model adopted in this study near the end of this chapter. Independent from their intertextual nature as allusive signals, allusions form *intra*-textual meaning-producing relations with other textual elements in the text. Therefore, we will first lay the foundations for and delineate an adequate general (if you will 'textual') reading approach to the text before outlining our model for interpreting the text's allusions. It is within this reading approach that contextualizing these allusions on the textual level and situating a description of their intertextuality will be possible. The first task before us in order to achieve these purposes is consideration of the textual history of the Qur'ān.

1. Formation of the Qur'ānic text

The Islamic tradition informs us that the Prophet Muḥammad received the Qur'ānic revelations in a piecemeal fashion during a prophetic ministry of some twenty-three years. Over this extended period, early Muslims recited the revelations they received from the Prophet in various settings (e.g. private, group, and ritual prayers) and many of them (the Qur'ān reciters, *al-qurrā'*) memorized²²² the revelations by heart. Various reports relate that whenever the Prophet received revelations, he sent for some of his literate companions (revelations scribes, *kuttāb al-wahy*) and they recorded his dictation of the revelations²²³ on different writing material: for instance, thin and flat stones (*al-likhāf*), palm stalks stripped off their leaves (*al-'usub*), camel and sheep bones (*al-aktāf*, lit. shoulder blades), parchment (*al-riqā'*), pieces of wood

²²² Gregor Schoeler, "The Codification of the Qur'ān: A Comment on the Hypotheses of Burton and Wansbrough," in *The Qur'ān in Context. Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 781.

²²³ Abū 'Isā Muḥammad b. 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ wa huwa sunan al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, 5 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduhū, 1978), 5:272; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad lil-imām Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, 20 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1995), 1:333-4.

used to mount camel backs (*al-aqtāb*),²²⁴ and, as Gregor Schoeler noticed, some reports also mention sheets (*ṣuḥuf*).²²⁵ Muslim reports also indicate that the arrangement of the different text units of the revelations in their respective *sūras* was according to the Prophet's instructions.²²⁶ Nevertheless, it should be noted that generally this arrangement does not coincide with the chronological order of the revelations.

By the time the Prophet died (11/632), the Qur'ān was not collected in its entirety in one volume. The unanimously acknowledged canonization account in the Islamic tradition²²⁷ ascribes the first collection of the Qur'ān in a single volume to the first Caliph Abū Bakr (d. 13/634).²²⁸ It is related that Abū Bakr entrusted Zayd b. Thābit (d. between 42/662-3 and 56/675-6), one of the Prophet's prominent scribes,²²⁹ with this task. Zayd collected the text and wrote it down on sheets in one volume, which remained in Abū Bakr's possession until his death. It was then passed down to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), the second Caliph, and following 'Umar's death to his daughter Ḥafṣa (also one of the Prophet's wives).²³⁰ Near the end of his reign, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (d. 35/656), the third Caliph, asked Ḥafṣa to send him these sheets and ordered a committee of four persons, among them is Zayd,²³¹ to copy the Qur'ān in official codices (*maṣāḥif*, sing. *muṣḥaf*). The committee carried out the task, authenticating each verse with two witnesses,²³² and the copies of the official codex

²²⁴ See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2:385-6; Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Isma'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut and Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathīr, 2002), 1274-5. Gregor Schoeler offers somewhat different translation of this material and based on Nöldeke-Schwally's *Geschichte des Qorāns* he mentions few additional materials on which the Qur'ān has been written during the Prophet's life (Schoeler, "The Codification," 781-2; Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 2:13).

²²⁵ Schoeler, "The Codification," 782. Schoeler's reference is Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, ed. Arthur Jeffery, trans. n.a. (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Raḥmāniyya, 1936), 7 and 10.

²²⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2:395-403.

²²⁷ This account is transmitted for instance in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1274-5.

²²⁸ This first collection (*jam'*), as tradition reports, was on the occasion of the death of a number of the *qurrā'* in one of the military campaigns during the apostasy wars (*al-riḍḍa*) following the Prophet's death (the battle of *al-yamāma*), 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb convinced Abū Bakr with the necessity to collect the Qur'ān in one volume. 'Umar feared that the *qurrā'* will die one after another in battles and portions of the Qur'ān will be lost. Abū Bakr was convinced and called Zayd b. Thābit and instructed him to collect the Qur'ān from the chests of men and fragments of writing material (see al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1274-5).

²²⁹ Prominent among the Prophet's scribes are also 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3) and Ubayy b. Ka'b (d. between 19/640 and 35/656). The former acted as one of the Prophet's scribe from the Meccan period and the latter embraced Islam, like Zayd, in Medina and then became one of the Prophet's scribes.

²³⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1275.

²³¹ The other three members were from *Quraysh* (the prominent tribe of Mecca): 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwām (d. 36/656), Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣ (d. 59/679), and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith b. Hishām (d. 663) (Ibid., 1275).

²³² Ibid., 695 and 1201.

were then distributed to the various city-centers (*al-amṣār*) of the by then a geographically expansive Islamic empire. These codices replaced the *amṣārs*' non-official editions where the latter 'Uthmān ordered to be burned.²³³

Over the past three decades, scholars have increasingly presented evidence and arguments in support of this traditional account. Concomitantly, they have also offered sufficient critique of the alternative revisionist hypotheses that emerged over the past century concerning the origin, pre-canonical transmission, and codification of the Qur'ān. As this section will demonstrate, today a considerable group of scholars of Islam in the West is of the opinion that this account, at least in its broad outline, is reliable.

An early 7th century Arabian origin of the Qur'ān (in the Ḥijāz) associated with the Prophet Muḥammad's prophetic ministry is warranted, first, by an extensive and continued Islamic literary and historical tradition, which is impossible to imagine have been forged in its entirety without leaving a trace; particularly, as Fred Donner argues, given the historical absence of a central religious authority in Islam and the Muslim state's expansive geographical territory acquired very shortly after the Prophet's death.²³⁴ Second, the Qur'ānic text itself offers extensive evidence of its origin. As Donner observes, the Qur'ān refers to events, issues, persons, and uses vocabulary both contemporaneous with the Prophet Muḥammad's life and coexistent in its context.²³⁵ Furthermore, Donner notes that references to issues, events, personalities, and groups that emerged after the Prophet's death are completely absent from the Qur'ān.²³⁶

As for the issue of the Qur'ān's pre-canonical transmission, the work of Gregor

²³³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1275. Contrary to the consensus concerning the *tawqīfī* (i.e. received from the Prophet) arrangement of the text units that make up the single *sūras*, there is no general consensus among Muslim scholars as to whether the organization of the different *sūras* in the 'Uthmānic codex was according to the Prophet's instructions. While the majority opinion endorses the view that this arrangement is also received from the Prophet, a number of scholars assert that this arrangement is not predicated on the Prophet's instructions (i.e. *ijtihādī*, according to individual opinion) (Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2:394-411). Al-Suyūṭī himself asserts that the arrangement of the *sūras* in the *muṣḥaf* was according to the Prophet's instruction except for the position of Q 8 and Q 9 (Ibid., 411). Scholars of Islam in the Islamic heartland and scholars of Islam in the West alike have nonetheless identified a simple criterion in the organization of the *sūras* in the official codex; roughly, the *sūras* are arranged in the *muṣḥaf* from the longer to the shorter *sūras* with the exception of the first chapter (*al-Fātiḥa*, lit. the Opening) which is very short but nonetheless is the first *sūra* in the official codex.

²³⁴ Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1998), 26-28.

²³⁵ Ibid., 40-7 and 49-61.

²³⁶ Ibid., 47-49. Donner persuasively argues that the absence of these anachronisms cannot be ascribed to a later editing process (Ibid., 49).

Schoeler stands out. In light of an extensive knowledge of oral and written transmission in early Islam, Schoeler argues that there is a considerable “genuine core” to the Islamic account.²³⁷ Schoeler demonstrates that the Prophet’s communication of the revelations to the *qurrā’* who memorized them is a practice that has parallel in the transmission of pre-Islamic poetry, attested and well-established long before the emergence of Islam.²³⁸ As for writing-down the revelations during the Prophet’s life, Schoeler argues that as the size and frequency of the revelations increased, possibly years before the migration from Mecca to Medina, the need must have arisen to write them down.²³⁹ Furthermore, he has demonstrated that it was around the time of the Qur’ānic revelations “that writing came into use as an aide-mémoire for the preservation of poetry and proverbs [in Arabia].”²⁴⁰ Since the Prophet had many scribes and paper did not exist yet during the Prophet’s life in Arabia, Schoeler reasons that it is quite conceivable that the Prophet’s scribes made due with the material available to them in writing down the revelations.²⁴¹ It is also quite plausible that anticipating that the Qur’ān will ultimately be the scripture of Muslims, an older and well-known antecedent in Jewish and Christian scriptures already existed, must have prompted the Prophet to record the revelations in the form of chapters of a book.²⁴² Schoeler also considers the Islamic tradition is most likely

²³⁷ Schoeler, “The Codification,” 780-4. Schoeler’s knowledge of oral and written transmission in early Islam has developed through a series of investigations published over the past three decades. In these articles, Schoeler does not exclusively base his views on critical assessment of Muslim sources but also his analysis is carried out in light of what is known about the wider publishing habits, transmission moods, and literary and material evidence from late antiquity in the Arabian Peninsula and around it (Gregor Schoeler, “Die Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im frühen Islam,” *Der Islam* 62 (1985): 201–230; idem., “Weiteres zur Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im Islam,” *Der Islam* 66 (1989): 38–67; idem., “Mündliche Thora und Ḥadīth: Überlieferung, Schreibverbot, Redaktion,” *Der Islam* 66 (1989): 213–251; idem., “Schreiben und Veröffentlichen. Zu Verwendung und Funktion der Schrift in den ersten islamischen Jahrhunderten,” *Der Islam* 69 (1992): 1–43; idem., *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1996); idem., *Écrire et transmettre dans les débuts de l’Islam* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002). The first four of these works have been translated in Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, ed. James E. Montgomery, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl (London and New York: Routledge, 2006)).

²³⁸ Schoeler, “The Codification,” 781. The *qurrā’*’s task was to memorize the revelations and relate them to other Muslims, or would-be Muslims, on the Prophet’s behalf. Schoeler points that the first scholar to have identified the similarity between this transmission task of the *qurrā’*’s and the task of pre-Islamic *rāwīs* (poetry transmitters) is Edmond Beck (Ibid., 781. See the original observation in Edmund Beck, “‘Arabiyya, Sunna und ‘Āmma in der Koranlesung des zweiten Jahrhunderts,” *Orientalia, n.s.*, 15 (1946), 209).

²³⁹ Schoeler, “The Codification,” 781. As Schoeler points out, this is in line with an argument of Nöldeke (Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 1:45).

²⁴⁰ Cf. Schoeler, “The Codification,” 782-3.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 782.

²⁴² Ibid., 783.

credible in asserting that the Prophet did not redact the Qur'ān's canonized final form; above all, since during the Prophet's life further revelations have always been anticipated.²⁴³

As for the event of the canonization of the Qur'ān, various revisionist hypotheses emerged over the past century: for instance, Friedrich Schwally (1911),²⁴⁴ Paul Casanova-Alphonse Mingana (1911-1915),²⁴⁵ and John Burton's (1977).²⁴⁶ Particularly those three hypotheses have been predicated on skepticism toward the reliability of Muslim traditions in general and aimed to prove that the-canonization-of-the-Qur'ān traditions, or some of them as in Schwally's case, are later fabrications by Muslim scholars.²⁴⁷ The views of those scholars have been recently thoroughly

²⁴³ Schoeler, "The Codification," 784.

²⁴⁴ When Friedrich Schwally updated the first edition of Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Qurāns*, he completely revised Nöldeke's view of the canonization of the Qur'ān. Schwally dismissed the account on a collection during Abū Bakr's reign as later fabrication intended to accord more authority to the collection made by the third caliph 'Uthmān. (See Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, 2:18-23; Motzki, "The Collection," 7-8). In Schwally's view, there has been only one collection of the Qur'ān in an official codex; it came about owing to 'Uthmān's directions (Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, 2: 22).

²⁴⁵ Paul Casanova advocated that the Qur'ān was collected during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65-86/685-705) and that the canonization of the text owed to the directions of his notorious governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714) (Motzki, "The Collection," 8). Alphonse Mingana attempted to substantiate Casanova's view. Mingana's argument essentially rested on the absence of mention of a collection by Abū Bakr or 'Uthmān in the then earliest extant Muslim source that reports on the codification of the Qur'ān, Ibn Sa'd's *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, and on some findings in Christian sources, prominent among them is the Christian al-Kindī's apology written circa 830 A.D. (see Motzki, "The Collection," 9-10). For Mingana's arguments based on Islamic and Christian sources see Alphonse Mingana, "The Transmission of The Qur'ān," *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society* 5 (1915-1916), 26-34 and 34-44. Mingana agrees completely with Casanova's thesis (Mingana, "The Transmission," 46-7).

²⁴⁶ John Burton attempted to show that the-canonization-of-the-Qur'ān traditions are offshoots of discussions among legal scholars on the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and verses abrogation (*naskh*) (Motzki, "The Collection," 12; John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'ān* (Cambridge, London, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 117-189). Burton concluded that the Qur'ān was fully collected in an official codex during the Prophet's own lifetime (Motzki, "The Collection," 11-2; Burton, *The Collection*, 239-40). The main justification that Burton offered is that, for the purpose of developing and defending their legal views, Muslim scholars could not work except within a concept of an incomplete Qur'ānic text and thus had to contrive accounts of a post-prophetical codification of the Qur'ān (see for instance Burton, *The Collection*, 105-13 particularly 111 and 225-40).

²⁴⁷ Particularly Ignaz Goldziher's *Muhammednische Studien* (originally published 1889-90) and Joseph Schacht's *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (first published 1950) have been influential in western scholarship in disseminating skepticism concerning the veracity of Muslim traditions in general. Goldziher concluded that Muslim traditions are generally not to be trusted and that the information they communicate are chiefly fabrications that do not reflect the history of nascent Islam but rather the interests of various later sectarian, intellectual, and political groups (Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)*, ed. S. M. Stern, trans. C. R. Barber and S.M. Stern, 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967), 2:19 and *passim*; Motzki, "The Collection," 7). Whereas Goldziher's examination encompassed Muslim traditions in general, Joseph Schacht focused on legal traditions and viewed the results of his research to confirm the picture drawn earlier by Goldziher on all Muslim traditions (Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1967), 329 and *passim*; Motzki, "The Collection," 10). As Motzki notes,

disproved by Harald Motzki in his excellent article titled “The Collection of the Qur’ān: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments.”²⁴⁸ In the same article, Motzki has also offered rigorous analysis of the canonization-of-the-Qur’ān traditions utilizing new methodological developments in the fields of *isnād* (chain of transmission), *matn* (content), and *isnād-cum-matn* criticism. Aided with access to some early Ḥadīth collections that only became available during the last two decades of the 20th century, Motzki reached the conclusion that “it does seem safe to conclude that reports on a collection of the Qur’ān on Abū Bakr’s behalf and on an official edition made by order of ‘Uthmān were already in circulation towards the end of the 1st Islamic century and that al-Zuhrī [the principal link in the *isnāds* of the canonization traditions and their principle propagator] possibly received some of them from the persons he indicated in his *isnāds*.”²⁴⁹ To date, Motzki’s study remains the most reliable dating of the traditions concerning the canonization of the Qur’ān.²⁵⁰

Goldziher’s *Muhammednische Studien* influenced Schwally’s work (Motzki, “The Collection,” 6-8; see for instance Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 2:145-52) and both Goldziher and Schacht’s thesis influenced Burton’s revisionist view concerning the canonization of the Qur’ān (Motzki, “The Collection,” 10-1; Burton, *The Collection*, 5-6). It should be noted that both works did not specifically examine the canonization-of-the-Qur’ān traditions. Furthermore, many conclusions that Goldziher and Schacht advanced have been substantially challenged over the past three decades (See for instance, Harald Motzki, “The Author and His Work in the Islamic Literature of the First Centuries: The Case of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaf*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003): 171–201; idem., *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, Vol. 41 of *Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts* (Leiden, Boston, MA and Köln: Brill, 2002); idem., “*Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-San‘ānī as a Source of Authentic *Aḥādīth* of the First Century A.H.,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 50 (1991): 1-21; David S. Powers, *Studies in Qur’an and Ḥadīth: The Formation of the Law of Inheritance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); idem., “The Will of Sa’d b. Abī Waqqās: A Reassessment,” *Studia Islamica* 58 (1983): 33-53).

²⁴⁸ For Motzki’s critique of Schwally, Mingana, and Burton’s theses, see Motzki, “The Collection,” 13-5.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 31. For Motzki’s detailed analysis of these traditions see *ibid.*, 15-31.

²⁵⁰ Burton did not date the canonization-of-the-Qur’ān traditions but, as Motzki observes, his suggestion that they are offshoots of discussions among legal scholars on the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and verses abrogation (*naskh*) indicates a date at the beginning of or later in the 3rd Islamic century, particularly because he endorses Schacht’s view concerning the origins of Islamic legal theory (Motzki, “The Collection,” 15). Motzki’s dating does not disprove Schwally or Casanova- Mingana’s; his critique of their arguments and interpretation of the evidence does though. It should be noted that Schwally’s thesis has no implications on our investigation here. On the other hand, Burton’s thesis is decisively refuted in light of Motzki’s dating. To assume that these traditions appeared, continued to circulate, and were considered authoritative before the actual event of the canonization took place is certainly a wanting assumption. Evidence that supports the veracity of the traditions concerning ‘Uthmān’s collection could also be adduced from the Qur’ān itself. Angelika Neuwirth argues, “the performance of the [codification] committee is ..., traditionally identified with the act of a collection, *jam‘*”, in perfect accordance with the concept of its commissioner, ‘Uthmān, who is reported to have imposed on the redactors – apart from the observing of some linguistic cautions, no further task than the gathering of ... the Qur’ān. The presentation of the events as traditions reports them ... fits well into the findings offered by the text itself, since the new codex, does not claim any chronological or theological justification for the sequence of the single texts (sūras and parts of sūras)

The most controversial and radical theory on the history of the Qur'ānic text has nonetheless been John Wansbrough's. In his *Quranic Studies: Sources and Method of Scriptural Interpretation*, a work that elicited an extended debate in Qur'ānic studies, Wansbrough reached the conclusion that the Qur'ān took at least two centuries to materialize into its current shape and that its origin is not the Arabian Peninsula but rather Mesopotamia.²⁵¹ At the basis of Wansbrough's thesis was a dismissal of Muslim reports concerning the first two centuries of Islam as later fabrications aimed at constructing historical origins for the Qur'ān and Islam in the Arabian Peninsula.²⁵² Adopting this premise has indeed afforded Wansbrough drawing sweeping and radical conclusions as to the textual history of the Qur'ān by means of primarily applying a literary method to the text, namely *Formgeschichte*.²⁵³ There has been abundant critique of Wansbrough's hypotheses, methodology, as well as his interpretation of the evidence.²⁵⁴ For our purposes, we neither need to discuss Wansbrough's theory nor its critique in detail. All of the above arguments and evidence stand in absolute contrast to his theory.²⁵⁵ In addition, two pieces of material evidence are particularly significant in disproving it.

The inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock, constructed during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65-86/685-705), have been available to scholars for more than a hundred years. It was only Estelle Whelen's analysis of these inscriptions close to the turn of the twentieth century that shed significant light on their value as evidence for the early canonization of the Qur'ān. Whelen's reading of these inscriptions demonstrates that except for slight variations, these inscriptions

which it encompasses, but which it arranges at least apparently according to merely technical, exterior criteria, does display inextinguishable traces of its compilation as a collection" (Cf. Neuwirth, "Referentiality and Textuality," 144).

²⁵¹ Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 47 and 49-50. In the same year, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook published their *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* which attempted to substantiate Wansbrough's literary-based analysis by providing historical evidence, primarily from non-Muslim sources on the first three centuries of Islam (See Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, London, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

²⁵² Wansbrough's skepticism seems also to have its roots in the work of Golzieder and Schacht, particularly the latter, on Muslim traditions (Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 44, 49-50, and 52).

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1-52.

²⁵⁴ The most comprehensive critique of Wansbrough's thesis to date is in Donner, *Narratives*, 22-61. Donner's critique encompasses as well the arguments and evidence of other scholars such as Crone and Cook who labored to prove the Wansbrough's thesis.

²⁵⁵ Further evidence that disproves Wansbrough's thesis has been adduced by Gregor Schoeler (see Schoeler, "The Codification," 784-92).

mirror the ‘Uthmānic codex as we have it today.²⁵⁶ Whelen goes on to demonstrate that these slight variations are due to rhetorical purposes similar usage of which completely aligns with a longstanding Islamic rhetorical tradition of using Qur’ānic verses and “other familiar phrases, paraphrases, and allusions in persuasive messages.”²⁵⁷ Equally important to her analysis of these inscriptions is the literary evidence that Whelen has unearthed. Through a process of textual archaeology, Whelen discovered several textual references that constitute a persuasive evidence for the existence of a Qur’ān professional copyists community (*aṣḥāb al-maṣāḥif*) in Medina during the last quarter of the 1st Islamic century.²⁵⁸ Viewing the Dome of the Rock inscriptions and this literary evidence together, Whelen concludes that crediting the codification of the Qur’ān to ‘Uthmān’s redaction committee is consistent with the evidence.²⁵⁹

The most prominent material evidence for the early codification of the Qur’ān is undoubtedly however the discovery of sizeable and extensive fragments of a Qur’ān manuscript in the Grand Mosque (*al-Jāmi‘ al-Kabīr*) of Sanaa.²⁶⁰ While the manuscript remains to be fully published, it exhibits no variations from the text of the present official edition of the Qur’ān and has been dated to the second half of the 1st Islamic century.²⁶¹

With all of the above evidence considered, the reliability of the Islamic account concerning the origin, pre-canonical transmission, and canonization of the Qur’ān is considerably warranted. Our examination of the Qur’ānic narratives and their intertextual allusions is informed by this account’s main corollaries: the *terminus ad*

²⁵⁶ Cf. Estelle Whelen, “Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur’ān,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118/1 (1998), 5.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Whelen, “Forgotten Witness,” 7-8.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-3. To rebuttal the charge of later fabrications of this textual evidence, Whelen asserts that “the details cited ... are scattered almost at random through texts of different character and period, and the references are too peripheral to the main accounts and the individuals too insignificant to have been part of a conscious, however pious, forgery of early Islamic history concocted at the end of the eighth century” (cf. *Ibid.*, 13).

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 13. Fred Donner has analyzed and commented on other early Islamic inscriptions (See Fred Donner, “Some Early Arabic Inscriptions from al-Ḥanākiyya, Saudi Arabia,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43 (1984), 181-208; Donner, *Narratives*, 62-3). In Donner’s view, “broader patterns of inscriptional evidence suggest that the traditional Muslim view, that the Qur’ān was codified during the caliphate of ‘Uthmān, is reliable” (cf. Donner, *Narratives*, 63).

²⁶⁰ Other early Qur’ān fragments from various periods before the date Wansbrough suggests for the canonization of the Qur’ān exist as well. For evidence and dating of these early Qur’ān fragments see Adolf Grohmann, “The Problem of Dating Early Qur’āns,” *Der Islam* (1958): 213-231.

²⁶¹ See Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer, “Neue Wege der Koranforschung,” *Universität des Saarlandes Magazin* 1 (1999), 45–6. The above-given date is the result of dating by the widely used C¹⁴ scientific method (*Ibid.*, 45).

quem of the official edition of the Qur'ān is some twenty-five years after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad,²⁶² it preserves the revelations the Prophet communicated to early Muslims in the Ḥijāz during the early decades of the 7th century A.D., and there is no reason to doubt that the text's chapters in their current shape are due to the Prophet's instructions.

2. A Text's Statements and their Associated Field of Coexistence

Foucault's discourse theory aims first and foremost to account for the system that makes possible and maintains the formation of a given discursive practice.²⁶³ By discursive practice, Foucault means discourses (e.g. natural history or psychiatry) involving authorities (individuals, groups, and/or institutions) and lasting for significant periods of time.²⁶⁴ Thus, in Foucault's analysis, it is not only the internal structures of discourse that form the system and rules that make possible and maintain discourse but equally (and intertwined with these structures) agencies (individuals, groups, and/or institutions).²⁶⁵ Our purpose of employing Foucault's notion of the statement and its associated field of coexistence is interpretational. We are interested in interpreting discourse's statements not in describing the system or rules by which these statements came to form a discourse or by which they are maintained as a discursive formation. We shall deal with the Qur'ān as a fixed discourse, which it is, a closed text. The question of agency in our analysis is thus fixed; the subject of the Qur'ānic discourse is the single source from which the text emanates. That is, what has maintained the Qur'ānic discourse as such is the status it acquired as being of divine origin and the cessation of the revelations ultimately expressed in the act of the text's canonization. Taking these delimitations into account, Foucault's notion of the statement and its associated field of coexistence are promising for the objectives of our analysis.

Foucault's conception of the statement is quite expansive. For our purposes, it has been adapted in the following somewhat lengthy quote:

A statement is always an event that neither the language (*langue*) nor the

²⁶² This date is also suggested by Muslim scholars (see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 2:389)

²⁶³ Foucault, *The Archeology*, 15-23 and *passim*.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 32 and *passim*. Foucault's archeological perception of these discourses is to be clearly distinguished from perceiving them as scientific disciplines (see *ibid.*, 137-9).

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-2 and *passim*.

meaning can quite exhaust ... first, because on the one hand it is linked to the gesture of writing or to the articulation of speech, and also on the other hand it opens up to itself a residual existence in the field of a memory, or in the materiality of manuscripts, books, or any other form of recording; secondly, because, like every event, it is unique, yet subject to repetition, transformation, and reactivation; thirdly, because it is linked not only to the situations that provoke it, and to the consequences that it gives rise to, but at the same time, ... to the statements that precede and follow it.²⁶⁶ ... The statement is not the direct projection on to the plane of language (*langage*) of a particular situation or a group of representations. It is not simply the manipulation by a speaking subject of a number of elements and linguistic rules. At the very outset, from the very root, the statement is divided up into an enunciative field in which it has a place and a status, which arranges for its possible relations with the past, and which opens up for it a possible future. Every statement is specified in this way: there is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them: it is always part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play. Whereas grammatical construction needs only elements and rules in order to operate; whereas one might just conceive of a language (*langue*) — an artificial one, of course — whose only purpose is the construction of a single sentence; whereas the alphabet, the rules of construction and transformation of a formal system being given, one can perfectly well define the first proposition of this language (*langage*), the same can-not be said of the statement.²⁶⁷

From this perspective, interpretation, or reading, is not confined to gleaning the syntactical meaning put forward by scripture's verses as sentences or propositions. It is a valuation of scripture's verses as statements that exceeds, yet is simultaneously influenced by, the value of their syntactical components to the significance of their

²⁶⁶ Cf. Foucault, *The Archeology*, 22.

²⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 77.

presence in an associated field of coexistence with other statements.²⁶⁸ As statements, what mainly distinguishes the Qur'ānic verses from being merely sentences or propositions is their existence in this intricate field of other statements to which they, in many different ways, relate;²⁶⁹ this perhaps is most manifested in the Qur'ānic narratives and their intertextual allusions. The following definition of the statement's associated field of coexistence makes this clear.

According to Foucault, the statement's associated field of coexistence consists of the following:

[1] It is made up first of all by the series of other formulations within which the statement appears and forms one element ... [2] The associated field is also made up of all the formulations to which the statement refers (implicitly or not), either by repeating them, modifying them, or adapting them, or by opposing them, or by commenting on them; there can be no statement that in one way or another does not reactualize others... [3] The associated field is also made up of all the formulations whose subsequent possibility is determined by the statement, and which may follow the statement as its consequence, its natural successor, or its conversational retort... [4] Lastly, the associated field is made up of all the formulations whose status the statement in question shares, among which it takes its place without regard to linear order, with which it will fade away, or with which, on the contrary, it will be valued, preserved, sacralized, and offered, as a possible object, to a future discourse.²⁷⁰

Projected on the verses of the Qur'ānic narratives, the first component of this associated field of coexistence is the narrative unit in which the verse appears. The second component consists of the other verses of the Qur'ānic narratives revolving around the same figure or episode, the relevant extant antecedent traditions (Jewish, Christian, and ancient Middle Eastern traditions), the relevant pre-Islamic Arabic oral traditions, and any non-textual elements (historical events, objects, etc) to which the verse refers. Moreover, by virtue of being a canonized text emanating from a single

²⁶⁸ This reemphasizes our assertion that the text is always subject to renewed reflections aiming at refining its interpretation. The canonization of the text does not mark the fixation of its meaning. It only marks the fixation of the text's content and form. The text's meaning, as its statements, remain always in flux yet simultaneously we are always able to offer *an interpretation* of the text.

²⁶⁹ Compare to Foucault, *The Archeology*, 76.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Foucault, *The Archeology*, 76.

authority the Qur'ān demands that its verses be linked to each other and read together as a unity: thus the second field also includes the verses of the Qur'ān as a whole. For the third component, we have the exegesis of the Qur'ān and its narratives and all subsequent responses to the Qur'ānic narratives' verses.²⁷¹ Fourth, the associated field of the verses of the Qur'ānic narratives encompasses the text of the Qur'ān as a whole; its verses share the status of being part of the Muslim scripture.

Some notes are due concerning the above scheme. First, the difference between the presence of the verses of the whole Qur'ān in components (2) and (4) should be noted. In the latter, it is the status of the text that the verses share. In the former, it is the meaning-producing relationships between these verses as elements of one text. Second, in theory fields (2) and (3) are unlimited; the Qur'ānic verses refer to, reactualize (in different ways), and have given rise to virtually an infinite number of statements and texts. But we are incapable of managing infinite semiosis and therefore we shall be content with the component within the purview of our study, the exegesis of the Qur'ānic narratives. Third, it is also important to note that every verse of the Qur'ānic narratives simultaneously exists in all these fields. We are confronted here with the issues of linear versus non-linear and synchronic versus diachronic analysis. We shall address these issues in full later in this chapter. We should however address here the position of exegesis in the verse's field of coexistence.

The simultaneity and centrality of the verse's existence in this field of coexistence surely presupposes a non-linear and synchronic form of meaning-producing interrelations. This would seem particularly problematic in the case of exegesis in field (3), since exegesis is posterior to the Qur'ānic discourse. I am not proposing in any way to dissolve the distinction between the text and its exegesis. Exegesis is indeed only possible as, to use Foucault's expressions, a "consequence," "natural successor," or "conversational retort" to discourse's statements.²⁷² Yet, we should not dismiss exegesis as a posterior historical development irrelevant to the text's ('original') meaning. As scholars, we do come to the text with pre-knowledge of its exegesis, at least during the research process. Even the necessary linguistic knowledge we need in order to tackle the text represents by itself a sort of pre-

²⁷¹ This field is not limited to proper *tafsīr* works but also includes, for instance, philological works whose subject is the language of the Qur'ān and the genre of *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*. It is actually possible to include in this category, any statement whose articulation became possible as a result of the existence of the Qur'ānic discourse and as a response to it.

²⁷² Foucault, *The Archeology*, 76.

knowledge of the text's exegesis. Still, simultaneously we measure the text's meaning not solely based on the dictionary meaning of vocabulary or the grammatical rules of language but also based on the text's particular usage. In sum, we need not pretend that exegesis is irrelevant to the text's meaning but we must measure exegesis in relation to the statements that made it possible, the text.

Bearing in mind the delimitations laid down above, Foucault's notions of the statement and its associated field of coexistence afford us a framework of reading the verses of the Qur'ānic narratives within the density of the interrelations in which they exist and a semiotic vantage point that compensates for the limits of semantic analysis.

3. Reading (Interpreting) Texts

It seems that it is particularly because all sorts of criticism involve hermeneutics²⁷³ that we are always faced with the situation of not only having to explicate our critical approach but also to differentiate it from other critical approaches. In other words, we are frequently obliged to demonstrate why and how our criticism (hermeneutics) improves on or differs from previous critical approaches to the text. We may therefore begin here by offering an overarching demarcation of Eco's interpretive theory and differentiate it from two common forms of textual criticism. Eco's interpretive theory embraces the author, the text, and the reader. Yet, Eco's hermeneutic thought is a brilliant formulation of the intertwining and manifestation of these three meaning-producing entities in one place: the intention of the text. Eco's hermeneutics is thus to be differentiated from author-oriented criticism, where the text is read in light of the author's presumed intention, and likewise from audience or reader-oriented criticism, which is "concerned not [necessarily] with what the text *says* or *shows*, but with what the text *does* to the reader."²⁷⁴

²⁷³ As Susan R. Suleiman asserts, "to the extent that all critical activity implies the presence of acknowledged or unacknowledged postulates about the ontological status of texts and of human understanding, such activity is always in the last instance hermeneutic. Every kind of criticism, no matter how resolutely "scientific" or "practical," implies a philosophical stance. Hermeneutics is not, by that token, something one can do without (it is coextensive with all criticism), but merely something one can acknowledge or not" (cf. Susan R. Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman 3-45 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 38).

²⁷⁴ Cf. James L. Resseguie, "Reader-Response Criticism And The Synoptic Gospels," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52/2 (Jun., 1984), 307.

3.1 The Intention of the Author (*intentio auctoris*)

Traditional literary criticism has attempted to make sense of the text by speculating on what its author intended to achieve. Traditional critics are not on search for what the text in itself means nor for what it means for its readers. They are on search for what the author intended his text to mean. This perception of the text's meaning led to the most prominent hallmark of author-oriented criticism: namely, the evidence for the text's meaning is not only located in the text but also in evidence from, for instance, the author interviews (in journals or media in general), his biography, or his commentary on his work. By consulting this evidence, traditional critics gained insight as to the author's intellectual project, his particular use of language, and/or the works that influenced his intellectual formation all of which they believed would help them better understand what the author intended to convey by his text.²⁷⁵

Traditional or author-oriented criticism is thus above all problematic because once the text is produced it is severed from its author and what remains available to the reader is the text itself.²⁷⁶ In other words, once the text is produced it is the interaction between the text and the reader that takes place not between the reader and the author's intention.²⁷⁷ Traditional criticism has often plunged critics into the exteriority of the text at the expense of evidence from within the text itself and the reader's response to it. To many, however, it seems too radical to neglect the text's author altogether, after all the text originates with its author. But Eco's interpretive theory does not quite claim that. According to Eco, the act of interpretation is concerned with

²⁷⁵ The above critique of the author-oriented criticism is entirely by way of analogy to W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's classic argument on the intentional fallacy in poetics (W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, by W. K. Wimsatt, JR. and two preliminary essays written in collaboration with Monroe C. Beardsley 3-18 (New York: The Noonday Press, 1958), particularly 4-5 and 10). Wimsatt and Beardsley also noted that their critique equally applies to traditional criticism of literary texts in general (*Ibid.*, 5). Foucault has also contrasted this traditional critical perspective with his own critical approach to discourse's statements (see for instance Foucault, *The Archeology*, 22 and 32).

²⁷⁶ Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," 5; Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 66; *idem.*, "Between Author and Text," *passim* but for a parallel explicit assertion see 84.

²⁷⁷ Eco, "Between Author and Text," 67-8. Eco emphasizes that in the case when the author of the text objects or comments on the meaning ascribed to his text or elucidates its meaning, "the response of the author must not be used in order to validate the interpretations of his text, but to show the discrepancies between the author's intention and the intention of the text" (cf. *Ibid.*, 73). Eco quite obviously does not espouse the much criticized and outdated perspective of humanism's autonomous, rational and intentional subject. The discrepancies between the author's declared intentions and the text are not to be reduced to the former's rational consciousness but the text should reign supreme even if its content and structures incorrectly reflect the empirical author's intentions or reflect unconscious intentions of his/hers.

the author in so far as it transpires in the text “as a textual strategy.”²⁷⁸ In reading a text, what we should speculate about is not the empirical author’s intentions but a model author’s intentions, which transpires in the text as a textual strategy (structures, vocabulary, literary features, etc.); ultimately, thus, we are speculating on the text’s intention.²⁷⁹

Following Eco’s lead, the intention of the author to allude is not negated but rather should be perceived from within the text; manifested in the textual features of the allusive signal and in the whole text which should, and the interpreter should prove, reflect an intentional literary strategy to allude generally as well as in every case of potential allusion. One of the recent attempts to breath new life into the notion of authorial intention is William Irwin’s hybrid view that preserves a role for the empirical author’s intention in alluding.²⁸⁰ Irwin argues, “for an allusion to be present, the author must intend to allude and must use words or structures that can in principle be recognized as alluding.”²⁸¹ Nonetheless, this indeed is an invalid argument. If the author intended to allude yet failed to implement literary features that prompts the reader to perceive the allusive signal, his allusion will pass unnoticed. On the other hand, if the author did not intend to allude but his text clearly reflects literary features that represent a case, or cases, of allusion readers will anyway detect the allusion(s). Speculating about the empirical author’s intention in alluding is thus largely irrelevant. Rigorously investigating the literary features that embody the allusion(s) in the text is what matters most.

3.2 The Intention of the Text (*intentio operis*)

The intention of the text ... [is] more than a parameter to use in order to validate the interpretation, the text is an object that the interpretation builds up in the course of the circular effort of validating itself on the basis of what it makes up as its result ... To recognize the *intentio operis* is to recognize a semiotic strategy ... How to prove a conjecture about the *intentio operis*? The only way is to check it upon the text as a coherent whole ... any interpretation given of a

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 69.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 69.

²⁸⁰ William Irwin, “What is an Allusion?” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59/3 (Summer, 2001): 287-297.

²⁸¹ Cf. Ibid., 290.

certain portion of a text can be accepted if it is confirmed by, and must be rejected if it is challenged by, another portion of the same text. In this sense the internal textual coherence controls the otherwise uncontrollable drives of the reader.²⁸²

With this quote, we have an apt and equally comprehensive description of Eco's notion of the intention of the text and its place in his hermeneutics. Since the intention of the text is not (always) such that it is exhibited 'on the page,'²⁸³ perceiving it is, as Eco emphasizes, a decision on the reader's part. In actual fact, "it is possible to speak of the text's intention only as the result of a conjecture on the part of the reader."²⁸⁴ But before turning to Eco's reader let us briefly address an important issue.

Eco's rigorous textual hermeneutics neutralizes, in theory of course, the reader's (interpreter's) subjectivity but we must address the question, as Wolfgang Iser does, concerning the interpreter's objectives and their implications on the frames, or parameters, needed for interpreting the text's intention.²⁸⁵ Iser rightly points out that "the more restricted the initial objective of interpretation ... the more limited are the frames stipulated for interpreting basic intent."²⁸⁶ The minimal objective of interpretation, as Iser rightly suggests, is translatability.²⁸⁷ But many interpretive activities, particularly of "privileged texts" such as scriptures,²⁸⁸ exceed this minimal objective to propping the text's intention with regard to various issues (ethical, theological, dogmatic, legal, etc).

Our reading's objective focuses on the intention of the text in utilizing allusions, on the meanings the text intends to generate by these allusions. The frames necessary to probe the intention of the text in this regard are not to be defined strictly or narrowly. They encompass the whole range of stipulations put forth in this chapter

²⁸² Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 64-5. Eco's formulation of the *intentio operis* is, as he asserts, particularly predicated on two classical, but to date applicable, hermeneutic notions: the hermeneutic circle and Augustine's idea that interpretation must coincide with the whole continuum of the text expressed in *De doctrina Christiana* (see *Ibid.*, 64-5).

²⁸³ Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 64-5.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁸⁵ Wolfgang Iser, "Introduction: The Marketplace of Interpretation. Interpretation as Translatability," in *The Range of Interpretation*, ed. Wolfgang Iser 1-12 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 10-2.

²⁸⁶ Iser, "Introduction," 12.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸⁸ The term is Peter Heath's (cf. Peter Heath, "Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches," *Arabica* 36 (1989), 203). The terms connotations derive from "the hermeneutic Principle of Privilege... essential to the concept of literary canon" (cf. Heath, "Creative Hermeneutics," 177, n.5).

and are possibly subject to future refinements and additions. It suffices however at this point that we have identified this objective to be attuned along the different investigation stages in this study to the text's semiotic strategies that has bearing on its allusions' significance.

3.3 The Text's Model Reader (*intentio lectoris*)

In Eco's hermeneutics, "a text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader."²⁸⁹ Eco's reader is thus a model reader solely constructed by the text's intention, the latter, as we have seen, is evident in the text as a semiotic strategy.²⁹⁰ To unpack this definition, we must contrast Eco's model reader with other reader-notions in literary criticism: namely, the notions of the empirical, ideal, inscribed, and implied readers.²⁹¹

Eco's model reader is not the empirical reader. Empirical readers can, and do, read texts in whatever ways they wish.²⁹² The empirical reader figures in Eco's hermeneutics only as "an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text."²⁹³ Eco's model reader is also not a reader endowed with an ideal interpretative sense since the text could be designed for a model reader obliged to attempt "infinite conjectures."²⁹⁴ The inscribed reader is also to be distinguished from Eco's model reader. The inscribed reader is the complement of the narrator of the text,²⁹⁵ "a first-level narratee (one who receives the whole narrative, not just a part)."²⁹⁶ Interpretation should be cognizant of the text's inscribed reader (and the naratees, or inscribed readers, on the other levels of the text's narration).²⁹⁷ Yet the presence of the inscribed reader in all texts isn't a feature that determines or controls their interpretation. It is an element of the text's composition to be analyzed for the significance it engenders within the text just as other textual and narrative features,

²⁸⁹ Cf. Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 64.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 64.

²⁹¹ Our analysis of the notion of the inscribed reader, as well as the notion of the implied reader in rhetorical and phenomenological audience-oriented criticism, is predominantly informed by Susan R. Suleiman critical introduction to *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*. For the analysis of Wolfgang Iser's notion of the implied reader I am also considerably indebted to James L. Resseguie's "Reader-Response Criticism And The Synoptic Gospels."

²⁹² Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 65.

²⁹³ Ibid., 64.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 64.

²⁹⁵ The author or a first level narrator.

²⁹⁶ Cf. Suleiman, "Introduction," 14.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 14.

e.g. the text's structures, plots, or settings.²⁹⁸ Eco's model reader is not a meaning value to be deciphered; it is the reader a text postulates who is "able to make conjectures about it."²⁹⁹

Neither is Eco's model reader equivalent to the implied reader. The notion of the implied reader found its most influential expressions in the rhetorical and phenomenological approaches to audience-oriented criticism.³⁰⁰ In the former, the leading formulation of this notion has been Wayne Booth's.³⁰¹ The rhetorical approach perceives the relation between the author and the reader as a process of communication mediated by the text.³⁰² As Susan R. Suleiman notes, in Booth's audience-oriented criticism both the implied reader and implied author of the text are not real persons but are brought about in the actual reading process of the text.³⁰³ The implied author represents the message (meaning and effects) the text intends to communicate to its reader.³⁰⁴ The implied reader represents on the other hand the ideal counterpart of this implied author, whereby his sole task is to decode, receive, and internalize the message(s) the latter imparts.³⁰⁵ By perceiving the reading process in this way, the implied reader's role is limited to receiving the rhetorical moves of the text and in "completely agreeing" with its values.³⁰⁶

Yet, the text and its meaning cannot be narrowly conceptualized or reduced to a set of messages; texts do not always invite readers to agree or disagree with certain messages. We may ask what if a reader disagrees with the text's message or what if a text is designed just to involve its reader in an issue without appealing to him/her to internalize a certain position. The allusion is undoubtedly a case that challenges this rhetorical perception of the reading process. The allusion is not a literary device that asks the reader, at least not at first, to internalize a certain message. It is a literary device that prompts participation on the reader's part in a process of text archeology, retrieval of cross-textual connotations, and reconciliation of these connotations within the alluding text. Internalizing a certain message that a text evokes through an allusion may occur at the end of a process of actualizing the allusive signal and determining its

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-5.

²⁹⁹ Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 64.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-27.

³⁰¹ The notion of the implied reader also originates with Booth's work (Suleiman, "Introduction," 10).

³⁰² Suleiman, "Introduction," 7-8.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-10.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-10.

significance. It may also not occur if the reader is to disagree with the message the allusion elicits or when the allusion is not intended to convey a message at all, for example when the allusion has an intratextual function like foreshadowing a narrative event.³⁰⁷

As for phenomenological audience-oriented criticism, we may start by noting that it is chiefly concerned with describing the (general) reader's experience as s/he advances through reading the text.³⁰⁸ In this approach, Wolfgang Iser's notion of the implied reader has been at the forefront. In Iser's view, the process of reading gives birth to something more than the text: the 'work,' which represents the text imbued with the reader's interaction with it.³⁰⁹ Iser's implied reader thus neither completely emanates from the text nor is it completely separate from it.³¹⁰

Iser offers two schemes through which the text influences its reader: "First, a repertoire of familiar literary patterns and recurrent literary themes, together with allusions to familiar social and historical contexts; second, techniques or strategies used to set the familiar against the unfamiliar."³¹¹ On the other hand, a certain freedom of interpretation is granted to the reader, first, because readers have predispositions that affect their understanding of the text.³¹² Second, by the text itself which, in Iser's view, "makes no objectively real demands on its readers, [but] opens up a freedom that everyone can interpret in his own way."³¹³ Third, the reader has considerable freedom in filling the "gaps" and "indeterminacies" in the text.³¹⁴

In all of the above cases, the text offers clues and directions but the text's interpretation remains also dependent on the implied reader's competency and predisposition (literary, linguistic, and socio-cultural).³¹⁵ In short, Iser's implied

³⁰⁷ Eco probably had Booth's implied reader in mind when he asserted that the model reader "is not the one who makes the 'only right' conjecture" (cf. Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 64).

³⁰⁸ In Suleiman's words, "it seeks to describe and account for the mental processes that occur as a reader advances through a text and derives from it--or imposes on it--a pattern" (cf. Suleiman, "Introduction," 22).

³⁰⁹ See Iser's view in *ibid.*, 22.

³¹⁰ See Iser's view in *ibid.*, 22 or in Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 274-5.

³¹¹ Cf. Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 288. I owe this insight to James L. Resseguie (Resseguie, "Reader-Response," 309).

³¹² Iser asserts that "the realization [of the text] is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader" (cf. Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 274).

³¹³ Cf. Wolfgang Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction," in *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. J. Hillis Miller 1-45 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 44. Quote is originally extracted from Suleiman, "Introduction," 25.

³¹⁴ Cf. Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 38-40; Resseguie, "Reader-Response," 308.

³¹⁵ Resseguie, "Reader-Response," 308; Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 27-38.

reader is invoked by the text but it is also a sort of a general “intermediary between two consciousnesses: the author’s and the reader’s.”³¹⁶ As to what extent is the reader’s freedom in interpreting the text, Iser does not offer a clear answer.³¹⁷ While he asserts that readers, even a single reader, can, and do, achieve different realizations of the text,³¹⁸ his approach, and phenomenological audience-oriented criticism in general, presents its account of the reading process as a common reader’s experience of the text.³¹⁹

Surely, readers come to the text with certain linguistic and socio-cultural competency, what Eco terms “social treasury” and represent in his view the reader’s encyclopedic heritage of linguistic, cultural, and earlier interpretations.³²⁰ Yet, it is the text itself that represents the evidence for the “encyclopedic competence” of its model reader.³²¹ To illustrate this point, we may use an example: the presence of an ancient map in a text.³²² The text, through the particular symbols and format of its ancient map, postulate that its model readers would understand its format and symbols, regardless of the historical era they come from or the context within which the reading process is carried out. Whether the text itself is old or contemporary does not matter; in and of itself, the presence of this ancient map represents a textual strategy inseparable of the text’s intention. Locating the historical origin of the text or its ancient map is only beneficial for the interpreter in his endeavor to acquire the necessary knowledge competency the text expects from its model reader to read the map. In sum, the text’s intention posits a particular model reader’s competency even before any actual reading has taken place.³²³

Another, and perhaps the most distinguishing, difference between Eco’s model reader and Iser’s implied reader is that the former does not have the interpretation

³¹⁶ Cf. Resseguie, “Reader-Response,” 308.

³¹⁷ As Suleiman puts it, “the question of how much freedom a reader has is eluded, or rather answered in contradictory ways” (cf. Suleiman, “Introduction,” 24-5).

³¹⁸ Suleiman, “Introduction,” 23

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

³²⁰ Eco, “Between Author and Text,” 67-8.

³²¹ Umberto Eco, “Two Problems in Textual Interpretation,” in *Reading Eco: An Anthology*, ed. Rocco Capozzi 34-52 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 44.

³²² This illustration is inspired by one of Eco’s examples on the presence of a railway timetable in any given text. In Eco’s view, the presence of a railway timetable in a text presumes a certain model reader, one who is “able to deal with Cartesian orthogonal axes (vertical and horizontal) and with a vigilant sense of the irreversibility of temporal sequences” (cf. Eco, “Two Problems,” 45).

³²³ Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 52. I owe the observation of this idea to Claudia Miranda’s quotation of Eco in Claudia Miranda, “‘Dove’ is the Dove?,” in *Reading Eco: An Anthology*, ed. Rocco Capozzi 362-87 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 372.

freedom accorded to the latter. Eco's model reader is not a descriptive category of the general reader's experience of the text as Iser's implied reader is. It is a "profile" of a reader patterned entirely by the text,³²⁴ a reader who has the ability to possibly discover the text's intention.

To bring our discussion of Eco's interpretive theory together, the task of Eco's model reader is to understand a model author that corresponds to the text's intention.³²⁵ The latter, as we have seen, is evident in the text as semiotic strategies. Eco's hermeneutics maintains the dialectic between the author, the text, and the reader but in a formulation that keeps the reader's subjectivity in check and offers a measuring reference for the validity of interpretation, the intention of the text. As opposed to *free* or *general* acts of reading or using the text, the interpreter should strive to read the text, to use Stefan Collini's expression, "as it is in some sense designed to be read."³²⁶

4. Diachronic and Synchronic Readings of the Text

It should be emphasized here that a synchronic approach to the text is not necessarily mutually exclusive with a diachronic one;³²⁷ in fact considerations of the diachronic dimensions of the text form part of a synchronic approach to it. In Biblical criticism, where the conflict between synchronic and diachronic approaches is more acute than in Qur'ānic studies, Mark G. Brett has identified two hallmarks of synchronic approaches: namely, a rejection of interpreting the text only through the lens of the historical development of its formation and an emphasis instead on interpreting the text as it stands in its canonical final form.³²⁸ Undoubtedly, these two characteristics are equally distinctive of synchronic approaches in Qur'ānic studies but they only express the main gist of these approaches. They hardly suffice to describe the

³²⁴ Cf. Eco, *The Limits*, 52.

³²⁵ Eco, "Overinterpreting Texts," 64.

³²⁶ Cf. Collini, "Introduction," 10.

³²⁷ Mark G. Brett's expresses the same idea with regard to synchronic and diachronic approaches in Biblical Criticism (Mark G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism In Crisis? The impact of the canonical approach on Old Testament studies* (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 104-5. John Sturrock views the tendency to regard synchronic and diachronic approaches as mutually opposed, in the social sciences, the study of language, or even the study of history, as exaggerated (John Sturrock, *Structuralism* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 64-73 and 105).

³²⁸ Brett, *Biblical Criticism*, 104-114, particularly 104-6.

intricacies underlying a synchronic approach to the Qur'ān.³²⁹ These two distinctive characteristics have connotations and implications as to approaching the Qur'ān (different from their context in Biblical criticism as well) that need to be probed in order to, so to speak, put flesh on this bare skeleton. Two observations apropos the Qur'ān's origin and the literature surrounding the text are particularly essential in this regard.

First, the evidence adduced at the beginning of this chapter warrants that the Qur'ān originates from a single linguistic, cultural and socio-political context. A synchronic approach to the Qur'ān thus need not worry about having in the text heterogeneous linguistic, cultural and socio-political elements that originally emanate from different historical contexts and which for their disentanglement one needs to apply historical critical methods such as source and form criticism.

Second, we need to address the evidence surrounding the text's linguistic, cultural, and socio-political elements. As for the text's language, the extant literary evidence demonstrates that the Arabic sciences of lexicography, grammar, and philology as well as Muslim exegesis are continues scholarly traditions that in fact co-originate with the cessation of the Qur'ānic revelations and the materialization of the canonical Qur'ānic text. Certainly, extant sources from the formative period of Islamic sciences are to some extent scarce. Yet also recent studies have demonstrated that ascriptions to early scholars in later Islamic sources are significantly more trustable than has been generally believed over the greater part of the past century.³³⁰ The point I am trying to make here is that a great deal of continuity and preservation exists with regard to the inventory of the Qur'ānic language. Even with regard to the often-challenging *hapax legomena* of the Qur'ān, we have views among the multitude of Muslim exegetical traditions, many of them are quite early, that match modern etymological investigations.³³¹ The same applies to the cultural and socio-political elements

³²⁹ On account of the competition between the historical critical approach and the final form literary approach as the appropriate method for interpreting the Bible Biblical criticism encountered a similar problem (Ibid., 1-10). When Brett discussed this crisis, under the heading "synchronic interpretation," he found himself obliged to attempt finer articulation of various approaches classified as synchronic in Biblical criticism (Ibid., 104-115).

³³⁰ See for instance, Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic jurisprudence.*; idem., "The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq: on the Origin and Reliability of some *maghāzī*-Reports," in *The Biography of Muḥammad: the Issue of the Sources*, ed. H. Motzki (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 170-239; idem., "Muṣannaf of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-San'ānī"; Schoeler, "Die Frage"; idem., "Weiteres zur Frage"; idem., "Schreiben und Veröffentlichen"; idem., *Charakter und Authentie*; idem., *Écrire et transmettre*.

³³¹ Compare for instance the exegesis of *al-Raqīm* in Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, 9:107 to Griffith, "Christian Lore," 125-27 and the exegesis of *al-Ṣamad* in Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*,

referred to in the Qur'ān and its narratives. We have extensive literature, Islamic and non-Islamic, pre- and post- Islamic, which represents a whole continues tradition on the cultural artifacts to which the Qur'ān and its narratives refer. The case is similar regarding the socio-political elements referred to in the Qur'ān or surrounding its formation.

How are these two general observations concerning the text and the literature surrounding it are useful for a finer articulation of a synchronic approach to the Qur'ān?

Any text cannot be totally separated from the linguistic, cultural, socio-political context of its emergence. The same applies to the Qur'ān which patently reflects this. While its prose is unlike other texts, it also clearly reflects a late antique Arabian diction. The presence of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives and references to certain historical events in the text (e.g. the battle of Badr Q 8:41-42 and the battle of the ditch in Q 33:10-25) are, for example, evidence that equally warrants that the Qur'ān is inseparable from the cultural and socio-political context of its emergence. The issue is how a synchronic approach to the text should approach the diachronic dimension of these homogeneous linguistic, cultural, and socio-political elements.

As John Sturrock notes, even Saussure did not believe that a synchronic approach to language is necessarily opposed to a diachronic one. The text is of course not a language it is a particular instance of linguistic manifestation, *parole* in Saussure's terminology.³³² The evidence for the meaning of the text's language is not restricted to evidence from within the text itself though. The text's language has history and roots and the text demands that its readers and interpreters have competency in this language in order to approach it. Lexical, grammatical, and philological knowledge of the text's utterances must, as both scholars of Islam in the Islamic heartland and scholars of Islam in the West do, be traced beyond the text, not infrequently even past the temporal point of the text's historical emergence. Yet, in analogy to Saussure's

7:111-561 to Uri Rubin, "“Al-Şamad” and the high God: An interpretation of *sūra* CXII,” *Islam* 61 (1984): 197-217 particularly 213.

³³² Brett, *Biblical Criticism*, 107; E. D. Hirsch, Jr. *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 231-2; Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye in collaboration with Albert Reidlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 13 and 15.

view of the dependence of the diachronic on the synchronic in linguistics,³³³ a synchronic approach must emphasize that the text has its own usage of language within the field of its final form and subordinates, not negate, the historical dimension of language's origins and developments to the text's final form usage. The same applies to the diachronic dimension of the cultural and socio-political elements referred to in the text. While knowledge of these elements is not exclusively restricted to evidence from the text itself, historical evidence must be checked and evaluated against and within the coherence of the text's final form to decipher the latter's particular nuances of referring to these cultural and historical elements. This ties to Eco's notions of the text's model reader and intention. The text's model reader urges interpreters to have the necessary pre-knowledge (if you will, the history) of all of the text's elements. Yet, it is the text's intention that has the ultimate say: the text controls and configures the connotations of the language, cultural, and socio-political elements it uses and refers to. A synchronic analysis of the Qur'ān does not lead to negating the historical diachronic connotations of its elements; the former however should be dominant over the latter.³³⁴

We must also consider the relationship, if any, between a synchronic approach to the Qur'ān and the diachronic reading according to the chronological emergence of the text's different units. Several chronological lists for the Qur'ānic revelations are extant in Islamic sources³³⁵ and they differ considerably among themselves. It was at the beginning of the 20th century that the Cairo edition of the Qur'ān, commissioned by King Fouad and issued by al-Azhar, led to establishing consensus on a

³³³ Sturrock, *Structuralism*, 64. According to Saussure, a synchronic linguist is interested in studying language as it exists in a particular context while on the other hand a diachronic linguist is only interested in studying language as it develops from one context to another (Sturrock, *Structuralism*, 28; Saussure, *Course*, 99-100). Saussure's argument is also that a diachronic description of language is in fact dependent on a synchronic one (Saussure, *Course*, *passim*). Furthermore, Saussure emphasized that a clear distinction between both approaches should always be maintained. For instance, as Sturrock illustrates the problem, one should not confuse the etymological meaning of a word for its contemporary meaning value (Sturrock, *Structuralism*, 64-5).

³³⁴ This intertwining between the synchronic and the diachronic is in fact commonly attested in Muslim exegesis. Early and classical exegetes have honored the transmitted reports around the Qur'ān's language, cultural, and socio-political elements and often extended considerable effort to reconcile these reports with reading the text in its entirety (synchronically). They have viewed a reading of the Qur'ān without rigorously consulting these reports as essentially espousing a faulty approach. This has been always at the center of refusing the practice of interpreting the Qur'ān based on personal opinion (*al-tafsīr bil ra'y*). For early and classical Muslim exegetes, honoring transmitted reports represented a guarantee that the (synchronic) reading of the text is anchored in knowledge of the history of the text's linguistic, cultural, and socio-political elements.

³³⁵ See Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'ān: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, 2nd ed, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 67.

chronological order of the *sūras* that came to be widely acknowledged in Muslim communities. Several scholars of Islam in the West have nonetheless attempted a reconstruction of the chronological emergence of the Qur'ān's different text units. Today, Nöldeke-Schwally and Neuwirth's attempts are regarded the most assiduous in the field and enjoy considerable currency. Yet, all modern pursuits of the chronological order of the corpus of Qur'ānic texts, including Neuwirth and Nöldeke-Schwally's chronology, are not (necessarily) historically verifiable.³³⁶

Nöldeke-Schwally's however is, in my view, more reliable. First, because in conjunction with stylistic criteria it relies on a critical reading of the historical and *tafsīr* material surrounding the text; recent studies, as I have indicated above, demonstrate that a genuine core of truth exists in the data transmitted in the former and the attributions in both the former and the latter are more reliable than what has been believed over the most part of the twentieth century. Second, because Nöldeke and Schwally, as opposed to Neuwirth, limited themselves to attempting to figure out the chronological order of the text's *sūras*; a reasonable objective attainable with a good degree of reliability as contrasted with determining the chronological order of each and every passage of the Qur'ān. We shall approach the narrative pericopes under examination here following Nöldeke-Schwally's chronology but this is only in an effort to perceive the narratives interrelationships diachronically, in a sequence that may roughly correspond to the chronological order of their revelation.

There are two main types of solely diachronic reading of the text according to the chronological order of the emergence of its text units: a historicist reading and a literary one. We certainly gain some insights from solely historical readings of the

³³⁶ As Neuwirth rightly notes, modern attempts to reconstruct the chronological order of the Qur'ānic revelations have principally been predicated on "observations about style and structure complemented by thematic considerations" (cf. Angelika Neuwirth, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. "Form and Structure of the Qur'ān"). Nöldeke and Schwally only attempted to determine the chronological order of the emergence of its different chapters. Neuwirth on the other hand pursues a reconstruction of the chronological order of the Qur'ānic text units, such as individual passages and narrative units. As already mentioned, as opposed to Nöldeke-Schwally's extensive reliance, although critical, on the Prophet's biography (*Sīra*) and Muslim exegetical reports, Neuwirth only relies on the *Sīra*'s broad outline (see Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, I: 58 and *passim*; Neuwirth, "Oral Scriptures", 72). Yet, similar to Nöldeke and Schwally, Neuwirth also relies on stylistic criteria (e.g. shifts in verses length, rhyme patterns, and vocabulary) in determining the divisioning of the corpus of Qur'ānic texts and the hypotheses concerning their chronology. Nöldeke and Schwally's reliance on stylistic criteria is thus modulated with their critical reading of the *Sīra* and *tafsīr* traditions and the checks and balances they impose. In light of Neuwirth's skepticism of the data transmitted in *Sīra* and exegetical literature, her postulated chronology does remain principally based on stylistic criteria. The problem with the chronological order of the revelation chiefly based on such criteria is indeed a substantial degree of circularity. Neuwirth concurs that a degree of circularity in her approach is unavoidable (Neuwirth, "Oral Scriptures", 73).

Qur'ān according to the chronological order of the revelations. However, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the meanings such readings offer remain to be confirmed by the text's intention through a synchronic reading.³³⁷ To attempt to reconstruct the history of the text's linguistic, cultural, and socio-political elements through a historical reading according to postulated chronologies, in order to retrieve the first-audience meaning or reconstruct the socio-political context of the revelations, as Neuwirth does, is indeed legitimate and at times yields fruitful insights. Yet, this is not a reading of the text; it is a reading of the history of the formation of the text that is of provisional nature and like historical research should be measured and scrutinized against the available historical evidence. All of the insights to be gained from solely historical and diachronic examinations of the text's linguistic, cultural, and socio-political elements, as I have been arguing, should be measured against the intention of the text's final form.

As for a literary reading of the text according to the chronological order of the revelations, it is obvious that it only investigates the Qur'ānic text as it was being formed. So to speak, it is like reading the notes of an author of a novel instead of the final product; it distorts the integrity and the intention of the final product. The final-form text is largely not within the scope of such reading. If we are to grant the text intentionality and design, it must have been produced as a coherent whole not only intended to a particular audience in a particular historical context. In other words, the text's 'author' knows that the text will be read in different contexts and the text is designed accordingly. The text's final form has tremendous effect on its meaning and the relationships it creates, internally and externally. It is not divorced from the gradual emergence of its individual units but it exceeds this piece-meal linear process of the revelations to convey to us a text in its entirety intended to be read both linearly and non-linearly.³³⁸

We shall make use of two main contributions of modern Muslim exegesis in our analysis. They fit neatly within the framework we have been discussing in this chapter. First is modern Muslim exegetes' pronounced scripturalist reading compared to their early and classical forerunners and second is their interest in the coherence

³³⁷ This point has been demonstrated in the previous chapter through our critique of Griffith and Neuwirth's approach to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives.

³³⁸ As the analysis in the following chapter will demonstrate, particularly classical Muslim exegetes read the text in both ways: linearly and non-linearly, synchronically and diachronically.

and holistic³³⁹ dimensions of the composition of the Qur'ān.³⁴⁰ These two trends are closely intertwined. The scripturalist approach emphasizes issues of coherence and integrity of the text. And coherence-related and holistic approaches to the text always lead to an emphasis on the unity of the Qur'ānic discourse from a scripturalist perspective. Furthermore, both the holistic and coherence-related approaches to the text are closely interrelated. Indeed, most modern Muslim scholars' holistic approaches have been predicated on perceiving the coherence of the text's individual verses, primarily by connecting the verses to each other in a linear fashion. For instance, Ḥāmid al-Dīn Farāhī (d. 1930) and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī's (d. 1997) holistic approaches are predicated on the *tartīb* (succession or sequence) and *tanāsub* (suitability or proportion) of the individual verses.³⁴¹ Likewise, Sayyid Quṭb's holistic perception of the *miḥwar* (axis) of the *sūra*'s unity is predicated on the semantic and logical interrelations of the *sūra*'s individual verses and passages.³⁴² We shall be interested in the topical and thematic unity of the *sūras* and their bearing on the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. In addition, we will also make use of one particular Muslim coherence-related approach to the Qur'ān, 'Aisha 'Abd Raḥmān's (d. 1998, penname Bint al-Shāṭi') *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī* (explicative exegesis) to which we will now turn.

In her influential work *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī lil-Qur'ān (The Explicative Exegesis of the Qur'ān)*, Bint al-Shāṭi' took her teacher, and later her husband, Amīn al-Khūlī's

³³⁹ In her University of Toronto PhD dissertation, Nevin Reda El-Tahry has offered an astute distinction between coherence-related and holistic approaches. She writes, "Contemporary coherence-related approaches ... share one characteristic: a preoccupation with exploring how the various parts of the text connect and fit together. All the holistic approaches are predicated on an assumption that there is an added value in examining the text as a whole, as opposed to when it is restricted to its component units, and they are all concerned with discovering this added value" (Cf. El-Tahry, "Textual Integrity," 52-3).

³⁴⁰ As previously alluded to, these two trends have their roots in classical Muslim exegesis. The first is an intensification of the time-honored principle of interpreting the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān. For the second trend, two classical precursors exist: namely, the concepts of *naẓm* (lit. arrangement) and *munāsaba* (lit. suitability or correlation). For a comprehensive survey of the origins and development of these two concepts contextualized within the scholarly interests and sectarian competition of classical Islamic scholarship, consult *ibid.*, 19-34. El-Tahry sums up a brief outline of what these two concepts denoted in the classical scholarly tradition worth quoting here. She writes, "the terms *naẓm* and *munāsaba* were both used in connection with treating suras [sic] as whole units, but not exclusively so. They were also used to designate linear-atomistic relationships [e.g. by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in his *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*], and *naẓm* was used for word-meaning relationships as well [e.g. 'Amr ibn Baḥr Jāhiz's (d. 255/868 or 9) *Naẓm al-Qur'ān*]. The concern attracted few scholars, perhaps because of sectarian sensitivities. The oldest known surviving treatment of this type is Bāqillānī's [d. 403/1013] work on Suras [sic] *Ghāfir* and *Fuṣṣilat*, but the most exhaustive and significant of the [classical] works of this genre is Biqā'ī's *Naẓm al-durar*" (cf. *Ibid.*, 34).

³⁴¹ Mir, *Coherence*, 32-6.

³⁴² See Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, *passim*.

(d. 1967) exegetical principles, expounded in his book *Manāhij Tajdīd*, and applied them to the Qurʾān. Neither al-Khūlī nor Bint al-Shāṭiʾ seem to have relied on the whole range of theoretical formulations we have expounded thus far. Nonetheless, their exegetical approach closely fits Eco’s interpretive theory and the explication of the synchronic approach I have elucidated above. Furthermore, it does not contradict at all our adaptation of Foucault’s notions of the statement and its associated field of coexistence. For the purpose of outlining Bint al-Shāṭiʾ’s methodology in terms of the theoretical principles adopted here, it should be noted that in the following brief exposition Issa J. Boullata’s translation of al-Khūlī/Bint al-Shāṭiʾ’s exegetical principles has been utilized with some modifications of mine.

The first principle is “the objective treatment of what is to be understood of the Qurʾān and it begins by the collection of all *sūras* and verses on the topic [*al-mawdūʿ*] to be studied.”³⁴³ Quite obviously, this is a sort of final form exegesis that emphasizes understanding the Qurʾānic utterances fundamentally through the semantic field and word usage of the text as a whole. The second principle reads as follows:

To understand what surrounds the text (*li fahmi mā ḥawla al-naṣ*), verses ... are placed in the chronological order of their revelation so that circumstances of time and place may be known. Traditional reports on the “occasions of revelation” are taken into consideration only as far as these occasions are the contextual circumstances associated with the revelation of a verse, for they are not its purpose or cause *sine qua non*, the significance being in the generality of the words not the specificity of the occasions.³⁴⁴

There are diachronic and synchronic dimensions to this second principle. The diachronic is the point of departure for the reading in order to have an initial sense of the “time and place” of the revelation of a particular verse or passage. Yet, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ also asserts that the contextual circumstances of the revelations are not its cause and that the true significance lies in “the generality of the words” not in the circumstance as the cause of the revelation. When the second principle is combined with the first, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ’s approach is thus in line with our view of the primacy of

³⁴³ Cf. Issa J. Boullata, “Modern Qurʾān Exegesis: A Study of Bint al-Shāṭiʾ’s Method,” *Muslim World* LXIV (1974): 103-13, 104. See original in ‘Āisha ‘Abd Raḥmān’s (Bint al-Shāṭiʾ), *al-Taḥqīq al-bayānī lil-Qurʾān*, 7th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.), 1:11.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Boullata, “Modern Qurʾān Exegesis,” 104-5; ‘Āisha ‘Abd Raḥmān, *al-Taḥqīq al-bayānī*, 1:11.

synchronic analysis over a diachronic one; it accords the final-form meaning dominance over the historical reports surrounding the text. In a sense, Bint al-Shāṭi' espouses a degree of skepticism concerning the veracity of these external reports but her method of assessing their veracity mainly depends on the degree to which they correspond or not to the meaning of the text in its interconnectedness and coherence.³⁴⁵

The third exegetical principle reads:

To understand the meanings of words, Arabic being the language of the Qur'ān, the original linguistic meaning is sought which gives the sense or feeling of Arabic for the word in its various material and figurative uses. The Qur'ānic meaning is then noted by collecting all forms of the word in the Qur'ān, and studying their particular context in specific verses and suras and their general context in the Qur'ān as a whole.³⁴⁶

This also is aligned with the idea that a synchronic approach to the text is not divorced from the diachronic description of language. Bint al-Shāṭi' is however careful to note that the historical meaning of words does not necessarily coincide with the Qur'ānic usage. The latter is to be deciphered from and checked against all the occurrence of the word in the entire text. Bint al-Shāṭi' then covers the remaining territory of the linguistic issues in her fourth exegetical principle. She writes,

To understand the subtleties of expression, the text in its Qur'ānic setting is studied for what it may mean, both the letter and the spirit of the text being considered. The sayings of exegetes are then examined in relation of the text thus studied, and only what agrees with the text may be accepted. To be avoided are all sectarian interpretations and all intrusive *Isrā'īliyyāt* (Jewish-Christian materials) that were forced on the books of *Tafsīr*. In the same manner, grammatical and rhetorical usage in the Qur'ān is to be considered the criterion by which the rules of grammarians and rhetoricians are judged, not vice versa. Also the allegorical/sectarian interpretations (*ta'wīl*) of the exegetes should not

³⁴⁵ See 'Āisha 'Abd Raḥmān's assessment of *asbāb al-nuzūl* traditions in 'Āisha 'Abd Raḥmān, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, 1:23.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 105; 'Āisha 'Abd Raḥmān, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, 1:11.

take precedence over the direct and contextual meaning of the Qur'ān's verses

...³⁴⁷

Here again stands out Bint al-Shāṭi's insistence on the supremacy of the text. What is most important is not the authenticity of the attributions of the lexical, grammatical, rhetorical, or exegetical views in Muslim sources or whether early attributions actually go back to the temporal point of their presumed emergence. The issue is primarily whether a given view is aligned with the text in its entirety, the spirit of the text in Bint al-Shāṭi's expression. All interpretations are but attempts to be measured against, to use our principle adopted from Eco, the intention of the text. The text not only has its own particular semantic and word usage field with its particular nuances but also its own grammatical and rhetorical nuances as well; they too are part of its semiotic strategies and so is its usage of the literary device of the allusion. The intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives are to be interpreted within the framework of the theoretical models we have elucidated above and the methodology Bint al-Shāṭi's exegetical principles stands for. Having put in place this theoretical and methodological reading model within which the analysis of the intertextual allusions will proceed, we may now attempt to offer a descriptive and interpretive model for the allusion itself.

5. The Intertextual Allusion: A Descriptive and Interpretive Model

The working definition of the allusion adopted here is Carmella Perri's:

Allusion in literature is a manner of signifying in which some kind of marker (simple or complex, overt or covert) not only signifies un-allusively, within the imagined possible world of the alluding text, but through echo also denotes ... [another] text and specifies some discrete, recoverable property(ies) belonging to the intension of this [other] text (or specifies its own property(ies) in the case of self-echo); the property(ies) evoked modifies the alluding text, and possibly activates further, larger inter- and intra-textual patterns of properties with consequent further modification of the alluding text.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Cf. Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis," 105; 'Āisha 'Abd Raḥmān, *al-Taḥf al-bayānī*, 1:11.

³⁴⁸ Perri, "On Alluding," 295.

Let us unpack this definition and clarify its terminology. The allusion-marker is a textual echo of a referent in some form.³⁴⁹ In the case of an intertextual allusion, this referent is located in an independent text.³⁵⁰ The process of determining the allusion's connotations involves an assessment of the formulation of its marker, its context in the alluding text, as well as the properties of its referent in the alluded-to text; the latter the alluding text assumes to be common knowledge and accessible to its readers.³⁵¹ By 'modification' in Perri's definition it is not meant a reductionist view that the referent's connotations of the allusion modify the alluding text. There are far more complex possibilities; as Perri contends, "the alluding text may also modify the significance of the attributes of the [alluded-to] text it evokes."³⁵² It is to be emphasized thus that, "denotation" is but the basic, yet essential, step in alluding; allusions do not function as mere referential devices to direct readers to other texts.³⁵³ It is the extra property beyond the allusion's referential function that allows for the additional "inter- and intra-textual patterns of associated attributes" that the allusion evokes.³⁵⁴

As to the descriptive and interpretive allusion model that will inform our analysis in the following chapters, we are squarely reliant in the present work on Hebel's model which offers seven descriptive categories that I will list now with brief comments to situate them within the context of the Qur'ānic narratives.

(5.1) The "Syntagmatic Manifestations of Allusions," i.e. Identifying the allusion-marker and its basic type.³⁵⁵

First, allusions could be classified as "implicit (unmarked) and explicit (marked)."³⁵⁶ Explicit allusions are marked in the alluding text with overt "typographic conventions such as quotation marks, italicization, capitalization, and spacing."³⁵⁷ Second, allusions could be classified into three main types: quotational, titular, and onomastic.³⁵⁸ In the Qur'ān, we only have unmarked allusions and we are

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 290. See also Ben-Porat, "The Poetics," 108.

³⁵⁰ Ben-Porat, "The Poetics," 108.

³⁵¹ Perri, "On Alluding," 296.

³⁵² Ibid., 296

³⁵³ As Hebel asserts, all definitions agree that "a successful allusion does not simply direct the reader to another text on a purely referential level" (cf. Hebel, "Towards," 138).

³⁵⁴ Perri, "On Alluding," 293.

³⁵⁵ Identifying the allusion-marker seems to be unanimously agreed upon as the first step in describing the allusion (Ben-Porat, "The Poetics," 110; Hebel, "Towards," 137-8; Perri, "On Alluding," 301).

³⁵⁶ Hebel, "Towards," 142.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 142.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 142.

dealing with unmarked allusions of the three aforementioned types.

By their very nature as proper names, onomastic allusions could allude to characters within the text or characters in other texts.³⁵⁹ e.g. a repeated name of a Prophet in the Qur'ānic narratives could be construed as both alluding to his stories in the Qur'ān or in its antecedent traditions. Titular allusions are also attested in the Qur'ān and they are predominantly composed of proper names in the format “the Chapter on [a figure's name]”: e.g. *Sūrat Yūsuf*, *Sūrat Yūnus*, *Sūrat Ibrāhīm*, *Sūrat Maryam*, and *Sūrat Luqmān*. They are thus largely formed of onomastic allusions but located in titles of chapters.

It should be emphasized that quotational allusions are not quotations; the term ‘quotational’ denotes that the allusion-marker echoes a referent through the particular formulation of its textual form (for instance Q 18:9 discussed in the previous chapter in which the companions of the cave and the inscription are mentioned). Recognizing unmarked allusions primarily depends on the quality of their echo, the reader's competency, and the text's semiotic strategy and frequency of alluding, which makes the reader more alert to possible cases of allusion. Detecting unmarked quotational allusions thus seems more dependent on these factors in comparison to onomastic and titular allusions.³⁶⁰ As the analysis in the next chapter will show the narrative pericopes at hand are filled with quotational allusions.

(5.2) “Localization of the Allusion,” i.e. determining the allusion's location in the alluding text.

Hebel suggests three possible positions: “allusions can occur as elements of the paratext, ... the external system of communication, or ... the internal system of communication.”³⁶¹ Paratextual allusions are by definition located outside the narrative stream, for example in titles and headings. In the Qur'ān, they are predominantly titular allusions as in the example *sūra* titles above.³⁶² Given the particular formulation of these paratextual allusions in the Qur'ān, they primarily function to prompt the collection of the story of the figure named; they engender no intertextual patterning or transformation by themselves.³⁶³

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 143.

³⁶⁰ Hebel, “Towards,” 143.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 146.

³⁶² Hebel write, “paratextual allusions include, above all, allusions in titles, epigraphs, chapter headings and chapter epigraphs, notes, and prefaces” (cf. Ibid., 146).

³⁶³ These chapters, with the exception of *Sūrat Yūsuf*, are not exclusively dedicated to the story of the figure named in their title. The narrative concerning the figure named in the title may even figure as a

Allusions in the external system of communication are located in the narrator's own speech not in the dialogue of the narrative characters.³⁶⁴ These are frequent in the Qur'ānic narratives. For example, the allusion to the disagreement on the number of the companions of the cave in Q 18:22,

(Some) say they were three, the dog being the fourth among them; (others) say they were five, the dog being the sixth,- doubtfully guessing at the unknown; (yet others) say they were seven, the dog being the eighth. Say thou: "My Lord knoweth best their number; It is but few that know their (real case)." Enter not, therefore, into controversies concerning them, except on a matter that is clear, nor consult any of them about (the affair of) the Sleepers. (Q 18:22)

The allusion in this verse is within the speech of the narrator of the story, i.e. God, not within the speech of the companions of the cave or other protagonists of the story. As Hebel observes, these allusions do not belong to the characters of the narrative; they are unaware of them.³⁶⁵ In contrast, allusions in the internal system of communication occur in the narrative characters' dialogue or narration.³⁶⁶ An example of this in the Qur'ān is the allusion to the indeterminacy concerning the number of years the companions of the cave spent in the cave in Q 18:19 which occurs in the companions own speech and points that they themselves did not know how long they remained sleep in the cave.³⁶⁷ When the allusion is located in the external system of communication, it signifies a commentary of the narrator on the events or details of the narrative. When it is located in the internal system of communication of the narrative it signifies that the protagonists, alongside the main narrator, are also aware or communicating their awareness of the allusion's implications and connotations.

(5.3) "Dimension(s) of reference."

Hebel divides this category into three dimensions: temporal, spatial, and "with

small narrative unit within the *sūra*, e.g. *sūrat Yūnus*. Such allusions in the Qur'ān thus pertain to the narratives in their respective *sūras* in as much as they prompt the reader to recall the story of the figure named.

³⁶⁴ Hebel, "Towards," 146.

³⁶⁵ Hebel, "Towards," 146.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

³⁶⁷ Q 18:19 reads, "Such (being their state), we raised them up (from sleep), that they might question each other. Said one of them, "How long have ye stayed (here)?" They said, "We have stayed (perhaps) a day, or part of a day." (At length) they (all) said, "Allah (alone) knows best how long ye have stayed here..." The allusion to the indeterminacy of the period of their stay which is located in the external system of communication between the narrator and the audience occurs in Q 18: 25-6.

regard to the area of reference.”³⁶⁸ For the temporal dimension, the Qur’ānic narratives allude always to figures and events that preceded Islam’s emergence. As for the spatial dimension, allusions could shed light on “the geographical and linguistic surroundings of the text.”³⁶⁹ Few geographical allusions exist in the Qur’ānic narratives. For instance, in Q 37:137 (“verily, ye pass by their (sites), by day-“), Q 15:76 (“and the (cities were) right on the high-road”) and Q 29:35 (“and We have left thereof an evident Sign, for any people who (care to) understand”) which point to the ruins of the homes of Lot’s people as existing on the travel path of the first audience of the Qur’ān.³⁷⁰ The temporal and spatial allusions of the Qur’ān in general contribute to anchoring the text in a specific context, late antique Arabia and, as Hebel asserts, “provides further insight into the text’s presuppositions and the structure of its [model] reader.”³⁷¹ The “area of reference” dimension designates areas of reference such as literature, religion, history, politics, science, economics, philosophy, the fine arts, sports, etc.³⁷² For the Qur’ān’s narratives the “area of reference” is thus not separate from the temporal dimension; the Qur’ān’s narratives predominantly refer to religious salvation history (the history of *al-umam al-khāliya*). This category of description is thus fixed as referring to religious salvation history for all the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives.

(5.4) “Modification of Allusions.”

This category pertains to describing the verbal difference between the allusive signal and the wording of the alluded-to element in the referent-text.³⁷³ These modifications include for example substitution of a word for another word, adding new words, deleting some words, or changing the words into different form (permutation).³⁷⁴ As Hebel asserts, these variants “imply a commentary on the point of reference ... [and form] part of the semantic potential of the [alluding] text.”³⁷⁵ An example of the modification of the allusion in the Qur’ān is the allusion in Q 15:71 to Gen. 19:8. Q 15:71 reads, “He said: Here are my daughters, if ye must be doing (so)” where the phrase “Here are my daughters” alludes to the segment “Look, I have two

³⁶⁸ Hebel, “Towards,” 148

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 148

³⁷⁰ The conjunction of the two seas (*majma‘ al-bahrayn*) in Q 18:60-1 could also be mentioned as an example here.

³⁷¹ Hebel, “Towards,” 148.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 150.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

daughters that have not known a man; let me bring them out to you” in Gen. 19:8 although the phrase from Q 15:71 does not mention the number of Lot’s daughters or point to their virginity.

(5.5) “Semantic Meaning of Allusions.”

That is, determining the meaning of the allusive signal within the textual continuum of the alluding text independent of actualizing it as an intertextual allusion.³⁷⁶ Onomastic allusions are usually not affected by this descriptive category since they are just proper names that do not hold meaning in and of themselves.³⁷⁷ Quotational allusions on the other hand are affected by this descriptive category (including titular allusions which represent quotational allusions). They have semantic meaning within the alluding text and could “be comprehended without further actualizing the allusions.”³⁷⁸ Yet, it should also be noted that the semantic meaning of the allusive signal may also have bearing on its intertextual “suggestive and connotative potential.”³⁷⁹

Comprehending quotational allusions as mere textual elements, i.e. without realizing their allusive potential, depends on two factors. The first is the reader’s intertextual competency and the second is whether the quotational allusion is difficult to detect, for instance when it is cryptic or very short. In this second case, the allusion may represent a “stumbling block”³⁸⁰ in the reading process if it does not have sufficient textual meaning attached to it. In such circumstances, the allusion will either represent a case of ambiguity or it will compel the reader to search for and retrieve the signal’s intertextual connotations.³⁸¹

(5.6) “Cotextualization of Allusions.”

This category involves the contextualization of the allusion within their “immediate lexical surroundings and/or by their relation(s) to structural elements such as character or setting.”³⁸² Obviously, this process is affected by the localization of

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 151.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 151.

³⁷⁸ Hebel, “Towards,” 152.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 153.

³⁸⁰ The expression is Michael Riffaterre cited in *ibid.*, 139. Hebel cites it with reference to any allusion. But allusions can at times be read on the textual level only. It is only when they are cryptic or very short and no sufficient textual meaning attached to them that they represent a true “stumbling block” in the reading process.

³⁸¹ Hebel, “Towards,” 152.

³⁸² Ibid., 154

the allusion³⁸³ and also “contributes to the syntagmatic – intratextual – understandability of allusions.”³⁸⁴ Particularly because this process is not separate from the actualization of the allusive signal, it, as mentioned in the introduction, brings to light the metatextual posture that the alluding text assumes toward the referent text.³⁸⁵

(5.7) “Functions of Allusions.”

In the introduction we have briefly discussed Hebel’s divisioning of this descriptive category into intratextual, metatextual, and intertextual functions. We may here note additional specificities. Besides the aims of the allusions subsumed under the first category mentioned in the introduction we have also the goals of “supporting the themes” or “foreshadowing events or outcome” of the narrative.³⁸⁶ As for the second functional category, the types of commentary embodied in this metatextual posture cannot be strictly formulated into discrete classifications but it should be emphasized that it does not only proceed from describing the allusion’s modification, semantic meaning, and lexical cotextualization but also from the cotextualization of the allusive signal within its narrative setting or structure. In other words, not only explicit lexical items can affect commentary but likewise the overall characteristics of the narrative, its protagonists, and their “attitudes toward the alluded-to points of reference.”³⁸⁷ The ‘reality effect’ that represents the core of the third functional category denotes the allusive signal’s reference to “nonfictional elements.”³⁸⁸ This intertextual functional category is abundantly attested in the Qur’ānic narratives since the Qur’ānic narratives present their events and protagonists as historical as opposed to fictional. Furthermore, it should be noted that allusions in the text to groups of its interlocutors and geographical locations serve, at least in part, this function. In order to avoid redundancy, we will only point to some cases of the intertextual functional category in the next chapter.

6. Conclusion: Theoretical and Methodological Summary

Hebel’s description of the allusive signal was identified as the model through which the intertextual allusions of the Qur’ānic narratives will be interpreted in this study. It

³⁸³ Ibid., 154

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 156.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 156.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 157.

³⁸⁷ Hebel, “Towards,” 157.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 157.

is undoubtedly compatible with Foucault's notion of the statement's associated field of coexistence. It is also quite obviously one which insists that intertextual allusions are to be read and comprehended within the whole content and structures of the text; thus it is aligned with the interpretive theory we have put forth based on Eco's hermeneutics. It is also compatible with a synchronic approach informed by the topical and thematic unity of the *sūras* but not divorced from a diachronic one.

Allusions do figure in the Qur'ān as a semiotic strategy intrinsic to the text's intention and its model reader. They are however not lacunas, mimicry, or merely invite completing the 'gaps' they engender from antecedent traditions. They are, as I aspire to demonstrate in the following chapter, carefully placed and formulated to present authentic Qur'ānic views and effects. Almost certain cases of allusions in the text are those in which the allusion could be described as a 'stumbling block' in the reading process, when it is for instance cryptic on the textual level alone. It is counter intuitive, and in fact against many pronouncements in the Qur'ān itself,³⁸⁹ to assume that the text in such cases intends to be ambiguous. The text is simply alluding and the reader is almost compelled to resolve the allusion in question.

The interpreter's ultimate task in this study is to attempt to answer the question what is the intention of the text from employing the allusion? The answer in each allusion case does principally rely on a careful application of the allusion model adopted here. But equally, as I hope the preceding discussion have demonstrated, on applying the approach to the textual items that make up the allusion and its entire context in the alluding text. Sufficient description of the theoretical vantage point to the interpretation of these elements has been laid out in Foucault's notion of the statement and its associated field of coexistence and in Eco's interpretive theory and at its heart his notion of the intention of the text. Procedurally, we will benefit from the overall topical and thematic unity of the *sūras* and we will benefit as well from Bint al-Shāṭi's four hermeneutical principles. A hermeneutical approach to any text cannot be founded except on the basis of the nature of the text itself. It is in light of a careful evaluation of the various views concerning the history of the Qur'ān, its canonization, and the literature surrounding the text that our hermeneutical framework has been proposed. It is hoped that the merits of this particular framework of inquiry will be evident in the progress of the following chapter.

³⁸⁹ See for instance Q 41:3 and 11:1

Chapter Three

The Qur'ān's Narratives through the Lens of their Intertextual Allusions

The previous chapter outlined in detail the theoretical and methodological framework within which we will examine the Qur'ānic narrative units in this study. This chapter offers the case studies where we shall apply this framework. In each case study, we shall first introduce the reader to the narrative units under examination and the story they relate by quoting these narrative units alongside brief descriptions of the main events they communicate. Secondly, we shall outline the problems that faced our four selected exegetes in interpreting the narrative units under examination as well as western scholarship's response to these narrative pericopes. Thirdly, we will examine the intertextual allusions evident in the narrative units under examination by applying our framework of inquiry. In examining these intertextual allusions our focus will be to take on and resolve the issues raised by our four selected exegetes. Finally, in the conclusion section we will elucidate whether our perspective can be considered a corrective of the responses of the four selected exegetes and scholars of Islam in the West. It should be noted here that we will not present in each allusion case the seven descriptive categories of the allusion outlined in the previous chapter. In many cases, some of these categories are simply not of value for our analysis. An example is the semantic meaning of an allusion when it has no bearing on the allusion's connotative potential.

Case Study 1: The Qur'ānic Story of Jonah

1.1 Jonah's Story

Jonah is among the twenty-five prophets mentioned by name in the Qur'ān. His story appears in the text on four occasions (Q 68:48-50, 37:139-148, 21:87-88, and 10:98) and he is named in two non-narrative verses (6:86 and 4:163). In the order of their revelation (as argued by Nöldeke) the six pericopes are as follows Q 68:48-50, 37:139-148, 21:87-88, 10:98, 6:86, and 4:163.

Q 6:86 and 4:163 name Jonah among those whom God gave favor and who received divine revelations.

And Isma'il and Elisha, and Jonas, and Lot: and to all We gave favour above the nations. (Q 6:86)

وَأِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى
الْعَالَمِينَ [٦:٨٦]

We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms. (Q 4:163)

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ
وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ
وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا (النساء: ١٦٣)

The earliest narrative pericope that mentions Jonah is Q 68:48-50 where the Prophet Muḥammad is told not to follow the example of Jonah, the companion of the fish (*ṣāhib al-ḥūt*) as he is named in the pericope. Instead, Muḥammad is instructed to wait patiently for the judgment or command of God. The pericope informs us also that God heard Jonah cries out in agony (from inside the belly of the great fish) and He forgave him and made him among the righteous.

So wait [Muḥammad] with patience for the Command of thy Lord, and be not like the Companion of the Fish,- when he cried out in agony. (48) Had not Grace from his Lord reached him, he would indeed have been cast off on the naked shore, in disgrace. (49) Thus did his Lord choose him and make him of the Company of the Righteous. (50) (Q 68:48-50)

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَى
وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ [٦٨:٤٨]
لَوْلَا أَنْ نَدَارِكُهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّهِ لَنُبِدَّ بِالْعُرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ
[٦٨:٤٩]
فَاجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ [٦٨:٥٠]

The second narrative pericope, Q 37:139-148, offers us much more detail on Jonah's story. According to this pericope, Jonah perpetrated a blameworthy act for which he was swallowed by a great fish. Inside the belly of the fish he prayed for forgiveness and God forgave him. Next, the great fish vomits him on the barren shore

where God sends him to preach to a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants or more who became all believers.

So also was Jonah among those sent (by Us). (139) When he ran away to the ship (fully) laden, (140) He (agreed to) cast lots, and he was condemned: (141) Then the big Fish did swallow him, and he had done acts worthy of blame. (142) Had it not been that he (repented and) glorified Allah, (143) He would certainly have remained inside the Fish till the Day of Resurrection. (144) But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness, (145) And We caused to grow, over him, a spreading plant of the gourd kind. (146) And We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand (men) or more. (147) And they believed; so We permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while. (148) (Q 37:139-148)

وَأَنَّ يُوسُفَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ [٣٧:١٣٩]
 إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ [٣٧:١٤٠]
 فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ [٣٧:١٤١]
 فَأَلْتَقَمَهُ الْكُوفُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ [٣٧:١٤٢]
 فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ [٣٧:١٤٣]
 لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ [٣٧:١٤٤]
 ﴿وَإِن تَبْتَغَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ [٣٧:١٤٥]
 وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَّفْطِينَ [٣٧:١٤٦]
 وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ [٣٧:١٤٧]
 فَأَمَّنُوا فَمَرَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَى حِينٍ [٣٧:١٤٨]

Q 21:87-88, our third narrative unit offers some additional details to the narrative pericope in Q 37. For instance, it mentions the prayer that Jonah uttered inside the belly of the great fish.

And remember Zun-nun, when he departed in wrath: He imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, "There is no god but thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!" (87) So We listened to him: and delivered him from distress: and

وَدَا النُّونَ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ
 فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ
 الظَّالِمِينَ [٢١:٨٧]
 فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ [٢١:٨٨]

thus do We deliver those who have faith.

(88) (Q 21:87-88)

The last narrative pericope consists of a single verse, Q 10:98, in which the belief of Jonah's people is revisited. All of Jonah's people became believers thus avoided God's punishment and were given "comfort for a while."

If only there had been a community (of all those that were destroyed of old) that believed and profited by its belief as did the folk of Jonah! When they believed We drew off from them the torment of disgrace in the life of the world and gave them comfort for a while. (Q 10:98)

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا
آمَنُوا كُنْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَمَنْعْنَاَهُمْ إِلَىٰ جِينٍ [١٠:٩٨]

1.2 Scholars' Responses to the Qur'ānic Story of Jonah

Q 4:163 and 6:86 directly establish Jonah as one of God's messengers and one of those whom God has given favor. Therefore, these verses constituted no problems for Muslim exegetes or scholars of Islam in the West.

1.2.1 The Exegetical Responses

1.2.1.1 The First Problem: The Exemption of Jonah's People from Punishment

The first problem that Muslim exegetes faced concerns Q 10:98 where Jonah's people are exempted from God's punishment. The issue - not always framed openly - is whether there has been exception (*istithnā'*) of Jonah's people from the norm sanctioned by God (God's *sunna*) with regard to the treatment of foregoing communities (*al-umam al-khāliya*) to whom His messengers were sent.

Al-Ṭabarī's position is that God exempted the people of Jonah from His established *sunna*. Except for Jonah's people, all foregoing communities did not avail themselves destruction when they believed at the moment of witnessing the approach of God's punishment. Only Jonah's people have been an exception among the *umam al-khāliya* for when they believed at the moment of witnessing the approach of God's

punishment their belief availed them destruction.³⁹⁰ On the other hand, Ibn Kathīr sees the exception in the fact that unlike the *umam al-khāliya* all of Jonah's people believed. No other people believed their prophet as a whole except Jonah's people.³⁹¹ It was not when they witnessed the approach of punishment that they believed. It was when they realized that it is going to befall them. Here Ibn Kathīr is careful to demonstrate that God's *sunna* was not broken; God's punishment did not touch the people of Jonah, otherwise their belief would have not availed them destruction.³⁹²

Our third and fourth exegetes are in agreement with Ibn Kathīr. Al-Biqā'ī asserts that the people of Jonah believed when they witnessed the signs of the punishment (*asbāb al-'adhāb*) not the punishment itself.³⁹³ Punishment did not yet touch them and they still had time to believe and mend their ways. Likewise, the modern exegete Sayyid Quṭb stresses that God's *sunna* was not subject to an exception in the case of Jonah's people. Rather the exception is that all of Jonah's people believed and they believed before the punishment befell them and so God forgave them.³⁹⁴

1.2.1.2 The Second Problem: Jonah's Anger

The second problem that Muslim exegetes faced revolved around a set of questions concerning Jonah's anger, namely why was Jonah angry, with whom he was angry, and away from whom did he depart? Al-Ṭabarī's discussion of these questions falls entirely under Q 21:87. Al-Ṭabarī is of the opinion that Jonah left his people after he had promised them God's punishment but he was upset with God (*dhahaba 'an qawmihi mughādiban li-rabbihi*) because God drew off His punishment.³⁹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī asserts that those of the opinion that Jonah left his people and that he was angry with them felt that it is inappropriate to suggest that a Prophet was upset with God. According to al-Ṭabarī, they have fallen into greater error.³⁹⁶ Al-Ṭabarī asserts that the exegetes of his opinion have given different reasons why Jonah left angry with God: First is that Jonah promised his people God's punishment and left. When he left they mended their way and therefore God forgave them. Jonah on the other hand only saw that the punishment did not befall his people and he thought that he will be

³⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 12:291.

³⁹¹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, 7:403.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 7:403.

³⁹³ Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-durar*, 9:208.

³⁹⁴ Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 11:1820-1.

³⁹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 16:377.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16:377.

considered a liar if he returns to them (*garrabū ‘alayhi al-kadhib*). So he went to the seashore angry with God because He put him in this position.³⁹⁷ A second group of exegetes was of the opinion that Jonah was in resentment with God (*ghādaba Rabbahu*) the reason being that God hastened him to a great degree to go and communicate His warning to a certain city. Therefore, Jonah left angry with God because God rushed him to the extent that he could not put on his shoes.³⁹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī contends that these two explanations attribute lesser fault to Jonah than the view that Jonah left his people because he was angry with them. The latter view, al-Ṭabarī emphasizes, attributes to Jonah direct disobedience of God who supposedly ordered Jonah to stay among his people and to convey to them God’s message.³⁹⁹

Similar to al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr’s discussion of the questions why was Jonah angry, with whom he was angry, and away from whom did he depart falls entirely under Q 21:87. Yet, Ibn Kathīr is again not of al-Ṭabarī’s opinion. He is clearly with the view that Jonah left his people and that he was angry with them because of their disbelief.⁴⁰⁰ Ibn Kathīr offers a summary of Jonah’s story in which he states that Jonah called the people of Nineveh to the worship of God but they did not believe him so he left them and he was upset with them because of their disbelief. He also promised them God’s punishment to befall them after three days.⁴⁰¹ Jonah left his people thinking that God will not punish him for leaving them without waiting for His command. In other words, Ibn Kathīr thinks that Jonah’s punishment in the belly of the great fish was on account of leaving his people without waiting for God’s permission to do so.

Al-Biqā’ī states that Jonah left his people angry with them (*‘alā hay’at al-mughāḍib li-qawmihi bi-l-hijra ‘anhum*) and angry with God by leaving without His permission to emigrate (*wa li-rabihi bi-l-khurūj ‘anhum dūna al-intizār li-idhn khāṣ minhu bi-l-hijra*).⁴⁰² Al-Biqā’ī does not mention the reason why Jonah left his people angry. However, under Q 37:140 he offers details as to the reason why Jonah left on another occasion. Under Q 37:140 al-Biqā’ī notes that the meaning of the word “*abaqa*” is left his Lord (or master) who honored him with carrying the message (*al-risāla*), where “*al-ibāq*” is the slave’s flight from his master to a place where he thinks his master will not find him. Al-Biqā’ī asserts that Jonah fled when he was sent

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 16:375-6.

³⁹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 16:377.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 16:378.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*, 9:434.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 9:434.

⁴⁰² Al-Biqā’ī, *Naẓm al-durar*, 12:465.

by God (his Lord, “*sayyiduhū*”) because he was weaker than shouldering the burdens of proclaiming the call to God.⁴⁰³ We may thus wonder, does al-Biqā‘ī think of two occasions on which Jonah fled? This seems to be the case where the incident in Q 21:87 corresponds to Jonah’s exit of the city of Nineveh in Jonah 4:5 and the incident in Q 37:140 corresponds to Jonah’s flight from God’s command to preach to Nineveh as described in Jonah 1:2-3. Why this could be al-Biqā‘ī’s understanding albeit he does not articulate it explicitly? There are two possible answers. First al-Biqā‘ī’s interpretation of Q 37:140 is almost identical to the articulation of the events in Jonah 1:2-3. Second is al-Biqā‘ī’s attempt to harmonize the Qur’ānic account and the Biblical account through his commentary on the excerpt from the Bible that he cites under Jonah’s story in Q 37.

Al-Biqā‘ī cites this excerpt after he had already finished the interpretation of the verses concerning Jonah in Q 37. The way he introduces this excerpt is neutral, he simply records that this is “the mention of the story of Jonah as it exists in the *Sēpher* of the Prophets.”⁴⁰⁴ Nonetheless, after quoting Jonah 1-4 from the Bible al-Biqā‘ī comments as follows: “Then what is quoted here [i.e. from the Bible] does not differ from what the historians (*ahl al-akhbār*) have narrated concerning this story” (“*fa-lā yakūnu hīna idh ma hunā [i.e. in the excerpt] mukhālif lima dhakar ahlu al-akhbār fī hadhihī al-qīṣṣa*”). However, there is a qualification which al-Biqā‘ī finds himself obliged to add so that this statement applies fully to the Qur’ānic story of Jonah; it concerns the gourd plant “*aṣl al-qar*”. The Biblical account mentions a gourd to have grown over Jonah’s hut after he went out of Nineveh angry (Jonah 4:6). Next it relates a little story concerning this gourd that has no parallel in the Qur’ān. The Qur’ānic account also mentions a gourd plant. But it grew over Jonah after he was thrown on the barren shore by the great fish in a state of sickness and weakness (Q 37:146). Al-Biqā‘ī states that the gourd mentioned in Jonah 4:6 was that which grew over Jonah initially when he was thrown on the barren shore by the great fish and that Jonah returned to it when he was angry that God did not punish the people of Nineveh and the plant was then grown significantly and Jonah built under it his hut.⁴⁰⁵ Al-Biqā‘ī thus suggests two occasions on which Jonah fled or departed. In the first instance, the fish vomits Jonah on the barren shore where the gourd plant grows over him. In the

⁴⁰³ Al-Biqā‘ī, *Naẓm al-durar*, 16:291.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 16:297.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 16:301.

second instance, Jonah departs from Nineveh angry with God because he forgave its people and he builds his hut under the gourd plant which by then have grown significantly. Indeed, al-Biqā'ī is at odds with both al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr's views. Both al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr understand the reference of Q 21:87 and Q 37:140 to be about a single event.

Turning to Sayyid Quṭb's view, under Q 21:87 he states that Jonah did not persevere with the burdens (or duties, *takālīf*) of the message that God entrusted to him.⁴⁰⁶ Jonah was fed up with the disbelief of the people to whom he was sent and it seemed to him that they would never become believers (*fa-ista 'shū 'alayhī*).⁴⁰⁷ He left his people angry with them and did not endure the hardships and trials of the call to God (*al-da'wa*).⁴⁰⁸ According to Quṭb, Jonah thought that God would not constrain him to a certain land (*yudayyiq 'alayhi al-arḍ*), i.e. constrain him to be the messenger to certain people, and that He would send him to another community.⁴⁰⁹ This puts a new slant on the incident. Yes, Jonah did not persevere under the burdens of the task entrusted to him but his guilt seems more of a misunderstanding of the nature of his mission rather than just lack of perseverance or disobeying a direct order from God. Jonah did not realize quite correctly the duties entrusted to him as a messenger of God and that he should continue preaching to the same people to whom he was sent until God decides otherwise. Under Q 37:140, Quṭb refers to the reports transmitted in the Islamic tradition (*tadhkuru al-riwāyāt*) which states that Jonah was fed up with the disbelief of his people and he promised them God's punishment and left angry.⁴¹⁰ He offers a very similar summary of the story to that given by Ibn Kathīr earlier.⁴¹¹ Jonah's anger in Ibn Kathīr and Quṭb's view seems not because God drew off the punishment of Jonah's people but rather because of their disbelief.

1.2.1.3 The Third Problem: Jonah's mission

The third problem revolved around the question was Jonah's mission before or after the great fish swallowed him? In connection to this question, al-Ṭabarī cites two views. One is that Jonah's mission was before the great fish swallowed him and that Q 37:147 speaks of commissioning Jonah again to carry God's message to the same

⁴⁰⁶ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 17: 2393.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 17: 2393.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 17: 2393.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17: 2393.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23: 2998.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23: 2998-9.

people.⁴¹² The other view is that Jonah was only commissioned to proclaim God's message to Nineveh after the great fish swallowed him.⁴¹³ In this second case scenario it is not clear whether one should assume that Nineveh was the same city or a different city from the one Jonah left before the great fish swallowed him. Al-Ṭabarī presents the first view as the view that he endorses.

Ibn Kathīr is of the opinion that the commissioning of Jonah as God's messenger was before the great fish swallowed him. He does not object to whether Jonah was sent to the people whom he left angry or to another people.⁴¹⁴ In Ibn Kathīr's view both answers are possible. There is no problem if Jonah was sent again to the people to whom he was sent in the first place. And there is no problem if he was commissioned anew to another people. Al-Biqā'ī on the other hand is not ready to concede these two possibilities as Ibn Kathīr does. He asserts that the majority (*al-jumhūr*) opinion is that Jonah was commissioned first before the great fish swallowed him and that he was sent to the same people to whom he was sent first.⁴¹⁵ Again al-Biqā'ī is in agreement with the Biblical account here since he emphasizes that Jonah was sent to non-Israelites, the people of Nineveh.⁴¹⁶ As to Quṭb's answer to the question at hand, he asserts that Jonah was sent back to the same people after the great fish swallowed him. Quṭb states explicitly that when Jonah recovered from the sickness due to the period he spent in the belly of the fish, God sent him back to his people (the ones he left angry in the first place). They were more than one hundred thousand and they all believed.⁴¹⁷

1.2.2 The Responses of Scholars of Islam in the West

Turning to scholars of Islam in the West and Jonah's Qur'ānic story, it is clear that Jonah's Qur'ānic story has long been considered identical to the skeleton of the Biblical account. Not only orientalist scholars such as J. Muehleisen Arnold and Heinrich Speyer have considered it so but also a post-orientalist scholar such as Roberto Tottoli.⁴¹⁸ Generally, the story did not receive much attention in Western scholarship,

⁴¹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 19:638.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 19:638-9.

⁴¹⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, 12:59-60.

⁴¹⁵ Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-durar*, 16:296.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16:296.

⁴¹⁷ Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 23:2999

⁴¹⁸ Arnold, *Ishmael*, 177; Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 191-2; Speyer, *Die biblischen*, 407-10; Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation*, 115-6; Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets*, 42-3.

particularly because it is short and focuses on a secondary figure in comparison to main Qur'ānic figures such as Noah and Moses whose stories occupy greater space in the text. Orientalist scholars were interested in tracing the original sources of the story. On the other hand, several post-orientalist scholars noted the exegetical problems that Muslim exegetes faced in tackling it. For instance, Heribert Busse identifies that the cause for Jonah's anger represented a theological problem that Muslim exegetes faced, who had to deal with the Qur'ānic text which seemed to imply that Jonah had doubt about God's omnipotence.⁴¹⁹ Similarly, B. Heller and A. Rippin also identify that Muslim exegetes faced problems regarding the cause of Jonah's anger.⁴²⁰ The post-orientalist scholar who dealt extensively with the Qur'ānic story of Jonah and the allusions therein is Gabriel Said Reynolds. Yet, Reynolds sought to clarify the significance of the allusions manifested in the story by also considering that the Qur'ānic version is identical to the main textual skeleton of the Biblical account.

Reynolds indicates that Q 21:87 and Q 68:48 each signifies a different blameworthy act⁴²¹ where Jonah sinned and was forgiven.⁴²² Q 21:87 is an allusion to Jonah's first blameworthy act of refusing to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-3). And Q 68:48 in Reynolds view indicates a second blameworthy act of objecting to God's forgiveness of the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4).⁴²³ In order to verify that the Qur'ānic sequence of events is identical to the basic plot of the Biblical account, first Q 37:140 is taken as Q 21:87 to refer to the same incident of Jonah's flight from the presence of the Lord (Jonah 1:3). Second, Reynolds assumes a sudden change in the sequence of the events narrated in Q 37:139-148. He disregards the straightforward meaning of Q 37:139-148 and assumes that Q 37:145 refers to the sojourn of Jonah to the east of Nineveh (as in Jonah 4:5) not the casting of Jonah onto the barren shore by the great fish.⁴²⁴ He then assumes that Q 37:146 is a reference to the gourd plant incident of Jonah 4:6-10 not the gourd plant which, according to the direct understanding of the Qur'ānic verses, has grown over Jonah when he was cast off on the barren shore by the great fish. Reynolds had also to consider Q 37:147-8 a reference to the epilogue of

⁴¹⁹ See *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. "Jonah."

⁴²⁰ See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Yūnus."

⁴²¹ Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 119

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 119

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 127

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 127

Jonah 4 not to Jonah 3. Yet to consider that Q 37:147-8 reflects Jonah 4:11,⁴²⁵ is a position which totally overlooks that Jonah is commissioned as God's messenger in Q 37:147 in what seems a fresh mission rather than the close of an old one. Indeed, establishing the sequence of events in the above awkward way is untenable.

Finally, for the exceptional salvation of Jonah's people in Q 10:98 Reynolds' concern is not the issue that was of real concern to Muslim exegetes. Muslim exegetes were concerned with God's *sunna* with the *umam al-khāliya* and the exact nature of the exemption bestowed on Jonah's people. Reynolds is answering to the extraordinary salvation of Jonah's people, a point which, according to Reynolds, is of much concern to Muslim exegetes since the Qur'ān is filled with examples of peoples who did not heed God's message and were subsequently destroyed. Eventually, Reynolds offers some reflection on the verse in light of the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions. He writes, "In *yūnus* (10) 98 [i.e. Q 10:98] the Qur'ān refers to the Jonah story ... to contrast the repentance of Jonah's people with the stubbornness of its audience. Thus the Qur'an's references to the story of Jonah reflect the content of the Old Testament Book, but the homiletic interpretation of the New Testament."⁴²⁶

1.3 The Jonah Qur'ānic Story in Light of the Analysis of its Intertextual

Allusions

In the following, we will examine Jonah's narrative units diachronically in the order of their revelation according to Nöldeke's chronology. We will also situate these narrative units synchronically in the *sūras* in which they occur by benefiting from Anthony Johns' study on the narrative units concerning Jonah in the Qur'ān.

1.3.1 Jonah's fault:

The **first allusion** we will examine is in Q 68:48, "So wait with patience for the Command of thy Lord, and be not like the companion of the Fish when he cried out in agony." The allusion is manifested in the segment "the companion of the fish" (*ṣāhib al-ḥūt*) which is an onomastic unmarked allusion located in the external system of communication, in the narrator's direct speech to the addressees. Jonah is referred to not by his real name but with an epithet, the companion of the fish. The onomastic

⁴²⁵ Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 128

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 129

allusion thus becomes an allusion to Jonah's story as a whole since Jonah is referred to by the most distinctive element of his story, the fish.

For the cotextualization of the allusion, we note that God instructs the Prophet Muḥammad not to follow the example of Jonah. The immediate lexical surroundings in the narrative unit tell us that, unlike Jonah, the Prophet Muḥammad should be patient and wait until God makes His judgment. It is not only the immediate context of the allusion in Q 68:48-50 that hints to what the Prophet should not follow from Jonah's actions but also the *sūra* in which Q 68:48 is located. As Anthony Johns puts it, "the essence of God's message is that Muḥammad [, unlike Jonah,] should endure rejection until his Lord makes His judgement."⁴²⁷ Thus, Jonah's fault is that he was not patient in the face of rejection and he did not wait until God made His judgment between him and his people.

The Biblical account tells us that Jonah disobeyed God's command to go and preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1:3). It tells us also that Jonah departed angry when God drew off the punishment of the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:1-5). Does Q 68:48-50 display any parallelism with those two incidents? In fact, Q 68:48-50 neither coincides with Jonah disobeying God's command to go and preach to Nineveh nor is it related to Jonah's departure from Nineveh angry because God forgave its people. It is clear that Q 68:48-50 is related to an event in Jonah's life where he took flight and was punished by being trapped inside the belly of the great fish. This is indicated in naming Jonah the companion of the fish (*ṣāhib al-ḥūt*) in Q 68:48 and in Q 68:49 that mentions casting off Jonah on the barren shore after being trapped inside the belly of the great fish. Yet, Q 68:48-50 is divorced from the first incident of Jonah's flight in Jonah 1:3. By drawing the parallel that Q 68 draws between Muḥammad and Jonah, it becomes clear that Jonah was preaching to his people when he was tried and became impatient in the face of their rejection of his message. Muḥammad is also preaching to the Meccans and God is telling him not to behave like Jonah and flee in the face of the Meccans' rejection of his message. Q 68:48-50 is thus speaking of an event in Jonah's life where he departs angry from the people to whom he was preaching because of their disbelief and not as in Jonah 1:3 where Jonah refuses to go and preach to Nineveh as God instructs him. Q 68:48-50 is also not an allusion to the second instance of Jonah's departure in anger resenting that God forgave the people of

⁴²⁷ Cf. Johns, "Jonah in the Qur'an," 54.

Nineveh (Jonah 4:1-5). There is ample evidence in Q 68:48-50 that it is related to Jonah being trapped inside the belly of the great fish, to his prayer inside the belly of the great fish, and to his subsequent deliverance by being cast off on the barren shore, all of which are incidents not narrated in Jonah 4:1-5. Moreover, we read nothing in Q 68:48-50 that speaks of resentment because God forgave the people of Nineveh or a departure in anger to the east side of Nineveh (Jonah 4:1-5). Thus, the Qur'ān in Q 68:48-50 speaks of an incident that is neither Jonah's flight in Jonah 1.3 nor his resentment and departure angry in Jonah 4:1-5. Therefore, it seems that Q 68:48-50 reflects a metatextual function. Through its onomastic allusion, it indirectly engenders commentary on the intertextual point of reference, the Biblical account: Jonah was preaching to his people when he became impatient and left them without waiting for God's judgment, so he was punished inside the belly of the great fish. The Qur'ān means an incident different from both the incidents narrated in Jonah 1:3 and Jonah 4:1-5.

Our **second allusion** is manifested also in Q 68:48 in the segment “when he cried out in agony.” This is a quotational unmarked allusion also located in the external system of communication, in the narrator's direct speech to the addressees. The allusion is to Jonah's prayer inside the belly of the great fish. Q 68:48 does not however quote the prayer itself (Jonah 2:2-10). Jonah is called the companion of the fish in Q 68:48 and in Q 68:49 he is cast off on the barren shore. Thus, although the semantic meaning of the allusive signal does not explicitly state that Jonah's cry in agony was from inside the belly of the great fish, it is understood that this was the case. The cotextualization of the allusion: Jonah, the companion of the fish as he is called in the verse, cried out inside the belly of the fish because of extreme agony. The Prophet is instructed not to follow the example of Jonah and Q 68:48-50 shows the situation in which Jonah was when he did not await patiently for God's judgment and thus warns the Prophet Muḥammad that he might himself be in a similar situation. The function of the allusion is an intratextual function to further setting characterization.

The **third allusion** is manifested in the italicized segment of Q 68:49, “Had not Grace from his Lord reached him, he would indeed *have been cast off on the naked shore*, in disgrace.” This is a quotational unmarked allusion also located in the external system of communication, in the narrator's direct speech to the addressees. It

is an allusion to Jonah 2:11. Jonah in the Biblical account was, as in the Qur'ān, also vomited onto the shore after being swallowed by the great fish.

For the cotextualization of the allusion, the allusion to this event is placed as the apodosis of a conditional statement that stresses that it was only through God's grace that Jonah was cast off on the barren shore not in disgrace. This refers again to the warning to the Prophet Muḥammad that he might find himself in a similar situation if he did not act patiently. He is informed here that it was only through God's grace that Jonah was cast off not in disgrace and so it will be only through God's grace that Muḥammad might be saved from distress if he does not wait in patience for God's judgment. The allusion has an intratextual function of event foreshadowing (the choosiness of Jonah among the righteous in Q 68:50) and an intertextual function of contributing to the reality effect of the narrative by explaining further an event in the life of Jonah.

1.3.2 On the Second and Third Problems

1.3.2.1 Q 37:139-148, A Summary of Jonah's Story

As Johns affirms, Jonah's appearance in Q 37 is among the appearance of many prophets who "All preached the coming of a Day of Resurrection, and a punishment for disbelief." But Jonah's appearance

marks a climactic point in the *sūra*. He is set apart from his predecessors in relation to the tests to which they were put, the dangers from which they were saved, and the fates of the peoples to whom they preached in vain. Of them, he is the only one who turned aside from his call, was described as *mulīm* (i.e. guilty of a blameworthy act), and the only one whose people eventually heard his message, and were saved.⁴²⁸

Our **fourth allusion** manifests itself in Jonah's flight to a ship fully laden in Q 37:140 ("When he ran away to the ship (fully) laden"). This is possibly an unmarked quotational allusion to Jonah 1:3 and it is also located in the external system of communication. The modification of the allusion could be described as follows: while

⁴²⁸ Cf. Johns, "Jonah in the Qur'an," 57.

in Jonah 1:3 Jonah is explicitly fleeing from the presence of the Lord, in Q 37:140 Jonah is simply fleeing away and it is not specified from whom, why, or to where. Jonah is simply boarding a ship and fleeing. This opens the door for several interpretations. Even opens the door for the question of the validity of this allusion.

When we turn to the cotextualization of the allusion, we find that the narrative unit does not state from whom or why did Jonah flee. It is only when Q 68:48-50 is read in conjunction with Q 37:140 that it is clear that Jonah fled not from God's command to go and preach to Nineveh as in the Biblical account but he was already preaching God's message when he decided to flee. Jonah left his people and was not patient with their disbelief, as Q 68:48-50 situated within the context of the whole of Q 68 indicates. The connotations of an allusion to Jonah 1:3 cannot be brought from the Biblical account to the text since they are divorced from it. The allusion is not to the first segment of Jonah 1:3 ("But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD"). Rather it is to the second segment of Jonah 1:3 that speaks of the ship, ("and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish"). The Qur'ān is however interested in indicating that the ship was fully laden not to where it was heading. The function of this allusion is intratextual function of characterization of setting and plot. The allusion also has an intertextual function. It points to an event in Jonah's life which is presented as nonfictional. The intertextual function of this allusion thus adds reality effect to the events narrated.

The **fifth allusion** manifests itself in the casting of the lot in Q 37:141 ("He (agreed to) cast lots, and he was condemned"). This is an unmarked quotational allusion to Jonah 1.7 which reads, "And they said every one to his fellow: 'Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah." This allusion is also located in the external system of communication. There is a modification of the allusion; while in Jonah 1.7 it is stated that the sailors suggested to cast a lot and expressed their reason for casting it, in Q 37:141 it is only mentioned that Jonah participated in the lot and that the lot fell upon him.

As for the cotextualization of the allusion, Jonah's flight to the ship involves the casting of the lot and the allusion in Q 37:141 is part of the series of events from the moment Jonah fled to the ship until the final event mentioned in the narrative unit in Q 37:148. The function of the allusion is intratextual function of characterization of

plot: the casting of the lot recalls several connotations from the Biblical account or from the extra anecdotal traditions, e.g. that the sailors recognize that there is a guilty person aboard the ship and they want to know him by casting lots or that they decide to cast lots to lighten the ship's load, etc. Another function is the foreshadowing of events where the allusion foreshadows the event that Jonah is thrown into the sea and is swallowed by the great fish. The allusion also has an intertextual function. The event of casting the lots is presented as nonfictional, thus it adds reality effect to the narrative pericope.

The **sixth allusion** is in the italicized segment of Q 37:142, "Then *the big Fish did swallow him*, and he had done acts worthy of blame." It is an unmarked quotational allusion to Jonah 1:17 located in the external system of communication. Jonah 1:17 reads, "now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." There are modifications of the allusion. While in Jonah 1:17 the interest is to show that the Lord had prepared the great fish to swallow Jonah and that Jonah stayed for three days and three nights inside the belly of the fish, in Q 37:142 it is the main narrator (God) who speaks and the center of the narrative is that the big fish did swallow Jonah because he had done acts worthy of blame, he was guilty of something (*mulīm*).

For the cotextualization of the allusion we have the event that Q 37:141 foreshadows transpires, Jonah is thrown into the sea and the great fish does swallow him. The narrative unit is keen to mention that when the big fish did swallow Jonah, he had done acts worthy of blame. The act worthy of blame we know already from Q 68:48-50. Q 68:48-50 tells us that Jonah was *mulīm* because he was not patient in the face of the rejection of his people and he did not await God's judgment, not that he fled from the presence of the Lord and disobeyed a direct order to go and preach to Nineveh. The allusion has an intratextual function of foreshadowing events (Jonah's prayer inside the belly of the great fish), characterization of figure (Jonah was worthy of blame and deserved the punishment of being swallowed by the great fish), and characterization of setting and plot (the connotations that can be brought to the text is that Jonah remained inside the belly of the big fish for three days and three nights). The allusion also has an intertextual function. Here also the event of the fish swallowing Jonah is presented as nonfictional, thus adding reality effect to the narrative pericope.

The **seventh allusion** manifests itself in the italicized segment of Q 37:143-4,

“Had it not been that he (repented and) glorified Allah, (143) he would certainly have remained inside the Fish till the Day of Resurrection (144).” It is an unmarked quotational allusion to Jonah 2:1-10 and is also located in the external system of communication. But there is a difference between the alluding statement and the alluded-to statements, the modification of the allusion. In Jonah 2:1, it is mentioned that Jonah prayed inside the belly of the fish and afterwards in Jonah 2:2-9 his prayer is quoted. Then in Jonah 2:10 it becomes clear that the Lord forgave Jonah which is expressed in the act that He ordered the big fish to vomit out Jonah on the shore. We thus have in Q 37:143-4 an allusion to the whole episode in Jonah 2:1-10 but the prayer itself is omitted. It must be noted also that there is an additional narrative detail in Q 37:143-4: Jonah would have stayed inside the belly of the fish until the day of the resurrection had he not prayed to God for forgiveness. Also it must be noted that the actual end in Jonah 2:10 where the fish vomits out Jonah is not mentioned in Q 37:143-4 but implicitly understood. As to the cotextualization of the allusion, the event that was foreshadowed by Q 37:142 transpires; Jonah prays for forgiveness inside the belly of the fish. The function of the allusion is an intratextual function of foreshadowing an event, Jonah is liberated by being vomited out on the barren shore in Q 37:145. The allusion’s function is also setting evocation of the prayer inside the belly of the great fish.

For Q 37:145 “But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness, (145)”, there is no allusion. In the Biblical story Jonah is simply cast onto the dry land and immediately the word of God comes to him to rise and go preach to Nineveh which means that he was not cast onto the shore in a state of sickness. Here, once again, the Qur’ānic account differs from the Biblical story.

Q 37:146 (“And We caused to grow, over him, a spreading plant of the gourd kind”) is also not an allusion and differs from the Biblical story. The gourd is only mentioned in the Jonah Biblical story when Jonah leaves Nineveh displeased that God forgave its people. And while waiting to see what will become of the city, the gourd plant grows to give him shadow over his head (Jonah 4:1-6). In Q 37:146 the gourd is mentioned explicitly to have grown over Jonah (to help heal him) after being vomited out by the great fish on the barren shore in a state of sickness.

Q 37:147 (“And We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand (men) or more”) is also not an allusion to any event in the Biblical story of Jonah. Indeed, it cannot be taken as an allusion to Jonah 4:11, as Reynolds considers it to be. Above

all, because Q 37:147 speaks of commissioning Jonah to preach to an unnamed city in a fresh mission. While, on the other hand, Jonah 4:11 is the epilogue of the narrative in the Biblical story and it does not speak at all of a commissioning of Jonah with a mission. Q 37:147 cannot also be taken as an allusion to Jonah 3:1-2 where Jonah is commissioned to preach to Nineveh for the second time. This is particularly because the first Biblical incident where God commissions Jonah to preach to Nineveh and Jonah refuses to preach to the city and attempts to escape God's presence is nonexistent in the Qur'ān. Q 37:147 speaks of one of two cases: either Jonah was sent to the people to whom he was preaching and whom he left on account of their rejection of God's message or he was sent by God to new people. We do not have to decide which was the case here. However, we shall address this issue in the conclusion of this case study.

With Q 37:148, the story in Q 68:48-50 and 37: 139-148 comes to a close. The people to whom Jonah was sent again or the new people to whom he was sent (after departing angry from the first people) become believers. Q 37:148 reads, "they believed; so We permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while."

1.3.2.2 Q 21:87-88, Jonah Departs in Wrath

Let us first take note here of Johns' remark on the place of Jonah in Q 21 because it has direct relationship to the fault of Jonah that we identified above. Johns writes,

"His [i.e. Jonah's] placing [in the *sūra*] is significant. He is set between Job, who exclaimed, Hurt has indeed touched me, though You are the most merciful of the merciful (Q. 21:83), and Zechariah, who called, Do not leave me childless, when You are the best of inheritors (Q. 21:89). After the two verses telling of Job (Q. 21:83-4), Ishmael, Idris and Dhu'l-Kifl are mentioned in a single verse. It is said of them: All were of those who endured in patience (Q. 21:85). Job is proverbial for his patience. There is thus a delicate emphasis on the fact that patience, when Jonah *departed enraged* (*mughāḍiban*, Q. 21:87), was a quality in which Jonah had fallen short."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ Cf. Johns, "Jonah in the Qur'an," 60-1.

Patience is thus once again stressed with respect to Jonah. It is a quality in which Jonah had fallen short as Johns remarks and the lack thereof is at the heart of his fault as indicated in Q 68:48-50.

The **eighth allusion** is manifested in Q 21:87 in the segment that reads, “And remember Zun-nun [*sic*], when he departed in wrath.” It is an unmarked quotational allusion to Q 37:140 located in the external system of communication. It is an intra-Qur’ānic allusion. In Q 37:140 we found that Jonah is simply departing and boarding a fully laden ship and we know from our analysis of Q 68:48-50 that he left his people and was angry with them. This is confirmed by Q 21:87 where Jonah is angry from something/someone not escaping from someone or a task (as in Jonah 1:3). Jonah is angry because of the disbelief of his people and he leaves them. Thus, Q 21:87 adds to Q 37:140 that Jonah left in anger (wrath). Here Jonah is named Dha l-Nūn (the companion of the fish), again an indication that the event of the flight is that which is connected with the fish swallowing Jonah, just as in naming Jonah *ṣāhib al-ḥūt* in Q 68:48. The function of this allusion is metatextual since it represents a commentary on Q 37:140, adding that Jonah departed in wrath.

The segment of Q 21:87 which reads “He imagined that We would not exercise restriction over him!” might be suspected as an allusion to Jonah 1:3 where Jonah thought that he can escape from God and His Will unpunished. Nonetheless, the word *naqdir* in Q 21:87 is not in the sense of “having power over” but rather it is in the sense of “exercise restriction over” as the exegetes understood it, *naqdir* means ‘to exercise restriction’ (*nudayyiq*) as in *qadara* and *yaqdir* (to restrict or to limit) in Q 89:16, 65:7, and 17:30. Thus Jonah did not imagine that God had no power over him but rather he imagined that He would not exercise restriction over him. There is no allusion here to Jonah 1:3. What we have is a commentary on Q 37:140: Jonah thought that God would not punish him for leaving the people to whom he was preaching without permission.

The whole pericope in Q 21:87-8 starts with one allusion to Q 37:140 and functions as commentary on the account given in Q 37:139-148 and by chaining on Q 68:48-50 as well. The segment “but he cried through the depths of darkness, “There is no god but thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!”” of Q 21:87 is Jonah’s prayer inside the belly of the great fish and refers back to Q 37:143-4. If it is taken as an allusion to Jonah’s prayer in the Biblical account (Jonah 2:2-9), it is thus one that modifies that prayer. Likewise, Q 21:88, “So We listened to him: and delivered him

from distress and thus do We deliver those who have faith,” is further commentary on Q 37:143-4. In light of Jonah’s departure in wrath in Q 21:87 the command to the Prophet Muḥammad in Q 68:48 is to remember Jonah’s flight in wrath and not to behave similarly with the Meccans.

1.3.3 The exception (*istithnā*) of Jonah’s people

Q 10:98 reads, “If only there had been a community (of all those that were destroyed of old) that believed and profited by its belief as did the folk of Jonah! When they believed We drew off from them the torment of disgrace in the life of the world and gave them comfort for a while.” Q 10:98 is an unmarked quotational allusion to Jonah 3:5-10 located in the external system of communication. The modification of the allusion lies in the fact that there are no details on how the people of Jonah believed where all what Q 10:98 communicates is that they all believed and God drew off the punishment from them. On the other hand Jonah 3:5-10 gives much more details such as that they proclaimed fasting, put on sackcloth, etc. All such details are not mentioned in the allusive signal, the allusion aims to stress the fact that all the people of Jonah believed and that is why God drew off the punishment from them. This supports the opinion in the exegetical literature (of Ibn Kathīr, al-Biqā‘ī, and Quṭb) that the exception lies in the fact that they all believed not in that they were exempted from God’s *sunna*.

The cotextualization of the allusion is that from all the nations to which Prophets have been sent only the people of Jonah believed, all of them, and they were rewarded comfort in this world for a while. The function of the allusion is metatextual. The allusion excludes all the details associated with the belief of the people of Jonah in Jonah 3:5-10 and focuses only on the fact that they all believed. Johns’ analysis of the *sūra* supports this understanding of the allusion and its function. As Johns notes, from among the prophets and their people whose stories are mentioned in the *sūra*, the people of Jonah are the only ones who believed and their belief was accepted and availed them punishment.⁴³⁰ So, the belief of all of Jonah’s people is also what is stressed in the *sūra* and not the details of the practices they performed when they believed. Johns emphasizes that “the story of Jonah and the fact that his people believed is embedded in the sura as a sub-text, underpins it, and is a key to its

⁴³⁰ Johns, “Jonah in the Qur’an,” 62.

structure... the Jonah verse (Q. 10:98) is the climax of the sura...⁴³¹ He wonders, “is there perhaps concealed within this sura a yearning that this [*sic*] people of Muḥammad might be as the people of Jonah, who after first rejecting their prophet, accepted him, and were spared the final punishment? There is still time for the Meccans to believe, and their faith to avail them.”⁴³²

1.4 Conclusion

Ibn Kathīr and Quṭb seem the closest to the text when they assert that Jonah’s fault was leaving the people to whom he was preaching without waiting for God’s permission to do so. The analysis of the allusions of Jonah’s Qur’ānic pericopes supports the idea that Jonah was not fleeing from God or angry with Him but rather he was frustrated with the disbelief of his people. The Qur’ānic account speaks of a single event on which Jonah departed angry with his people because of their disbelief. Despite that al-Ṭabarī, like Ibn Kathīr and Quṭb, thinks that Q 21:87 and Q 37:140 speak of a single event concerning Jonah’s flight, his idea that Jonah departed angry with God is not supported by the analysis of the allusions presented above. As for the question related to Q 37:147, i.e. whether Jonah was sent back to the same people whom he left angry or was sent to new people, it is a question beside the point. Nevertheless, Quṭb’s answer to this question seems more convincing. As indicated above, Quṭb asserts that God sent Jonah back to preach to the same people. This must have taught Jonah that with patience his people became believers and that he was wrong when he was pessimistic thinking that they will never become believers.

Al-Biqā’ī’s attempt to harmonize the Biblical and the Qur’ānic accounts is not supported by the analysis of the allusions of Jonah’s Qur’ānic story. To harmonize both accounts, al-Biqā’ī had to postulate an assumption from outside of the texts. The Qur’ān speaks of the gourd plant in relation to only one event; that which is after the big fish vomits Jonah on the barren shore. On the other hand, the gourd plant occupies two events in Al-Biqā’ī’s analysis. This is the only assumption from outside of the Qur’ān which is articulated explicitly by Al-Biqā’ī but there are more assumptions in his analysis that are implicit. For instance, that Jonah’s anger depicted in Q 21:87 was because God drew off the punishment of Jonah’s people not because of their disbelief. Nevertheless, despite the many details associated with the belief of Jonah’s people in

⁴³¹ Cf. Johns, “Jonah in the Qur’an,” 65.

⁴³² Cf. *Ibid.*, 66.

the Biblical account, al-Biqā'ī is not distracted from the fact that the exception lies in the belief of all of Jonah's people. Ibn Kathīr and Quṭb also assert that the exception lies in the fact that they all believed. Only al-Ṭabarī thinks that the exception was from God's established *sunna*. The analysis of the allusion of Q 10:98 and situating this verse within the context of Q 10 as a whole supports also that it is the belief of all of Jonah's people which represents the exception not that they were exempted from God's *sunna*.

The problems with Reynolds' analysis of the Qur'ānic story of Jonah start with considering that Q 68:48-50 contains an allusion to Jonah's objection to God's forgiveness of the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:1-5). It also stems from considering Q 21:87 and Q 37:140 to represent an allusion to Jonah's flight from the presence of the Lord as in Jonah 1:1-3 when Jonah refused to preach to Nineveh. Yet, an allusion in Q 68:48-50 to Jonah 4:1-5 is not tenable. Our analysis proves that this allusion is invalid and unsupported by the text. It shows that Q 68:48-50 is related to an event that does not have an exact parallel in the Biblical account. In Q 68:48-50 Jonah took flight and was punished by being trapped in the belly of the great fish. But he took flight from the people to whom he was preaching not from the presence of the Lord. Jonah also did not flee because God drew off the punishment from upon Jonah's people. The main shortcoming of Reynolds analysis is that he reads the Biblical account into the Qur'ānic account, denying that the latter in the midst of establishing allusions to the Biblical account is in fact establishing a new narrative that also departs from the Biblical account.

The methodical analysis of the allusions within the framework of the chronological order of the revelations as well as a synchronic perspective to the Jonah Qur'ānic pericopes led us to a new perception of Jonah's Qur'ānic story. Some of the end results of the analysis do not differ from the views already articulated by Muslim exegetes like Ibn Kathīr and Quṭb. Nonetheless, the arguments and the analyses through which these results are reached differ markedly from those put forward by our four selected exegetes. They shed new light on the sequence of events of the Qur'ānic story of Jonah as well as the ways the different pericopes of this story relate to each other and to the *sūras* in which they appear. Most importantly, the arguments expounded above shed new light on the interrelationships between Jonah's Qur'ānic story and its Biblical counterpart. In comparison to the Jonah Biblical story, Jonah in the Qur'an perpetrates a single blameworthy act. This main conclusion will come as a

surprise to one who reads the Jonah Qur'ānic story mainly in light of its Biblical counterpart. There are many narrative details shared between the Qur'ānic account and its Biblical counterpart. However, this is precisely in order to link the Jonah Qur'ānic story to the Biblical account and to simultaneously engender commentary on the latter.

Case Study 2: The Fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden and God Teaching

Adam the Names of everything

The creation account in the Qur'ān contains several episodes. In this case study, our focus will be on two episodes: the fall of the first couple, Adam and Eve, from the Garden and God teaching Adam the names of everything. Our first pericope according to the chronological order of the revelations as argued by Nöldeke is Q 20:120-121. It speaks of Satan whispering to Adam to convince him to eat from the forbidden tree. It reads,

But Satan whispered evil to him: he said, "O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?" (120) Then they twain ate thereof, so that their shame became apparent unto them, and they began to hide by heaping on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden. And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so went astray (121). (Q 20:120-1)⁴³³

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى
شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَىٰ (٢٠:١٢٠)
فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتَ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ
عَلَيْهِمَا مِن وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ
(٢٠:١٢١)

The next narrative pericope is Q 7:19-22. It speaks of God telling Adam and his wife to dwell in the Garden but not to eat from a particular tree. Next it speaks of Satan's temptation of the first couple and their failure to keep to God's command.

⁴³³ Q 20:121 is according to Marmaduke Pickthall's translation.

And (unto man) O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat from whence ye will, but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrong-doers.(19) Then Satan whispered to them that he might manifest unto them that which was hidden from them of their shame, and he said: Your Lord forbade you from this tree only lest ye should become angels or become of the immortals. (20) And he swore unto them (saying): Lo! I am a sincere adviser unto you. (21) Thus did he lead them on with guile. And when they tasted of the tree their shame was manifest to them and they began to hide (by heaping) on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden. And their Lord called them, (saying): Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you: Lo! Satan is an open enemy to you? (22). (Q 7:19-22)⁴³⁴

The third narrative pericope is Q 2:31-3 and 35-6. It starts with God teaching Adam all the names. The next incident mentioned in the pericope is God's command to Adam and his wife to dwell in the Garden but not to eat from a particular tree. It also mentions the failure of Adam and Eve to comply with this command.

“And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell me the names of these if ye are right." (31) They said: "Glory to Thee, of knowledge We have none, save what Thou Hast taught us: In

وَيَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٩:٧)

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوَاتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَتَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ (٢٠:٧)

وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ (٢١:٧)

فَدَلَّاهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوَاتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلْ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ (٢٢:٧)

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣١:٢)

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ

⁴³⁴ Q 7:19-22 is according to Marmaduke Pickthall's translation.

truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."(32) He said: "O Adam! Tell them their names." When he had told them, Allah said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?"(33)... We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression."(35) Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: "Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood - for a time." (36)" (Q 2:31-3 and 35-6)

الْعَلِيمِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢: ٣٢)

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئُهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ
قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ
... (٢: ٣٣)

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا
رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا
مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢: ٣٥)

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ
وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (٢: ٣٦)

2.1 The Exegetical Responses

Under Q 2:31-33, al-Ṭabarī cites three views on the nature of the names that God taught Adam. The first view is that God taught Adam the names of everything.⁴³⁵ The second view is that God taught Adam the names of the angels.⁴³⁶ And the third view is that God taught Adam the names of all of his offspring.⁴³⁷ Al-Ṭabarī prefers the second and third view, i.e. that God taught Adam the names of the angels and his offspring. The main argument that al-Ṭabarī presents as his justification of this choice is that the third person masculine plural pronoun (“*hum*”) used in “*‘arāḍahum*,” i.e. placed them before, typically refers to names of intelligent beings not inanimate

⁴³⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 1:514-17

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 517

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:517-18

objects or animals. Thus, of the three views cited only the angels and Adam's offspring fit with the third person masculine plural pronoun used in the verse. Al-Ṭabarī then notes that the view attributed to Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687–8) that emphasizes that the names taught to Adam are the names of everything is also possible. Particularly because the third person masculine plural pronoun (“*hum*”) is used in the Qur'ān to refer to a group which includes both intelligent beings and none intelligent beings as in “*fa-minhum*” (of them) in Q 24:45.⁴³⁸ Al-Ṭabarī then notes that “He placed them before the angels” in Q 2:31 would mean that God displayed before the angels the real entities to which the names refer (*'araḍa ahl al-asmā*).

Under Q 2:35, al-Ṭabarī cites the various views concerning the type of the forbidden tree, for instance that the tree was the grapes tree or the figs tree.⁴³⁹ Al-Ṭabarī then notes that the type of the tree is not identified or even hinted at in the Qur'ān. In his view, the tree is just a tree which God forbade to Adam and Eve in the Garden. Identifying its type would not increase one's knowledge of the meaning of the verse. In other words, it is beside the point.⁴⁴⁰

Ibn Kathīr cites the three views concerning the names that God taught Adam which al-Ṭabarī has cited earlier.⁴⁴¹ He contends that al-Ṭabarī's interpretation is not necessarily the correct one since, as al-Ṭabarī himself pointed out, the third person masculine plural pronoun is used in Q 24:45 to refer to a group which includes both intelligent beings and animals. Ibn Kathīr emphasizes that the correct interpretation is that God taught Adam the names of everything, their essences and their behaviour (*dhawātahā wa af'ālahā*).⁴⁴² Ibn Kathīr offers additional evidence to support his view, a prophetic tradition transmitted by al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The tradition does not speak of this episode rather it speaks of the intercession of the Prophet Muḥammad in the afterlife. The first part of the tradition speaks of the believers resort to Adam at the day of resurrection asking him to intercede for them with God. As the tradition relates, they do so because Adam is the father of all humans, God created him with His Hand, the angels prostrated to him, and that *God taught him the names of everything*. Based on this prophetic tradition Ibn Kathīr asserts that God taught

⁴³⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 1:518-19

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:551-56

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: 556-57

⁴⁴¹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, 1: 347

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 1: 348

Adam the names of everything.⁴⁴³ Ibn Kathīr is of the opinion that God displayed before the angels the names (*al-musammayāt*) of the entities not the entities themselves. In Ibn Kahtir’s terminology, *al-musammayāt* is used as a synonym of *al-asmā’* (the names).⁴⁴⁴

Under Q 2:35, Ibn Kathīr, like al-Ṭabarī, cites several views concerning the type of the tree that God forbade to Adam and Eve, for instance that the tree is the grapes tree or the figs tree.⁴⁴⁵ He adds a view (attributed to Abū l-‘Āliya) that indicates that the fruits of this tree caused those who eat from it to exert bodily waste (*yuhdith*). And in the Garden there is no exertion of bodily waste (*iḥdāth*).⁴⁴⁶ Another view that Ibn Kathīr cites is one attributed to Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 110/728 or 114/732) and it states that only the angels ate from this tree because they are immortal, i.e. that the tree was the tree of immortality.⁴⁴⁷ Out of all of these views concerning the forbidden tree Ibn Kathīr chooses none. Ibn Kathīr is with al-Ṭabarī that the text does not identify the type of the tree or hint at it. He is also with al-Ṭabarī that Knowledge of the type of the tree is beside the point. Knowing it does not add knowledge to the reader and not knowing it does not compromise the reader’s understanding of the verse in question.⁴⁴⁸

As for al-Biqā‘ī’s views concerning the two episodes at hand, he states that a name is said of the name of the thing (*ism al-tasmya*) and it also represents part of the essence of the thing named.⁴⁴⁹ This part of the essence to which the name refers is *al-ism al-ma‘rūḍ* (lit. the displayed name).⁴⁵⁰ For Adam, the name is a definite proper name (*‘alam*) and for the angels and those who don’t know the *ism al-ma‘rūḍ* it is unknown (*tawqīf*).⁴⁵¹ Adam thus knew the essence of all seen things (*al-ashyā’ al-mashhūda*). The angels witnessed those things as images and they did not understand the meaning of their names. God taught Adam the wisdom between *asmā’ al-tasmya* (*al-tasmyāt*) and the *asmā’ al-ma‘rūḍa*. So, in Adam’s knowledge the presence of everything is as an image and as a related name to this image, everything exists in this

⁴⁴³ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*, 1: 348-49

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 1: 349

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 1:364-365

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 1:365

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 1:365

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 1:365-66

⁴⁴⁹ Al-Biqā‘ī, *Naẓm al-durar*, 1:242

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 1:242

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 1:242

fashion in Adam’s consciousness.⁴⁵² What has been shown to the angels is only the *asmā’ al-ma’rūḍa*, the images of the part of the essences of things and they could not give them names. Like Ibn Kathīr, al-Biqā’ī states that the third person masculine plural pronoun “*hum*” is used to refer to names of intelligent beings, none intelligent beings, and inanimate objects. Thus, this pronoun points to the names of everything⁴⁵³ and Adam was taught the names of everything. Al-Biqā’ī notes also that God made every name point to the essence of the thing named. So, the name encompasses knowledge of the whole thing named. Therefore, when God taught Adam the names he taught him also knowledge of the things named. Thus God taught Adam knowledge of everything.⁴⁵⁴

As for the type of the forbidden tree, al-Biqā’ī is of the opinion of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr. He asserts that it is beside the point to specify the type of the tree. The context emphasizes the consequences of disobeying God not the type of the forbidden tree.⁴⁵⁵

Turning to Quṭb’s views on the two episodes under examination here, Quṭb states that what God taught Adam is the ability to give things and persons names.⁴⁵⁶ Quṭb is silent on what God showed the angels. He does not specify whether God showed them the names, the things named, or something else.

God forbade Adam to eat from only one tree. In Quṭb’s view it is a symbol of the forbidden. The forbidden is a necessity in earthly life. For, according to Quṭb, without the forbidden one’s will cannot be trained.⁴⁵⁷ Under Q 7:19, Quṭb notes that the Qur’ān does not identify the tree type because it does not add anything to the wisdom behind forbidding the tree.⁴⁵⁸ This makes it clear that forbidding the tree itself is the core issue. Eating from the tree is not lawful; this is what is meant, not the tree type.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵² Al-Biqā’ī, *Naẓm al-durar*, 1:243

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1:244

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:245

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:286

⁴⁵⁶ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, 1:57

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:58

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8:1268

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 8:1268

2.2 The Responses of Scholars of Islam in the West

Abraham Geiger's response represents the general mood with which the orientalist scholars approached the two episodes at hand. For Geiger, the Qur'ānic account concerning the names taught to Adam corresponds to the account given in Midrash Rabbah on Numbers (para. 19).⁴⁶⁰ Therein, Adam does not learn names from God but rather God brings before Adam the beasts, cattle, and fowl and Adam gives them names. Adam even gives a name to himself and identifies a name for God.⁴⁶¹ It is quite obvious that for the sake of seeking the origin of the story in antecedent traditions the specificity of the Qur'ānic narrative is sacrificed; the Qur'ānic account emphasizes that Adam learned the names from God.

As for the forbidden tree, Geiger states that Satan's first action after being cursed was to incite man in the Garden to eat from the tree of knowledge.⁴⁶² This identification of the tree as the tree of knowledge has no support in the Qur'ānic text. It only originates from the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions.

Roberto Tottoli's *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature* is a rare example of a recent treatment of the two episodes at hand. Tottoli is of the opinion that God taught Adam the names of all things.⁴⁶³ He thinks however that certain details are missing from the Qur'ānic narrative such as the type of the tree.⁴⁶⁴ In fact, as we will see shortly, nothing is missing. It is precisely that the tree type is not mentioned that contributes to the desired effect of the Qur'ānic narrative.

2.3 The Narrative Pericopes Through the Lens of their Intertextual Allusions

2.3.1 The First Allusion: Adam and Eve are Stripped off Their Innocence

2.3.1.1 The Alluding Text

Q 20:120-21, "But Satan whispered evil to him: he said, "O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?" (120) Then they twain ate thereof, so that their shame became apparent unto them, and they began to hide by

⁴⁶⁰ Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 99.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 99. The same view concerning the names is adopted by Arnold in his *Ishmael or a Natural History of Islamism* (Arnold, *Ishmael*, 152-3).

⁴⁶² Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, 101.

⁴⁶³ Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets*, 19.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 20.

heaping on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden. And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so went astray. (121)”

2.3.1.2 The Alluded-to Text

Gen 3:7, “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves girdles.”

2.3.1.3 The Analysis of the Allusion

Q 20:120 has no parallel in the Biblical account concerning the episode of the forbidden tree. In the Bible, it is the serpent that instills evil in Eve and convinces her to eat from the forbidden tree. Also in the Bible, the tree is identified as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). Q 20:120 is clear; Satan whispers to Adam that the tree is the tree of immortality and a “kingdom that never decays.” When Adam and Eve eat from the tree (Q 20:121) it turns out that Satan’s claims are false and are only intended to tempt the couple to eat from the forbidden tree.

As opposed to Q 20:120, Q 20:121 is an allusion. It is a quotational allusion to Gen 3:7 and is located in the external system of communication. There is a modification of the allusion; Q 20:121 does not mention explicitly that Adam and Eve were naked. It is implicitly understood that the couple were naked but not aware of their nakedness. When they eat from the forbidden tree they suddenly become aware of their nakedness and they see their genitals (*saw’ātuhumā*). The Qur’ānic verse states that they started to heap on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden to cover their nakedness. In the Bible verse, they sew fig-leaves together and made girdles. For the cotextualization of the allusion, we note that Adam and Eve disobeyed God when they allowed themselves to listen to and act upon Satan’s temptation. The consequences were immediate; Adam and Eve are stripped off their innocence. The veil that God made between them and their nakedness was removed. The function of the allusion is metatextual commentary. The Qur’ānic verse does not identify the type of the leaves that Adam and Eve heaped on themselves nor does it mention that the couple sewed girdles. Instead of these extra details, it focuses on drawing a vivid picture of the couple’s spontaneous reaction to being aware of their nakedness for the first time; they heaped from the leaves of the Garden on themselves to cover their ‘shame.’ The Qur’ānic verse also emphasizes that Adam sinned by eating from the forbidden tree and that this sin came as a result of disobeying God’s command.

2.3.2 The Second and Third Allusion: Adam and Eve are Wrongdoers (*Zālimūn*) and Their Shame is Manifested to Them

2.3.2.1 The Alluding Text:

Q 7:19-22 reads,

“And (unto man) O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat from whence ye will, but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrongdoers. (19) Then Satan whispered to them that he might manifest unto them that which was hidden from them of their shame, and he said: Your Lord forbade you from this tree only lest ye should become angels or become of the immortals. (20) And he swore unto them (saying): Lo! I am a sincere adviser unto you. (21) Thus did he lead them on with guile. And when they tasted of the tree their shame was manifest to them and they began to hide (by heaping) on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden. And their Lord called them, (saying): Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you: Lo! Satan is an open enemy to you? (22)”

2.3.2.2 The Alluded-to Texts:

Gen 2:16-7, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying: ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; (16) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’ (17)”

Q 20:121, “Then they twain ate thereof, so that their shame became apparent unto them, and they began to hide by heaping on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden. And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so went astray. (121)”

2.3.2.3 The Analysis of the Allusions

Q 7:19 is a quotational allusion to Gen. 2:16-7 located in the external system of communication. There is a modification of the allusion: in comparison to Gen. 2:16-7 Adam’s wife is mentioned in Q 7:19 and the type of the tree is not specified. Also Q 7:19, unlike Gen. 2:17, does not indicate that Adam will die if he eats from the forbidden tree. Q 7:19 only indicates that if Adam and Eve ate from the tree they will be blameworthy for their transgression, they will be wrongdoers (*zālimūn*). For the

cotextualization of the allusion, we note that in the immediate context of the allusion God warns Adam and Eve that they will be wrongdoers if they approach the forbidden tree. Satan whispers to them to eat from the tree and his mind is set on uncovering their genitals before their eyes (Q 7:20, “Then Satan whispered to them that he might manifest unto them that which was hidden from them of their shame...”). In his effort to convince the first couple, Satan claims that if they eat from the tree they will be angels and immortal (Q 7:20, “...he [i.e. Satan] said: Your Lord forbade you from this tree only lest ye should become angels or become of the immortals”). Satan even swears to the couple that he is a sincere advisor (Q 7:21, “And he swore unto them (saying): Lo! I am a sincere adviser unto you.”). The function of the allusion is metatextual commentary. God says to Adam that if they transgress and eat from the tree they will be wrongdoers. This differs from the Biblical account which mentions that God told Adam that he will die if he ate from the forbidden tree. Q 7:19 and its context make it clear that the tree isn’t the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is just a tree that God forbade to the couple and the obedience to God’s command is what is at stakes. The tree is a symbol of the forbidden regardless of its type. Certain claims of the tree type come only on Satan’s tongue (Q 20:120 and 7:20) but these are lies intended to tempt the first couple to eat from the tree. On the other hand, God, i.e. the narrator, always mentions the tree without mentioning its type (see Q 7:19, 20, 22 and Q 2:35).

There is also a quotational allusion in Q 7:22 to Q 20:121 manifest in the segment “their shame was manifest to them and they began to hide (by heaping) on themselves some of the leaves of the Garden.” This allusion is also located in the external system of communication and there is no modification of the allusion. For the cotextualization of the allusion, we note that in the immediate context of the allusion God mentions to the couple that He warned them of eating from the forbidden tree and already advised them that Satan is their enemy. These two additions represent the commentary of Q 7:22 on Q 20:121, thus the metatextual function of the allusion.

2.3.3 The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Allusions: On the Names-Episode and the Bountiful Fruits of Paradise

2.3.3.1 The Alluding Texts

Q 2:31-33 and 35-36 read,

“And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell me the names of these if ye are right." (31) They said: "Glory to Thee, of knowledge We have none, save what Thou Hast taught us: In truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom." (32) He said: "O Adam! Tell them their names." When he had told them, Allah said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?" (33)...We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression." (35) Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: "Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood - for a time." (36)”

2.3.3.2 The Alluded-to Texts

Gen 2:19-20,

“And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them; and whatsoever the man would call every living creature, that was to be the name thereof.(19) And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. (20)”

Midrash Rabbah on Numbers para. 19,

“When the Holy One, blessed be He! would create man, he took counsel with the angels, and said to them: ‘We will make man in our image;’ then they said: ‘What is man that thou art mindful of him? What will be his peculiarity?’ He said: ‘His wisdom is greater than yours.’ Then He brought beasts, cattle, and birds before them, and asked for their names, but they knew them not. But when He had created man He caused the animals to pass before him and asked him for their names, and he replied: ‘This is an ox, that an ass, this a horse and that a camel.’ ‘But what art thou called?’ ‘It is fitting that I should be called earthy, for I am formed of the earth.’ ‘And I?’ ‘Thou art called LORD, for thou rulest all Thy creatures.’”

Q 7:19, “And (unto man) O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat from whence ye will, but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrong-doers.(19)”

2.3.3.3 The Analysis of the Allusions

There is an allusion in Q 2:31 to the excerpt from Midrash Rabbah on Numbers (para. 19). The allusion is located in the external system of communication and the allusion marker is the question God put to the angels: “Tell me the names of these if ye are right.” There is no modification of the allusion. For the cotextualization of the allusion, we note that the text insists on not specifying “the names” (Q 2:31 and Q 2:33). The referent of “the names” offered in the alluded-to text cannot be brought to the alluding text because the latter insists on leaving “the names” unspecified (Q 2:31 and Q 2:33). Put differently, the alluding text insists on leaving “the names” open for a wider set of interpretation than the names of cattle, beasts, and fowl. The function of the allusion is metatextual commentary of excluding the specification of “the names” offered in the alluded-to text and allowing “the names” to have a wider set of interpretations in the alluding text.

Q 2:33 contains a quotational allusion to Gen 2:19-20 or to the excerpt above from Midrash Rabbah on Numbers. The allusion marker is “Tell them their names. When he had told them”. This allusion is located in the external system of communication. The modification of the allusion lies first in the fact that in the Qur’ānic verse Adam repeats the names that God taught him. In the Bible verse and in Midrash Rabbah, Adam is inventing names for the creatures showed to him and God accepts those names as the designation of those creatures. While in the Bible verses and in Midrash Rabbah God brought the creatures to pass before Adam, in the Qur’ānic verse it is not explicitly stated what has been made to pass before Adam and the angels. Thus, in the Qur’ān the episode of the names is open to a wider set of interpretations, even allowing the possibility that God taught Adam the knowledge of everything as in al-Biqā’ī’s ingenious interpretation elucidated above. It also allows the interpretation that God gave Adam the ability to name everything as Quṭb asserts. For the cotextualization of the allusion, we note that Adam is reciting back what he had learned of the names. We have an insistence in Q 2:31 and Q 2:33 on referring to “the names” without specifying the names of what exactly. Q 2:31 however mentions that Adam learned all the names. The context is one in which God challenges the angels.

The episode of teaching Adam the names is to demonstrate to the angels the superiority of Adam's knowledge. The "names" become an epithet that encompasses all the knowledge that God taught Adam. The function of the allusion is metatextual. The "names" mentioned in the Qur'ān are more comprehensive than the "names" given in the Biblical account or in Midrash Rabbah. It includes the names of phenomena and everything not only the names of cattle, fowl and beasts. Here the Qur'ān is keen to show that it is God who taught Adam those names. Or, put differently, He is the One who gave Adam the ability to give names to things, phenomena, persons, etc.

Our next allusion manifests itself in Q 2:35. It is an allusion to Q 7:19 also located in the external system of communication. There is modification of the allusion where in Q 2:35 there is the addition of "*raghadan*" which indicates that Adam and Eve ate of the bountiful fruits of the Garden in a state of care free and without the effort of laboring to plant or acquire these fruits. For the cotextualization of the allusion we note, again, that the type of the tree is not identified and the text is content with leaving the type of the tree unspecified because it is not the focus of the narrative. The focus of the narrative is on the disobedience of the first couple to God's command and their subsequent fall. Satan succeeds in getting them out of the Garden. The function of the allusion is metatextual of adding to Q 7:19 the state in which the first couple dwelled in the Garden. They lived and ate "*raghadan*" in a state of comfort, felicity, and without the need to labor for their sustenance.

2.4 Conclusion

The Qur'ānic text presents the reader with a wide range for the interpretation of "the names" because it insists on not limiting "the names" by any narrow specification (Q 2:31 and Q 2:33). Thus, Ibn Kathīr, al-Biqā'ī and Quṭb seem to be aligned with the text's spirit in leaving the names episode open for a wide interpretation. When Ibn Kathīr interprets "the names" as the names of everything, this interpretation would not only include cattle, beasts, and fowl but everything under the sun as well as phenomena. Al-Biqā'ī presents a wider interpretation than Ibn Kathīr. In al-Biqā'ī's interpretation, names are more than labels; they designate the essences of things and phenomena. Thus, "the names" include knowledge of the essence of everything. Al-Biqā'ī's interpretation of "the names" thus not only emphasizes that Adam received all of his knowledge from God but also that Adam received all knowledge of earthly

matters. Quṭb's interpretation is even wider than Ibn Kathīr and al-Biqā'ī's. In Quṭb's view, man receives the ability to name things, phenomena, animals and persons from God. Also, according to Quṭb, this ability is not limited to what exists at a certain moment in the history of humanity but extends to the names of what is yet to exist.

Our four exegetes do not differ among themselves as to the approach to the type of the forbidden tree. Despite that some of them, like al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, cite the views of earlier exegetes concerning the type of the forbidden tree, the four of them decline to specify it. In doing so, they align themselves with the text which refuses to specify the type of this tree (Q 7:19, 20, 22 and Q 2:35).

The Qur'ānic account shuns the specification of "the names" and the type of the tree mentioned in the antecedent traditions of the Qur'ān. Thus, it also shuns the specifications offered by Geiger of the names and the tree type. And to claim that certain details are missing, as did Tottoli with regard to the tree type, is misleading. As we have seen, the text itself rejects such specification.

Although the Qur'ānic narrative on the two episodes at hand seems short compared to its Biblical counterpart, the two Qur'ānic episodes are quite intelligible on their own. As we have seen, the allusions evident in the two episodes engender commentary on the intertextual point of reference. When the Qur'ān does not attach any specifications to the "names" it is more encompassing. It opens up the episode's interpretation to a wide range, possibly encompassing ideas, phenomena, animals and everything not only the names of cattle, fowl and beasts. Thus, as the analysis of this case study shows, the "names" mentioned in the Qur'ān are more comprehensive than the "names" mentioned in the Biblical account or in Midrash Rabbah. It is also important to note that the Qur'ān explicitly insists that God taught Adam these "names" (Q 2:31). Put differently, according to the Qur'ān, Adam was endowed by the ability to name everything by God Himself.

As for the forbidden tree episode, the text seems also to engender commentary on the intertextual point of reference. In Q 2:35-6 and Q 7:19-23, the Qur'ānic text focuses the attention of its audience on the main issue of the narrative, the first couple's sin of disobeying God's command. Thus, the forbidden tree figures in the narrative as the ultimate test of the couple's obedience to God and ultimately therefore it becomes a symbol of the couple's fallibility after the couple's disobedience. Before eating from the forbidden tree Adam and Eve had the ability to disobey or obey God, i.e. to commit evil or good. This is clear from Q 2:35 in which

the couple are warned from eating from the tree, where it is implicitly understood that eating from the tree is unlawful, i.e. would represent an evil act. Since the Qur'ānic text insists on not specify the type of the forbidden tree (Q 20:120-121, Q 7:19-22 Q 2:31-3 and 35-6), the text's intention behind the forbidden tree narrative thus seem to have nothing to do with the tree type but has everything to do with the test that Adam and Eve face and which proves their fallibility. Put differently, in the Qur'ān the type of the fruits of the tree does not influence man's morality or knowledge. It is the couple's transgression by disobeying God that leads to the break of the couple's innocence and their subsequent fall from the Garden (Q 2:35).

Case Study 3: Sarah's Laughter and Abraham's Intercession for Lot's People

The glad tidings of a son to be born to Abraham and Sarah, and Abraham's pleading for Lot's people are mentioned in Q 11:69-76. The glad tidings to Abraham and Sarah of a newborn are also mentioned in two other Qur'ānic pericopes: namely Q 51:24-30, and Q 15:51-60. Only two of these three pericopes mention Abraham's wife: namely Q 51:24-30 and Q 11:69-76. The focus of our analysis will thus mainly be on these two pericopes.

The first reference to Abraham's wife occurs in Q 51:29 where she is greatly surprised by the news that she will bear a son in her old age. The pericope reads as follows:

Has the story reached thee, of the honoured guests of Abraham? (24) Behold, they entered his presence, and said: "Peace!" He said, "Peace!" (and thought, "These seem) unusual people." (25) Then he turned quickly to his household, brought out a fatted calf, (26) And placed it before them.. he said, "Will ye not eat?" (27) (When they did not eat), He conceived a fear of them. They said, "Fear not," and they gave him glad

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ [٥١]
[٢٤]

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ [٥١ ٢٥]

فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ [٥١ ٢٦]

فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ [٥١ ٢٧]

فَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَحْزَنْ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِغُلَامٍ

tidings of a son endowed with knowledge. (28) Then his wife came forward, making moan, and smote her face, and cried: A barren old woman! (29)⁴⁶⁵ They said, "Even so has thy Lord spoken: and He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge." (30)

عَلِيمٍ [٢٨ ٥١]

فَأَقْبَلَتْ امْرَأَتُهُ فِي صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ

عَجُوزٌ عَقِيمٌ [٢٩ ٥١]

قَالُوا كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ [٥١

[٣٠

The second pericope contains the only Qur'ānic reference to Sarah's laughter (Q 11:71) as well as the Qur'ānic reference to Abraham's intercession for Lot's people (Q 11:74-6). It reads,

There came Our messengers to Abraham with glad tidings. They said, "Peace!" He answered, "Peace!" and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf. (69) But when he saw their hands went not towards the (meal), he felt some mistrust of them, and conceived a fear of them. They said: "Fear not: We have been sent against the people of Lut." (70) And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed: so we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob. (71)⁴⁶⁶ She said: "Alas for me! shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing!" (72) They said: "Dost thou wonder at Allah's

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَىٰ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَلَمَّا أَبَيْتَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ خَنِيذٍ [١١

[٦٩

فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكَرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ

مِنْهُمْ خِيَفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ

لُوطٍ [٧٠ ١١]

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنَاَهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ

وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ [٧١ ١١]

قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَىٰ أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا

إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ [٧٢ ١١]

قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحِمَتُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ [٧٣ ١١]

⁴⁶⁵ The translation of Q 51:29 is according to Marmaduke Pickthall

⁴⁶⁶ Q 11:71 is according to my translation. It reflects the Arabic more closely, especially the relationship between Sarah's laughter and its consequence; that is the messengers giving Sarah the glad tidings of a newborn.

decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, o ye people of the house! for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!" (73) When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings had reached him, he began to plead with us for Lut's people. (74) For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah. (75) O Abraham! Seek not this. The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth: for them there cometh a penalty that cannot be turned back! (76)

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَىٰ
يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ [٧٤ ١١]

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ [٧٥ ١١]

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ
وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ [٧٦ ١١]

3.1 The Exegetical Responses

Under Q 11:71, al-Ṭabarī transmits two views concerning what Sarah was doing standing (*qā'ima*). According to the first view, Sarah was standing behind the tent's curtain listening to the conversation between the guests and Abraham. And according to the second view she was serving the guests while Abraham was sitting with them.⁴⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī then offers several interpretations regarding the reason why Sarah laughed (*daḥikat*). As per the first of these explanations, Sarah laughed surprised that she and her husband are honoring the guests by serving them in person and the guests refuse to eat the food served.⁴⁶⁸ The second explanation has Sarah laughing because the people of Lot are unaware (*fi ghafla*) that the messengers of God arrived for their destruction.⁴⁶⁹ According to the third explanation, Sarah initially thought that the messengers want to do what the people of Lot are known to do but she laughed (out of relief) when she realized that they are not seeking sexual intercourse with men.⁴⁷⁰ The fourth explanation indicates that Sarah laughed because she saw her husband frightened. Abraham was frightened thinking that since the guests did not eat from the food he served to them they came to do evil to him and his wife.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 12:473.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 12:473.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 12:474.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 12:474.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 12:475.

According to the fifth explanation Sarah laughed when she received the good tidings of a son to be born amazed that she and her husband could still have children in their old age.⁴⁷² Al-Ṭabarī explains that some of the exegetes who offered this fifth explanation asserted that the verse contains an element that appears earlier in the verse while it should be understood as later (*al-muqaddam alladhī ma'nāhu al-ta'khīr*).⁴⁷³ In other words, the verse should read “And his wife, standing by, We gave her good tidings (of the birth) of Isaac, and, after Isaac, of Jacob. So she laughed.” Al-Ṭabarī then transmits a sixth explanation concerning a different meaning of *ḍahikat*, where it is suggested that the word *ḍahikat* means menstruated (*ḥāḍat*). Thus implying that Sarah menstruated (despite of her old age) when the messengers of God gave her the glad tidings of the newborn.⁴⁷⁴ In the seventh and last explanation, Sarah laughed out of relief that she and her husband are safe and that the messengers are sent to the people of Lot.⁴⁷⁵ Al-Ṭabarī himself prefers the view that Sarah laughed because the people of Lot are unaware (*fī ghafla*) while the messengers of God arrived for their destruction (the second view above).⁴⁷⁶ Al-Ṭabarī's justification of this choice is that the laugh is mentioned directly after the angels tell Abraham “Fear not, surely we are sent to Lot's people.” And since there is no reason to laugh in amazement because the angels told Abraham not to be afraid then the laugh is because the messengers of God have arrived for the destruction of Lot's people.

Under Q 11:74, al-Ṭabarī notes that some scholars have objected that Abraham argues (*yujādil*) with God. In al-Ṭabarī's view this objection is not warranted since God Himself asserts in the verse that Abraham “pleads with us for Lot's people.” According to al-Ṭabarī, the root of the problem is that Abraham argues with God's messengers but since this is easily deducible instead of “pleads with our messengers” (i.e. *yujādilu rusulanā*) the word “messengers” is omitted and the verse instead reads, “pleads with us.”⁴⁷⁷ As to Q 11:76, al-Ṭabarī observes that it is God's messengers who are directing the words to Abraham not God Himself. They order him to stop pleading for Lot's people for their fate is sealed and God's decree of their destruction is final.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷² Ibid., 12:475.

⁴⁷³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 12:476.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 12:476.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 12:477.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 12:478.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 12:489.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 12:494.

Under Q 11:71, Ibn Kathīr transmits several of the views that al-Ṭabarī transmitted earlier, namely the first,⁴⁷⁹ second,⁴⁸⁰ and sixth⁴⁸¹ view. Ibn Kathīr completely rejects three other views transmitted by al-Ṭabarī. He states that the view that Sarah laughed when she realized that the messengers do not want to do what the people of Lot are known to do is a very weak explanation.⁴⁸² And so is the view that Sarah laughed of Abraham’s fear from the messengers of God.⁴⁸³ Ibn Kathīr also objects to the view of Wahb ibn Munabbih that Sarah laughed upon receiving the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac. Ibn Kathīr’s objection stems from the fact that this is a reading opposite to what the verse directly states where the glad tidings are a consequence of Sarah’s laughter not the other way around.⁴⁸⁴ Finally, Ibn Kathīr endorses a new view: Sarah laughed when she heard that the messengers of God are sent to destroy Lot’s people, she laughed glad on account of this news because the people of Lot were extremely corrupt.⁴⁸⁵

Under Q 11:74, Ibn Kathīr offers an anecdotal tradition as an explanation. Therein, Abraham argues that God should spare the city if it has three hundred believers then argues that it should be saved if it has two hundred believers and so on in descending order until he argues that the city should be saved if it has one believer, i.e. Lot.⁴⁸⁶ At this point the messengers of God respond: “...Well we do know who is there: we will certainly save him [i.e. Lot] and his following,- except his wife: she is of those who lag behind!” Q 29:32. The anecdotal tradition thus resembles the Biblical account concerning the same situation. One of the main differences is that Abraham pleads for Lot’s people with God’s messengers not with God Himself.

Our third exegete, al-Biqā’ī, notes that when the messengers of God said to Abraham “Fear not, surely we are sent to Lot’s people” (Q 11:70), they also gave him the glad tidings of the birth of a son. Sarah was standing at the door of the tent and she overheard the good news delivered to Abraham so she laughed surprised that her husband could have a child at his old age. Al-Biqā’ī states that Sarah might have also thought that the child will be from another woman since she is both old and sterile. It

⁴⁷⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*, 7:451-2.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7:452.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7:452.

⁴⁸² Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*, 7:452.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 7:452.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7:452.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7:452.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7:453-454.

was particularly because Sarah was in such great surprise at the news, that the messengers gave her the glad tidings of a son and a grandson in person (*mushāfaha*) as per Q 11:71. Al-Biqā'ī's evidence for his understanding of the sequence of events is first the Biblical account (Gen. 18:10) where the messengers give Abraham the glad tidings and Sarah overhears them. He also offers evidence from the Qur'ān; specifically, Q 51:28 where Abraham receives the glad tidings from the messengers of God (“(When they did not eat), He conceived a fear of them. They said, “Fear not,” and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge”).⁴⁸⁷ In short, al-Biqā'ī is with the Biblical account that Sarah's laughter was on account of receiving the glad tidings of a son to be born.

As for Q 11:74, al-Biqā'ī observes that Abraham was arguing with God's messengers.⁴⁸⁸ He also notes that the use of the present tense *yujādilunā* (he argues with us) instead of the past tense (*jādalnā*) points that Abraham argued repeatedly.⁴⁸⁹ As Q 11:75 states, the motivation of pleading repeatedly for Lot's people is that Abraham is forbearing of faults (*ḥalīm*), compassionate (*awwāh*), penitent (*munīb*).⁴⁹⁰ Nevertheless, when the command comes to Abraham to stop arguing because the fate of Lot's People is already sealed, Abraham immediately ceases to plead for them.⁴⁹¹ Al-Biqā'ī then cites the Biblical account in full (Gen. 18), after which he does not comment on the fact that Abraham's intercession for Lot's people is with Gods messengers in the Qur'ān while it is between Abraham and God Himself in the Biblical account.

Our fourth exegete Sayyid Quṭb does not dwell much on Q 11:71. He suggests only one possible reason for Sarah's laughter which is that she laughed glad that the evil people of Lot will be destroyed.⁴⁹² Quṭb is also of the view that Abraham pleaded for the people of Lot with God's messengers, the angels (*al-malā'ika*). He remarks that God did not offer in the Qur'ān any details of this argument.⁴⁹³ So, all depictions transmitted in the exegetical literature of this argument are to be shunned.

3.2 The Responses of Scholars of Islam in the West

⁴⁸⁷ Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-durar*, 9:330-1.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 9:333.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 9:333.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 9:333.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 9:333-4.

⁴⁹² Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 12:1912.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 12:1913.

In western scholarship, Gabriel Said Reynolds is the only scholar who focused on the problem of Sarah's laughter. Reynolds suggests that Sarah's laughter was due to the news of a son to be born. He asserts that Sarah's role in the narrative with regard to this surprising news is to "express amazement...whether she does so through shouting, hitting herself or laughing."⁴⁹⁴ According to Reynolds, the evidence that support his view is along the following lines: First, the Qur'ān in Q 11:69-83 follows very closely the sequence of events in the Biblical account. Yet the Qur'ān neither reproduces the Biblical account nor provides an alternative to it. The Qur'ān develops into a homily on the Biblical account filled with brief references to the latter in a style suggesting that its audience already know the story.⁴⁹⁵ Second, Reynolds concludes "it is perfectly reasonable for the Qur'ān to allude to the laughter of Sarah without a detailed explanation thereof. It is also reasonable for the Qur'ān (in Q 11.71) to mention that laughter before the annunciation of Isaac's birth, and to expect the reader nevertheless to understand that the annunciation came first."⁴⁹⁶ This is according to the device of *ta'khīr al-muqaddam*, i.e. "understanding later that which appears earlier," which al-Ṭabarī pointed to.⁴⁹⁷

Third, the Qur'ān has another reason to implement this *ta'khīr al-muqaddam*, namely the rhyme pattern. Reynolds suggests that the Qur'ān wants to keep the rhyme scheme of the penultimate syllable of the last word of each verse to obey either *ī* or *ū*. Thus, bringing Sarah's laughter first in the verse and then the glad tidings of a son (Isaac) and a grandson (Jacob), where Jacob comes last in the verse because in Arabic it obeys this rhyme pattern.⁴⁹⁸

Very few scholars of Islam in the West have commented on Abraham's intercession for Lot's people and their comments came very brief. In a sign that he considers the Qur'ānic account is similar to the Biblical account, Henry Preserved Smith counts the intercession of Abraham for the people of Lot among the Abraham history narrated by the Qur'ān.⁴⁹⁹ On the other hand, Heinrich Speyer discusses Abraham's intercession for Lot's people but he also includes Q 29:32 in the discussion. He sees that the argument of Abraham to spare Lot's people in the Biblical account depends on finding righteous people in the city. Speyer observes that

⁴⁹⁴ Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 89.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 93-4.

⁴⁹⁹ Smith, *The Bible*, 69.

in the Qur'ān Abraham's argument is particularly based on saving Lot's people for the sake of Lot and his household. This is particularly an argument not based on Q 11:74 but rather on Q 29:32 which reads, "He said: "But there is Lut there [i.e. in the city]." They said: "Well we do know who is there: we will certainly save him and his following,- except his wife: she is of those who lag behind!"⁵⁰⁰

3.3 The Narrative Pericopes Through the Lens of their Intertextual Allusions

3.3.1 The First Allusion: Sarah's Laughter

3.3.1.1 The Alluding Text

Q 11:71 reads, "And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed: so we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob."

3.3.1.2 The Alluded-to text

Gen 18:12 reads, "So Sarah laughed within herself, saying: "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?""

3.3.1.3 Analysis of the First Allusion

Q 11:71 contains a quotational allusion to Gen. 18:12. The allusion is located in the external system of communication and the allusion marker is "she laughed." There is a modification of the allusion. Instead of "Sarah laughed within herself" as in Gen. 18:12, Sarah laughs openly in Q 11:71. In the first case, only an omniscient God and Sarah herself know about this secret laugh (see Gen 18:12-15). In the second case, she laughs openly in front of her husband and God's messengers. For the cotextualization of the allusion, we note that in Q 11:71 the glad tidings of a son and a grandson is a consequence of Sarah's laughter. Sarah laughed to the guests at the news that they are sent against Lot's people. So, God's messengers gave her the glad tidings of a son and a grandson. This is the direct understanding of Q 11:70-1.

Sarah is shocked when she receives the news of a newborn. So, in Q 51:29 she shouts (*ft̄ ṣarra*) and stricks her face with her hand and says: a barren old woman. In Q 11:72, she shouts: alas for me (*yā waylatī*), and she wonders if she and her old husband can still have children at their old age. Thus, in both Q 51:29 and Q 11:72

⁵⁰⁰ Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, 150-1.

Sarah's reaction to the glad tidings of a newborn is a *serious* shock; it contradicts the claims that she laughed upon receiving this news. The Qur'ānic narrative differs markedly from the Biblical account where Sarah laughs within herself and God confronts her with her secret laugh (Gen.18:12-5). In the Qur'ānic narrative God does not intervene in the events nor speaks directly to any of the narrative protagonists. Sarah laughs openly in Q 11:71 and there is nothing in the Qur'ān that resembles even remotely an incident where God confronts Sarah with a secret laugh.

There is an attempt, by al-Biqā'ī, to harmonize the Qur'ānic account with the Biblical account. Al-Biqā'ī assumes that Abraham received the good news of a son to be born immediately after God's messengers said: "Fear not: We have been sent against the people of Lot," in Q 11:70. Sarah overhears the news delivered to Abraham and so she laughs and perhaps, according to al-Biqā'ī, she also thought that the child will be from another woman because she is old and sterile. It is because Sarah was in a state of disbelief that the angels repeated the glad tidings to her (in Q 11:71) and also gave her the news of a grandson. The assumption on al-Biqā'ī's part that God's messengers gave Abraham the glad tidings of a son immediately after they said: "Fear not: We have been sent against the people of Lot," in Q 11:70 is however unwarranted. Nothing in Q 11:70 or Q 11:71 supports this claim. Furthermore, the segment "there came Our messengers to Abraham with glad tidings [i.e. *al-bushrā*]" of Q 11:69 is the speech of the narrator and is located in the external system of communication, i.e. the narrative protagonists are not aware of it. It is the opening line of the story for the audience, and the protagonists are neither aware of it nor is it directed to them. Thus, the glad tidings were not delivered to Abraham in Q 11:69.

Indeed, the Qur'ān depicts Abraham receiving the glad tidings of a son in Q 51:28 and Q 15:53 and Sarah receiving the glad tidings in Q 11:71. In two of these cases, namely Q 11 and Q 51, the text is narrating the responses of Sarah discussed above (i.e. Q 11:72 and Q 51:29). In the third case the text is narrating Abraham's reaction (Q 15:54). Nothing in these reactions mentions or hints to a laugh on Sarah's part. The problem with Al-Biqā'ī explanation is that he states that Sarah laughed upon the delivery of the news to Abraham based on nothing in the text itself; It is only supported by a reading of the Biblical incident into the Qur'ānic account and nothing more.

The reason of Sarah's laughter is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān. The analysis above however is evidence that Sarah's laughter is not due to the same reason

mentioned in the Bible. The Qur'ānic pericope and particularly Q 11:70 offers us the chance to hypothesize various reasons for Sarah's laughter. One reason for Sarah's laughter is that she laughed because she felt relieved and safe that God's messengers are sent against Lot's people not against her and her husband (the seventh view that al-Ṭabarī cites). Upon this laugh, God's messengers gave the glad tidings to Sarah. To consider that Sarah's laughter was due to the glad tidings of a newborn requires a rearrangement of Q 11:71; a move which is not needed in light of the straightforward explanation the alluding text directly suggests for the verse. The function of the allusion is thus metatextual commentary. Sarah's laughter is intended to be an intertextual allusion to comment on the incident in the Bible. The Qur'ānic account is modifying the Biblical account by asserting that Sarah laughed openly and her laughter was not due to receiving the glad tidings of a son to be born. The aim is to disentangle Sarah from laughing secretly and that she lied to God when He asserted that she laughed within herself. The allusion also has an intertextual function. The event of Sarah's laughter is presented as nonfictional, thus adding reality effect to the narrative pericope.

3.3.2 The Second allusion: Abraham's Intercession for Lot's People

3.3.2.1 The Alluding Text

Q 11:74-76 reads,

When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings had reached him, he began to plead with us for Lut's people (74) For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah. (75) O Abraham! Seek not this. The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth: for them there cometh a penalty that cannot be turned back! (76)

3.3.2.2 The Alluded-to Text

Gen. 18:20-33 reads,

20 And the LORD said: 'Verily, the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and, verily, their sin is exceeding grievous. **21** I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know. **22** And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. **23** And Abraham drew near,

and said: 'Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? **24** Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep away and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? **25** That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from Thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?' **26** And the LORD said: 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will forgive all the place for their sake.' **27** And Abraham answered and said: 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, who am but dust and ashes. **28** Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?' And He said: 'I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five.' **29** And he spoke unto Him yet again, and said: 'Peradventure there shall be forty found there.' And He said: 'I will not do it for the forty's sake.' **30** And he said: 'Oh, let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak. Peradventure there shall thirty be found there.' And He said: 'I will not do it, if I find thirty there.' **31** And he said: 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD. Peradventure there shall be twenty found there.' And He said: 'I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake.' **32** And he said: 'Oh, let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once. Peradventure ten shall be found there.' And He said: 'I will not destroy it for the ten's sake.' **33** And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left off speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned unto his place.

3.3.2.3 The Analysis of the Second Allusion

There is an allusion in Q 11:74 to Gen 18:20-33, the allusion marker is “he began to plead with us” (*yujādilunā*). This allusion is also located in the external system of communication. There is significant modification of the allusion; The Qur’ān is using a single word, i.e. *yujādilunā*, to point to the whole Biblical account concerning Abraham’s intercession for Lot’s people. For the cotextualization of the allusion, we note that in the Qur’ān Abraham is depicted as arguing with God’s messengers not directly with God. First of all, the spirit of the text supports that the interlocutors of Abraham are God’s Messengers not God. This is particularly the case because when the Qur’ān narrates, God is always the narrator and He very seldom participates as a protagonist of the narrative. Another evidence that Abraham is pleading with God’s messengers is the segment “the decree of thy Lord hath gone forth” of Q 11:76 which

fits the messengers speaking of the decree of God in the third person as opposed for example to “Our decree hath gone forth” which would fit God speaking in the first person. The segment “the decree of thy Lord hath gone forth” of Q 11:76 thus confirms that the utterances in Q 11:76 are by God’s messengers. There is yet another piece of evidence in Abraham’s pleading for Lot in Q 29:32. Q 29:32 reads, “He [i.e. Abraham] said: “But there is Lot there [i.e. in Sodom].” They said: “Well we do know who is there: we will certainly save him and his following,- except his wife: she is of those who lag behind!”.” (emphasis is mine). Clearly, Abraham’s interlocutors in the verse are God’s messengers, referred to by the pronoun ‘they.’ Thus, in all probability ‘he began to plead with us’ of Q 11:74 points to an indirect argument with God through arguing with his messengers.

As al-Biqā’ī notes, using the present tense *yujādilunā* instead of the past tense is indicative that Abraham pleaded repeatedly for Lot’s people. Yet, unlike the detailed Biblical account the Qur’ān does not depict any details as to the nature of Abraham’s pleading for Lot’s people. The response of God’s messengers to Abraham’s attempt to intercede for Lot’s people by the words “*a’rid ‘an dhālik*” (seek not this) also offers a different ending than that in the Biblical account. In the Biblical account, Abraham reaches a final point in the argument where if there are ten righteous men in Sodom God will spare the city. In the Qur’ān, Abraham is commanded by God’s messengers to “seek not this” which indicates that Abraham did not reach an agreement with God’s messengers concerning his intercession for Lot’s people; he was forced to leave off pleading for the survival of Lot’s people. The function of the allusion is again metatextual commentary. The Qur’ān engenders commentary on the incident in the Bible through the allusion. First, Abraham argues with God’s messengers not with God Himself. Second, no agreement on a condition to save Lot’s people is reached based on Abraham’s intercession for them. Abraham is forced to abandon pleading for Lot’s people for their fate is sealed; God’s punishment will befall them. The allusion also has an intertextual function. Abraham’s pleading with God’s messengers for Lot’s people is presented as nonfictional, thus adding reality effect to the narrative pericope.

3.4 Conclusion

Our four exegetes offer different views concerning the reason for Sarah’s laughter. While the choices of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and Quṭb are possible, the reason we

adduced above seems more convincing. Al-Biqā'ī's attempt to harmonize the Qur'ānic and the Biblical accounts regarding Sarah's laughter is unsuccessful. Al-Biqā'ī however is not always with the Biblical account. He is for instance in agreement with the other Muslim exegetes and with the Qur'ānic account that Abraham's argument was with God's messengers not with God Himself.

As Reynolds observes, most probably the first audience of the Qur'ān knew the Biblical story of Sarah's laughter. However, unlike Reynolds' analysis ours is not concerned with the meaning a certain audience have grasped in a certain historical condition, but rather with what the text says in light of its unity and coherence. The evidence we offered above does not tamper with the organization of the text. Considerations of the rhyme pattern is a poor evidence in our particular case, specifically because it recourses to rearranging the text to support a particular view only derived from the alluded-to text. While on the other hand careful contextualization of the allusion within the alluding text proves that the alluding text does not support the results of Reynolds' analysis.

Speyer's argument that Abraham's intercession was primarily to save the city for the sake of Lot's house is not supported by the verse that he cites. The Qur'ānic verse on which Speyer's argument depends is Q 29:32. Therein, Abraham does not utter the segment "But there is Lut there" as part of pleading for Lot's people. Rather, this segment was uttered out of concern for the survival of Lot and his household not for a concern of preserving the city.

The two Qur'ānic incidents at hand differ markedly from their Biblical counterpart. In the Qur'ān, Sarah laughs because she felt relieved that the messengers are sent against Lot's people not against them. Reaching this conclusion was not only possible through consideration of the meaning of Sarah's response to the glad tidings of a newborn, but also through consideration of the additional value to be gained from viewing these responses together. Only then it was possible to ascertain a specific character of Sarah's psychological state when receiving the glad tidings of a newborn and hence differentiate this state from that where she laughed.

Our analysis reveals two main differences in comparison to the Biblical account concerning Abraham's intercession for Lot's people. First, Abraham did not argue with God Himself but instead with God's messengers. Second, unlike the Bible where Abraham reaches an agreement with God at the end of his pleading for Lot's people, in the Qur'ān Abraham is told by God's messengers to leave off pleading for Lot's

people for their fate is sealed, they will be destroyed for their sins. Both elements became apparent through a contextual reading of the verses relevant to the episode where it became obvious that this is the only possible reading aligned with the spirit of the Qur'ānic text.

Conclusions

In this study, we started our examination by exploring previous scholarship on the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. Through a critical analysis from the vantage point of contemporary allusional studies, we have brought to light a number of the shortcomings of this scholarship. In summary, the following points need to be made in this regard:

Surveying Muslim exegesis, it is obvious that in interpreting the Qur'ānic narratives early and classical Muslim exegetes have accommodated a multitude of extra-anecdotal traditions and thereby they have actually reconfigured these narratives. Moreover, these extra-anecdotal traditions do not originate in the pre-Islamic context with any degree of certainty; their composition is quite obviously heterogeneous of Biblical, pre-Islamic Arabian, and Islamic elements. In short, they are pseudo-reconstructions of the pre-Islamic traditions against which the Qur'ānic narratives and their allusions took shape.

From the vantage point of modern allusional studies, in early and classical Muslim exegesis all of the necessary steps for the analysis of the allusion such as identifying its marker, the connotations it evokes through its particular formulation, and how these connotations are contextualized within the alluding text are absent. Instead what we find is that early and classical Muslim exegetes have compensated for this analysis with an amalgam of narrative elements derived from the extra-anecdotal traditions pointed to above. We may recall the example we discussed in the literature review where resolving the allusion to the witness mentioned in Q 12:26-7 concerning the failed temptation attempt of Joseph by Potiphar's wife became for early Muslim exegetes a matter of suggesting a referent for this allusion, i.e. an identity of the witness, based on information derived from various extra-anecdotal traditions. Early Muslim exegetes attached different identities to this witness. For example, the witness was identified as a wise man, a man with a beard, a cousin of Potiphar's wife, or an infant who miraculously spoke out in favor of Joseph. In effect, all of these views represent possible referents of the witness-allusion accompanied with some distorted connotations (compared to the connotations found in the extant pre-Islamic Biblical traditions) derived from various extra-anecdotal traditions; for instance, in identifying the witness as a man with a beard the connotations implied is that the witness is a wise man and in the case of the infant-witness the connotations become the miracle

associated with an infant speaking. With early Muslim exegesis available to them, classical Muslim exegetes cited in their works a multitude of possible referents and connotations for any allusion. They dealt with these citations by adopting one of two approaches: in the first approach, they did not declare their preference of a particular view and thus have basically left it up to the reader to choose the interpretation of the allusion from among possible referents and partial connotations. In the second approach, they declared their preference of a particular view and therefore were adopting the same attitude that the early Muslim exegetes espoused towards these allusions. In sum, instead of exploring the significance of the allusion's bi-directional reference in the modern sense, early and classical exegetes have compensated for this analysis with some of the allusion's possible referents and their partial connotations. Nonetheless, we must also bear in mind that classical Muslim exegetes did not always follow this scheme. Sometimes they have offered what in our terminology resembles a contextualization of the allusion within the alluding text. Unfortunately, however, they have done so by also relying on the possible referents of the allusion and their distorted connotations derived from the extra-anecdotal traditions. The example discussed in the literature review of Ibn al-Jawzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and al-Qurṭubī's treatments of the infant-witness allusion is a case in point in this regard.

As for modern Muslim exegetes, we have observed two main trends. First, we have observed that whether modern Muslim exegetes cited extra-anecdotal traditions, material from the Bible, or both, the vast majority of them have embraced an approach to the allusion very similar to classical exegesis. The works of Muḥammad 'Abduh, Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī, Wahba b. Muṣṭafā Al-Zuḥaylī, Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī, and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Ashūr represent examples of this trend. In this context, it should be noted that by citing excerpts from the Bible, some modern exegetes, such as Muḥammad 'Abduh, Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Ashūr, have brought to their works the full connotations of the allusion as they are expressed in the Bible. Nevertheless, they have not demonstrated whether the Qur'ān (i.e. the alluding text) intended that these connotations be brought to the text or whether the allusion modifies these connotations or not. As for the second trend, we have pointed to the scripturalist tendency in interpreting the Qur'ān of some modern Muslim exegetes, such as Sayyid Quṭb and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb. This approach has been anti-intertextual and has opted to examine the Qur'ānic narratives mostly independent of the relationships they form with their antecedent traditions.

Turning to Western scholarship on the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives, we first encountered the 19th and 20th century orientalists. It was observed that the orientalists depended on the notion of influence in approaching the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. This led them to advance the thesis that the Qur'ānic narratives are predominantly borrowings on the Prophet Muḥammad's part from Jewish and Christian sources. Some scholars such as Abraham Geiger, Charles Cutler Torrey, and J. Muehleisen Arnold were in favor of Jewish origins of the Qur'ānic narratives while several others such as Tor Andrae, Wilhelm Rudolph, and Theodore Nöldeke favored a mixed Jewish and Christian origins but have emphasized Christianity's influence or flow of oral religious instructions from Christian informants to Muḥammad. Within the borrowing thesis, the orientalists perceived the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives as representing 1) references to the sources from which Muḥammad supposedly borrowed bits of narrative details, 2) the ends towards which Muḥammad allegedly used these narrative details, and/or 3) imitations that only derive significance from their so-called 'original sources.' We have also observed that what defied this scheme was the multitude of instances of divergence in the Qur'ānic narratives in comparison to their antecedent traditions. Those instances the orientalists usually explained as lack of knowledge of the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions, accidental mistakes, or confusion on Muḥammad's part.

As for post-orientalist scholarship, there has been an approach which sought to understand the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives through the Muslim exegetical response to these allusions. This move is essentially erroneous, specifically because it disregards the borders between the text and its interpretation. We have also examined Sidney Griffith's approach to the allusions of the Qur'ānic story of the Companions of the Cave. As opposed to orientalist scholarship, Griffith has emphasized the oral nature of the Qur'ānic narratives and that they cannot be reduced to any presumed sources. Griffith asserted that the intertextual allusions of the story of the Companions of the Cave are to oral traditions that circulated in pre-Islamic Arabia among the pagan Arabs and Christian communities. This assertion on Griffith's part can be extended and applied to the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives in general; it is almost certain that such allusions were made to oral traditions that circulated among pre-Islamic communities in Arabia (pagan, Christian, and Jewish). It should be noted, however, that Griffith's study is an example of a post-orientalist approach that does not disentangle itself completely from orientalist scholarship on

the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives; it gravitates towards the reduction associated with the confused text theses. Note has also been taken of Angelika Neuwirth's approach to the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. Neuwirth's contribution to the study of the intertextuality of the Qur'ānic narratives is notable. Neuwirth rejects perceiving redundant repetitions in the Qur'ānic narratives or seeing their elements as dull echoes of Jewish and Christian traditions. Neuwirth's intertextual readings are groundbreaking because they recognize the particularity of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives and insist on contextualizing these allusions within the Qur'ānic text. Nonetheless, Neuwirth postulates allusions which are unwarranted; for instance, because of the weak syntactical and contextual echoes of these allusions to their presumed referent-texts. It has also been observed that Neuwirth derives unwarranted connotations from her postulated allusions; particularly because she implicitly assumes that the first audience of the Qur'ān had extremely broad and extensive knowledge of Jewish and Christian traditions. Finally, we have examined Gabriel Said Reynolds' reading of the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. Unlike Griffith and Neuwirth's largely historical reading of the Qur'ānic narratives, Reynolds' offers an exclusively literary reading of the intertextual allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. In doing so, Reynolds mentions a wealth of Jewish and Christian traditions that he sees the Qur'ānic narratives to be in conversation with. He also avoids the reduction of the borrowing thesis. Nevertheless, Reynolds, like Griffith and Neuwirth, does not rely in his analysis on any literary model for the analysis of the intertextual allusion. Therefore, in his analysis he overlooks several procedures necessary for an adequate assessment of the intertextual allusion. Instead, Reynolds' reading is primarily controlled by the capacity of the intertextual points of reference to supply solutions for the exegetical problems that the Muslim exegetes faced.

We have taken note of the shortcomings of previous scholarship on the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives and avoided repeating them in our analysis. Furthermore, the main goal of our study has been to suggest and apply a literary approach to these allusions that not only overcomes these shortcomings but also is comprehensive enough for an adequate analysis of these allusions. The first and most obvious problem with previous scholarship on our subject matter was the lack of dependence on a literary model for the analysis of the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives. Therefore, instead of approaching the allusion without employing a theory-informed method, we have adopted a comprehensive model for the analysis and description of

the intertextual allusions, namely Hebel's scheme. Hebel's scheme offered us a systematic method for examining the allusion and comprehensively contextualizing it. For instance, in analyzing the allusion in Q 11:71 to Gen. 18:12 concerning Sarah's laughter Hebel's scheme has allowed us to identify the allusion marker and the modification of the allusion where it became evident that the Qur'ān is not depicting Sarah laughing within herself as in the Biblical account. Then, it was through cotextualization of the allusive signal that it also became evident that Sarah's laughter is not presented as a consequence of receiving the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac. Through further cotextualization of the allusion, we could differentiate between the state in which Sarah was upon receiving the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac and the state in which she laughed. All these observations led us to the genuine significance of the allusion to Sarah's laughter in relation to the Biblical account; it became obvious that the Qur'ānic account is disentangling Sarah from laughing secretly and from lying to God when He asserted that she laughed within herself.

Besides Hebel's model for the analysis of the allusion, a whole range of theoretical and methodological premises has been postulated, without which a comprehensive analysis of the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives would have been unfeasible. We first needed a framework that describes the verses of the Qur'ānic narratives within the density of their existence. Therefore, Foucault's notion of the statement's field of coexistence was adopted. Foucault's divisioning of the statement's field of coexistence has been successfully applied in mapping out the field of interrelations of the verses of the Qur'ānic narratives and in valuing them as more than sentences and propositions. From this standpoint, we analyzed the allusions of the Qur'ānic narratives as representing meaning values influenced by their relationship to other verses in the same narrative unit, to other narrative verses relevant to the episode or protagonist under examination, to other verses in the *sūras* in which they are located, to the whole text of the Qur'ān, and to verses in the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions. Put differently, we have looked at the statements of the Qur'ānic narratives through the lens of the totality of the interrelations they form within the text of the Qur'ān and outside the text of the Qur'ān with its antecedent traditions. An example of observing these interrelations of signification is the case of the narrative units of Jonah's story where situating the Jonah pericopes and their intertextual allusions within the entire *sūras* in which they are located was instrumental in deciphering the significance of these allusions. The case concerning

how we deciphered Jonah's fault from a reading of Q 68:48-50 situated within Q 68 stands out in this regard. Without a reading of this narrative pericope within the entire *sūra*, it would have been unattainable to know that Jonah's fault is that he was not patient in the face of the rejection by his people and that he did not wait until God made His judgment between him and them.

In this dissertation, we have embraced a second theoretical position besides Foucault's notion of the statement's field of coexistence. Instead of approaching the text from an author or reader-oriented perspective, we have approached it from a textual perspective. Our textual hermeneutics has been based on Umberto Eco's interpretive theory with the notion of the intention of the text at its heart. It was shown that Eco's notion of the intention of the text is a formulation of the intertwining of the three meaning-producing entities of the text's significance: the author, the text, and the reader. It is this quality which gave Eco's interpretive theory its comprehensive nature as a theory for the interpretation of texts. We have encountered the intention of the text several times in the analysis of our case studies. For instance, the case of the allusion in Q 7:19 to Gen. 2:16-7, where the type of the tree that God forbade to Adam and Eve is not specified in Q 7:19. The intention of the text confirmed that specifying the type of this tree has been disregarded at every possible chance in the text. Indeed, the Qur'ān consistently mentions the forbidden tree without specifying its type (Q 7:19, 20, 22 and Q 2:35). Another example of the intention of the text concerns appreciating the consistency with which the Qur'ān referred to the "names" in the names-episode without further specification (Q 2:31 and 33). Similarly, we have appreciated the consistency with which the text depicted Sarah's response to the glad tidings of a newborn in Q 51:29 and Q 11:72. The text depicted a serious shock articulated in a specific manner that contradicts that Sarah laughed when she received the news of a newborn. Perceiving all of these cases of consistency within the Qur'ān was possible only by means of paying attention to the intention of the text. It should be mentioned also that in our analysis we have looked for the intention of the text in wider horizons than groups of verses. For instance, through considering the spirit of the Qur'ānic text we could initially postulate that Abraham did not plead with God himself. This is particularly because in the Qur'ān God is always the main narrator and seldom participates as a protagonist of the narratives. This was the general intention of the text. We have confirmed it with additional evidence from Q 29:32 and Q 11:76. Q 29:32 reads, "He [i.e. Abraham] said: "But there is Lut there." *They* said:

“Well we do know who is there: we will certainly save him and his following,- except his wife: she is of those who lag behind!”” The plural pronoun ‘they’ in Q 29:32 proves that Abraham’s interlocutors are God’s messengers not God Himself. Also, the segment “the decree of thy Lord hath gone forth” of Q 11:76 made it highly probable that those who speak to Abraham are God’s messengers since they speak of God’s decree using the third person pronoun. Yet, the most blatant result from considering the intention of the text concerning the narratives of the Qur’ān is that employing the literary device of the intertextual allusion is certainly a semiotic strategy of the text.

The above insights that Eco’s concept of the intention of the text has afforded us have been gleaned through a synchronic reading of the text. Indeed, by virtue of being a canonized text emanating from a single authority (according to this study’s standpoint concerning the text’s origins and history) and because of a prominent feature of self- referentiality, the Qur’ān demands that its verses be linked to each other and read together as a coherent whole.⁵⁰¹ We have embraced this tenet time and again in our analysis. For instance, when we emphasized that the text has its own usage of language within the textual field of its canonized final form. We have insisted with Bint al-Shāṭi’ that all of the linguistic insights concerning any Qur’ānic term should be measured against the Qur’ān’s particular usage of the term and its derivatives. So, we have initially postulated that the meaning the text attaches to the verb “*naqdir*” in the Qur’ānic story of Jonah is ‘to exercise restriction’. But it was only possible to confirm this insight by taking into consideration other instances of using derivatives from the same root in the Qur’ān, e.g. *qadara* and *yaqdir* (to restrict or to limit) in Q 89:16, 65:7, and 17:30.

In spite of the synchronic nature of our study, a diachronic perspective to the text was not excluded. A reading according to the chronological order of the revelations helped reveal the intra-Qur’ānic allusions in the text, e.g. the allusion in Q 21:87 to Q 37:140. The analysis of this allusion has added to our knowledge that Jonah left his people angry and displeased with their disbelief. From a diachronic perspective, intra-Qur’ānic allusions are commentary on events the Qur’ān already narrated but wants to expand or comment upon. In a solely synchronic study, intra-Qur’ānic allusions are simply overlooked. Indeed, Reynolds appears to have overlooked the aforementioned intra-Qur’ānic allusion and has mistakenly taken Q 21:87 as an allusion to Jonah’s

⁵⁰¹ Various examples of the Qur’ān’s self-referentiality have been discussed by Stefan Wild in an

first blameworthy act of refusing to preach to Nineveh (i.e. Jonah 1:1-3).⁵⁰² Yet, to consider such intra-Qur'ānic allusions made to the antecedent traditions of the Qur'ān, as Reynolds did in this particular case, is to create confusion and distort the meaning the text wants to communicate; there is no instance in the Qur'ān that speaks of Jonah refusing to preach to Nineveh and then fleeing from the presence of God.

Through our analysis of the intertextual allusions in the Qur'ānic narratives, we have discovered that Hebel's three functional categories of the allusion are present in the Qur'ānic narratives. Where the function of the allusion was intratextual, the text built on other texts. For instance, the allusion in Q 37:141 to Jonah 1.7 where the sailors cast lots and the lot falls upon Jonah. This allusion has brought connotations from the antecedent traditions to the alluding text, e.g. that the sailors realize that there is a guilty person aboard the ship and they cast lots in order to identify him. As previously mentioned, we have perceived the intratextual function of this allusion as characterization of plot.

As for the intertextual function of the allusion, it is always embodied in allusions to elements, incidents, entities, and characters presented as nonfictional in the text. In our case studies, we have pointed to some instances of this functional category of the allusion. For example, the allusion in Q 11:74 to Gen 18:20-33 concerning Abraham's pleading for Lot's people. This allusion has an intertextual function. Abraham's pleading with God's messengers for Lot's people is presented as nonfictional, thus adding reality effect to the narrative pericope. The above example concerning the incident of casting the lot reflects an intertextual function besides its intratextual function. The reality effect reflected in this allusion emanates from the fact that the Qur'ān presents the event of casting the lots as nonfictional and part of the true history of Jonah.

Perhaps the most frequent functional category of the allusion that we encountered in chapter three is the metatextual function, where the allusion engenders commentary on the Biblical episodes. An example of this is the allusion to Sarah's laughter where Q 11:71 did not evoke connotations from the referent text, i.e. Gen. 18:12, but rather generated implicit commentary on it. The allusion modified the episode as narrated in the referent text. It dismissed that Sarah laughed within herself and that God confronted her with this secret laugh where she lied about it.

⁵⁰² See Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 119

The three functional categories discussed above describe the three main threads of the intertextual conversation between the Qur'ān and its antecedent traditions. This conversation is characterized by involving a particular economy of using words; allusions make it possible to say more by actually saying less. In every case of allusion we encountered, the unallusive (textual) significance of the allusion was 'less' than its actualized allusive (intertextual) meaning. Where the function of the allusion was intratextual, the connotations the allusion brought to the alluding text contributed additional significance, such as setting evocation, characterization of figure, or foreshadowing of events. This additional significance materialized not by using 'additional' words in the allusive signal but through the process of actualizing this signal. Similarly, the allusions of intertextual function we encountered have contributed to the reality effect of the narrative pericopes not through using additional words in the allusive signal but by merely actualizing it within the worldview of the alluding text. Finally, the allusions of metatextual function we encountered have engendered commentary on the intertextual point of reference not by using additional words in the allusive signal itself. We have seen how the allusion of the forbidden tree has generated commentary on the specification of the type of this tree in the alluded-to text. The alluding text has shunned these specifications first by consistently referring to the tree without further specification and second by placing the mention of the tree in a literary context that shuns this specification in favor of other shades of meaning. A similar result could be reached with regard to the metatextual function of the allusion to Sarah's laughter. In the Qur'ān, Sarah's laughter is strategically placed to negate that she laughed secretly to herself and that she lied to God about her secret laugh. Sarah's laughter appears in a context where the Qur'ān is consistent in describing her reaction to the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac as one of a serious shock. Sarah's laughter on the other hand appears as a consequence to another event, i.e. receiving the news that God's messengers are sent against Lot's people not against Sarah and her husband. It is through such interrelations between the different events narrated in the narrative pericopes on the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac that the Qur'ān generates its commentary on details in the alluded-to text. In sum, the Qur'ān articulated its own versions of the stories we examined not only through presenting new details but also through its usage of the literary device of the allusion to comment on the alluded-to texts.

As opposed to an impression from a cursory reading, the Qur'ānic episodes we examined in this study differ markedly from their Biblical counterparts. In contrast to the Jonah Biblical story, Jonah in the Qur'ān perpetrates a single blameworthy act. This blameworthy act also differs from the two blameworthy acts that Jonah has perpetrated according to his Biblical story. Jonah's fault according to the Qur'ān is that he was not patient in the face of the rejection by his people and that he left his people without waiting until God makes His judgment between him and them. On the other hand, Jonah's two blameworthy acts according to the Biblical account are refusing to preach to Nineveh and resenting God's forgiveness of its people.

As opposed to the episode of the "names" in the Bible and in Midrash Rabbah, the Qur'ān opens up the range of interpretations for the "names." As the Qur'ānic account suggests, the names that God taught Adam encompass ideas, phenomena, animals and everything, not only the names of cattle, fowl and beasts as expressed in the Bible and in Midrash Rabbah. Also in the Bible and in Midrash Rabbah God does not teach Adam the names as in the Qur'ānic account. Rather cattle, fowl and beasts are made to pass before Adam and he gives them names which God accepts as the designation of those creatures.

The Qur'ānic account is also different from the Biblical account on the type of the forbidden tree. The Qur'ānic text shuns the specification of the type of the forbidden tree in order to focus the attention of its audience on the main issue of the narrative, the first couple's sin of disobeying God's command not to eat from the forbidden tree. In contrast, the forbidden tree in the Bible is identified as the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of immortality. According to the Qur'ānic account, the forbidden tree is not the tree of immortality; Satan lied to Adam and Eve when he tried to convince them that it is. Likewise it is not the tree of knowledge of good and evil for prior to eating from this tree Adam and Eve had the ability to disobey or obey God, i.e. to commit evil or good. The Qur'ānic text wants to emphasize that man's fall of the Garden was because he disobeyed and that disobedience brought about the break of the couple's innocence. The forbidden tree in the Qur'ān is thus just a tree that stands as the test for man's fallibility.

Sarah laughs in both the Bible and the Qur'ān but her laughter in the Qur'ān is not due to the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac. Sarah laughs in the Qur'ān because she felt relieved that God's messengers are sent to Lot's people not to her and her husband. In addition, in the Qur'ān Sarah laughs overtly. Therefore, Sarah's laughter

within herself, God asking her about this secret laugh, and her lie to God about this secret laugh are all Biblical events that have no parallels in the Qur'ānic account concerning Sarah's laughter.

Also different from its Biblical counterpart is the Qur'ānic episode concerning Abraham's intercession for Lot's people. In the Qur'ān, Abraham does not argue with God Himself. Instead, he pleads for Lot's people with God's messengers. Moreover, Abraham does not reach an agreement with God's messengers concerning Lot's people. The messengers tell Abraham to leave off pleading for them for their fate has been sealed and they will be destroyed for their sins.

These insights and new readings have been possible through the application of our comprehensive theoretical and methodological framework. The insights and new readings this comprehensive framework has afforded us have made a significant contribution to the understanding of the narrative pericopes under examination, the intertextual allusions they contain, and the intertextual conversation these allusions establish with the Qur'ān's antecedent traditions. Yet, the value of our examination may extend beyond the confines of the present study, as it may enrich Qur'ānic studies as a whole. The approach applied in our study has a future in Qur'ānic studies. It is possible to apply it on other Qur'ānic narrative units and the allusions they contain.

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