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Theories and Methodologies

Adab: Literary Form and Social Praxis

HODA EL SHAKRY

أول ما أمر الله به عبده الجمع وهو الأدب وهو مشتق من المأدبة وهو الاجتماع على الطعام كذلك الأدب عبارة عن جماع الخير كله قال صلى الله عليه وسلم إن الله أدبني أي جمع في جميع الخيرات لأنه قال فحسن أدبي أي جعلني محلا لكل حسن

—Ibn al-ʿArabī, محيي الدين بن العربي، الفتوحات المكية (*The Meccan Illuminations*)

The first thing that God has commanded to his servant is to gather [*jam*ʿ], and this is *adab*. *Adab* derives from "banquet" [*ma*ʾ*dubah*], which is gathering to eat. Similarly, *adab* is to put together all that is good. The Prophet said: "God has taught me *adab*," in other words, he put together in me all the good things, and then he said: "And then he perfected in me the *adab*." In other words, he made me a receptacle for every good thing.[1]

وإنّما الأدب عقل غيرك تزيده في عقلك

—al-Jāḥiẓ, الجاحظ، المعاش والمعاد (*This World and the Next*)

Indeed, *adab* is the augmenting of one's mind [ʿ*aql*] with the mind [ʿ*aql*] of the other.

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Attending to the complex intellectual histories of the polysemic concept of أدب (*adab*) exposes how the codification of literary epistemes flattens certain cultural lifeworlds and practices in order to reify others. While in its contemporary usage *adab* has come to denote "literature," historically the term has signified not only literary ideals, styles, and forms but also educational tenets, cultural erudition, and moral comportment, as well as social norms and etiquette (hospitality, fashion, food, speech, and manners). It can therefore be understood as "both a literary and an ethical ideal" that couples "polite behavior and proper education" (Hämeen-Anttila). From the vantage point of Euro-American understandings of belletristic literature (*littérature*), these connotations might appear incongruous.

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However, the interweaving of spiritual and intellectual edification has been central to the Arab-Islamic intellectual tradition of *adab* across its historical development.

Concerned with ethical, aesthetic, and bodily comportment, *adab* speaks to the mutual imbrication of literary form and social praxis. Before its codification as "literature" at the end of the nineteenth century, *adab* encompassed a broad range of genres and textual practices—from poetry and prose to anthologies and encyclopedias to critical studies about *adab*. Alongside its inherent interdisciplinarity, *adab* carries an intersubjective valence insofar as it frames cultural production as a dialogic process that moves across mediums, individuals, and historical times. Put otherwise, "*Adab* and the role of the *adīb* came to represent both process and product: the process of contributing to the corpus of materials that would maintain and enhance the status of *adab* and the aesthetic norms of its practitioner, and the products . . . that the corpus provided" (Allen, *Arabic Literary Heritage* 238).

The modern taming of *adab*'s semantic capaciousness exposes a range of disciplinary measures that restructured knowledge practices around particular literary sensibilities, social values, and institutional formations. Attending to what is lost in this process renders legible a diverse set of literary modes with immense critical relevance. Combining the formal dimension of genre taxonomy with a stylized approach to writing, alongside a social, moral, and pedagogical orientation, *adab* cuts across many of the concerns that have animated the various method wars within contemporary literary criticism. It therefore models other forms of writing and reading that are only now gaining currency in Euro-American literary studies.[2] In bridging questions of literary form, disposition, and function, *adab* directs us to how the very category of literature itself discloses a series of assumptions about the kinds of work that literary texts can or should do. Modern Euro-American understandings of literariness are frequently rooted in taxonomic distinctions that uphold binaries of the secular/sacred and public/private. The exclusion of religious, historical, and political texts from the category of belles lettres, for example, runs against the practices and ethos of *adab* within Arab and Islamic intellectual histories (Rashwan; Simpson and Ritner). The secular turn therefore introduced a different conceptualization of historical time and the social body that continues to sway literary practices and critical persuasions.

This essay argues that the transhistorical lens of *adab* provides a valuable corrective to the influence of the secularization thesis on narrative studies. By this, I mean the ways in which the historicization of modernity in relation to the European Enlightenment project favors models of scientific technorationality that are seen as antithetical to religious epistemes. The secularization thesis has conditioned both the periodization of genres and the framing of critical reading practices within the dominant schools of Euro-American literary studies—from Roland Barthes's manifesto on literary criticism as an "anti-theological activity" that sacrifices the "Author-God" (147) to Georg Lukács's solemn conclusion that "[t]he novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God" (88). Foregrounding the communities of practice that shape social and intellectual lifeworlds, *adab* engages a diverse range of textual and extradiscursive traditions that introduce more expansive notions of literary writing, reading, and interpretation. This essay turns to the historical formation and transformation of *adab* across Arab-Islamic intellectual traditions as a starting point for thinking through the sedimentation of certain methods, practices, and theories within contemporary literary criticism. Rather than approach *adab*'s inherent polysemy and etymological ambiguity as a problem to be (re)solved, I suggest that we embrace its internal heterogeneity as a site for reflecting on the dynamic relationship between literary forms and practices.

Adab as Literature

The secularization thesis has influenced not only modern Euro-American literary studies but also much of the canonical scholarship on Arab-Islamic intellectual traditions. The nineteenth century was a major inflection point in the conceptual history of *adab*, during which two interrelated

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phenomena emerged—*adab*'s institutional codification as "literature" and its formation as a subject of Orientalist scholarship (Brockelmann; Nicholson; Vollers; Gibb; Nallino; and Pellat).[3] In creating the Arab and Muslim worlds as epistemic objects, the project of European imperialism reshaped local knowledge practices to better align with secular post-Enlightenment principles. Epistemic shifts in the relationship between the social and the individual, as well as the mind and the body, inflected new institutional formations such as universities, libraries, school curricula, and print technologies (Allan, "How *Adab*" and *In the Shadow*). These developments were accompanied by contemporaneous transformations in the intellectual landscape of the Middle East and North Africa during the long-nineteenth-century Arab intellectual *nahḍah* or "revival," a period generally bookended by Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the start of World War II.

Interrogating the intersection of European colonialism with discourses of Arab modernity, *nahḍah* studies scholars have attended to the cultural institutions, infrastructures, and habitus animating the period's zeitgeist of intellectual inquiry and cross-cultural exchange. The practices indexed under *adab* were inevitably influenced by the shifting landscape of cultural institutions and forms, which included language reform and translation projects, literary salons and associations, journalism and publishing industries, periodicals and printing technologies, and university and educational initiatives, as well as the rise of new literary genres such as the novel and the short story.[4] These developments collectively led to an increase in Arabic literary criticism and comparative literary studies that engaged a newly available archive of translated works of literature and theory (see Allen, *Introduction*; and Pepe). The first use of *adab* to signify a worldly sense of belletristic literature beyond the context of Arabic or Islamic cultural production is said to be in the work of the Lebanese *nahḍawī* linguist, lexicographer, and translator Buṭrus al-Bustānī in 1876 (Hallaq).

Echoing Ottoman-era knowledge classifications, many *nahḍawī* intellectuals adopted the singular *adab*—signifying literature or belles lettres as a genre or corpus—as well as the plural *ādāb*—indicating the practice of literary or linguistic arts—and used *adab* and *ādāb* more interchangeably with the terms علم (*ʿilm*; "science," "knowledge," "learning," "scholarship"), and بلاغة (*balāghah*; "rhetoric," "eloquence").[5] This trend is especially prevalent in the Lebanese intellectual Jurjī Zaydān's canonical four-volume Arabic literary history, تاريخ آداب اللغة العربية (*Tārīkh ādāb al-lughah al-ʿarabiyyah*; *The History of Arabic Language Arts*), serialized in the literary journal الهلال (*al-Hilāl*; *The Crescent*) in 1894–95 and published in book form as a multivolume set between 1910 and 1913 (see Al-Baghdadi; Elshakry). Michael Allan discusses how Zaydān's use of *adab* in the singular and *ādāb* in the plural, which he translates as "literature" and "language arts," respectively, calls attention to "a distinction between literature understood as a corpus of knowledge and literature understood as a pedagogical practice" ("How *Adab*" 187).[6] Zaydān's work also reveals a narrowing of the genres and practices that fall under the category of *adab* as the multivolume series approaches the modern period. By the fourth volume, the scope of *adab* contracts to more closely align with modern Euro-American literary sensibilities. Specifically, Zaydān begins to distinguish between the social sciences and the humanities, while removing the Islamic sciences from *adab*, which is now modeled on the category of belletristic literature, especially fiction.[7] Zaydān's canonical typological classification speaks to the evolving role of the discourse of *adab* within the tradition itself while also revealing its relationship to broader structures of power-knowledge.

The long nineteenth century not only marked a pivotal shift in how Arab intellectuals and scholars of the Middle East and North Africa came to understand the practices and discourses of *adab* but crucially influenced generations of scholars in its wake. The imperial body politic relied on the enforcement of secular/sacred and public/private distinctions that reshaped synchronic accounts of *adab* in ways that continue to be reflected in twentieth-century scholarship. With the postsecular turn, however, scholars are revisiting the classical

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and medieval archives to foreground *adab*'s interlinking of sociality, spirituality, and embodiment. This corpus of work illuminates the rich intellectual and social possibilities of approaching *adab* through a practice of historical recovery. In what follows, I turn to the recuperative gestures of these scholars, which demonstrate *adab*'s dialogic development with Islamic ethical epistemes and textual traditions.

Adab as Ethics[8]

The word *adab* was coined to describe a new social and intellectual formation coalescing during the late Umayyad (661–750) to early Abbasid (750–1258) period. Literary historians and philologists are divided on the precise etymology of *adab* but generally consider it to be "a back-formation from the unattested plural *ādāb* (for the likewise unattested *aʾdāb*) of the singular *daʾb*," meaning habit, custom, or سُنَّة (*sunnah*)—the latter term signifying "ancestral custom" (Hämeen-Anttila). While this account has dominated Orientalist and early European literature, scholars have since complicated this origin story by highlighting associations with entertainment, education, and hospitality within *adab*'s etymological and conceptual history.[9]

Luca Patrizi and Nuha Alshaar have drawn a connection between *adab* and the metaphor of the Qurʾan as "a divine banquet sent by God" (Alshaar, "Relation" 11) or an archetype of "Divine Hospitality" (Patrizi 519) through the root *ʾ-d-b*, signifying a banquet or invitation to a meal.[10] Exploring *adab* as a mode of hospitality that nourishes the mind, soul, and body, they assiduously trace this image across the Qurʾan, hadith (the sayings and practices ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad), and exegetical literature. The Qurʾanic sura المائدة ("al-Māʾidah"; "The Repast" or "The Banquet") reads

> قَالَ عِيسَى ٱبْنُ مَرْيَمَ ٱللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَآ أَنزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ تَكُونُ لَنَا عِيدًا لِّأَوَّلِنَا وَءَاخِرِنَا وَءَايَةً مِّنكَ ۖ وَٱرْزُقْنَا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ١١٤
> قَالَ ٱللَّهُ إِنِّى مُنَزِّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَمَن يَكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنكُمْ فَإِنِّىٓ أُعَذِّبُهُۥ عَذَابًا لَّآ أُعَذِّبُهُۥٓ أَحَدًا مِّنَ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ١١٥
>
> Said Jesus, the son of Mary: "O God, our Sustainer! Send down upon us a repast from heaven: it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us—for the first and the last of us—and a sign from Thee. And provide us our sustenance, for Thou art the best of providers!"
>
> God answered: "Verily, I [always] do send it down unto you and so, if any of you should henceforth deny [this] truth, on him, behold, will I inflict suffering the like of which I have never [yet] inflicted upon anyone in the world!" (M. Asad 5.114–15)

The Qurʾanic translator and commentator Muhammad Asad interprets the sura's imagery as a reference to "God's ever-recurrent provision of sustenance, both physical and spiritual" (194).[11] Situating the sura within the context of *adab* as a social formation, theological sources demonstrate how the pre-Islamic etymological valences of *ʾ-d-b* influenced both the "development of the notion of adab within Islam" and the Islamic tradition's self-conceptualization in the designation of the Qurʾan as a banquet (Patrizi 523).

Within Sufi mystical literature, the banquet is frequently interpreted allegorically, so that "*al-māʾida* indicates the realities of knowledge (*haqāʾiq al-maʿārif*)" (al-Raghīb al-Iṣfahānī qtd. in Patrizi 523–24). Patrizi also links *adab* to مأدبة (*maʾdubah*) through references to "God's Banquet (*maʾdubat Allāh*), from which the believers can draw knowledge" (530). Bridging hospitality and educational imagery, the expression *maʾdubat Allāh* "was probably used metaphorically to define the education of people and thereafter of their own souls, the *adab al-nafs*" (517). These alternative etymologies suggest that *adab* always already linked the social, the spiritual, and the bodily as shared worlds and that these connections were further developed as the discourse of *adab* integrated and expanded on Islamic narrative and moral norms. Sufi writings on *adab*, for example, teach corporeal, social, and spiritual forms of comportment directed toward humankind, God, and divine law (Ohlander).[12] Classical Sufi *adab* discourse encompasses both "an outer, praxic dimension (*ādāb al-ẓāhir*), as well as an inner, attitudinal dimension (*ādāb al-bāṭin*)" (Ohlander). Delineating social and spiritual norms for the Sufi aspirant, literature in this tradition relies on a

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dialogic relationship between the esoteric and exoteric that is foundational to both Qurʾanic and literary hermeneutics.[13]

Islamic narrative ethics shaped the practice and discourse of *adab* across multiple registers. Not only were the Qurʾan and hadith regularly cited in *adab* compilations and training manuals, but the holy text served as a new exemplar of literary eloquence that shifted aesthetic norms across the literary and linguistic arts.[14] Comprehensive knowledge of the Qurʾan—largely through memorization and rote recitation—was integral to the cultivation of *udabāʾ*, who often demonstrated erudition through direct citation of or indirect allusion to the Qurʾan (*iqtibās*), Qurʾanic commentary, or hadith.[15] Similarly, *adab* compilations were modeled on the narrative structure of hadith, which relies on a genealogical model of textual veracity that traces a chain of transmission directly to a first-person eyewitness.

Beyond their narratological influence, the Qurʾan and hadith have an explicit pedagogical function that has deeply marked the *adab* tradition. The texts explicate and model the tenets of Muslim spiritual comportment, with the Prophet Muhammad as an ethical exemplar. As the practice of *adab* continued to develop, it became associated "with knowledge and the manners that are dictated by a divine source" (Alshaar, "Relation" 7). Signaling both "a moral and intellectual curriculum," *adab* built on the centrality of knowledge practices in Islam, since "the best form of *adab* is that which God used to educate His Prophet" (14–15). Ibn Manẓūr's thirteenth-century dictionary لسان العرب (*Lisān al-ʿArab*; *The Tongue of the Arabs*) similarly speaks of the divine education of the Prophet through an etymological connection between دعاء (*duʿāʾ*; "prayer," "invocation to God," or "supplication") and *adab* (100).[16] This suggests a relationship between the *adīb* and the consumer of *adab* akin to one of hospitality, while further associating the work of *adab* with pedagogical practices of piety. These connotations carry over in some of the semantic derivatives of *adab*, such as *taʾaddub* and *taʾdīb*, that appear across both hadith literature and classical *adab* compendia (Sperl; Alshaar, "Relation").[17]

Alongside the prominence of the Qurʾan and hadith within *adab* literature, there was a reciprocal influence of *adab* on canonical religious training practices. Thomas Bauer notes that during the period known as the "Sunni revival" (1055–1258), the secretariat class (*kuttāb*) was absorbed into the religious class of ulama at a moment when language studies were developing into a disciplinary field that was "an indispensable part of the religious studies curriculum." Literary criticism, linguistics, rhetoric, semantics, grammar, and lexicography were explicitly integrated into the religious training of ulama who now participated in the production of belles lettres. *Adab* emerged as an academic discipline integrated into the training and practices of scholars in Islamic law, speculative theology, hadith studies, and Qurʾanic exegesis. Bauer notes that literature of the time defined an *adīb* as "a bearer of knowledge indispensable for religious studies, as an interpreter of the secular tradition of Arabic lore and literature, as *maître de plaisir*, as author of refined poetry and prose, and as a *kātib* in service of the state." These developments fortified the growing field of *ʿilm al-adab*—the science or study of *adab*—which further intertwined the methodologies of scriptural exegesis and literary hermeneutics (Bauer; Enderwitz).[18]

Across these recent critical interventions, *adab* emerges as a complex societal and intellectual formation that marries ethical edification and spiritual comportment with the social habitus of cultural practices. Framing *adab* as a shared pedagogical praxis that reaches across moral and epistemic registers, these accounts complicate a scholarly tradition that has privileged *adab*'s association with the elite intellectual culture of literary salons and the courts.[19] Understanding what is lost in the canonical histories of *adab* sheds light on the recuperative intellectual work that might lie ahead.

Adab as Subject Formation

The transhistorical prominence and circulatory range of the concept of *adab* might direct us to the perception that there has been a distinct community of *adab* practitioners and readers across Arab-Islamic intellectual histories. As this exploration of

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its shifting semantic landscape has illustrated, however, the social, spiritual, and intellectual formations that fall under its conceptual umbrella speak to a multitude of literary practices called *adab*. Moreover, within a scholarly tradition whose textual corpus demonstrates a deep concern with the lexical, philological, and intellectual genealogies of its own knowledge practices, the act of defining *adab* is itself a crucial facet of the self-reflective work of the *adīb*. *Adab* is thus at its core an evolving social praxis whose communities continually shape and redefine its terms.

The denotational delimiting of *adab* as "literature" has largely overshadowed its various connotations and their dialogic interrelationships.[20] Colonial practices and epistemes dramatically reorganized bodies in space and time while introducing new models of the human that were in contest with *adab* as social and intellectual formation.[21] Critics of *adab*'s reception in the Western academy rightfully problematize the tendency to project modern Euro-American literary schemas onto Arab-Islamic intellectual traditions (see, e.g., Allan, "How *Adab*" 182; Alshaar, "Relation"; Bin Tyeer; H. El Shakry; Guth; Sperl). There has been far less attention paid to understanding how *adab*'s evolution and significatory accretions might have something to offer contemporary literary critics. To that end, Allan invites us to reflect on literature less as a coherent body of texts that conform to some internally consistent logic than as "a disciplined manner of reading" ("How *Adab*" 176). Bridging the ontological question of what literature *is* and an inquiry into what literature *does* renders legible how modern literary studies codify ways of reading tied to the universalization of secular modes of knowledge production and subject formation. The academic fetishization of critical reading as "an invisible norm," as Michael Warner reminds us, has a complicated and underexplored history (20).[22] It is not surprising that Warner finds in Saba Mahmood's work alternative pathways to knowledge that model "not just a different technique of text processing, or a different attitude about the text object, but a different kind of subject to which the technique is oriented" (19).

We might juxtapose "critical reading" to the verb قرأ (*qaraʾa*)—to recite, read, study, teach, investigate, examine, or explore—from which the *maṣdar*, or verbal noun, *Qurʾān* derives.[23] Like *adab*, *qaraʾa* suggests a model of reading and reciting that mobilizes "corporeal knowledge practices" to cultivate ethical edification as a social mode of subject formation (Ware 57). The inclination to separate internal states from outward habits relies not only on a false binary of the secular and the spiritual but also on assumptions about the private work of the self as distinct from the social work of the cultural or political sphere. As scholars in the anthropology of Islam have demonstrated, the privatization of a series of beliefs, practices, and discourses under the transcendental category of religion is a relatively new phenomenon.[24]

Arguing for the centrality of *adab* to Islamic modes of being, Ira Lapidus highlights how the concept mediates "the inward flux of intellect, judgement, and emotion in relation to outward expression in speech, gesture, ritual, and action—as the key to the very nature of man's being and his relationship to God" (40). These interlocking spiritual, aesthetic, and existential registers all reside within *adab* as a practice that speaks at once to "the role of literature in moral, religious, and social life" as well as to "fundamental Muslim ideas about how life is to be lived to fulfill the religious goals of human existence" (40).[25] Dahlia Gubara and Alexis Wick similarly adopt a holistic approach that situates *adab* as a "way of life" (195) or "ethical habitus" (200), and they refer to the practice of *adab* as a kind of "*ṣināʿah* (a craft, technique, specialization, or profession)" that models intellectual production as an ethical "*lived practice,* more akin to a set of *exercises*" (203). Reflecting on the modern dismissal of *adab*'s ethical and embodied dimensions brings to light the critical illegibility of certain reading and textual practices that have been foundational to Arab-Islamic subject formation.

Understanding the nonequivalence between *adab* and literature is the starting point for a broader inquiry into the relationship between literary forms and their social functions. From the perspective of *adab*'s diachronic development, we can begin to

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question privatized models of literary writing and reading within the Euro-American tradition. We can thus engage the *adab* corpus on its own terms while also considering how it can expand our approach to literary lifeworlds and practices. Calling into question the ontological stability of literature allows us to move beyond the limits of narrative entextualization to explore what happens outside the textual frame. When we reimagine literary reading as a nexus of embodied practices, habits, and sensibilities, we can better attend to the extradiscursive dimensions—literary salons, printing presses, journals, classrooms, mosques—that shape literary communities. This breaks apart the rigidity of the literature-theory divide and its attendant canons, while calling attention to how certain conceptual or theoretical paradigms "travel" more easily than others (Said).

As the *adab* corpus is by nature heteroglossic and self-referential, it challenges modern notions of literary authorship while exposing how the very category of literature is inseparable from the critical apparatuses through which we interpret cultural objects.[26] These tensions emerge in some of the scholarship on *adab* in which its blurry distinctions between passive and active, as well as between form, content, style, and intention can sit uncomfortably with contemporary literary dispositions.[27] This ambiguity of creative acts, agents, and texts opens the door to new understandings of literary reading that can enrich our own practices as literary scholars and educators. Returning to Warner's provocation, we can ask: What kind of subjects does *adab* orient itself toward? And, more crucially, what kind of subjects can *adab* create?

Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. See also the translation in Gubara and Wick (206). On al-Jāḥiẓ's theory of *adab*, see Natij.

2. See, for example, the recent collection of articles on aesthetic education in the Theories and Methodologies section of *PMLA* (vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2023, coordinated by Nicholas Gaskill and Kate Stanley).

3. See Allan, "How *Adab*" 182; Alshaar, "Relation"; Bonebakker; Holmberg; and Malti-Douglas.

4. See S. Ali; Hanssen and Weiss; al-Musawi; El-Ariss; Holt; Sacks; Selim; Sheehi; and Tageldin.

5. See Allan, "How *Adab*" 187 and *In the Shadow*; Hallaq; Holt; and Rashwan.

6. Allan notes this distinction based on a footnote in the 1957 edition that discusses semantic shifts in the understanding of *adab* since its initial publication in 1911 ("How *Adab*" 184–89).

7. On the formation of the social sciences in colonial Egypt, see O. El Shakry.

8. My use of the term *ethics* is informed by studies in the anthropology of Islam that challenge the Aristotelian and Foucauldian distinction between private ethics and public morality by attending to the moral and epistemic practices through which the pious subject is cultivated as part of a broader Islamic ethical episteme.

9. For an overview of this scholarship, see Patrizi 517–18. On the pedagogical dimension of *adab*, al-Baghdadi notes, "It is rendered most closely as 'educational literature,' 'etiquette,' '*Bildung*,' or '*paideia*'; others would go for '*humanitas*'" (439). Grunebaum, Lapidus, and Brown argue for the influence of Hellenistic notions of *paideia* on Islamic conceptions of *adab*; see also Enderwitz.

10. See Alshaar, "Relation" (11–16) and "*Ḥadīth*." Patrizi expands on the various Qurʾanic references to revelation and divine knowledge as food, water, and shelter (524–25). Sperl is particularly helpful for thinking through the curatorial qualities of *adab* in relation to hadith compilations. See also Gelder.

11. The sura is one of the final sections of the holy text revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

12. On Sufi understandings of *adab*, see Chiabotti et al.; Ohlander.

13. A key figure in this tradition is the Sufi mystic, jurist, theologian, philosopher, and polymath al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). Esoteric hermeneutics, known as تأويل (*taʾwīl*), favors the باطن (*bāṭin*; "esoteric" or "hidden") meanings embedded within scripture; see Abdul-Raof; El-Desouky.

14. See Alshaar, "Relation"; Bin Tyeer; H. El Shakry; Holmberg; and Neuwirth. Hadith literature was largely compiled in the eighth and ninth centuries. It relies on a rigorous verification system in which each hadith must be genealogically traced directly to the Prophet Muhammad, generally through one of his wives or close companions.

15. See Alshaar, "Relation" 18–24; Malti-Douglas; Patrizi; and Sperl.

16. See Alshaar, "Relation" 14–15.

17. While Sperl refers to the "acquisition of *taʾaddub*" as a kind of "moral rectitude" (463–64), Alshaar translates the terms *taʾaddub* and *taʾdīb* as "to acquire education" and "to educate" ("Relation" 15).

18. Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* expands on *ʿilm al-adab* and offers a kind of literary historiography of the field through four key texts in the tradition that all "contain exemplary prose, philological knowledge, and entertaining anecdotes" (Hämeen-Anttila).

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19. See S. Ali; Allen, *Arabic Literary Heritage*; Alshaar "Relation" and "*Ḥadīth*"; Al-Baghdadi; Bonebakker; Holmberg; Kilpatrick; Leder and Kilpatrick; and Malti-Douglas. On the diverse *adab* manuals that outlined proper comportment and knowledge for specific professions or social ranks, see Enderwitz; Metcalf.

20. In addition to referring to belletristic literature, *adab* has managed to retain some of its historical valences within the everyday vernacular, signifying proper behavior or comportment. This can be expressed either positively, as moral praise, or negatively, as opprobrium (*qillat al-adab*, meaning "lacking in *adab*"). In contemporary Egypt, the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of *adab* are most likely to meet in the context of literary censorship on the grounds of moral outrage or the gatekeeping practices of the literati, such as the privileging of formal Arabic over its more accessible vernacular forms; see Pepe; Jacquemond. Pepe argues that Egyptian blogging practices challenge modern notions of "adab-icity" by playing with the parameters of literariness indexed under post-*nahḍah* conceptions of *adab* (551).

21. For scholarship that adopts the somewhat anachronistic lens of Arab or Islamic humanism in relation to *adab*, see Arkoun; Makdisi, *Rise*, "Scholasticism," and "Inquiry."

22. On the encoding of critique as a mode of secular skepticism that opposes the "speculative" nature of faith or belief, see H. El Shakry 9–15.

23. The first divine word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Jibrīl (Gabriel) was the command إقرأ (*iqraʾ*), meaning both "read" and "recite" (Qurʾan 96.1). Through the act of divine revelation, the reportedly illiterate Prophet came to know the verses in his mind and heart (M. M. Ali 1–15). See H. El Shakry xv–xvi and 22.

24. Mahmood notes that religion as such is "conceptually and practically tied to the emergence of 'the secular' as a domain from which it is supposed to be normatively independent but to which it is indelibly linked" (225). Agrama describes this as the "active principle of secularism," whereby the state is "promoting an abstract notion of 'religion,' defining the spaces it should inhabit, authorizing the sensibilities proper to it, and then working to discipline actual religious traditions so as to conform to this abstract notion, to fit into those spaces, and to express those sensibilities" (503). Focusing on French colonial efforts in North Africa and the metropole, Fernando notes that French imperial ideology sought to "to secularize Islam by turning it into religion, distinct from culture and politics" (22). See also T. Asad.

25. See H. El Shakry 18.

26. On *al-ʿulūm al-adabiyyah* in relation to the "classification of the sciences," see Heinrichs. On the organizational logics of medieval Islamic concepts of knowledge, see Rosenthal. On multivocality and self-referentiality across the Qurʾan, hadith, and *adab*, see H. El Shakry 1–28; Holmberg 188–89.

27. Bonebakker writes that *adab* "may refer either to literary creativity, or else to literature as an object of philological study or to knowledge of literature as a mark of erudition. However, these two senses, with their respectively active and passive connotations, are not always clearly distinguished" (19–20). Similarly, von Grunebaum notes that "*adab* is, above all, an approach; it is, so to speak, a principle of form, not an array of materials" (255). Meanwhile, Ilse Lichtenstädter emphasizes *adab*'s common purpose "of bringing knowledge to the people in an entertaining fashion" (qtd. in Malti-Douglas 9–10). Finally, Kilpatrick describes *adab* "as an *approach* to writing" (56).

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