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Introduction: Words, Hermeneutics, and the Construction of Meaning

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W HAT THE words of the Qur'an mean is, naturally, central to any understanding of the Qur'an. Before attempting to come to understand anything of the Qur'anic worldview, its theology and its ethical values, there is a need to engage with the words found in it. The essays in this volume explore the ways in which exegetes and other interpreters, such as legal theorists and translators, engage with the words of the Qur'an to generate meaning.

The question of how people read texts and respond to them has been of great concern in Biblical Studies and in philosophy more broadly, but has not been adequately addressed in Islamic Studies. This introduction will begin by looking at approaches to reading and hermeneutics in Biblical Studies and philosophy, to provide some foundation for discussion of the Qur'an and *tafsīr*. Early discussions of hermeneutics by Friedrich Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century laid the foundation for the development of a field devoted exclusively to understanding this problem.[1] Outside of Biblical Studies, Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* and Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* represent attempts to understand the relationship between a reader's own context and the world of the text.[2] For Gadamer, readers have an 'historically effected consciousness' (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*) that comes to influence their understanding of a text: reading is always a reflection of an individual's historical context.[3] These philosophical discussions of hermeneutics have strongly influenced the way in which the interpretation of the Bible is understood, and these ideas are worth considering in the context of the study of the Qur'an and *tafsīr*.[4]

In the early stages of the development of hermeneutic theory, Schleiermacher noted the complex relationship between reading a text on a general level and at a more specific level: considering the Bible, or a book of the Bible, as a whole against the interpretation of individual words.[5] Schleiermacher argued that the process of interpreting texts was circular (his so-called 'hermeneutic circle'), since a reader needs to understand the general Biblical worldview to interpret individual words; but at the same time, the interpretation of individual words informs the understanding of the Biblical worldview itself.[6] In the context of Islamic Studies, the implication is that the meanings exegetes give to words of the Qur'an are influenced by, and themselves influence, their interpretation of the Qur'an as whole.

Using the essays included in this volume as case studies, this introductory chapter will explore how exegetes went about this process of giving meanings to words, and the different ways in which lexical meaning can be constructed. Building on, and reacting to, the philosophical hermeneutics of figures such as Heidegger and Gadamer, as well as the emerging field of semiotics,[7] postmodern literary theorists such as Louise M. Rosenblatt, among others, have highlighted the fact that any reading is interpretative: every reader has a reaction to a text that is distinct from anyone else's reading, and the meaning and significance of individual words within the text play a part in the way in which readers receive the text and construct its meaning more generally.[8] Readers naturally bring other external texts to their reading and, to use Roland Barthes's analogy, they 'weave' these external texts into the fabric of the text being read.[9] The postmodern notion of intertextuality maintains that someone (either an author or a reader) cannot divest themselves of their life experiences; furthermore, because every reader has had different life experiences, each individual receives a text differently, resulting in a text's meaning becoming fluid and without any definitive or actual meaning.[10] For some literary theorists, a consequence of this instability of meaning was a weakening in an author's control of the text's meaning, which transferred to its reader(s).[11] However, Wolfgang Iser, in an attempt to reclaim some power for the author, presents a model in which the author and the

reader are situated at opposite 'poles' and the 'text' is created in the space between these two opposing poles.[12] In this way, an author is able to encourage his or her reader to receive the text in a certain way – that is, the author is able to control the text to some extent, but the reader will still receive the text in whichever way he or she wishes, and read the author's text in light of other sources that the author may not have intended: the meaning of the text is controlled by neither the author nor the reader, but is generated through the interaction between both.

These literary and philosophical reflections on the way in which texts are received have had a great influence on the understanding and interpretation of scripture, particularly Biblical interpretation, and to a much lesser extent the interpretation of the Qur'an.[13] The Biblical scholar Rudolph Bultmann argues that exegesis is an '*exist-entiell* encounter' with the text, and that as a result, an exegete's interpretation is still 'determined by his own individuality, in the sense of his special biases and beliefs, his gifts and weaknesses . . .'[14] Here, the '*existentiell* encounter' with exegesis is influenced, as Bultmann argues, by an exegete's own experiences of external texts that play a part in the way he or she interprets the Bible.[15] In an Islamic Studies context, this means that *tafsīr* is generated by the interaction between how an exegete understands the world and how such a worldview can be reconciled with the text of the Qur'an.

In Biblical Studies, the term 'exegesis' is used to describe the act of developing an interpretation *out of* the text itself. The term exegesis is often coupled with its polemical counterpart 'eisegesis' – the act of developing an interpretation by bringing external ideas *into* the text that are not necessarily there. However, the usual understanding of the term exegesis – the method that is perceived as being unsullied by any reading of external texts into a text – fails to accommodate the natural influence and presence of external texts involved in the act of reading, advocated by theories of reading in both philosophical hermeneutics and postmodern literary theory. In response, George Aichele and Gary Phillips argue that all interpretation is a mixture of exegesis and eisegesis; they write: 'intertextuality disputes the reductive binary opposition of exegesis/eisegesis with "intergesis"'.[16] Aichele and Phillips locate meaning

– like Wolfgang Iser – neither inside the text nor outside of it, but argue, rather, that meaning is generated by the interaction between both the text (i.e. the scripture) and the reader (i.e. the exegete).

The way in which an exegete goes about this process is what is meant by the term hermeneutics; this consists of both the practical form that an exegete wishes to give his exegesis, and the theological and philosophical worldviews that he or she might hold.[17] For the genre of *tafsīr* this means that the commentary (i.e. the work or text itself) can determine the form that it takes – an area of *tafsīr* studies that has been given much attention recently by both Walid A. Saleh and Karen Bauer.[18] Every *tafsīr* has a specific objective and audience in mind and the content of the work is determined by these factors; so, for example, the *al-Durr al-manthūr* of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) and his portions of the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* include different information, and even the 'occasions of revelation' material (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) differs in content in his *al-Durr al-manthūr*, the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, and his work devoted to the subject, his *Lubāb al-nuqūl fī asbāb al-nuzūl*.[19]

A *tafsīr* is also influenced by an exegete's own 'pre-texts', his or her previously held theological and philosophical ideas.[20] For example, in his discussion of Q. 6:12,[21] the Muʿtazilī exegete Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) writes:

> He [i.e. God] then threatens them [with punishment in the hereafter] for their neglecting to contemplate [such proofs] and for their ascription of partners to Him that have no power to create anything, by saying: *He will surely gather you to the day of Resurrection*, whereupon He will requite you for your ascription of partners [to Him].[22]

Zamakhsharī's interpretation clearly reflects two of the five Muʿtazilī principles: firstly the necessity of God's justice, and secondly that God provides both a promise of reward and a threat of punishment (*al-waʿd wa'l-waʿīd*).[23] Likewise, in order to find a Qur'anic proof for the doctrine of the imamate (*imāma*), early Shiʿis interpreted verses of the Qur'an, such as *God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners; and when you judge between the people, that you judge with justice . . .* (Q. 4:58), in reference to the *imāma*. For example, ʿAlī

b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (fl. mid-fourth/tenth century) explains this verse by saying: 'It is obligatory for the imam (*faraḍa ʿalā'l-imām*) to judge between people justly (*bi'l-ʿadl*).'[24] Qummī's Shiʿi view of the imam as a spiritual leader, alluded to here, is obviously a response that would not be entertained by Sunni exegetes. In addition, it is also extremely likely that exegeses responded to their religio-political context. In the case of hadith compilation, Andrew Newman has argued that the early Shiʿi collections of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī (d. 274/887–8 or 280/893–4), Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār (d. 290/902–3) and Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Kulaynī (d. 328/939–40 or 329/940–41) 'may be seen as linked to, if they were not directly "the product of", broader trends and events of which the compilor himself was inherently a part'.[25] A similar influence of historical and political contexts on an exegesis is likely, and an area of *tafsīr* studies that needs and warrants further research.

The combination of the effects of both the form of a work and the author's theological or philosophical worldview on a text can be seen when comparing a particular exegesis to another work written by the same author in a different genre. The philosopher and theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) provides an interesting case in point. In his *tafsīr*, the genre itself constrains him in what he can say and how he says it, since the discourse is tied to the text of the Qur'an and he can only engage with theological issues as and when the Qur'anic text provides the opportunity.[26] Rāzī does introduce philosophical and theological ideas where other exegetes do not, but such discussions must arise out of the text itself.[27] In contrast, in his theological works Rāzī is able to employ a discourse that is unfettered and unconstrained by the genre of commentary, and he can develop systematic theological arguments in a logical and sequential manner.[28] As a result, whilst he does engage with the Qur'an in his theological works, he engages with it in a completely different way. Instead of the Qur'an leading the development of ideas, the theological ideas form the basis of the *kalām*ic discourse and the Qur'an merely becomes a means of establishing credence and authority to those ideas. This can be seen throughout a work such as his *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*. In his discussion as to whether prophets are more worthy than angels, he writes:

> The members of our [Ashʿarī] school and the Shiʿa [argue] that
> the prophets are more worthy (*afḍal*) than angels, but the philo-
> sophers and the Muʿtazila [argue] that the heavenly angels
> (*al-malāʾika al-samāwiyya*) are more worthy than humans
> (*al-bashar*) [. . .] The first proof [is] that Adam was prostrated to
> by the angels, and the person being prostrated to is more worthy
> than the person doing the prostration. This is first made clear in
> His Words, Most High, *And when We said to the angels, 'Bow
> yourselves to Adam'.* [Q. 2:34][29]

Here, the theological idea that prophets are more worthy than
angels precedes the interpretation of the verse, and the verse itself is
interpreted in light of that view.[30] Whilst Rāzī does include the
same point in his *tafsīr* of Q. 2:34, it is certainly not his main one,
nor is it the focus of the discussion: the verse generates and demands
a greater number of questions beyond that of whether angels or
prophets are superior; most notably, why God commanded the
angels to prostrate to something other than Him – an idea that
could be interpreted as *shirk* ('associationism').[31] These two texts
show quite different responses to Q. 2:34 and the question of the
angelic prostration to Adam; these establish a distinction between
exegesis and theological proof texting, which is not an exegetical
process.[32] The roots of these different approaches to the verse are
based in the different forms of genre, and the distinct aims and
objectives that each entails.

   Texts that engage in disputation or are advocating one particular
worldview over others for doctrinal or dogmatic reasons engage
with the Qurʾan in a different way to exegesis. Works in the fields of
law, philosophy and theology (*kalām*) use the words and verses of
the Qurʾan to provide proof for a specific theological or legal idea,
rather than being a reflection and interpretation generated by the
text of the Qurʾan, which demands a different and more compre-
hensive response. In theological (and legal) discourses, words and
verses of the Qurʾan acquire a closed, forced and prescriptive
meaning, since they are forming part of a larger argument, rather
than being part of a response to a Qurʾanic verse. The tension
between open and closed interpretations distinguishes exegesis

from legal and theological apologetic works, since, in contrast, the genre of *tafsīr* is typified by a desire to present a range of exegetical possibilities for interpretation and for the meanings of words themselves, cataloguing the interpretative options and leaving the meaning of the text open.[33]

This polyvalent approach is one that has been discussed in detail by Norman Calder, who argues that polyvalency is typical of *tafsīr*, and may even be the characteristic that defines it as a genre.[34] Calder also makes a distinction between two different ways in which exegetes are able to exert control over any polyvalency, namely 'the exercise of choice (hiding variety) or the expression of a preference (admitting while controlling variety)'.[35] In addition, Calder highlights the influence of hermeneutics on this process of giving a preference; regarding Zamakhsharī, he comments that he 'combines a meticulous concern for grammatical nicety with a defence of Muʿtazilī theology. These factors condition both his expressed preferences (admitting variety) and choices (implying eschewing of some possibilities).'[36] Whilst Calder's analysis of the genre of *tafsīr* is extremely helpful, it is also necessary to understand the motivations that lay behind any attempt to control or reduce the polyvalent readings available. The analysis below argues that there are two distinct reasons for reducing or challenging any potential polyvalency: one in which an exegete makes a decision based on his own analysis of the philological evidence (often from both linguistic analysis and hadith-based glosses); and another which is more highly influenced by pre-textual ideas and beliefs.

Ways of Establishing Lexical Meaning in *Tafsīr*

The discussion thus far has focused on the question of reading, hermeneutics and the formation of meaning in general terms; this volume, however, is focused on a very specific element by which exegetes, and other interpreters of the Qur'an (including translators), construct the meaning of the Qur'an. By giving a word in the Qur'an a meaning, we, as readers of an exegesis, need to ask *cui bono*? What does the exegete gain by giving that word that particular definition? In some cases there may be an underlying

theological, socio-cultural or legal reason for it. The same can be equally said for translators of the Qur'an – what idea or belief is benefited by the translator translating a word in such a way? This section will outline the different ways in which individual words are given meaning by exegetes and other interpreters, and how the giving of meaning to Qur'anic lexica relates to external theological ideas.

The most obvious way in which words are given meaning is through lexicography (*ʿilm al-lugha*). Although some lexicographers see, or have seen, their works as providing authoritative accounts of how a word should be understood or spelled (the prescriptive method), many lexicons simply provide data about how a word is and has been used (the descriptive method).[37] Medieval Arabic lexicons usually provide detailed information concerning the speech of the Arabs, using poetry, the Qur'an, hadiths and proverbs as records of proper usage and meaning.[38] However, a genre of 'dictionaries of the Qur'an' (*gharīb al-Qurʾān* works; lit. 'the unusual words of the Qur'an') was also popular in the medieval period and these tend to be much more prescriptive in their handling of Qur'anic lexica, often giving single glosses for specific words, which can be seen in the *Majāz al-Qurʾān* by Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā (d. between 207/822 and 213/828), and Suyūṭī's *al-Mutawakkilī*.[39] Andrew Rippin comments that, in terms of providing definitions, these works 'are generally very specific as compared to being fully comprehensive for the language or for the text as a whole.'[40] This preference for prescription in *gharīb* works is still found in contemporary Arabic lexicography, both Muslim and non-Muslim. For example, the word *ṣafrāʾ* (Q. 2:69) is subject to debate in the *tafsīr* tradition, since it can indicate either yellow or black;[41] however, most *gharīb* works simply define *ṣafrāʾ* as 'yellow', with very few mentioning the debate at all.[42] The implication is that dictionaries of the Qur'an are highly influenced by the exegetical tradition, and they represent the general conclusions of the exegetes, rather than describing the ways in which the term was used by Arabs.[43] In his study of lexical interpretations of the formative period of *tafsīr*, Kees Versteegh (Chapter 2) shows that early exegetes such as Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) handled lexical meaning

in much the same way as these 'dictionaries of the Qur'an'. Throughout his exegesis, Muqātil routinely gives words the same glosses, even when the word has been glossed very recently: for example, he glosses the word *khālidūna* ('dwell forever') with '*lā yamūtūna*' ('they will not die') in both Q. 2:81 and 2:82.[44] However, when turning to the genre of *tafsīr*, especially those working after Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), it is soon discovered that many exegetes rarely, if at all, provide simple, single-word glosses of a word's meaning, nor are they purely prescriptive. Exegetes tend to provide a (possibly full) summary of the ways in which a word is used, and the meanings that it has, but at the same time an exegete often assesses these options and gives his (or her) preferred reading.[45]

Words which seem to have very little theological significance are often subjected to extensive treatment by the exegetes. For example, *Sūrat al-Falaq* begins, *Say: 'I take refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak'* (Q. 113:1). The word for daybreak (*falaq*) is disputed and can either mean 'dawn' (*ṣubḥ*), a location or place in Hell, or 'creation'. Despite the fact that it does not appear to be particularly important whether the oath is made 'with the Lord of the Daybreak' or 'with the Lord of Hell', many exegetes go to great lengths to give the meanings of *falaq*, even though they state their preference for the gloss 'dawn', as can be seen in my own essay (Chapter 6). Ṭabarī provides and describes the full range of possible interpretations of the word, yet gives an overt statement about what he thinks the word means. He is not unique in this method, since many of the other exegetes included in my sample follow the same procedure. In his comparison of the lexical methodologies of Abū'l Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076) and Ṭabarī (Chapter 5), Claude Gilliot shows both authors giving an array of definitions for words such as *mawbiq* in Q. 18:52.[46] Whilst Ṭabarī does not give his opinion openly (as he does for *falaq*), Gilliot shows the ways in which he does manage to convey his own views: although he cites Abū ʿUbayda's interpretation of *mawbiq* as a 'promise' (*mawʿid*), the fact that he includes other glosses of *mawbiq*, such as *mahlik* ('place of destruction') or *mahlak* ('perdition', 'destruction'), more prominently suggests to Gilliot that 'he [Ṭabarī] obviously does not favour it; rather, he seems to prefer the interpretation of the Kufan linguists

[*mahlik*]'.[47] Wāḥidī follows a similar procedure in his discussion of the word *mawbiq*, but is more direct in his rejection of Abū 'Ubayda's view. Gilliot comments that 'Wāḥidī considers this interpretation an error (*hādhā'l-qawlu fāsidun*) from the point of view of the word and of its meaning.'[48] This methodological procedure of giving a list of possible options, but discarding some, is hermeneutically complex since it is one that provides a descriptive range of possible meanings, leaving the word open to interpretation, and yet this openness is restricted or closed by the preferred reading. The question is whether giving a preference for a particular reading is the same as giving a forced reading – that is, a reading that is directly influenced by a pre-textual idea or belief. A forced reading is not necessarily an 'incorrect' one, but it is one in which a word is forced into a specific, monovalent interpretation. Calder has noted the process of reducing polyvalency through not providing comprehensive lists of a word's meaning ('hiding variety'), and by giving a preference ('admitting while controlling variety'); but he does not differentiate between the motivations that lie behind the choice itself.[49] A choice can be governed by external, pre-textual ideas, which creates a forced reading; or the choice can be a reflection on the linguistic evidence available. These two ways of establishing a word's meaning are very different and the two approaches need to be considered in more detail. Some lexical readings, found in some of the chapters in this volume, do appear to be influenced by pre-textual ideas and beliefs.

Ayesha S. Chaudhry presents an analysis of discussions of the word *nushūz* in medieval exegetical works (Chapter 10). The word, associated with the notion of 'disobedience', is used of women in Q. 4:34 and of men in Q. 4:128.[50] However, the exegetes' treatments of the word reveal the complexity of finding meaning for Qur'anic lexica. Chaudhry demonstrates that medieval exegetes defined *nushūz* in completely different ways depending on the gender of the person committing *nushūz*: that is, male *nushūz* is different to female *nushūz*. The exegetes are dealing with the same word, albeit appearing in different contexts; but Chaudhry shows that medieval exegetes are wilfully forgetful of their own interpretations of *nushūz*. She concludes:

The interpretation of the same term, *nushūz*, to produce two different meanings, at times reading against the plain-sense meaning of the Qur'anic text, is significant in terms of methodology. It demonstrates that pre-modern exegetes read and interpreted the Qur'an within the context of an idealised cosmology in which a patriarchal marital structure was divinely prescribed.[51]

Chaudhry shows that the exegetes in her sample do not attempt to reconcile the two meanings of *nushūz*, and the exegetes treat them as two different words because of their different contexts – a trend that is also seen in Ṭabarī's treatment of the word *fitna*, for which he does not provide a consistent definition throughout his *tafsīr*.[52] In this case, the definitions of *nushūz* are made to reflect and conform to already existing understandings of the gender hierarchy. This is not simply an exegete giving a preference for a particular reading, but Chaudhry argues that the interpretation of *nushūz* is used to authenticate and support a specific patriarchal worldview. Discussions of contentious words like *nushūz* are both open, providing a description of the possible meanings of a word, and also forced or prescriptive. The debates about their meanings, as represented in the *tafsīr* literature, allows for a plurality of meanings, yet the divergences between husbandly and wifely *nushūz* illustrate a proof-texting interpretation that articulates the worldview of the exegetes.

Devin J. Stewart's analysis of *al-Mufradāt alfāẓ al-Qur'ān* by al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 422/1031) highlights a slightly different issue (Chapter 7). Stewart argues that there are a number of instances in the Qur'an where a word takes a non-standard form in order to fit in with the rhyme scheme employed in a sura, a process which Stewart calls 'cognate substitution'.[53] However, the vast majority of Muslim exegetes interpreted these non-standard forms as completely different words and ignored any possibility that they might simply have a new form for reasons of rhyme. Peter Heath, drawing on the work of Tzvetan Todorov, illustrates the way in which exegetes devote extensive material to words that appear to be easily understood, and shows that '[e]ach word becomes a trigger for interpretative processes' and that 'every word or phrase in the Qur'ān acquires enormous power for eliciting hermeneutic responses'.[54]

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The exegetical view that new lexical forms are just that – i.e. words with new meanings, rather than forms that have been subject to morphological change as a result of accommodating the rhyme scheme – is also part of this exegetical response to the Qur'an in which all words and every new form is significant. Stewart argues that exegetes interpreted these cognate substitutes as different words in order to preserve the inimitability (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'an; he writes:

> Recognition of the phenomenon of cognate substitution risked implying that God coined new forms on an ad hoc basis for particular texts in the Qur'an or that God could say one word while intending another, both of which bordered on blasphemy. Exegetes therefore argued that every difference in form implied a difference in meaning.[55]

This is a slightly separate issue to the question of polysemic and monosemic meanings of Qur'anic lexica, but it does, as in Chaudhry's study, highlight a degree of wilful ignorance and academic forgetfulness, as well as the theological limitations of meaning. Figures like al-Rāghib were well versed in rhetoric and poetics, and, Stewart argues, they must have been aware of what was happening to these words, but chose to ignore it.[56]

This process of wilfully forgetting what words can mean can also be seen in another chapter in this volume: Christopher Melchert, in his comparison of the interpretation of Qur'anic words in *tafsīr* and *zuhd* ('asceticism' or 'renunciation') traditions,[57] highlights an attempt on the part of the *mufassirūn* to ignore interpretations of which they disapproved for theological reasons (Chapter 4). In the case of *siyāḥa* ('roaming' or 'travelling') many exegetes gloss the active participle *al-sa'iḥūna* in Q. 9:112 as *al-ṣā'imūna* ('those who fast').[58] Melchert argues that the move against 'roaming', as seen in the gloss 'those who fast', is a result of a movement that found the 'roaming around' of ascetics distasteful in the context of a society where most scholars regarded sedentariness as being civilised. The *tafsīr* literature which emerged in the third/ninth century changed the meaning of *siyāḥa* to 'fasting', but the hadith literature preserved the older definition of *siyāḥa* as 'travelling'. Melchert argues that

hadith and renunciant literature appear to preserve older inter-pretations of the terms *siyāḥa*, *ḥikma* and *ṣiddīq* than *tafsīr*. Either *tafsīr* is in fact less primitive than it has seemed or we must consider it strictly selective in what it recalls and what it ignores, of late first-/early eighth-century Islam.[59]

What can be seen here, as in the cases of *nushūz* and cognate substi-tution, is that a methodology that appears to provide a range of possible meanings for a word does not, in actual fact, always present the whole picture: the descriptiveness is selective. This selective-ness is driven by both socio-cultural and theological worldviews, making such interpretations both descriptive in the sense that they provide an account of the possible meanings of words, and forced or prescriptive in the sense that the words in the Qur'an are being used to articulate and accommodate specific external views. In these cases the preference or interpretation is not reasoned through linguistic analysis, but is defined by cultural or theological beliefs.

Understanding Complex Forms of Constructing Meaning

In the interpretations of *mawbiq*, *falaq*, *nushūz* and *siyāḥa* seen above, different ways of constructing meaning have been encountered. In all four of these examples the exegetes provide a list of possible meanings, but also give a preferred reading. However, the way in which preferences are given for *mawbiq* and *falaq* are quite different to those given for *nushūz* and *siyāḥa*. The first two preferences (*mawbiq* and *falaq*) are reached through philological and linguistic analysis of the term; the second two appear to be generated by specific worldviews. When confronted with an exegete's list of possible mean-ings for a word, alongside a preference, it is important to distinguish between these two types of readings, since they signify a different hermeneutic response to the Qur'anic text.

The distinction between these two types of giving a preference is hinted at in some medieval works of exegetical theory. For example, in his *Sharḥ ta'wilāt ahl al-sunnah*, 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 539/1144),[60] commenting on the hermeneutic method of *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), states:

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> [As for] *ta'wīl*, it is an explanation of something that allows [for various] possibilities and of the ultimate possibility as a predominant opinion, but without a decisive affirmation (*qaṭ'*). Thus, it [can be] said that an expression may allow such and such interpretations, and that [one of these] interpretations is more appropriate, because it is supported by fundamental sources of religion (*uṣūl*).[61]

Māturīdī uses *ta'wīl* ('interpretation')[62] to describe a method that does not force a meaning, because the reading is simply one that the exegete believes to be more appropriate. In contrast, for Māturīdī *tafsīr* comprised interpretation based on hadiths attributed to Companions of the Prophet, which, consequently, had a fixed meaning, since the Companions had direct interaction with the Prophet and knew the interpretation. Māturīdī opens his *Ta'wīlāt ahl al-sunna* with the statement: '[Concerning] the distinction between *ta'wīl* and *tafsīr*, it is said: *tafsīr* belongs to the Companions, and *ta'wīl* to the lawyers (*fuqahā*')'.[63] However, even in the case of Māturīdī's conception of *ta'wīl*, the construction of meaning is still limited because of the preference that has been given. This way of reading and interpreting Qur'anic words is half-open and half-closed, or, perhaps neither fully descriptive nor fully prescriptive. This is quite different to the examples seen in the chapters by Chaudhry, Melchert and Stewart, in which the readings are driven by specific socio-cultural and theological motivations, and the openness of the interpretative options for lexical meaning are closed to confirm and conform to a specific worldview.

This distinction between two ways of establishing lexical meaning – by individual preference (Māturīdī's *ta'wīl*) and a more prescriptive method (Māturīdī's *tafsīr*) – is also alluded to by the Muʿtazilī theologian al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101). In the introduction to his exegetical work, *Tahdhīb fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, he discusses the various sciences (*ʿulūm*) of the Qur'an, and concerning *maʿnā* (meaning), he writes:

> Each word can either have one meaning, so that the only way to interpret it would be by following that meaning, or have [multiple] meanings, all of which are plausible, in which case they can be

followed in totality or selectively. But if there is compelling evidence that only certain meanings are intended but not others, then those meanings deduced by evidence are to be followed.[64]

Here Jishumī distinguishes between a methodology that provides interpretative options, in which all possible meanings are 'plausible' and can be followed 'in totality', and another methodology in which a word with a range of possible meanings is given a preference, which, as argued above, is neither fully descriptive nor prescriptive. Lastly, Jishumī describes a methodology in which external preconceived ideas (the 'law') can close the interpretation of a word. This is made even stronger in the sentence that follows: '. . . if [a word] has a lexical meaning and a legal meaning, then the legal meaning is heeded because it is overriding'.[65] This is no longer a preferred reading, but a required one.

For some medieval theologians it is impossible to conceive of an individual holding or intending two opposing meanings for the same word at the same time; an idea that was held particularly strongly by Muʿtazilīs. For example, Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915–16) argued that 'the meaning of an utterance is not simply a function of its verbal form, but also of the speaker's will'.[66] This means that one has to understand a word in the context of the intention (*niyya*, *irāda* or *qaṣd*) meant by the speaker when it was said. This principle can be extended to the lexical opinions of early interpreters of the Qurʾan preserved in the hadith: if someone holds a belief that a word means one thing, can they intentionally give the same word a completely different meaning? In the case of *falaq*, is it logical to think ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAbbās (d. ca. 68/687) believed that *falaq* meant 'dawn', a 'prison in Hell', and 'creation' simultaneously? The link between meaning (*maʿnā*) and intention (*irāda*) would suggest that one could only hold one of these interpretations at a time. The problem of having multiple definitions of the same word by one person is at the heart of Herbert Berg's analysis of the lexical hadith attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās (Chapter 3). For Berg, suspicion is cast not just on Ibn ʿAbbās, but also on his reputed 'school', since his disciples do not provide a consistent and unified front in terms of lexicology.[67] This unease with the multiple interpretations

attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās does not seem to be simply a modern concern, since 'the proliferation of these deutero-Ibn ʿAbbās hadiths had, by Ṭabarī's time, forced the compiler into the awkward need to reconcile conflicting opinions'.[68]

Excursus: Mystical lexicology

The exegetes that have been encountered thus far were interested in philological and linguistic meaning, and were concerned with what words mean on a practical level. In his analysis of the *Mafātīḥ al-asrār* by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) (Chapter 8), Toby Mayer argues that Shahrastānī envisions a semantic world that works on two levels: the first is linguistic or physical meaning,[69] which is concerned with 'regular lexicology'; the second is a metaphysical layer of meaning, in which words can reveal the mysteries of the divine world. Shahrastānī himself distinguishes between these two methods, writing: 'The exegetes talk about the meanings of words and terms on the basis of lexicography and transmitted tradition; they do not discuss their arcana in regard to the harmonious order and sequence'.[70] Words, then, have both a physical and a metaphysical meaning. On this basis, Mayer concludes:

> [. . .] on one side, Shahrastānī viewed his etymology, regular lexicology and other historical treatments of the text as addressing the Qurʾan *qua* inchoate, as manifest within the conditions of human history. On the other side, he viewed the arcana sections with their items of 'esoteric lexicology' and their unlocking of the text's latent semantic system through the dyadic keys as addressing the scripture *qua* eternally accomplished.[71]

Furthermore, normal linguistic rules do not necessarily apply when the lexical analysis moves into the realm of the metaphysical; indeed, Mayer shows Shahrastānī using playful and unconventional etymologies to great effect.

Shahrastānī provides a further complication to how we can understand the ways in which exegetes construct meaning for words in the Qurʾan: in his handling of lexica on the physical level, Shahrastānī pursues a descriptive methodology in a similar fashion

to other exegetes,[72] but on the metaphysical level, the engagement with lexicology is more 'prescriptive', and one in which there can be more than one metaphysical meaning for a word, which are all equally valid and authoritative divine truths.[73] The epistemic complexities of holding two (possibly contradictory) meanings for a word cannot really be discussed here, but metaphysical meanings of Qur'anic words are rooted in the divine and transcend the boundaries of established forms of semantic meaning.

Other, more typically Sufi, mystical exegetes engage with the words of the Qur'an in a similar way. The Persian author Rashīd al-Dīn Maybūdī (fl. sixth/twelfth century), for example, delineates his exegesis into three sections (*nawbat*s): the first is a Persian translation of the Qur'anic verse; the second is an exoteric (*ẓāhir*) commentary, and the third is an esoteric (*bāṭin*) commentary.[74] In section II, Maybūdī explores lexical meanings and the different uses of the word, although Annabel Keeler comments that

> [Maybūdī] appears to be more concerned with the significance of words, and their different facets of meaning (*wujūh*) as manifested in other verses of the Qur'an. For example, when commenting on '*yawmi'l-dīn*' (Q. 1:4) he does not discuss the semantic structure of the phrase, but gives twelve different aspects of the word *dīn* as it appears in different verses of the Qur'an.[75]

Even though Maybūdī does not construct meaning through linguistic analysis, as many other exegetes do, he still presents a series of interpretative options. However, in section III, the mystical section, lexical meaning is extended through the use of *ishārāt* ('allusions' or 'allegories'), which enables, and promotes, a freer response to Qur'anic lexicology. These extensions or developments of lexical meaning represent a direct revelation of its meaning, or as Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) comments, 'the point of transcendency [*maṭlaʿ*] is the heart's place of elevation (*ishrāf*) [from which it beholds] the intended meaning, as an understanding from God'.[76] The construction of meaning for words in the Qur'an on two separate planes of reality, the physical and the metaphysical, does not create contradictions or problems in the eyes of mystical exegetes, such as Maybūdī or Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī

(d. 465/1072). The linguistic and philological meanings of words seek to form a basis from which the mystical is developed; as Martin Nguyen notes: 'In Qushayrī's view, traditional learning and foundational knowledge serve as critical stepping stones to understanding the higher realities embedded in God's word.'[77] Mystical lexicology can complicate the ways in which words are understood to be given meaning by exegetes; however, these complications primarily arise out of the fact that mystical lexicology operates in two different spheres of meaning, the physical and the metaphysical, whereas standard exoteric exegeses focus on linguistic and philological meaning.

Is a Forced Reading Unexegetical?

The field of law is one area where preconceived religious opinions will come to the fore. As already seen, Jishumī argues that 'if [a word] has a lexical meaning and a legal meaning, then the legal meaning is heeded because it is overriding'.[78] This is similar to the view held by Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). Shāfiʿī developed a hermeneutical method that managed to accommodate existing legal principles within a revelatory framework; David R. Vishanoff comments that Shāfiʿī 'sometimes discounted or reinterpreted a revealed text in order to remain within the parameters of mainstream positive law'.[79] In many cases, the Qurʾanic text is made to conform to the interpreter's already held legal views, and the way in which this can be done forms the basis of legal hermeneutic theory, except for those who take a literalist approach to Qurʾanic interpretation, in which case the plain-sense reading of the Qurʾan is the basis of legal decisions.[80] The need to interpret the Qurʾan in light of already existing legal principles is particularly evident in Islamic inheritance law, where the interpretations of specific words, such as *walad* and *ikhwā* in Q. 4:10–11, are directly linked to preconceived and already established ideas on inheritance.[81] This process of interpreting words and verses of the Qurʾan in light of already pre-textual legal ideas is analysed in detail by Agostino Cilardo (Chapter 9), who places the different legal schools' interpretations of words concerning inheritance law in the context of

their own scholastic views on the division of an estate. Cilardo demonstrates that the Shiʿi author, exegete and legist Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) must interpret *walad* as 'sons and daughters' to accommodate the Shiʿi convention that women can inherit; this contrasts with Sunni interpreters, who apply the term *walad* to male children only (i.e. sons), in order to maintain male inheritance rights.[82] The different legal schools can only interpret them in a single way: to do otherwise would threaten the legal position itself. In the case of legal exegesis, therefore, meaning becomes firmly prescriptive.

The question as to whether a lexical methodology that drives a forced meaning can be considered as being interpretative is complex; but, if exegesis/*tafsīr* is considered as the way in which data is collected and assessed, this forced, monovalent approach to meaning is quite different to standard *tafsīr*. This method of proof texting denies the existence of any other possibilities: there is only one meaning, no other. As a result, monovalency cannot really be considered strictly exegetical, since it is not a reflection on the text, but rather an eisegetical attempt to make the text conform to external ideas.

Are Translations Prescriptive Readings of the Qur'an?

The physical act of translation necessitates a specific response to lexical questions. Whereas exegetes have the ability to discuss a range of possibilities, a translator cannot do so. A translator, therefore, must explicitly and actively choose one reading for a word's meaning over another. This can enable translators of the Qur'an to promote particular ideas over others: for example, Laleh Bakhtiar's translation of the Qur'an is a response to her finding 'that little attention had been given to the woman's point of view'.[83]

In this volume, Stefan Wild (Chapter 13) illustrates this process in his analysis of two different 'redactions' (for want of a better word) of the Hilali–Khan translation of Q. 1:6–7, which was modified after 9/11. The two versions read:

> Guide us to the Straight Way, the way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your

Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians). [1999 edition][84]

Guide us to the Straight Way. The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (i.e. those whose intentions are perverted; they know the Truth, yet do not follow it), nor those who went astray (i.e. those who have lost the [true] knowledge, so they wander in error, and are not guided to the Truth). [2006 revised edition][85]

The interpolations and intrusions into the text force the reader to come to specific interpretative judgements about the meaning of the verses. The move away from a polemic attack against Jews and Christians onto extremists – implied by 'those whose intentions are perverted' – shows the extent to which translation can advocate particular discourses. In his study of different translations of Mark 7:19b,[86] George Aichele distinguishes between literal and 'spiritual' translations, which advocate views associated with specific world-views or beliefs; he concludes:

All of these translation choices constrain the reading of the text of the Gospel of Mark by eliminating alternative possibilities [. . .] In general, a literal translation will leave more reading options open than will a spiritual one, which by its nature seeks to clarify the source text.[87]

The Hilali–Khan translation and revision shows a highly 'spiritual' translation that seeks to interpret Q. 1:7 in a very specific, politicised way. Wild also highlights the politicisation of translation more generally, both in individual translations,[88] and at an institutional level, pointing to the rivalry between the King Fahd Complex in Medina and al-Azhar in Cairo in producing and authorising translations.[89] Likewise, political action on the ground, away from religious affairs, comes to affect the ways in which translations of the Qur'an are received, which is particularly the case in those translations made by Jews and Israelis. In this case, the interpretations and translations that are made are read in light of the contemporary political environment.[90]

Translation, then, enables and necessitates the articulation of certain ideas and beliefs. As Aichele notes, '[e]very translation is directed by the beliefs and values of the translator [. . .] just as every writing is directed by the ideology of the writer'.[91] The extent to which this process is pre-empted by a specific theological or political agenda is hard to establish, although some translators, especially Laleh Bakhtiar, are quite open about the way in which their translations were conditioned by a preconceived agenda. In other cases, the translation is the final product of the translator's internal discussion of a word's meaning; a process which may be similar to the exegeses of early commentators such as Muqātil b. Sulaymān. In the introduction to his translation, Yusuf Ali comments that

> In translating the Text I have aired no views of my own, but followed the received Commentators. Where they differ among themselves, I have had to choose what appeared to me to be the most reasonable opinion from all points of view. Where it is a question merely of words, I have not considered the question important enough to discuss in the Notes, but where it is a question of substance, I hope adequate explanations will be found in the Notes.[92]

Two important points can be drawn from this: (i) that translation can be an exegetical exercise, and the translation itself is the final product of the translator's internal exegetical debate made before committing to a particular translation; and (ii) the notes provide a wider frame of reference and make the translation more descriptive than prescriptive. So, whilst a translation provides single glosses for Qur'anic lexica, this may be part of an unwitnessed methodology that explores potential meanings: an outwardly forced or prescriptive approach to lexical meaning may have been the product of a methodology that has more in common with the descriptive method seen in most exegeses. However, at the same time, translations may be highly prescriptive, in cases where the Qur'an is being used as a proof text for particular worldviews. For example, Andrea Brigaglia illustrates the way in which the Nigerian translator Shaykh Naṣīru Kabarā avoids literal translations of Qur'anic phrases that are anthropomorphic, reflecting his Ashʿarī outlook.[93]

The twin issues of law and translation are discussed in detail in M. Brett Wilson's study of a debate in Turkey that took place during the early twentieth century, discussing whether the fast of Ramadan was obligatory, or whether the fast could be replaced by the payment of compensation called the *fidya* (Chapter 11). The translators and interpreters who advocated replacing the fast with the *fidya* made use of the syntactic difficulties of Q. 2:184.[94] Wilson highlights the fact that this debate is not simply an orthopractic, legal discussion about Islamic ritual, but is embedded within the wider Turkish discussions about modernity: as in Hilali–Khan, translation and politics collide. Wilson concludes:

> By revealing the ambiguity over the meaning of the word *yuṭiqū-nahu*, the debate over Q. 2:184 in Turkey highlights the importance of political context in the pursuit of meaning in the Qur'an and, methodologically, provides a fascinating case of modern lexicographic analysis, and its limits, in the print-based public sphere.[95]

These discussions, as well as many other elements of the Turkish modernisation of Islam, generated much debate in other parts of the Islamic world, and are explored in detail by Travis Zadeh (Chapter 12). Zadeh highlights the link between the opposition to the translation of the Qur'an by many Muslim scholars and the doctrine of the inimitability of the Qur'an (*iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*). Part of the argument, given by both medieval and modern authors, is that non-Arabic speakers are not able to understand the full nuances of the Qur'an, and that the 'miraculousness' (*muʿjiza*) of the Qur'an cannot be conveyed in another language.[96] An element of the inimitability of the Qur'an stems from lexical meaning, its ambiguity and the philological connections that can be made between different patterns of the same root. Indeed, some theologians and legal scholars, such as ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), argued that one could not deduce meaning from words of the same root, but of a different pattern (i.e. one could not use the form *munfaṭir* ['be split'] in Q. 73:18 to interpret the meaning of *fāṭir* ['originator'] in Q. 35:1).[97] Others, such as some Muʿtazilīs, including Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, argued that intention (*niyya*) was essential to meaning,

and that words which had multiple meanings could not have had multiple meanings in a single speech-act.[98] However, these two positions were not predominant, and many exegetes maintained a degree of ambiguity in lexical meaning, which cannot be reproduced in translation. As a consequence, translation is inevitably prescriptive, since it cannot maintain any ambiguity that may exist.

What is Meaning For? Lexical Methodologies and Interpretation

The discussion above has highlighted a number of different ways in which lexical meaning can be constructed. These different methodologies are not simply used by different authors, but can also be found in the same work. Consequently, it is necessary to reflect on how exegetes and interpreters develop meaning, in order to facilitate accurate comparisons, and this introduction will now reflect on the construction of lexical meaning in *tafsīr* more generally. For example, exegetes such as Ṭabarī and Wāḥidī construct lexical meaning in different ways in different situations. This can, and should, be regarded as significant, since the way in which lexical meaning is constructed has a bearing on how we, as readers of an exegesis, understand the information being presented by an exegete or interpreter.

The evidence found in the articles included in this volume reveals a need to refine Calder's theories about choice in *tafsīr*. Calder's main interest is in the polyvalent nature of *tafsīr*, coupled with different means of subverting it. Calder does acknowledge the influence of hermeneutic principles on the ways in which exegetes reduce any interpretive polyvalency, but this introduction argues that, regarding the interpretation of words of the Qur'an, there is a difference between an exegete giving a preference, and when preferences are clearly underpinned by specific pre-textual ideas. The former is an evaluation of the linguistic and interpretative context, the other is influenced by beliefs held by an exegete or interpreter before coming to the text.

At its most basic level, there are two diametrically opposed methodologies to the construction of lexical meaning: the first is a

methodology which provides an interpretative open description of a word's usage in Arabic. The second is a methodology that gives a single, forced or prescribed solution to a semantic question. The exploration of the ways in which exegetes and translators develop meaning for words of the Qur'an seen above has shown that this dichotomy between the descriptive and the prescriptive is not absolute, and that exegeses engage with lexical meaning in a much more complex way.

The semiotician A.J. Greimas created a way to explore and develop fields of semantic meaning through contrasting two opposed terms, and his approach will help to illustrate the different ways that exegetes construct lexical meaning (see Figure 1).[99] Greimas develops semantic meaning from a single seme (a unit of meaning or signification), which is given the symbol (S_1), and its opposite (S_2; i.e. $\neg S_1$ /'not S_1'). The seme can be a word (e.g. 'black'), an idea (e.g. 'democracy'), or even a theme or trope within a narrative (e.g. 'death' in the story of Sleeping Beauty). Greimas argues that the original seme, and its opposite (marked by the symbol $\neg$), also holds more complex senses of semantic meaning, which are indicated by the symbol $\tilde{S}$. In the case of the story of Sleeping Beauty, for example, the binary themes of death and life also generate the complex idea of 'being both dead *and* alive', when the princess is sleeping. Importantly, the narrative of the fairy story
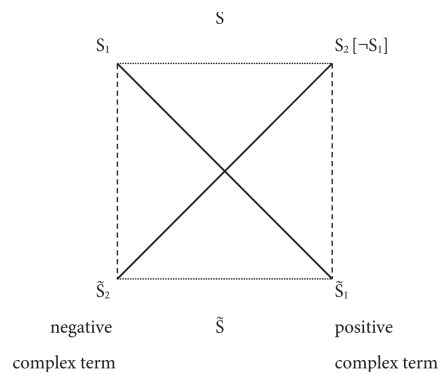

Figure 1.

24

does not move from 'death' to 'life' directly, but through this complex idea of 'being both dead and alive'.[100] Greimas's main objective in using the semiotic square is to show that words, concepts and signs in a binary relationship have more complex ideas lying beneath them: (i) one of which is both S_1 and S_2 ($\tilde{S}_1$), and (ii) one which is neither ($\tilde{S}_2$).

In an illustration of the way in which the semiotic square can be used, Ronald Schleifer explores the terms 'black' and 'white'.[101] In this example, 'black' (S_1) is the opposite of 'white' ($\neg S_1/S_2$), but from these two terms it is possible to develop more complex ideas: the first is a term that describes something that is both 'black and white', or a term that has 'both no colours' and 'all colours', which Schleifer calls 'colouredness' ($\tilde{S}_1$). The second is a term that is 'neither black nor white', or has 'neither all colours nor no colours', which he calls 'colourlessness' ($\tilde{S}_2$). Schleifer uses the square to place the simple terms 'black' and 'white' within wider, more complex semantic fields. The semiotic square has not just been used to describe semantic meaning, but also the relationship of ideas, technical terms and ideologies, as well as literary studies.[102] In the context of this study of how exegetes construct meaning, it is possible to explore the relationship between the opposed methods of description and prescription (see Figure 2).
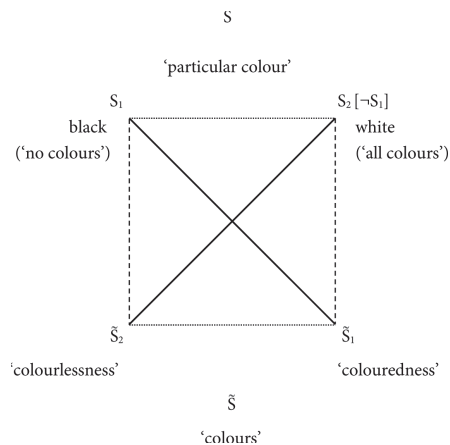

Figure 2.

The reason Greimas's square is helpful in the context of Qur'anic lexicology is that it enables a more nuanced appreciation of the ways in which the polyvalency of lexical meaning is subverted by exegetes. My analysis of the ways in which exegetes construct the meanings of words in the Qur'an has outlined four main ways of doing this: (i) the purely descriptive method (polyvalency), which produces an open interpretation; (ii) the purely prescriptive method (mono-valency), which closes the potential readings of the word; (iii) a method where a list of potential meanings is given, but the exegete restricts the openness of the reading by stating a preferred option arrived at through linguistic analysis, although where other options are interpretatively valid; and (iv) a method where a list of meanings is given, but the meaning is given a closed and prescriptive defini-tion, because of theological or socio-cultural beliefs (see Figure 3).
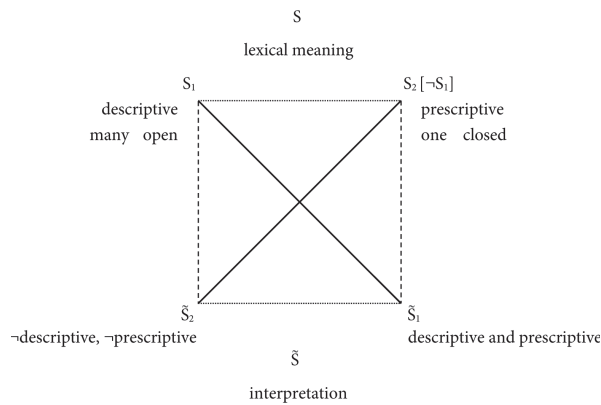

Figure 3.

When the two terms or methodologies of description and prescription (or semantic polyvalency and monovalency) are placed in the semiotic square, two complex terms emerge, which can help to delineate the different ways in which exegetes can develop lexical meaning.

The descriptive method takes a word and provides a different range of possible meanings, without giving one reading preference over any other, so the meaning of the word is left open. This method is predominantly found in lexicography (*lugha*), which attempts to provide descriptions of words' meanings in a neutral fashion.[103] The method is also found in many exegeses of the Qur'an, in those places where authors give possible options without giving a preference; it is used, for example, by Suyūṭī throughout his *al-Durr al-manthūr*,[104] but is also relatively common elsewhere. A caveat must be given that an exegete may hinder the openness of the reading by not listing every possible meaning of a given word (which Calder refers to as 'hiding variety');[105] but there are instances in which exegetes do produce open lists of possible meanings, without making any overt preference.

The prescriptive methodology is a completely different process. In this case, the starting point is not the Qur'anic word in question, but the idea, which informs the interpretation of the word and necessitates a single meaning rather than a range of meanings that could threaten the coherence of any argument being made. This is most relevant to specific discourses such as theology (*kalām*), philosophy and law, in which external ideas are rooted in the revealed scripture through the use of lexicology and other forms of argumentation. In this method, meaning is used to establish a proof (*ḥujja*) to a particular external idea or belief. However, the prescriptive method can also be found in other cases: often in *gharīb al-Qur'ān* works, in early exegeses, such as that by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), and in translations of the Qur'an.

The 'descriptive and prescriptive method' is seen when the exegete provides a range of interpretations for a word's meaning, but gives a preference for a particular reading that is dictated by an external belief or idea. For example, the meaning of *nushūz* is predetermined by socio-cultural norms, and 'cognate substitutes' are interpreted differently to maintain the inimitability of the Qur'an. The way in which exegetes handle words in the Qur'an that have implications to legal theories can also introduce more prescriptive interpretations, such as in the interpretations of *walad* as either 'sons' or 'sons and daughters' in Q. 4:10–11.

The 'neither descriptive nor prescriptive method' is found most commonly in exegeses of the Qur'an, where an exegete provides a series of possibilities for a word's meaning, but gives a preference for one over any others. This methodology may also be used in translations of the Qur'an and in early exegesis, but in this case the process is hidden: the final solution to a lexical question is given, but without any of the other possibilities that were known to the exegete or translator. The 'neither descriptive nor prescriptive method' is not descriptive in the sense that a single reading is given in the preferred reading (so it is not fully polyvalent); but it is also not prescriptive, because the preference is not generated by an external idea, and other possible meanings remain equally valid (so it is not monovalent).

Typically, exegetes employ a mixture of the 'descriptive', 'descriptive and prescriptive' and 'neither descriptive nor prescriptive' methodologies in their exegeses; that is, exegesis (*tafsīr*) only operates in one part of the semiotic square (see Figure 4).
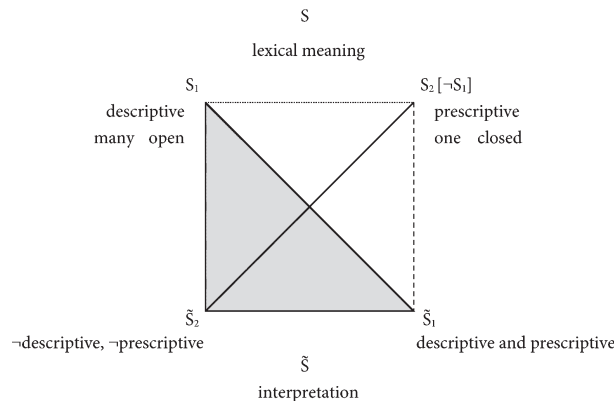

S
lexical meaning

S₁ — descriptive / many open

S₂ [¬S₁] — prescriptive / one closed

S̃₂ — ¬descriptive, ¬prescriptive

S̃₁ — descriptive and prescriptive

S̃
interpretation

Figure 4.

As has been seen above, it is possible, for example, to find all three of these methodologies (but not the prescriptive) in Ṭabarī's *tafsīr*: his interpretation of *nushūz*, particularly in the case of wifely *nushūz*, is conditioned by socio-cultural norms; his interpretation

of *falaq* provides a preferred reading based on linguistic evidence, but other meanings are valid; and in his interpretation of *mawbiq*, Ṭabarī does not give a preferred reading openly. The method that cannot easily be found in Ṭabarī's exegetical works is the purely prescriptive, providing monovalent definitions.

This exploration of the ways in which exegetes construct meaning for words in the Qur'an has shown that there are complex ways of forming lexical meaning. Furthermore, not all exegetical lexical choices or preferences are the product of the same process; some are simply preferences, and others are highly influenced by pre-textual ideas and beliefs. The two complex ways of establishing meaning – 'descriptive and prescriptive' and 'neither descriptive nor prescriptive' – help to distinguish these two types of exegetical choice: one introduces prescription, the other reduces the description. As previously discussed, these two different ways of coming to exegetical decisions are alluded to in some discussions of medieval exegetical theory. This first method ('descriptive and prescriptive') is associated by Māturīdī with *tafsīr*, since for him, interpretations found in the Hadith provide definite interpretations, but there may be a plurality of views which need to be assessed, making the approach both prescriptive and descriptive (Š_1). In contrast, he views *ta'wīl* as a more open process, albeit sometimes one in which preferences are given; *ta'wīl* is concerned with 'possibility' and 'preference', which can never be properly descriptive or prescriptive (Š_2). Whether or not it is appropriate to use the terms *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* to distinguish these two methods is a different question;[106] but the distinction between giving a preference based on a personal, reflective judgement, and an opinion that is imposed on a word because of pre-textual beliefs can be made. Using Māturīdī's terms as a guide, it is possible to represent the four approaches to lexical meaning in a semiotic square (see Figure 5).

The act of translation (*tarjama*) creates a slightly different model. Since a translation must produce a single, prescriptive translation of a word, it can never be descriptive and it can never be 'neither descriptive nor prescriptive' (cf. Māturīdī's *ta'wīl*). Some translations, however, can be the product of a descriptive method that remains unseen (cf. Māturīdī's *tafsīr*); others will be highly

S

lexical meaning

S₁   S₂ [¬S₁]

lugha   *ḥujja*

S̃₂   S̃₁

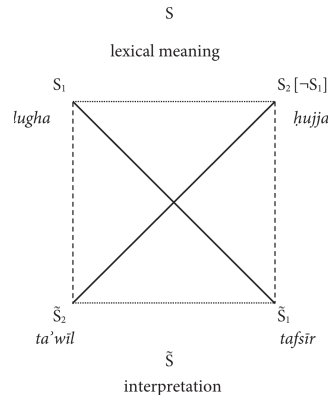*ta'wīl*   *tafsīr*

S̃

interpretation

Figure 5.

prescriptive. There are also commentaries in Arabic that establish meaning in a similar fashion, such as the early exegesis of Muqātil b. Sulaymān, as well as the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. With regard to lexicology, the extent to which these can be regarded as *tafsīr* or *ta'wīl* (following Māturīdī's understanding) warrants further discussion, which cannot be provided here. The construction of the meanings of words in translations of the Qur'an works in a different way to exegesis, since the genre of translation (*tarjama*) cannot accommodate descriptiveness, so translation as a whole must be confined to one side of the square (see Figure 6).

The basic function of both exegesis and translation is to generate and provide interpretations or meanings for words in the Qur'an; but the way in which the meanings of words are constructed varies greatly. Meaning can be open/polyvalent, closed/monovalent, as well as take more complex and refined forms: an exegete can reduce the potential polyvalency through giving opinions or preferences; and an exegete can introduce a degree of prescription to a lexical discussion as a result of pre-textual, external ideas and beliefs. The prescriptive methodology uses the meaning of the words in the Qur'an to support ideas, and to offer proofs (sg. *ḥujja*). Here, meaning is established not by a word's potential for a variety of meanings, but because the lexical meaning becomes a requirement
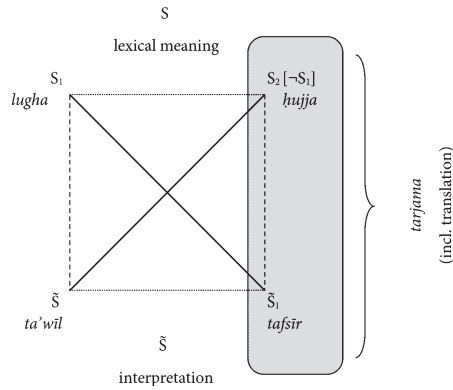
Figure 6.

(or consequence) of a previously held belief. In contrast, the descriptive methodology (*lugha*) begins by looking at a word found in the Qur'an and exploring its potential meanings. The descriptive method (even when modified with an element of prescription) is part of a wider search for the meaning of scripture, whereas the prescriptive method uses meaning to defend a specific, predefined theological belief. In this way, the construction of words' meanings are dependent on the way in which they are being approached: the prescriptive method provides a contextual framework into which meaning is placed (or forced), creating a closed and monovalent interpretative environment; the descriptive method provides a range of exegetical possibilities, creating an open and polyvalent interpretative world.[107] *Tafsīr*, however, tends to construct meaning in more complex ways, at times reducing the polyvalency through various means, or by introducing external ideas, whether theological, legal or socio-cultural, into the text.

Lexicology is not simply about semantic or philological meaning, but it is concerned with what words mean to their readers and the authors, and the significance and resonances they may have for both. As Karen Bauer comments, '*tafsīr* is each scholar's attempt to relate his world to the world of the Qur'an; it is his attempt to

relate his intellectual, political and social contexts to the Quran's text'.[108] The relationship within hermeneutics between the words of the Qur'an and the wider interpretative discourse is complex. Reading, writing and translation are all subject to influence from previously held beliefs, which come into play in both the interpretation of scripture in general terms, as well as the specific handling of individual words: as Schleiermacher argued, each level of meaning feeds into the understanding of another. The different ways in which exegetes establish the meanings of the words in the Qur'an reveal the extent of the influence of external texts, as well as the different uses for giving meaning to words. The use of words as proof texts for particular ideas or beliefs shows a specific type of engagement with the Qur'an and its words. The different ways in which exegetes establish the meanings of words, the 'descriptive', the 'descriptive and prescriptive' and the 'neither descriptive nor prescriptive', highlight the different responses to words in the Qur'an within the genre of *tafsīr* itself, and the ways in which exegetes approach their personal choices and preferences.

The articles in this volume discuss the ways in which exegetes engage with words to construct the meaning of the Qur'an. It is necessary to reflect on the ways in which exegetes engage with meaning and what they hope to achieve by interpreting words in particular ways. Whilst acknowledging that external pre-textual ideas always inform the process of reading, the extent of their influence can vary depending on the word, context and approach of an exegete or translator. Exegetes and translators do not simply provide neutral descriptions of words' meanings, but seek to articulate specific ideas through them. At times this may simply be a personal preference, at others it is more thoroughly affected by external, pre-textual ideas and beliefs. Being aware of the different ways of constructing lexical meaning helps us to understand the influence of external texts on lexical meaning, as well as the way in which the meanings of words can come to direct and inform a particular reading of a Qur'anic word. The meaning of the Qur'an, taken in its most general sense, is built up from its smaller parts and the meanings of words are at its very foundation.

NOTES

1 See Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, tr. and ed. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Originally published as *Hermeneutik und Kritik mit besonderer Beziehung aus das Neue Testament* (Berlin: Reimer, 1838). Also see B.H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 39–43.

2 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (repr. Oxford: Blackwell, 1978). Originally published as *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1927). Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. edn (London: Continuum, 2004). Originally published as *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

3 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 299–310.

4 For a discussion of hermeneutics in an Islamic context, see Victoria S. Harrison, 'Hermeneutics, Religious Language and the Qur'an', *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 21, no. 3 (2010), pp. 207–20.

5 Schleiermacher, 'Hermeneutics and Criticism' in idem, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, pp. 9–11. Schleiermacher differentiates between two types of reading, the grammatical (textual and philological reading) and the psychological (wider theological and spiritual reflection on the whole text). See also Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 184–95.

6 For a discussion of this, see McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Meaning*, pp. 43–4.

7 Postmodernist literary theory also developed out of the linguistic models of meaning and signification developed by Ferdinand de Sausurre, and the theories of signs (semiotics) first put forward by Charles S. Peirce.

8 Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 13. For a longer discussion of theories of reading and *tafsīr*, see S.R. Burge, 'The Search for Meaning: *Tafsīr*, Hermeneutics, and Theories of Reading,' *Arabica* 62, no. 1 (2015), pp. 53–73.

9 See Roland Barthes, 'From Word to Text' in idem, *Image, Music, Text*, tr. Stephen Heath (repr. London: Flamingo, 1984), pp. 155–64, at pp. 159–60. Originally published as 'De l'œuvre au texte', *Revue d'esthétique* 3 (1971), pp. 225–32.

10 For an analysis of the term 'intertextuality' in postmodern literary theory, see Graham Allen, *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2011). The term is often used in the sense of 'source-criticism', but this is not what is meant by it.

11 See Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in idem, *Image, Music, Text*, pp. 142–8. Originally published as 'La mort de l'auteur', *Manteia* 5 (1968), pp. 12–17.

12 Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 124–51, esp. pp. 141–3.

13 Postmodernism and hermeneutic theory has attracted some Muslim thinkers, such as Mohammed Arkoun, Abdulkarim Soroush and Farid Esack; see Harrison, 'Hermeneutics, Religious Language and the Qur'an', pp. 214–19.

14 Rudolf Bultmann, 'Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?' in idem, *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, tr. M. Ogden (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1961), pp. 342–51, at p. 344. Originally published as 'Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1957), pp. 409–17. Bultmann's hermeneutic method has been critiqued by Barrie A. Wilson, 'Bultmann's Hermeneutics: A Critical Examination', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8 (1977), pp. 169–89. See also, Burge, 'The Search for Meaning', pp. 72–3.

15 See also Jay G. Williams, 'Exegesis-Eisegesis: Is there a Difference?' *Theology Today* 30 (1973), pp. 218–27.

16 George Aichele and Gary A. Phillips, 'Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis', *Semeia* 69/70 (1995), pp. 7–18, at p. 14. See also Burge, 'The Search for Meaning', pp. 57–8.

17 Islamic Studies as a field has tended to use the term hermeneutics in the sense of methodology, e.g. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 'Quranic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr' in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 46–62; and Walid A. Saleh, 'Hermeneutics: al-Thaʿlabī' in Andrew Rippin, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 323–37.

18 Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qurʾān Commentary of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 16–17; Karen Bauer, '"I Have Seen the People's Antipathy to this Knowledge": The Muslim Exegete and his Audience, 5th/11th–7th/13th Centuries' in Asad Q. Ahmed, Behnam Sadeghi and Michael Bonner, eds, *The Islamic Scholarly Tradition: Studies in History, Law, and Thought in Honor of Professor Michael Allan Cook* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 293–314. Bauer also highlights the use of *tafsīr* in sermons.

19 Cf. S.R. Burge, 'Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, the *Muʿawwidhatān* and the Modes of Exegesis' in Karen Bauer, ed., *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qurʾanic Exegesis (2nd/8th–9th/15th c.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2013), pp. 277–307.

20 The term 'pre-text' is used by Robert E. Innis to refer to previously read texts (in the sense of both actual written texts, and life experiences); see Robert E. Innis, 'Pragmatics of Reading', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34, no. 4 (1998), pp. 869–84.

21 *Say: 'To whom belongs what is in the heavens and in the earth?' Say: 'It is God's. He has prescribed for Himself mercy. He will surely gather you to the Resurrection Day, of which there is no doubt. Those who have lost their souls, they do not believe.* Unless specified otherwise, translations of the Qurʾan are from A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

22 Feras Hamza and Sajjad Rizvi, with Farhana Mayer, eds, *An Anthology of Qurʾanic Commentaries. Volume 1: On the Nature of the Divine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008), pp. 312–13.

23 See W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), pp. 47–52.

24 ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Ṭayyib al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī (Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Najaf, 1387/1967), vol. 1, p. 141; for more on Shiʿi proofs for the

imamate, see Meir M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 126–8.

25 Andrew Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shī'ism: Ḥadīth as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000), p. 51.

26 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (*Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*) (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.).

27 For example, Rāzī provides a long theological discussion about the sending down of the Qur'an in his exegesis of Q. 2:185 at the reference to *the month of Ramadan, wherein the Koran was sent down*; ibid., vol. 5, pp. 84–7.

28 Yasin Ceylan, *Theology and Tafsīr in the Major Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996).

29 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1353/1934–5), p. 368; cf. Rāzī's use of the Qur'an as a proof text in Binyamin Abrahamov, 'Faḵr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Knowability of God's Essence and Attributes', *Arabica* 49, no. 2 (2002), pp. 204–30.

30 Cf. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Text* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1979), pp. 24–7; see also Omar Alí-de-Unzaga, 'Citational Exegesis of the Qur'an: Towards a Theoretical Framework for the Construction of Meaning in Classical Islamic Thought. The Case of the *Epistles of the Pure Brethren* (*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*)' in Abdou Filali-Ansary and Aziz Esmail, eds, *The Construction of Belief: Reflections on the Thought of Mohammed Arkoun* (London: Saqi Books in association with the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, 2012), pp. 168–93.

31 See Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), pp. 24–33.

32 Geza Vermes makes this distinction in 'Biblical Proof-Texts in Qumran Literature', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34 (1989), pp. 493–508, at p. 493.

33 Karen Bauer, 'Introduction' in Bauer, ed., *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis*, pp. 1–16, at p. 7.

34 Norman Calder, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Descriptions of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham' in G.R. Hawting and Abdul Kader A. Shareef, eds, *Approaches to the Study of the Qur'ān* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 101–40, at pp. 101–3.

35 Ibid., p. 103.

36 Ibid.

37 For a history of the uses of the terms 'descriptive' and 'prescriptive' in lexicography and grammar, see Henning Bergenholz and Rufus S. Gouws, 'A Functional Approach to the Choice between Descriptive, Prescriptive and Proscriptive Lexicography', *Lexikos* 20 (2010), pp. 26–51.

38 E.g. al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-'Ayn* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001); Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Fīrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (India: n.p., n.d.); Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, ed. Amīn Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq al-'Ubaydī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999); Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'arūs min*

jawāhir al-qāmūs, ed. ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farāj *et al.* (Kuwait: Maṭabaʿat Ḥukūmāt al-Kuwayt, 1965–2001); and Ibn Durayd, *Kitāb Jamaharat al-lugha*, repr. (Baghdad: al-Muthanna Library, n.d.).

39 Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006); and Suyūṭī, *al-Mutawakkilī*, ed. and tr. William Y. Bell as *The Mutawakkili of as-Suyūṭī* (Cairo: Nile Mission Press, 1924).

40 Andrew Rippin, 'Lexicographical Texts and the Qurʾān' in idem, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, pp. 158–74, at p. 162.

41 For more on *ṣafrāʾ* in Q. 2:69, see Kees Versteegh, Chapter 2 in this volume, pp. 54–5; Wolfdietrich Fischer, *Farb- und Formbezeichnungen in der Sprache der altarabischen Dichtung: Untersuchungen zur Wortbedeutung und zur Wortbildung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965), pp. 364–5.

42 Cf. John Penrice, *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Qurʾan*, repr. (Lahore: al-Biruni, 1976), p. 84; Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Lexicon of Qurʾanic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 528; ʿAlī Akbār Qurashī, *Qāmūs-i Qurʾān* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1973–6), vol. 4, p. 133. Arne Ambros refers to the debate about *ṣafrāʾ* in Arne A. Ambros, with Stephan Procházka, *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004), p. 162.

43 Cf. Calder, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr', p. 104.

44 See Versteegh, Chapter 2, p. 64, n. 53.

45 See S.R. Burge, Chapter 6 in this volume, pp. 162–3.

46 *And on the day He shall say, 'Call on My associates whom you asserted', and then they shall call on them, but they will not answer them, and We shall set a gulf* (*mawbiq*) *between them.*

47 Claude Gilliot, Chapter 5 in this volume, p. 128.

48 Ibid., p. 129.

49 Cf. Calder, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr', p. 103.

50 Q. 4:34, . . . *and those that you fear may be rebellious* (*nushūzahunna*) *admonish . . .*; and Q. 4:128, *If a woman fear rebelliousness* (*nushūzan*) *or aversion in her husband . . .*

51 Ayesha S. Chaudhry, Chapter 10 in this volume, p. 343.

52 See Abdulkader Tayob, 'An Analytical Survey of al-Ṭabarī's Exegesis of the Cultural Symbolic Construct of *Fitna*' in Hawting and Shareef, *Approaches to the Study of the Qurʾān*, pp. 157–72; cf. Herbert Berg, 'Ṭabarī's Exegesis of the Qurʾānic Term *al-Kitāb*', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 4 (1995), pp. 761–74.

53 Stewart also discusses this in 'Poetic License in the Qurʾan: Ibn al-Ṣaʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām al-rāy fī aḥkām al-āy*', *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009), pp. 1–54, at pp. 20–25.

54 Peter Heath, 'Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches,' *Arabica* 36, no. 2 (1989), pp. 173–210, at pp. 178–9. Heath is referring to Todorov's 'principle of pertinence'; Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, tr. Catherine Porter (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 28. Originally published as *Symbolisme et interpretation* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978).

55 Devin J. Stewart, Chapter 7 in this volume, p. 246.

56 Cf. Alexander Key, 'Al-Raghīb al-Iṣfahānī' in Terri de Young, ed., *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography. Volume 1* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), pp. 298–306. See also Stewart, 'Poetic License in the Qur'an', pp. 1–54.

57 *Zuhd* was a pietistic movement that became prominent in the early period of Islam; a body of hadith emerged which promoted *zuhd*; see Christopher Melchert's essay (Chapter 4 in this volume).

58 Q. 9:112, *Those who repent, those who serve, those who pray, those who journey . . .*

59 Melchert, Chapter 4 in this volume, p. 110.

60 See Angelika Broderson, ''Alā' al-Dīn al-Samarqandī', *EI THREE* (Brill Online) [last accessed 27 June 2013].

61 Cited from Alena Kulinich, 'Representing "a Blameworthy *Tafsīr*": Muʿtazilite Exegetical Tradition in *al-Jāmiʿ fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* of 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-Rummānī (d. 384/994)' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2011), p. 83 (amended slightly). The text is Kulinich's translation of 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Samarqandī, *Sharḥ ta'wīlāt ahl al-sunnah* (fragment), MS 3249, fol. 2v, Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent.

62 It should be noted that this is not always what is meant by *ta'wīl*, as it can be used, especially by Ismaili exegetes, to describe a construction of lexical meaning that is prescriptive, rather than the result of linguistic and philological analysis. For Ismaili exegetes the *ta'wīl* is forced or prescriptive, because the meaning is given through divine revelation. See Ismail K. Poonawala, 'Ismāʿīlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ān' in Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, pp. 199–222, at pp. 206–12.

63 Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt ahl al-sunna*, ed. Fāṭima Yūsuf al-Khaymī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla Nāshirūn, 1425/2004), p. 1. See also Ahmad Mohmed Ahmad Galli, 'Some Aspects of al-Māturīdī's Commentary on the Qur'ān', *Islamic Studies* 21, no. 1 (1982), pp. 3–22, at pp. 3–5. Māturīdī presents his theoretical understanding of *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*, not necessarily what he does in practice. The application of the theories expounded by exegetes in their introductions do not always match an exegete's actual practice and can serve other purposes; for a discussion of introductions to *tafsīr*, see Karen Bauer, 'Justifying the Genre: A Study of Introductions to Classical Works of *Tafsīr*' in Bauer, ed., *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis*, pp. 39–65.

64 al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī, *Tahdhīb fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*; translation from Suleiman A. Mourad, 'Towards a Reconstruction of the Muʿtazilī Tradition of Qur'anic Exegesis: Reading the Introduction to the *Tahdhīb* of al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101) and Its Application' in Bauer, ed., *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis*, pp. 101–37, at p. 104 (Ar. p. 135).

65 Ibid., p. 104 (Ar. p. 135).

66 David R. Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics: How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 2011), p. 116.

67 Herbert Berg, Chapter 3 in this volume, p. 83; cf. Claude Gilliot, 'Portrait "mythique" d'Ibn 'Abbās', *Arabica* 32, no. 2 (1985), pp. 127–84.

68 Berg, Chapter 3 in this volume, p. 83.

69 There are three main ways of deriving meaning (*ishtiqāq*) for words: *ishtiqāq al-ṣaghīr* (etymology or the meaning of derived forms and patterns), *ishtiqāq al-kabīr* or *qalb* (meaning developed through metathesis), and *ishtiqāq al-akbar* or *ibdāl* (meaning generated through the replacement of one radical with another of a similar phonetic value). Although Shahrastānī does not use these terms, his use of 'physical' meaning is related to *ishtiqāq al-ṣaghīr* and *ishtiqāq al-kabīr*, and his 'metaphysical' lexicology is similar to *ishtiqāq al-kabīr*. For more on approaches to *ishtiqāq*, see Mustafa Shah, 'The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawqīf-iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy – Part I', *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), pp. 27–46, at pp. 33–5.

70 Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Mafātīḥ al-asrār wa maṣābīḥ al-abrār*, tr. Toby Mayer as *Keys to the Arcana: Shahrastānī's Esoteric Commentary on the Qurʾan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2009), p. 153.

71 Toby Mayer, Chapter 8 in this volume, p. 275.

72 Ibid., p. 261.

73 Cf. Shahrastānī's exegesis of Q. 1:7, Mayer, *Keys to the Arcana*, pp. 184–5.

74 See Annabel Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics: The Qurʾan Commentary of Rashīd al-Dīn al-Maybūdī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2006), pp. 39–104.

75 Ibid., p. 52.

76 Sahl al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr*, tr. Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler as *Tafsīr al-Tustarī* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae / Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2011), p. 2.

77 Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Scholar: Abūʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and the Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012), p. 138.

78 Mourad, 'Towards a Reconstruction of the Muʿtazilī Tradition of Qurʾanic Exegesis', p. 104 (Ar. p. 135).

79 Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics*, p. 36.

80 This is particularly important for the Ẓahirīs, see ibid., pp. 66–108; and Robert Gleave, *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); and idem, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shīʿī School* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

81 That interpretations of specific words relevant to inheritance do not largely appear in exegeses of the Qurʾan until after Shāfiʿī, indicates his influence, and also Vishanoff's main argument.

82 Agostino Cilardo, Chapter 9 in this volume, p. 297.

83 Laleh Bakhtiar, tr., *The Sublime Quran: Based on the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafii Schools of Law* (Chicago, IL: islamicworld.com, 2007), p. xliii.

84 Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, tr., *The Noble Qurʾan in the English Language: A Summarized Version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir with Comments from Sahih al-Bukhari* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996), p. 10.

85 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, *The Noble Qurʾan. English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*; http://www.quran complex.org [last accessed 20 June 2013].

86 'He [Jesus] said to them: "Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean).' [Mark 7:18–19].

87 George Aichele, *Sign, Text, Scripture: Semiotics and the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 54–5.

88 There has been much written on this area, e.g. Abdur Rahim Kidwai, 'A Survey of English Translations of the Quran', *The Muslim World Book Review* 7, no. 4 (1987), pp. 66–71; Helmut Bobzin, 'Translations of the Qur'ān', *EQ*, vol. 4, pp. 340–58; Neal Robinson, 'Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Qur'an', *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 8, no. 3 (1997), pp. 261–78; and more region-specific studies, such as Andrea Brigaglia, 'Two Published Hausa Translations of the Qur'ān and Their Doctrinal Background', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35, no. 4 (2005), pp. 424–49; Ziad Elmarsafy, 'Translations of the Qur'ān into Western Languages', *Religion Compass* 3, no. 3 (2009), pp. 430–39.

89 Stefan Wild, Chapter 13 in this volume, p. 432.

90 Ibid., pp. 437–40.

91 Aichele, *Sign, Text, Scripture*, p. 55.

92 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, tr., *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān: Qur'ānic Text (Arabic) with Revised English Translation, Commentary and Index*, 11th edn (Beltsville: Amana Publications, 1427/2006), p. xiv; cf. Brigaglia, 'Two Published Hausa Translations of the Qur'ān', pp. 436–9.

93 Brigaglia, 'Two Published Hausa Translations of the Qur'ān', pp. 440–41.

94 See also M. Brett Wilson, 'The First Translations of the Qur'an in Modern Turkey (1924–1938)', *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009), pp. 419–35.

95 M. Brett Wilson, Chapter 11 in this volume, p. 368.

96 See also Travis Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012), pp. 214–50.

97 For more on this see Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics*, pp. 88–91.

98 See ibid., pp. 116–17; and Richard Frank, 'Meanings Are Spoken of in Many Ways: The Earlier Arab Grammarians', *Le Muséon* 94, nos 3–4 (1981), pp. 259–319.

99 A.J. Greimas, *Sémantique structurale. Recherche de méthod* (Paris: Larousse, 1966); tr. D. McDowell, R. Schleifer and A. Velie as *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* (London: Nebraska University Press, 1983).

100 This example is taken from Bronwen Martin, 'Semiotics', *Encyclopaedia of Literary Critics and Criticism*, vol. 2, pp. 1004–12, at pp. 1008–10.

101 Ronald Schleifer, *A.J. Greimas and the Nature of Meaning: Linguistics, Semiotics and Discourse Theory* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 25–33.

102 Cf. A.J. Greimas, *Maupassant: La sémiotique du texte* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1976).

103 See John A. Haywood, 'The Entry in Medieval Arabic Monolingual Dictionaries: Some Aspects of Arrangement and Context' in Reinhard R.K. Hartmann, ed., *The History of Lexicography: Papers from the Dictionary*

Research Centre Seminar at Exeter, March 1986 (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1986), pp. 107–13; and Rippin, 'Lexicographical Texts and the Qur'ān'.

104 Burge, Chapter 6 in this volume, pp. 172 and 180–81.

105 Calder, '*Tafsīr* from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr', p. 103.

106 Andrew Rippin, 'Tafsīr', *EI²*, vol. 10, pp. 83–8; cf. Galli, 'Some Aspects of al-Māturīdī's Commentary on the Qur'ān', pp. 4–5.

107 See Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, pp. 3–43.

108 Bauer, 'Introduction', in eadem, ed., *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis*, p. 8.