

Embarking on a literary odyssey, Al-Abhath's volume 71 unfurls a vibrant collection of articles that collectively examine the nuanced art of conclusions and the perpetual currents of narrative continuation in Arabic literature. The genesis of this volume traces back to a first workshop on textual endings at Bamberg University in 2012. Plans soon developed to convene an international conference on the subject of endings, closure, and finality (*khātima*) in 2021 at the American University in Beirut. However, the onset of travel restrictions during the pandemic necessitated a shift in plans, leading to the hosting of a digital conference in June 2021.

Despite the challenges posed by the virtual format, colleagues from universities across the globe graciously adapted to the new mode of engagement, presenting their research remotely via screens. Participants listened attentively, exchanged ideas about the novel conference experience, and even experimented with virtual breakout sessions. The enthusiasm of everyone involved in exploring the forms and functions of endings was palpable, underscoring their commitment to scholarly inquiry even in the face of adversity.

Our heartfelt thanks extend to all participants for their dedication and willingness to embark on this adventure. Special appreciation is reserved for Maurice Pomerantz for providing an elegant introduction to the volume. Furthermore, we express gratitude to the individuals instrumental in organizing the conference and preparing the Special Issue, namely Amelie Beyhum (American University of Beirut), Rami Yassine (American University of Beirut), and Safinaz Saad (Bamberg University).

Now, delving into the rich collection of articles within Volume 71:

Maurice A. Pomerantz sets the stage by exploring the nuanced art of endings in Arabic literature, using Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasah* ("Book of Delight and Conviviality") as a lens. Through the interactions between philosopher and patron, Pomerantz illustrates how closures in Arabic literature are deeply embedded in social, cultural, and literary contexts, showcasing the multifaceted nature of endings.

Within this collection, Kevin Blankinship delves into the nuances of poetic closure, dissecting why some poems end poorly. His study on premodern Arabic poetry uncovers the performative context in which critics evaluated endings, highlighting the influence of Quranic closures on poetic aesthetics.

Subsequent articles, such as Johannes Thomann's, unravel the narrative strategies employed in constructing endings within *The Thousand and One Nights*. *The Nights*, often perceived as a mere compilation, emerges as a meticulously crafted literary composition. This exploration adds layers to the understanding of closure, showcasing how strategic narrative construction contributes to an enduring sense of completion.

Navigating the complexities of *Kalīla and Dimna*, Johannes Stephan's piece sheds light on open-endedness and fluidity within this seminal work of Arabic literature. The article reveals how the book's transmission, marked by undefined nature and continuous relevance, fosters an ever-expansive potential. *Kalīla and Dimna's* sense of no ending emerges as a testament to its timeless allure.

A deeper dive into narrative dynamics shapes the violent end of al-Amīn in Lale Behzadi's exploration of al-Ṭabarī's *Annales*. The article dissects the elements, strategies, and decision-making processes that lead to the inevitable conclusion. The unfolding narrative becomes a canvas illustrating the profound impact of earlier choices on the composition of the passage and the ultimate end of al-Amīn's life.

Shifting the lens to the pedagogical dimension of endings in Sebastian Günther's study of the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, the exploration extends beyond content summarization. The study unravels the persuasive educational beginnings encoded within, offering insights into the *Epistles'* role in the broader development of classical Arabic writing and their educational significance.

Venturing into the politics of citationality (*ikhṭiyār*) in Andalusian works, Enass Khansa's article challenges established repertoires. The study unveils tendentious attitudes, departing into local, synchronic, and imagined frames of reference. The work illuminates the constructed nature of medieval anthologies, inviting readers to reconsider the interplay between citation and originality.

Bridging religious boundaries, Rocio Daga Portillo's article analyzes author's endings and copyist's colophons in Christian theological works. The comparative study of Christian and Islamic colophons unveils shifts in tone and self-abasement influenced by historical circumstances. The article traces the evolution of apologetic language, highlighting the diverse trajectories taken by Christian Arabic literature.

In Lina al-Jammal's article, she explores the intriguing link between Mamlūk carpet weaving and al-Qalqashandī's work on letter writing, highlighting the intricate patterns in both. This comparison unveils how meticulous design reflects deeper meanings. Meanwhile, 'Imād Bassām Ghannūm's analysis of Halim Barakat's novel "Days of Dust" reveals how literature grapples with existential challenges, blending personal and national histories through narrative techniques. Together, these studies offer fresh insights into Arabic literature's narrative complexity and cultural significance.

The volume culminates with discussions on the role of endings in providing order and meaning, as well as the potential for radical hope in narratives that resist closure. Through analyses of modern dystopian novels, Katarina Beškova challenges traditional notions of closure, highlighting how literature can offer new beginnings even in the absence of definitive endings.

The volume concludes with a monumental book review by Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila on *The Maqāmāt of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī* by Bilal W. Orfali, co-editor of *Al-Abhath*, and Maurice A. Pomerantz, challenging existing editions and promising a transformative era in maqāma scholarship. The meticulous collection and analysis of manuscripts redefine the landscape of al-Hamadhānī's maqāmas. By systematically utilizing numerous manuscripts, the authors challenge existing editions, promising a transformative era in maqāma scholarship.

In conclusion, *Al-Abhath's* volume 71, enriched by the contributions of these scholars, stands as a testament to the richness and complexity of Arabic literature. Beyond exploring endings, it invites readers to contemplate the perpetual nature of narratives. These scholarly contributions, with each

author playing a distinctive role, paint a vibrant tableau where closure and continuity dance together, immortalizing the beauty of storytelling within the diverse literary tradition of the Arab world. And this shall not be the end of it, as we hope to see more research on endings and *khawātim*.