Jan Scholz, Max Stille, Ines Weinrich

Introduction

When the Arab traveller Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) visited Baghdad in 1184, he attended a preaching assembly of the famous scholar Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201). He was deeply impressed and thus attended no less than three preaching sessions during his short stay. Ibn al-Jawzī's preaching performances were true mass events at that time, carefully staged—including spatial arrangement, attire, props, and co-actors—and enthusiastically received by the audience who were willing to pay high prices for seats. Ibn Jubayr informs us about the remarkable talents of this preacher and the dramatic responses he evoked:

> On his [Ibn al-Jawzī] ascending the pulpit, the readers, who numbered more than twenty, began to recite the Koran. Two or three of them spoke a verse of the Koran in a moving and impassioned rhythm, and when they had done, another group of the same number recited another verse. So they went on, alternately reciting verses, from various chapters, until they had ended the reading. The verses they gave were so similar that even a man of ready mind could scarce tell the number or name the order; yet when they had finished, this great and remarkable imam, passing speedily into his disquisition and pouring into the shells of our ears the pearls of his utterance, punctuated his discourse at each paragraph with the rhyming opening words of the verses recited, giving them in the order of their reading without prematurity or deferment, and ending with the rhyme of the last. If anyone present at his sermon had thought to name what was recited verse by verse in the proper order he would have failed. What then of one who fits them rapidly and extemporarily to a fine sermon! [. . .]

> When he had ended his sermon, he offered some gentle exhortations and talked of some clear events in his memory, so that hearts were struck with longing, spirits melted with ardour, and the sobs of weeping resounded. The penitent raised loud their voices and fell on him like moths on a lamp. [. . .] Some fainted and he raised them to him in his arms. We witnessed an awesome spectacle which filled the soul with repentance and contrition, reminding it of the dreads of the Day of Resurrection. Had we ridden over the high seas and

strayed through the waterless desert only to attend the sermon of this man, it would have been a gainful bargain and a successful and prosperous journey.[1]

This account by Ibn Jubayr emphasises the importance of aesthetic experience in the religious field. Ibn Jubayr does not tell us *what* the preacher says but instead *how* he says it and provides a meticulous account of the audience's response, as well as a variety of aesthetic experiences:[2] the overall staging, the quality of the Qurʾānic recitation, the memory and poetic mastery of the preacher, his ability to take up the rhymes of the Qurʾānic verses and to stir emotions with his exhortation.

This volume argues for the value of aesthetic experience as a category within transcultural studies. To illustrate this view, our introduction is organised into two parts: In the first part, our first step will be to define our approach to transculturality and hint at the potential of assessing aesthetic experience, a category that gained importance during the twentieth century chiefly in the field of literary theory, but also in the field of religious studies.[3] In a second step, we will argue that from a transcultural perspective, aesthetic experience is particularly important, since it focuses on the interaction between object and subject—that is, between artwork and recipient, poem and listener, or sermon and believer. Our interest lies with aesthetic experience in the religious field; thus, this volume assembles discussions about the interaction between aesthetic and religious experience, which takes place in and between different cultures and in many cases involves shared discussions. The third step in this first part of the introduction will discuss genres as constitutive of transcultural processes, and as transcultural contact zones where mutual influences and cross-fertilisations take place. Indeed, Islamic preaching provides a concrete example in which genres mediate transcultural processes.

The introduction's second part outlines in further detail the fundamental categories and traditions of analysis. We will emphasise the overlaps between aesthetic and religious experience and work out the relevance of emotions in the processes of religious mediation and performance. Finally, this introduction will outline the contributions and thematic structure of the volume as a whole.

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1   Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 197–198; Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr,* trans. Roland Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 230–231.
2   The experience of preaching as a multi-sensorial event and its confluence with theatre has been addressed by Sabine Dorpmüller. Sabine Dorpmüller, "Preaching Performances Revisted: The Narrative Restaging of Sermons in the Travelogues of Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217)," in *Performing Religion: Actors, Contexts, and Texts. Case studies on Islam*, ed. Ines Weinrich (Würzburg: Ergon, 2016).
3   Georg Maag, "Erfahrung," in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, vol. 2, ed. Karlheinz Barck et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001); Jürgen Mohn, "Religionsaisthetik: Religion(en) als Wahrnehmungsräume," in *Religionswissenschaft*, ed. Michael Stausberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

Transculturality: Two definitions

One main aim when focusing on the dynamics of transculturality is to question an outdated conceptualisation of culture in which a culture is characterised by three main elements: "social homogenization, ethnic consolidation and intercultural delimitation."[4] Instead, the transcultural approach looks into the intertwinedness of cultures. Transcultural exchange is not a static quality, however; cultural difference and commonalities are instead continuously renegotiated. These processes involve dynamics of selective appropriation, mediation, translation, re-contextualisation, and re-interpretation.[5]

Roughly speaking, one can distinguish two understandings of transculturality. In a first understanding, transculturality can refer to the fact that an object or an artefact is constituted by different influences or traditions, thus transcending cultural borders. In addition to this first understanding, the term transculturality can be used "to signal that a topic is analysed across cultural borders."[6] The topic of this volume—aesthetic experience—designates a central process of human apprehension of the world. Aesthetic experience constitutes a central concern of reflection in the realm of several religions and allows for drawing on theoretical approaches stemming from different cultural contexts.

Much of the discussion of transculturality focuses on its prefix. The differences between trans-, inter-, and multiculturality—in which manners are cultures transcended, connected, and entangled—and the dynamics of the new prefix have been reasonably established. However, as Flüchter and Grüner note,[7] the second part of the word transcultural figures less prominently in these discussions; the borderline, for example, between transculturality, transnationality, and transregionality is more difficult to define and is less discussed. Approaches from the perspective of disciplines concerned with the traditional fields of culture, such as literary studies, are not prominent within transcultural studies. With some notable exceptions

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4   Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality—the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194.
5   Monica Juneja and Michael Falser, "Kulturerbe—Denkmalpflege: transkulturell. Eine Einleitung," in *Kulturerbe und Denkmalpflege transkulturell: Grenzgänge zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Monica Juneja and Michael Falser (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013), 19–20; Antje Flüchter and Jivanta Schöttli, "Introduction," in *The Dynamics of Transculturality: Concepts and Institutions in Motion*, ed. Antje Flüchter and Jivanta Schüttli (Berlin: Springer, 2015).
6   Wolfgang Welsch, "Transkulturalität," in *Enzyklopädie Philosophie: In drei Bänden mit einer CD-ROM*, vol. 3, ed. Hans Jörg Sandkühler and Dagmar Borchers (Hamburg: Meiner, 2010), 2771. Our translation.
7   Antje Flüchter and Frank Grüner, "Überlegungen zur Transkulturalität," unpublished manuscript, Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context," Heidelberg University 2010, 2.

from the disciplines of art history,[8] literary studies,[9] and philosophy,[10] many of the impulses for transcultural research do not stem from the field of aesthetic theory, but from economics and history.[11] When concerned with literature, transcultural approaches thus far have often formed general surveys that do not take into account the aesthetic processes but focus instead on circulations of books as objects and on the migration of their authors.[12] The present volume rests largely on the assumption that approaches from literary and rhetorical theory can make a meaningful contribution to the larger transcultural enterprise through their analytical grasp of cultural processes.

Focusing on the aesthetic processes is a promising path for a transcultural approach to follow because the issue of aesthetic experience is linked to the issue of interaction. Aesthetic experience does not exist per se, but it does come into being through an interaction between an artwork and its recipient. This interaction between the artwork and its recipient can, of course, differ from one recipient to another, just as it can from one place to another. Within literary studies, for instance, the School of Constance has underlined this aspect. Furthermore, one has to keep in mind that within different traditions and at different points in time, different conceptions of aesthetic experience coexist. Therefore, we argue that a transcultural approach cannot be limited to analysing the different influences or traditions which constitute a given cultural artefact. One has to acknowledge that tracing certain elements of an artefact back to the originating traditions to which they belong perpetuates existing cultural categories to an extent.[13] In order to overcome a culture-bound view in favour of exploring cultural affiliations and cultural exchange, a transcultural approach emphasises common aspects or approaches in different cultural contexts without necessarily seeking to trace their origins. Doing so means acknowledging the simultaneous existence and importance of an artefact or a theory in different contexts, and eventually combining insights from different traditions.

We are thus operating with two dimensions of transculturality: first, the focus on the different influences which any given object is subject to, or which inform a given practice; and second, a dimension that highlights the existence of comparable concepts within different traditions. In the latter case, the researcher becomes a transcultural actor once he or she points

8   Monica Juneja, "Can Art History be Made Global?," Heinrich Wölfflin Lectures (University of Zürich, Zürich, Spring 2014).
9   Hans Harder and Barbara Mittler, *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair* (Berlin: Springer, 2013).
10   Welsch, "Transculturality."
11   For a historical approach, see Madeleine Herren, Martin Rüesch, and Christiane Sibille, *Transcultural History: Theories, Methods, Sources* (Berlin: Springer, 2012).
12   Arianna Dagnino, "Global Mobility, Transcultural Literature, and Multiple Modes of Modernity," *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2013).
13   Jan Scholz, "Modern Arabic Rhetorical Manuals: A Transcultural Phenomenon," in *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub, et al. (London: Routledge, 2018, in press).

to the potential of the different traditions of aesthetic theory that he or she combines. Each description is part of a transcultural process when it brings together tools from different traditions, trying to find the adequate tool for a given object of analysis. However, this does not endorse a researcher's use of universal categories without taking into account the cultural-historical actor's perspective. On the other hand, the approach in a transcultural setting cannot be limited to an "autochthonous" actor's perspective. Both need to engage in a hermeneutical dialogue. For example, it is not always helpful to contrast Greco-Roman and Arabic literary rhetorical theory (ʿilm al-balāgha).[14] Instead, depending on the aspects one wants to analyse, one can find useful tools in both traditions. In the present volume, Jan Scholz uses modern Arabic preaching manuals, which are influenced by Greco-Roman rhetorical theory, to analyse the dramatic staging in contemporary Islamic TV-sermons by ʿAmr Khālid. Analysing aspects of the aesthetic experience of the Qurʾān, Omaima Abou-Bakr bases her reflections on central concepts of ʿilm al-balāgha and draws on New Criticism as well. Max Stille discusses the overlaps of melodrama as an analytical as much as actor's term. And Tony Stewart employs the concept of the *imaginaire* to carve out the borders of the fictional in Bengali popular Sufi narratives.

TRANSCULTURALITY AND GENRE

As has been indicated by these examples, many of the volume's contributions are concerned with individual genres. The interaction of different genres constitutes a process not only comparable to transculturality, but, in many cases, also forms part of the transcultural processes themselves.[15] It is comparable in cases where previously separated genres are mixed, thus creating new trans-genres. Similar to transcultural processes, the transgression of genre boundaries is often accompanied by discussions regarding its permissibility and consequences. Genre-transgressions thus have to be regarded as explicitly transcultural in cases where the genre either stems from or is believed to stem from different cultural contexts or moves between the secular and the religious.

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14 The term Arabic rhetoric is usually used to distinguish the autochthonous Arabic tradition of literary rhetoric (*ʿilm al-balāgha*) from the Greek rhetoric tradition. One main difference between the two traditions is that while Greek rhetoric (in the following, the Greco-Roman tradition) includes performative reflections regarding the delivery of the speech, Arabic rhetoric is mostly a literary rhetoric that is more concerned with text-oriented aspects than with performative questions. Renate Würsch, "Rhetorik und Stilistik im arabischen Raum," in *Rhetorik und Stilistik: Ein internationales Handbuch historischer und systematischer Forschung (Rhetoric and Stylistics: An International Handbook of Historical and Systematic Research)*, vol. 2, ed. Ulla Fix, Andreas Gardt, and Joachim Knape (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 2041; Scholz, "Modern Arabic Rhetorical Manuals."

15 Hans Harder, "Migrant Literary Genres: Transcultural Moments and Scales of Transculturality," in *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub et al. (London: Routledge, 2018, in press).

In some of the case studies presented in this volume, the emotive power of more than one genre or aesthetic field are combined in order to achieve the utmost effect in the process of religious mediation. Theories of affects and the techniques on how to stir emotions move across genres and artistic traditions, and they are religiously encoded and decoded. Such examples in the present volume include the use of secular poetry in religious preaching, the musical delivery of religious poetry, the reflection of religious experience within the narrative structures of the novel, or the application of the theoretical framework of *rasa* in religious discourses.

The techniques and features of Arabic religious chanting (*inshād*) have entered global pop music and vice versa. Furthermore, strategies from (secular) music performances—for example, relying on musical connoisseurs or a behaviour codex for listeners—also apply to contemporary *inshād* performances, as some contemporary examples from Syria and Lebanon reveal. Ines Weinrich further demonstrates how one effect of the performed poetry builds on emotionally charged keywords which move across genres of poetry, prayer, and religious propositions.

The Egyptian author ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim uses the genre of the novel—in modern times not a religious genre per se—to depict different types of religious experience. Susanne Enderwitz provides an analysis of his novel *Ayyām al-insān as-sabʿa* (The Seven Days of Man). In fact, the genre of the Arabic novel is itself the result of cultural contact: Arab authors who were well-acquainted with European literature introduced the Arabic novel to Egypt and the eastern Levant roughly at the turn of the twentieth century.[16] Writing in the 1960s, Qāsim makes use of a wide array of narrative techniques to make different religious experiences and life worlds manifest: language levels, chapter structure, and time arrangement.

Lore Knapp discusses shifts between religious and aesthetic experience in European aesthetic and more specifically in theatre theory and performance art. She claims that defining experiences as religious or aesthetic is rooted in culturally and historically specific understandings. Experiences called religious, she argues, can in other cultural contexts be understood as aesthetic. Similarly, but the other way around, Annette Wilke describes how schools of Indian aesthetics became models for devotional literature. Drama theory's terminology on aesthetic emotions, or *rasa*, was adopted in relation to aesthetic response and religious encoding, starting with the claim that theatre was the Veda for the common people. This later fed into religious discourse, most prominently in *Vaiṣṇava* theology. Transgressions between the religious and the aesthetic thus also occur within cultures.

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16 Commonly, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥaykal's *Zaynab* (published 1913) is credited with being the first Arabic novel; though this position is rivalled by a number of other authors and works. Hoda El Sadda argues that *Zaynab* prevailed because of its compatibility with the liberal national discourse on the modern nation. Hoda El Sadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt 1892–2008* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), xvii–xx.

Both examples reveal how transculturality can occur between a culture of theatre and religious culture.

In the case of the emergence of the Arabic poetic genre *badīʿiyya* in the fourteenth century, literary rhetoric (*ʿilm al-balāgha*) is combined with the act of composing praise poetry to the prophet Muḥammad. Suzanne Stetkevych analyses this case in depth. The most rhetorically powerful poem is also considered the most religiously effective poem and vice versa. Her example thus discusses the (ritual) efficacy of a poetic genre used within the religious field.

Tony Stewart shows how analysing Bengali popular narratives as a fiction genre allows us to look beyond the colonialist constructed notion that Muslim and Hindu are clear-cut political identities. He instead emphasises indigenous categories of identification (*musalmāni*, *hinduyāni*). Max Stille demonstrates that in contemporary popular preaching assemblies in Bangladesh, the preacher uses a special technique of chanting. This technique builds on a variety of aesthetical traditions that cross regions and cultural spheres—such as the Shiʿī mourning session (*majlis*), the Bengali story-telling tradition, or the Egyptian aesthetics of Qurʾānic recitation. Thus, both regional and supra-regional aesthetics are at work in shaping the style of popular preachers.

ISLAMIC PREACHING AND TRANSCULTURALITY

Against a backdrop of defining transculturality and considering the interaction between different genres, Islamic preaching can be understood as a transcultural practice from its very beginnings. It developed from the ancient practice of Arabian tribe spokesmen and is conceived as an oral and rhythmic performance. Tahera Qutbuddin has pointed out the importance of articulate speakers, whom Islamic societies revered and whose addresses were held up by later scholars as exemplars of eloquence.[17] In her contribution to this volume, Qutbuddin analyses the beauty and persuasive power of an early Arabic Islamic oration and its key aesthetic tools.

As a ritual, the Islamic Friday congregation was influenced by Christian and Jewish rituals, and it constituted itself as a particularly Islamic ritual over the course of the first Islamic years in acceptance of, but also in demarcation from, the Judeo-Christian tradition.[18] While these developments relate to the Islamic Friday ritual, of which the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*) is one element, Islamic preaching in a wider sense also offers interesting insights from a transcultural perspective. Islamic preaching is not just limited to the *khuṭba* as a part of the Friday prayer, it also includes

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17 Tahera Qutbuddin, "Khuṭba: The Evolution of Early Arabic Oration," in *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms: Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs,* ed. Beatrice Gruendler and Michael Cooperson (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

18 Cf. Carl Heinrich Becker, "Die Kanzel im Kultus des alten Islam," in *Orientalische Studien: Festschrift für Theodor Nöldeke zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, vol. 1, ed. Carl Bezold (Gießen: Alfred Tölpelmann, 1906).

non-liturgical preaching. In this volume, two examples of non-liturgical preaching are discussed: the Egyptian ʿAmr Khālid, an important representative of Islamic televangelism, and Bengali preaching assemblies (*waʿẓ maḥfil*s)*.*

Transcultural processes shape both examples. ʿAmr Khālid's preaching style, discussed in depth by Jan Scholz, reveals the influence of Christian televangelist preachers, such as the American Billy Graham who became popular in the fifties.[19] It is in fact explicitly on the basis of such models of a new preaching style, with which ʿAmr Khālid was well acquainted,[20] that the phenomenon of the "Islamic televangelists" developed. This entailed different aspects, the most central of which was a break with traditional severe preaching where one major focus was to instil fear in listeners. The new preaching style, as represented by ʿAmr Khālid, is instead dominated by emotional techniques which often "function as emotional therapy."[21] This new style, however, is heavily medium dependent in that it relies on the crucial elements of a television broadcast—for instance frequent camera close-ups of the preacher's face—to meet the viewers' expectations.

Similar media-specific influences can be discerned in the case of the "24 hours Islamic International Channel" *Peace TV*, which was founded by the Mumbai-based physician Zakir Naik and currently broadcasts from Dubai in English and Hindi/Urdu. However, as Patrick Eisenlohr has convincingly argued, the influence of larger public culture and new media is never uniform or automatised but instead builds on prior aspects of religious mediation.[22] To understand this interplay beyond the influence of modern or even Western forms requires that we pay attention to the multiple forms of religious mediation in a field that has never been isolated or uniform. The transcultural dimensions of new media become evident only through constant exchange about and comparison of the impact new media has on the theory and praxis of Islamic preaching in different locations and among different actors.

Furthermore, medialisation encompasses traditional preaching genres more directly. New and cheaper techniques for audio-visual recordings are bringing to the fore oral genres which never made it into writing and are consequently part of an unknown history of popular forms that were faded out by the advent of modern print and, in colonial contexts, other

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19 The influence of televangelism is one among others. As Moll points out, Khālid's preaching programme "consciously located itself halfway between an American televangelist show and an American therapeutic talk-show, inviting participation from a live studio audience and viewers at home through call-ins." Yasmin Moll, "Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt," *Arab Media & Society* 10 (2010): 2.

20 Patrick Haenni, *L'Islam de marché: l'autre révolution conservatrice* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 35; Lindsay Wise, "Amr Khaled: Broadcasting the Nahda," *Transnational Broadcasting Studies* 13 (2004), accessed November 8, 2017, http://tbsjournal. arabmediasociety.com/Archives/Fall04/wiseamrkhaled.html.

21 Haenni, *L'Islam de marché: l'autre révolution conservatrice*, 36 (our translation).

22 Patrick Eisenlohr, "Reconsidering Mediatization of Religion: Islamic Televangelism in India," *Media, Culture & Society* 39 (2016).

dominant cultural forms. These include Bengali preaching traditions, which partly continue the configurations and aesthetic forms of Bengali story-telling traditions that shared trajectories with Indian melodrama. In form, Islamic preaching here connects to regional story-telling traditions and to the regional *imaginaire* that is shared with the popular narratives analysed by Tony Stewart as well as pan-regional aesthetic theories. The most influential among these, the *rasa*-theory, whose prehistory is outlined by Annette Wilke, emphasises the affective merging of song, drama, and poetry. This medialisation, apart from the officially broadcasted tel-evangelists, is particularly important in linking migrants' places of origin with their destination, as it is these highly localised forms of preaching in specific dialects and from rural communities, which create a sense of belonging and home for the global diaspora.

Far from only promoting standardisation, small media adds to the variety of different genres that are placed into new forms of contacts and interrelations and therefore trigger new chances for cross-fertilisation. This takes place on platforms such as YouTube, where different actors, including ʿAmr Khālid, Zakir Naik from *Peace TV* and localised forms of preaching, meet. But despite new technology, an aesthetic understanding of phenomena such as new media and popular culture is able to provide fresh insights. Its analyses can profit from drawing on the basic categories that have developed in fields like aesthetics.

Aesthetic and Religious Experience

AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Alexander Baumgarten, the founder of the discipline of aesthetics in Europe, defined it as a science of sensual cognition (*sinnliches Erkennen*).[23] In this view, art theory aims at the notional mediation of this sensual encounter. One way of doing this is through theoretical analysis and description of the artwork. Literary criticism has engaged in such analysis since the very beginning of its establishment as a modern science. It has done so by means of formalist reflection on the making of the artwork and the specificities of poetic language; by a structuralist understanding of the artwork as a "verbal construction"[24] whose inner textual relations have to be explicated; or by a post-structuralist emphasis on the construction of meaning. Naturally, this reasoning is not limited to post-Enlightenment Europe but has its roots and parallels in other eras and cultural contexts, such as European antiquity and, significant for the disciplines

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23 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, cited according to Wolfgang Welsch, "Die Aktualität des Ästhetischen," in *Das Ästhetische – eine Schlüsselkategorie unserer Zeit?*, ed. Wolfgang Welsch (Munich: Fink, 1993), 24.
24 Tzvetan Todorov, *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?*, (Paris: Seuil, 1968).

assembled here, non-European philosophies of language and arts, particularly drama.

The term aesthetic experience has gained attention in European literary theory, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century; the sociocultural basis for this new importance was laid at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century.[25] Its theory draws on texts from Greek antiquity, as does aesthetic theory in a more general sense. Against this backdrop, one might perceive the theories of aesthetic experience as being grounded in the so-called Western tradition. But while it is true that a great number of theorists in the twentieth century stem from the West—due to its hegemonic position—reflections on aesthetic experience have a long and vital tradition in the Arabic, Persian, and Indian context as well. In the Arabic case, for instance, the early development of aesthetic and rhetorical reflections took place in close engagement with the Qurʾānic text. The different authors of Arabic rhetoric,[26] such as, to cite just a few of the most prominent names, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868/869), al-ʿAskarī (d. around 1009), al-Jurjānī (d. 1078), as-Sakkākī (d. 1229), and al-Qazwīnī (d. 1338), reflected upon the aesthetics of rhetorical devices. This can be linked to a Western conceptualisation of aesthetics insofar as the theory of *iʿjāz* (inimitability), for instance, is an attempt to grasp the beauty of the Qurʾān theoretically. Concerning India, Sheldon Pollock has recently achieved an overview "over a period of 1,500 years, between the third and the eighteenth centuries," in which Indian aesthetics "carried on an intense conversation about the emotional world of the story and its complex relationships to the world of the audience."[27]

When speaking of aesthetics, our focus rests on textual and literary aesthetics within the religious field. Analysing aesthetic effects and experience has gained increased importance over the last few years.[28]

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25 Maag, "Erfahrung," 261.

26 On the differentiation between Arabic and Greco-Roman rhetoric, see above, footnote 15.

27 See Sheldon Pollock, "Introduction," in *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 1. The introduction is a case in point for transcultural research, as it stresses many categories that are central to our volume.

28 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Aesthetics," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2010–2012, ed. Gudrun Krämer et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Navid Kermani, *God is Beautiful: The Aesthetic Experience of the Quran* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014); Angelika Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); "Einleitung," in *Der Koran, vol. 1: Frühmekkanische Suren* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011); *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren: die literarische Form des Koran—ein Zeugnis seiner Historizität?* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007); Seyyed H. Nasr, "Islamic aesthetics," in *A Companion to World Philosophies*, ed. Eliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); Salim Kemal, "[Philosophy and its parts:] Aesthetics," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996). A rich source on Arabic writing on sense perception and aesthetics, with extensive references, is José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, *Aesthetics in Arabic Thought: From Pre-Islamic Arabia through al-Andalus*, trans.

Focusing on the concrete ways in which a text operates or functions and interacts with its recipient, follows the basic assumption of theories of reception and aesthetic response.[29] From this perspective, many of the contributions centre on the means by which texts themselves engender the responses they evoke. The act of reading is never arbitrary, but we understand it—according to aesthetic response theory—as "a process of directed perception which can be comprehended from the motivations which constitute it and the signals which set it off and which can be described linguistically."[30]

Focusing on aesthetic experience carries innovative potential for transcultural studies. The emphasis on reception, which always takes place against different horizons of expectation, pluralises the perspectives on cultural phenomena and evades narrow confinements and the identification with particular traditions or cultural origins.[31] Our analysis will thus focus on the interaction between cultural artefacts such as religious and non-religious texts and their recipients. From this perspective, culture is crucially shaped by aesthetic mediation and individual appropriation, which is always to a degree assembling and unifying rather than disentangling cultural influences.[32] This somewhat solves the riddle of hybridity, which is continually used to propose different cultural origins as a starting point for activity.

Consuelo López-Morillas (Leiden: Brill, 2017). It covers the period until the fourteenth century with a focus on al-Andalus and investigates a broad corpus on rhetoric, poetics, manual art, calligraphy, and architecture. An interesting comparison between Kantian and Islamic aesthetics is offered by Omar W. Nasim, "Toward an Islamic aesthetic theory," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 15 (1998).

29 A need to overcome the artificial gap between Western literary theory and Arabic texts has been formulated with regard to both older and modern literature; cf. Andreas Pflitsch, "The End of Illusions: On Arab Postmodernism," in *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth et al. (London: Saqi Books, 2010); Beatrice Gruendler and Verena Klemm, "Introduction," in *Understanding Near Eastern Literatures: A Spectrum of Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Beatrice Gruendler and Verena Klemm (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000).

30 Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," *New Literary History* 2 (1970): 12.

31 For a case of reconstructing the reading experience from translation practices see Thibaut D'Hubert, *In the Shade of the Golden Palace: Ālāol and Middle Bengali Poetics in Arakan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 213-218.

32 In the early debates concerning intertextuality, Roland Barthes observed that: "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author." Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image—Music—Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 148.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Religion is always mediated.[33] Mediation is thus one function of the literary, auditory, and visual art, spanning from antiquity to modernity and across different traditions, created in the religious contexts under consideration here. The mediation of religion follows—and shapes—aesthetic rules, and it thereby also shapes rhetorical and poetic traditions. Rituals, for instance, can be interpreted as artworks whose aesthetic design is of pivotal importance.[34] The confluence, particularly of ritual and drama with the centrality of the body and somatic experience, has been the subject not only of ritual but also of theatre studies.[35] Many of the volume's contributions demonstrate this entanglement of aesthetic and religious experience: Islamic sermons have, from their very beginning, relied on aesthetics shaped by the poetic forms of their respective context of performance; praise poems for the prophet Muḥammad are as much literary masterpieces as they are ritual enactments; devotional practice in Hindu India[36] is built on aesthetic categories; popular Sufi narratives evade religious doctrine by literary means; contemporary practices of Islamic chanting build on concepts rooted in the secular musical tradition; and some contemporary religious phenomena, including televised preaching, are better understood as part of a larger media history than as a purely religious development.

On a meta-level, the relationship between aesthetics and religion has become a pertinent question since the two were established as separate entities.[37] Most prominently, a functional perspective has emerged:

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33 The mediation of religion and its related qualities and processes is currently the focus of the perspective of material religion. David Morgan, "Introduction: The Matter of Belief," in *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, ed. David Morgan (London: Routledge, 2010).

34 Wolfgang Braungart, *Ritual und Literatur* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), 26.

35 Beatrix Hauser, "Zur somatischen Erfahrbarkeit von Aufführungen," in *Ästhetische Erfahrung: Gegenstände, Konzepte, Geschichtlichkeit,* ed. Sonderforschungsbereich 626 "Ästhetische Erfahrung im Zeichen der Entgrenzung der Künste," Freie Universität Berlin (Berlin 2006), 1-2, accessed November 8, 2017, http://www.geschkult.fuberlin.de/e/sfb626/veroeffentlichungen/online/aesth_erfahrung/aufsaetze/hauser1.pdf; Ron G. Williams and James W. Boyd, "Aesthetics," in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Johannes A.M. Snoek, and Michael Stausberg (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Axel Michaels, ed., *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual, vol. 2: Body, Performance, Agency, and Experience, section IV: The Variety of Religious Experience*, ed. Jan Weinhold and Geoffrey Samuel (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (New York: Routledge, 2008).

36 As the traditions and time span covered by Annette Wilke's remarks are incredibly large and complex, she situates them under the rubric of "Hindu India." This broad demarcation does not intend to submerge the productive roles of other religions or non-religious traditions. For essential reading into the canon of *rasa* theories, see the texts compiled in Pollock, *A Rasa Reader.*

37 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Ästhetische und religiöse Erfahrung (1964/1968)," in *Ästhetik und Poetik, vol. 1: Kunst als Aussage* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 143.

do aesthetic responses take up functions of religion?[38] Like the question of ritual design, this perspective opens the religious field to questions posed by poetics and rhetoric. One prominent and productive example of combining both religious and aesthetic experience is the category of the sublime.[39] This category shares many of the fundamental assumptions made above: even the strong passion of awe associated with the sublime is not a quality of the object itself but lies in the subject observing it. Thus, the sublime is part of a subjective reception process, which can nevertheless be analysed by examining the rhetorical/poetic functioning of the object received. Rudolf Otto, one of the founding fathers of religious studies in Germany, organises religious feelings of the tremendous, overwhelming majesty, or the energetic moment,[40] into aesthetic categories—a process similar to the classification of religious feelings into aesthetic categories in Vaishnavism since the sixteenth century.[41] What is more, Otto implies a research programme made up of a poetologically and rhetorically informed science of religion. This notion has recently been revived in the aesthetics of religion, an approach that starts with the sensual consciousness of the receptive religious actor whose body takes

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38 Religious feelings can be treated as aesthetic ones: "Aus der Perspektive kritischer Philosophie, so ließe sich Kants Satz interpretieren, sind religiöse Gefühle als ästhetische zu behandeln. [. . .] Bei Kant ist angelegt, daß der Ästhetik Funktionen zugewiesen werden, die traditionell Metaphysik (oder lebensweltlich die Religion) inne hatten." Ernst Müller, "Beraubung oder Erschleichung des Absoluten? Das Erhabene als Grenzkategorie ästhetischer und religiöser Erfahrung," in *Die Gegenwart der Kunst: Ästhetische und religiöse Erfahrung heute*, ed. Jörg Herrmann, Andreas Mertin, and Eveline Valtink (Munich: Fink, 1998), 147–148.
39 Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2006 [1790]); Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. Donald Russell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964). Already Boileau indicates this affinity in the preface to his translation of Longinus in 1764, where he uses a citation from the Bible in order to exemplify the sublime (Martin Fritz, *Vom Erhabenen: Der Traktat "Peri Hypsous" und seine ästhetisch-religiöse Renaissance im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 186). He has given the impetus for the sublime as a category for the hermeneutics of the Scriptures. Ibid., 193.
40 Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, ed. Jörg Lauster and Peter Schüz (Munich: Beck, 2014 [1917]) [Engl. translation *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1931)]. For the problematic perspective of Otto's conceptualisation of religion, especially his Christian-Protestant bias, see Annette Wilke, "Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft," in *Systematische Theologie*, ed. Karlheinz Ruhstorfer (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoningh, 2012), 305–307, 327.
41 John Corrigan, "Introduction: How do we Study Religion and Emotion?," in *Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017) discusses important limits in the liberal Protestant tradition's conceptualisation of emotions. However, we focus here on the aesthetic tradition to which Otto refers, and contrary to Corrigan we believe that the tradition does provide approaches that can analyse feelings and religion rather than render them ineffable and irreducible. In fact, it is Corrigan's observation that "[e]motion in religion [. . .] has been cast as irrational and, as such, insusceptible to scholarly analysis" (ibid., 1) which has formed the base of Otto's approach comparing religious experience with aesthetic experience.

up and processes the verbal and non-verbal messages transported by religious media.[42]

The papers assembled in this volume revolve around the structural analogies of aesthetic and religious experience; they ask questions about the changing interlinkages between the religious and the aesthetic and show the mutual dependencies and tendencies, such as the aestheticisation of the religious or religious interpretations of aesthetic phenomena. Where and how have aesthetic theories been used to describe religious experience? What is the role of aesthetic identification in religious (con) texts? Addressing these questions poses considerable philological challenges. The interpretation of experience is by nature always a reconstruction of the conditions of this experience from close textual and contextual analysis. If, to "*interpret a work* is *to tell* a story of *reading,*"[43] then this story includes the shifting positions of the religious and the aesthetic for the actors situated in specific contexts. The question of whether poetry, for instance, is valued for its aesthetic or religious efficacy, or both, has to be addressed.

The volume's sections deal with these questions from different perspectives. The chapters of the first section reveal the influence of traditions of interpretation, which guide the interpretation in the cases to follow. Sections two and three present applications of theoretical thought to religious and literary texts, teasing out the specific potentialities of religious and aesthetic practice.

EMOTION

Often, "the aesthetic use of language [. . .] implies an emotive usage of the references."[44] The codification of emotions varies in different historical and linguistic contexts. The term "cultural codification" is useful here, as it points to the cultural as well as to the historical variability of the "linguistic signs, images and elements of action."[45] The language-boundedness of emotions intertwines them with other cultural systems and makes them culturally and historically specific to a high degree. The fine conceptual differences and their translations between cultures are an expanding field

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42 Hubert Cancik and Hubert Mohr, "Religionsästhetik," in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1, ed. Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow, and Matthias Laubscher (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988), 132.

43 Jonathan D. Culler, *Literary Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 63, emphasis by the authors.

44 Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta: Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee*, 8th ed., vol. 21 (Milan: Bompiani, 2009), 83–84.

45 Simone Winko, *Kodierte Gefühle: Zu einer Poetik der Emotionen in lyrischen und poetologischen Texten um 1900* (Berlin: Schmidt, 2003), 158 (our translation). This view builds on propositions made by Arlie Hochschild in his pioneering works of the 1970s and 1980s.

of global conceptual history[46] and transcultural studies.[47] In this volume, emotions are particularly addressed as part of the aesthetic response of religious communication.

While the degree to which concrete texts appeal to emotions might differ in different texts, the presence of emotions in texts, or their importance within the reception of texts,[48] always plays a role.[49] This is also the case for religious texts. One of the most prominent examples is the Qurʾān. The earliest sources describe the effectiveness of the Qurʾānic message as resulting partially from its beauty. Accordingly, the faithful are conceptualised in the Qurʾān as "react[ing] with 'shivering' skin and 'trembling' heart."[50] In Muslim theology, the beauty of the Qurʾānic language serves as proof of its divine origin—not only the beauty itself, but also the beauty mediated by the emotional response it provokes. On many occasions, Qurʾānic quotations are used "in order to elicit emotional responses from their audiences."[51]

The emotional power of texts can be amplified through music. In Arabic and Persian philosophical, mathematical, and medical writings from the ninth century up to early modern times, the rhythmic and modal organisation of music—that is, the relationship between tones—is set in relation to the human body, the cosmos, and particular emotions. In one epistle by the tenth-century Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ*), the origin of music is ascribed to "the sages" who would make use of its different emotive powers according to different contexts. For the devotional context, they state: "While praying, praising God, and reciting, they [the sages] would use a type of melody termed sorrowful. These are the ones which, when heard, soften hearts, cause eyes to weep, and instil in souls remorse from past sins, inner sincerity, and a cleansing of conscience. This is one of the

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46 Margrit Pernau, "Introduction: Concepts of Emotions in Indian Languages," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 11 (2016).

47 Max Stille, "Emotion Studies and Transcultural Studies," in *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub et al. (London: Routledge, 2018, in press).

48 Though von Koppenfels and Zumbusch argue that tendencies in literary theory during the twentieth century have sometimes sidelined emotive responses. Cornelia Zumbusch and Martin von Koppenfels, "Introduction," *Handbuch Literatur & Emotionen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 17.

49 Also, the non-usage of emotions does not easily allow for an exclusion of emotions from the reflection.

50 Anna M. Gade, "Islam," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37 referring to Q 19:58 and Q 39:23.

51 Stephan Dähne, "Context Equivalence: A Hitherto Insufficiently Studied Use of the Quran in Political Speeches from the Early Period of Islam," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 4. Tahera Qutbuddin's contribution in this volume shows a similar case: the incorporation of Qurʾānic citation as a key aesthetic feature in religious oratory.

reasons why the sages created the art of music and used it in temples, at sacrifices, and for invocations and ritual prayers."[52]

When composing texts, whether written or oral, the stirring of emotions is not left to chance. Within the field of aesthetic theory, in fact, the inter-connected disciplines of rhetorical and poetic theory address emotions.[53] Despite differences in conceptualisations, categorisations, and systema-tisations, this is a topic shared across different cultures. Whether in *rasa* theory's nine different emotions, which form the basis of all encounters with art, or in the Platonic guidance of the souls,[54] or Aristotle's analysis of affects, approaching the aesthetic always entails approaching emotions. One of the central aspects, therefore, is the question of how language transmits and evokes emotions.

A number of the case studies collected here address this problem. Rhe-torical strategies for instance, be it within the medieval Arabic ode (*qaṣīda*), or within modern communicative strategies shaped by mass media, aim at evoking and directing emotions. Mimesis and bodily rhetoric re-emerge as central categories for this in the Islamic TV-preaching of contemporary Egypt. Islamic sermons furthermore employ rhythmic and musical mark-ers to elicit emotions in different linguistic contexts, as the examples from the early Arabic and modern Bengali sermons reveal. Semantics, rhetoric, and music work together in contemporary religious chanting, too. In many devotional contexts, the roles between performer and audience merge in the joint goal of experiencing heightened emotions.[55]

Evoking emotions in religious texts is, last but not least, part of the way in which the larger public works. The observations made with regard to mass media, for example, show how rhetorical analysis of religious texts is part of larger transcultural processes that are studied completely only when they include religious actors. Analysing how emotions are evoked is therefore linked to the larger topics of religious and non-religious publics and mediation.

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52 Owen Wright, *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. On Music. An Arabic critical edition and English translation of EPISTLE 5,* ed. Owen Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), 17 (Arab.), 83 (Engl. translation).

53 Sometimes rhetoric is understood as referring to prose, whereas poetics refers to poetry. However, this differentiation is misleading: the distinction between the categories of rhetorical and poetical theory goes back to Aristotle where the *Rhetoric* is concerned with public speech, and the *Poetics* with tragedy. The two disciplines are closely interlinked, as Aristotle emphasised. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), III, 1. It seems important to mention this here, as many of the con-siderations made within literary or aesthetical theory either explicitly or implic-itly draw on this tradition, particularly (but not only) with regard to the field of emotions.

54 Joachim Knape, *Was ist Rhetorik?* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000), 9.

55 Max Stille, "Conceptualizing Compassion in Communication for Communication: Emotional Experience in Islamic Sermons (Bengali *waʿẓ maḥfils*)," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 11 (2016).

MEDIATION

The stirring of emotions is often in the service of the transmission of a message. It might be the message of a concrete speech, such as a sermon, which addresses a certain topic or tries to convey a certain opinion. The speaker or the writer, the orator as the poet, will employ his or her techniques in order to achieve her or his goal. However, the function of a text, whether written or oral, is not necessarily always to convey a *concrete* message. Within the religious sphere, too, a text on certain occasions might serve rather to convey or create a certain atmosphere.[56] For example, a preacher does not speak in a given way because this is the only way to convey his message. He might choose a different form, less gravity, a simpler wording, more colloquial terms, or on the other hand, adopt a more sophisticated tone. However, in conveying his message he often chooses a concrete form, delimiting his speech from other forms, such as every-day-speech. Particularly within rituals, the form and the material quality of the delivery allows for the creation of a different space, one that is separated from everyday life.[57]

The articles in this volume approach these questions of mediation. Jan Scholz demonstrates that the preacher not only conveys a message, but that this message also provides an occasion for re-enacting through imagination. The events from the lives of the early Islamic actors emerge in the specific modes of experience that are allowed in the fictitious. The case Suzanne Stetkevych focuses on, the imitation of the *Burda* poem, enlarges this notion of mediation: the conveyance of a message and the creation of a particular atmosphere are central, but more importantly, the imitation of the *Burda* allows for a re-enactment of the Qurʾān's competitive character, combining it with a re-actualisation of the poem's positive power (*baraka*).

Regardless of whether the intention is to convey a message or create a ritual atmosphere, mediation follows rules.[58] A certain style, rhythm, tone, diction, metre, place, or clothing, for instance, allows the speaker to direct the effect of the text. Such rules, however, do not necessarily have to be explicitly available in the form of codified manuals that indicate techniques through which an aim is achieved. In many cases, the techniques for mediation are implicit and thus applied without being addressed separately on an abstract and theoretical level. However, in both cases it is possible to describe the specific techniques of mediation, such as the choice of

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56 Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

57 Dietrich Harth, "Rituale, Texte, Diskurse: Eine formtheoretische Betrachtung," in *Text und Ritual*, ed. Burckhard Dücker and Hubert Roeder (Heidelberg: Synchron Wissenschaftsverlag der Autoren, 2005), 36–37.

58 See for general considerations in this regard, Thomas Anz, "Kulturtechniken der Emotionalisierung: Beobachtungen, Reflexionen und Vorschläge zur literaturwissenschaftlichen Gefühlsforschung," in *Im Rücken der Kulturen*, ed. Karl Eibl, Katja Mellmann, and Rüdiger Zymner (Paderborn: Mentis, 2007), 214–215.

wordings, the use of rhyme or rhythm, the different stylistic figures, and the concrete delivery.

While the examples mentioned thus far refer to ritual mediation, another type of mediation has yet to be addressed. Religion is not only represented within religious texts in the narrow sense, but texts which themselves are not religious per definition can nonetheless mediate religion as well. This is the case with literature addressing or describing religious experience or, in more general terms, religious practice. Susanne Enderwitz approaches this question in her analysis of a modern Egyptian novel, as does Tony Stewart in his study of popular Sufi narratives from Bengal.

PERFORMANCE

Performance is one precondition for the aesthetic and religious experience of the texts scrutinised in this volume; further, it often constitutes the framework for processes of mediation. Many of the volume's chapters deal with performance in one way or another: they either directly analyse performance practices or indirectly investigate performative elements that are inscribed in the text. However, the cases of performance studied in this volume involve not only the concrete delivery of texts but also its effect and the transformative potential of the enactment of a text—whether it's a work of drama, a sermon, or poetry.[59]

Performance implies an understanding of texts that are not merely written but also orally and often visually performed. Nevertheless, "oral" is in no way conceived as simply the opposite of "written," nor do we suggest that they constitute two separate entities. Within the complex dynamics and different stages of oral and written texts, there are cases of subsequent written fixation, of simulated orality, or model texts in the written mode, as well as cases of prior composition and of exactly repeated delivery in the oral mode.[60] Thus, oral and written forms of particular genres exist simultaneously and often serve complementary functions. The question

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59 Contemporary performance theories build on the speech act theory by John Austin, which was formulated in the 1950s; the structural confluences of ritual and drama inspired Richard Schechner and Victor Turner's theories in their respective fields of drama and ritual studies, which led to the performative turn in Cultural Studies during the twentieth century. Performance theory, with respect to performative arts and aesthetics, has been further developed by Erika Fischer-Lichte. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* [1962] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988 [1977]); Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004) [Engl. translation *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008)].

60 Karl Reichl, "Memory and Textuality in the Orality-Literacy Continuum," in *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World*, ed. Julia Rubanovich (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Pamela Kalning, "Schriftlichkeit," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 10, ed. Gert Ueding (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2012); Ruth Finnegan, "The How of Literature," *Oral Tradition* 20 (2005).

of interest in our context is not where to place texts in the "orality-literacy continuum,"[61] but rather to reveal the many facets of their enacted form and to investigate the various means that are employed in the process of religious mediation.

For performed texts, the category of "oral" is too narrow to convey all aspects of a text in its delivery to an audience. It is rather its acoustic materiality, produced by a voice, which brings the text into a sensually experienced form. In a similar vein, Paul Zumthor argues that the main characteristic of medieval poetry lies not in orality (*oralité*) but in vocality (*vocalité*).[62] A whole string of rhetorical devices rely on acoustic effects, such as rhythm, sonic parallelisms, or rhyme. Other effective devices are not inscribed into the text but become enacted in performance. Therefore, artistry and potential triggers for sensations lie not only in the verbal content but also in the way the performer voices the delivery of the text: the skilful use of voice modulation, the tempo of performance, moments of silence, vocal dynamics, intonation, or pitch. Max Stille, for instance, shows that the insertion of the chanting mode in Bengali sermons is a deliberate choice to emphasise a specific thematic and emotional message, a technique similar to strategies in other narrative genres. Finally, the enactment of texts may comprise more than the verbalisation of words but also include elements which lie further beyond the text. Next to acoustic features, bodily expressions like mimics, gestures, or postures; spatial movement or visual effects like dress, colours, light, and the use of props may also play a role. Therefore, a text's performance is not only "oral," it is closer to what Ruth Finnegan speaks of as a "multiform mode of existence."[63]

Most of the time, religious texts are encountered as performed texts during religious practice; performance therefore has to serve as a central category of analysis if the goal is an understanding of religious practice. The focus on performativity not only necessitates a discerning of the facets of the enacted form of texts (in cases where they are enacted), but also addressing the performative implications where only the written text is available. Following its constraint in form, the vocally materialised word brings together form and content and offers an amplification of persuasive evidence. An additional question revolves around which reflections, originating in other textual genres, can fruitfully be applied to analyse the texts under consideration.

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61 Reichl, "Memory and Textuality," 35–36.
62 German: "Stimmlichkeit." Paul Zumthor, *Die Stimme und die Poesie in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft* (Munich: Fink, 1994), 13. Characterising the materiality of performance, Erika Fischer-Lichte uses the term "Lautlichkeit" (Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, esp. 209–227; Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative Power of Performance*, 122–138).
63 Finnegan, "The How of Literature," 170.

The Volume's Chapters

TRAJECTORIES OF RELIGIOUS AND AESTHETIC INTERPRETATIONS

The volume opens by introducing categories which have been central to the theoretical reflections on aesthetics from Europe, India, and the Middle East from antiquity to contemporary times. The categories focus primarily on the overlapping of aesthetic and religious experience and its theoretical conceptualisations. They demonstrate how historically as well as contemporaneously, aesthetic and religious experience are in a state of mutual (sometimes tense) observation and interlinkage. One the one hand, the section will map the field of the topic broadly; but on the other, it will lay the groundwork for subsequent sections by considering specific points—namely, experience, emotion, presence, and rhetoric—which emerge as the guiding terms for what follows.

Lore Knapp provides a very modern example. Beginning with Pseudo-Longinos—and building on Kant, Lyotard, and Adorno as well as on Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto's reflections—she discusses religious experience as an aesthetic experience, and more particularly as a liminal experience. She emphasises the structural and functional similarities of aesthetic and religious experience and illustrates her point with the example of Christoph Schlingensief's performance *Immortality Can Kill: Learn to Die! Mr. Anderson Dies in 60 Minutes* (Zurich, 2009). Building on Erika Fischer-Lichte's differentiation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic experiences, which is based on the aim ascribed to the transformation process, she demonstrates that an experience may be interpreted either way.

Annette Wilke similarly outlines the interaction between aesthetic and religious experience in theoretical discussions from ancient to medieval India. *Rasa* theory is an aesthetic one, originating in drama theory; it was later applied to literature, and finally, used to structure theoretical reflections on religious experience. From this perspective, it is clear that religious and aesthetic experience overlap. Wilke particularly emphasises the importance of the vocal transmission of religious texts as well as the evocation of aesthetic emotions (*rasa*).

Omaima Abou-Bakr revisits the hermeneutical tradition initiated by Amīn al-Khūlī (1895–1966), namely, the literary approach to the Qurʾānic text. In doing so she combines the classical notion of literary rhetoric (*balāgha*) with modern concepts from literary theory in a structuralist tradition. She exemplifies her approach through a study of Sura ar-Raḥmān (Q 55) by proposing a reading which can yield an appreciation of its aesthetic characteristics and moral vision at the same time—an integration of textual, spiritual, and moral beauty.

AESTHETICS OF ISLAMIC SERMONS

The second section of the volume focuses on aesthetic experience on the basis of different examples from the realm of Islamic preaching. This trans-culturally interconnected field is illustrated by examples from the earliest Islamic times up to the twenty-first century, and it covers different linguistic configurations. The examples all focus on the rhetorical strategies used in the sermons and their impact on listeners. They specifically address the relation between the conveyed message and affective responses. The affective and bodily dimensions of Islamic sermons have been stressed in previous research, such as the studies of Charles Hirschkind and Linda Jones.[64] The case studies here particularly emphasise the relevance of aesthetic theory, rhetorical theory, linguistics, and narratology in approaching religion from the point of view of aesthetic experience.

Tahera Qutbuddin analyses the rhetorical devices used in a sermon by the fourth Sunni caliph and first Shiʿa imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 661). Out of five groups of key aesthetic features, she focuses on the effect of rhythm, which in the presented case is mainly created by parallelism (*izdiwāj*). Her analysis is not just limited to the semantic effects of parallelism but includes the acoustic effects as well. Acoustic features become occasionally augmented through rhyme, assonances, or repetitions. Together with other techniques of climax building which rely on bodily features—in fact the described sequences of tension and relaxation contain structural parallels with the recitation of poetry (Weinrich)—these features produce a palpable effect on the body and thus contribute significantly to what Qutbuddin calls tacit persuasion, which in this case study helps convince the audience to prepare for the hereafter.

Max Stille reflects about the trajectories and taxonomies of popular preaching (*waʿẓ*) in contemporary Bangladesh and questions the existing evaluations of heightened religious feelings. The use of chanting in the preachers' presentation of the Bengali text provide an entry point for a discussion of the criticism that such sermons are merely entertaining and rely on emotional excess, a critique that is shared by liberal Protestant thinkers such as Rudolph Otto and reformist preachers in Bangladesh. A structuralist analysis of the narrative role of chanted passages in the Bengali text of the sermons shows that they are crucial in illustrating dramatic salvific scenes and provide emotional evidence. Importantly, these narrative and performative structures can be linked to Bengali literary and performance history, and to other popular forms, such as South Asian melodrama. The rhetorics of the numinous and the melodramatic can hence not be

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64 Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counter-publics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Linda G. Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

perceived as two opposite poles; they rather call for a refined analytical framework of their evocation.

Jan Scholz focuses on oratory delivery through discussion of ʿAmr Khālid, a famous and popular Islamic TV-preacher. Proposing a close reading of a short passage, Scholz suggests that the means of the delivery enables a particular form of dramatic experience. In order to contextualise this dramatic experience theoretically he draws upon Arabic rhetorical manuals and the question of affectation, as well as theories of identification of the spectator. Linking the latter back to neuropsychological research he argues that the responses of the spectator triggered by the performance lead to a particular aesthetic/religious experience. In this way, ʿAmr Khālid's preaching style becomes understandable from a rhetorical perspective not only as geared towards persuasion, but as a particular form of bringing the past to presence.

EXPERIENCING RELIGION IN AND THROUGH LITERATURE

The volume's third part sketches different configurations of the literary vis-à-vis the religious. The first two contributions treat two complementary cases, one where quasi-religious literature draws on the possibilities—and limits—of imagination to overcome sectarian boundaries; and one where non-religious literature depicts and supplants religious experience. Both, however, investigate the literary means of addressing questions of identity and hybrid cultural experiences. The last two contributions focus on poetry. Poetry has been the supreme discipline of Arabic literature, and throughout centuries preachers have made use not only of the rhetorical devices related to poetics but also frequently incorporated poetic lines into religious oratory to exploit its musical and emotional impact (although the latter has not gone entirely undisputed). The articles explore the material quality of the poetic text and its rhetorical devices and the material quality of its delivery to the listeners.

Tony Stewart translates and analyses popular Sufi narratives from Bengal, which were dedicated to holy men and women and have circulated widely over the last five centuries alongside the tales of their historical counterparts. The stories of Mānik Pīr, Baḍakhān Gājī, and Bonbibī do not fit in with dominant religious or aesthetic doctrines. Rather, they trigger imaginations of alternative worlds and offer critiques of religion and society. Stewart shows that we can understand their meaning and critique by studying their explicit and implicit intertextual references. Through subtle parodies, for example, the stories voice critique. Stewart also unpacks conscious aesthetic choices of language and sub-genres included in the narratives. In a paradigmatic exercise, he unpacks the complex coding of a religious world accessible only by knowing its literary conventions, while at the same time pointing to the limits of the stories' intervention.

In her analysis of the novel *Ayyām al-insān as-sabʿa* (The Seven Days of Man, 1968/69) by the Egyptian writer ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim, Susanne

Enderwitz explores the aesthetic ways in which the author expresses the protagonist's search for his place in society. The book's seven chapters correspond to the seven days of the week, which culminate in the annual feast commemorating the local Sufi Shaykh Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 1276). Each day is set in a different life stage of the male main protagonist, from little boy to student. The main social group described are the men of a Delta village, a circle around the protagonist's father who regularly meet in the evenings. Religious experience in this group is mainly created through recitation and ritual. Language, light, script, and voice serve as markers of different life worlds, rural/urban, day/night, religious/secular and, finally, the perception of time. Only in the last chapter, when the protagonist breaks with the collective that he no longer feels he belongs to, does calendrical time enter cyclical time.

Suzanne Stetkevych presents the case of the fourteenth-century Arab poet Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī who seeks to outperform the famous *Burda* poem by al-Būṣīrī by entering a type of (double) competition whose understanding is based on the concept of *iʾjāz* (inimitability of the Qurʾān). The *Burda* is conceived as a literary masterpiece; moreover, it is one of the most powerful poems, performatively. Not only did the poet receive the Prophet's mantle (*burda*) in a dream as a reward for the beauty of his poem, by composing and reciting this poem in praise of Muḥammad he was also cured of his sickness. Believers regularly sought to re-enact the positive power (*baraka*) of the poem through its recitation. However, al-Ḥillī chooses rhetoric: through the creation of a new poetic genre, the *badīʾiyya*, which demonstrates in each line a rhetorical figure composed as an imitation (*muʿāraḍa*) of the *Burda*, he seeks to co-opt the *baraka* of the original poem through his achievements of rhetoric. Meta-communicative poetic conventions signal the listener/reader that al-Ḥillī's poem is an imitation of the *Burda* so that his endeavour is understood. Following the model of "praise prompts intercession prompts salvation," the act of composing is simultaneously conceived as both rhetorical competition and religious devotion.

Ines Weinrich by contrast looks at how poetry is mediated within contemporary religious and ritual settings in Lebanon. She discusses the concept of *infiʿāl*, a basic concept within the Arab musical tradition, with respect to Islamic religious chanting. *Infiʿāl*, the state of being affected or involved, blends well with the religious concept that a performer—whether preacher, reciter, or chanter—should not only convey the content of a text but also produce an emotional impact (*taʾthīr*) on the listener. Taking some poetic verses from the ninth century as a case example, she analyses the mode of delivery and the rhetorical, semantical, and musical features that mark the process of reception. She also takes extra-textual factors into consideration and highlights the aspects of reciprocity in *infiʿāl*. Listeners enter an interactive process, one that is marked by verbal and bodily communication, with the performers and thereby shape both the process of delivery and of reception.

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