Introduction*

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ACCORDING TO THE EXEGETES, the central aim of the genre of Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān*) is to uncover and explain the meaning of the Qur'an; but for readers the central question about *tafsīr* is the extent to which it creates, and reads meanings into, the text. This volume is dedicated to the study of *tafsīr* as a genre. As the chapters in this volume show, the study of context, genre constraints and hermeneutics is important because *tafsīr* represents not the one true understanding of the Qur'an, but rather a certain type of understanding, and certain types of knowledge about the Muslim holy Book. By examining *tafsīr* as a genre, with attention to the authors' aims, methods, sources and context, we can gain a clearer understanding of what they were saying, why they were saying it in particular ways, and how this process both uncovers and creates meaning in the text of the Qur'an.

Each section in this book responds to a particular type of question about the genre of *tafsīr*. The chapters in Section One, 'The Aims of *Tafsīr*', explore the exegetes' stated methods of interpretation in their introductions. In their introductions, exegetes state their aims and discuss their methods, and in doing so they explain what, for them, constitute the appropriate sources through which the words of the Qur'an are mediated, thereby exposing the general aims of the genre.

Two of the chapters in Section One, by Walid Saleh and Suleiman Mourad respectively, include editions of important introductions:

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one by Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Wāḥidī (d. 486/1076) and one by al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101). The introduction to the commentary of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1336) is also translated here by Feras Hamza. This section provides not only analysis, but also primary sources for those interested in the aims and methods of *tafsīr*.

Section Two of this volume is dedicated to the study of exegetes' sources and methods. Thus, while Section One examines the exegetes' theories, and how they claimed to uncover the meaning of the Qur'an in their works of *tafsīr*, Section Two describes how exegesis works in practice: by mediating the Qur'an's words through specific sources such as hadiths, exegetes can transform the apparent sense of the text. The analysis in works of exegesis written in the fourth/tenth to ninth/fifteenth centuries tends to focus on grammar, hadiths, lexicology and the legal application of verses. The exegetes say that they are using these tools to uncover what is already in the text; but for outside observers, or exegetes from a rival school of interpretation, some methods entail reading meaning into the text, as well as taking meaning from it. As the essays in Section Two show, the exegetes' interpretive methods were complex and influenced by a myriad of different factors. These included, but were not limited to, local and regional influences, ideological beliefs and intellectual interests, responses to previous works in the tradition, and the need to produce a work that fulfilled a certain communal and didactic function and that reflected the learning and authority of its author.

In this section, the study of methods and sources is intertwined. Roberto Tottoli, Andrew Rippin, Stephen Burge and Robert Gleave each study the way that exegetes use different types of narratives and hadiths. Narratives and hadiths are used to bring meaning to the Qur'anic text: Rippin shows, for instance, how the use of the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) creates a historical context for the Qur'an's verses, providing meaning not apparent in the text itself. Tottoli examines the use of hadiths in the two literary genres of *tafsīr* and Hadith; genre boundaries influenced the hadiths used in each type of work. Burge looks at how Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) uses hadiths to create different modes of exegesis. And Gleave analyses hadiths attributed to the Shiʿi imams in order to highlight the imams' interpretative methods. In all of these cases, the study of the

sources of exegesis cannot be disentangled from the study of the methods of exegesis, and the exegetes use these sources and methods to take particular meanings from, and read meanings into, the text of the Qur'an.

Other essays focus on exegetes' intellectual context. Martin Nguyen examines the way that previous exegeses influence the work of Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), which, in turn, reveals Qushayrī's own learning and exegetical authority. Tariq Jaffer describes the philosophical method of exegesis in the work of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), a method borrowed from outside the genre of *tafsīr* and imported into it by Rāzī in order to expound his own interests through the Qur'an. Ludmila Zamah examines the way that one particular concept, that of the 'apparent' or 'literal' meaning (*ẓāhir*), is used in exegesis.

The chapters in Section Three, 'Contextualising *Tafsīr*', are dedicated to the context of *tafsīr* and methods for the study of the genre. Claude Gilliot takes an in-depth look at one author in the genre, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Hilālī (d. 106/724), and in particular his connections and influence. Michael Pregill examines how we may date a work of exegesis by placing it in conjunction with other works of the period. Each of these essays undertakes a kind of archaeological research into *tafsīr*, examining the full context of a particular exegete or work. Gilliot and Pregill use a wide lens to examine minute details, and in doing so they help us to understand more about the factors influencing the genre as a whole, whether that be in its social and intellectual context, or its methodological one.

While *tafsīr* has sometimes been viewed as the genre that explains the full range of Muslim understandings of the meaning of the Qur'an, the chapters in this volume shed light not only on how varied Muslim understandings are, but also on the specific types of understanding that were meant to be conveyed in these texts, whether that be grammatical, philosophical or historical.

The Need to Study *Tafsīr* as a Genre

Many of the authors in this volume respond, overtly or implicitly, to the arguments of previous generations of scholars of *tafsīr*. In what

follows, I discuss two of these scholars, Ignaz Goldziher and John Wansbrough, and whether their work is pertinent to the study of *tafsīr* as a genre. Goldziher, who in 1920 published *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*,[1] and Wansbrough, who in 1977 published *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, propose categorisations of *tafsīr* that relate to its methods and its diachronic development.[2] In so doing, they refer to the emergence and development of *tafsīr* in the broadest definition: the activity of interpretation. However, I argue below that scholars need to study the emergence of *tafsīr* as a genre of texts dedicated to certain methods of interpretation. Close analysis calls into question whether it is correct to link the categorisation of *tafsīr* to its development in the broadest sense, and whether their categorisations are applicable to the genre of *tafsīr* at all.

Goldziher was interested in the method by which thinkers interpret the Qur'an around their ideas, and his aim was to show how the exegetes pursued their ideological agendas in their interpretations.[3] In doing so, he proposes a chronology of the development of *tafsīr*, dividing interpretation into the following types: the early stage of interpretation, liturgical interpretation, traditional interpretation, dogmatic interpretation, Sufi interpretation and sectarian interpretation. To make these categorisations, he drew on the limited numbers of sources available to him at the time. The main problem with applying this categorisation to the genre of *tafsīr* is that it was never meant to apply solely to this genre. For what mattered to Goldziher were the mythical and actual foundations for the activity of interpretation, not a specific genre of text dedicated to that activity. He used works of *tafsīr* that were available to him, such as that of Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144); but he also focuses his attention on ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), the 'father of Koranic exposition',[4] while admitting that we do not have a reliable work of *tafsīr* by him.[5] Though many of Goldziher's observations are trenchant and worthy of scholarly attention even today, his categorisation should not be applied indiscriminately to the genre of *tafsīr* because he did not intend it to be descriptive of this genre alone; instead, using limited numbers of texts, he argued that these categories applied to the development of exegesis as a whole.[6]

Like Goldziher, Wansbrough describes the emergence of *tafsīr*, and many of his sources are works of *tafsīr*; also like Goldziher, his sources were limited and his conclusions pertain to the broader activity of exegesis rather than the specific genre of *tafsīr*. Wansbrough famously divides *tafsīr* into five modes of interpretation, derived from Biblical scholarship, which, he argues, roughly correspond to the chronological development of *tafsīr*: haggadic (narrative), halakhic (legal), masoretic (lexical), rhetorical and allegorical. His initial point is that his proposed categorisation is chronological as well as typological.[7] His chronology spans the period of oral transmission to written transmission. In his words, 'the development of Muslim exegetical literature envisaged here required a span of approximately a century and a half, from Muqātil (d. 150/767) to Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889).'[8] It is true that the genre of *tafsīr* probably developed in a written form in this period. But inconsistencies in this typology call into question its usefulness for describing the genre, and, in a broader sense, the usefulness of undertaking the sort of categorisation proposed by both Wansbrough and Goldziher, and of attaching this categorisation to the chronological development of the genre.

Wansbrough's main inconsistency is that he does not provide much evidence for the chronological element of his argument. Muqātil is used as the primary example for both haggadic and halakhic exegesis, and no evidence is provided to indicate that Muqātil's 'legal' work of exegesis was written significantly later than his 'narrative' work. His claim that his typology is chronological may refer to the development of exegetical thinking: narrative exegesis must necessarily precede legal, and so forth. Wansbrough draws on the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) as another early example of legal *tafsīr*. This may illustrate that legal writings emerged in the period of Muqātil and Mālik, and that such writings were necessarily a type of exegesis on the Qur'an, but it does not say much about the emergence of specific typologies in the genre of *tafsīr*. Other examples of the legal *tafsīr* date from much later, such as the works of *aḥkām al-Qur'ān* of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 371/980) and Abū Bakr Ibn ʿArabī (d. 543/1148). Writing in this volume, Pregill gives examples of how the 'types' proposed by Wansbrough stretch across time. Pregill argues that literary analysis such as that practiced by Wansbrough cannot date a work accurately,

particularly an early work; he argues instead for 'quantitative comparison of glosses of particular verses, qualitative comparison of conceptual content and corroboration of transmitted material in other sources.'[9]

Even if one discards the chronological element of Wansbrough's argument, a deeper flaw with the typological categorisation is that elements of all these typologies can be found in all works. Wansbrough claims that lexical ('masoretic') exegesis was one of the last types to develop, but Kees Versteegh argues that linguistic interpretation occurred as early as Muqātil; he points out that the grammatical terms that Muqātil used had not, at that point, reached the level of specificity and technicality that they would later convey.[10] Writing in the 1990s, Versteegh's analysis represents a newer trend in the study of *tafsīr*. He indicates a certain development in the genre but does not strictly tie that development to Wansbrough's typologies. Wansbrough notes that there is linguistic analysis in narrative works, but dismisses it as 'intrusive' in that type.[11] Another 'intrusion' in narrative exegesis, according to Wansbrough, is the *asbāb al-nuzūl*; he says that these are 'characteristic of halakhic exegesis but present in underdeveloped form in the haggadic type'.[12] As Versteegh points out, attaching the chronological development to typologies leads to circular reasoning: all elements that do not fit are said to be intrusions.[13]

Writing about the emergence of grammar and exegesis in the early period, for which he relies mostly on sources from the third/ninth century, Versteegh describes how such literature came about:

> The result of the analysis of these materials is that after the death of the Prophet all scholarly activities concentrated on the text of the Qurʾān. At this stage there were not yet any specialized disciplines, dealing with only one aspect of Qurʾānic studies. The text was not studied and commented upon for its own sake, but in order to elucidate the meaning of God's word, and there was no separation between the study of various aspects of the text. Consequently, we find in the earliest commentaries an amalgam of all different aspects of Islamic scholarship: historical narrative, abrogation, pre-Islamic lore, lexicography, legal application, theology, reading, and grammar. There may have been an independent legal practice, but that was based either on customary law, or on exegesis of the Qurʾān.[14]

The elements named by Versteegh (historical narrative, abrogation, pre-Islamic lore, lexicography, legal application, theology, reading and grammar) formed the core of the genre of *tafsīr* once it had assumed a recognisable shape; these elements were listed in introductions by fourth/tenth–sixth/twelfth century exegetes as the core of their works of *tafsīr*.[15] This intermingling of different types of exegesis in works of *tafsīr* is one reason why it has been so difficult to categorise the genre; even works of *aḥkām al-Qur'ān* include narrative exegesis. Esoteric works often include exoteric interpretations, while exoteric works do not always adopt the most obvious meaning. The attempt to categorise individual works according to strict typologies seems to be inherently fraught. But that does not mean that we should not attempt to understand these texts within their genre constraints.

The works of Versteegh, Wansbrough and Goldziher all raise a fundamental question as to the nature of the genre of *tafsīr*. As I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, the stated aim of the exegetes is to explain the meaning of the Qur'an; but the genre is also used as a way of arguing for a particular interpretive perspective, and furthermore it is a genre that is deeply influenced by its intellectual and social context. I will now return to the fundamental questions of the *tafsīr* genre: the extent to which interpretation creates meaning and the extent to which it uncovers meaning in the Qur'an.

In one modern branch of scholarship on the Qur'an, efforts to glean the meaning of the Qur'anic text are understood as the attempt to understand what it meant to its original audience. For these scholars, work on the original meaning of the Qur'an tends to diverge from the genre of *tafsīr*, and focuses instead on contemporaneous witnesses from within the Qur'an itself and other texts. In another branch of scholarship on the Qur'an, the Qur'an's meaning is linked to its interpretation. Thus, although the Qur'an meant something specific to its original audience, it also stretches to accommodate a range of meanings for Muslims through time. The interpretation is not separate from the meaning of the Qur'an, but rather is an expression of the many possible meanings of the text.

Authors within the genre of *tafsīr* presume that there is intrinsic meaning to the Qur'an, and their entire venture seems to be focused on understanding the original meaning or meanings. But the genre

also preserves a huge diversity of conflicting interpretations that change through time. One might go so far as to say that *tafsīr* reveals more about its authors than about the original meaning of the text. Indeed, the study of *tafsīr* since Goldziher and Wansbrough has been less about the study of the Qur'an's original meaning than it has been about the study of later accretions of meaning to the text: the meanings it has held for different groups of believers through time.

Hamza addresses the question of whether this disjuncture between the Qur'an and *tafsīr* is fundamental. In Chapter One of this volume, he points out that although the intent of the exegetes is to explain the intrinsic or original meaning of the Qur'an, exegetes often diverge from the Qur'an's text, constructing their ideas about that text in their works of *tafsīr*. But Hamza argues that we in *tafsīr* studies must not lose track of the possibility of using *tafsīr* to illuminate the exoteric meaning of Qur'anic words, phrases and verses. The very nature of the genre, and especially the linguistic and grammatical interpretations of the exegetes, means that scholars cannot close themselves to the possibility of some continuity with the meaning of the text of the Qur'an, for there are elements of the genre that certainly transcend its obvious biases.

Building on theories of interpretation, and drawing on Hamza's ideas, I would suggest that, at its essence, *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 Qur'an's text. It is a process of meaning-creation, because what the scholars read into the text is not always explicitly there: interpretation does not always respect the Qur'an's grammar or its context. The interpretative possibilities seem limitless; but interpretations are still attached, with varying degrees of grammatical and contextual accuracy, to the text. For all that it is a description, adaptation, expansion and even a contradiction of the text of the Qur'an, *tafsīr* still cannot stand alone. It is a genre that creates and imposes meaning on the Qur'an; it is also a genre that takes meaning from the text of the Qur'an, expanding it with all the methods at an exegete's disposal. The degree of correspondence with, and description of, the 'original' meaning of the Qur'an very much depends on the exegete, his aims, methods and context.

Categorisation and Beyond

Since the exegetes themselves do not confine their works to one specific method of interpretation, but rather use all of the tools at their disposal, many recent attempts to analyse the genre reject the typologies of Wansbrough and Goldziher, which, as I described above, categorised *tafsīr* by specific methods or types of interpretation. In a seminal article in 1993, Norman Calder offered a concrete definition of the formal textual characteristics of the genre.[16] According to Calder, *tafsīr* of the Classical period had certain salient points: it includes all or part of the text of the Qur'an, in canonical order, with commentary.[17] The other characteristics of the genre are the 'citation of named authorities and consequent polyvalent reading of the text', which polyvalence was limited by an exegete's choice and preference,[18] and the juxtaposition of the text of the Qur'an against certain instrumental and ideological structures.[19] According to Calder, therefore, the genre is defined not by one particular method of interpretation (such as 'narrative' or 'legal') but by its overall approach and formal characteristics, which differentiate this genre from other genres.

Calder's approach opens the door to the idea of a typology of *tafsīr* that is not strictly related to its chronological development, nor to a specific method of interpretation. Saleh has more recently proposed that we view Sunni *tafsīr* as either the 'madrasa' type, or the 'encyclopaedic' type.[20] This typology relates to the function and style of the texts, and their overall method (summary versus polyvalent and comprehensive), rather than relating the text to one particular exegetical tool, such as narration or esotericism. Furthermore, this characterisation builds on the stated aims of some exegetes. For instance, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035), Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) all wrote what they describe as comprehensive works of *tafsīr*, which in Saleh's typology counts as 'encyclopaedic' works. Shorter works of *tafsīr* were certainly penned for ease of memorisation, as might have occurred in the madrasa; yet surely encyclopaedic works would have been studied there as well.

It is sometimes useful to see how the exegetes themselves defined their works. In a recent article, I described how exegetes divided their

works into 'short', 'medium' and 'comprehensive', with the medium length seemingly preferred as neither too short nor too long, comprehending enough information without being boring, being inclusive enough without being impossible to memorise.[21] This idealised typology reveals much about what exegetes saw as the most useful type of work, and the kind of scholars they wanted to be. Another clue as to the intentions of the exegetes lies in the titles that they give their works. Ṭabarī and Qurṭubī both authored *Jāmiʿ*s: exegeses that collected together diverse interpretations. One cannot always rely on titles to tell the tale; nevertheless, it is useful to ask ourselves what an author's intentions were when we attempt to understand why he included certain interpretations in his works.

It is worth noting that the most recent contributors to the debate have proposed increasingly flexible, rather than precise, categorisations. Rather than having clearly-defined characteristics, the categories proposed by the exegetes themselves (with 'medium' as a particular favourite) seem to be the most flexible. Perhaps, as Saleh suggests, this is due to the nature of the genre itself. When critiquing Goldziher's typology, he comments that: 'Such characterizations impose upon exegesis a much more rigid plan than the tradition itself allows.'[22] The trend towards open-ended and flexible categories is symptomatic of the futility of attempting to categorise a genre that is at once inclusive and exclusive, and that is, at present, so little understood in terms of its intellectual and social history. Until scholars develop a better understanding of the genre's history, the following categories will be useful: 'encyclopaedic/*Jāmiʿ*', 'madrasa/abbreviated', 'middle' works, and the barely-studied 'marginal' commentaries, that is, commentaries on commentaries, which represent a more sophisticated phase of the genre.

But categories can take us only so far; it may be time to move beyond the entire question of categorisation. I would suggest that certain nodes could be useful for the study of the genre of *tafsīr*, and for placing it in its particular social and intellectual context: geography (particular places which may have served as hubs for *tafsīr* at different moments in history), human networks (of kinship, teacher/student and school affiliation), terminology (the use of terms in different works, what these terms mean, and how that use changes through

time), hermeneutical systems (their emergence, development and transference between exegetes) and genre boundaries (by tracing the same interpretations or the same sources of interpretation in different genres of text). Many of these nodes explore the environmental factors that might have influenced the development of a text or set of texts. Thus, the study of the use of particular terminology, for instance, can enable us to move beyond the conscious modes of interpretation such as the writing of a Sunni or Shiʿi work, an 'esoteric' or an 'exoteric' *tafsīr*. Although purposeful elements play a large part in works of exegesis, they work in conjunction with other environmental factors to shape the development of the genre as a whole. Below, I draw on some of the chapters in this volume to illustrate the way that these nodes are already being used in the study of *tafsīr*.

Geography is one major node through which *tafsīr* is being studied. For example, Nishapur, as Nguyen says, is 'an important historical nexus in the development of *tafsīr*.'[23] Five of the chapters in this volume deal with authors based in or near Nishapur in the fifth/eleventh–sixth/twelfth centuries. They highlight the importance of taking into account the immediate physical context when analysing the intellectual output of *tafsīr*. Nguyen argues that location and local ties may be just as strong an influence on an author as his affiliation with a certain type of exegesis, in this case mystical exegesis. By taking a genealogical approach to the *tafsīr* of Abūʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), Nguyen shows that the scholar's trend towards citing contemporary authors from Nishapur implies that local scholarship was an influence at least as strong for Qushayrī as his mystical influences. He thereby implicitly calls into question the categorisation of a *tafsīr* solely in terms of its mysticism. In this, he agrees with Saleh, who points out that the characterisation of a *tafsīr* as 'mystical' or 'doctrinal' 'fails to show how the whole tradition worked as a genre and how different exegetes related to the tradition.'[24] Nguyen's analysis of Qushayrī's intellectual genealogy goes a long way towards showing how the tradition works as a genre, and how regional influences can work on a *tafsīr* generally considered for only one aspect of its exegetical content, that is, the mystical content. My survey of the introductions to several prominent works of *tafsīr* indicates that Thaʿlabī's introduction had an effect on later introductions in the area, and even

beyond it, and on authors from different schools as well as his own. Since the introduction to a work is meant to reveal its theoretical underpinnings, the effect may have been more than simply stylistic, and may have permeated the works of *tafsīr* themselves. In approaching the question of potential influences on works of *tafsīr*, it is crucial to investigate aspects that range beyond an author's affiliation with a particular group or stream of thought: genre or geographical constraints can outweigh ideological concerns.

Closely related to the study of geography and its effect on *tafsīr* is the study of human networks, namely, how the personal relationships between scholars, either through kinship networks or scholarly networks, can affect the writing of a work. Saleh, whose previous work sheds so much light on Nishapuri *tafsīr*, highlights in his chapter the role of interpersonal relationships on *tafsīr*, and the scholarly jockeying that occurs in a highly-contested academic environment. He argues that Wāḥidī's magnum opus, *al-Basīṭ*, was an attempt 'to break away from the method of his master' Thaʿlabī.[25]

Gilliot's chapter is centred on the question of personal networks and how these networks affect the writing of *tafsīr*. He analyses the biography and affiliations of one of the major early exegetes, Ḍaḥḥāk. Ḍaḥḥāk was an early Khurāsānī exegete and perhaps one of the founders of the Khurāsānī tradition of *tafsīr*. None of Ḍaḥḥāk's works remain, but Gilliot carefully analyses his biography and the traditions attributed to him. In the process, he shows the importance of scholarly networks and affiliations, as well as geographical locale.

A third node for the study of *tafsīr* is its authors' use of particular terminology. Zamah focuses on the term *ẓāhir*, particularly in the *tafsīr* of Qurṭubī; she shows the ways in which this term can function as a signifier of various meanings. Gleave includes analysis of particular terms as they were used in exegetical reports attributed to the Shiʿi imams. He examines meticulously what was meant by the imams' reported use of terms which are very common in *tafsīr*, such as *ay*, *yaʿnī*, and *maʿnā*, and shows what type or method of interpretation is taken through the use of these terms. He also examines the way in which certain terms can be associated with particular contexts, arguing that some categories and arguments attributed to the imams emerged in a later period, and therefore cannot have come from

them. The study of particular terminology shows not only what the exegetes said and meant in their works of *tafsīr*, but also how the genre developed.

One way of approaching the questions of authority, appropriation and development central to the genre of *tafsīr* is to study hermeneutical systems. Tariq Jaffer analyses Rāzī's method of importing systems of thought from philosophy (*falsafa*) into speculative theology (*kalām*) and thence into *tafsīr*. By importing these methods, Rāzī develops a new hermeneutical system. Although he was critiqued for his methods by later authors, Rāzī's work never lost popularity. This example shows how the boundaries of the genre were in some sense porous, as new ideas and methods permeated the seemingly set format of *tafsīr*. Andrew Rippin explores how exegetes used a particular type of report, the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, to create an historical context for the Qur'an's verses, and thereby to bring meaning to a verse. These reports spawned their own genre of text, but were also a fundamental part of the genre of *tafsīr*, as the historical context was, for the exegetes, inseparable from the verses' content.

Another example of the development of hermeneutical systems is found in Mourad's chapter on Jishumī. Mourad shows that Jishumī's hermeneutical system was a more advanced version of earlier iterations within the genre. On the basis of currently available textual evidence, Jishumī was a pioneer on two fronts: not only does he have a better-developed hermeneutic system in his introduction than previous exegetes, but he actually implements this in the body of his *tafsīr*, unlike many other authors. The case of Jishumī highlights how development can take place within the genre across ideological boundaries. Although Jishumī was a Muʿtazilī, some of the issues in his introduction had been mentioned long before by authors outside his intellectual tradition; likewise his hermeneutical system had an effect on later authors who were not Muʿtazilīs. Moreover, works of *tafsīr* by Shiʿis and Sunnis, mystics and literalists, may have more in common than works by those same authors outside the genre of tafsīr. The study of hermeneutical systems emphasises the cross-pollination of different schools of thought within the genre.

These essays give us a picture of a genre that is not immune to outside influences, but which nevertheless has certain boundaries. A

fifth node for the study of *tafsīr* is the investigation of the exact nature of its genre boundaries. This can be achieved through an examination of content. Tottoli highlights the question of genre constraints by analysing the way that hadiths were used in the genre of *tafsīr*. He shows that the 'aims and concerns displayed by the authors of the two literary genres [Hadith and *tafsīr*] were different and that *tafsīr* authors accepted the inclusion of material rejected by' authors of hadith works.[26] The comparison of the content of works in different genres is an important step in defining the boundaries of any particular genre. Such investigations can lead us to question the role of particular genres of texts, for, as Tottoli shows, although some authors of tafsīr included only sound hadiths, others appear to have been unconcerned about including weak ones: for some exegetes, therefore, the content of the hadith was more important than its soundness. Other authors in this volume who look to the content of exegesis in order to examine the function or the provenance of the work are Burge and Pregill. By examining the content of different works by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), and by comparing these with the theoretical bases for interpretation in the *Kitāb al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Burge argues that in practice, Suyūṭī blends the modes of interpretation he describes in the *Itqān*. This blending 'seeks to articulate ideas and the answers to exegetical problems on a number of different levels at the same time, providing a comprehensive response.'[27] Pregill's chapter synthesises a number of the nodes for study that I have outlined above, and takes the study of content in a different direction, showing how content (including glosses) can be used productively in order to establish the provenance or date of a text.

The above has been a brief tour through the volume, showing how the authors of these chapters have furthered our understanding of *tafsīr*. By way of conclusion, I will mention one final area that, in my opinion, deserves more attention: the study of *tafsīr* texts as objects. For while we have some understanding of the genre of text, and of the importance of genre boundaries, we have very little understanding of the ways in which these works were used by scholars and by non-specialists. Yet they surely had much salience in Islamic societies. The study of these texts' distribution, of who read them, of where and when particular texts were studied and even of the rise and fall in

popularity of particular texts, could teach us much not only about *tafsīr*, but also about the broader intellectual history of Islamic societies.

NOTES

1 Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden, 1920), ed. and tr. Wolfgang H. Behn as *Schools of Koranic Commentators* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006).
2 John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Amherst, 2004).
3 Goldziher, *Schools of Koranic Commentators*, p. 1.
4 Ibid., p. 45.
5 Ibid., p. 48.
6 Only one of Goldziher's chapters is dedicated to an exposition of the genre of *tafsīr*, but even this chapter is not really about the emergence of a specific style of written text. See Ignaz Goldziher, 'The Traditional Interpretation of the Koran', in *Schools of Koranic Commentators*, pp. 36–64.
7 Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 119. This volume has a foreword and notes by Andrew Rippin, but has been reprinted with the original pagination for ease of reference.
8 Namely, Muqātil b. Sulaymān and ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 140.
9 See Michael Pregill, Chapter Thirteen in this volume, p. 408.
10 Cornelis [Kees] H.M. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'ānic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden, 1993), p. 195.
11 Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, pp. 142–3.
12 Ibid., p. 141.
13 Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar*, p. 47.
14 Ibid., p. 195.
15 See my own chapter in this volume.
16 Norman Calder, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham', in Gerald R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, eds., *Approaches to the Qur'ān* (London, 1993), pp. 101–40.
17 Calder, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr', p. 101.
18 Ibid., p. 103.
19 The instrumental structures that Calder proposes consist of orthography, lexis, syntax, rhetoric and symbol/allegory; the ideological structures are prophetic history, theology, eschatology, law and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*). See ibid., pp. 105–6.
20 Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical* Tafsīr *Tradition*: *The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035)* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 16–17.
21 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 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, 2011) pp. 293–315.

22 Saleh, *Formation*, p. 17.
23 Martin Nguyen in this volume, drawing on Claude Gilliot, *Exégèse, langue et théologie en islam: L'exégèse coranique de Tabari* (Paris, 1990). See Nguyen, Chapter Eight, p. 224.
24 Saleh, *Formation*, p. 17.
25 See Walid A. Saleh, Chapter Three, p. 68.
26 See Roberto Tottoli, Chapter Seven, p. 211.
27 See S. R. Burge, Chapter Eleven, p. 300.