Introduction

The Qur'an and the modern Western world: a fresh approach to understanding the Qur'an and its role in modern times. This essay explores the influence of Qur'anic studies on contemporary Western thought and culture, highlighting the importance of the Qur'an in shaping modern literary and intellectual discourse.

Background

The Islamic world has a long and rich history, with the Qur'an serving as its central text. The Qur'an's influence on modern Western thought has been significant, influencing fields such as literature, philosophy, and social science. This essay aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Qur'an's impact on modern Western thought.

The Qur'an and Modern Literature

The Qur'an has been a source of inspiration for modern writers, with many authors drawing on its themes and narratives to create new works. This section explores the relationship between the Qur'an and modern literature, highlighting key examples of literary works that have been influenced by the Qur'an.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Qur'an has played a significant role in shaping modern Western thought and culture. Its influence can be seen in various literary works, highlighting the importance of understanding the Qur'an's impact on modern times.
...Creative...

...Incidentally...

Interaction of modern graphic design and the "in" the world, about the effects of modern graphic design on the visual experience...
MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE AND THE QUR'AN

Inimitability, creativity ... incompatibility

Shawkat M. Toorawa

Wa nā kāna hādha t-qur'ānu an yuṣfar min dāni lāhi.

And this Qur'an could not have been composed by anyone other than God.

(Qur'an 10:37)

Introduction

The Qur'an has been mined by creative writers for centuries, no less in the modern period – defined here as the late eighteenth to the early twenty-first century – than in earlier ones. Indeed, there appear to have been several imitations of the Qur'an in the classical and medieval periods. Why, then, does there exist no study devoted to its use in modern Arabic literature? There are, for instance, only two references to the Qur'an, both incidental, in the Modern Arabic Literature volume of the Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. M. M. Badawi's Early Arabic Drama and Roger Allen's The Arabic Novel: A Historical and Critical Introduction, to take but two examples, make no mention of the Qur'an at all. Is it that writers have not turned to the Qur'an for inspiration? Or has this not been studied? If not, why not?

Could the answer to both questions be fear of repercussions?

Muṣṭafā Bayyūmī's recent study of the Qur'an in the oeuvre of Najīb Maḥfūẓ, for example, is, to my knowledge, one of the very first serious attempts systematically (and non-judgementally) to document and catalogue the influence of the Qur'an on a modern Arabic writer. That this sort of work should appear only in the late 1990s is, as I have adumbrated, partly a function of fear on the part of critics of public reaction.

After a short introduction in which he explains that Maḥfūẓ draws on ('an) and from (min) the Qur'an, Bayyūmī proceeds to divide his study into two parts. Part One covers briefly the following issues: the influence of the Qur'an; the portrayal of Qur'an reciters; the Qur'an and death; Qur'anic instruction; the Qur'an as protection; the Qur'an and politics; Qur'anic exegesis; the Qur'an and the media; swearing on the Qur'an; final reckoning;
The production of a novel is a descent, a fall in the hierarchy of the steps of experience, for the basis of a novel is the story of a conflict. If the conflict is not resolved, then the story is not complete. If the conflict is resolved, then the story is complete. The production of a novel begins with the writer's imagination, which creates the characters, the plot, and the setting. The writer then writes the story, which is the process of putting the imagination into words. The story is then edited and revised, and the novel is published. The novel is then read by the reader, who interprets the story and makes sense of it. The reader's interpretation is subjective and can vary from person to person. The novel is then discussed, debated, and analyzed, and its impact on society is considered. The novel is a form of art, and its purpose is to entertain, to educate, and to inspire.
Annexation of_North_Panama_and_North_Bahia_1872

These days are numbered by a sense of the passing years, and heard by them

And thus the story pitifully.

The short wars were fought that hear.

The American War of 1812

The course of the other nations of Europe and the.In an era of relative peace the American War of 1812 was fought between the United States and Great Britain. It lasted from 1812 to 1815 and was fought primarily on the northern border of the United States.

Experiments in the art of modern warfare included the use of new technologies such as the steamboat, which was used to transport troops and supplies across the Great Lakes. The war was also marked by the use of new tactics, such as the use of guerrilla warfare by the Seminoles and Choctaw tribes in the southern United States.

The war ended in 1815 with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, which restored all pre-war territorial and commercial relationships between the United States and Great Britain.
by violence. This work is inspired by an event described often in the Qur'an: the terrible earthquake that will convulse the Earth at the end of time. The *zilzāl* of the title is a reference to Qur'an (hereafter Q) 99, which opens:

When the earth is convulsed with convulsions
And the earth spits out its human remains
And people ask: What are these commotions?
On that day, shall the earth provide descriptions?

(*idhā zilzilati l-arūṣ zilzālahā ...*)

The Qur’an is quoted often in the novel, but the passage that has pride of place is Q 22:1–2, which is first put in the mouth of a Friday sermon-giver, but also quoted by the unsavory third-person narrator and main character, Shaykh Bularwah:

Every nursing mother will neglect her nursing,
and every pregnant mother will abort her burden,
and you will see people drunk, yet they will not have drunk.

(*tadhālu kullu murdī’ātīn ‘annā arda’at wa tada’u kullu dhāti ḵamalīn ḵamalahā wa tarā n-nāsī sukārā wa mā hum bi-sukārā*)

The convulsion described by the Qur’an is imminent for the novel’s main character, and is presaged for him in the condition of one of the quarters of Constantine, where the novel is set:

The Sidi M’sid quarter looks like the Garabi’ quarter in Najib Mahfouz’s novel, *The Children of the Alley*. The Egyptians were too cowardly to kill Mahfouz for writing that trash, with all its heathen, heretical ideas and its mockery of our prophets and angels.

Not only does Watāṭār write a novel with direct Qur’anic thematic inspiration, but he writes it also into a particular history by intertextually invoking Mahfouz’s controversial *Children of the Alley* (discussed below). It goes without saying that Wattar does not share his protagonist’s views.

Another example of deriving inspiration from a Qur’anic theme is the novel *al-Rahīna* (*The Hostage*) by Zayd Muṭṭār Danmāj (b. 1943). Set in pre-revolution Yemen, it is the story of a young boy taken hostage as a pledge for his family’s political obedience. In the palace of a city governor, the youth is turned into an attendant, or *dwaydar*, providing a sexual outlet for the many women of the palace, in particular for the governor’s sister, the beguiling Sharifā Ḥāṣa, with whom he falls in love. In one exchange, Sharifā Ḥāṣa, having failed to ensnare the young protagonist, threatens him. The exchange between the two is evocative of that between the young and handsome Yūsuf (Joseph) and the wife of the person he serves (given the name Zulaykhā in Islamic tradition). Zulaykhā attempts to seduce Yūsuf, he runs away, and she tears his shirt from behind, causing a scandal – for her (Q 12:23–7). In both cases, Qur’an and novel, handsome youths are being held ‘hostage’ in the house of a powerful man; and in both cases a woman related to that man, and in a similar position of power, wishes to take advantage of the youth. The congruities are signalled in an exchange between Sharifā Ḥāṣa and one of the older (and presumably less desirable) palace women, where Joseph and Zulaykhā are explicitly named.

Examples of taking a theme from the Qur’an and then doing something creative with it include one of the works of Indonesian-born playwright Ali Ahmad Bā’-Kathīr (d. 1969), who drew inspiration from a wide range of authors and traditions. His 1962 play *Ḥārūt wa Mārūt* (*Ḥārūt and Mārūt*) is inspired by the Qur’anic story of two angels who, after criticising humanity for its disobedience, are told by God not to judge humanity too harshly, for were they subject to the same desires, they would not act any differently. They disagree, so God suggests a number of them try their hand at being ‘human’ themselves. Three descend to earth, one choosing to return immediately to the heavens when he finds that the beauty of women is an irresistible temptation. Ḥārūt and Mārūt stay behind, and fall prey to human nature, engaging in illicit sexual relations, and killing a man. The angels in heaven then realise God’s wisdom.

In 1933 Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (d. 1987) published *Ahl al-Kahf* (*The Sleepers in the Cave*). The playwright describes its roots as being situated in the European tradition of intellectual drama, and states outright that it was written under the influence of dramatists such as Ibsen, Shaw, Maeterlinck and especially Pirandello, all of whom al-Ḥakīm saw performed in Paris between 1925 and 1928. But the story is inspired by Q 18:9–26 (drawing also on the early Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus). Al-Ḥakīm explained his choice of subject as follows:

I wanted my source not to be Greek legends, but the Qur’an. My aim was not simply to take a story from the Holy Book and set it in a dramatic framework, but, rather, to look at our Islamic legends with the eye of Greek tragedy, to bring about a fusion of the two mentalities and the two literatures.

Paul Starkey has noted that

The publication of *Ahl al-Kahf* is a decisive date both in al-Ḥakīm’s career as a writer – it was his first printed work – and in the history of modern Arabic drama, for the use of a Qur’ānic story (that of the sleepers of Ephesus) as the basis for the philosophical play was unprecedented.
context is hard if it's only applicable to the original use...
most recent translator of the narrative regards the inclusion of the Qur'anic chapter:50

Omar incorporates surat al-Mulk as a kind of prologue to his narrative. Omar's choice seems deliberate and significant in the context of a slave narrative, for the noun al-Mulk comes from the tripartite Arabic root malaka, meaning both to own and to have dominion. The sura contends that God is the owner of everyone and everything. Through this choice, Omar seems to refute the rights of his owners over him, since only God has the mulk, the power and the ownership.

Textual recourse to the Qur'an might also involve inverting or reworking a word or phrase. In one of his long poems Adonis (b. 1930) uses the mystical letters found at the beginning of Q 2 and Q 19 in disturbed and reverse order respectively:51

and a crowd like the powdered sand began to divide up a stretch the extent of lâm mimm alif or the size of sâd 'ayn yâ hâ kâf, flowing in it, weaving banners and carpets and domes.

When Qur'anic passages are reworked, the situation is of course quite different from the use of isolated words, the use being usually both obvious (to the reader) and intended by the writer.52 In lâ waqa ti lí bákâ" ( 'No Time for Weeping'), his elegy to Gamal Abdel Nasser, the poet Amal Dunqu (d. 1983) substitutes the word mahzûn for the word amin in a passage from Q 96:53

By the fig, by the olive,
by the Mount of Sinai ... by this land of grief

Wa t-tîni wa z-sayûn
Wa 'rî Sinîn... wa hâda h-baladi h-mahzûn

This is a poignant echo, and rereading, of verses that will be utterly familiar to most Muslims, where the poet, by changing only the final amin to mahzûn, transforms a safe, secure, prosperous nation into a saddened, grieving one.54

Incompatibility ...

The poetry of Amal Dunqu has been the subject of a sustained literary-religious diatribe by Ikhlaś Fakhřî 'Imâra.55 For 'Imâra, the Qur'an may indeed inspire a creative writer, linguistically (lughawi) or thematically (fikri). The former may involve the 'use' (isti'mâl) of a phrase or sentence, possibly a whole verse, or the 'borrowing' (iqîbâs) of a single word.56 She

also allows for 'imitation' (tamâthîl) of Qur'anic prose (al-naţm al-qur'ânî) or Qur'anic style (al-naşq al-wisâbi, lit. stylistic arrangement).

In the best example of 'Imâra's ability only to see error where there is in fact — in my view — unthreatening artistry, she writes:57

There would be verbatim quotation from 'Sûrat al-'Adîyâ' [Q 100] were it not for the forcible introduction of the expression 'as they say' which leads the poet into grave error [khatta' jâsîm]. It is as if he wishes to stir up doubt or uncertainty about the incontrovertible truth of the Divine Text, or, by using this expression, to call into question the veracity of the Divine Word, believed for all time by believers everywhere.

The passage in question is from Dunqu's celebrated 'al-Khuyûl' ('The Horses'):

Gallop — or halt — dear horses:
You are not the morning racers
And not the — so-called — snorting chargers

Arkîdî aw qif l-în — ayyatuhû l-khaylû:
lastî l-mughfârî tâbân
Wa là l-âdîyâ — kamâ qîla — Îdâbân

In addition to linguistic inspiration, 'Imâra recognises thematic inspiration too. This, she believes, may derive from a complete or entire Qur'anic story, from just one 'scene' or from one character depicted in the Holy Qur'an. She dwells at length on Dunqu's 'Muqâbala khâṣṣa ma'a Ibn Nûh' ('A Private Interview with Noah's Son'), which mines Q 11:40-6 ('[The Prophet] Hûd').58 The following is a passage from the poem:

Noah's Flood has come
Over there are 'the scientists' making for the Ark;
the singers; the Prince's stableboy; the breeders of livestock;
the Chief Judge ( ... and his servant!); the sword-bearer; the temple-dancer
(she was delighted when she rescues her artificial hair);
the tax-collectors; the importers of arms shipments;
the Princess's sweetheart in all the radiant femininity of his features

'Imâra writes that the reader has no choice but to notice the 'marked incompatibility' between what the Qur'an sets out, i.e. the Truth, and what the poet sets out.51 Dunqu is additionally taken to task for the implications of the poem's
politeness points the minds through which our (e) can express their own experience and to the possibilities of more complex and effective action.


2. The principle of respect for diversity and the promotion of cultural pluralism are essential aspects of a democratic society. These values are protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has a right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (Article 19).

3. The development of the internet and social media has brought both benefits and challenges. On the one hand, it has facilitated the exchange of ideas and the spread of knowledge, but on the other hand, it has also led to the spread of misinformation and hate speech. It is therefore essential to promote critical thinking and media literacy to ensure that people can evaluate information and ideas critically and make informed decisions.

4. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. It is a fundamental right that should be protected by governments and societies.

5. In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the impact of algorithms on the way news is presented to people. Algorithms are used to personalize content, which can lead to the creation of echo chambers where people are only exposed to information that supports their existing beliefs. This can limit the diversity of viewpoints and lead to polarized societies.

6. Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of a democratic society. It is necessary for the functioning of a free press and for the development of a healthy civil society. However, freedom of expression must be balanced with the need to protect individuals from hate speech and other forms of harmful content. It is essential to find a way to balance these interests and to ensure that everyone can express their opinions without fear of retribution.
The correct answer is not provided here. The page contains text in English, but it is not legible due to the image quality.
with a parody of the Qur'an. But the only surviving part of his al-Fusūl wa al-
ghayāt fi maḥādātā al-suwar wa al-ayāt [The Book of Paragraphs and Endings
Composed on the Analogy of the Qur'an's Chapters and Verses] is no parody but
rather a work heavily indebted to Qur'ānic stylistics, lexicon and diction.
In this connection, the practice of hāl (turning poetry into prose) is relevant. Works
such as al-Wašqī al-muqarrbī as-Sanā'ah, al-qā'idah fi al-ṣanā'ah [The Striped Embroidery: Turning
Verse into Prose] by Dīyād al-dīn fīn al-Āfīr (d. 1239) discuss inter alia this
procedure with reference to the Qur'an.

4 In accordance with one of the rubrics listed in the introduction. It should be
noted that Jacques Jomier's 'Aspects of the Qur'an today', in A. F. L. Beeston, T.
M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant and G. R. Smith (eds), Arabic Literature to the End
260–70, opens with 'At the present time, the influence of the Qur'an on Arabic
literature is unobtrusive, yet at the same time considerable'. Yet, bellettristic
literature ('The influence of the Qur'an on contemporary literature') is given
only are four pages, wherein are mentioned the religious-historical works of Abbās
Muḥammad al-Qāḍī and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Jāda al-Saḥānī; Muḥammad Dīyād's 1971
novel, Atḥāār muṣāva (A Town's Sadness); and Najib Muḥāfiz al-Awlād īrāyāt (see
note 45 below); and 'Izz al-dīn Mādānī, about whom Jomier curiously (and
unhelpfully) notes (p. 264): 'There is no point in dwelling here upon an early
work by 'Izz al-dīn al-Mādānī published in Tunisia in the revue [sic] al-Fikr in
about 1968, al-Insān al-ṣirīf, which adheres to the very style of the Qur'an in
a way that a Muslim should never allow'. I am, alas, not familiar with Mādānī's
work. An important recent contribution to the influence of the Qur'an on
modern Arabic poetry is Stefan Wild, 'The Koran as Subtext in Modern Arabic
Poetry', in Gert Borst and Ed de Moor (eds), Representations of the Divine in

5 M. M. Badawi (ed), Modern Arabic Literature, Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1985. But see Badawi's early and important study: 'Islam in Modern Egyptian
article, 'In a Glass Darkly: The Faintness of Islamic Inspiration in
Modern Arabic Literature', reprinted in his An Overview of Modern Arabic
Literature, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990, pp. 201–17; and
Kenneth Cragg, The Pen and the Faith: Eight Modern Muslim Writers and the
Qurān, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985, which includes three Arabic-
language writers: Muḥammad Kamīl Ḥusayn, Sayyid Ṭuḥayb and Najib Muḥāfiz.
The situation is better for other literatures. See, for instance, Maggi Phillips, 'The
View from a Mosque of Words: Nuruddin Farah's Close Sesame and The Holy
Qurān', in Kenneth W. Harrow (ed), The Marabout and the Muse, Portsmouth
NH: Heinemann, 1996, pp. 191–204; Harrow's earlier edited volume, Faces of
Islam in African Literature, Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1991; and Cragg, The
Pen and the Faith.

6 M. M. Badawi, Early Arabic Drama, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Cambridge University Press, 1998, Roger Allen briefly discusses the Qur'an and
Arabic literature (p. 101), observing that 'in modern times the Qur'ānic themes of
divine retribution against sinful peoples and the ephemeral nature of human existence
have provided fertile images through which poets can express their political opinions'.

8 Muṣṭafā Bayyūmi, al-Qurān al-kārim ḍī adab Najīb Muḥāfiz:-dirasā muṣālimāt
tablīyāt [The Holy Qur'an in the Oeuvre of Najib Mahfuz], Cairo: Dār al-

9 The oeuvre of Yūsuf Idrīs (d. 1992) is particularly rich in such portrayals. See,
for example, the celebrated title story in Bayt min iltarāt, Cairo: 'Alam al-Kutub,
1971, pp. 5–13, translated by Mona Mikha'il as 'A House of Fles', in Yūsuf
Idris, Eye of the Beholder, ed. Roger Allen, Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica,
'tablīya min al-samā'ī' (in al-Miṣrī fī al-kāmil: I: al-qā'idah al-ṣanā'ah, Cairo: 'Alam al-
Hawley (ed), The Postcolonial Crescent: Islam's Impact on Contemporary

An argument could be made, it is true, that Children of the Alley does not, in
fact, draw any passages directly from the Qur'an and therefore need not find its
way into a work organised along the lines of Bayyūmi’s.

10 Understandable in light of the conviction for apostasy on 14 June 1995 of the
Egyptian academic Naṣr Abū Zayd for remarks about the literary nature of the
Qur'an. On this and other issues pertaining to academic perceptions of the
Qur'an, see Toby Lester, 'What Is the Koran?', in The Atlantic Monthly, 283(1)
(1 January 1999), pp. 43–56.

11 For a creative literary use of this term, see Tawfīq al-Hākim’s play, al-Mukhrīj
(The Producer), in Muṣarrah al-muṣālāma: Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1950, p. 294,
where the playwright's niece describes a film version of Othello as a lowān
maḥfūz.

12 Notwithstanding Daniel Madigan’s nuanced study of the Qur'an’s use of the
term kiṭāb, for which he argues the translation ‘book’ is woefully inadequate, the
Qur'an is nonetheless the first attested book in Arabic and is, contra Madigan,
the ‘physical book at the center of Muslim worship’. See Daniel A. Madigan,
The Qur'an’s Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam’s Scripture, Princeton:

13 For a concise characterisation of the Qur'an, see Andrew Rippin, ‘Koran’, in
Julie Scott Mesami and Paul Starkey (eds), Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature,
London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 2, pp. 453–6; see also Michael Cook,

pp. 1018–20. See also ‘Inimitability’ in the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an, vol. 2,

15 The Qur'an's literariness is disputed by many conservative theologians who hold
that by virtue of being divine it cannot therefore be literary. There are, of course,
alternative and middle-ground views: see e.g. Andrew Rippin, The Qur'an as
Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects', in British Journal of Middle Eastern
Studies, 10(1) (1983), pp. 38–47; and Anthony H. Johns, 'In Search of Common
Ground: The Qur'an as Literature', in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 4

16 For a statement of the position that the antecedents of modern Arabic fiction
are to be found in the Qur'an, see Muḥammad Kamīl Ḥusayn, al-Qurān wa al-
quṣay al-ḥaditha [The Qur'an and modern fiction], Beirut: Dār al-Buḥūth
al-Usmāniyya, 1970.

17 'Abd al-Ḥādi al-Fāyūkī, al-Iṣrā’īl min al-Qurān al-kārim: fi al-shl ‘il al-’Arabî [Quoting
the Holy Qur'an in Arabic Poetry], Damascus: Manshūrat Dār al-Numa’ār li
l-Nashr wa l-Tawzî‘, 1996, p. 7. One of al-Fāyūkī’s distinguished predecessors is
Further Reading

[References are not shown in the image provided.]
So, although al-Hakim’s *The Sleepers in the Cave* was pioneering in its use of a Qur’anic story, that story is not one connected to the Prophet Muhammad or to the events in the life of Islam proper, but rather to earlier Prophets and to events that pre-date historical Islam. This is true of other writers too. This instinct is worthy of further investigation, especially inasmuch as it is a form of self-censorship and/or self-preservation.


39 Starkey, *From the Ivory Tower*, p. 28.

40 Long, *Tawfīq al Hakim*, p. 34.

41 Starkey, *From the Ivory Tower*, p. 29; cf. Long, *Tawfīq al Hakim*, p. 34.


43 The character Adham is inspired by Adam; that of Jabal (*Mountain*) by Moses; Rifā’a (*Highness*) by Jesus; and Qasim by Muḥammad (whose patronymic was Abū al-Qāsim). Arafah (*scientia*), whose narrative comes last, would appear to represent a constant Everyman.

44 Motivated no doubt by self-preservation, Mahfūz has upheld the ban of *Children of the Alley*.


52 The new sequence *khāmil-*aḥ气势 the word *‘alma*, ‘why’; and the resequenced *ṣūd ‘ayn yā hā kāf* replicates the standard (coat of arms) of the Caliph *‘Abd al-Malik* (d. 661).


54 The echo of another Quranic phrase, ‘*‘lāḥah baladnā a‘minan*’ (Q 2:126); ‘Make it [this city] a city of peace’, is also unmistakable.


56 Cf. al-Fukayyī, *Ištibās, passim.*


63 ‘Imārā, *Isitḥām*, p. 108. (In 1991, I was told by the Head of the Arabic language programme at an Islamic University that I should abandon my interest in Adonis because he is an apostate.)


67 ‘Lagerfeld apologises for dress’, in *The Times*, 21 January 1994: The Chanel fashion house yesterday scrapped an haute couture design and scrambled to apologise to the world’s Muslims after an Arabic inscription on the bodice of a dress worn by model Claudia Schiffer turned out to be a line from the Koran*. For a picture, see the *Houston Chronicle*, 27 January 1994, Fashion, p. 2.
