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(Inter)textuality: Interactive Cultural Practices

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(Inter)textuality: Interactive Cultural Practices

Starting from the theoretical framework of 'intertextuality', the aim of the workshop 'Textuality, Intertextuality: Interactive Cultural Practices in Judaism and Islam' was to strive to transcend conventionally accepted identity boundaries in order to replace linear and hierarchical paradigms of influence with a model of mutual interaction that allows for a more nuanced analysis of the dynamics of textual and intertextual practices. Scholars from various countries and different disciplines were invited for the interactive reading and discussion of texts. These texts, basically rooted in the Torah and the Qur'an, were extended to later related texts, exegetical, theological, and philosophical as well as literary texts.

In the first session 'Between Initiation and Recitation' Galit Hasan-Rokem and Nasr Abu Zayd presented two sets of texts related to the usage of the root 'Qr' and its derivations in the Bible and the Qur'an. The basic issue was how to correlate the meanings that the word conveys in various Biblical contexts, such as 'to call', 'to communicate', 'to name' to 'invoke' or 'to convoke' with the same root in the Qur'an; the imperative form *iqra'* presents the actual enunciation of Muhammad's prophet-hood by invoking the name of his Lord. During the discussion Abu Zayd presented his newly developed conviction that to deal with the Qur'an as only a text is reductionist since oral 'recitation', not 'reading' from the *mushaf*, is the prevailing practice among Muslims, not to mention that Qur'anic verses get appropriated and re-appropriated as verbal quotations on a daily basis.

The second session was devoted to the 'Risks and Chances of Narrative Interpretation' thus moving from the foundational text to exegesis. Dina Stein and Nicolai Sinai presented two types of exegetical texts. The first text belongs to the Babylonian Talmud, while the second is taken from Muqatil and al-Tabari's *tafsirs*. The relation between the canonized text and its interpretation was the focus of the discussion in this session. It became obvious during the discussion that the Babylonian Talmud is to a great extent a narrative structure while the canonized text enjoys a superior position in Islamic exegesis due to the doctrine of *ijaz*. The question about the 'original' meaning and the 'constructed' exegetical narrative turned the discussion back to what constitutes the original canonized text: is it so fixed and stable with its own boundaries, or is it reconstructed by later narratives? Does the commentator over-mystify the text or sometimes tries to demystify it?

With such open questions the third session 'Back to the Bare Text' problematized the definition of the text. Sarah Stroumsa presented a text in which Sa'adyal Fayyumi refutes the Karaite use of logical reasoning, *qiyas*, thus directing the discussion to compare and seek the influence between the two traditions. Claiming the independence of the text, or the concept of a bare text, implied an extension of its domain by integrating tradition, the sayings of the Fathers in Judaism and both the *sunna* and *ijma'* in Islam. Khalid Masud presented a text from Al-Mawdu'di's *tafsir* of the verses 41-54 of *sura* 5 in which he emphasized the boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims, not only in terms of religious practice but also in social interaction. Claiming the returning back to the bare text, or 'textual mentality', as Galit puts it, seems to be a common practice shared by both the literalists and the modernists. But is bare text void of tradition, whether canonized or not, meaningful?

The fourth session 'Philosophical and Mystical Contacts' shifted the discussion to the issue of intertextuality beyond the canonized texts and their exegesis. Sabine Schmidtke presented an Arabic text written

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in Hebrew letters by the Jewish author Yusuf al-Basir. In this text the author elaborates his refutation of the Mutazili Abu 'l-Husayn al-Basri's treatise *Tasaffuh al-Adilla* (examining the evidences) and raised questions about whom this text addressed, why it was written in Hebrew letters, and whether it is possible to identify the author as a

NASR ABU ZAYD

Jew or Muslim? The mystical text of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi *Badw al-Sha'n* (The Beginning of the Matter) presented by Sara Sviri developed the discussion towards the shared cultural symbols that are employed in the mystical literature in the two traditions. Again, the question of linear and hierarchical paradigms of influence was eliminated in favor of shared cultural background.

The fifth session, 'Poetry in Andalusia, Andalusia in Poetry', made it possible to reconsider the issue of influence. Haviva Ishay presented two poetry texts, one in Hebrew by Samuel Hanagid and the other in Arabic by 'Urwa bin Hazm where the influence and the competition are obvious. Was the competition to prove that Hebrew is as sacred as Arabic? Was the differentiation between religious and non-religious poetry in the Hebrew tradition directed toward eliminating the Arabic influence? Again, the text of the Palestinian Poet Mahmud Darwish presented by Abdul-Rahman al-Shaikh emphasized the notion of the shared symbols; Andalusia is the symbol of loss shared by Jews and Muslims though the meaning conveyed is not the same.

For more information about the project including detailed information about the previous two workshops please see:

<http://www.wikoberlin.de/kolleg/projekte/AKMI/hermeneutik?hpl=2>

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