    Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Kalīla wa-Dimna*,[1] and *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya* of al-Saraqusṭī (d. 538/1143) construct performances of storytelling events in a literary setting as a way of providing a context for the anecdotes and fables narrated by the characters in each text. The way in which the performativity of each text is constructed reflects their respective cultural and literary heritage, as well as the performative nature of Medieval Arabic literature in general. The two texts represent a convergence of different oral narrative traditions: in *Kalīla* we find the animal fable tradition originating in India, and in the *maqāma* the Arabic tradition of popular preaching and storytelling, coupled with anecdotal religious literature such as the *ḥadīṯ*. The episodic frametale structure introduced into Arabic literature by *Kalīla* is adapted by the *maqāma*, which can be seen as one of Medieval literature's first forays into realistic prose fiction.

    Kalīla wa-Dimna, translated into Arabic from Pahlavi in 748 by ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (102/720-139/756), is the first work of literary prose narrative in Arabic. It was originally composed in Sanskrit as the *Panchatantra* in India around the year 300 A.D. It remained a work of prose narrative through subsequent translations into Pahlavi (by Burzoē, physician to Sasanian king Khusraw Anushirwan [531-579]) and then into Arabic (Brockelmann). As a work, it has two significant links to performance. First, the text presents a series of storytelling events: characters narrate animal fables to one another. The narrative context of the fables reproduces some aspects of a live storytelling or performance event, as defined by anthropologists such as Robert Georges, Richard Bauman, and Alan Dundes. There is a storyteller, an audience, and a social context. The tales told by the characters are of a genre recognizable to their immediate audience (the other characters), as well as to the fictive audience (us). The event is framed by narrative markers which signal a beginning and end to each performance.

    The tales narrated by characters in *Kalīla* have a history of perfomance. They were drawn from popular tradition and were originally collated by Hindu preachers who used the fables as exemplary tales in their sermons, much like the Dominican and Franciscan friars of Western Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries C.E.[2] The exemplary tale told by a popular preacher or storyteller would have been familiar to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's audience as well, but would have been accorded a lower level of prestige, as performers making use of such tales would not have been associated with organized religion.[3] The compiler of the tales included in the original *Panchatantra* was a Brahmin, a clergyman from the

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[1] Hereafter referred to as "*Kalīla*".

[2] For the *exemplum* in Medieval Christian literature, see Welter.

[3] While such popular preachers were originally admitted to mosques, particularly in Iraq, they eventually began to take liberties in mixing non-Islamic material into their performances and began to earn the scorn of orthodox Islam. This disdain on the part of Islamic scholars was probably more due to the fact that the *quṣṣāṣ* attracted larger crowds than the former (Pellat). In general, a "certain mistrust of narrative literature" that could not be readily Islamicized obtained in Medieval Islam (Windstedt).

upper ranks of organized religion. This compiler was assembling material drawn from performances of tales current in Indian oral tradition (Keller and Linker xvi). In Medieval Western Europe, Christian friars, representatives of official religion (like the Brahmins), compiled collections of popular tales, which inspired later frame tales in the vernacular languages of Christian Europe.[4] In Islam, such tales were the currency of the *qaṣṣ* (popular preacher and storyteller) and so did not bear the stamp of approval of organized religion (Pellat). Therefore, *Kalīla* can be seen as a literary performance setting for tales that were historically performed (and transmitted) orally.

Like *Kalīla*, the *maqāma* genre is also a literary setting for storytelling events, but with some crucial differences. The narrator is performing tales drawn from first-hand experience, and so the distance between audience and tale is reduced. Furthermore, this narrator is fictional, by the admission of al-Saraqusṭī himself.[5] Both the setting and the tales are pure fiction, yet the first person stance of the narrator invites the reader to identify with the narrator-as-character within the tales. By building on the model of literary prose narrative introduced by *Kalīla*, the *maqāma* introduces suspension of disbelief into Medieval literary prose narrative.[6]

Modern prose fiction does not generally resonate with performance for its readers. In the present day, reading is largely conducted silently and alone. This type of private reading was practically unheard of until the advent of printing, which puts a great deal of distance between the modern critic and the Medieval reality of reading (Coleman 23). When the reading public thinks of performance, thoughts turn to drama, music, perhaps to poetry. However, works of literary prose narrative in Medieval Arabic have a much closer relationship with orality and performance than the modern novel. The ʿAbbāsid era was a period characterized by both oral and written literature.[7] When the formative works of Arabic literary narrative were being composed, reading was most often a performance. Because of this, written literature enjoyed a fairly immediate sense of aurality, and a performative context. The earliest audiences of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Kalīla* and al-Saraqusṭī's *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya* would have heard them read aloud (Monroe 2). These works were composed during a time when lyric was the prestige literary genre, and narrative was held in lower regard, largely the province of popular *quṣṣāṣ*, storytellers and preachers (Pellat). Literary connoisseurs of the day showed a distinct preference for lyric, and generally held poetry in higher regard than prose narrative. Ibn Rushd, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*, explains this distinction:

> He said: from what has been said about the intention of poetical statements, it is clear that representation that comes about by means of false inventions– namely the things called parables and stories like what is in *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* –is not part of the poet's activity. Indeed, the poet speaks only about existing or possible matters . . . . Those who do make

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[4] For a discussion of the frame tale in Europe, see Irwin, especially pages 31-35.

[5] Despite the fact that al-Saraqusṭī provides an *isnād* that indicates Ibn Tammām as narrator, he takes credit for the work in the colophon: "Let it be known that the following are fifty maqāmāt composed by Abu-l Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yusūf al-Tamīmī al-Saraqusṭī in Córdoba, one of the cities of al-Andalus" (Monroe 2002: 113). This is a stark admission of the work's fictionality.

[6] Rina Drory writes that "in Arabic the major difficulty in accepting the *maqāmāt* consisted in the novelty of overt fiction, which violated the norm of faithfully reporting on reality" (200).

[7] "I do not believe there was ever a clear-cut distinction between the two; each influenced the other, and the literary genres to which this interaction gave birth were to be developed and eventually reached their peak in the age of the Mamluks" (Norris 145).

> parables and stories are making something other than what poets make, even if they have made those invented parables and tales in metered speech (Butterworth 83-84; Butterworth and Harīdī 76-77).

In fact, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's aim in translating *Kalīla* was not so much to promote prose narrative as a literary genre as it was to use it as a vehicle to display highly polished rhetorical style (Brockelmann). Similarly, the *maqāma* was not originally valued for the quality of the narrative it presented, but rather was intended as a showcase to parody existing genres of Classical Arabic literature.[8] These works began as literary experiments; *Kalīla* applied a literary Arabic register to translations of foreign prose, while the *maqāma* parodied established Arabic literary genres. Over time, both *Kalīla* and the *maqāmāt* of such authors as al-Hamadhānī, al-Harīrī, and al-Saraqusṭī ended up as classics in their own right.

Two hundred years later, *Kalīla* gained popularity for its narrative content; once presented to an Arabic audience in sufficiently elegant prose, *Kalīla* came to be a success based on appreciation for its narrative content (Latham 53). The elegance of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's prose legitimized the secular tale for literary Arabic audiences. The work was such a success in al-Andalus, that when Alfonso X (1252-1284) undertook his massive project of translating scientific works from Arabic to Castilian, he included *Kalīla* as the only representative of prose narrative, and in 1251 gave Castilian readers *Calila e Dimna*.[9] In this way, the first major work of literary prose narrative in Classical Arabic also became the first of its genre in Castilian.

Such translated works play an important (and often minimized) role in the development of a literary tradition. They often address a lack in the literary system of the target culture (Even-Zohar 194). At times this lack is due to a change in the demand for literary texts.[10] Particularly in the case of the introduction of a genre previously uncultivated by the target culture, translated works stand as a challenge to authors working in the target language to assimilate the new genre by creating original works in their own language. This process of appropriation leads to innovation and the development of new, hybrid genres that combine aspects of the original and target cultures. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation clothed the tales of the Pahlavi *Kalīla* in the Arabic rhetorical style so redolent of performance.

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of *Kalīla* was instrumental in opening avenues of innovation in Arabic prose narrative. His introduction of episodic prose narrative to

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[8] Writing of the *maqāmāt* of Badīʿ al-Zaman al-Hamadhānī (358-98 /968-1008), James Monroe (1983) has commented that "the work of Hamadhānī was conceived, at one level at least, as a parody of certain noble genres that already existed in Arabic literature, among them, *ḥadīt̲*, *sīra*, and the lyric" (38). Zubaidi points out that the *maqāmāt* were heavily laced with allusions and quotations from *ḥadīt̲* literature (343), and Drory writes that al-Hamadhānī developed his *maqāmāt* as "a sort of comic relief... parodic variations on familiar, often much-studied pieces of *adab* knowledge" (191).

[9] As Alfonso X did not ascend to the throne until 1252, he commissioned the translation of *Kalīla* while still crown prince. For the Castilian *Calila e Dimna*, see the edition of Blecua and Lacarra as well as that of Keller and Linker.

[10] Even-Zohar writes of "historical moments where established models are no longer tenable for a younger generation" (194). In the case of *Kalīla*, the historical moment is when Arabic literary culture encompasses non-Arab groups, such as Persians, who have access to genres without analogues in Arabic literature. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was himself a Persian of noble origin, and converted to Islam only in adulthood (Gabrieli). Therefore it is safe to assume that he had a literary education in Pahlavi and that he was well acquainted with genres from that tradition.

Arabic literature paved the way for later authors of *maqāmāt*, such as innovator Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī (446-516/1054-1122), and the Andalusī al-Saraqusṭī.

In *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, the philosopher Baydabā relates to King Dabšalīm the tale of the Lion, the bull Šatraba, and the two jackals, Kalīla and Dimna. The frame of the work is nested, so that further tales are narrated by the animal characters themselves. Just as Baydabā acts as counselor to his king, Kalīla and Dimna act as counselors to their king, the lion. While Kalīla is upright and gives his advice only to forward the lion's best interests, Dimna is more ambitious and does not hesitate to play the lion off against the bull in an attempt to improve Dimna's own position at court. Most of the interpolated tales are political in nature, and warn against misleading appearances and deceptive behavior. *Kalīla* belongs to the mirror of princes category of wisdom literature and was ostensibly written for the education of princes, though the lessons contained within it obviously have more general applications. The model of the overall frame is that of a conversation between student and teacher, with the jackals Kalīla and Dimna as teachers to the student lion. The jackals narrate tales whose morals suggest solutions to the political problems posed by the lion.

The structure of the *maqāmāt* is somewhat different. It consists of a series of 50 seemingly independent episodes narrated by an unreliable and sometimes inconsistent narrator, who is also the main character in each narration. In each episode, the narrator encounters an eloquent rogue, usually shabby in appearance. The rogue may appear as a young boy, and old man, a drifter, or a *shaykh*. In the course of each narrative, the rogue dazzles the narrator with his eloquence and relieves him of his money and/or property. The relationship between narrator and character is an inversion of the student/teacher roles played by the lion and the jackals in *Kalīla*. In the former, the characters narrate tales of the shortsightedness and gullibility of others. In the *maqāma*, the teacher/rogue consistently deceives the student/narrator, who in turn narrates the tales of his own gullibility. In *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya* of al-Saraqusṭī, the hapless narrator al-Sāʾib Ibn Tammām relates the repeated misfortunes he himself suffers at the hands of the wily orator al-Sadūsī.

Both works are episodic in nature. It can perhaps be argued that the episodic structure of the *maqāma* is owed to the frame tale structure introduced to Arabic literature by *Kalīla wa-Dimna*. Both works provide a literary framework for a series of storytelling events. This episodic structure (as opposed to more linear works such as the Byzantine novel) is characteristic of orally composed narrative. In primary oral cultures — those cultures which have not yet developed or been exposed to writing— narrative genres are almost exclusively episodic and cyclical, since it is extremely difficult to maintain a lengthy, specific, and linear plot without the aid of writing.[11]

The *maqāmāt* originated as performances of parodies of established *topoi* drawn from *adab* literature. The author frames these performances by placing them in the mouth of an eloquent narrator, who relates his exchanges with an even more eloquent

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[11] Ong maintains that "if we take the climactic linear plot as the paradigm of plot, the epic has no plot. Strict plot for lengthy narrative comes with writing" (144). Ong here follows Lord, who notes that oral epic is episodic and not restricted to specific details of plot, which fall within the artistic purview of the individual performer (4). In response to Lord's model, Finnegan has cited examples of exact memorization of lengthy plots in orally transmitted narratives found in pre-literate societies (158). We would counter that these are examples of a highly organized and systematic attempt to preserve sacred texts in a tradition that does not admit individual artistic innovation.

rogue. Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, the originator of the *maqāmāt*, "composed his narrations publicly as oral improvisations at the end of adab sessions" (Drory 191), ostensibly as a way of blowing off steam by poking fun at traditional genres. Even after the *maqāmāt* were canonized as a written literary form by al-Ḥarīrī, there continued a tradition of public scholarly readings. The earliest manuscript of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* records 30 public readings –the primary means of transmission of the work– over 180 years (Drory 193). This means that the *maqāmāt* were conceived, canonized and disseminated in a performative context, and that any approach to the *maqāmāt* must include consideration of their performativity.

The importance placed on oratory in Arabic culture lends its literature a performative aspect. Performance is unique among modes of human discourse in that in its very conduct it "highlights the social, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of the communicative process" (Bauman 1992: 40). In addition, it makes the performer and listener aware of the roles they play within the context of performance. In particular, it "gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity" (Bauman 1975: 293). The Arabic tradition of *balāgha* is highly peformative, in that its aim is to draw attention to the artifice of the speaker's words in order to invest them with authority. Systematic analyses of *balāgha* made frequent reference to the figure of the *khaṭīb* or orator, and reinforce the performative and oral nature of *balāgha*.[12]

The *maqāma* displays traits of such rhetorical performance. The name itself suggests a public act of oratory. Since *maqāma,* like *majlis*, can be defined as an assembly of important people,[13] and such a meeting is a common forum for eloquent oratory, it is a natural metonymy for the word *maqāma* to denote the act of oratory itself (Brockelmann and Pellat). The *sajʿ* (rhymed prose), in which much of the *maqāmāt* are composed, has its roots in oral composition and performance. While by the time of al-Saraqusṭī, *sajʿ* had evolved into the standard genre for all official correspondence and had very solid footing as a genre composed in writing (but read aloud), its history is rooted in orality and performance, as a genre utilized by oracles and other popular orators. Originally, *sajʿ* was a genre used by the Pre-Islamic oracles (*kuhān*) which signaled that the oracle was in trance and whatever followed was to be an "oracular utterance" (Ben Abdesselem). The Qurʾān later reclaimed the genre by using it in several *sūras*, for example *Sūrat al-nās*, (CXIV). Storytelling and storytellers continued to be an object of scorn among religious officials and thinkers. Al-Ghazālī (450/1058-505/1111) comments on storytellers who tell stories in *sajʿ*:

> It is not permitted to gather a crowd around oneself and narrate stories in mosques . . . . as for those who adorn themselves and whose master is lust, and tell [their stories] in rhymed prose and sing them . . . such a deed is considered an unforgivable sin and should not be permitted even outside the mosques.[14]

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[12] Schaade and Grunebaum refer to "the demand for skill in improvisation and the recurring references to the *khaṭīb* (or orator) in connexion with the discussion of the concept" in literary treatments of *balāghā*.

[13] Ibn Manẓūr, in his *Lisān al-ʿarab*, defines *maqāma* as *al-majlis* (362). Ibn Qutayba (d. 278/889) uses the term *maqām* in his *ʿUyūn al-akhbar* with the sense of "pious harangue" (Blachère 649), which recalls the oratory of the popular preachers described in the *Qaṣīda Sasāniyya* of Abū Dulaf and depicted in the *maqāmāt* of al-Saraqusṭī (Monroe 2002: 130; al-Warāglī 41).

[14] From Al-Ghazālī's *Kīmīyā-yi Saʿādat*, his own translation into Persian of his Arabic *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn*. The citation is found in Ārām's edition (404-06) and is translated by Omidsalar (206).

This same type of popular storytelling and oratory is mentioned in the *qaṣīda sasāniyya* of Abū Dulaf (fl. 4th/10th century). The poem is an inventory of beggars, petty con artists, and street performers, among them "the one who tells stories about the history and legends of the Jews, or who relates a series of brief anecdotes one after another" (Bosworth, vol. 2: 195).[15] Somewhat later, Ṣafī d-Dīn (677/1278-750/1349), in his own *qaṣīda sasāniyya* describes a similar type of character: "and how often have I acted as a popular preacher and storyteller (i.e. as a *qaṣṣ*), making people absorbed and enraptured by my stories and verses, and how often have I addressed them in a mad, deranged fashion, swinging my head from side to side whilst declaiming" (Bosworth, vol. 2: 297).[16] Al-Saraqustī describes just such a character in his fourth *maqāma*:

> When I was in the district of Oman, by turns experiencing poverty and prosperity, I encountered group after group of people going down, singly and in pairs, to where a man was standing telling stories and tales, and enduring weariness and fatigue in the course of his preaching. At times, he spoke in verse, and at times in prose, moving fluently, without stumbling in his discourse (Monroe 2002: 130; al-Warāglī 41).

The activities of such *quṣṣāṣ* were especially curtailed in al-Andalus, where the prevalent Māliki school of Islamic law "would scarcely tolerate them" (Pellat, "Ḳaṣṣ").

The performances of the *quṣṣāṣ* in mosques or other public places constitute a live storytelling event. In a literary setting such as the frame tale or *maqāma*, the author constructs the context of the storytelling event. This is not an effort to produce a realistic recreation of a live storytelling event. Rather, the aim is to lend enough meaningful context to the tale in order that it be a feasible event within the literary setting. The tale must be told for a reason, and it must serve a function within the narrative frame.

In *Kalīla* the performative frame and context of the storytelling event are constructed in a fictional environment. The author creates an opportunity for a character to tell a tale. This opportunity arises from a request for advice made by another character. The request can be direct ("tell me the fable about…") or indirect ("I have such and such a problem, please advise me…"). Even this rudimentary performative frame reproduces some of the interaction between storyteller and audience characteristic of a storytelling event.

These two works, therefore, consist of a series of storytelling events –a specific type of performance– represented in narrative. As a genre, performance creates a unique frame for the delivery of a message that alerts the audience to choose the appropriate interpretative filter. This filter will vary according to the type of text performed: an audience has different expectations of a wedding song than they do of a ghost story or dirty joke. This frame emphasizes the social and aesthetic aspects of the performance and, writes Richard Bauman (1992), "assigns to an audience the responsibility of evaluating the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's accomplishment" (44). It is fitting that the frame tale –a literary prose genre so inherently focused on verbal

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[15] The Arabic text is found on page 9 of the Arabic edition of the two poems, found at the end of the volume and paginated in the Arabic fashion.
[16] The Arabic text is found on page 47 of the Arabic edition.

performance– be the vehicle for the debut of literary prose narrative in a literary culture dominated by performative, lyric genres.

The precise constellation of performer, message, audience and context that obtains for a given performance can never be reproduced. Robert Georges has written that "the message of a storytelling event has no existence ʿoutside' the storytelling event itself" (323). In the frame tale or *maqāma*, this means that the tale or narration acquires a unique meaning within a given frame. For example, in book one of *Kalīla*, Dimna relates to the lion the tale of the fox and the drum. This tale as performed by Dimna (Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ 132) is distinct from any other version of the tale. The circumstances of the telling are part and parcel of the audience's experience of the tale. Therefore, viewing Dimna's tale as a performance leads us to consider carefully the relationships involved in the storytelling event: it is these relationships that shape the performance. Many aspects of a real-life storytelling event are not typically accounted for in a literary setting: the physical environment and conditions of the event, and the extra-linguistic information conveyed in the storyteller's message. Much of the communication between performer and audience is extralinguistic, such as gesture and tone of voice (Dundes 254). The terms used by Georges are the "lingustic, paralinguistic, and kinesic" modes of coding a message (317).

Aspects such as the relationship between storyteller and audience are, however, accounted for in a literary setting. In this case, the relationship is that between a fearful ruler (the lion) looking to his advisor for guidance, and a wily advisor (Dimna) seeking to capitalize on his master's fear. The lion has heard the loud bellowing of the bull Shatrabah and, not knowing its source, is afraid (*Kalīla* 131). Dimna suggests that the lion collect more data before fearing the unknown voice of the bull. He tells the lion a proverb: "It is not necessary to fear all voices" (132). The lion then asks Dimna to tell the tale illustrating the proverb. Dimna has a motivation for telling the story: he is attempting to quell the lion's unreasonable fear. He is also acting on the knowledge that in his role as storyteller he has the duty to "formulate, encode, and transmit" the tale according to the rules of a storytelling event (Georges 318). The lion has a motivation for listening to and reacting to the story: he wants to make sense of the unknown voice and believe that it poses no real threat. He also has the right to "receive, decode, and respond" to the story (Georges 318). These motivations cue the characters to provide markers for the performative frame. The lion requests an elucidation of a proverb by a performance of the related tale: "*mā matala dhālika?*" Dimna then provides a marker for the beginning of his performance: "*zaʿamū ʾanna . . .*" and tells the tale. Dimna's words alert the audience that what follows is a piece of lore; this information brings the audience (the lion) into the storytelling event. Once the narrative marker focuses the attention of the audience, and prepares it to hear a *story* (as opposed to any other type of verbal utterance), the performance can proceed. Such formulas are common in popular English tradition as well, for example, "once upon a time." Dimna marks the end of his performance with an explanation of why he told the particular tale: "'*innamā ḍarabtu laka hādhā al-matala li-taʿlama ʾanna . . .*" and so closes the performative frame.

The *maqāmāt* establish the performative frame in a more traditional manner, using markers that are familiar from traditional genres of Arabic literature. As we have mentioned, the *maqāmāt* are believed to be parodic of a variety of classical genres. Because of this, their performative pretext is in their transmission, after the manner of *ḥadīt* literature. Like *ḥadīt*, each *maqāma* begins with an *isnād* which traces the chain of

transmission from the eyewitness to the author. Each link in the chain constitutes a performance of its own, and suggests, as in *ḥadīṯ* literature, that the integrity of the message is reliant upon the narrative accuracy (and moral integrity) of each transmitter, or performer. The *isnād* for each *maqāma* is as follows:

> The author said:
> Al-Mundhir ibn Humām narrated and said:
> Al-Sāʾib ibn Tammām narrated to us and said:
> I was in a certain country . . .
> (Monroe 2002: 114; al-Warāglī 14)

While the narrative description of the performance event in this case is minimal, it does posit a performance and means of transmission of a type with which the audience would be quite familiar. As discussed above, Monroe (1983) maintains that the *isnād* of the *maqāma* (referring to those of al-Hamadhānī) was intended as a parody of established genres of Arabic literature (99). Therefore, it can be concluded that in the *maqāma*, the need to construct the storytelling event that obtains in *Kalīla* directly is obviated because the *maqāma* is drawing on the oral setting of the genres that it parodies. Because it is a genre imported from a foreign literature, *Kalīla* cannot draw on the audience's familiarity with established genres of Arabic literature. The audience of the *maqāma*, hearing the *isnād*, calls up the image of the transmission of a *ḥadīṯ* or other traditional text. There is no need for the author to paint the storytelling event in detail within the *maqāma* itself. For example, the carefully placed narrative markers characteristic of *Kalīla* (discussed above) are absent in the *maqāma*; their function is fulfilled by the reproduction of the *isnād* at the beginning of each episode.

    The distinct ways in which each text constructs performance is a matter of genre. While in the *maqāma*, the narratives in each episode are anecdote, and descend from the Arabic tradition of anecdotal literature, in *Kalīla* they are fable, and belong to the mirror of princes genre originating in India. In *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, the narrator al-Sāʾib ibn Tammām is relating anecdotes in the first person, and so the authority of the narration is personal rather than traditional, as it is with the fable. Characters in *Kalīla* mark the beginnings of their fable narratives with language that refers to the transmission of the fable, thereby situating themselves within the oral or written fable tradition. In the *maqāmāt*, the narrators profess to tell the true story of their own experience. Although there may be inconsistencies in their narratives (Monroe 2002: 90), the content is fairly realistic. There is no hint of the fantastic or supernatural in the misadventures they relate. This approximation of realistic fiction stands in contrast to the world of talking animals described in the fables told in *Kalila*. In this, the *maqāma* represents a step toward the prose narrative fiction of the modern era, this narrative form born of Persian, Arab, and Islamic heritage.

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