# Interpreting the Self

Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition

#### **EDITED BY**

# Dwight F. Reynolds

#### COAUTHORED BY

Kristen E. Brustad • Michael Cooperson • Jamal J. Elias Nuha N. N. Khoury • Joseph E. Lowry • Nasser Rabbat Dwight F. Reynolds • Devin J. Stewart • Shawkat M. Toorawa

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Berkeley Los Angeles London

## **CONTENTS**

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
PART I. A THOUSAND YEARS OF ARABIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY	
1. The Fallacy of Western Origins	17
Western Reception of Arabic Autobiography 20	
Redefining the Issues 31	
2. The Origins of Arabic Autobiography	36
Biographical Traditions: Early Prototypes 36	
Biographical Writing: Literary Genres 38	
Sīra (Exemplary Life Story) 38	
Ţabaqāt (Biographical Dictionaries) 40	
Tarjama (Biographical Notice) 42	
Autobiographical Subgenres 44	
Other Influences 45	
3. Toward a History of Arabic Autobiography	52
Historical Clusters 52	
Authorial Motivations 59	
Autobiographical Anxieties 66	
4. Arabic Autobiography and the Literary Portrayal of the Self	72
Essentializing the Self: Private Life and Personality	
in the Memoirs of Ibn Buluggīn 74	

### vi CONTENTS

Historicizing the Self: Deciphering the Autobiography of Ibn Ḥajar 79	
Reading for Stylistic Convention in the Autobiography of al-Suyūṭī 87	
Dreams, Visions, and Unseen Voices 88	
Poetry: An Alternative Discourse 93	
PART II. TRANSLATIONS	
Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (d. 873 or 877)	107
Al-Tirmidhī (d. between 905 and 910)	119
Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī (d. 1077)	132
'Imād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1201)	145
'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 1231)	156
Ibn al-'Adīm (d. 1262)	165
Abū Shāma (d. 1268)	179
Al-Simnānī (d. 1336)	188
'Abd Allāh al-Turjumān [Fray Anselmo Turmeda] (d. 1432?)	194.
Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505)	202
Al-Aydarus (d. 1628)	208
Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī (d. 1772)	216
'Alī Mubārak (d. 1893)	224
Conclusion	241
Personality and Self 242	
Literary Conventions 245	
The Status of Arabic Autobiographies as Texts 247	
Into the Twentieth Century 249	
Annotated Guide to Arabic Autobiographical Writings	<sup>2</sup> 55
Glossary	289
References	295
List of Contributors	311
Index	313