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Publication date
1986

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Quaderni di Studi Arabi

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

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Download date: 15 Jan 2022
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«TALES WITH A GOOD ENDING» IN ARABIC LITERATURE
Narrative Art and Theory of the Arabic World

In recent years, increasing attention is being paid towards the literary genre of the Arabic tale, in particular in the light of the results of general literary studies. The research has been specifically directed towards the morphology of the story. Until very recently, The Thousand and One Nights was the main object of research, especially in the studies which followed the theories of Propp. Studies are now also being made of other collections of tales, which have a more literary character and were directed towards a more educated audience. In this way we find, in addition to the older studies by such scholars as C. Bremond, A. Miquel and J. E. Bencheikh\(^1\), also the examination by F. Malti Douglas of The Book of Misers\(^2\). In the latter study, use has been made of the theories of Bremond concerning the Agens and Patiens and the significance of the arrangement of these roles; according to these theories, the plot of the story is built on these roles, rather than on the sequence of events\(^3\).


2. See F. Malti-Douglas, *Structures of Avarice. The Bukhali’ in Medieval Arabic Literature*, Leiden 1985. I am not able to list here all the recent contributions about story telling, e.g. by scholars like H. Fähndrich and S. Leder, who distinguish themselves also by their literary approach. For C. Bremond’s theory at least, certainly this work of F. Malti-Douglas is one of the most representative in the Arabic field.

The identity of the *agens* often determines the significance of the act. In Bremond's studies, emphasis lies more on the *agens* than in those of Propp. Nevertheless, Bremond has made some use of the latter's system of sequences, but he has drawn a more schematic scheme, possibly because he refutes as inadequate the rigid sequence of acts, as proposed by Propp. And recently, following the French translation of the *Russian Fairy Tales* by Afanassiev (Maisonuneve et Larose, Paris 1978), Bremond has criticised the forced manner in which Propp tried to encapsulate the tales into his Procrustus' bed of theories\(^4\). He came to the conclusion, that the notions of function and sequence keep their use, but that in addition to these elements, the notions of motive and story type are indispensable.

C. Bremond has attempted to establish a generally applicable scheme for stories, and in order to do so he has included many Arabic tales within his analysis. These Arabic stories are mostly derived from *The Thousand and One Nights*. Bremond has used many stories from this collection in one of his classical works, *La logique du récit*, Paris 1973, and in the same year he has also included some in his article concerning a French miracle tale\(^5\). In the latter study, he uses one of the stories from *The Thousand and One Nights* as an example for the opposite of a «moralistic tale»: a «pessimistic» tale, in which the villain allows innocent people to be accused of his misdeeds (the 173rd night)\(^6\).

Below, we will try to see whether Bremond's theories of 1973 as regards the French miracle or moralistic tales, can be used universally. We hope to show with the following analysis of Arabic moralistic stories how difficult it is to establish a general, abstract system for all stories, or even for the stories of a certain type. With the help of a cross-referenced check on Bremond's theories, which ultimately goes back to Propp, we will be able to obtain a better understanding of certain facets of the Arabic moralistic tales, and their theoretical starting points.

Bremond distinguishes a system of sequences (or main events, also called «functions») in the moralistic tales which allows for either an improve-

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6. In the usual arrangement, this story is told in the 31st night. See N. Elisséef, *Thèmes et motifs des Mille et une nuits*, Beyrouth 1949, p. 190.
ment of fortune to follow a deterioration of fortune (a), or the reward for someone, who has done a good deed (b), or the punishment of a person who has done some evil (c)7.

In the French miracle tale, Bremond finds the same three possibilities, which he schematises as follows:

A. Dégradation → Amélioration.
B. Mérite → Récompense.
C. Démérite → Châtiment.

The type of event which, according to Bremond, indispensable in moralistic stories, is A: Dégradation → Amélioration; in other words, an improvement in fortune follows a deterioration of fortune.

Claude Bremond bases his theories on four matrices, i.e. four possible combinations of sequences of events. But not all of these matrices need to feature in the story. Below we will give the four matrices:

Fig. 1

Type 1: Dégradation de A → Amélioration de A.
Type 2: Dégradation de A → Amélioration de A à cause de dégradateur → Châtiment de B dénéritant B.
Type 3: Dégradation de A → Amélioration de A grâce à prestataire → Récompense de C mériterant C.
Type 4: Dégradation de A → Amélioration de A grâce à prestataire → Récompense du mériterant C prestataire C à cause de dégradateur dénéritant B → Châtiment du dégradateur B.

Bremond’s theory should be applicable to all moralistic stories («s’appliquant a priori à tout espèce de récit régi par une exigence moralisatrice forte»).

A collection of tales which may be regarded as truly representative of the Arabic literature, and which lends itself very well for a structural analysis, is the collection called Reward For The Good; Punishment for

7. C. Bremond, Les bon recompensés et les mechants punis, pp. 96-121.
Evil; Good Ending by Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf ibn ad-Dāya from Egypt (died 330/941)⁸.

This court functionary and collector of tales tells stories from his own background, the world of civil servants, or he relates tales told by other people from the same milieu. What is noticeable, however, is the narrative conception of the stories. The titles of the three parts, or chapters, of his work already show this aspect: Reward For The Good, Punishment of Evil, and Good Ending. Asides from being the titles of the works, they are also the three story categories which are often found in moralistic (i.e. stories with a positive outlook on life) tales (compare the above mentioned categories of Bremond). In this aspect, the collection of Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf is comparable with other collections of tales in Arab literature, the origins of which can be found in the milieu of lesser court officials. Another collection to which we will sometimes refer, is called Relieve After Hardship, by Tanūḥī (died 383/993)⁹. The title again falls within one of the categories of Bremond (just like Good Ending with the category Déggradation → Amélioration). The writers/collectors of these works tried to show with these collections that the world has, in the end, some sort of internal justice or balance. They also wanted to encourage those who despaired, because everything, ultimately, will turn out right. This concept is explicitly stated in the prefaces and accompanying texts of both collections.

Each of the three chapters of the collection by Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf, includes about twenty to thirty stories. The chapters are introduced with a short preface and also occasionally followed by a postscript. In the «Preface» between the second and third chapter we read (al-Mukāfa’a, pp. 89-90):

«We have now accomplished that which we promised to do. We have told tales about Rewards for the Good and Punishments for Evil. We hope that they will contribute to the clear realisation that one should always continue with that


which is Good; that a reward for Good is necessary; that one should prevent one’s soul from pursuing Evil; that one should keep one’s soul from sudden feelings of revenge to avenge Evil».

«They say: Good is repaid with Good, and the first Good is better. Evil will repay Evil, and the first Evil is worse».

«Now we have told all these stories, it is evident that those principles can be found in a number of tales about people, who were sorely tried, yet withstood all sorrows. Thus the fruit of their firmness was a Good Ending».

«Because, if the soul in times of sorrow does not try to regain its powers, despair will become dominant, and ultimately it will destroy the soul. Man should know that the origin of a certain situation (for instance, happiness) comes out of its opposite (unhappiness) and that this is a natural law. Just as one knows that the night has to give way to the day, so a weak character will always, in times of trouble, adhere to the soul. If the soul is not treated with medicines, the illness will grow worse and the trials harder. Reflection upon the tales in this chapter will encourage the soul and put it into continuous steadfastness. Good Behaviour towards The Lord In Heaven creates confidence in the Good Ending at the end of personal trials. God occasions the Good Ending».

The theoretical conception of Aḥmad ibn Yusuf (and also of Tanūḥī) also clearly shows in the interior arrangement of the tales within the chapters. For instance, in the chapter Reward for Good, two stories (nos. 2 and 3), are put together which are concerned with the payment of taxes and tenants. Similarly, stories nos. 6 and 7 are placed together and both are concerned with a debt of a thousand dinar which is paid back. In stories 8 and 9 a beautiful robe plays an important role. Finally, reference should be made to tales nos. 16 and 17, in which the story is told of a pilgrimage to Mecca 10.

In Tanūḥī’s Relieve After Hardship, we find the same arrangement within the chapters. For instance, two stories are put together in which the hair of the main characters turns grey out of fright. There is also two tales in which Mecca plays an important role 11.

10. Ibn al-Dāya, al-Mukṭafa’u’a, pp. 6-9, nos. 2 and 3; pp. 31-35, nos. 16-17; pp. 16-19, nos. 8 and 9; pp. 14-16, nos. 6 and 7.

11. See Tanūḥī, al-Farag, II, pp. 131ff., no. 179; pp. 137ff., no. 180; pp. 373ff., no. 246; pp. 378, no. 247). Stories nos. 179 and 180 form part of the fifth chapter dealing with «those who escaped from prison». Stories nos. 245 and 246 are included within the seventh chapter, dealing with «those who escaped from oppressive circumstances, either by chance or by plan».
Arab story collectors, such as Ahmad ibn Yusuf and Tanūhī have derived their stories from the milieu of the lesser court officials. They have used a strict arrangement for their material which shows an awareness of a theoretical background. Elements of this background coincide with a number of theoretic points which Bremond has developed based on French miracle tales. There are, however, some important differences between the Arabic tales from the milieu of the lesser court officials and the West European stories, for example, the French miracle tale. After a more detailed examination of Reward For Good, etc., we notice that the stories in these collections are not as varied as those in the French group. The French tales are far more fanciful and of greater divergence of form. It would seem as if Ahmad ibn Yusuf had devised a schematic arrangement which limited the variety of types.

Another difference between this kind of Arabic tales and the examples from Western Europe is the way in which the stories were transmitted and the fiction maintained. The Arabic stories are always told by people who have been personally involved. The only exceptions are the stories which are derived from The Books of the Persians, or from other collections which have originated outside of the Arab world. If the narrators have forgotten a certain name, they confess this plainly: qad dhabab smu-hu'an-ni («I have forgotten his name»)12. This realism has perhaps been instigated by the narrator or collector in order to underline the moral lesson expounded in the prefaces and postscripts.

The idea of «loyalty to truth», is often found in the form of the so-called isnād or tradition chain. The chain probably formed part of a concept which was common to the story tellers from the world of the lesser court officials. In the Medieval European stories, however, the fiction that the narrator has to be involved into the story has been rarely maintained. In these European tales we are, to the contrary, often dealing with omniscient narrators who need not to have necessarily a role in the story they tell.

The differences in structure and manner of narrating force us to reconsider seriously whether the theories expounded by Bremond on the basis of the French miracle stories can also be applied to the Arabic tales. Below we will give, from each chapter of the Reward for Good, etc., some examples of tales, followed by their schematic representation according to Bre-

12. Ibn al-Daya, al-Mukafa'a, p. 86. In these cases Harūn ibn Mahlī usually turns out to be the narrator. Generally, if the reader did not want the expand upon the nature of a character, such an explicit formula is not avoided. One simply said: «one of the merchants», or «one of the secretaries».
mond. The two ensuing stories are characteristic for the chapter *Reward for the Good*:

1) A tale from the time of the Umayyads, on the authority of a kātib or secretary of Ḥālid al-Qasrī, a governor. The record keeper has given to some tenants a certain document in exchange for a favour. When Ḥālid al-Qasrī hears about this, he demands that the hand of the record keeper should be cut off. The functionary manages to avert the danger by reminding the governor of his loyalty. Within a year, Ḥālid is replaced and imprisoned by Yusuf ibn 'Umar. A crowd of people guards the door of the prison holding the ex-governor. The keeper of records, whose hand was spared by the former governor, befriends the guards. He then manages to give some food to Ḥālid, who has refused to eat the prison food because he fears it has been poisoned. The keeper of records also draws up a plan to escape. With the help of two camels, which he has had ready for some time, he succeeds in letting Ḥālid escape unnoticed. The escape of the former governor is not discovered until the following day, by which time all pursuits prove to be of no avail. Ḥālid was thus able to escape and make his way to the Umayyad general, Maslama. The latter speaks with the caliph Hishām, and he reinstores Ḥālid to his former position.

7) Išḥāq ibn Nuṣayr wants to repay a debt to a paper merchant. He had borrowed some money before emigrating to Egypt. He despatches someone to give over a thousand dinar to the paper merchant, although he had only borrowed a thousand dirham. The paper merchant, who had since fallen on evil days, received «the fruit of his patience», and was thus able to regain his former wealth and position.

In the chapter *Reward of Good*, we find many stories, including those which have been summarised above, which can be split in two parts and which feature two main characters, A and B. In the first part, A is in trouble and is saved by B; in the second part, B is in difficulty and is helped by A. Based on the theories of Bremond, we can schematise this plot as follows:

**Fig. 2**

**Part 1:** Dégradation A → Amélioration A
prestateur B → Récompense B.

**Part 2:** Dégradation B → Amélioration B
prestateur/rétributeur A.

13. Ibn al-Dīyā, *al-Mukaña'a*, pp. 4ff., no. 1; pp. 15-16, no. 7. Ḥālid al-Qasrī, was well known as a cruel judge, and was mentioned in the work of Tanūhi, *al-Farağ*, IV, pp. 30ff., no. 467, and also
The scheme which has been given above can be applied to many of the stories in the *Reward for Good*. An essential element of these stories is the time which elapses before the benefactor is repaid. In other stories, however, there is no longer any mention of a previous good deed. In Tale no. 10, a beautiful poem is immediately rewarded (*al-Mukafa'a*, pp. 20-21, no. 10).

10) The author (Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf) is in the hands of the Qaysiyya Bedouins who want to rob him. He manages, however, to avert this danger. He then succeeds in winning the Bedouins over by composing a poem about them. As a «reward» he receives twenty dinar.

This story contains only the combination of the sequences Dégradation - Amélioration and Mérite - Récompense. This type of story is reminiscent of other tales from the Arabic literature. In these stories a poet or artist manages to avert poverty or other misfortunes by impressing or stupefying people by his readiness of speech. In this way, there is an immediate reward for the main character of the story.\(^{14}\)

All of the examples detailed above have come from the chapter entitled the *Reward for Good*. They have been discussed in order to show that there is very little variation in the structure of the stories. Almost all tales from the collection are composed following the above mentioned scheme (Fig. 2). A similar structure can also be found in most of the stories from the *Punishment for Evil*, of which we will now give two examples.\(^{15}\):
2) Ibn al-Zayyāt, a vizir who was infamous for his cruelty, agitated in the days of the caliph al-Wātiq (227/842 - 232/847) against the later caliph al-Mutawakkil (232/847 - 247/861). He even managed to have his opponent imprisoned in his own prison. Al-Mutawakkil tells that no one has ever had to endure as much as he had from Ibn al-Zayyāt. When he was incarcerated, he was locked into a very small, verminous cell. As a result his hair was crawling with vermin. His mother had addressed a petition to al-Wātiq, asking whether her son would be allowed to have a shave, to wash his clothes and to perfume himself. The caliph agrees to this petition and orders Ibn al-Zayyāt to meet the requests. Ibn al-Zayyāt became very angry and ordered his servants to bring al-Mutawakkil into his presence. When, however, al-Mutawakkil arrived, al-Zayyāt did not address him for an hour. Then, however, he ordered a leather mat to be fetched. This type of mat was used at that time for executions, and al-Mutawakkil thinks that he is about to be killed. Then Ibn al-Zayyāt sent for a barber and al-Mutawakkil suspected that his teeth were about to pulled out. But instead of these deeds only his hair was cut. After the mock execution, al-Mutawakkil took an oath that he, when he becomes the caliph, will immediately execute Ibn al-Zayyāt. This promise was carried out on the third day following his succession to the throne. Al-Mutawakkil punished Ibn al-Zayyāt with the nail box.

4) This is a story which was told on the authority of Naṣīm, the servant of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUmri. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUmri then received the news that servants of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUmri had killed their master. The servants came to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUmri and offered him the head of their former leader. Spectators and others affirmed that it was indeed the head of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUmri, and that they were his former servants. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUmri asked whether their chief had ever harmed them. They replied that he had also been very good to them. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUmri then had the faithless servants executed.

In the tales from the chapter Punishment for Evil, of which we have just saw two examples, character A usually falls on evil days because of character B, who, in the next episode, is punished by A. The same theme is followed in stories nos. 1, 2, 7, and 12. These stories can thus be schematised as follows (story no. 4 is of a slightly different pattern, the «justicier» being a C):
An important aspect of these stories is that A does not necessarily improve his lot; and if so, as in story no. 2, in which al-Mutawakkil becomes the caliph, this does not directly follow the line of events. This is an important difference from the French miracle story, in which character A improves his lot because of the events told in the tale.

As a general theory, therefore, the hypotheses of Bremond can, in this case, be refuted. This position also applies to tale no. 10, in which the victim prepares the punishment before the crime has been committed. Below we will relate the complete story (al-Mukāfā‘a, p. 70, no. 10):

10) «I have read in the Biographies of the Persians among others the following story: a group of astronomers prophesied to one of the Persian kings that he would be murdered and succeeded by his son. Subsequently, the king prepared a number of fast working poisons, placed them into some bottles, sealed them, and then wrote on the bottles: “aphrodisiac; so many drops at a time”. The poisons were so strong that it required only a small quantity to be lethal. The king told himself: “If things turn out as told by the astronomers, then I will be able to avenge myself”. The king’s son did attack and kill his father. Sometime later, feeling the need for an aphrodisiac, the son saw the bottles and took the requisite dose. As a result he died and his father was avenged».

The tales from the third chapter, Good Ending, have, for the greater part, a very simple plot: good luck (amélioration) is followed by bad luck (dégradation). Judging from the title (Good Ending), they are based on the same formula as the Relieve After Hardship by Tanūḥi: someone in deep trouble is saved. It should be said, however, that many tales from the collection of Tanūḥi have a more complicated plot than announced by the title. There are also a number of stories in Good Ending which could have been incorporated into the Reward For Good.

In story no. 1, a man has given his wealth into the custody of someone, who afterwards refuses to return it. The first man finally succeeds in obtaining back his wealth. In story no. 2, someone is saved from poverty. This is also the theme of story no. 3, in which Judge Abu Yusuf al-Qādī (who later becomes famous) features prominently. Initially the judge lived in Kūfa and although he was very learned, he was also very poor and unknown. He is
advised that he should go to Baghdad and try his luck. After his arrival in the
great city, he is introduced to other scholars at a meeting of learned
men. He stands out as a result of his fluency in speech and his oratorial pro-
wess. Due to his abilities he becomes famous, he is introduced to the court
of caliph al-Mahdi (158/775 - 169/785) and later to that of Harūn al-Rašīd
(170/786 - 193/809).¹⁷

In tale no. 4 someone who is about to be executed, is pardoned, because
someone else had intervened on his behalf. The second man had intervened
after seeing the victim’s name on the list of people who were to be execut-
ed. The man acted so, because he had known the father of the convicted
man, and remembered him with great warmth (al-Mukāfā‘a, pp. 98-99,
no. 4). Other stories in this chapter deal with the release at the last moment
of people from prison, or the return of stolen goods (al-Mukāfā‘a, pp. 102-
103, no. 7 and pp. 99-100, no. 5).

After the above analysis of the three chapters from the work by Aḥmad
ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Dāya we can conclude that the model which Bremond says
can be applied, a priori, to all moralistic stories («s’appiquant a priori à
tout espèce de récit régi par une exigence moralisatrice forte») (see above),
cannot be used to describe the stories of Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf. This is espe-
cially true for the stories which are included in the chapter called Punish-
ment for Evil. In these stories there is no improvement in the position or
fortune of victim A. The matrix of Type II, as represented in illustration 1,
differs from Type II as given in illustration 3 and based on the chapter
Punishment for Evil (the «Amélioration de A» is lacking). Bremond’s re-
mark that the sequence «deterioration of fate» to «improvement of fate» is
omnipresent, can thus be similarly discounted.

At the beginning of this paper we stated that the œuvre of Aḥmad ibn
Yūsuf – apart from the Relief After Hardship by Tanūḥī – lends itself very
well to structural analytical research. Perhaps even to a greater extent that
than the work by Tanūḥī. The Reward for Good by Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf has
a very simple structure, and it is as if the author was himself a theoretician
in the field of narratology. This point can also be found in other groups of
literature.¹⁸

¹⁷. Ibn al-Dāya, al-Mukāfā‘a, pp. 91-93, no. 1; pp. 94-96, no. 2; pp. 97-98, no. 3). See for Abu
Yūsuf al-Qāṭīfī also Tanūḥī, al-Farāg, II, pp. 387ff., no. 249). He was qādī in Baghdād, where he
died in 178/798.
¹⁸. See e.g. E. Sanguineti, Gli «schemata» del Decameron, in Studi di filologia e letteratura dedicati
a Vincenzo Pernicone, II-III, Istituto di Letteratura dell’Università degli studi di Genova, 1975,
pp. 141-153, and P. W. M. De Meijer, Le trasformazioni del racconto nel Decameron, in Atti del
Convegno di Nimega sul Boccaccio, Bologna 1975, pp. 279-300.

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Now we have established that the moralistic tales by Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf and Tanūḫī do not fit into the «universally applicable» theory of Bremond, we should study which structure is dominant in the work of Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf. In this aspect we notice that many stories in the first and second chapters consist of two episodes between which a certain period of time elapses. Below we will not use the codes of Bremond, because in these case the symmetry which is proposed by the French scholar cannot be indicated. The parallel sequence of many (but not all) stories in chapters I and II can be schematised as follows:

Fig. 4

Chapter I (e.g. stories 1, 7, 11). Chapter II (e.g. stories 1, 2, 7).

Episode 1: A helps B A commits evil against B
lapse of time lapse of time

Episode 2: B helps B B commits evil against A

One element from Episode 2 is not indicated, namely that the reward or punishment generally exceeds that of Episode 1. An increased reward, and the lapse of time, seem to be general anthropological features (Cf. Mauss quoted in note 20).

It should be noted, however, that the lapse of time is not foreseen by the main characters of the story; it has the function of showing that the world can appear to be full of injustice, but that eventually good will always prevail. The balance of things always restored.

In Chapter I the recompense is larger than the initial good deed, similarly in Chapter II, the punishment for evil is larger than the original evil. The Arabic term mukāfa'a, which we can translated either with «reward» or «punishment», suggests more than the idea of «giving or doing back in equal measure»; it does not really carry the conception of «rewarding in increased measure». As far as this point is concerned, the writer permits himself the liberty, which, as we saw above, can be explained in Chapter I on the basis of anthropological data.

The increased degree of punishment in Chapter II is more difficult to explain, especially as the Arabic writer himself turns against excessive punishment in the postscript. For this reason, excessive punishment is not supported by moral codes, but seems to be inherent part of worldly life. It is stated in the Koran, that God created for himself a different rule which

he follows: he recompenses the Good with more than the original (limitless or double, as in Koran 64: 17:20), but he punishes the wicked only with equal measures. It is stated in Koran 40: 40: «Who commits evil, will be punished only with equal measures; but who does good, and is a believer, these will enter the Garden, where they will be looked after, without a final account».

I only quote the Koran at this instant as an example of the ideas about punishment and reward. The Arabic writers do not quote the relevant Sūra's, merely limiting themselves to «quotations» of philosophers. The tales, like those by Tanūḥī, are very worldly. The milieu of the lesser court officials directed them to the reality of daily life A life which seems to be full of injustice, but in reality it is one which, eventually, everything becomes just. Both writers cited above try to illustrate a positive attitude to life, the concept that everything will turn out for the right is an important theme. Āḥmad ibn Yūṣuf ibn al-Dāya ends his work with a third chapter in which he recapitulates his vision on life. His beliefs are expounded in his preface to Chapter III: «The principle which rules all tales is that steadfastness in dire need will eventually lead to an improvement of fortunes»21.

It has been a deliberate policy in this article to avoid using any examples from the hand of Tanūḥī. We have refrained from doing so because Tanūḥī is less schematic than Āḥmad ibn Yūṣuf ibn al-Dāya and therefore less suitable for testing the theories of C. Bremond. This does not mean, however, that the Relieve After Hardship by Tanūḥī offers no any interesting or relevant material. Merely that it is another story.


SUMMARY

This article puts to the test the theory of Claude Bremond. The theory was developed during his study of the French miracle or moralistic tale. The theory is tested with the help of the Arabic moralistic stories in the collection of Yusuf ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Dāya. These stories had been collected into three chapters, namely Reward for Good, Punishment for Evil and Good Ending. The chapters are reminiscent of the three main «functions» which were distinguished by Bremond, namely: Mérite → Récompense; Démérite → Châtiment; Dégénération → Amélioration. With the help of an analysis of the Arabic stories, the article shows that the theories of Bremond, which he thought could be used universally, have an only restricted value.