PREFACE

This volume comprises most of the papers presented at a Wellcome Institute symposium on Ibn Ṭufayl and Ḥāyy ibn Yaqqān, as well as several contributions by other scholars who were unable to attend or whose studies were solicited subsequently. The Arabic text referred to throughout this book is the second edition prepared by Léon Gauthier in 1936 and published by the Imprimerie catholique in Beirut. Lenn Goodman’s very useful and well-annotated English translation, published in New York by Twayne in 1972, has also been consulted by some contributors.

Neither the symposium nor this volume would have been possible without the financial and administrative support of the Wellcome Institute. I am also grateful to all of the contributors, not only for their stimulating papers and comments during our discussions at the symposium, but also for their patience with my queries and suggestions, and with a series of delays to publication, many of them unavoidable. I would also like to express my gratitude to Meg Davies for preparing the index, and to some former colleagues at the American University of Beirut, where I taught Ḥāyy ibn Yaqqān for several years. Discussions with Tarif Khalidi, James Malarkey, Nabil Matar, Wadad al-Qadi, Richard Scott, and Peter Shebayah contributed much to the shaping of my own understanding of the text, and James Malarkey’s organization of an inter-disciplinary symposium on text analysis convinced me of the potential fruitfulness of devoting such a meeting to this text in particular.

So far as I am aware, this publication marks the first effort to study a work of medieval Arabic literature by drawing together the contributions of scholars approaching the text from many different methodological and disciplinary perspectives. While it may be true that Ibn Ṭufayl is unusually well suited for such discussion, I would suggest that since all books can be dealt with as “literature,” there are practically boundless opportunities for similar endeavors, and of course, for further study of Ḥāyy ibn Yaqqān itself.

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