

Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought: Essays in Honor of Everett K. Rowson, edited by Joseph E. Lowry and Shawkat M. Toorawa (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), XXIX - 514 pp., ISBN : 978-90-04-34324-5, \$ USD 179,00; € 155,00 (hb).

This Festschrift, presented to its dedicatee on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, reflects well the outstanding quality and wide range of scholarship of one of the leading American Arabists of the last several decades, Everett K. Rowson. Looking at the list of this latter's publications (pp. XX-XXIX) one cannot but admire the wide variety of subjects which the latter has seriously dealt with: from philosophy to literature, the Qurʾān to Islamic erotica, and from classical Islamic Law to contemporary legal and social issues in the Islamic world (with a special attention to Egypt) —just to mention the most important foci of his research. This rich variety of topics across such diverse areas is also present in the Festschrift. This makes any thematic presentation extremely difficult and the editors have decided wisely to offer none.

The book opens with two studies related to two interesting notions in the Qurʾān: *rūḥ* and *kayd*. Regarding the former S. Tlili offers convincing evidence of the existence of a growing anthropocentric tendency in the commentarial tradition in interpreting the term. She rightly insists that this is astonishing. Indeed, in the Qurʾān (more precisely in s. XVII, 51) it is precisely the profundity and inaccessibility of the concept of *rūḥ* is emphasized — or, at least, strongly suggested. It is somewhat regrettable that Tlili says nothing—not even in the form of a small remark— concerning a possible relation between the Qurʾānic notion and that of God's *ruaḥ* in *Genesis* 1, even if this is not the proper topic of her—otherwise, most valuable—contribution. As for *kayd*, Z. Mahmoud evidences that this term in the sūrah of Yūsuf, is neither inherently destructive, nor essentially feminine. Hereafter, S. Spectorosky presents a legal issue: i.e., she surveys some Ḥanbalī views on secret marriages from the classical days to the present.

D. Hollenberg deals with a quasi-Nuṣayrī fragment in an early Ismāʿīlī treatise ([partially] published by St. Guyard in 1874, based on

an unknown manuscript of Syrian origin), in which he signals the presence of other quasi-Nuṣayrī tropes outside the fragment as well. Hollenberg offers an edition of the Arabic text, according to the ms. 1283 of the Institute of Ismaili Studies of London, as well as an English translation. On a few occasions (e.g., p. 17, n. 15; p. 18, n. 4 and 20) the expected or corrected reading is attested in Guyard's edition and in one dubious case (p. 55, n. 16) the latter has an interesting variant, namely *ifaḍā* instead of *afāḍal*, since it avoids the problem of a lacking verb (see St. Guyard, *Fragments relatifs à la doctrine des Ismaélîs*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1874, pp. 246-247 [which covers only the first part of the fragment]). One wonders why Hollenberg has not taken any profit of Guyard's edition in these cases. The translation offered is valuable. However, in the passage where God says to the Intellect: "you are one (...) and I am one..." (p. 61, last paragraph) I would replace the former 'one' (Arabic: *wāḥid*) with 'unique' and put a majuscule to the latter 'one' (Arabic: *aḥad*)—but, of course, this concerns a minor detail.

Hereafter follow different contributions which mainly are related to poetry, song, or language in the early classical period (8th-10th. cent.): on the crucifixion poem of 'Alī ibn Jahm (d. 863) (D. Laren); on animal speech in the theologian and litterateur of the same century, al-Jāḥiẓ (J. Miller); on intermedial poetry in Ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca. 910) (L. Harb); on poetry and madness in Arabic literary history (8-9th. cent.) (G. J. van Gelder); on the concept of music according to Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 934) (H. Biesterfeldt); on Zoroaster's many languages, based on classical Arabic sources (al-Bīrūnī, al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn al-Nadīm) (K. van Bladel) and on semi-fictional or hybrid narratives in classical Arabic historiography (A. Talib). Each study offers many interesting insights, both technical and doctrinal. In addition, they often highlight psychological or social-political aspects that lie in the background as well. Finally, they often contain well-reflected translations of sometimes very complicated texts. Regarding these latter, very minor reservations sometimes arise, although very seldom. Let me offer three examples:

(1) Miller's translation of "*miqdār al-maṣlaḥa wa-nibāya al-rasm*" as "the degree needed for providential benefit and the purpose of providing a periphrastic definition" (p. 103) is not very appropriate in the context in which it functions—I would propose instead: "the degree of (strict) requirement and the limit of description"

(2) Talib translates of a verse of a pre-islamic poem of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā (d. 609) that starts with “*a-lā lā arā*” in the affirmative as “I’ve never known”(p. 240). Logically, one would expect an interrogation—I would therefore propose: “Can I [or: Is it possible to?] know (that a blessed man...)?”

(3) As to van Gelder’s translation of “*fa-anniyya fattish fiyya talqānī*” as “search me in me” (p. 170), albeit literally correct, in my view it misses the profound mystical implication of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s affirmation, i.e., the human soul as mirroring God’s image—I therefore would articulate the translation as follows: “(Therefore) search Me [the Truth, i.e., God] in me [i.e., the soul].”

However, let me once more stress that these points concern details—as such, they in no way countervail the overall quality of each of these translations.

Nine contributions then follow that deal with various topics. Their major text source (or, at least, one of their major text sources) can be situated in the somewhat later part of the classical period of Islamic culture, i.e., during the 11-14th centuries: the existence of three major views of Ancient Egypt in the writings of scholars of that period, coming from all over the Islamic world (T. Stephan); a (not literal, but sublime) translation of al-Hamadhānī’s *al-Maqāmab al-Mawṣiliyyah* (M. Cooperson), as well as a new edition of this *Maqāmab*, based on the oldest known manuscript, i.e., ms. Fatih 4097 (B. Orfali); an analysis of the expression “*māṣṣ baṣr ummihī*” or its close derivatives, with special attention given to Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah (d. 1270), but also to two earlier authors as well, i.e., al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) and Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967) (J. Nawas); the presence of a rich manuscript variation in the manuscript tradition in which the exordium of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122) has been preserved (M. Keegan); the understanding of the conception of *mayl*, ‘inclination’ or ‘impetus’, in Najm al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī al-Kātibī (d. 1276) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) (J. McGinnis); and the unusual, but extraordinary letter to Ibn Nubāta which is present in the book *Maṭla‘ al-nayyirayn* of Burhān al-Dīn al-Qirāṭī (d. 1379) (Th. Bauer). These contributions also testify to a high level of scholarship and offer many innovative insights for the interested reader. Here, as well, I see at best room for minor remarks. For example, Keegan states (p. 296) that the ms. Cairo Adab 105 “was copied from an autograph manuscript in 504/1111 and authorized by al-Ḥarīrī,” but somewhat later (p. 300) he affirms that it “was authorized at the first reading session and contains an attendance record of its

notable participants”—I find it puzzling that an attendance record can be identified as a copy of an autograph. As to McGinnis (p. 331, and n. 51), he notes that his translation of *qatʿ* by ‘deprivation’ is context-based and deviates from its technical sense—given his own observation that one can make sense of it in the framework of al-Rāzī’s discussion, one wonders, however, why he does not withhold the latter. Finally, regarding Bauer’s qualification of al-Qīrāṭī’s letter as a *mufākharah*, it is far from evident and, as such, questionable—it is worthwhile to note that Bauer himself (p. 343) specifies it as a “*mufākbara manquée*.”

The chapter which comes after the nine just mentioned ones, occupies a somewhat isolated place. In it A. Akhtar shows an interesting comparison between Venice and Baghdad (as the new Byzantium, respectively new Baghdad) in the fifteenth century. He focuses as well on the complex issue of their mutual relationship, and this in a most nuanced way.

The last five papers deal with contemporary issues: M. ‘Abduh’s views on family (K. Cuna); conduct books for Egyptian youth at the beginning of the twentieth century (M. Booth); inter-communal violence between Jews and Muslims in Yemen (M. Wagner); internationalism and surrealism in the work of the Egyptian novelist, poet and critic, Idwār al-Kharṭāṭ (d. 2015) (H. Halim) and the link between Islamic development and the movement to transform Egypt (J. Toth). They too demonstrate a high level of scholarship level, and, in the last two studies, present undoubtedly challenging, although plausible interpretations.

An index of Qurʾān citations as well as a general index complete this Festschrift, which both by its high scholarly quality and its rich thematic variety constitutes an appropriate homage to the leading scholar who Everett K. Rowson was, and still is.

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