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Buchbesprechungen – Comptes Rendus – Book Reviews

Cornell, Rkia Elaroui: *Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth: The Many Faces of Islam's Most Famous Woman Saint, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya*. London: Oneworld Academic, 2019, 416 pp., ISBN 978-7-860-75215.

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There are certain books that appear from time to time which provide such insight and clarity to their subject that they demand to be read and reviewed. This is one such book. *Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth: The Many Faces of Islam's Most Famous Woman Saint, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya* written by Rkia Elaroui Cornell is a tour de force in the study of early Islam and Sufism that elucidates the rich history of interpretations of the life of this elusive ascetic/mystic of Islam. Cornell has an abiding interest in the tales of Sufi woman and brings a wealth of experience to the complicated task. In an earlier and valuable contribution to the subject she studied and translated a medieval Arabic treatise written by al-Sulami (d. 1021 CE) which she published in 1999 as *Early Sufi Women*. With her comprehensive examination and intricate analysis of early Arabic texts, Cornell has the ability to bring to life details of the history of early Islamic ascetic movements that few scholars have noticed, but greatly deserve to be brought to light.

Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya, who died in Basra in 801 CE, has been the subject of far too few a dedicated study. The last major book on Rabi'a in English was written nearly a century ago in 1928 when Margaret Smith, a pioneering scholar of Islamic mysticism, published her investigation *Rabi'a the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam*. A certain number of articles have treated Rabi'a in the intervening years, but we have not had a thorough investigation of Rabi'a in a critical perspective until the present one. Cornell's book is not precisely a history of Rabi'a, but rather a description and meticulous analysis of religious ideas that developed in Middle Eastern contexts dating principally from the ninth century to the thirteenth century. Cornell is under no illusion that the Rabi'a of history can be easily distinguished from myth. She rejects the uncritical efforts that have been made to resurrect a historical Rabi'a from the faded traces of history. There are no sources dating to her lifetime. In the absence of writings attributable to Rabi'a, or accounts of individuals who knew her personally, Cornell seek answers in the hagiographical writings of Muslim intellectuals and religious scholars who treated her life, in many cases, centuries after the fact. While

these sources cannot be used to understand Rabi'a's own theological positions, or her religious teachings, nevertheless, Cornell wisely recognizes that to discard them as mere myth would be terrible mistake. Instead, Cornell draws upon a deep expertise in Arabic philology, literature and language to extract valuable insights into the thinking of the authors themselves and how their creative storytelling of Rabi'a reflects major ideological currents in early Islamic thought.

Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth contains many useful insights into the textual analysis applied to the stories of Rabi'a. Cornell draws on a deep knowledge in the fields of literary studies, ritual studies and historiography carried out by the likes of Roland Barthes, Michel de Certeau, Hayden White, Catherine Bell, and Franklin Ankersmit. She combines a narrativist and constructivist approach to her subject matter, one inspired by Jonathan Potter in *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric, and Social Construction* (2012). This is all fascinating and skillfully described and for those interested in literary studies one will find much food for thought. But what is of principle interest to this reviewer is what do we learn about early Islamic ascetic movements and Sufism through the study of Rabi'a as an idealized Muslim religious figure. On that topic the revelations are many, but I will focus on the larger and what I consider the more significant of Cornell's contributions.

Although the historical Rabi'a is all but lost to posterity, one can surmise from the earliest biographical sources, recorded by figures familiar with the cultural life of Basra, that she was a notable religious figure in that city. Rabi'a was certainly a woman of some social standing, free and an Arab of the 'Adi b. Qays tribe, a Sunni Muslim known for her eloquence. Cornell reveals that one of the earliest epithets for Rabi'a was *musma'iyya* or the "woman who must be heard." Rabi'a taught and inspired the earliest generation of Muslim scholars beginning with Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 776), a scholar of Islamic law and transmitter of hadith, and Shu'ba b. al-Hajjaj (d. 776–7 or 781–2) also a transmitter of hadith and Quran commentator. Above all what appears to have impressed Rabi'a's contemporaries was her asceticism and religious devotion. Rabi'a never married and according to the social mores of her day this would have left her with a problematic social status in the community. Nevertheless, some stories of Rabi'a show that her celibacy was interpreted as deriving from her singular focus on God that was greatly admired.

The prominent view of Rabi'a today, and perhaps for much of history, is the image of a lover of God and as a Sufi. Perhaps, one of the most important contributions of this book is to place that perspective in context. It is not the image of Rabi'a to be found in the earliest accounts. Two of the most prominent tropes found in the writings on Rabi'a depict her as a teacher and as an ascetic. Cornell has much to say about the cultural world and social value that was

constructed around the image of Rabi'a as a teacher. The Arabic term frequently used to describe Rabi'a is *mu'addiba*. Cornell describes with great nuance how the term *adab* at the root of *mu'addiba* is rich in meanings including ethics, good manners and education in the sense of moral comportment. Education was a form of training in what Cornell styles "the art of character formation." The teacher was asked to live out the life of their religious conviction in every action, and in every breath. Rabi'a apparently was one such dedicated believer. Cornell sees inspiration of this kind of moral education in the ethical teachings of Stoics and Cynics that value the endurance of hardship and strive to live a life of virtue. With this perspective, Rabi'a can be placed in the larger context of the "pan-Mediterranean pedagogical culture" to which she belonged.

In addition to the image of the teacher, Rabi'a is also depicted principally as an ascetic. This is found in the writings of Jahiz (776–868/9), the famous prose author and native of Basra, who gives various anecdotes about Rabi'a in *Kitab al-hayawan* and *al-Bayan wa-l-tabyin*. Cornell's thoughts on asceticism in early Islam are insightful and form a major section of her book. In the early period of Islam, women played a major role cultivating and transmitting a new form of Islamic asceticism. Cornell shows, quite effectively, that Rabi'a was not the originator of a tradition of women's asceticism in Islam, but a prominent exponent of a century-long tradition in Basra. Cornell describes the essential components of Rabi'a's narratives of asceticism as consisting of four principal notions: practices of renunciation (*zuhd*), the avoidance of ethical failings (*wara'*), ascetic ritualism (*nusk*), and poverty (*faqr*). Asceticism was a central aspect of religious life for Muslim communities of the time and it was discussed in works of the period such as 'Abd Allah b. al-Mubarak's (d. 797) *Kitab al-zuhd wa-l-raqa'iq*. Cornell explains that Rabi'a asceticism was not a form of quietism. It came from a deep religious conviction that one should entrust one's entire life to God, a theological concept referred to as *tawakkul*. Early Islamic asceticism was defined by questions of bodily and ethical purity. Ascetics were preoccupied with rigorously maintaining the distinction between the lawful (*halal*) and unlawful (*haram*) in thought and deed.

Cornell's insights on *nusk* are interesting as she explains that ascetics of the early period thought of their renunciation as a form of self-sacrifice. Cornell often supplies examples drawn from other religious traditions, such as Rabbinic Judaism and Syrian Christianity, not so much for the purposes of direct comparison, but to elucidate Islamic practice in light of other examples of asceticism. Cornell provides some new insights into the role of poverty in early Islamic ascetic movements. It has long been thought that voluntary poverty or *faqr* was valued and strived for in and of itself. This was true of later periods, but it does not appear to be the case in early Islam. Cornell shows that although poverty

was discussed, it was seen as a condition of existence determined by God, just as wealth. Therefore, an ascetic does not strive for poverty, but must be patient in poverty, if that is their condition in life.

If representations of Rabi'a can be separated into two distinct groups, they are marked by the historical transition between the image of Rabia as an ascetic, to her image as mystic and a lover of God. Cornell situates the development of "love-mysticism" during the mid-tenth century, long after the life of Rabi'a. To understand this transition Cornell differentiates between instrumental and essential asceticism. Instrumental asceticism is a religious practice carried out to obtain concrete goals: spiritual blessings of God, rewards, answered prayers. However, Cornell argues that there developed at a later stage a form of asceticism that was more essential, in that it was practiced for itself, without regards to spiritual benefits. In a parallel development, early Islamic ideals of the love of God focused on a distant relationship in which God was loved as a patron. However, this relationship became more intimate as practitioners conceived of love as a correspondence between the lover and the Beloved. It is marked by a change in the understanding of the love of God as affection which later developed into an understanding of the love of God as desire.

The earliest portrayal of this kind of love-mysticism comes in the representations of three women ascetics from al-Ubulla (a town located in southern Iraq near Basra): Rayhana, Hayyuna and Sha'wana. Discussions of Rabi'a as a lover of God come in early Sufi works such as *Qut al-qulub* of Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 996) in which love is seen as the ultimate state of union with God. One of the central issues Cornell investigates in narratives of Rabi'a is her transformation from a teacher and ascetic into a lover and a Sufi. This is a major historical question that tells us much about early religious developments in Islam. One of Cornell's largest claims is that essential asceticism, along with other religious practices, ascribed to Rabi'a and some of her contemporaries represent an early development that led to the theologically oriented Sufism of the ninth and tenth century (220). As Sufism per se did not exist in the life of Rabi'a, Cornell argues that the earliest representations of Rabi'a reflect a form of "Proto-Sufism."

Smaller discoveries are scattered throughout the work. Cornell uncovers one of the earliest, and perhaps first, historical references to Rabi'a found in *al-Qasd wa-l-ruju' ila Allah* (*God as the Goal and the Return*) written by al-Muhasibi (d. 857 CE), an important early Sufi author of Baghdad. Many unstudied medieval Arabic sources are brought to light for the first time in a modern academic study such as the *Balaghat al-nisa'* (*Eloquence of Women*) written by Ahmad b. Abi Tahir Tayfur (d. 893 CE) and the *Kitab al-muhabba li-llah* (*Book of the Love of God*), written by Ibrahim b. al-Junayd (d. 883–4 CE). On a number of occasions Cornell provides meaningful critiques of previous scholarship. For instance, Cornell criticizes

Marshall Hodgson's view that *adab* was principally a contribution of the Greek, Persian and Indian "secular" views and limited to a sophistication of knowledge in literature. She shows that *adab* had a much larger impact than literary circles, but also served as a central construct of religious communities. She also corrects a number of cases where scholars have confused Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya with other women of Islamic history. And Cornell brings needed clarity to the often contradictory discussions of Rabi'a's celibacy (167–179).

It is academic tradition to conclude a review of even the most erudite of studies with a critique of its contents. With Cornell's work such adherence to formal convention seems trivial and pedantic. One may find certain aspects of her work with which to disagree, but not for a lack of intellectual rigor or clarity. It is impossible in a review of this nature to treat all the contributions of Cornell's invaluable study which greatly enhances our knowledge of early ascetic movements and Sufism. It is sufficient to say that it will likely stand as the definitive work on Rabi'a for some time and will continue to inspire new studies on the early religious history of Islam.

Dubrow, Jennifer: *Cosmopolitan Dreams: The Making of Modern Urdu Literary Culture in Colonial South Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018, 180 pp., ISBN 978-0-8248-7270-0.

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How to define *modernity* in Urdu literature? This is the subject explored in *Cosmopolitan Dreams: The Making of Modern Urdu Literary Culture in Colonial South Asia*, the work of Jennifer Dubrow, Professor of Urdu at the University of Washington. Through two nineteenth-century Lakhnavi Urdu newspapers in rivalry – *Avadh Akhbar* and *Avadh Punch* – Jennifer Dubrow highlights the central role of periodicals played in the making of a modern Urdu cosmopolitanism. In associating “Urdu,” “modern”, and “cosmopolitanism”, Dubrow stresses how a global network of exchanges – created by new print technology – produced a “shared critical idiom and bonds of affection created through [Urdu] language.”¹ *Cosmopolitan Dreams* reveals the richness of unexplored Urdu archives and therefore, sheds light on characteristic features of Urdu as a language of modernity. Turning away from a conventional vision of Urdu as the refined language of classical poetry, characterized by elegance and sensibility, Dubrow depicts Urdu as a modern language that laughs at itself and casts a critical eye on contemporary Indian society. Through her sharp analysis of the literary content published in *Avadh Akhbar* and *Avadh Punch*, Dubrow underlines a turn in Urdu literary traditions linked to the reorientation of Urdu language in the second half of the nineteenth century. As a result, she defines the Urdu literary modernity as an ironic and satirical worldview that probes traditional literary forms and uses new literary genres – such as the novel and the short story – to challenge Indian colonial society. Dubrow’s significant contribution lies in the emphasis on readership’s participation in the world-making activity of literature. This entry point is particularly relevant to apprehend the formation of a globally imagined community shaped by Urdu-language speakers. Analyzing various forms of intertextuality, built upon a modern print culture, Dubrow argues that periodicals’ culture transformed the Urdu public sphere in shaping a common imaginary between Urdu-speakers that went beyond regional borders. Consequently, Dubrow asserts that Urdu periodicals created a discursive space – promoting literary

1 Dubrow 2018: 11.

experimentation, fostering debates and intertextual connections – in which Urdu-speakers defined themselves anew as an Urdu cosmopolitan community.

The intense involvement of readers in periodicals led to a radical transformation of Urdu literary styles and composition. This in turn produced a self-reflexive literature that mingled humor and critical voices. In this perspective, *Cosmopolitan Dreams* offers a knowledgeable overview of this emerging literary culture that participated in the creation of the Urdu *cosmopolis*. This permits scholars to broaden the understanding of the making of Urdu literary modernity as it was produced in Urdu journals in the Lucknow region. The first chapter “Printing the Cosmopolis: Authors and Journals in the Age of Print” lays out the impacts of print-capitalism on authorship and on shaping the public sphere and the literary space through Urdu periodicals. It demonstrates how Urdu journals created new communities in print by making spaces for debating and sharing experience of religious festivals. In “The Novel in Installments: *Fasana-e Azad* and Literary Modernity” (chapter two), Dubrow traces the development of the novel through a study of *Fasana-e Azad*, an early Urdu novel written by Ratan Nath Sarshar and published serially in the Urdu newspaper *Avadh Akhbar* between 1878 and 1883. She points to how Sarshar, by joining *mazaq* (humor) and *akhlaq* (ethics), “reframed the practice of wit into an edificatory and patriotic act.”² Furthermore, she underlines the importance of satirical vignettes as sources for the development of the novel in Colonial India. By examining readers’ comments published in the readers’ letters section of *Avadh Akhbar*, she illustrates the active participation of readers in the making of *Fasana-e Azad* and displays the importance of the novel as a didactic mode to debate about contemporary issues. Chapter three “Experiments with form: *Avadh Punch*, Satirical Journalism, and Colonial Critique” focuses on *Avadh Punch*, a satirical literary journal published in Lucknow from 1877 to 1936 edited by Munshi Sajjad Hussain. In establishing this new form of political satire in India which included caricatures, *Avadh Punch* distinguished itself as a visual art form. Furthermore, *Avadh Punch* was an experimental space for innovative literary genres. With examples of short prose and poetry, Dubrow sheds light on writers’ genres experiments – dictionaries, medical prescriptions, news reports – that parodied British colonial rhetoric or ridiculed mimicry of Western behavior by natives. In chapter four “Reading the World: The Urdu Print Public Sphere and the Hindi/Urdu divide,” Dubrow describes the manner Urdu print culture participated in reconfigurations of language and religious identity in the nineteenth century. As journals create news through the amplification of controversies, Dubrow turns her eye to debates that pitted *Avadh Akhbar* against *Avadh Punch*.³ *Avadh Punch*’s

² Dubrow 2018: 38.

³ Orsini 2010.

attacks against Ratan Nath Sarshar and Munshi Naval Kishore, the founder of *Avadh Akhbar*, were personal and aimed at their religious and ethnic identity, both Kashmiri Brahmins. These attacks set out to discredit their ability to write Urdu as individuals who did not belong to *ahl-e zaban* or “native” language speakers. This rivalry pushed the journal into the Hindi/Urdu controversy and therefore, participated in the redefinition of Urdu as a Muslim language. By discussing readers’ letters published in *Avadh Akhbar* and in *Avadh Punch*, this last chapter sheds light on the formation of a critical public that defined a new, democratic and modern Urdu public sphere.

The title of Dubrow’s study, *Cosmopolitan Dreams*, reflects Benedict’s Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities” which is a theorization of the relationship between nationalism and print as an efficient *medium* in shaping a global imaginative space where identities are defined.⁴ The advent of print technology transformed the literary landscape of colonial India. Cheaper than books, periodicals established themselves on the Urdu cultural scene in developing new literary genres, such as the vignette, short stories, political cartoons, and serial novels. Even more significant, journals in vernacular languages created new discursive spaces, allowing readers to participate in debates and thus, providing “an ongoing, reoccurring relationship between writers and readers.”⁵ In this perspective, Dubrow’s *Cosmopolitan Dreams* moves beyond *Imagined Communities* by considering the creation of a common imaginary that exists beyond national borders. The notion of *cosmopolitanism* at the core of this book echoes several notable studies. Not only to mention the Sanskrit *cosmopolis* described by Sheldon Pollock, but also the more recent *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* by Seema Alavi.⁶ There the making of Muslim cosmopolitan sensitivity was aided by an assemblage of individuals who traveled in British and Ottoman imperial contexts that were sustained by international trade, economic relations and new communication modes that stretched across the Indian Ocean. According to Alavi, Muslim cosmopolitanism stands at the intersections of British and Ottoman empires, and rests on “a cultural and civilizational view: a universalist Muslim conduct based on a consensus in matter of belief, ritual, and forms of devotion.”⁷ Hence, it is dependent on a global and shared sensitivity to religious dogma and practices, an Islamic interconnectedness. On the contrary, according to Dubrow, Urdu cosmopolitanism rejected these religious bonds of affiliation, and “acts to

⁴ Anderson 1991.

⁵ Dubrow 2018: 14.

⁶ Pollock 2006; Alavi 2015.

⁷ Alavi 2015: 6.

resist the identification of identity with religion.”⁸ Rather, Dubrow emphasizes the use of Urdu as a language emerging from a secular ethos, a critical and subversive means to compete with the colonial rule.

Dubrow envisages the notion of modernity from an inner outlook based on a literary critical perspective. This innovative approach to Urdu modernity is different from studies that consider modernity as originating in the West, relegating South Asian literary innovation to European influence, or others that designate the formation of all-India Progressive Writers' Association in 1936 as the beginning of modernism in South Asia. Underlining a rupture in aesthetics, narrative consciousness or narrative composition, *Cosmopolitan Dreams* presents the self-critical and satirical voices that arose in this period as a characteristic of modernity in colonial India. Humor, witticism and irony set the tone of this self-reflexive literature not only in content, but in form. From the satirical vignette to the “picaresque tale” – authors mixed several literary Indo-Persian traditions, mainly the *dastan* and *zarifanah mazamin* and activated intertextual references. As mentioned previously, Sarshar combined the two parallel traditions of *akhlaq* and *mazaq* into a hybrid genre. In periodicals, authors reinvented forms, genres and style to criticize Indian society. *Cosmopolitan Dreams* plunges readers into a changing literary world where authors do not hesitate to ridicule and criticize modernity which is a refreshing and stimulating perspective.

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This challenging work is based on two graduate courses taught by the author, supplemented by a number of his related studies. It presumes a level of familiarity with both Arabic and general linguistics that many students would struggle to attain.

The approach itself is innovative, a rigorous, full scale application to Arabic of Charles Bally's division of sentences into "bound" (*phrase liée*) and "segmented" (*phrase segmentée*), the bound sentence represented in Arabic by (in the traditional terminology) the "verbal sentence", and the segmented by the "nominal sentence". The distinction is then applied to expansions of these two kernel sentences as the organising principle of the whole work. Larcher subdivides expanded sentences into "complex sentences" (e. g. relative, circumstantial) and "complexes of sentences" (e. g. conditional, exceptive, with *hattā* a borderline case, p. 196), enabling him to achieve his stated goal of providing a complete and systematic (his emphasis) description of Arabic syntax emancipated from the inherited arrangement of native and western grammars. As we would expect from Larcher's many publications, the emphasis throughout is on the pragmatic, on *actes de langage*.

While "bound" and "segmented" sentences are directly derived from Bally, it is likely that the categories of "complex sentence" and "complex of sentences" reflect Larcher's deep acquaintance with the Arab grammarians, particularly al-Astarābādī (d. ca 1289), who is frequently cited in this work. Larcher's diagnostic for the two types is that the complex sentence contains elements additional to the kernel sentence, but structurally redundant, such as adverbial or attributive clauses, while the complex of sentences consists of two sentences in a particular semantic relationship, e. g. conditionals, exceptives. We can see in this classification an echo of the Arabic terms *faḍla* "redundant [element]" for the additions to a complex sentence and *jawāb* "answer" for the second member of a complex of sentences (cf. Larcher pp. 22, 211).

As Larcher points out, western writing systems indicate constituent boundaries by punctuation, especially commas, while mediaeval Arabic lacked

punctuation altogether (as well as markers of stress and intonation, cf. Larcher p. 97). Constituent boundaries are indicated instead by pause (*waqf*), a rule-governed reduction of the final syllable which is not marked orthographically but applied during the process of reading. An exception is the Qur'ān, where variant readings involving pause are possible, and marked accordingly. Larcher (p. 74) provides an example from Sūra 2, vs. 2, where there is a choice in recitation between *dālika kitābun lā rāyb / fīhi hudān li-l-muttaqīn* and *dālika kitābun lā rāyba fīh / hudān li-l-muttaqīn*, indicated by special paired symbols and by / in Larcher's transliteration.

Modern editors freely punctuate the printed text as they see fit, often inconsistently (examples on p. 278, fn. 1), and Larcher rightly decides to omit all punctuation from the Arabic text and transliteration. It would be instructive to compare the inserted punctuation in several editions (there are many), bearing in mind that these typographical interventions do represent the editor's intuition about the segmentation of the text, and might therefore serve to validate Bally's scheme.

Linguistics is the only science which makes up its own data by introspection, and it is a relief to be offered a description of Arabic based largely on the evidence of a single, complete text, *Ayyuhā l-walad* of al-Ġazālī (d. 1111). The edition used by Larcher was inaccessible, so for the sake of comparison a downloaded edition by 'Alī b. Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Alī al-Qara-Dāḡī, Beirut 1431/2010, was consulted.

Very few typographical errors caught the eye, of which only two are significant. In p. 55 the item numbers (63) and (64) of the two types of adverbial *mafūl muṭlaq* have been transposed, making a complex analysis more difficult to follow. In p. 272 the Qur'anic *yuḍī'u* (with *hamza*) "illuminates" has been printed in Arabic as *yuḍī'u* with 'ayn, though correctly transliterated and translated. The Beirut 2010 edition also reveals some textual differences, mostly trivial (*bi-mudāwalatihi*, p. 278 fn 1 appears as *bi-mudāwātīhi* in the Beirut 2010 edition, p. 127, which is a better reading), but there is one variant which does raise a serious problem. Larcher's example (8) on p. 205 is '*ammā 'anta fa-'aṣamu lā tasma'u*', correctly translated as "Quant à toi, tu es sourd, n'entendant pas", but in Beirut 2010, p. 108 we find '*a-mā 'anta 'aṣamu lā tasma'u?*' ([sic], as if to reinforce the exclamatory tone), "Aren't you a deaf one, not hearing a thing!". The two versions are syntactically irreconcilable, and only one would qualify as evidence for the grammatical point at issue.

In p. 151 the intention appears to be to illustrate the alternation of the verbal noun *al-ištīgāl* and the equivalent verb phrase '*an taštāqila*', but item (2) does not do this. What may have happened is that the second half of item (4) on p. 256

has been quoted here by mistake, instead of the first half, *'an taštagila bi-jawābi su'ālihi*.

Larcher justifiably preempts criticism of bibliographical omissions in a short work of this kind, but there is one title which should be in the bibliography because it is cited dozens of times, and that is the *Jāmi'* [*al-durūs*] of al-Ġalāyīnī – perhaps for French Arabists it is too well known to need listing.

In part this work is an exercise in metalinguistics, effectively comparing different linguistic systems, each with its own taxonomy, namely the traditional Arab grammarians, the inherited Graeco-Latin grammar (complete with its “governing” and case and mood names), and a number of contemporary western theoretical systems. All this is accompanied by appeals to formal logic, along with what the author calls “a dose of the diachronic” (p. 11) thrown in for good measure.

For the anglophone reader there are the usual *faux amis*, among them *phrase* meaning only “sentence” and never “phrase”, *imparfait* for *kāna l-nāqiṣa* but not denoting the tense, *eventuel* for “possible” in conditional sentences, while *jussive* counts as a *faux ami* because its use in a purely semantic sense covering imperatives, injunctives and optatives regardless of verb form would confuse those Arabists brought up in the tradition (by no means abandoned) of applying it exclusively to the apocopated verb, for which Larcher preserves *apocopé*. On the other hand it is gratifying to see the concept of “fronting” acknowledged as a borrowing from English, p. 202.

Imbrication is a real challenge for those who are not architects, zoologists or botanists. Although it is occasionally glossed by Larcher as *enchâssement* and cognates, implying some sort of “nesting” or “embedding”, *imbrication* covers a wider range, embracing subordinate clauses generally, including *hāl* and exceptive clauses, whether formally embedded or not (they are often terminal but may also be fronted, for example). Given its etymological connotation of “overlapping”, as in roof tiles, fish scales and the like, *imbrication* may be taken to denote the structural integration of a clause regardless of its position in the sentence or complex of sentences.

Whether it is a feature of Bally’s analysis this reviewer cannot say, but there is a curious occultation of one of the most prominent characteristics of Arabic syntax, namely the lack of a verbal copula. Three observations will be made here.

Firstly, the nominal sentence *jumla ismiyya*, sometimes rendered “equational sentence” in English, needs no copula verb because it takes the existence of the subject for granted, as pointed out at least as long ago as 1983 by Elamrani-Jamal, *Logique aristotélicienne et grammaire arabe*, p. 139. The actual copula in such sentences is a pronoun (overt or concealed) in the predicate,

unless the subject and predicate are identical things, and this also applies to the predicate, *ḥabar kāna*, when these sentences are modalised with *kāna* and the verbs related to it. To be sure Larcher does identify a coreferential pronoun in this function in the complex nominal sentence type *zaydun abūhu qā'imun* (p. 130f), but passes over in silence the presence of the same pronoun in the simple nominal sentence, perhaps because it is nearly always implicit. The terms *rābiṭa* and 'ā'id by which these pronouns are known are absent from the book, although there are four passing references to a *pronome de rappel*, all in the context of relative clauses, most likely translations of 'ā'id.

Secondly, since all nominal sentences assert the existence of the subject merely by the act of saying it, Larcher's preference for *phrase existentielle* (e. g. p. 25) and his rejection of "locative sentence" for nominal sentences with space/time qualifiers (*zurūf*) as predicates, e. g. *fi l-dāri rajulun*, seems inappropriate. He also summarily dismisses as *inutile* (p. 179) the Arab theory that this type of sentence contains an understood predicate *yastaqirru* or *mustaqirrun* "stay, stop, rest etc.", whose concealed agent pronoun is the copula. The Arab grammarians at least deserve credit for not proposing an implicit *kāna* as the copula. Their choice of *istaqarra* as the dummy verb is probably inspired by Sibawayhi's collective description of the *zurūf* as *mustaqarr [fīhi]* "place stayed, stopped, rested [in] etc." (e. g. *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg 1,21).

Thirdly, the same pronominal copula is required in the *ḥāl*, whether a single term or a sentence, because the *ḥāl* is a predicate *ḥabar al-ma'rifa* of its antecedent, the *ṣāḥib al-ḥāl*. This rule appears to be broken in item (3) p. 287, *yunādī bi-l-ashāri wa-'anta nā'imun*, which, as Larcher notes, contains no anaphora. But the quotation is incomplete and omits the antecedent of the *ḥāl*, who is the person addressed in the previous sentence (*yā bunayya ... minka*), hence 'anta functions quite normally to link the *ḥāl* clause to its second person singular antecedent by coreference.

Inevitably the prominence of quotations from al-Astarābādī and other late grammarians such as Ibn Hišām in this work creates a lopsided image of the grammatical tradition, because by their time grammar was a fully evolved scholastic discipline with a new technical vocabulary largely absent from early grammar. Only one example need be given here. Several dozen occurrences of the term *jumla* are listed in the index (as *ğumla*), followed by fifteen subcategories such as *ğumla ismiyya* etc., not one of which appears in the foundation text of Arabic grammar, the *Kitāb* of Sibawayhi (d. ca 795). The earliest use of *jumla* as a linguistic term is probably by al-Mubarrad (d. 898 or 899): in *Muqtadāb* 4, 108 the rule is stated that *lākin* can only coordinate a whole sentence *jumla* after a positive assertion *ijab*, and he (or perhaps a later scholar) clearly feels that

jumla is a neologism that needs to be glossed, *wa-hiya l-kalām al-mustagnī* “this being a self-sufficient utterance”.

The same al-Mubarrad is quoted with approval by Larcher (p. 264 n. 4), on his theory that the conjunction *bal* after negative statements is ambiguous, thus *mā jā'anī zaydun bal 'amrun* can mean either “Zayd did not come to me – nay 'Amr [was the one who did not come]” or “Zayd did not come to me – nay 'Amr [was the one who came]” depending on the scope of *bal*. There is a feeling here of a certain admiration for al-Mubarrad, which prompts the reviewer to remark that the high intellectual level of al-Mubarrad’s grammatical reasoning is matched by his piety, shared by all his colleagues and seldom taken into account when considering the role of grammar among the Islamic sciences. We see this, for example, in *Muqtādāb* 3,304f, where al-Mubarrad defines the function of *bal* as revoking a misstatement *istidrāk* arising from forgetfulness *nisyān* or error *ǵalaṭ*, but then immediately qualifies it with the reservation that such corrections do not occur in the Qur’ān. In other words, there are no slips of the tongue in God’s speech. Al-Mubarrad supports his claim by quoting the use of *bal* in Sūra 21 v. 27, *bal 'ibādun mukarramūna* “Not so, [these alleged children are] honoured servants, [my angels]”, where God is not correcting himself but refuting the false assertion of the unbelievers that he had children. Al-Mubarrad expresses the same reservation elsewhere regarding the so-called *badal al-ǵalaṭ* “substitution of error”, which cannot occur in God’s speech, or in poetry for that matter (*Muqtādāb* 1,28 and 4,298).

This is not linguistics, this is theology. In spite of their refined argumentation in the secular domain, the grammarians never lost sight of the religious implications. Every grammatical statement was tested against a corpus with a far higher status and linguistic authority than al-Ğazālī’s *Ayyuhā l-walad*, namely the Qur’ān, in case there were any heretical or blasphemous consequences. We can hardly say the same about contemporary western theoretical linguistics, especially in its extreme context-free manifestations (*bal* context of one).

It is fitting that the cover of the book bears a facsimile of a page from the *Šarḥ al-Kāfiya* of al-Astarābādī. The image was familiar to this reviewer, who also owns a copy in a slightly earlier edition (1271/1855), but which he would happily exchange for Larcher’s copy, connected as it is with Howell. Another page from the same work appears on the cover of Larcher’s collected articles (*Linguistique arabe et pragmatique* 2014), where this time al-Astarābādī is duly discussing performative verbs, one of the major themes of that book.

The usefulness of the work is undeniable: it will appeal to various kinds of readers, from Arabists with competence in linguistics to linguists with competence in Arabic (the reviewer belongs – but only just – to the first category, while

Larcher is a master of both disciplines). It will stimulate research in several areas, not to mention the pedagogical benefits. Written classical Arabic has always been and essentially still is transcribed speech, and to understand it requires control not only of the formal grammar taught in the classroom, but also of all the acoustic signals, morphological, lexical and syntactic, which are usually decoded without difficulty by educated speakers when reading the text, aloud or silently. We do not read Arabic literature, we listen to it, and Larcher's book will go a long way to sharpening our western experience of that process.