

phenomena that “attack” and modify existing forms (p. 128). For instance, a foreign word that is used in Arabic takes on Arabic case markers because the “pouncing factor” – the word’s use in Arabic – changes the original state of affairs (pp. 137–8). “Pouncing” is at work in many different grammatical contexts (e.g. declension, definiteness, grammatical agreement) and although the term partly overlaps with *‘araḍ*, the Arabic translation of the Aristotelian “accident”, derivatives from *ṭ-r-* usually affect grammatical rules.

Terms referring in *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya* to the form–meaning discussion are not unique to al-Astarābādhī. In chapter 5 Sheyhatovitch focuses on five such terms: *ma’ nā*, meaning; *dalāla/madlūl*, signification; *musammā*, referent; *maḍmūn*, content; and *waqa’ a’ alā*, referred to. Of these, the first two are the most widespread in the *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya* and though closely related and presenting overlap, *ma’ nā* is used mainly to refer to abstract ideas while *dalāla/madlūl* often denotes concrete entities. As al-Astarābādhī puts it, for instance, in treating adjectives: *al-dalāla ‘alā dhāti ma’ a l-ma’ nā l-muta’ alliqi bihā*, “signifying an entity together with the meaning linked to it” (p. 184). An elaborate discussion about the differences between these terms results in a picture of the subtle treatment of semantics in the work of al-Astarābādhī.

Sheyhatovitch is to be lauded for her thorough and systematic investigation of the technical vocabulary of al-Astarābādhī’s *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya*, a widely used and cited work in scholarship on Arabic linguistics. Two remarks in conclusion: the study would have greatly gained in clarity and understanding through the incorporation of examples from Arabic language usage; and, I wonder if it would not have been more appropriate and useful to position al-Astarābādhī’s linguistic theory not so much in logic as in pragmatics.

Monique Bernards

Institute for Advanced Arabic and Islamic Studies, Antwerp, Belgium

AHMED EL SHAMSY:

Rediscovery of the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020. 312 pp. ISBN 978 0 69117456 3.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X20002815

The French campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798–1801) led by Napoleon Bonaparte, as my generation of students of Arabic literature have been taught, jolted the Arabic-speaking territories of the Ottoman Empire out of decline. The foundation myth of the modern Arabic world, if we may thus describe the complex of Arabic narratives of nation-building and modernization, tells the story of Arab cultural and literary *Nahḍa* as the happenstance of two parallel but separate intellectual movements: Westernization and classicism. There is, however, next to no traffic between the two movements. Concrete details are few and far between. *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* offers a timely and much needed intervention in the narratives of *Nahḍa* and the revival of Arabic classics. It does so in two significant ways: it offers concrete details of the so-called “post-classical” culture of *inḥiṭāt* in the

nineteenth century; and of the process of revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on how *nahḍawi* figures transformed manuscripts into books and reinvented the Classical Arabic intellectual tradition.

Chapters 1, “The disappearing of books”, and 2, “Postclassical book culture”, flesh out the culture of decline from the perspective of book history. Chapter 1 tells the story of the European hunt for and purchase, perhaps even theft, of Arabic manuscripts and how libraries and learning centres in Egypt, the Levant, and even Istanbul, including al-Azhar, came to be depleted of their collections. “The book drain to Europe”, Ahmed El Shamsy shows, sums up the Orientalist adventures, foreshadows the “Decline of traditional libraries”, and also anticipates the “Emergence of modern libraries” in the Middle East in the nineteenth century. Chapter 2 explains the postclassical cultural milieu that allowed the book drain to Europe to happen: the turn to scholasticism and esotericism. Teaching texts replaced original works in education and scholarly endeavours, and esotericism, which locates truth in experience rather than learning, further turned believers away from books, until a new generation of scholars who witnessed the Oriental Library in Europe and returned to build modern libraries in their homelands now modelled what they saw in Europe.

This rebuilding, of both the library and the classical tradition, coincided with the arrival and proliferation of print, which is the subject of chapter 3, “The beginnings of print”. Of course, the postclassical teaching texts were the first to be published, but the new Muslim scholars, especially those who had spent time in Europe, such as al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–73), would lobby for Arabic classics to be printed, including Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddima*. Shamsy brings attention for the first time to the instrumental role a new class of “correctors” (*muṣahḥih*) played in Arabic book publishing. These were the prototypes of the “editors” (*muḥaqqiq*), the subject of chapter 5, “The rise of the editor”, who identified and prepared classics for publication based on “a host of enduring institutional and methodological developments” (p. 123), including systematic collection of manuscripts in specialist libraries, and comparing manuscripts in the production of print editions. It was this new print culture that made it possible for “A new generation of book lovers” (chapter 4) not only to collect the newly printed classics and read them, but also to effect “Reform through books” (chapter 6) by, for example, privileging the classics over postclassical teaching texts in education and scholarly debates. Chapter 7 then situates “The backlash against postclassicism” in a transnational network of book collectors: “a network of like-minded scholars residing across the Middle East in Egypt, the Levant, Iraq, the Hijaz, and Yemen, as well as beyond it, in places such as India and the Maghreb” (p. 173). These scholars, despite their diverse backgrounds and divergent ideological positions, collaborated in finding hidden manuscripts and bringing them to light. More importantly, they posed a serious challenge to esotericism.

The story El Shamsy tells is more than the emergence of a modern book culture and the rediscovery of Arabic classics. It is above all an intellectual history of the Islamic Middle East that is informed by El Shamsy’s interest in Islamic thought, his familiarity with Orientalism, and his extensive research in Arabic book history. This history is incomplete without Orientalism. The revival of Arabic classics is entangled with Orientalism from the outset, as we have seen here, but this entanglement extends beyond the nineteenth century. Muslim scholars have been and continue to be “members” of transnational networks that include Orientalists in Europe and the USA. In the eighteenth century, as Alexander Bevilacqua demonstrates in *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), Orientalists collaborated closely with Muslim scholars in their collection, translation

and exegesis of the Quran, as well as their understanding and interpretation of Islamic history. In *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*, El Shamsy shows how Muslim scholars were initially inspired by Orientalists in their programmes and methods of cultural reform and management of tradition but later responded to their understanding and assessment of Arabic classics, culminating in “fierce debates over philology and critical method” in the early twentieth century, and the development of indigenous philological methods and textual criticism (chapter 8, “Critiques and philology”).

Moving away from postcolonial binaries and engaging with the idea of intercultural entanglement have made it possible for El Shamsy to go beyond the national frame and write a complex history of the Arabic intellectual traditions in the modern age. The fortunes of Arabic classics are determined by individual actors, whether vociferous intellectuals or silent correctors and editors, as well as the circulation of books and bodies of knowledge across transnational networks of European and Middle Eastern scholars. This history, as El Shamsy narrates it, is a series of intercultural dialogues – between past and present, East and West – which gave shape to the Arabic classics, as we know them today. As such, it not only fills the lacunae left in the prevalent discourses on the *Nahḍa* but also provides a much-needed corrective.

Wen-chin Ouyang
SOAS University of London

RICHARD VAN LEEUWEN:

The Thousand and One Nights and Twentieth-Century Fiction: Intertextual Readings.

(Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section One: The Near and Middle East.)
ix, 832 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2018. ISBN 978 90 04 36253 6.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X20002888

The author of this encyclopaedic book, Richard van Leeuwen, is a lecturer in Islamic studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Amsterdam. He is a prolific author who has published extensively on the *Arabian Nights*, including *The One Thousand and One Nights: Space, Travel, and Transformation* (2007) and (with Ulrich Marzolph) *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (in two volumes, 2004). He is also the first and only translator of the *Arabian Nights* directly from Arabic into Dutch (1999). What comes as a pleasant surprise in this book is Leeuwen’s knowledge and command of twentieth-century fiction. He moves in this work from canonical authors of modernism and postmodernism to Third World novelists. He covers Nobel laureates – Naguib Mahfouz, William Faulkner, Gabriel García Márquez, Orhan Pamuk, and Toni Morrison – as well as lesser-known twentieth-century writers – the Libyan Ibrahim al-Faqih, the Cuban Abilio Estévez, the Iranian Bahram Beyzaï, and the Hungarian Gyula Krúdy – giving the reader a sense of unsuspected kinship among these writers, thanks to *The One Thousand and One Nights*, the common denominator which surfaces in these works.

Van Leeuwen’s book is structured in such a way that the reader can pick and choose what set of writers to focus on. This is similar to reading the *Nights*, where one can skip a story or a set of stories and move to others without compromising the overall coherence of the work. Similarly, the Reader can choose what