

development of argument as well as for its stimulating new approach. A book highly recommended, and not only for *sira* scholars.

**Remke Kruk**  
Leiden University

KAREN BAUER:

*Gender Hierarchy in the Qur'ān: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses.*

(Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization.) xi, 308 pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. £64.99. ISBN 978 1 107 04152 3. doi:10.1017/S0041977X17000581

In this book, Karen Bauer surveys a number of pre-modern exegetical works on the topic of gender and hierarchy in the Quran and also records her interviews with a number of contemporary Muslim intellectuals in Syria and Iran in order to take the pulse, albeit very selectively, of modern thinking on this topic.

Bauer focuses on certain Quranic verses that have invited the most attention in the pre-modern and modern periods in the context of gender. One such verse is Quran 2: 282, which has been used to devalue the worth of women's legal testimony in general despite the fact that the verse specifically refers to a loan transaction. Bauer presents the diversity of interpretations of this verse, which range from generally allowing to generally disallowing women's legal testimony. This allows her sensibly to conclude that the [male] scholars' larger social context often impinged upon their interpretations of key Quranic verses that have to do with gender.

In chapters 3 and 4, Bauer turns to a discussion of Quran 4: 1, a verse that has been foregrounded particularly in modernist and feminist discussions as positing the ontological equality of men and women, since neither is described as being created first. Bauer, however, goes against the grain of feminist exegeses when she claims that her analysis of Quran 4: 1 and related verses leads her to conclude "that the first woman was created from (*min*) and for man (*lahu*)" (p. 105). Three additional verses (Quran 16: 72; 30: 21 and 42: 11) that she cites in this context together with Quran 4:1, however, imply no such thing; none of these verses identifies the gender of the soul/s nor its mate/s who equally find rest in the other; no gender hierarchy can thereby be inferred. The author attempts to infer such a hierarchy however from Quran 7: 189, which states: *wa ja'ala minhā zawjahā li-yaskuna ilayhā ... fa-lammā taghashshahā ḥamalat ḥamlan khafīfan* which the author translates as: "... and created from it [him] its [his mate] so that he could find rest in her. When the man covered her, she bore a light burden ..." (p. 108). Grammatically speaking, *li-yaskuna ilayhā* must be literally translated as: "so that the mate" (since the verb is conjugated for the masculine and the only masculine referent in the sentence is *zawj*) "may find rest in the soul" (the enclitic pronoun is feminine and therefore must grammatically refer to the feminine noun *nafs*). If the mate is understood to be Adam's wife as is usually the case and as Bauer also assumes, then it is actually the woman who finds rest in the man, therefore implying instead that the man was created for her! Bauer's arbitrary suggestion that "The verse at that point changes from the feminine, which is used to describe the 'soul', to the masculine, to show that this soul is Adam" (p. 108) is utterly implausible. The referents change rather after the conjunction *fa-lammā*, which indicates a switch to the different topic of pregnancy. Unsurprisingly, male exegetes have privileged the idea of

creation of the man first and imported the rib story from the Genesis account in the Bible into their commentaries to lend heft to this reading *against* the actual wording of the Quran – this goes precisely to the nub of feminist critiques of traditional masculinist interpretations of such key verses.

Two verses that enjoy prominence in feminist exegeses should have received greater attention. One such verse is Quran 9: 71 (only briefly referenced in the book), which describes men and women as partners (*awliyā'*) of one another to promote what is right and prevent what is wrong, a fundamental moral imperative within Islam. Another is Quran 33: 35, which broadly posits the moral and spiritual equality of men and women. Both of these verses have general applicability since they are not understood to be restricted to specific circumstances. Verses with such general applicability (*'āmm*) establish the general principle or norm; verses that concern a circumscribed situation (*khāṣṣ*) like Quran 2: 242 have limited applicability and do not undermine general principles. Bauer briefly mentions this important distinction but does not dwell on it.

This is a missed opportunity since modernist and feminist exegetes who seek to challenge androcentric interpretations of key Quranic verses invoke this vital distinction as a cornerstone of their hermeneutic projects. Such a hermeneutic approach allows one, furthermore, to explore fruitfully the tension within the Quran between notions of functional superiority versus ontological equality, a key discussion that is unfortunately notably absent in Bauer's study. This tension had been insightfully underscored by Fazlur Rahman (in his *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, and further elaborated upon by his student Amina Wadud in her *Qur'ān and Woman*), who had commented regarding Quran 4: 34 that the status of men as "custodians" (*qawwāmūn*) of women that has typically been read into this verse is contingent upon his traditional function as the sole breadwinner in the family (similarly for Quran 2: 228). In the modern world, large numbers of women work outside the home and contribute to the economic well-being of the family or serve as its sole provider, which allows us to reassess the assumed absolutist implications of the term *qawwāmūn* in Quran 4: 34. Furthermore, the verse discusses gender roles in the context of the domestic sphere. When read cross-referentially with other verses, such as Quran 9: 71 and 33: 35, that have to do with gender more broadly speaking, a more generalized understanding of a superior status for the male *qua* male becomes untenable.

Ultimately, this book fails to satisfy on many levels: the author's conclusions are sometimes too hastily founded and do not do justice to the complexities of gendered identities in the Quranic milieu. A more thorough canvassing of the corpus of Muslim feminist works having to do with a broader range of relevant Quranic verses would have led to a more rigorous and nuanced treatment of this important topic.

**Asma Afsaruddin**

Indiana University, Bloomington

MICHAEL FARQUHAR:

*Circuits of Faith: Migration, Education and the Wahhabi Mission.*

xvi, 271 pp. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. \$45. ISBN 978 0 804 79835 8.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X17000593

It is a truism in accounts of modern Islam that Saudi Arabia emerged as a serious global religious player during the second half of the twentieth century. Media reports and scholarly studies alike point to the firepower of the country's