

nature of love's emotional involvement more directly and with greater nuance.

Boullata brilliantly captures the impasse between Jim and Nadia by his use of the epistolary—notoriously one-sided—form in “True Love, Mad Love,” where it works to call into question Jim's repeated assertion that he understands (and should therefore control) the discourse of love better than his partner Nadia. Elsewhere, Boullata also makes use of techniques that stand out best in the short story form—like an attention to dialogue and character development, and a de-emphasis on narrative detail—directly in the furtherance of the subjective emotional impact of his tales. For example, the first story of the collection, “Without a Court Trial,” uses dialogue extensively to heighten the suspense and sense of dread that two friends feel when they are summarily arrested and sent to a desert prison in the middle of the night. As the situation becomes more and more mysterious, it is related through more leisurely expository descriptions of their surroundings. But when they are suddenly released in the morning—as the result of a political coup in the capital—the abrupt return to dialogue that explains nothing “Come on. Get out, all of you. You're free. What are you waiting for?” (6) underscores the suddenness and uncertainty of their change in fortune. Similarly, the stories that follow employ dialogue very strategically to emphasize a sense of uncertainty, and the secrecy and deception that must undergird any construction of self. We all lie to ourselves as much as others, and language both supports us in those lies and can reveal those lies to others. This is as much a theme of this collection as the exploration of the meaning of love, and Professor Boullata takes his readers on a fascinating and technically assured journey in both cases. ✨

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GLEN W. BOWERSOCK, *The Crucible of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017). Pp. 220. \$25.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780674057760.

Reading through the introductory chapters in *The Crucible of Islam* brought to mind numerous educational experiences of past decades. One was my introduction to Mas'udi's *Muruj al-Dhahab* (*Meadows of Gold*) in a class with Tarif Khalidi at the American University of Beirut; another was being

shown the site of renewed excavations at Fustaṭ (original garrison city now incorporated into the outskirts of Cairo), and portions of some trilingual (Greek, Coptic, Arabic) documents found there by George Scanlon. Still another was having lunch with Irfan Shahid (who characterized himself as “the last spiritual descendant of the Christian Arab *phylarchoi* of Bilad al-Sham”) at Dumbarton Oaks. Yet another were visits to ‘Umayyad sites (the “Desert Castles”) near ‘Amman with David Kennedy. Thus learning the history of Islam’s emergence had a *personal* context, and Glen Bowersock’s new book has evoked a sense of nostalgia.

More than half of this book’s nine chapters is devoted to the “backstory” of Islam, all set precisely within the Arabian Peninsula and adjacent areas that formed the suggested “crucible” of its title. Accordingly, we don’t “meet” Muḥammad until Chapter 6. Worthy of note is Bowersock’s critique of the late Patricia Crone’s controversial argument that Mecca was a nondescript settlement of questionable antiquity on the eve of Islam (51-54). He draws on earlier criticism (that of Robert Serjeant is paramount) and subsequent strong rejoinders by Crone, as well as the long under-rated evidence of Ptolemy of Alexandria’s *Geography* for this critique. Attested to in his text as *Makoraba*, Mecca’s notable existence goes back at least a full five centuries before the birth of the Prophet. Bowersock also demonstrates (Chapter 2) the growing evidence for a durable strain of polytheism throughout the Arabian Peninsula (particularly in Mecca), despite the inroads of Judaism and Christianity during the first six centuries CE.

Adequate attention is given to sometimes incomplete and usually biased contemporary and later literary sources, and the slender—but ever-increasing—epigraphic corpus. For the former, Bowersock meticulously attends not only to the Greek and Latin witnesses, but also to what has survived in Nabataean, Arabic, Syriac, Armenian, and Amharic. Command of disparate written sources has always been a hallmark of his research, and Arabia in the broadest sense has been his special interest since the early 1970s. He is careful to survey recent archaeological reports and their associated numismatic discoveries (57 and n17; 81 and n2; 91 and n13). The spectacular site of ancient Hegra (not indexed as such e.g. 40 or 49, but instead under Ḥijr and its modern name Madā’in Sāleḥ) continues to produce striking finds. Too late for inclusion is the report of the fifth season’s results: see now Laïla Nehmé (ed.), *Madā’in Sālih Archaeological Project: Report on the 2016 Season* (December 2016). Warfare and shifting alliances within the territories contested by Byzantium, Persia, and Ethiopia are further explored, as are the obligatory intrusions from neighboring powers at times of major tectonic imperial tensions.

Bowersock aptly characterizes such volatility in the political terrain as a “time of transition, which remains today the most obscure and poorly documented period in the history of late antique Arabia ...” (67-68). Of particular interest to Bowersock is the date of Muḥammad’s move from Mecca to Yathrib (later Medina) within the perspective of Byzantine-Persian relations in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem in 614 and the reprisal attack on Persia by Heraclius precisely in 622. The timing of the *hijra* is one of only a few certain dates regarding the lifetime of the Prophet. Bowersock is also cognizant of insider and outsider perspectives in the history of early Islam. He is clearly wary of legendary overtones within the *ḥadith* collections regarding details of the Prophet’s trading travels outside Arabia, e.g. not even his alleged business journey to Bostra (Buṣra al-Shams) in southeastern Syria is mentioned. Tensions between theological and academic interpretations are also key to Christian histories, and on this point see Herbert Berg and Sarah Rollins, “The Historical Muhammad and the Historical Jesus: A Comparison of Scholarly Reinventions and Reinterpretations,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 37 (2008): 271–92.

Some remarks on the editorial aspects of this volume are relevant. Repetitions include the incorrect “emigrating to” (I counted a dozen instances of it), and the overuse of “irredentist”. Reprising *full* source publication data in the endnotes of *all* chapters is acknowledged (189) as being reader-helpful, but it then obviates the need for a bibliography, however “select”. There are a negligible number of typos (e.g., intrusive “the” on 184, notes 1 and 3). Characterizing the Dome of the Rock as a “mosque” (140) is a bit tricky without mentioning that the sequence of early mosques in Jerusalem is still not clear. While a wood-built structure may have functioned briefly as a mosque in the immediate aftermath of the capture of Jerusalem, the Dome that replaced it soon became a “sanctuary” without a specific religious function c. 690.

Almost half of the sixteen main sources in the select bibliography are dated as recently as 2014–15, but honorable mention should go to several not registered therein. One is Thomas Bauer’s *Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islam* (Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011). Though Bauer’s narrative takes us from the lifetime of the Prophet through the establishment of the ‘Abbasid era, his concern is less with historical events than it is with the creation of a new Mediterranean-wide culture. Another unrecognized work is the four volume selected compendium of Andreas Goerke’s earlier publication *Muhammad* (Routledge, 2015). *The Crucible of Islam* offers readers a thoughtful introduction to such larger studies. We have all experienced meals after which the appetizer is sometimes more

memorable than the main dish. This volume can be counted as one of those. ✂

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ELENA I. CAMPBELL, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015). Pp. 235. \$60 cloth. ISBN: 9780253014467.

This deeply researched and carefully written monograph focuses on the so-called “Muslim Question” as a window into “the nature and possibilities and consequences of state-sponsored reform in Russia” (1) in the late imperial period, from the Crimean War (1853-6) to the collapse of the tsarist empire in 1917. Based on central archival sources and documents from local tsarist government agencies in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Simferopol, Kazan, and Tashkent, as well as collections in Berlin and Paris, Campbell’s analysis of Russian policies toward Muslims spans the empire.

Campbell presents the Muslim Question as one of several major issues Russia faced after its humiliating defeat in the Crimean War (1853-56), when state officials launched the Great Reforms. Accompanying debates about how best to modernize and unify Russia, a land-based empire that was both internally diverse and officially an Orthodox Christian state, in the context of rising nationalism and national unification in Europe, and the emergence of a pan-Islamic movement, also shaped the period. Campbell defines the Muslim question as “a historical term... [that] comprised a complex set of ideas and concerns that centered on the problems of reimagining and governing the tremendously diverse Russian empire in the face of challenges presented by the modernizing world” (1).

In addition to the Muslim Question, Campbell notes that post-Crimean War Russia faced the Constitutional Question, Clerical Question, Jewish Question, Nationality Question, Parish Question, Peasant Question, Polish Question, Russian Question, and School Question (and, beyond the domestic context, the Eastern Question). The formulation of “alien questions” at this time, Campbell argues, reveals the extent to which Russian officials had begun to see internal diversity as a challenge to imperial unity, and non-Orthodox groups in national terms (6). Campbell considers the Muslim Question in relation to the Polish and Russian Questions to suggest that tsarist officials’ attitudes and policies toward Muslims were necessarily shaped by their