

favour, but given the conservatism of the *fiqh* tradition, the difference between texts is largely one of format rather than one of substance. Finally, the *Fatāwā Hindīyya* is not, as the author implies, a collection of fatwās but a systematic compendium of law made up of quotations from earlier authoritative works of *fiqh*.

In brief, therefore, an excellent and important book, although I disagree with its conclusions.

Colin Imber

The University of Manchester

E-mail: colin.h.imber@manchester.ac.uk

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*Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature Anthology*

Selected and translated by GEERT JAN VAN GELDER (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013. Library of Arabic Literature), xxviii + 468pp. Price PB £16.99. EAN 978-0814738269.

This is the first in a new series ‘Library of Arabic Literature’ under the general editorship of Philip F. Kennedy. The underlying objective is to make available to learners and general readers Arabic paperback editions and English translations of major works from pre and early Islam to the cusp of the modern period; works of philosophy, belles lettres, history, law, religion, and science, in fact, the whole spectrum of what can be designated as ‘sacred’ or ‘profane’ Arabic-Islamic literature. The introduction (xiii–xxviii) gives an enlightening overview of definitions of Arabic literature ‘*adab*’ as texts (or oral renditions) which are cast in particular style or wording ‘meant to please, entertain, or evoke admiration’ (p. xiv). The volume under review is an anthology of rare and not too rare poetical and prose selections from the pre-Islamic era to the ‘Abbasid period, the ‘Golden Era’ of Arabic cultural history. In all, thirty-one standard *qaṣīdas* (odes) or epigrammatic poems by poets such as ‘Abīd b. al-Abrāṣ (b. ca. 500 CE), al-Muthaqqib al-‘Abdī (fl. 6th c.) al-Khansā’ (d. after 644), ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a (d. 721), Umm Khālīd (fl. 7th c.), Abū Nuwās (d. 813), Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 896), al-Buḥturī (d. 897), al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), and al-Ma‘arrī (d. 1057), among others, are given in English translations. The genres covered include love (*ghazal*), invective (*hijā’*), asceticism (*zuhd*), panegyric (*madīḥ*), and transcendental mystical love. Selections from strophic poetical type (*muwashshah*), didactic iambic verse (*rajaz*), and vernacular (*zajal*), are also included. But the poetical selections are proportionately fewer than the prose extracts (pp. 1–108), and this for a factual and historical reason. Poems, even in prose texts, indicate that they are often dependent on particular contexts in which they are read or composed; they rarely existed in isolation. Besides, the Arabic tradition could boast of more genres in prose than in poetry. The prose selections cover a wide variety of genres from the pre-historic rhymed type, ‘mirror for the princes’ literature, stories,

tales, debates, creative writings, literary criticism, *maqāma*, erotica, and popular science. The chronology section gives a bird's eye view of the temporal and spatial coordinates of the selections and their authors, the glossary of names and terms serves as an *aide memoire* and a key that unlocks the technicalities of the Arabic-Islamic literary register, while the rich bibliography offers rich source and resource materials for expert and dilettante.

But against the series' declared translation and presentation style of providing Arabic text with parallel English translation on facing pages, this had not been possible with the present volume; and this for an excusable reason. Providing Arabic texts, which are readily accessible to 'experts' for whom the translation was not primarily intended anyway, would have made the volume unwieldy and less than handy. The peculiarity of the Arabic verse in terms of rhyme, quantitative metre, rhythm, and music has led to an almost canonical postulation that anyone attempting a translation of Arabic poetry into English will come to realize that poetry is what is left out of translation; van Gelder's effort has thrown this assumption into a remarkable relief, almost to the verge of belying it. The translation generally gives a pleasant reading and evinces an adept and uncanny familiarity of the anthologizer-translator with the text and context of the selections, although some of the translations oscillate between paraphrase and ideational equivalency. But the argument by the translator—apparently to justify his exclusion of Qur'ānic texts—that the dogma by which the Muslims, including the Prophet, believe that the Qur'ān is 'God's literal speech has denied Muḥammad a place among the world's most gifted and original authors' (p. xxvii, n. 8) is a dark spot in a rather well-knit embroidery, a weak point in a strong chain, which is emblematic of old 'Orientalism' noted for its canonical scepticism about and disregard for the foundational texts of Islam and its human agency. By and large, this volume, and indeed the entire series, promises to be an invaluable mine of knowledge for scholars and general readers who need an introduction to the universal appeal and validity of the enlightening and enlightened literary heritage of the Arabic-Islamic intellectual tradition.

*Amidu Olalekan Sanni*

*Lagos State University*

E-mail: amsanni@yahoo.co.uk

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*Muslim Spain Reconsidered. From 711 to 1502*

By RICHARD HITCHCOCK (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014. The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys), x+219 pp. Price PB £29.00. EAN 978-0748639601.

A book that intends to be a 'reconsideration' of Muslim Spain may be expected to include new ideas and debates from the latest research on the field, or from the most outstanding contributions by recent scholarship. This does not seem to be