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TERRI DEYOUNG and MARY ST. GERMAIN, eds., *Essays in Arabic Literary Bibliography. 925–1350* (Mizan 17.1.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011. Pp. 371. \$105. ISBN: 9783447065986.

JOSEPH E. LOWRY and DEVIN J. STEWART, eds., *Essays in Arabic Literary Bibliography. 1350–1850* (Mizan 17.2.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009. Pp. 429. \$102. ISBN: 9783447059336. doi:10.1017/S0038713413004302

The two volumes under review were meant to be the continuation of *Arabic Literary Culture 500–925* (ed. Michael Cooperson and Shawkat Toorawa), published in 2005 as volume 311 of the *Gale Dictionary of Literary Bibliography* (GDLB). However, the present volumes, together with a third one covering the years 1850–1950 (ed. Roger Allan, 2010) are instead published by Harrassowitz. While mostly preserving GDLB's target readership of students and lay readers, both volumes under review offer the specialist plenty of satisfying material as well. This is especially noteworthy for Joseph Lowry and Devin Stewart's volume, which tackles one of the most understudied periods of Arabic literature, conventionally referred to (and dismissed) as *ʿaṣr al-inḥiṭāt*, the age of decadence. The introduction (1–12) offers a general evaluation of the period as well as of the scant scholarship devoted to it, providing a selected bibliography of secondary sources. Distilling such a long period into thirty-eight biographies is a hard task, but the editors motivate their criteria intelligently: they have attempted to achieve an even chronological distribution of authors, favoring those who have been less studied (another few were left out for practical reasons). A balance between religious and belletristic literature is attempted, although the distinction is problematic in itself. Lowry and Stewart also describe the microstructure of biographical entries, mostly dictated by the Gale series, which they acknowledge as the originally intended publisher.

Terri DeYoung and Mary St. Germain's volume was published two years after Lowry and Stewart's and covers the preceding centuries. The editors adopt "late Abbasid period" as shorthand definition for chronological purposes, pointing out its ambiguity, and in the introduction (1–11) they outline the development of various literary forms (language, poetry, religious poetry, prose), contextualizing within it some (but not all) of the forty biographies and accentuating elements of continuity with the past: despite the political decline, "the long-term impact of the cultural institutions the Abbasids sponsored and shaped . . . would be more lasting" (2). DeYoung and St. Germain do not explain their criteria for selecting authors, but it may be inferred that these are similar to those adopted by Lowry and Stewart—for instance, prominent authors such as Ibn Khallikān, Yāqūt, and al-Khaṭīb al-Baḡhdādī are not included in the volume, while the entry devoted to Abū 'l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (12–16) is relatively short.

In order to understand the rationale of these two collections, it is necessary to read their introductions in the order they were published rather than in the chronological order of the periods they tackle. On the other hand, the individual biographies are treated similarly: each entry begins with a list of works (in chronological order when possible), followed by their editions and translations, an essay organizing the author's work in the context of his biographical data, and a bibliography of secondary sources. Many entries also trace a history of the author's reception in modern times. In comparison with the two most widely used reference works in English, bibliographic information here is organized more consistently than in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (ed. P. Bearman et al., 1960–2009) and much more detailed than in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (ed. J. Scott Meisami and P. Starkey, 1998). The chronological organization of biographical information, also part of the original editorial guidelines, is less effective: especially for the earlier periods, it is often impossible to establish when exactly during the life of an author a work

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was composed, and interspersing biographical details with the illustration of his works may feel unnecessarily forced.

The two volumes contain a similar mix of shorter surveys and heftier contributions. Especially in Lowry and Stewart's volume, some of the biographies are the first study on a specific individual in a Western language—a testimony of how understudied the period is. But examples abound in DeYoung and St. Germain's volume as well. For instance, Stewart delves into the structure, rationale and publishing history of the *Kitāb al-fihrist* by Ibn al-Nadīm (129–42), teasing out of it every scrap of detail of its author's life and intellectual persona and putting together a thorough bibliography of secondary literature. It is a welcome contribution to the study of the *Fihrist*, which has been widely mined for information but rarely examined as a coherent work authored by a specific individual.

My main quibble with both volumes stems from one of its strengths: addressing both specialists and nonspecialists leads, at times, to unsatisfactory compromises. For instance, a consistent scientific transliteration system is adopted (although DeYoung and St. Germain use curly apostrophes for *'ayns and ḥamzas*, a practice rendered obsolete by the advent of Unicode). On the other hand, only CE dates are given. While this may be less confusing for the lay reader, it represents a significant shortcoming for a specialist, who will have to consult another reference for the correspondent *hijrī* date. Lowry and Stewart provide at the end of their volume (429–31) a glossary of some fifty terms, which is superfluous for the specialist but seems insufficient for the nonspecialist. The alphabetical order employed by DeYoung and St. Germain for their entries is not easy to make sense of if one is not familiar with the structure of the Arabic name. Finally, some indication of which edition of a work is the standard one would have been helpful to all readers. Quibbles aside, the two volumes under review are excellent reference tools for both the specialist and the lay reader.

LETIZIA OSTI, Università degli Studi di Milano