

known as al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (the Pure Soul), rose up in Medina in 145/762f., while his brother Ibrāhīm revolted in Basra shortly after. These uprisings were a watershed in the history of the Hashimite family. As the fourth/tenth-century historian al-Mas'ūdī put it: “It caused a split between the descendants of al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the family of Abū Ṭālib; prior to this, their cause was one.”

Amikam Elad has now presented a most thorough study—the result of some ten years of meticulous research—of the first part of the uprisings, the rebellion led by al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in Medina. As Elad says at the beginning of the book, this rebellion was more important for its questioning of Abbasid authority than for its military might (Ibrāhīm’s revolt in Basra was probably the more serious military threat). He shows that this questioning of Abbasid authority was considerable: the rebellion was supported not only by a number of Ṭālibids, but also by many other notable Arab families, as well as several important scholars of the period. Elad’s approach is to give an extremely thorough analysis of the accounts of the rebellion, based on an examination of all of the source material available on CDs and databases. Elad has been a pioneer in using these digital resources, and the result is an impressive amount of detail on all aspects of Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh’s dealings and relations. One comes away from reading this book with a sense of real insight into the complex human, political, and religious connections of Ṭālibids and Abbasids (or Ṭālibīs and ‘Abbāsīs, as Elad calls them), and early Muslim society more generally.

The study is divided into two parts, the first, consisting of six chapters, called “Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh in Historical Context” and the second—three chapters—“The Social, Ethnic, Political, and Religious Character of the Revolt.” It concludes with three appendices: (1) “Attitudes of the ‘Ulamā’ towards the Rebellion”; (2) “Transmitters and Transmissions of the Historical Events of the Revolt”; and (3) “The Struggle for Legitimization between the Ḥasanīs and the Ḥusaynīs as Reflected Mainly in Imāmī Literature.” Elad has unearthed a huge amount of prosopographical data, and part one starts off with Muḥammad’s biography, including information on his mother, siblings, wives, and children. There is a detailed discussion of the reports whether Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh was considered the *mahdī*, and thus the legitimate leader of the community, before the Abbasid revolution. As is typical for the study as a whole, Elad gives a very nuanced picture, and places much emphasis on where certain traditions come from, if they are considered to be pro-Ṭālibid/‘Alid/Ḥasanid or pro-Abbasid, and who transmitted them. The result of this careful review is that the answers are not always as clear as one might wish; but such ambiguity is an accurate reflection of our sources. Among the most interesting sections is chapter five, which deals with the curious correspondence between al-Manṣūr and al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (pp. 171–93). Elad does not provide a defini-

tive answer with regard to authenticity, or indeed the main arguments for claims to legitimacy as found in the letters, but he introduces a number of little-known or related sources. Part one concludes with a chapter on the Abbasid military responses to the rebellion, ending with a discussion of the reports of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya’s killing and the Abbasid reactions to it.

Part two gives a detailed analysis of those involved in the rebellion. The genealogical charts at the end of the book (pp. 466–77) are very helpful to visualize the complexity of associations, as they clearly indicate supporters and opponents of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. What is striking is that virtually all important Arab families of the period were in some way involved in the rebellion, but their members often supported different sides. One good example is the Zubayrid family, from which a fair number of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya’s most distinguished adherents as well as some opponents stemmed (pp. 323–36; chart XII, p. 477). Among the main conclusions of the book is the finding that support for the rebellion was not uniform; indeed, even among the Ṭālibid family there was probably less support than is generally assumed. Elad places much emphasis on where a report was recorded and who transmitted it, thus giving a sense of the different versions of events preserved in the sources. The third appendix in particular opens up some interesting avenues for further research, as Elad clearly shows that there are some unexplored questions regarding relationships and conflicts within the Ṭālibid family.

Overall, Elad’s thorough study is an excellent contribution to the small group of recent publications on the history of Prophet Muḥammad’s family. It leaves one hoping that he will now turn his interest and efforts to Ibrāhīm’s rebellion, as the changing nature of Ṭālibid–Abbasid relations in the early Abbasid period probably needs to be seen in light of both of these uprisings.

TERESA BERNHEIMER  
SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

*Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim: A Literary Banquet.* By EMILY SELOVE. Edinburgh Studies in Classical Arabic Literature. Edinburgh: EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. Pp. x + 200. \$120, £70.

The unrestrained *Ḥikāyat Abī l-Qāsim*, apparently compiled at the beginning of the eleventh century by the otherwise unknown Abū l-Muṭahhar al-Azdī, has attracted the attention of scholars of Arabic literature ever since Adam Mez’s 1902 edition of the unique manuscript, today preserved in the British Library (Add. 19, 913). Emily Selove’s 2012 UCLA dissertation, supervised by Michael Cooperson, is the first book-length study devoted to it. It is, to say the least, a challenging study of an Arabic text that itself presents numerous challenges, not only on account of the rare and

unusual terms it uses but also because of its uninhibited and outright provocative language, which abounds in obscenities to such an extent that the renowned scholar Michael Jan de Goeje (d. 1909), reviewing Mez's edition at an advanced age, "confessed himself to have been unable to read the entire story, which he found disgusting and low" (p. 5).

The book presents more or less a one-man show whose development is fairly simple. Abū l-Qāsim from Baghdad, whom the author introduces as both a real person he used to know and as the epitomized party-crasher representing "the entirety of Baghdad" (p. 1), walks into a "high-end gathering" (p. 35) in the Iranian town of Isfahan. At first presenting himself as a man of utmost piety, he starts to revile the guests when they mock him, leading him to endless harangues, denigrating his host city while praising the merits of Baghdad. When he drinks some of the local water, however, his attitude changes abruptly and he proceeds to revile Baghdad and laud Isfahan. Drinking heavily while discussing a large variety of topics, he finally falls into a drunken stupor. Getting up the next morning, he once more presents himself as a pious man and leaves.

Following an introduction (pp. 1–30) in which are discussed the manuscript, authorship, dating, editions, translations, and scholarship and in which the work is placed in the context of the "Mediterranean banquet literature tradition" (p. 103), a total of five chapters are given over to its analysis. Further introduced by "a sampling of the *Hikāya*" (pp. 31–69), which gives a taste of Selove's forthcoming complete translation of the text (based on her equally forthcoming new edition), the second, and longest, chapter discusses the microcosm the text presents (pp. 70–102). The following chapters ("Crashing the Text," pp. 103–18; "*Mujūn* Is a Crazy Game," pp. 119–34; "The Cosmic Crasher," pp. 135–66) present minute discussions of the text from various angles. The "Conclusion" (pp. 167–83) not only sums up some of the general questions the text raises, such as its generic quality as a *hikāya* (with its contemporary implication of *mimesis*), but also adds a further dimension by relating the tale to Ovid's *Philemon and Baucis* as another important text of Mediterranean banquet literature. The study concludes with an extensive bibliography (pp. 184–96) and an index (pp. 197–200).

With chapter headings that quote from Melville's *Moby Dick* and a text replete with numerous references to a wide variety of works from Arabic, ancient Greek and Roman (Petronius's *Satyricon*; Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae*), as well as early modern (Rabelais) and modern European literatures (ranging from Jonathan Swift's satirical rewriting of the legend of Baucis and Philemon and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*), Selove unravels the text's multiple layers by reading it first as an evident microcosm of contemporary Baghdad society and

subsequently developing its "cosmic" dimensions. By embedding the unique text in the tradition of a Mediterranean banquet culture and a "hospitality culture" (p. 154) and tackling just about every question one could possibly think of asking, Selove's study is an unprecedented thick reading of the often demanding text whose multitude of contemporary allusions is as overwhelming as it remains, at times, enigmatic (p. 126). Although this reviewer finds it increasingly difficult to follow the author's argument the more she gets—to a certain extent—carried away by her own fascination, the least one can say about this detailed and highly engaging study is that it is, as the text it studies, highly instructive and "eminently entertaining" (although it risks at times being equally "overabundant," p. 107).

Picky readers might wonder whether the author's repeated mention of the difficulties of translating the Quran (pp. vi, 18, 66 n. 69, 114) and her various references to her own work in progress (pp. 7, 20, 62 n. 1, 66 n. 36) are really necessary. But no short review can do justice to the author's inspiring intellectual achievement of translating, interpreting, and contextualizing the difficult text of *Hikāyat Abī l-Qāsim*. Particularly in light of the author's extremely wide-ranging interests and points of comparison, I limit myself to mentioning three (minor) points that might deserve further consideration. First, there is Otto Ribbeck's *Kolax: Eine ethologische Studie* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1883), a detailed study of the party-crashing character in Greek antiquity that may justly be regarded as the precursor of the Arabic/Muslim *tufayli*. Second, the mention of *al-'ajā'ib wa-l-gharā'ib* on the title page of the only preserved manuscript (p. 3), a term not discussed by the author, links to current discussions in the field of middle-Arabic narrative literature that are particularly inspired by the work of Aboubakr Chraïbi (see, e.g., his preface to the edited volume *Arabic Manuscripts of the Thousand and One Nights* [Paris: espaces & signes, 2016], 15–64). And, third, the author's casual mention (p. 75) of *The 1001 Days* appears to disregard the fact that a work by this name actually exists, even though it is the early eighteenth-century French orientalist scholar Pétis de la Croix's mystification of a purportedly Persian manuscript collection (see my *Relief after Hardship: The Ottoman Turkish Model for the Thousand and One Days* [Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2017]).

The present study, together with both the forthcoming new edition of the text in question and its complete English translation, will form a solid trinity, presenting, translating, and discussing one of the most fascinating as well as challenging texts of classical Arabic literature.

ULRICH MARZOLPH  
GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT, GÖTTINGEN