

dictionaries do not usually distinguish explicitly between common metaphors and one-off expressions.

Ullmann's volume is far more than a list of quotations, for many sections give insight not only into Arabic linguistic idioms but also into literary motifs—for instance, the “stolen glance” in love poetry (pp. 48–81, nos. 160–307). To these sections Ullmann regularly prefixes short but illuminating discussions, placing the motifs in context. Normally, glances from the lover of his beloved are stolen in spite of the chaperone (*raqīb*) or other literary antagonists. Very different from the stolen glance is the “stealing glance,” cast by the beloved who steals the lover's heart or reason (nos. 305–7 and many more in chap. 11). An excursus (pp. 215–21, nos. 857–85) at the end of the book deals with the opposite of the “stolen glance”: the “open look,” most often expressed with forms of the verb *malaʿa l-ʿayn*, literally “to fill one's eye(s).” The association in Islam of stealing with the punishment of amputating the right hand is used in jest by poets, as in a line by al-Ṣāhib ibn ʿAbbād: “He who steals money has his hand cut off; he who steals poetry should have his ears boxed” (no. 721); this association too is discussed separately (pp. 229–31).

The quotations are overwhelmingly taken from poetry. The few prose examples, not marked as such, are normally easily recognizable. Once or twice, however, I found myself vainly attempting to scan a prose saying as verse.

In a thoughtful epilogue (*Ausblick*, “outlook”) Ullmann recommends a comparative study of expressions such as “stealing a glance,” which is found not only in modern European languages but also in classical Greek (many examples are given), and he points out a few other striking expressions that occur in different languages where there is no apparent dependence, such as “buying a cat in a sack,” as in a verse by Abū l-Faḍl al-Sukkarī al-Marwazī (fl. early fifth/eleventh century): *mā biʿtuka l-hirrata fī l-jirābi*, which is found in many languages including Italian, French, German, and Dutch—and British English as a variant of the more common “buying a pig in a poke.”

The book concludes with indexes of persons, rhymes, and words.

GEERT JAN VAN GELDER
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Muḥammad al-Tūnisī, *In Darfur: An Account of the Sultanate and Its People*. Edited and translated by HUMPHREY DAVIES. Library of Arabic Literature. 2 vols. New York: NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. lvi + 243 (vol. 1), x + 317 (vol. 2). \$40 each.

This two-volume bilingual edition of an early nineteenth-century Arabic account of travel to the Sultanate of Darfur is a work of great beauty and consummate literary and scholarly accomplishment. It represents the experiences of a Tunisian youth, Muḥammad bin ʿUmar al-Tūnisī, who in 1803 undertook a trip from Cairo to Darfur to find his father. When he succeeded, his father transferred the administrative duties he shouldered for Darfur's sultan to him and Muḥammad thus ended up residing in Darfur for eight years. Volume one contains the narrative of the long family history that had brought young Muḥammad's father and grandfather to (what is now) Sudan before him, describes Muḥammad's own trip from Cairo through the desert to Darfur, and chronicles the reigns of the two most recent predecessors of its then ruling sultan. Volume two is an almost encyclopedic description, systematized without being quite systematic, of aspects of Darfur's land and people, including the sultan's court, officials, and customs, as well as the kingdom's language(s), marriage customs, women and women's beauty, flora, fauna, food, currency, disease, magic, and geomancy.

Adding to the plot line of *In Darfur*, however, is that the text was not committed to writing until several decades later, leading in 1845 to the publication of a partial French text, and then in 1850 to a limited-number lithographic Arabic edition. Both resulted from the collaboration between Muḥammad al-Tūnisī and Nicolas Perron, a French medical doctor and Arabist. In the late 1830s both men found themselves employed at the newly established Medical School of Cairo, where al-Tūnisī supervised the translation into Arabic of contemporary French medical and related scientific texts and Perron first taught and then served as director. This was a transformative period in which Egypt, in the wake of the short-lived occupation by Napoleon and under the ambitious leadership of Muḥammad ʿAlī (1805–1848), undertook many projects of purposeful modernization. The translation project of the Medical School was part of this undertaking and played an important role in the development of the Arabic language.

Perron encouraged al-Tūnisī to commit his Darfur stories to writing as part of the Arabic lessons he took with him. This probably involved, as Davies persuasively argues, dictation from written notes by al-Tūnisī, the writing out in Arabic by the Frenchman, the preparation of the lithographic Arabic text by Perron in his own hand, followed by a more or less thorough revision and correction by al-Tūnisī. The element of orality that was part of this genesis is how Davies accounts for some nonstandard features or infelicities of the Arabic in the text, which had led some scholars to even question al-Tūnisī's authorship. Davies puts this matter to rest. “The issue is not whether the text was the work of one of the collaborators to the exclusion of the other,”

he writes, “but of where al-Tūnīsī stops and Perron begins” (1: xxxiv–xxxv).

Al-Tūnīsī’s account, especially the French text of 1845, has long been an important source for historians of Darfur. A small example of the gems it offers is the story of an incident that occurred during the reign of Sultan Muḥammad Tayrāb (1752–1756), when a court jester revealed to the king that his Fur high officials were so upset about the Islamic ulema’s influence at court that they vowed to make sure that the next sultan would be someone who could not read (2: 61–63). A comparable story concerns the reign of Sultan ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (1787–1800), when the sultan’s chief wife refused to have the food she prepared served to the learned foreign ulema rather than the local Fur bigwigs at court. When the sultan suggested she would get special blessings from the ulema, she disdainfully stated that she was in no need of their blessing and got her way (2: 63). Stories such as these suggest that at this time political legitimacy was anchored in local Sudanic tradition as much as in the transregional prestige of Islam and that the two were, to an extent, in competition.

The new edition Davies so carefully prepared further enhances the value of al-Tūnīsī’s account as a primary source for Darfur’s precolonial history, for he presents us with a more transparent, accurate, beautifully translated, and thus superior text. However, this is only one dimension of Davies’s contribution. A new and innovative dimension Davies manages to bring out is the text’s value as “an absorbing and rewarding work of literature,” a cross-cultural account of drama and adventure presented through the “encyclopedic lens of the early Arabic enlightenment” (1: xxx). In other words, as edited, translated, and presented by Davies, al-Tūnīsī’s account is not only a rich primary source for the early nineteenth-century history of Darfur but also a literary gem marking Egypt’s dynamic and innovative intellectual history at mid-century.

Finally, as a physical object this book is of great beauty, with the jacket design, paper, printing, and binding all matching the care and quality of the contents. This title in the Library of Arabic Literature is, in every way, a book to treasure.

LIDWIEN KAPTEJNS
WELLESLEY COLLEGE
