inscription, where he establishes the text MLK ʾLʿRB KLH and interprets this puzzled-over phrase as "King of the entire 'al-ʿArab' *territory*," defined as the "region of central and southern Iraq and the eastern Syro-Arabian desert for which al-Ḥīra would have served as capital" (p. 18). Two studies focus on the Qurʾān, another of Bellamy's abiding scholarly interests. Jarl E. Fossum's "The Apostle Concept in the Qurʾān and Pre-Islamic Near Eastern Literature" (pp. 149–67) links Qurʾānic views of the apostle figure with similar views found in earlier Jewish, Christian, Mandaean, and Manichaean traditions. A straightforward argument for historical influence, this essay is characterized by careful philological analysis and use of extensive source material unfamiliar to most scholars in Islamic studies. Mustansir Mir's "Passives in the Qurʾān: Preliminary Notes" (pp. 169–79) examines the use of the passive voice in the Qurʾān in an attempt to understand its semantic and pragmatic significance. The study admits its tentative nature; in a more complete study, one would expect Mir to make more use of *tafsīr*, for he cites only one remark from al-Zamakhsharī's famous *Kashshāf*, as well as the classical grammarians, from whose texts the quotation on the usage of passive voice from Wright's grammar (p. 169) probably ultimately derives. M. C. Lyons' "Maugis d'Aigremont: Arabic Parallels," on Arabic folk-*sīrah* parallels to this medieval French *chanson de geste*, is reminiscent of Bellamy's earlier work on the *Chanson de Roland*, but the essay is primarily a concatenation of parallel motifs.

Other studies in the volume are less closely related to Bellamy's own work but nevertheless include interesting and valuable contributions. For example, Wadād al-Qāḍī's "Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī and His Social and Political Vision" (pp. 197–223) extends Rowson's excellent work,[2] drawing on al-Hamadhānī's little-used *Rasāʾil* to build a portrait of the author as a staunch Sunni and a socially committed, though quite conservative, thinker, dedicated to the maintenance of proper order in society and the regular support of religion and education. L. E. Goodman's wide-ranging essay, "The Sacred and the Secular: Rival Themes in Arabic Literature" (pp. 287–330), is a thoughtful commentary on the Arabic literary tradition; Goodman deserves credit for his lively prose style, so rare in academic writing, as well as his excellent translation of al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāma Iṣfahāniyya* (pp. 320–21), a vast improvement over Prendergast's stilted and over-annotated version.

While the number and range of studies in the volume render it difficult to review thoroughly—one may mention the additional studies by Franz Rosenthal, James A. Montgomery, E. Th. Homerin, Nicholas Heer, Abdelkader I. Tayob, and Ian Richard Netton—they render this *Festschrift* a pleasure for the reader and a fitting tribute to the career and broad scholarly interests of James Bellamy.

Devin J. Stewart
Emory University

[2] Everett K. Rowson, "Religion and Politics in the Career of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī," *JAOS* 107 (1987): 653–73.

An Introduction to Arab Poetics. By Adonis. Translated by Catherine Cobham. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. Pp. 108.

For those who believe that "theory" is one of the modern plagues of Western literary studies, particularly in the United States, it may come as a surprise—or cause lamentation, or seem ironical—that one of the most provocative theoretical meditations on the nature of Arabic poetry comes from far outside the often faddish American academy. In his brief yet immensely rich *An Introduction to Arab Poetics* Adonis confronts what are, in fact, the central concerns of the most influential theoretical texts of the last several decades, notably the issue of originality and influence, and that of the relationship between modernity and the lyric. In the hands of a contemporary American-trained Arabist, such concerns could scarcely have been addressed except in the context of a reading of the key texts of Bloom and de Man, respectively, but in Adonis' essays, his own rather stark originality, at least for us, lies in the complete absence of apparent awareness of—or reference to—this powerful tradition of criticism. Even more interestingly, Adonis' undoubtedly controversial arguments about modernity in the Arab poetic tradition and its relationship to the Western poetic canon (and the West itself) fall very much into an area of speculation that has been thoroughly shaped by Edward Said (and his many epigones) and yet, again, there is no apparent consciousness of this (for us) self-evident intellectual frame.

I write this review from the specific and limited perspective I can offer, as a scholar of Western literature, familiar with but not immersed in the history of Arabic poetry. In other words, my reactions to this collection of highly readable essays—and it is abundantly clear that part of Adonis' objective, explicitly set out with his title, is to be accessible to individuals who are not necessarily specialists in Arabic literature—are intentionally framed as the mirror image of the sort of reaction a cultivated Arab would have had to the in many ways comparable work of a Harold Bloom or a Paul de Man. In this I believe I am respecting the fundamental propositions and qualities of Adonis' work in this series of short essays originally delivered as talks; the principal issues at stake, as I have suggested, far transcend

the culture-specific concerns of one body of language-bound poetry. This is precisely the broad frame that Adonis wants to provide for Arabic literature: an appreciation of the ways in which it is as rich, as the basis for the most crucial philosophical speculations, as the universe of the British Romantics or of French nineteenth-century poetry. At the same time it seems to me these essays can provide, for the more traditional scholar (most likely historian) of Arabic literature, a powerful introduction to the most tantalizing theoretical problems as they are seen from within the Arabic tradition, written, indeed, by the recognized master of contemporary Arabic poetry. In this it is more akin to something like the critical writings of T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound in the first part of this century, a time when the tradition of strong poet-critic was still a powerful one in the Anglo-American tradition. In that same vein, this is also very much the writing of a poet who has turned to the history of his own tradition in order to apprehend more fully the revolutionariness of his own work.

At the heart of Adonis' concerns is the complex question of modernity and originality and the very direct historical question of where and when Arabic literature has been "modern," in both the present and the past. His considerations of the origins of the lyric form in song in the first chapter ("Poetics and Orality in the Jāhiliyya") takes on the relationship of the crucial issue of the ties of poetry to music and the more challenging technical question of how oral forms, particularly as they might (and did) become fixed into remarkably rigid codes, are related to nascent written forms, the locus, in many cases, of the modernist break from derivative (and communal) to original (and individual) poetry. It is in the ecstatic (non-philosophical) nature of oral poetry, which is first and foremost a communal act of strong relations between poet and listener, that Adonis locates the recurring crisis of modernity for Arabic literature. Unlike in the Western tradition (although he does not explicitly raise the contrast), the Arabic tradition has strongly privileged as foundational its pre-Islamic and other early essentially oral poetry and, in consequence, made the poetics of written poetry bend to the standards of what is a fundamentally different art. In other words, in the transfer of aesthetic value from the oral to the written, the written—which should be in many ways the opposite of the oral, philosophical and not ecstatic, metrically and in other formal ways creative, rather than rule-bound—lies the problem of a loss of the urge to modernity.

The great paradox—a painful one, we sense, for Adonis—is that the most starkly modernist text in the Arabic tradition is the Qurʾān and yet, although its literary ideal clearly transcends the old pre-Islamic one, its influence, as an exemplar of poetic writing, has never been as widespread as that of the poetics of pre-Islamic oral poetry. The second chapter ("Poetics and the Influence of the Qurʾān") is a detailed homage to the transcendent poetic power and incomparable originality of the Qurʾān and, in the process, a brilliant meditation on what constitutes originality and modernism, both exemplified, of course, in the ways in which the Qurʾān itself is a very conscious and direct break from its own *agon*, the poetry of the Jāhiliyya. This involves, centrally, not only a lack of adherence to the rules and principles of an earlier tradition but an explicit and " . . . continual violation of the established practice in order that poetry should always be strange and new in its language, structures and meanings" (p. 51).

In the third chapter ("Poetics and Thought") Adonis muses on the immensely difficult question of the epistemological separation of what we call thought from poetry. The historical case he argues, and this is a continuation of what he has been constructing all along, is that the normative tradition of Arabic speculation on its own poetic tradition imposed a false but lasting separation between poetry, on the one hand, and other forms of "legitimate" philosophical speculation, on the other. It is a false dichotomy both because it need not be inherently true (of course) and because within the Arabic tradition, both in the pre-Islamic and in later periods, there is ample evidence that poetry is, often enough, not just formulaic "song" and its written derivatives, but also true "modern" poetry, "a particular way of approaching the world and things through thought, based on an intellectual experience as well as an emotional one" (p. 56). Throughout, Adonis is continuing to build his principal argument, which is that the strong modernist tradition has always existed in Arabic poetry—indeed, that some of the most stunning examples of poetry as a coherent approach to and revelation of the universe are to be found among the Arab masters—but that it has been either ill-understood or repressed historically by the dominant, principally religious, approaches to poetry within the Arab tradition itself. The remainder of this chapter is a lucid and informative account of three of Adonis' "best cases" for this proposition: Abū Nuwās, Al-Niffarī and al-Maʿarrī. It is impossible to do justice in a résumé such as this to the often moving quality of Adonis' subtle and yet precise readings of this poetry: the highly lyrical critical mode of a poet, yes, but also the fine argumentation of a historical reader writing not only against the grain but also about the grain, attempting to reverse the fundamental premises of a long and powerful critical tradition.

The final chapter brings all of this to a head and rather gingerly raises the issue that will certainly cause most of the emotional disagreement and discomfort: in "Poetics and Modernity" we find Adonis' version of the story of the meeting of East and West, of his own relationship to the Arabic poetic tradition—as it has been strongly mediated by his encounter with the West and with its modernities. Characteristically, he understands full well that the issue of poetic modernity is not separable from general cultural movements and he is able to focus in crystalline fashion on poetry itself without ever losing—or making us lose—the powerful sense that the broadest cultural and historical forces are at play, completely intertwined. One of the key

passages is used, in fragmentary form, as back-cover copy, but I will give the paragraph in full:

> I should acknowledge here that I was one of those who were captivated by Western culture. Some of us, however, went beyond that stage, armed with a changed awareness and new concepts which enabled us to reread our heritage with new eyes and to realize our own cultural independence. I must also admit that I did not discover this modernity in Arabic poetry from within the prevailing Arab cultural order and its systems of knowledge. It was reading Baudelaire which changed my understanding of Abū Nuwās and revealed his particular poetical quality and modernity, and Mallarmé's work which explained to me the mysteries of Abū Tammām's poetic language and the modern dimension in it. My reading of Rimbaud, Nerval and Breton led me to discover the poetry of the mystic writers in all its uniqueness and splendor, and the new French criticism gave me an indication of the newness of al-Jurjānī's critical vision. (pp. 80–81)

Far too many issues of dramatic contemporary importance are raised here for any reviewer to be able to do them justice—among these the question of whether we can, or should—ever read poetry in the way the modern "scholarly" mode of "objectivity" urges us to, and the seemingly unrelated but vast and vexing question of whether an Arabic cultural modernity can be achieved without fully discarding the forces of "tradition" and embracing a secularism and a "modernism" which will always be tainted, no matter the brilliance of an argument from someone as subtle as Adonis, with "otherness." Indeed, toward the end of the chapter Adonis seems to be arguing that if only the Arabic tradition understood its own modernisms fully, and valued them accordingly, there would be no need to turn to the West, or, in other words, future poets would not have to read Baudelaire or Rimbaud in order to appreciate the Arabic tradition the way he has and does.

But this argument, at both the level of poetry and politics, is an extremely difficult one, and it is to Adonis' credit that he only seems to be arguing this, that he cannot fully oversimplify the case. I take his essays to be not so much an argument—as some have—that the Arabs stop reading the West, so to speak, but rather to read both the Western and the Arabic traditions in the same way, as a continual series of struggles between the normative and traditional, on the one hand, and the modernist, on the other. Indeed, the essays on modernism written by Eliot, and especially Pound, as they were quite consciously struggling with the relationship between tradition and modernism, are very kindred pieces, as are their efforts (in crucial ways successful) to reintroduce some of the starkly "modernist" medieval poets into the Anglo-American canon. Moreover, and this is crucial to the argument, Adonis points out (although far too briefly) that modernity within the Arab tradition has been a product of culturally synthetic moments and, as he says, authentic indigenous creativity goes hand in hand—perhaps paradoxically—with a spirit of curiosity and openness toward other cultures. Although Adonis refers only briefly to the achievements of the medieval period[1] he might have added to this the historically poignant fact that the spectacular creativity of the West—and the achievements of secular culture in particular—that begin in about the twelfth century come precisely from the willingness and ability to take so much from and be so inspired by Arabic culture, despite the sort of ideological hostilities, coming primarily from clerics then, as now. There is even a remarkable circularity involved if one apprehends that the secular modernism of poetry in Europe in the twelfth century, for example, cannot be understood outside the context of Andalusian forms—and that the strong body of poetry that is produced is then, centuries and worlds later, the modernist ancestry reclaimed by canonical modernists such as Pound and Eliot, in their attempts to free English poetry from the yoke of Milton.

In the realm of poetry, moreover, Adonis sheds lovely light on what I consider to be one of the central theoretical conundrums of literary historiography, that of how our historically random readings can and should powerfully shape our sense of poetry and its contours—how, indeed, one should read Abū Nuwās differently once one has read Baudelaire, and vice versa. Literature, to steal a stunning expression from a complex section of this essay, is the crucible where all times meet. And where all cultures meet, one might add, since few great poets one can name would shape their own ancestry along national or ideological lines as such. The complexity of the anxiety issue here, obviously, has to do with the association of a given body of poetry to its political culture—Baudelaire not as poetic *agon* but as symbol of French cultural dominance. But in the end influence and originality have to do with the poet's ability to wrestle with his demons, not walk away from them, and in his wrestling with the poetic angels that have shaped him, and attempting to write their history and define their modernisms, Adonis has given us as good a token of what a strong poet he is as in any of his poems.

While I feel comfortable delivering the cliché that no one in Arabic literary studies should miss reading this book, it may be that in the future its real value and influence will be in that universe of poets and critics who have little interest in national filiations—thus all strong poets and critics. For although Adonis is attempting, in the characteristic manner of poets, both to clear space and establish ancestry within his own tradition, he

[1] "This combination carried Arab-Islamic civilization at its most mature to the West by way of Andalusia" (p. 89).

is, in this remarkable collection of essays, speaking to the most basic issues of all poetic cultures. That he manages to do this, to theorize quite intelligibly, and at the same time not only respect the particularities of the Arab tradition but also suggest a profound rewriting of its history, is a singular achievement.

MARÍA ROSA MENOCAL
YALE UNIVERSITY

The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education. By JONATHAN BERKEY. Princeton: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1992. Pp. ix + 238. $39.50, £25.

Several features of Jonathan Berkey's book deserve praise. It is nicely written and thoroughly researched. Berkey has relied upon a range of chronicles and biographical dictionaries as well as the apparently numerous *waqfiyya*s (deeds of endowment) presently available in Egyptian archives (pp. 15–16). He also succeeds in alerting the reader to the range of institutions, actors and experiences that shaped Islamic education in Mamluk Cairo from the mid-thirteenth to the early sixteenth century. However, conceptual problems come perilously close to undercutting the strengths of this book.

Following a set of introductory comments, Berkey first turns his attention to the nature of instruction in medieval Cairo and the activities of each of the players on the educational stage, the professors, teaching assistants and students. He sees the interaction between these groups as based primarily upon personal relationships and the oral transmission of texts (one "'heard from' some individual a particular text," p. 24). Over several pages (33–38) Berkey explores the dynamics between students and teachers; he considers, for example, what he refers to as the concept *ṣuḥba*, which, as he describes it, blended "companionship" with "discipleship."

Next is a longer chapter on the range of institutions in which education was provided in Mamluk Cairo. Berkey warns against attaching a static meaning to the terms (*madrasa*, *jāmiᶜ*, *masjid*, and *khānqāh*) used by medieval writers for these institutions. Repeating the point that Islamic education was "personal," Berkey argues that venue mattered less to the process of instruction than a teacher's authority, hence the "apparent confusion" (p. 50) in terminology.

Subsequent chapters take up, in turn, the experience of three populations of participants in medieval Cairene education: the scholars and teachers; the Mamluk sultans and amirs; and, in decidedly smaller numbers, Egyptian women. Berkey considers the web of patronage joining shaykhs to Mamluk notables and the ways in which—once again—the personal took precedence over what might be termed the structural; that is, appointments to educational posts were often decided on the basis of relations between the ᶜulamāᵓ and well-placed Mamluks. The chapter on women and education contains useful insights into the range of barriers confronting women in their effort to both receive and transmit knowledge, and on the activity of those women who succeeded in overcoming such obstacles.

The access of the wider population of Cairo to religious education is the subject of the closing chapter. Such access, Berkey suggests, was related in part to the variety in size and quality of the schools. No less significant, however, was the love of learning which Berkey describes, in sweeping fashion, as having "constituted the highest form of worship recognized by Muslim civilization" (p. 217).

I admire the book's intent, that is, to provide a comprehensive view of a complex facet of medieval Islamic life. However, I question the manner in which Berkey would have us conceive of his subject.

To begin with, he fails to avoid the sin of essentialism he accuses earlier scholarship of having committed (p. 14). How else to describe such apparently well-intended statements as, "[f]rom the beginning . . . Islam was a religion of the book and of learning, a society that esteemed knowledge and education above almost every other human activity" (p. 6), or his argument that the "personal" and "flexible" nature of Islamic education persisted "from its inception . . . into the twentieth century" (p. 44). Has Islamic religious instruction been studied in sufficient breadth to support judgments of this kind?

More problematic is Berkey's reliance upon the idea of "informality" in Islamic education. He uses this and related terms repeatedly (pp. 16, 33, 44, 60, 132, 159, and 216–17), yet never pauses to define them. To the best of my knowledge, scholars in political science and economics, as well as modern Middle East history, continue to debate the nature and impact of "informal" networks and processes. The range of opinion resulting from that discussion indicates that one cannot take for granted how readers understand the idea.

I would press this point; in neglecting to clarify the central point of his thesis, Berkey risks being understood to mean that medieval Islamic intellectual and pedagogical practice lacked rigor, on the one hand, method and convention, on the other. His own findings, however, indicate the contrary. His comments on the hierarchy joining scholars and students (pp. 39–42 *et passim*); on the levels of authority and reputation among the scholars and professors; and on the size, reputation and range of functions of educational and religious institutions suggest that educational life in Mamluk Cairo followed its own sets of clearly delineated and widely understood rules and patterns.