

REVIEWS

Hakan Özkan and Nefeli Papoutsakis (eds): *Doing Justice to a Wronged Literature. Essays on Arabic Literature and Rhetoric of the 12th–18th Centuries in Honour of Thomas Bauer*

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Since 2000, when Thomas Bauer was appointed to a chair in Münster, that university has developed into a powerhouse of the study of Arabic literature of the Mamluk and more recently Ottoman periods. Convinced that the label of decline attached to the writing of these periods was a slander, Bauer brought together and inspired a team of researchers dedicated to exploding the decline myth. The volume reviewed here, which includes seventeen articles, testifies to the immense progress made recently in Mamluk and Ottoman literary studies in the Münster powerhouse and elsewhere.

Verena Klemm's intriguingly titled "Hidden literary history – Ismaili tradition in Syria" brings up to date what is known about the literature of this small and secretive community in Syria and adds to it on the basis of a study of ten *majmū'āt* and accounts of the virtues (*manāqib*) of the community's leader, Sinān. She concludes that the anthologies transmit an identity-forming religious heritage among the isolated Ismailis and also shows what valuable results research into such "blank spots" of Arabic literature can yield.

The subject of Ines Weinrich's article is paradoxically something of a "blank spot" too, a poet whose verses praising the Prophet are widely sung from Morocco to the Gulf, but of whose life very little is known. She exploits the manuscripts of the *dīwān* as well as the printed editions to establish his name, 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Bura'ī and his period, the ninth/fifteenth century, where he lived, Tihāma, and where he died, Mecca. In his own time he was known as a jurist and scholar but he became famous posthumously as a Sufi and poet.

Several contributors discuss relations between poetry or literary prose and social history. Poetry in particular has not been exploited as much as it might be in this connection. Ewald Wagner presents quotations from Usāma ibn Munqidh's (d. 584/1188) poetry which unambiguously show he supported *jihād*, a thesis which has been questioned by some scholars relying on his *Memoirs*. Werner Diem uses surviving fragments of Ibn Abī Ḥajala's (d. 776/1375) *Al-saj' al-jalīl fī mā jarā min al-Nīl* ("Rhymed prose to beguile on the events around the Nile"), translated with extensive annotations, to illustrate the exceptional flood of 761/1362 and its effect on some places and professions. He also traces echoes of this text in two of al-Suyūṭī's *maqāmas*. In Andreas Herdt's contribution, an

incomplete letter written by Ibn Nubāta (d. 768/1166) rejoicing about a sultan's recovery from illness in 743/1342 is analysed for its formal aspects, its intertextual allusions and also what it does not say; the names of the official who commissioned the letter, its addressee, the sultan, and the length of the illness and date of his recovery are not mentioned, although historical texts allow the sultan to be identified. Herdt observes that official correspondence of the Mamluk period, to which this letter belongs, combines fixed chancery formulas with freedom to draw on the literary and rhetorical heritage. By contrast the correspondence of an early Ottoman man of letters, Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mullā (d. 1032/1623), which Nefeli Papoutsakis focusses on is informal, and unusually Ibn al-Mullā has included his correspondents' replies. Most of this correspondence is in verse, which is revealing of the exchanges in learned circles of the time, and it illustrates their fondness for riddle poems, two of which are included in text and translation.

In "Poetisch wider Willen", Alev Masarwa discusses the Quranic quotations in Māmayh al-Rūmī's (d. c. 987/1579) epigrams, concentrating on rhetorical aspects of the sensitive subject of including snatches of God's speech in poems which may be serious or frivolous. Whether the quotations are marked or unmarked and thus more or less easily recognizable, they add further dimensions to the already complex interpretations of these brief verses. Another rhetorically oriented contribution is Geert Jan van Gelder's history of the term *ibdā'*, "cumulation of figures of style", whose meaning was originally defined by Ibn Abī l-Ṣba' (d. 654/1256) on the basis of an analysis of a Quranic verse describing the Ark coming to rest on Mount Jūdī. Later poets up until the thirteenth/nineteenth century included this form in their *badī'iyas*, panegyrics of the Prophet often accompanied by a commentary, which include as many rhetorical figures as possible within the challenging framework of *qaṣīd* poetry's monorhyme and meter. Syrinx von Hees focusses on an instance of applied criticism, following the discussion about *muṭābaqa* (conventionally understood as "antithesis") from al-Qazwīnī's (d. 739/1338) canonical handbook on rhetoric to Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī's (d. 837/1434) *badī'iyya* and commentary. Ibn Ḥijja argues that *muṭābaqa* is inapplicable to colours except black and white; the appropriate term is *tadbīj*, "decoration". In this he distances himself from al-Qazwīnī and follows Ibn Abī l-Ṣba', another theorist already mentioned here. In a close reading of a Sufi poem by 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) which is part of a bigger project, Ali Ahmad Hussein first provides the poem's text and translation and then in a detailed commentary identifies rhetorical elements. These elements are subjected to a statistical analysis from which it emerges that metaphor is most important (25.79%), followed by periphrasis (13.66%). The results are compared with those gained for poems of comparable length by al-Nābigha, Jarīr and Abū Tammām, showing that already through this limited sample certain changes in the frequency of rhetorical elements can be traced from the pre-Islamic to the Mamluk period.

'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī's son, al-Shābb al-Zarīf Muḥammad al-Tilimsānī (d. 688/1289), is the author of the *maqāma* entitled *Faṣāḥat al-mashūq fī malāḥat al-ma'shūq* ("The lover's eloquence about the beloved's elegance") which is introduced and edited by Bilal Orfali and Maurice Pomerantz. They list the manuscripts used and provide a summary of the plot, consisting of exchanges about love in the form of rhymed prose or poetry between a group of drinking companions and an unknown tormented lover. This is a welcome addition to the already considerable corpus of *maqāmāt* published by these two scholars. The dove, the commonest bird in Arabic literature, is often associated with love and lovers' complaints, as emerges from Anke Osigus's tracking of this bird in the anthologies she presents by Ibn Abī Ḥajala, al-Ghuzūlī (d. 815/1411-2), Ibn Ḥijja, al-Asyūṭī (d.c. 856/1453) and al-Nawājī (d. 859/1455). This is an exhaustive study, listing the different species of dove and their appearance in prose and poetry of the anthologies.

Two contributions examine *zajals*. Hakan Özkan presents the text and translation of a famous *zajal* by Ibn Muqātil al-Ḥamawī (d. 761/1359) which was declared the winner in a

contest held before the sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir and was much imitated and emulated thereafter. He ascribes the enduring popularity of this brief sketch of the poet's infatuation with an arrogant lad to a combination of simple language and rhetorical mastery. The *zajal* by Ibn al-Mī'mār (d. 749/1348–9) which Gregor Schoeler's contribution discusses is longer and, as it is couched in a stylized colloquial, linguistically more challenging. In it an uninhibited young singer and entertainer defends herself from her mother's reproaches and energetically affirms her right to live her own life. Schoeler comments on the *zajal*'s language and style and its social context before offering an interpretation and a possible model for it.

Examining one of the stories of the *1001 Nights*, *Sūl and Sumūl*, Claudia Ott concentrates on the poems and the inter-religious dimension. The poems are unusually long for the *Nights* and were apparently composed for the situation in which they are placed; they can have a narrative function. The plot, Sūl's search for his abducted bride Shumūl, takes him to a series of monasteries, where he has courteous duet-like exchanges with monks in which Christian expressions are prominent. Ott suggests this story should be read as a libretto for an opera.

Beatrice Gruendler presents a sub- or embedded story from *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a comprehensive study of which, with its transmission and versions, is being carried out in the pioneering AnonymClassic project. This work, although it migrated from Middle Persian into Arabic in writing, subsequently spawned myriad variants resulting from mixed oral and written transmission and omission or inclusion of stories. Gruendler sets out the divergences between different groups of manuscripts, taking account of the manuscripts' dates and whether they have been substantially rewritten or have combined elements from different versions. Colourful appendices show the cross-analysis of segments in the story as graphs and how they appear in the digital edition, as well as giving the full text of the sixteen versions studied. (A line of the full text has been omitted at the break between pp. 142 and 143.)

In her contribution, Remke Kruk traces references to books in the *sīra* or popular epic literature. Some books are known historically, but most are referred to vaguely as *malāḥim* (here: predictions). Kruk passes in review the *siyar* in which books play a major part in the narrative, either as a source of knowledge in general, or for their magical properties and the occult knowledge they contain. She points out that the *siyar* where books of magic play an important role date from the Mamluk period, when magic and the occult were prominent in the cultural climate and books in general seem to have been gaining in popularity among the non-learned. The Quran, by contrast, is present very frequently for instance in the form of recitations or quotations, but not as an actual volume.

This is a memorable collection of articles by specialists in their fields, discussing interesting texts from different angles and applying a range of traditional and modern methods in treating them. It will certainly spur researchers on to further discoveries. But it unintentionally illustrates the fact that, with only two out of the seventeen articles treating Ottoman texts, the Bauer effect has not yet properly been felt in Ottoman Arabic literature.

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