

## PREFACE

*Beatrice Gruendler (New Haven)*

It is both a privilege and a pleasure to open with a tribute to a scholar whose body of work has not only charted the internal developments of early Arabic poetry down to the 'Abbāsid period but also anchored these findings socio-historically, highlighting the incessant give and take between literature and society.

Renate Jacobi who is celebrated with this Festschrift began her scholarly career in Tübingen with a thesis on the conditional clause in the Koran (published still under her maiden name of Renate Tietz) under the supervision of her *Doktorvater* Rudi Paret. Beginning with her licentiate thesis (*Habilitation*), however, she would turn her attention to poetry, which has since become her life's project. From her days as assistant professor in Tübingen, the honoree has been a stalwart creative contributor to the study of pre-Islamic, early Islamic, Umayyad, and 'Abbāsid poetry. Meanwhile she pursued her career path as professor at the University of Saarbrücken and, after the closure of its Institut für Orientalistik in 1994, as visiting professor at the Seminar für Semitistik und Arabistik of the Free University of Berlin, where she was awarded an honorary professorship in 2001.

With her groundbreaking survey of the pre-Islamic *qaṣida*, the honoree established a framework of analysis – tested on a large corpus of texts – which allowed room for variation and individual styles. She was the first to look at this genre from a fully literary perspective, and her book thus gave a firm grounding to the study of Arabic poetry for its own sake. Later she proposed an historical model for the gradual genesis of the *qaṣida*, an approach that starkly differed from other postulations for an a priori existence of the tripartite ode. Ever since, one has come to expect from the honoree articles of characteristic lucidity and transparency, combined with a felicitous choice of examples and an economy of argument. Perceptive studies of the ode's *nasīb* and *raḥīl* sections and the *khayāl* motif demonstrated the diachronic development of the ode towards an increasing narrative coherence and structural unity. This being said, genre, for Renate Jacobi has never been an end in itself, but rather a point of reference in relation to which chronological developments or individual styles could be cast into relief. By

isolating aspects of the *nasīb* (and its independent counterpart of the *ghazal*), such as the concepts of love and time, she demonstrated the creative role of the *mukhaḍramūn* poets, whom she viewed as part of the larger nexus between literature and social change and placed them within an era of their own. The continuous dialogue among poetic texts across time has been another important concern for the honoree. With her longitudinal view of the *ghazal*, she has also articulated a persuasive account of the 'Udhri concept of love and its subsequent courtly and mystical derivatives.

What is more, the honoree pioneered the application of literary criticism from her earliest studies, when such an avenue was rarely pursued. Christine Brooke-Rose, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, Victor Shlovskij, Hans Robert Jauss, and Wolfgang Iser inspired her interpretations in which she treated modern literary theory as a complement and continuation of medieval poetics, particularly when speaking to those aspects about which the latter remained silent. In her own work as well as in reading that of others, she assessed with sobriety the limits of these and other interpretations and critiqued any overtasking of pre-existing concepts or their forcing of classical Arabic texts; but even in these applications of theory to Arabic poetry that she could not fully endorse – be it of philosophy of religion, structuralism, symbolic reading, or ritual theory – she made a point of identifying such elements as appeared propitious, incorporating them into her own work. Thus she contributed to shaping the integration of modern thought and medieval subject matter as a mutual and ongoing effort in which trial and error were necessary steps. In this spirit, she actively encouraged, since its inception in 1995 at the 26<sup>th</sup> Deutsche Orientalistentag (DOT) in Leipzig, the forum devoted to debating theoretical approaches to Arabic (and more recently Persian and Turkish) literature, and she subsequently contributed the preface to its publication under the title *Understanding Near Eastern Literatures: A Spectrum of Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000). Thus began the series “Literaturen im Kontext: Arabisch – Persisch – Türkisch”, which has since become an important venue for literary studies by younger scholars, among them two advisees of the honoree.

In addition to her devotion to poetry, the honoree has also made forays into prose literature, notably biographies of women in early *akhbār* and late medieval biographical dictionaries. Here again she sleuthed out with her characteristic *Fingerspitzengefühl* the personal contours of historical figures from literary sources. The social and historical background is the primary dimension upon which she bases her argument and draws cautious sketches from literary elaborations whose factual bedrock time has long worn away. In the same vein, during 2000-2002, she directed a research project on the transmission of knowledge among male and female scholars of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which has yielded its first publication.

Throughout her career, the honoree has directed numerous masters and doctoral theses on classical and modern Arabic literary culture:

- DEGAND, Angela (1982), *Untersuchungen zu einer Geschichte der Frauenbildung im islamischen Spätmittelalter anhand des 12. Bandes von as-Sahāwī's biographischem Lexikon aḍ-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn at-tāsi'* (Master's thesis, Saarbrücken).
- KOLLET, Birgit (1985), *Zur Entstehung der arabischen Liebesgeschichte „Qais und Lubnā“: Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Master's thesis, Saarbrücken).
- HEIB, Marina (1987), *Die Biographie des Dichters al-Aḡī im Kitāb al-Aḡānī: Ein Beitrag zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte* (Master's thesis, Saarbrücken).
- BEISSEL, Daniela (1989), *Liebeskrankheit und Liebestod im Diwan des 'Abbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf* (Master's thesis, Saarbrücken).
- EL-BEITUNI, Nabil (1989), *Das Motiv der Heimat in der palästinensischen Dichtung seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg bis in die Gegenwart* (Saarbrücken).
- OBERINGER, Dorothea (1989), *Altarabische Elemente in den Märchen von Tausendundeine Nacht* (Master's thesis, Saarbrücken).
- DARABSEH, Mahmoud (1990), *Die Kritik der Prosa bei den Arabern: vom 3./9. Jahrhundert bis zum Ende des 5./11. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz).
- HEINRICH, Marietta (1990), *Die Biographie der Prophetin Sagah: Zur Stellung der Frau im vorislamischen Arabien* (Master's thesis, Saarbrücken).
- THOMAS, Astrid (1992), *Die umayyadische Sängerin 'Azza al-Mailā' und ihr Milieu* (Master's thesis, Saarbrücken).
- GRIFFEL, Frank (1995), *Logische und ontologische Probleme in al-Ġazālī's Fayṣal at-tafrīqa bayna l-islām wa-z-zandāqa* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- SHARKAWI, Nermin (1995), *Nāzik al-Malā'ika's Lyrik im Wandel: Vergleich von drei Fassungen eines Gedichts aus der Zeit zwischen 1945 und 1965* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- METZNER, Kirsten (1996), *„Ich bin eine Löwin“: Andalusische Dichterinnen des 10./11. Jahrhunderts in ihrem Umfeld* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- HEINZE, Katrin (1997), *Frauen und Gesellschaft im Werk Salwā Baḥr's* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- RADTKE, Andreas (1997), *Der Sühnebegriff im frühen Islam* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- BRINKMANN, Katja (1998), *Die Mu'allāqa von 'Antara b. Šaddād nach dem Kommentar zu den sieben langen Qaṣīden von Ibn al-Anbārī* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- ISLEBE, Andreas Christian (1998), *Der Begriff der „Seelendressur“ bei al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmiḏī* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- HAMARNEH, Muzainah (2000), *Frauen im öffentlichen Leben zur Zeit der Mamluken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel von Saḥāwī's aḍ-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' und Maḡrīzī's Ḥiṭaṭ* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- TOUMI, Lotfi (2000), *Die Mu'allāqa des altarabischen Dichters Ṭarafa Ibn al-'Abd* (Master's thesis, Berlin).



- LAURE AL-SAMARAI, Nicola (2001), *Die Macht der Darstellung: Gender, sozialer Status, historiografische Re-Präsentation: Zwei Frauenbiografien aus der frühen Abbasidenzeit* [Literaturen im Kontext: Arabisch – Persisch – Türkisch, vol. 6] (Wiesbaden: Reichert).
- MEJCHER, Sonja (2001), *Geschichten über Geschichten: Erinnerung im Romanwerk von Ilyās Ḥūrī* [Literaturen im Kontext: Arabisch – Persisch – Türkisch, vol. 8] (Wiesbaden: Reichert).
- RADTKE, Andreas (2001), *Offenbarung zwischen Gesetz und Geschichte: Quellenstudien zu den Bedingungsfaktoren frühislamischen Rechtsdenkens* (Ph.D. dissertation, Berlin).
- BEHLOUL, Samuel-Martin (2002), *Ibn Ḥazms Evangelienkritik: Eine methodische Untersuchung* (Leiden: Brill).
- BRITZ, Simone (2002), *Intertextuelle Bezüge zu ausgewählten Gedichten des palästinensischen Dichters Izzaddin al-Manāsira* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- ISHAQ, Silvia Manuela (2002), *Berufs- und Aufstiegschancen der Christen im Irak des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- AHMED, Aischa (2003), *Die Biographien von Ḥabāba und Sallāmat al-Qass: Zwei versklavte Frauen aus der Umayyadenzeit* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- PUIN, Elisabeth (2004), *Islamische Plakate: Kalligraphie und Malerei im Dienst des Glaubens* (Ph.D. dissertation, Saarbrücken).
- BEDNAREK, Jenny (2005), *Die Genderkonstruktion Zainab al-Ġazālīs anhand ihrer Autobiografie „Ayyām min Ḥayātī – Tage meines Lebens“* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- ŠEBESTA, Petr (2005), *Ġahl und ḥilm im Lisān al-ʿArab* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- BARTON, Katja (2006), *Sklavin und Freie: Die Biographie der Dichterin Faḍl im Kitāb al-Aġānī* (Master's thesis, Berlin).
- DMITRIEV, Kyrill (2006), *Das poetische Werk des Abū Ṣaḥr al-Hudālī: Eine literaturanthropologische Studie* (Ph.D. dissertation, Berlin).
- HAJY, Hasim (2006), *Die Banū Ḥanīfa: Quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu ihrem Bild in der frühislamischen Geschichte* (Master's thesis, Berlin).

But the honoree's impact radiated far beyond her immediate circle of students, reaching a generation of young scholars who in the 1980s and 1990s were in search of literary approaches to Arabic poetry, and among whom the writer of these lines includes herself. In 1983/84, when I was taking my first steps in Arabic studies at the Université des Sciences Humaines, Strasbourg and scouring the holdings of its library for discussions of pre-Islamic verse as literature, the shelves of this venerable institution offered as the unique work on the subject the honoree's *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qaṣīde*. From that day forward it became my constant companion, a decade before I had the good fortune of meeting the author during her visit to Harvard University in Cambridge Massachusetts, where I was then pursuing my doctoral thesis.

In the course of her long career, the honoree has never isolated Arabic literature as text on the page but treated it holistically, including its function and reception by contempo-

rary and subsequent audiences. To honor her on occasion of her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, this very subject was chosen for an International Symposium held at the Free University of Berlin June 27-29, 2001 under the title, "Processes of Reception in the Context of Arabic Literature." Papers presented there have been assembled in the present volume so that the festive moment will not be limited to the memories of its participants, for "the tongue is for him who sees you, but the pen is for the one distant from you, for the one who has gone before you, and for the one who will come after you," as al-Jāḥiẓ has remarked.<sup>1</sup> Proud to count her in our midst, we wish Renate Jacobi many more productive years as a scholar, teacher, and guardian spirit of future explorers of Classical Arabic literature, borrowing the words of Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī:

*Ḥassana llāhu l-zamāna lladhī qalla fīhi naẓīruki bi-baqā'iki wa-wahaba li-ahli l-adabi salāmataki.*

<sup>1</sup> *Kitābān li-l-Jāḥiẓ: Kitāb al-Mu'allimīn wa-Kitāb fī l-Radd 'alā l-mushabbaha*, ed. Ibrāhīm Jirīs (Tel Aviv 1980), p. 60.