

having to mention the presence of a human hand behind them. Statues "are made" and "are erected." "The spindle is fixed." "The ball of cotton or wool is held." "Yarn is spun." These are only a few examples of how the "folk" are sadly excluded from this presentation.

With this one reservation, however, the four books remain a useful tool for viewers of the museum's items.

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#### ARABIA

MARZOLPH, ULRICH. *Arabia ridens: Die humoristische Kurzprosa der frühen adab-Literatur im internationalen Traditionsgeflecht* [Arabia ridens: The humoristic short prose of early *adab* literature in the international web of traditions]. Band 1: Darstellung [Exposition]. Band 2: Material [Material]. Frankfurter Wissenschaftliche Beiträge, Kulturwissenschaftliche Reihe Band 21/1-2. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992. Band 1: xiii+295 pages, indices. Band 2: vii+417 pages, indices of quotations from the Quran, types and motifs, sources, subjects, names, bibliography. Cloth DM 180.00 (both volumes); ISBN 3-465-02550-4. (In German)

The comparative investigation of literature is to a large extent Eurocentric; the literatures of other high cultures that for centuries interacted with each other and with European antique and medieval literature are now on the periphery of our attention. *Arabia Ridens* is a contribution to the broadening of our literary-historic horizons, presenting a section of medieval Arabic and Persian literature to the Western audience. Being medieval, this literature is of course in written form; nevertheless, its close interrelation with the oral tradition, commonly called "folklore," is conspicuous (see the partial type and motif indices in vol. 1, 276-77 and vol. 2, 269-70).

The study under review is a first attempt to bring to the attention of the literary comparatist the "short genres" (jokes, anecdotes, parables, wisdom sayings, numskull tales, etc.) from the prose sections of the *adab* anthologies (see the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. *adab*). In the first volume the author presents several comparative historical studies of literary works and themes, examining the changes, assimilations, and acculturations the materials went through as they moved from one culture to another through space and time. The author avoids focusing on European literature; he centers instead on Arabic literature in order to demonstrate the role of medieval *adab* literature in the development of short humoristic written folk prose in the region from Europe to India. This is an important contribution to the discussion of how the Euro-Afro-Asian "literary area" (encompassing Christian Europe, Muslim North Africa, the Near East, Central Asia, and India) evolved. Now it is up to the literary theoreticians to work on the materials Marzolph has presented us with: to describe their formal and semantic literary qualities; to define the genres involved; to determine the place of these genres in the literary system of their culture as delimited in time and space; to develop a classificatory scheme for the various literary types within the framework of their respective genres; to examine the relations of the Arabic system to the literary

systems of other cultures; and so on.

The corpus investigated in these volumes consists of excerpts from the works of two authors (*Naṣr ad-durr* by al-Ābī [d. 1030] and three works by Ibn al-Gawzī [d. 1201]), supplemented by excerpts from *adab* encyclopedias and smaller anthologies from the mid-ninth to the late-twelfth century. Altogether Marzolph collected a total of 11,500 texts, comprising 5,600 "types" (1,247 of which are listed in the index in volume 2, 1-268). The types listed have been found in multiple versions in one or more of five kinds of literature: 1) Arabic folk literature before the year 1200; 2) Arabic medieval literature after 1200; 3) modern Arabic oral literature; 4) medieval and modern written and oral literature from non-Arabic-speaking Muslim countries from Turkey through India; 5) European oral and written folk literature. The corpus is not complete—not all written works in Arabic from before 1200 have been examined, for example. The author concentrates on the main works of *adab* entertainment prose (see list in vol. 1, 35-36).

Many indices facilitate use of the work. It is a pity that the publisher did not see fit to add a few more pages and print the indices in columns (vol. 1, 276-81; vol. 2, 269-312), this to the great frustration of both the reader and the unfortunate author. A work of such fundamental significance for so many disciplines should be made as easy to consult as possible.

*Arabia ridens* is of prime importance to the literary and cultural historian: for the first time the "short forms" of written Arabic folk literature are systematically indexed and thereby made accessible to comparative literary studies. Marzolph's work complements CHAUVIN's monumental index (1892-1922) of medieval Arabic "long-form" written folk literature (or "entertainment literature"). At the same time it comprises a first attempt at indexing the "short form" medieval prose folk literature of Persia, which Marzolph lists as "additional versions," to types found in Arabic sources (see section C in the list of versions to each type). *Arabia ridens* is a must for the library of every Arabist, Iranist, literary and cultural historian, and, last but not least, folklorist.

#### REFERENCE CITED:

CHAUVIN, Victor

1892-1922 *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux arabes, publiés dans l'Europe chrétienne de 1810 à 1885* [Bibliography of Arabic works, or works akin to Arabic (literature), published in Christian Europe between 1810 and 1885]. 12 vols. Liège: Vaillant & Carmanne.

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SOWAYAN, SAAD A. *The Arabian Oral Historical Narrative: An Ethnographic and Linguistic Analysis*. Semitica Viva, Band 6. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992. xii+323 pages. Facsimile of Arab text, appendices (lists of characters, genealogical charts, place names), glossary, bibliography. Paper DM 98.00; ISBN 3-447-03224-3; ISSN 0931-2811.

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