

Dr. Peretz was born in 1922 in Baltimore, Maryland, to Haim Peretz and Josephine Lasser Peretz. He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Maya Peretz, a Holocaust child survivor, by his daughter Debbie Peretz (Marcus Brandt), and sons Jonathan Chance, and Ervin Peretz (Pauline Cooper), grandson Jonah, and cousins Edith and Hanan Schaham. ✂

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2017.79](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2017.79)

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Pierre Cachia **1921–2017**

Pierre Cachia slipped away peacefully on 1 April 2017, a few days shy of his ninety-sixth birthday, surrounded by his children and grandchildren. With the passing of this key architect of Arabic studies, those of us who have studied and worked with him will not only mourn the loss of a friend, teacher, and mentor, but also the irretrievable era in which a first generation of postwar American and European Arabists and Orientalists made tremendous strides in fashioning academic studies of modern Arabic literature into what it is today: grounded in native fluency of the Arabic language, informed by real experiences lived in close proximity with Arab writers and storytellers, and took seriously the concerns and priorities of Arab scholars, critics, and intellectuals.

Born in Faiyum (Fayyum) on 30 April 1921 to a Maltese father and Russian mother, Pierre grew up in Upper Egypt. He successively attended French, Italian, Egyptian, and American schools before he enrolled at the American University in Cairo, where he earned his BA degree. After war service with the British 8th Army in North Africa, Italy, and Austria, he moved to Scotland. He received his doctorate at the University of Edinburgh in 1951 and joined its faculty. He was appointed Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at Columbia University in 1975 and would remain there until he retired in 1991. However, he continued to teach and write, and in fact he published many of

his important works after retirement. He wrote scholarly articles and books on a variety of subjects, translated classical and modern literary and critical works, and published other scholars in the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, which he cofounded and on whose editorial board he served for many years.

His first book, *Taha Husayn: His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance* (1956), epitomizes Pierre's approach to research and scholarly writing. It is informed by extensive fieldwork as well as interviews with those who knew Taha Husayn and gives us a complex portrait of the man behind his gargantuan legacy and, more importantly, it comes to terms with the urgent and critical issues that shaped the thought and writing of Taha Husayn as well as his generation of Egyptian intellectuals. It is written in Pierre's infinitely readable prose, elegant, clear, terse, and fluid all at the same time, and grounded in his profound knowledge of the classical Arabic literary tradition. His subsequent books on Arabic literature are eloquent expressions of his views of himself as a scholar and, above all, teacher.

Pierre always put his students first. He wrote with them in mind. His published works on Arabic literature are meant to provide them with the necessary foundation and key concepts that would allow them to pursue their interests in depth. He translated Arabic literary and critical works with the same purpose in mind. *The Monitor: A Dictionary of Arabic Grammatical Terms* (1973) and *The Arch Rhetorician or The Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic Badi' Drawn from 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi's Nafahat al-azhar 'ala nasamat al-ashar* (1998) are intended for students of Arabic language and literature and to give them access to Arabic grammatical terms and rhetorical devices. However, Pierre's single most important contribution lies in his work on Egyptian folk literature. *Popular Narrative Ballads of Modern Egypt* (1989) and his various essays now collected in *Exploring Arab Folk Literature* (2011) are a testimony to his life-long interest in and commitment to colloquial literary expressions. He put "folk" literature, orally transmitted in the colloquial register, on the map of literary studies, and made it not only legitimate but also fashionable to pursue academic studies of folk literature.

Pierre taught many students. All of us who had the privilege of working closely with him will remember him as a gentleman scholar, who spoke impeccable Arabic and English, and who loved to tell stories, but whose sharp wit made his humorous stories even more memorable. He was generous to a fault to anyone who sought his help, but always gave us ample space to develop our own ideas and projects. He was more interested in showing us how to be a rounded human being than an ambitious scholar, and taught us that honest work would always make a difference. He was like a father to me. He took me in when I arrived alone in New York in 1982, leaving behind my

family in Tripoli, Libya. Since then, and wherever I go, I carry with me the warmth of his welcome, and of his office and living room, where we spent long hours talking and bantering and exchanging stories.

He is survived by a son, two daughters, and six grandchildren. ✨

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2017.87](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2017.87)

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