JULIE SCOTT MEISAMI

Medieval Persian Court Poetry

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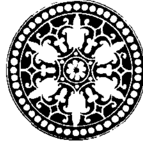
Medieval Persian Court Poetry

Poets in Discussion (British Library Ms. 132)

Medieval Persian Court Poetry



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Preface

THE poetry of medieval Persia came into being and developed to a high level of artistic excellence under the patronage of the local Iranian dynasties that began to emerge in the latter half of the tenth century. Despite subsequent changes in patterns of patronage (particularly in the mid-twelfth century and after), a significant amount of poetry continued to be produced in and for courtly circles up to the beginning of the modern age.[1] It is to be expected that this circumstance would exert a profound influence on the forms and genres most favored and the values depicted therein, but it is a lamentable fact of Persian studies that in general such influence has been evaluated negatively and court patronage has been judged as leading primarily to the composition of fulsome and insincere panegyric characterized stylistically by excessive ornamentation, artificiality, and rhetorical bombast. A typical view is that expressed in a recent survey of Islamic civilization:

> The re-emergence of Persian as a literary vehicle in about 900 took place in a particular political and social setting that gave it great force and at the same time set definite

[1] Medieval Persian poetry, also referred to as "neo-Persian," began its development some two centuries after the Islamic conquest of Iran. For discussions of the early stages of this development (particularly under the Samanids in the tenth century), see especially Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, pp. 126–71, and G. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," *Cambridge History of Iran (CHI)*, 4:611–22. A full understanding of the rise of other, noncourtly types of poetry (for example, mystical) will require, among other desiderata, a comprehensive study of shifting patterns of patronage, and in particular of the development of noncourtly centers of patronage (chiefly religious) and of the role of various social groupings and classes (for example the urban bourgeoisie) in contributing to changes in the popularity of specific genres, the decline of some and the appearance of others. While such questions have been touched upon (see, in particular, the works cited in note 5), no comprehensive study of the problem has as yet been undertaken; the value of such an undertaking in enhancing our perception of the total picture of the development of Persian literature would be inestimable.

> limits to its potentialities. . . . One social and economic fact, present from the beginning, could never be entirely shaken off: the overwhelming bulk of Persian literature, until modern times, was composed under dynastic or noble patronage, and this had two unfortunate consequences. In the first place, it led to much commissioned work, uninspired stuff deliberately designed to flatter the patron. Secondly, taste tended to be markedly "courtly"—artificial, lush, over-ingenious; and there was a natural disinclination in such an atmosphere for the writer to risk liberties and innovations, especially if these too obviously suggested the natural and the real. Nevertheless, Persian writers—at least the greatest of them—were marvelously successful in working within these constrictions, and from time to time they even managed to break or circumvent them—with varying consequences to themselves.[2]

Largely because of this negative view of court poetry, many critics have preferred to devote their attention to other types, especially to mystical poetry, in which they find (according to their particular ideological bent) either the record of a deep personal experience or a covert means of combating the pernicious influence of court patronage.[3]

While not denying that such patronage can produce bad writing as well as good (as can any other kind of patronage or, for that matter, none at all), the view that it is inevitably inimical to artistic creativity is grossly erroneous, as is the automatic equation of "courtly" taste with the "lush, artificial, and over-ingenious," as opposed to the "real" or "natural." Studies on medieval literature in the West have shown court patronage to be an essential factor in stimulating the composition of many of the outstanding works of the Western literary tradition.[4] No similar study, aimed at clarifying the interaction

[2] G. M. Wickens, "Persian Literature: An Affirmation of Identity," in *Introduction to Islamic Civilization*, ed. Roger M. Savory, p. 72.

[3] For further discussion of such views see chapters 1 and 6.

[4] Exemplary studies include, for English literature, Richard Firth Green,

between the poet and his courtly milieu, has yet been undertaken for Persian court poetry, although several studies of individual poets have made considerable headway in this respect.[5] This book represents an effort to reevaluate medieval Persian court poetry by placing it in its proper historical and literary perspective. It is by no means exhaustive, or even as comprehensive as one might wish; many poets worthy of inclusion have been omitted, others emphasized perhaps disproportionately; and the work as a whole, rather than attempting a general survey of the tradition, offers instead a series of interpretive essays on specific aspects of it, aims to provide insights into the whole, and suggests directions for further investigation.

Throughout these chapters, the terms *court* (or *courtly*) *poetry* and *courtly love* recur. These terms, and the manner in which they are used, will be discussed in more detail in chapter 1. Their application to any portion of the Persian poetic tradition has (not without justification) been questioned; but no alternatives have been suggested, and the terms—subject to proper definition—remain useful conceptual tools.[6] It is self-evident that love is the primary topic of medieval Persian poetry; it may be assumed that the manner in which it is treated

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Poets and Princepleasers, and Daniel Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England*; and for French, Daniel Poirion, *Le poète et le prince* (see Bibliography).

[5] See especially Jerome W. Clinton, *The Dīvān of Manūchihrī Dāmghānī: A Critical Study*, and, more recently, J.T.P. de Bruijn's study of Sanā'ī, *Of Piety and Poetry (OPP)*, which raises many questions concerning the crucial issue of patronage as well as other aspects of the profession of poet in medieval Persia.

[6] Cf. R. Rehder, "Persian Poets and Modern Critics," *Edebiyat* 2 (1977), 111. Rehder's objections are made in the context of the use of the term by Michael Hillmann in his *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*; the point that Hillmann uses the term indiscriminately and without attempt at definition is well taken, but the generalization that any application of Western critical concepts or terms to non-Western literatures is inappropriate is, I think, exaggerated. The debate among Western scholars concerning the term's validity is too extensive and complex to discuss here; for useful references, see the essays in *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F. X. Newman, and the response by Jean Frappier, "Sur un procès fait à l'amour courtois," in *Amour courtois et Table Ronde*, pp. 61–96.

by court poets reflects the values and sensibilities of the courtly audience. However, in using the term *courtly* to describe the ideal of love depicted by these poets, I depart from the views both of those who (like C. S. Lewis) would limit *courtly love* to a specific historical period and geographical locus or relate it to a concrete "system" or "code" (either social or literary),[7] and of those who (like Peter Dronke) hold the opinion that " 'the new feeling' of *amour courtois* . . . might indeed occur at any time or place" and is "not confined to courtly or chivalric society."[8] I prefer the view of scholars who regard *courtly love* as an essentially literary phenomenon expressive of a mode of thought that has close ties with courtly values.[9]

Persian court poetry combines the ethics of courtly conduct with those of the conduct of love in a fashion designed to emphasize the former at least as much as the latter. Like the connection between poet and court in Persia, the courtly ethic that informs this poetry has its roots in antiquity; it influenced not only the Persian literature that developed in the Islamic period, but the Arabic tradition as well (through which it may even have extended its influence to medieval Europe).[10] The central

[7] C. S. Lewis asserts categorically that courtly love "appeared quite suddenly at the end of the eleventh century in Languedoc" and insists on "its *systematic coherence* throughout the love poetry of the troubadours *as a whole*" (*The Allegory of Love*, pp. 2, 3; my emphasis). Similarly, A. J. Denomy states, "Courtly love made its appearance in the Middle Ages, in a culture and civilization that were Christian" (*The Heresy of Courtly Love*, p. 19), a view that is modified somewhat in his "Courtly Love and Courtliness," *Speculum* 28 (1953), 44–45.

[8] Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, 2d ed., 1:xvii.

[9] In their introduction to the collection *In Pursuit of Perfection*, Joan Ferrante and George Economou observe that "a distinction must be made between an established doctrine, a rigid system of rules of behavior, which did not exist, and a mode of thought, expressed in literary conventions, which can be traced through so much medieval literature" (p. 3). See also J. M. Steadman, "Courtly Love as a Problem of Style," in *Chaucer und seine Zeit*, ed. A. Esch, pp. 1–33. The problem is discussed more fully in chapter 1 of this book.

[10] On the influence of Iranian courtly ethics on the Arabic tradition, see de Bruijn, *OPP*, p. 157, and chapter 1 of this book.

virtues of this ethic, loyalty and service, are of equal importance in the context of love; and while Persian poets do not speak of courtly love any more than do their European counterparts, they do make explicit connections between love, courtesy (*murūvat*), chivalry (*javānmardī*, *futūvat*), and the virtues associated with all three.[11] An examination of the connections between these related value systems is a major preoccupation of this book.

A final observation: my approach in the essays that follow is broadly comparative. Since it is evident—regardless of the direction in which one may be traveling—that the medieval world does not stop at, say, the border between Christian Byzantium and the Islamic territories, it is also clear that valuable insights may be gained from comparing the various manifestations of what is, to a great extent, a unified tradition, which shares certain basic attitudes and assumptions despite the particular local coloring of the individual cultures that make up the whole.[12] Frequently an example from one area may throw

[11] The connection between love and *murūwah*, however, is made explicitly (albeit in a negative way) by the Hispano-Arabic poet Ibn Quzmān, when he declares, "Let others lay claim to courtly love" (*ʿIshq al-murūwah ghayrī yaddaʿīhi*) (quoted by A. Hamori, "Form and Logic in Some Medieval Arabic Poems," *Edebiyat* 2 [1977], 167). On the "courtliness" of courtly love and the question of medieval terms that suggest the concept, see Ferrante and Economou, *In Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 4; Denomy, " 'Courtly Love,' " 47–63; J. D. Burnley, "*Fine amor*: Its Meaning and Context," *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 31 (1980), 129–48; Jean Frappier, "Vues sur les conceptions courtoises dans les littératures d'oc et d'oïl au XIIe siècle," CCM 2 (1959) 135–37. The similarity between the terms *murūwah/murūvat* as used by Arabic and Persian poets, and the troubadours' *courtoisie* or *cortezia*, is often quite striking. The Islamic concept of *futūwah* (Persian *javānmardī*) is said to have been of Iranian origin; cf. Claude Cahen, "Tribes, Cities and Social Organization," *CHI*, 4:320–22, and L. Massignon, "La 'Futuwwa,' ou 'pacte d'honneur artisanal' entre les travailleurs musulmans au Moyen Age," *La Nouvelle Clio* 4 (1952), 171–98; see also *EI*², s.v. "Futuwwa." For discussions (pro and con) of the possible influence of Arabic *futūwah* on troubadour poetry, see Denomy, "*Jovens*: The Notion of Youth Among the Troubadours, Its Meaning and Source," *Medieval Studies* 11 (1949), 1–22; Erich Köhler, "Sens et fonction du terme 'jeunesse' dans la poésie des troubadours," in *Mélanges René Crozet*, 1:569–72.

[12] Compare the methodological problems and approach outlined by M.G.S.

unexpected light on a problem from another; I have therefore felt at liberty to draw parallels and inferences where they seemed appropriate. Further (and perhaps more important), the continuity between the Persian tradition of court poetry and that of Arabic, which developed several centuries earlier—a continuity all too often obscured by the fragmentation of literary studies along linguistic, geographical, or political lines—will be stressed throughout this book, in particular with respect to the development of panegyric poetry and of the love lyric.

The chapters that follow represent the results of both earlier research on medieval Persian court poetry and new work undertaken specifically in connection with this book. Any resulting unevenness will, I hope, be forgiven; my goal is to say, not the last word on the topic, but a much-needed first word in order to stimulate greater interest and more extensive research on the many and varied aspects of court poetry. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the many colleagues and friends who, through their unflagging support, have encouraged me in the completion of this work. While it is impossible to name all those who have been a source of encouragement, I must single out for special mention Jerome Clinton of Princeton University, James Monroe of the University of California at Berkeley, Daniel Javitch of New York University, and Joseph Snow of the University of Georgia, whose support and advice have been unstinting. The Comparative Literature Department at the University of California, Berkeley, provided the affiliation that made it possible to use library and other resources, while some

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Hodgson in his invaluable study of Islamic culture and institutions, *The Venture of Islam*, in particular the methodological portion of the Introduction (1:22–67) and the chapter entitled "Cultural Patterning in Islamdom and the Occident" (2:329–68). Rehder comments on the utility of comparative literary studies ("Persian Poets," 98); but his periodization is too limited and his methodology hindered by his unwillingness to accept Western terminology as having a place in the conduct of such studies. See also James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badīʿ az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*, pp. 98–100; and J. S. Meisami, "Norms and Conventions of the Classical Persian Lyric," *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, 1:203–207.

portions of the research on poetic structure were done during my tenure of a Fellowship for Independent Study from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Special appreciation must go to Peter Whigham for his invaluable assistance with the translations and to Marjorie Sherwood of Princeton University Press for her encouragement and advice. Finally, my deepest thanks to Esmail, Mona, and Ayda, whose patience during the various phases of this book has been monumental and whose support has been most precious.

The dating employed in this study is, for purposes of simplicity, in accordance with the Christian calendar; Islamic scholars will have no trouble making the necessary conversions to Hijri dates. Transliterations follow the system of the Library of Congress for Arabic and Persian. Bibliographic references are given in brief form in the footnotes; full citations, together with a list of abbreviations for works referred to frequently and for periodicals, will be found in the Bibliography. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own; since some texts lent themselves more readily to rendering in English than did others, and since some of the translated excerpts form part of more extensive projects and have received more attention over a longer period of time, I apologize in advance for any unevenness. In general, in the interest of brevity, I have limited myself to quotations in translation only, except where certain features of their language made reference to the original obligatory; page references to the editions used will aid specialists who wish to consult the works in the original languages. The illustrations are reproduced with the permission of the British Library, London, and the John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

Medieval Persian Court Poetry

· I ·

Poet and Court in Persia

The Traditional Background

The close relationship between court and poet in Persia dates from pre-Islamic times, when the poet-minstrel enjoyed an important and influential position at the court of the Iranian emperors.[1] Ancient Iranian society centered around the person of the ruler, the king of kings, who ruled through an administration headed by his chief minister; traditionally, the ruler remained separate from his household, concealed from even the highest dignitaries by an intervening curtain, and transmitted his commands to the assembled court through a noble who bore the title Khurram-bāsh, "Be joyful."[2] The king showed himself in public only on such ritually important occasions as the equinoctial festivals of Naw Rūz, the New Year, in the spring, and Mihrigān, in the fall.[3] Court life

> was governed by a strict and elaborate etiquette. The courtiers were grouped in three classes according to their birth and office. Members of the royal family and the knights of the retinue had the highest standing. There were also jesters, jugglers, clowns, and musicians. The last played an important part in Court life and were likewise divided into three grades, according to their skill and the instruments on which they performed.[4]

[1] See Mary Boyce, "The Parthian *Gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition," *JRAS* (1947), 10–12; Clinton, *Manūchihrī*, pp. 1–2.

[2] The etymology of this term appears doubtful; its source seems to be the Arab historian al-Masʿūdī in his work *Murūj al-Dhahab*, who may be providing a translation for a corrupted term. Cf. *Les prairies d'or*, ed. and trans. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, 2:158.

[3] C. Huart, *Ancient Persia and Iranian Civilization*, pp. 145–47. See also R. Ghirshmann, *Iran: From the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest*, pp. 309–11; and especially M. G. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, pp. 70–98.

[4] Ghirshmann, *Iran*, p. 312. For a detailed picture of Sassanian court eti-

It was to this latter group that poets, as practitioners of an oral art closely associated with music, belonged. The favor they enjoyed at court is attested to by references in ancient texts as well as by popular traditions. Mary Boyce describes the minstrel of Parthian times as "entertainer of king and commoner, privileged at court and popular with the people; present at graveside and at the feast; eulogist, satirist, storyteller, musician; recorder of past achievements, and commentator of his own times."[5] Under the Sassanians, poets enjoyed an even more privileged position:

> Musicians and singers of the first rank belonged to the highest class of courtiers, comprising nobles and princes of the royal blood, and were placed on a footing of equality with the greatest of them. The court-minstrels appear to have been in constant attendance in the king's audience-chamber, where they were called on at the discretion of the *xurrambāš*; and also at state-banquets and upon special occasions; and yearly they presented poems . . . as offerings to the king at the festivals of Mihrgān and Naurūz.[6]

The example of Bārbad, the renowned court minstrel of Khusraw II Parvīz, whose memory is enshrined in later Persian epic and romance, reflects the importance and influence of the poet at court.[7] Although the poetry of these court poets and minstrels has vanished almost completely—due both to its predominantly oral nature and to changes in Persian literary taste

quette, see further A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, pp. 388–410; and the anonymous Arabic *Kitāb al-Tāj*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Bāshā.

[5] Boyce, "Parthian Gōsān," 17–18. Compare Morton Bloomfield's remarks on the Anglo-Saxon scop, in "Understanding Old English Poetry," *Essays and Explorations*, pp. 62–65.

[6] Boyce, "Parthian Gōsān," 22; cf. *Kitāb al-Tāj*, pp. 146–48.

[7] Cf. Boyce, "Parthian Gōsān," 23–25; Huart, *Ancient Persia*, pp. 145–46; E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia (LHP)*, 1:14–16, and idem, "The Sources of Dawlatshāh; with . . . an Excursus on Bārbad and Rūdakī," *JRAS* (1899), 54–61; Rypka, *History*, pp. 55–57. Bārbad's importance is recalled both by Firdawsī in the *Shāhnāmah* and by Niẓāmī in *Khusraw u Shīrīn* and the *Haft Paykar*.

following the Islamic conquest[8]—the abundant reminiscences of it indicate an awareness of the tradition which led to a continuity of the close relationship between poet and court in Islamic times.

The emerging Arab caliphate, stimulated by the demands of the new, urban society that was rapidly displacing the old tribal one, drew heavily on Persian models of court conduct and etiquette. Arab contacts with Persian culture, which had always existed in some form or other, increased markedly, first under the Umayyads but especially with the early Abbasid rulers, whose court protocols (like their bureaucracy) derived in large part from Sassanian practice.[9] Models were provided through the translation and imitation of works of the "mirror for princes" type, manuals of statecraft which had formed an important genre of Sassanian prose literature, by secretaries and scribes who were themselves often of Persian origin, like ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. 750) and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 754).[10] Along with attempts to establish hereditary rule, the seclusion of kings in the Sassanian style came to be practiced. Iranian festivals such as Naw Rūz and Mihrigān were cele-

[8] Cf. Boyce, "Parthian *Gōsān*," 32–41; Clinton, *Manūchihrī*, pp. 2–3.

[9] Victor Danner, "Arabic Literature in Iran," *CHI*, 4:566–67, gives a brief account of early contacts. Persian influence on Umayyad court life increased sharply during the brief reign of Yazīd III (720), whose mother was Persian; see M. Sprengling, "From Persian to Arabic," *AJSLL* 56 (1939), 214–17 et passim. For the Abbasids, see Hodgson, *Venture*, 1:239, 280–84, and the references cited on 505–506; Morony, *Iraq*, especially pp. 27–98. For a valuable caveat against viewing such contacts either in terms of "influence" or of national self-assertion, see Hodgson, 1:40–45, and Morony, pp. 3–9. The view that assumes a recourse to Iranian models by the Abbasids has recently been challenged by Jacob Lassner; see *The Shaping of ʿAbbasid Rule*, pp. 3–4, 13–15 et passim.

[10] See A.K.S. Lambton, "Islamic Mirrors for Princes," *Quaderno dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* 160 (1971), 419–23. As Lambton notes, "The possibility that [Islamic mirrors] were influenced by Byzantine mirrors . . . cannot be ruled out, but whereas there were Arabic translations of Pahlavi *andarz-nāma*, I do not know of any similar translations of Byzantine mirrors" (421). See also C. E. Bosworth, "An Early Arabic Mirror for Princes: Ṭāhir Dhū l-Yamīnain's Epistle to His Son ʿAbdallāh (206/821)," *JNES* 29 (1970), 15, and Danner, "Arabic Literature," passim.

brated with great pomp in Baghdad. Poets were elevated from their earlier roles of tribal panegyrist-satirist or urban minstrel to a position comparable to that enjoyed by the Sassanian court minstrels; and panegyric became the major end of the Arabic *qaṣīdah*, presented to the ruler on ceremonial occasions as well as utilized for the praise of lesser notables.[11] Many poets became the familiars of royalty and aristocracy, some holding the much-coveted office of *nadīm*: boon companion to the ruler.[12]

This important and influential institution, of Iranian origin—the founder of the Sassanian dynasty, Ardashīr Bābakān, is said to have described it as "part of government (*siyāsah*), and the means of strengthening rulership"[13]—was regulated by a strict etiquette, and an abundant literature developed concerning the qualifications and proper conduct of the *nadīm*.[14] The following passage from the ninth-century mirror the *Kitāb al-Tāj* suggests both the significance of the position and the eminent suitability of the poet to occupy it.

> A courtier who accompanies the king (on a journey) must be familiar with the stages of the route and its dis-

[11] Cf. M. M. Badawi, "From Primary to Secondary Qaṣīdas: Thoughts on the Development of Classical Arabic Poetry," *JAL* 11 (1980); and see chapter 2 of this book.

[12] See Badawi, "Qaṣīdas," 10; and especially A. G. Chejne, "The Boon-Companion in Early ʿAbbasid Times," *JAOS* 85 (1965), 327–35. On the urban *majlis*, the "salon" or intimate gathering at which the caliph or vizier would sit with a small group of familiars and boon companions, see G. E. von Grunebaum, "Aspects of Arabic Urban Literature Mostly in Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *Islamic Studies* 8 (1969), 292–93.; J.-E. Bencheikh, "Le cénacle poétique du calife al-Mutawakkil (m. 247)," *BEO* 29 (1977), 39, and idem, "Les secrétaires poètes et animateurs de cénacles aux IIe et IIIe siècles de l'Hégire: contribution à l'analyse d'une production poétique," *JA* 263 (1975), 265–315.

[13] Chejne, "Boon-Companion," 330. Al-Masʿūdī states that the king's courtiers (*nudamāʾ*) occupied the first rank in the social hierarchy established by Ardashīr (*Les prairies d'or*, 1:217–18).

[14] On the Arabic and Persian literature concerning the *nadīm*, see the works cited by Chejne, "Boon-Companion," 328 et passim. For exemplary treatments see *Kitāb al-Tāj*, pp. 71–159, and the chapter on the *nadīm* in Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar, *A Mirror for Princes: The Qābūs Nāma*, trans. R. Levy, pp. 196–200.

> tances, and be able to direct him as to the correct road, its landmarks and its watering-places. He should yawn and sleep but little, nor should he cough or sneeze. His disposition should be balanced, his constitution sound; he should (be able to) make amusing and pleasant conversation, and to make time (appear) short, both day and night. He must be knowledgeable concerning the battles of tribes and their noble deeds, and know both rare verses and current proverbs; he must be acquainted with every art, and be able to choose properly from good or bad: if (for example) he speaks of the Hereafter and the blessings of Paradise, he informs (the king) thereby of the rewards God has prepared for the pious and makes him eager to obtain them; and if he speaks of Hellfire, he warns him of that which leads thereto. Thus does he counsel abstention (from evil) at one time, and encourage him (to do good) at another. The king has the greatest need of one who possesses such qualities, and when he finds such a person, it is proper that he not part from him, unless some matter destroy his immunity and require punishment.[15]

From this passage it becomes clear that the *nadīm* is expected to function not only as boon companion and familiar, but also as a source of counsel and of moral guidance—a function the court poet who might hold this office would be especially qualified to discharge.[16] An understanding of this seldom-acknowledged aspect of the role of *nadīm* and poet alike throws new light on the careers of such famous Abbasid court poets as al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Aḥnaf (d. c. 808), Abū Nuwās (d. 813?), and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyah (d. 828), who served as boon companions to various rulers (Abū Nuwās, for example, was the *nadīm* of the caliph al-Amīn and before that had enjoyed

[15] *Kitāb al-Tāj*, pp. 71–2.

[16] Cf. Boyce, "Parthian *Gōsān*," passim; on the importance of the didactic element in pre-Islamic Persian court poetry, see ibid., 30–32. Moral edification as a duty of the courtier is emphasized in, e.g., Kaykāvūs, *Mirror for Princes*, p. 198, and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G. M. Wickens, pp. 238–39; as an important aspect of the court poet's function, by Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī in his chapter on poetry, *The Chahár Maqála* ("*Four Discourses*"), trans. E. G. Browne, pp. 42–87.

the friendship and confidence of al-Amīn's father, the famed Hārūn al-Rashīd).[17] The position of intimacy enjoyed by such poets may account for their ability to specialize in the minor genres of erotic, bacchic, and gnomic poetry, without being obliged to compose panegyric (for which others were employed);[18] while the fact that their function was not limited to entertainment but incorporated an ethical dimension suggests that, on occasion at least, the personae of the distraught lover and the debauched libertine, so characteristic of Abbasid (and later of Persian) court poetry, may have served as vehicles for messages more profound than appear at first glance. With respect to the latter in particular, the principle, enunciated in the *Kitāb al-Tāj*, that the drunkard is immune from punishment for improprieties uttered while in a state of inebriation, is illuminating: "Drunkenness has limits; should his boon companion reach them, it is most becoming and fitting that the king not reproach him if he unwittingly commits an error, if a (careless) word gets the better of his tongue, or if some fancy causes him to offend."[19] The negative example set in such poetry as that of Abū Nuwās might serve as a forceful reminder of the correct path;[20] similarly, the complaints of the dis-

[17] Chejne, "Boon-Companion," 330. Under al-Rashīd the position was held by al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Aḥnaf and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyah (ibid., 333).

[18] On the problem of specialization see J.-E. Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe*, pp. 111–15, and N. Tomiche, "Réflexions sur la poésie de ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf," *Arabica* 27 (1980), 275–77. Badawi's assertion that "no poet could afford to earn his living as a poet by his occasional poems: unless a poet had independent means of livelihood . . . he had no option but to compose panegyrics if he was to survive on his poetry," and the corollary assumption that, since panegyrics were written to please the patron, the *qitʿah*—the independent poem on love, wine, etc.—was composed by the poet "primarily to please himself, or to relieve his feelings" ("Qaṣīdas," 12), overlooks both the poet's dual identity as courtier and the essentially public nature of medieval Arabic poetry in general, whether composed for formal occasions or for more intimate gatherings. On the other hand, the possibilities offered by the various strategies for indirect discourse available ensured that the poet would to some extent at least be able to find expression for his own views.

[19] *Kitāb al-Tāj*, p. 45.

[20] This dimension of Abū Nuwās's poetry is suggested by Andras Hamori, who describes the poet's libertine persona as being the antithesis of the *wāʿiẓ*,

traught courtly lover in the poems of al-ʿAbbās might suggest to the ruler that his obligations toward his dependents are at least as pressing as those of the lady toward her devoted lover.[21]

With the development of neo-Persian poetry at the courts of local Iranian princes from the late tenth century onward, the close relationship between court and poet continued to prevail. It is important to remember—as Gilbert Lazard reminds us—that the development of Persian literature

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the preacher of orthodox morality. Abū Nuwās preaches by negative example, which can be as potent a form of instruction as positive exhortation. See *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, pp. 50–71. The relations between Abū Nuwās and the Caliph al-Amīn are the subject of many anecdotes, which, though perhaps apocryphal (and undoubtedly politically motivated), are nevertheless representative of the potentials of such a connection; see, for example, Abū Hiffān al-Miḥzamī, *Akhbār Abī Nuwās*, ed. ʿA. A. Farrāj, pp. 23–26, 83–85, 122–23, 129–31, et passim. To Abū Nuwās are also attributed (probably apocryphally as well) some satirical verses on al-Amīn; see Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. S. Khuda Bukhsh and D. S. Margoliouth, p. 353. From the persona of Abū Nuwās derives that of ʿUmar Khayyām as well as the *rind* of later Persian poetry (especially *ghazal*, culminating in Ḥāfiẓ, who explicitly opposes *rind* and *vāʿiẓ*); cf. A. Christensen, *Recherches sur les Rubāʿiyāt de ʿOmar Ḫayyām*, p. 45, who asserts that Abū Nuwās (like his predecessor Bashshār ibn Burd) continued an Iranian poetic tradition dating from Sassanian times.

[21] An anecdote concerning al-ʿAbbās suggests such a function for the love poem: It is recounted that the Caliph al-Rashīd and his favorite, one Maria, had a falling out, and pride prevented their reconciliation, as neither was willing to lose face. The vizier Yaḥyā ibn Khālid al-Barmakī sought al-ʿAbbās's assistance in bringing the two back together. Al-ʿAbbās composed four verses, beginning with "Each of the lovers was angry, desirous [of the other], distressed" (*al-ʿĀshiqāni kilāhumā mutaghaḍḍibu / wa-kilāhumā mutashawwiqun mutaṭarribu*). Yaḥyā sent the verses to al-Rashīd, who commented on their aptness to his own situation and presented them to Maria, whereupon the two were reconciled, and the poet was richly rewarded by all parties. (Quoted from the *Aghānī* by Karam al-Bustānī in his introduction to the *Dīwān* of al-ʿAbbās, pp. 6–7; cf. also Tomiche, "Réflexions," 275–76). A. Guillaume has suggested that Abū al-ʿAtāhiyah's sudden "conversion" from a composer of erotic and bacchic verse to ascetic may have had political implications, coinciding as it did with his coming under the patronage of al-Faḍl ibn Rabīʿ; his ascetic stance and warnings of the transience of worldly glory may have provided a poetic weapon in that minister's intrigues against the Barmakids. See *EI*[2] s.v. "Abū 'l-ʿAtāhiya."

was neither a pure and simple resurgence of the ancient culture nor the expression of an entirely fresh culture of Arab-Islamic origin. The links with ancient Iran had been established partly perhaps by such of the Middle Persian writings as were still being read, but surely much more by what had been handed down to Arabic literature and what still remained, more or less modified and brought up to date, in the living oral tradition. It is in these two sources, Arabic literature and oral Iranian literature, that the origin of the forms and themes of Persian poetry must be sought.[22]

Histories, biographies of poets, and other sources attest to the importance of court poets throughout the medieval period. The famous chapter on poetry in the *Chahār Maqālah* (1155–57) of Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī describes the relationship of mutual benefit that existed between poet and patron; for, since the poet's chief official function was to spread the fame and repute of the ruler,

> so a king cannot dispense with a good poet, who shall conduce to the immortality of his name, and shall record his fame in *díwáns* and books. For when the king receives that command which none can escape [i.e. death], no trace will remain of his army, his treasure, and his store; but his name will endure forever by reason of the poet's verse.[23]

The same writer recounts numerous anecdotes testifying to the influence of poets in the political sphere; similarly, ʿAwfī and

[22] Lazard, "Rise," p. 612. The view that neo-Persian literature represents a reaffirmation of Iranian national identity is exemplified by Wickens, "Persian Literature"; see also Rypka, *History*, pp. 141–42 et passim. On the interpenetration of Arabic poetry into Persian court life, see Danner, "Arabic Literature"; C. E. Bosworth, "The Ṭâhirids and Persian Literature," *Iran* 7 (1969), 103–106; *EI*², s.v. "al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Aḥnaf"; and see R. Blachère, *Un poète arabe du IVe siècle de l'Hégire . . . Abou ṭ-Ṭayyib al-Motanabbî*, pp. 271–84, on the popularity of that poet's verse at the Samanid court (al-Mutanabbī also spent a brief period as panegyrist of the Buyids in western Iran) and the numerous Persian commentaries on his *Dīwān*.

[23] Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī, *Chahár Maqála*, p. 45.

Dawlatshāh record in their biographical works the names of poets (many now only names) who occupied important positions at court. Maḥmūd of Ghaznah is said to have established the title of poet laureate (*malik al-shuʿarā*ʾ) to honor his chief panegyrist, ʿUnṣurī; the institution was preserved by his successors and adopted by his rivals, the Saljuqs.[24] Until the Mongol catastrophe, which altered patterns of patronage and literary taste as radically as it did other aspects of Iranian life, the court poet enjoyed considerable privilege and influence in return for ensuring his patron's repute by means of his eloquent verses; and though his prestige may have diminished somewhat after the establishment of Mongol hegemony, the careers of individual poets still attest to a degree of continued influence and esteem.[25]

In keeping with the ethical dimension of the court poet's function, panegyric preoccupations were never far removed from didactic ones. The ethical dimension of court poetry has received little serious attention from critics eager to associate court poetry in general, and panegyric in particular, with flattery and bombast, despite abundant evidence—provided in particular in philosophical discussions of poetry and in ethical writings, especially those of the mirror-for-princes variety—

[24] Cf. Lazard, "Rise," p. 618. Dawlatshāh provides abundant examples of poets who held the post of *nadīm*; cf. *The Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shuʿará'* ("*Memoirs of the Poets*"), ed. E. G. Browne, pp. 9–10 (Amīr Muʿizzī), 44–5 (ʿUnṣurī), 72 (ʿAzraqī), etc. Bayhaqī's *History* testifies to the importance of poets at the Ghaznavid court; see *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*, ed. Q. Ghanī and ʿA. A. Fayyāẓ, pp. 273–74 (a description of poets receiving honors at the Mihrigān festival), 274–80 (on the state and importance of poetry in general, and a *qaṣīdah* on the same topic), 384–87 (on the importance of poets to kings, and in particular their obligation to impart good advice). See also Gītī Fallāḥ Rastgār, "Ādāb u rusūm u tashrīfāt-i darbār-i Ghaznah az khilāl-i *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*," in *Yādnāmah-i Abū al-Faẓl Bayhaqī*, pp. 424–65. Anvarī's poetic description of his duties as *nadīm* provides further illumination of this important function; see chapter 2, n. 53. On Maḥmūd's institution of the post of *malik al-shuʿarā*ʾ see Dawlatshāh, *Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shuʿará'*, p. 45; on the requirements of the poetic profession in general during the Ghaznavid period, see de Bruijn, *OPP*, pp. 155–60.

[25] On the cultural changes that followed the Mongol invasion, see Rypka, *History*, pp. 248–49, and Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:437–500; see also chapter 6, n. 48.

for the view that an important function of poetry is moral instruction by example. To cite only one instance: al-Fārābī, in his discussion of poetry in the *Fuṣūl al-Madanī*, notes its effect on the imagination in moving the hearer to seek good and avoid evil,[26] in terms that both recall the passage from the *Ki-*

[26] Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl al-Madanī, Aphorisms of the Statesman*, ed. and trans. D. M. Dunlop, p. 49. In the same work, al-Fārābī defines poetry as follows: "All poetry has been invented to produce an excellent imaginative impression of the object. It is of six kinds, three of which are praised and three blamed. Of the three which are praised one is that by which are aimed at the improvement of the rational faculty, and that its actions and thought should be directed towards happiness, the production of an imaginative impression of divine matters and good deeds, excellence in producing an imaginative impression of the virtues and approving them, the reprobating of evil deeds and the vices, and holding them in scorn. The second kind is that by which are aimed at the improvement and correction of those accidents of the soul which are related to strength, and the breaking of them down till they become moderate and cease to be excessive. Such accidents are anger, pride, cruelty, effrontery, love of honour and domination, greed and the like. Those who possess these qualities are led (*sc.* by this kind of poetry) to employ them in good, not evil deeds. The third kind aims at the improvement and correction of the accidents of the soul related to weakness and softness, viz. desires, base pleasures, falseness and slackness of soul, pity, fear, anxiety, grief, shame, luxury, softness, and the like, that they may be broken down and cease to be excessive, till they become moderate, and (the possessor) is led to employ them in good, not evil deeds. The three kinds which are blamed are the opposites of the three which are praised. For the former ruin all that the latter correct, bringing it from the moderate state to excess" (pp. 49–50). See also al-Fārābī's observations on poetic discourse translated by Vicente Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age*, pp. 116–17; and compare the views of Averroes (Ibn Rushd), discussed in ibid., pp. 180–81, and in idem, "Averroes on Poetry," in *Islam and Its Cultural Divergence*, ed. G. L. Tikku, pp. 10–26. The relevance of the views of the philosophers on poetry has been questioned by, among others, G.J.H. van Gelder, who objects that "they are not or hardly concerned at all with Arabic poetry and their direct influence on traditional Arabic theory and criticism is inappreciably slight" (*Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem*, p. 166); however, what scholars generally term "criticism" is, in fact, rhetoric, the orientation of which is quite different, and for serious discussions of the function of poetry one must go to the philosophers, exegetes, ethical writers, and, often as not, the mystics. For analogous problems with respect to medieval European poetry, see Judson B. Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages*, pp. xi–xii et passim. See also Allen's discussion of Averroes' conception of poetry (as transmitted to medi-

tāb al-Tāj concerning the courtier's duty to encourage his prince to pursue good and avoid evil and anticipate Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī's observation that the poet "by acting on the imagination . . . excites the faculties of anger and concupiscence in such a way that by his suggestion men's temperaments become affected with exultation or depression; whereby he conduces to the accomplishment of great things in the order of the world."[27] The thirteenth-century ethical writer Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's reminder of the importance of the courtier's counsel in directing his prince toward the good—that, by following "the path of subtlety and manipulation," he show him "the way of best interest," so that "gradually, in moments of privacy and intimacy, he should be brought (by examples, by tales of past rulers, and by subtle devices) to see the ill-advised form of his own opinion"[28]—expands on a topic addressed by al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) in his *Nasīḥat al-Mulūk*, where he enjoins the ruler to devote

> constant attention to the Biographies of the Kings and inquiry concerning the activities of the Kings of Old; because the present world is the continuation of the empire of the forerunners, who reigned and departed, each leaving a memory to his name and [acquiring] treasure in this life and the next. The treasure for the next life is righteous conduct, and the treasure in this life is a good name among the people.[29]

Who better equipped to provide such guidance than the poet, who, as the repository of tradition, has at his ready command ample material to employ toward this end, as well as the elo-

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eval Europe via Hermann the German's Latin translation of his commentary on Aristotle), "Hermann the German's Averroistic Aristotle and Medieval Poetic Theory," *Mosaic* 9:3 (1976), 67–81.

[27] Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī, *Chahár Maqála*, p. 43; the essay is filled with concrete examples of the ethical (and political) effect of poetry.

[28] Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Nasirean Ethics*, p. 238.

[29] Al-Ghazzālī, *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings (Nasīḥat al-Mulūk)*, tr. F.R.C. Bagley, p. 74. On the value for the ruler of reading history, compare R. F. Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 138–45.

quence to produce the desired imaginative effect? I will examine various ways in which the medieval Persian court poet addressed himself, in general, to the ethical dimension of his task, and specifically in the major genres of court poetry, panegyric, romance, and love lyric; this introductory chapter is intended to provide a theoretical and critical background to the chapters that follow, together with a brief consideration of precedents in the related Arabic tradition, and of parallels in the Western.

Courtly Language, Courtly Love

The question arises as to the means to be employed in his task by the court poet, who, if he presumes to preach to his prince, is surely destined for a short career, if not for a swift journey to the next world. More particularly, how is the poet to impart moral guidance—whether generalized or directed to a specific issue or circumstance—in the major genres of court poetry, which (though they may incorporate a gnomic element) are not overtly didactic? Finally, since the poet-courtier is necessarily obliged to couch his advice (or his criticism, if the occasion demands) in oblique and indirect language, which will at once conceal and reveal and which will not offend his patron, how is he to develop a poetic style that will enable him to achieve these ends?

The *Kitāb al-Tāj* instructs the courtier on how to address the king:

> He who addresses the king should not employ base language or expressions, saying (for example), "Listen to me," or "Understand what I'm saying," or "You, there," or, "Don't you see?" Such (expressions show) the speaker's incapacity of expression; they are useless interpolations in his discourse, a deviation from pleasing eloquence, and a sign of dull wits and small substance. *Let*

> *his speech flow smoothly, his style be pleasant and coherent, and coarse expressions rarely used.*[30]

This advocacy of subtle indirection recalls Renaissance rhetorician George Puttenham's advice to the court poet that, in pleading his suit, he speak only

> of pleasant & lovely causes and nothing perillous, such as be those [suits] for the triall of life, limme, or livelyhood; and before judges neither sower nor severe, but in the eare of princely dames, yong ladies, gentlewomen and courtiers . . . and that all his abuses tende but to dispose the hearers to mirth and sollace *by pleasant conveyance and efficacy of speach*. . . .[31]

On the close association between courtly manners and poetic style in the Renaissance, Daniel Javitch observes:

> Not only would the ornament, the feigning, and the play esteemed in court be exemplary for the poet, but by the very possibility of association these virtues of proper courtliness would help to justify the stylistic procedures that have permanently characterized poetic discourse. For poetry had always possessed and had been seen to possess the ornamental, deceptive, and playful properties that proper court conduct eventually shared with it. . . . The concurrence of the court's esteem for artistic conduct and the rise of poetic activity could not but enhance the value of such activity as well as encourage it. . . .
>
> But the poet's role was not just enhanced because his beautiful tactics corresponded to ones cultivated by courtiers. A code of conduct like Castiglione's [*The Courtier*, discussed earlier by Javitch] attests that beautiful play need not exclude didactic purposes. It reveals, moreover, that in the courtly milieu dominating society, didactic

[30] *Kitāb al-Tāj*, pp. 112–13 (my emphasis), and cf. also pp. 83–84, where the author criticizes the "poets of old" (i.e., the Arabs) for addressing kings and caliphs, and even the Prophet, by their *kunyah*.

[31] George Puttenham, *The Arte of Englishe Poesie*, quoted in Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness*, p. 78 (my emphasis).

Poet Reading to His Young Patron (British Library Ms. 132)

> purposes must assume recreative form. The Renaissance poet, believing as he did in the power of his art to improve society, may not have needed to be assured that his own recreative activity could bear profit. But because he could instruct while delighting, because his didactic strategies were so acceptable to the courtly milieu, he could present himself as an indispensable moral agent in a high society not disposed to be edified by more severe methods.[32]

That an analogous relationship between courtly manners and poetic diction existed in both the Arabic and the Persian traditions of court poetry may be inferred from the testimony

[32] Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness* pp. 104–6; for a full discussion of Puttenham's work and its connections with the qualities required of a good courtier, see especially pp. 50–75. The didactic ends of Renaissance poetry are perhaps best expressed by Sidney's *Apology* (see ibid., pp. 93–104); many of Sidney's statements—such as that poetry instructs by *moving* rather than by *teaching* (p. 103)—bear a striking resemblance to statements on the effect of poetry in the writings of the medieval Islamic philosophers. Cf. Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, pp. 116–17; and see also Ismail Dahiyat's discussion of Avicenna's (Ibn Sīnā) views on poetry, *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle*, pp 34–38.

of historical and written records that bear witness to the emphasis on manners and decorum, the delight in verbal play, and the general admiration for elegance of all sorts characteristic of their courtly milieus.[33] The brilliance of the Abbasid court is recorded in histories such as al-Masʿūdī's (d. 956) *Murūj al-Dhahab*, while the cultivation of a refined and luxurious lifestyle is reflected in *adab* literature. The *Kitāb al-Muwashshā* of al-Washshā' (d. 936), for example, describes the elite group known as the *ẓurafā'* (sing. *ẓarīf*), the "refined people" of Baghdad, and expounds on not only the manners, dress, and accouterments proper to this class, but the standards of discourse appropriate to them as well. Not surprisingly, eloquent speech (*faṣāḥah*) is considered one of the two indispensable constituents of the fundamental virtue of the *ẓarīf, murūwah* (chivalry), the other being the ability to lead (*riyāsah*).[34] Four qualities distinguish the *ẓarīf*: *faṣāḥah, balāghah, ʿiffah,* and *nizāḥah*—elegant speech, rhetorical eloquence, decency (chaste conduct), and probity; however, according to one authority, "Elegance (*ẓarf*) resides solely in the tongue, for to say 'so-and-so is a *ẓarīf*' means to say that he is eloquent, and of excellent speech (*balīgh jayyid al-manṭiq*)."[35] Significantly, elegance is also strongly associated with the proper conduct of love (a good third of the book is devoted to the topic); as we shall see, the decorum of love and that of discourse are closely related.

Such emphasis on decorum—both of discourse and of love—reflects to a great extent the exigencies of urban, courtly life and the tastes of the courtly audience. The delight of this

[33] Cf., for Arabic, the descriptions of court life in Mez, *Renaissance*, pp. 379–408 et passim, and the sources cited therein; von Grunebaum "Aspects," 293–94; M. M. Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*; and for Persian, Rastgār, "Ādāb va rusūm," and Hodgson, *Venture*, especially 2:487 (on the relation of literary language to courtliness).

[34] Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Washshā', *Kitāb al-Muwaššā*, ed. R. E. Brunnow, p. 32; the two qualities recall the distinction between speech and action that recurs in ethical literature. For discussions of this work see Lois A. Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs*, pp. 13–15 et passim; J.-C. Vadet, *L'Esprit courtois en Orient dans les cinq premiers siècles de l'Hégire*, pp. 317–51.

[35] Al-Washshā', *al-Muwaššá*, p. 41.

audience in verbal elegance and play, coupled with the need for an oblique mode of expression that would make the moral lessons of poetry more palatable by "hiding them in such [things] as have a pleasant taste" (to quote Sir Philip Sidney),[36] were undoubtedly among the factors that contributed to the emergence, in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, of the *badīʿ* style, which came to dominate Abbasid poetry and exerted a pervasive influence on Persian. One of the acknowledged originators of this style was the court poet Bashshār ibn Burd (d. 784), who was of Persian descent and whose frequent criticisms of Arab culture and values, when not expressed directly in his satires, were voiced indirectly in *qaṣīdah*s and love poems, in a manner made possible only by the new style. Similarly, Abū Nuwās's flights of licentious bawdry rely to a great extent on the possibilities offered by this style, and their elegance of expression often acts as ironic commentary on their frequently obscene content.[37] The characteristics of the *badīʿ* style, the rhetorical devices subsumed under it, and the circumstances surrounding its appearance and development have been discussed extensively.[38] Two points, however, have re-

[36] In the *Apology for Poetry*; quoted by Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness*, p. 98.

[37] I am indebted to James Monroe for pointing out this feature of Abū Nuwās's style; the humor that it engenders provides a safety valve, making the poet's implicit criticism more palatable than those more overtly expressed (e.g., in the satires of Bashshār, whose career ended ultimately in disaster).

[38] See, e.g., S. A. Bonebakker, "Reflections on the *Kitāb al-Badīʿ* of Ibn al-Muʿtazz," *Atti del 3. Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici*, pp. 191–209; Amjad Trabulsi, *La critique poétique des arabes*, pp. 136–63. On the role of Muʿtazilite speculative theology in the development of *badīʿ*, see S. P. Stetkevych, "Toward a Redefinition of 'Badīʿ' Poetry," *JAL* 12 (1981), 1–29. The prevailing view that *badīʿ*—which "may be defined as rhetorical embellishment which is consciously sought after by the poets and thus gradually evolves as a principle of art rather than a mere instrument of it"—arose because "the traditionalism of Arabic poetry with regard to its content . . . compelled the poets to give exclusive attention to the 'attire' of their products" (W. Heinrichs, "Literary Theory: The Problem of Its Efficiency," in *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum, p. 25) is reiterated by Badawi, who laments that "there is hardly a single Abbasid poet who managed to escape altogether the influence of *badīʿ*" (Qaṣīdas, 22).

ceived relatively little attention: first, its effect on the overall organization of the poem;[39] and second, its relation to the emergence of allegory.[40] Both factors exerted a decisive influence on the development, not merely of court poetry, but of the entire medieval Arabo-Persian tradition; they are of particular importance with respect to that type of poetry which exploits

[39] On *badīʿ* as an organizational factor, see Bencheikh, *Poétique*, p. 127 n. 57 et passim; and see Hamori, *Art*, pp. 101–41, and "Form and Logic" on the use of figures as organizing strategies. On the dynamics of various figures (and to some extent of *badīʿ* in general) see also, for Arabic, John Wansbrough, "A Note on Arabic Rhetoric," in *Lebende Antike: Symposion für Rudolf Suhnel*, ed. H. Meller and H.-J. Zimmermann, pp. 55–63 (specifically on *al-madhhab al-kalāmī*), and idem, "Arabic Rhetoric and Qur'anic Exegesis," *BSOAS* 31 (1968), 469–85; and for Persian, J. C. Bürgel, "Remarques sur une relation entre la logique aristotélienne et la poésie arabo-persane," *Correspondence d'Orient* 11 (1970), 131–43, and Robert Rehder, "The Unity of the Ghazals of Ḥāfiẓ," *Der Islam* 51 (1974), 88–93.

[40] In this respect *badīʿ* itself is another manifestation of the general interest of the period in the potentials of discourse of all sorts for oblique statement and polysemy; the primary manifestation is of course the proliferation of various schools of *taʾwīl*, allegorical exegesis (Muʿtazilite, Shiʿite, mystical), on which see especially Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langue mystique*. I have discussed some of the general problems relating to allegorical style in an earlier essay on Ḥāfiẓ (see "Allegorical Techniques in the *Ghazals* of Hāfez," *Edebiyat* 4 [1973], 1–40) and will not repeat them here, taking allegorical expression to be one of the givens of medieval literature and only cautioning (along with the usual caveats against equating "allegorical" with mystical [cf. chapter 6 of this book]) the importance of remembering that, as Judson B. Allen reminds us, "allegorical statements in the Middle Ages were not, in our terms, either referential or symbolic, even though the forms of the sentences in which they expressed their allegories are the same as those which we now understand as symbolic. Therefore the array of terms, usually religious, which tended frequently to appear on the right-hand side of their allegorical statements were not by their location endorsed as 'right meanings.' Much more than this, these statements were simple descriptions . . . the whole class of [which] depended, as descriptions, on the presumption of a relationship of analogous parallelism between the level of reality to which the left-hand term belonged and that to which the right-hand term belonged . . . [and which] were not as much referential, or even linguistic, as cosmological. They presumed and reflected and constituted by their existence a particular classification and relational arrangement of all that was" (J. B. Allen and Theresa Anne Moritz, *A Distinction of Stories*, pp. 64–65. The particular relevance of Allen's statement to this study will become apparent in the final portion of the present chapter.

to the greatest extent the potentials of oblique expression for a wide range of ethico-didactic purposes: the poetry of love.

The predominant topic of Arabo-Persian court poetry, in both major and minor genres, is, without question, love; and the type of love depicted is in most cases (barring the obvious exceptions of satire and parody) that which—as indicated in the Preface—deserves the term *courtly* by virtue of its representation of an ideal aspired to by the courtly milieu. Although traditional scholarship has linked the emergence of courtly love in the Islamic tradition with the ʿUdhrī poets—those distraught lovers who wandered in the deserts, burning with unrequited (and chaste) passion which they expressed in their verses[41]—the problems connected with this attribution are numerous; not least of these is the doubt surrounding the very existence of many of these poets. Moreover, it is clear that, what-

[41] The complex problem of the authenticity and attribution of ʿUdhrī poetry has been debated at length by various scholars; cf. Hamori, *Art*, pp. 39–47, and particularly pp. 45–46; Vadet, *Esprit courtois*, passim, especially pp. 353–73, 393–94. Vadet considers the ascription of "courtly" attitudes—in particular the devotion of the poet-lover to a single lady and his unconditional loyalty to her—to be the product of a later age, an age whose ideals are exemplified by the *Kitāb al-Muwashshā* and the poetry of al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Aḥnaf (see pp. 359–60, 393; and cf. also Tomiche, "Réflexions," 284 et passim). R. Blachère, in his discussion of the ʿUdhrī poets both as poets and in the context of the "romans d'amour" in which they figure as heroes, notes in particular that much of the poetry attributed to them—especially that in which the "esprit courtois" figures prominently—is undoubtedly posterior to the poets themselves (see *Histoire de la littérature arabe*, 3:649–60, 711–16 et passim). The "romans d'amour" that tend to make of poets like ʿUrwah ibn Ḥizām, Qays ibn al-Mulawwaḥ ("Majnūn"), and other obscure figures heroes of a courtly (and later of a mystical) conception of love are largely the creation of later anthologists and apologists for love and express a nostalgia for, and a search for origins in, an idealized "Beduinity" that never existed in reality. Analogous tendencies in Western scholarship define the "courtly love" of the troubadours as essentially Platonic and chaste; cf. in particular Denomy, "Courtly Love," and idem, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love," *Medieval Studies* 6 (1944), especially 175–88. It is possible to see in the equation of *al-ḥubb al-ʿudhrī* with *amour courtois* a response to a terminological, rather than a conceptual, problem: as mentioned in the Preface, Arabic lacks an equivalent term for the concept most often designated in the West as *fin' amors*.

ever its ultimate sources, the image of love presented by the court poets of the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods (to say nothing of their Persian successors) is that cultivated by a mannered and refined court culture and dependent both on courtly conventions and protocols and on the courtier's attachment to "play" for its existence. At the same time, the ideal itself transcends the specific limitations of "real life" to encompass an ethical dimension the full implications of which extend beyond itself. As the decorum of the language employed to depict this conception of love parallels its courtliness in being elegant, refined, and susceptible to varied interpretations, so the value systems implied involve a similar and related set of parallels.[42] In the Arabo-Persian tradition taken as a whole, the level of sophistication both of the concept of love and of the language in which it is depicted develops over the centuries; Ḥāfiẓ's love poems represent a considerable refinement over those of Jamīl, but many of the typical motifs of the fourteenth-century Persian *ghazal* may be found inchoate in the eighth-century Arab poet's *Dīwān*.

Central to this concept of love is the principle of the lover's unswerving devotion and fidelity to his lady, of loyalty and service, which parallel those expected of the courtier. The analogy between the relationships of lover and beloved and of poet and patron, the similitude perceived between the lover's stance and that of the courtier, constitute important features of court poetry, which will be explored in the chapters that follow. Here I wish only to suggest that many poems that are os-

[42] Some scholars consider courtly love as a primarily stylistic phenomenon; Steadman, for example, notes: "Like the ideals of 'courtoisie' and *gentillesse*, the problem of 'courtly love' cannot be divorced from the problem of literary decorum. All of these terms involved ideals of behavior proper to a particular social class. . . . The term 'courtly love' . . . denotes the type of behaviour suitable to persons of noble rank. As such it represents (essentially and specifically) the application of a rhetorical principle to the theme of *amor*" ("Courtly Love," p. 11). While I agree substantially with Steadman, J. B. Allen, Javitch, and others that earlier ages were more self-consciously and deliberately "rhetorical," this view ignores the important principle of analogous value systems that allowed the poetry of courtly love to be (to use a modern term) "relevant" in more than merely subjective terms.

tensibly about love are also about courtliness and courtly ethics, and, in particular, about the problematic issues of loyalty and justice. This specific aspect of Arabo-Persian love poetry further supports its designation as "courtly"; and it is interesting to speculate (though we can only speculate) that the parallelism perceived between love and courtliness may have been present in pre-Islamic Iranian literature. Certainly it is absent (or virtually so) from pre-Islamic Arabic poetry; for, however intense, love is doomed by the very nature of tribal life to be ephemeral, and this ephemerality constitutes the primary topic of love poetry.[43] We can only conjecture, on the basis of reminiscences in later works, about the nature of the love poetry composed by the court poets of pre-Islamic Iran; but it seems safe to assume that the close mixture of the erotic and the courtly, the use of matters of love to figure matters of state (as well as the sense of the participation of both in a larger ethical scheme) date from antiquity.[44]

Certainly there exists abundant evidence in early Arabic sources testifying to the Persian interest in matters of love; as an example, it suffices to recall al-Masʿūdī's description of a *majlis* (salon) of Yaḥyā ibn Khālid al-Barmakī devoted to a discussion of the topic, in which scholars and theologians of Persian origin figure prominently.[45] The importance of authorities of Persian descent in the development of love theory, and in general as reciters of stories and traditions concerning love

[43] Cf. Vadet, *Esprit courtois*, pp. 55–60.

[44] This mingling of the erotic and the courtly may have been a characteristic of the Parthian romance of Vis and Ramin, whose eleventh-century Persian treatment by Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī is discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. On the "characteristically Persian" nature of the romantic tale as exemplified by *Vīs u Rāmīn*, see J. Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods," *CHI*, 5:558.

[45] Al-Masʿūdī, *Les prairies d'or*, 6:368–76; the whole spectrum of contemporary views on love is represented. The Barmakids themselves had been Buddhist, and not Zoroastrian, prior to their conversion to Islam (Hodgson, *Venture*, 1:295); thus it is not sufficient to examine Zoroastrian sources alone in an attempt to ascertain pre-Islamic Iranian views on love. On the importance of Buddhism in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Iran, see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire du bouddhisme dans l'Iran musulman," in *Le monde iranien et l'Islam*. 2:1–72.