Rebecca Gould

The Persian Translation of Arabic Aesthetics: Rādūyānī's Rhetorical Renaissance

Abstract: Notwithstanding its value as the earliest extant New Persian treatment of the art of rhetoric, Rādūyānī's *Interpreter of Rhetoric* (*Tarjumān al-Balāgha*) has yet to be read from the vantage point of comparative poetics. Composed in the Ferghana region of modern Central Asia between the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth century, Rādūyānī's vernacularization of classical Arabic norms inaugurated literary theory in the New Persian language. I argue here that Rādūyānī's vernacularization is most consequential with respect to its transformation of the classical Arabic tropes of metaphor (*istiʿāra*) and comparison (*tashbīh*) to suit the new exigencies of a New Persian literary culture. In reversing the relation between metaphor and comparison enshrined in Arabic aesthetics, Rādūyānī concretized the Persian contribution to the global study of literary form.

Keywords: comparison, simile, metaphor, New Persian, rhetoric, vernacularization, literary theory, poetics

T he difference made by Islamic literary theory in a global context becomes clear when we compare *mimesis*, the concept of literary representation that grounds many classical and modern aesthetic systems, with the philologically oriented language-based rhetoric of classical Arabic and Persian literary theory. For Aristotle, as for his teacher Plato, the basic task of *poesis* is to represent reality. For Arabo-Persian literary theory, the task of poetry is less to represent reality than to surpass it; the poetic imagination generates

a discourse surpassing that given by literal language.[1] Where Aristotle points to plot as the basic element of a literary work,[2] Arabic and Persian literary critics foreground the role of the imagination (*khayāl*) in the creation of the literary artifact. Thus, for Aristotle, *phantasia*, the Arabic *khayāl* (or *takhyīl*, the word used to translate *phantasia*) is "mere outward show, pleasing to the hearer" but necessarily a superficial aspect of rhetoric.[3] For classical Arabic literary theory, the assertion that "the best poetry is that which lies the most" (*aḥsan al-shiʿr akdhabuhu*) became a commonly-cited slogan for poetry's efficacy.[4] A literary tradition that regards the best poetry as that which lies the most will also refuse to subordinate the literary imagination to rhetoric and persuasion, as in Aristotle, or to philosophical wisdom (*sophia*), as in Plato. In contrast with Platonic aesthetics, reality, even truthful reality, is not necessarily the target of the classical Arabic poet's imagination.

In contrast to a conception of mimesis premised on verisimilitude, Arabic literary theory regards figurative language as the arbiter of poetic meaning. The distinctiveness and sophistication of Arabic literary theory has long been appreciated by specialists, even though its integration into global literary thought remains incomplete.[5] Less understood, and less widely appreciated even by specialists, is the contribution made by Persian literary theory to the conceptualization of the literary imagination. Increasingly, specialists are coming to recognize the divergences between the Persian and Arabic contributions. Bo Utas has argued that "the enormous prestige that came to be accumulated by poetic and other literary uses of Persian gave the aesthetic dimension a dominant position in the Iranian view of language, and even of culture in general."[6] While this field of inquiry is still in infancy, it represents one of the most promising areas of comparative research within global literary theory.

---

[1]See Karla Mallette, "Beyond Mimesis: Aristotle's Poetics in the Medieval Mediterranean," *PMLA* 124 (2009): 583–591, and Rebecca Gould, "The *Poetics* from Athens to al-Andalus: Ibn Rushd's Grounds for Comparison," *Modern Philology* 112.1 (2014): 1–24.

[2]Aristotle privileges plot to character on ethical grounds: "though we consider people's characters in deciding what sort of persons they are we call them successful or successful only with reference to their actions" (*Poetics* 1450b, in *Ancient Literary Criticism*, ed. D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1972], 98).

[3]*Rhetoric*, 1404a, trans. Sir Richard Jebb (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1909).

[4]Al-Jurjānī quotes a slight variation on this phrase: *"khayr al-shiʿr akdhabuhu"* (*Asrār al-Balāgha*, ed. Ritter [Istanbul: Istanbul Government Press, 1954], 243).

[5]For insight into the current state of inquiry, see the landmark collection edited by Geert Jan van Gelder and Marlé Hammond: *Takhyil: The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics* (Oxford: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2009).

[6]Bo Utas, "The Aesthetic Use of New Persian," *Edabiyat* 9 (1998): 1.

In the spirit of furthering this line of inquiry, this essay elucidates, for the first time in English, the contribution of a text that entered the world at the crossroads of the Arabic and Persian traditions to the conceptualization of literary knowledge. Muḥammad bin ʿUmar Rādūyānī's *Interpreter of Rhetoric* (*Tarjumān al-Balāgha*, henceforth *Tarjumān*) coincided with the advent of New Persian, the literary language that was formed by infusing an Iranian vernacular with an Arabic lexicon and script. Poetry had been composed in New Persian since the age of Rūdakī (858–940) and Ferdowsī's *Shāhnāma* (c. 1025), but scholarship in New Persian was as rare as was the language's grammatical formalization. Éva Jeremías states the matter forthrightly when she writes that "Iranians did not deal with the grammatical problems of their mother tongue" during the classical period of New Persian literature.[7] Looking ahead in time, the Indo-Persian poet Amīr Khusrow (d. 1258) wrote "for the sweet speaks of Persians / no grammatical system has been devised by the eloquent ones [*ahl-i bayān*] / I would like to undertake this task / and to set matters straight / but as everyone knows the language, / there is no need."[8]

Central Asia had witnessed the rapid spread of New Persian under the patronage of the Samanids (10–11th centuries).[9] By the time Rādūyānī set out to compose his rhetorical treatise, Ferdowsī had already completed the most important epic in Persian literature. Rūdakī and scores of other Persian poets whose work are no longer extant had pioneered new genres and reinvented Arabic ones.[10] Also under Samanid patronage, Balʿamī translated al-Ṭabarī's *History of the Apostles and the Kings* (*Tārīkh al-rūsūl wa al-mulūk*) into Persian. Aside from this landmark endeavor to translate Arabic historical discourse into Persian, scholarly writing in the eastern Islamic world was for many centuries after the composition of Rādūyānī's treatise confined primarily to Arabic. Against the background of this linguistic division of disciplinary labor, whereby Persian was reserved for poetry and Arabic for scholarship, Rādūyānī's decision to compose his treatise

---

[7]Éva M. Jeremías, "Grammar and Linguistic Consciousness in Persian," in Charles Melville, ed., *Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies held in Cambridge 11th to 15th September 1995* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1999), 20.

[8]Amīr Khusraw Dihlawī, *Nuh Sipihr of Amir Khusraw*, ed. Waḥīd Mīrzā (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 173–173 (Persian text).

[9]For overviews of the New Persian literary language, see G. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," R.N. Frye, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran,* vol. 4 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975), chap. 19, p. 595–632, and Lazard, *La Formation de la langue persane* (Paris: Peeters, 1995), 49–80.

[10]Some of this poetry is collected in G. Lazard, *Les Premiers poètes persans (IXe - Xe siècles). Fragments rassemblés, édités et traduits* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1964). 2 vols.

on rhetoric in Persian marked a new moment in Persian literary consciousness. Although the sporadic textual record makes absolute claims impossible, *Tarjumān* appears in many respects like a genuine first in the history of New Persian literature.

By way of better clarifying the importance of this text, I will dwell on its way of conceiving a series of key literary terms, before turning to the broader implications of these taxonomies. In light of Rādūyānī's merger of translation and interpretation in his treatise, I adhere wherever possible to consistent (if imperfect) English renderings of Rādūyānī's ultimately untranslatable lexicon. The key concepts to bear in mind as I proceed are comparison (*tashbīh*), metaphor (*istiʿāra*), analogy (*tamthīl*), literal reality (*ḥaqīqa*), figural reality (*majāz*), idea (*maʿnī*) and utterance (*lafẓ*). I argue that the relationship between the first two of these terms shifted when the language of eastern Islamic literary culture switched from Arabic to Persian. Given the fluidity of the significations I explore, each of these renderings is open to contestation. Yet their translation necessarily precedes their incorporation into global literary theory.

While this article argues for Rādūyānī's importance to the history of Islamic literary theory, it also seeks to do more. Beyond making the incontestable point that the earliest extant treatise of New Persian literary theory merits deeper analysis, I want to make a case for the relevance of this work for the global study of literary form, in particular with respect to its account of the relationship between comparison and metaphor, which moves significantly beyond the Aristotelian reduction of all similes to metaphorical modes. By way of clarifying the method through which Rādūyānī's argument proceeds, I begin with a poem that illustrates the stakes of the dialectic between metaphor and comparison and which recapitulates its historical trajectory.

From Metaphor to Comparison

Rādūyānī's contemporary Mujīr al-Dīn Baylaqānī is one of the most important, if least known, poets of twelfth-century Azerbaijan. Typically of the New Persian aesthetic during this century, Mujīr translates the theory of poetic tropology (*badīʿ*), into the practice of poetry:

<div dir="rtl">

انوار مهر زآب رخش مستعار شد

امواج بحر زکف تو مستعیر باد[11]

</div>

---

[11]Mujīr al-Dīn Baylaqānī, *Dīwān-i Mujīr al-Dīn Baylaqānī,* ed. Muḥammad Abādī (Tabriz: Muʾassassah-ʿi Tārīkh va Farhang-i Irān, 1358), 48.

> The sun's rays were borrowed [*musta'r shod*] from the rainbow's shine.
> May the sea's waves borrow [*musta'īr bād*] from your palm.

Here, as in countless other contemporaneous poems, poetic alchemy motivates a commentary on poetic signification. Mujīr draws on the language of rhetoric (*balāgha*) to advance ontological claims concerning the relation between language and being. To say that the sun reflects the light of a rainbow is not merely to rehearse a repertoire that many Persian poets prior to Mujīr had deployed. Rather, it is the language through which this transaction is expressed that is striking. The sun's light does not reflect; it is borrowed (*musta'ār shod*). Not coincidentally, this borrowing process refers at once to the movement of imagery within the poem and to the technical term for metaphor (*isti'āra*) in Arabo-Persian rhetoric, which derives from the verbal noun meaning "to borrow." An object that partakes of another's being—in this case the sun borrowing from a rainbow—becomes, by virtue of its capacity to move from language to being and back to language, the driving force behind Mujīr's metapoetics.

Both *musta'ār* and *musta'īr*, the key terms in this distich, are participial forms of the Arabic root for borrowing (ر و ع). *Musta'ār* is a passive participle while *musta'īr* is an active participle; *isti'āra*, metaphor, is a verbal noun of this same root. With the second hemistich, which asks that the sea's waves receive their outlines from the lover's hands, we arrive at a new moment in metaphor's literary history. Mujīr's term for "sea"—*baḥr*—also means "meter" in Arabo-Persian prosody. Meter, verse, and not only the sea's waves, borrow their lines from the lover's hand.

The successive images of the sun's rays, the lover's face and hands, and the sea's waves, successively abdicate metaphorical meaning to literal signification. Whereas the lover is grammatically active in the first hemistich, he or she is passive in the second one. The sun receives light from the lover's face; the lover's hand inscribes its lines on the sea's waves. As with the lover's body, so with Mujīr's verse. His poetry alchemically transforms the material substance of his text: the sun's rays are transposed onto the lover's face, and the sea's waves are transposed onto the lover's hand. The natural world metamorphoses into the human body; the poetic self becomes the center of an emptiness formerly filled by the cosmos. Mujīr's verse inflects the world outside. The movement from active to passive from the first to the second hemistich proceeds logically from the dialectic leading from metaphor conceived of as a loan to the reception of the new poetic creation

within one's being.[12] This movement also recapitulates Persian literary theory's general trajectory over the course of its gradual break with Arabic rhetorical traditions. Amidst this process, the Arabic emphasis on metaphor yielded to a Persian emphasis on comparison. To rephrase this transformation in terms of Rādūyānī's lexicon, *istiʿāra* yielded to *tashbīh*.

Borrowed (*mustaʿār*) and borrower (*mustaʿīr*), two of the three basic elements in Mujīr's lexicon for metaphor, correspond to source and target in European poetic systems.[13] Their invocation by Mujīr leads us to this essay's basic goal: to document the movement from the Arabic *istiʿāra* to the Persian *tashbīh*. Without drawing explicitly on the *tashbīh* lexicon as he does elsewhere, Mujīr's distich nonetheless relates poetic signification to cosmic creation. Our task here is to discover how these conceptual configurations and the poetry they engendered transformed twelfth-century Persian literary culture. The belatedness of theory in relation to its object makes it possible to read poetic metaphor against itself by drawing on the examples that appear in rhetorical manuals, and to perceive how literary texts can illuminate details that literary criticism, taken by itself, cannot explain.

ARABIC RHETORIC BEFORE THE NEW PERSIAN RENAISSANCE

A brief tour through the history of Arabic rhetoric is necessary to clarify Rādūyānī's endeavor to articulate a distinctively Persian poetics from within the Arabic rhetorical tradition.[14] ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, the most important theorist in Arabic rhetoric, wrote *Asrār al-Balāgha* (*Secrets of Rhetoric*) in part to correct what he saw as a lamentable tendency within the Arabic literary theory of his time to privilege form (*lafẓ*) over meaning (*maʿnā*). In the centuries following al-Jurjānī, *balāgha* compendiums based largely on his work tended to subordinate tropology (*badīʿ*) to elucidation (*bayān*). Another transformation

---

[12]For the first kind of metaphor, see Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind: opinions on metaphor and the early meaning of istiʿāra in Arabic poetics* (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1977).

[13]I adopt here the terminology of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 126–7 and *passim*. Source/target roughly corresponds to, in turn, topic/analogue (Heinrichs) and tenor/vehicle (I.A. Richards).

[14]Earlier Persian precedents for Rādūyānī's achievement are no longer extant. Rādūyānī himself cites two lost treatises on ʿarūḍ (prosody) by Abū Yūsuf and Abūʾl-ʿAlāʾ al-Shūshtarī as precedents for his own (*Tarjumān*, 3). Another lost earlier text is Rashīd Samarqandī's *Zinatnāma* (*Ornate poetics*).

occurred, not only in the content, but also in the structure of Arabic *balāgha* in the thirteenth century, with the encyclopedic compendium of al-Sakkākī (d. 1229), and its later abridgements by al-Qazwīnī (d. 1338) and al-Taftazanī (d.1389).[15] Prior to these thirteenth and four-teenth century compendiums, *bayān* overlapped with *badīʿ* in literary theory; much of the epistemic work done by elucidation (*bayān*) in later centuries was done by tropology (*badīʿ*) in the early centuries of Per-sian and Arabic literary theory.[16] Writing prior to al-Sakkākī, Rādūyānī did not inherit the threefold division of rhetoric (*ʿilm al-maʿānī, ʿilm al-bayān, ʿilm al-badīʿ*) that became canonical with the establishment of the *madrasa* curriculum in the twelfth century.[17] For Rādūyānī, *badīʿ* encompassed the entire range of *balāgha*, and included both metaphor (*istiʿāra*) and comparison (*tashbīh*).

Notwithstanding the evidence for the existence of prior Persian *badīʿ* treatises, Rādūyānī translated the genre into Persian for the first time in systematic fashion.[18] That this text was falsely attributed to the Ghaznavid poet Farrukhī (best known for his *qaṣīda* laud-ing Maḥmūd's plundering of the temple at Somnath in 1025) during almost the entirety of its reception history further testifies to Rādūyānī's obscurity within Persian literary history.[19] Not least

---

[15]The titles of these texts are, respectively, *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm* (*Key to the Sciences*), *Talhkīṣ al-Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm* (*Summary of the Key to the Sciences*), and *al-Muṭawwal fī-l-macʿānī* (*Elabo-ration of Meanings*). Al-Sakkākī's Miftāḥ has been translated and analyzed by Udo Simon in *Mittelalterliche arabische Sprachbetrachtung zwischen Grammatik und Rhetorik: ʿilm al-maʿānī bei as-Sakkaki* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1993).

[16]William Smyth has done much to clarify these distinctions. See esp. his articles "The Making of a Textbook," *Studia Islamica* 78 (1993): 99–116, and "Controversy in a Tradition of Commentary: The Academic Legacy of al-Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112 (1992): 589–597. S. R. Faruqi notes that al-Sakkākī's compendium was "the standard textbook on poetics and rhetoric in Indo-Islamic schools for more than four centuries" ("Constructing a Literary History, a Canon, and a Theory of Poetry," *Social Scientist* 2 (1995): 76).

[17]For the establishment of the *madrasa* system during the twelfth century, see Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni ʿUlamaʾ of Elev-enth- Century Baghdad* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 27, and David R. Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics: How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2011), 252, 271.

[18]While acknowledging the precedents in prosody for Rādūyānī's treatment, Ateş concludes that in the case of *Tarjumān*: "On voit que nous sommes vraiment en face d'un ouvrage persan, le premier dans son genre" ("Être sur le Tarcumān al-balāġa et sur la manière dont la poésie persane s'est conservée jusqu'à nos jours," *Türk dili ve edebiyatı dergisi*, 3: 257–65, 1949, p. 258).

[19]On the false attribution to Farrukhī, see Ateş, "Tarcumān al-balāġa, das frü-heste neupersische Werk," *Oriens* 1 (1948): 48–52; idem, "Étude," 258. This false attri-bution (which may have been initiated by Yāqūt) appears in the most important *tadhkira* from late-medieval Transoxiania, Dawlatshah's *Tazkira al Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Edward

among Rādūyānī's innovations was his departure from Arabic
rhetorical norms. Though indebted to another *badīʿ* manual written in
the same part of Central Asia in Arabic a century prior, al-Marghīnā-
nī's *The beauties of poetry and prose* (*al-Maḥāsin fī 'l-naẓm wa-'l-nathr*),[20]
Tarjumān al-Balāgha declared its distance from its Arabic predecessors
in the first pages of its introduction and by confining its citations to
New Persian poetry.

Aḥmed Ateş discovered Rādūyānī's text in 1948 in Istanbul's cen-
tral library Fatıh Kütüphanesi many centuries after it had been
assumed lost, in a unique manuscript dated Ramadan 507 (=1114 of
the Christian era), and copied by the Persian poet Abū 'l-Hayjāʾ Ardash-
hīr b. Daylamsipār al-Najmī al-Quṭbī. Prior to the discovery of the
unique manuscript of *Tarjumān*, its copyist Abū 'l-Hayjāʾ was only
known from the statement in the first extant Persian dictionary,
Lughat–i Furs (c. 1060), that the author Abū Manṣūr ʿAlī b. Aḥmad
Asadī Tūsī, had composed his dictionary at the request of Abū 'l-
Hayjāʾ, whom he referred to, perhaps figuratively, as his "learned
child."[21] If Abū Manṣūr's reference to Abū 'l-Hayjāʾ is not figurative,
this means that the person who bequeathed to us our only extant copy
of the first Persian treatise in literary theory also inspired the first Per-
sian dictionary. Ateş's discovery moved the eminent scholar of Persian
literature A.J. Arberry to ecstatically predict that, once Rādūyānī's text
is assessed, "The history of Islamic literature and learning will need to
be rewritten."[22] Although Arberry argued for a reassessment over
sixty years ago, the assessment he advocated has yet to take place.

Soon after discovering the unique manuscript, Ateş published the
first modern study of the text, along with, soon afterwards, a critical
edition. In this study, Ateş distinguished four aspects of Rādūyānī's
intervention: 1.) words and rare expressions are replaced by recent

---

Brown (London: Brill, 1901), 57, Luṭf ʿAlī Beg Aḏar's (d. 1760–5) *Ateshkade* (Bombay,
1298), 78, and in the last major Urdu *tadhkira*, by Muḥammad usayn Āzād, *Sukhān-
dan-i Fārs*. Also see n60 for the contemporary persistence of this error.

[20]This text has been critically edited by G.J. van Gelder and published under the
title *Two Arabic treatises on stylistics* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch
Institut, 1987).

[21]*Lughat-i furs*, ed. Paul Horn and Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī (Tehran: Kitābkhā-
nah-ʾi Ṭahūrī, 1977), 1–2. The poetry of a certain Najmī, cited on p. 50 of this dictio-
nary, may belong to Abū 'l-Hayjāʾ. See also *Tarjumān al-Balāgha*, ed. Ateş (Tehrān:
Intishārāt-i Āsāṭīr, 1983), 35, and pp. 63–4 of Ateş' intro. (Except where noted, all refe-
rences to *Tarjumān* are to this second printing of Ateş's edition.) Nothing is known of
the person for whom the unique manuscript of *Tarjumān* was copied, Muntajab al-
Mulk ʿImād al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahīd b. Muẓaffar b. Yūsuf.

[22]See Arberry's review of Ateş' critical edition of Rādūyānī's *Tarjumān, Oriens* 3
(1950): 124.

usages; 2.) comparisons and loan metaphors (*métaphores empruntées*) from prior epochs of literary culture are updated by modern examples; 3.) ancient grammatical forms and particles are corrected; 4.) ancient surnames and titles are replaced by those from more recent periods.[23] As these four distinctions suggest, Rādūyānī went beyond Persianizing the Arabic tradition he inherited; he also updated it for an eastern Islamic readership. In rendering classical Arabic rhetorical norms in the vernacular, Rādūyānī inflected his local literary culture in ways that could not have been sustained by poetry alone. Although his introduction specifies no patron and names no audience, he clearly writes for a readership prepared to break with past linguistic codes, antiquated grammars, and outdated literary hierarchies.

Significantly, the only chapter of *Tarjumān* to include Arabic citations is devoted to the trope of translation (*faṣl fī al-tarjama*, 115). Given the text's break with Arabic precedent, it is of interest that the only extant manuscript is composed in a calligraphic script close to Kufic, an ancient style of Arabic writing that predates the Quran (illustrated in appendix II).[24] Thus, Rādūyānī's text is steeped in ancient Arabic traditions even as its author distances himself from Arabic rhetoric through nearly unilateral reliance on Persian citations. Rādūyānī even translates the Arabic *bismi 'llāh*—the Quranic invocation of God that opens every book written in the Islamic world—into Persian.[25] Although the date of its composition has yet to be established with certainty, Rādūyānī's *Tarjumān*, composed during the closing decades of the eleventh century or the early decades of the twelfth,[26] is one of

---

[23]"Étude," 263

[24]Particularly given its antiquity, the *Tarjumān* ms. is an excellent copy. As Ateş describes: "les caractères de son écriture sont un neskhi trés proche de l'ècriture coufique; il y a trois points sous les lettres u س et ﺱ , un sous la lettre ﺀ. En un mot, en tant que manuscrit, on ne peut pas douter de son authenticité" ("Étude," 257).

[25]Thus the Arabic *bismi-llāhi al-raḥmāni al-raḥīm* becomes, in Rādūyānī's Persian, *bi-nām-i īzad-i bakhshāyandih-i bakhshāyishgar* (*Tarjumān al-Balāgha*, ed. Ateş [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Āsāṭīr, 1983], 2). Both phrases translate into English as "In the name of God, the compassionate and merciful."

[26]Ateş assigns 1088, the first year of the incarceration of Qarakhānid ruler Aḥmed Khan by Malik Shah, referred to in one of Rādūyānī's *shahid*, as *terminus post quem* for *Tarjumān*, and 1114, the transcription date of the only extant manuscript, as *terminus ante quem*. A more precise dating is hampered by the fact that neither Rādūyānī nor his *Tarjumān* are mentioned in any contemporaneous source. The only classical rhetorician who clearly based his text on Rādūyānī is Rashid al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ. The second author to mention *Tarjumān* after Waṭwāṭ is Yāqūt (d. 1229), who in the entry on Waṭwāṭ in his *Irshād*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd Rifāʿī Bek (Cairo: Maktabat al- alabī, n.d) attributes *Tarjumān* to Farrukhī (19: 29).

the earliest instances of a Persian *bismi'llāh* in New Persian prose.
(At this point in history, New Persian prose consisted of, in addition
to Asadī's dictionary and Balʿamī's Persian translation of al-Ṭabarī
mentioned above, the Persian rendition of al-Ṭabarī's Commentary
(*tafsīr*) on the Quran, and Abū Manṣūr Daqīqī's preface to his prose
version of the *Shāhnāma*.)

A remarkable shift in the treatment of *istiʿāra* and *tashbīh* becomes
evident as we move from Arabic *balāgha* to New Persian *balāgha* with
Rādūyānī. Although al-Jurjānī and Rādūyānī are divorced from each
other temporally and linguistically, in their goals they are related; both
authors wish to explicate the principles of rhetoric to a readership pre-
pared to understand this system in philosophical terms.[27] While al-
Jurjānī lays the philosophical foundations for literary theory, Rādūyānī,
more concerned like his Persian successors with applied poetics, stays
largely within the framework of tropology (*badīʿ*). However, the nod
to rhetoric (*balāgha*) in his title (*Tarjumān al-Balāgha*) and the concepts
he introduces to New Persian, a language that at the time of his writing
had yet to serve as a medium for philosophical or scientific treatises,
suggests that Rādūyānī's tropology was more philosophically conse-
quential than scholarship to date has recognized.[28] Shams-i Qays's
lengthy *Muʿjam* is commonly credited as the most important treatise
of Persian rhetoric ever composed due to its relatively comprehensive
merger of Persian and Arabic traditions.[29] Yet a century before Shams-
i Qays, Rādūyānī pushed the Arabic *balāgha* tradition in a different,
more conceptual, direction.

In certain respects, Rādūyānī did for Persian literary theory what
the poet, critic, and caliph for a day Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 908) did for its
Arabic predecessor: he aggregated hitherto disparate literary norms
derived from multiple poets pursuing multiple aesthetic goals into a
formal poetics suited specifically to his literary milieu. Ibn al-Muʿtazz's
Book of the New (*Kitāb al-Badīʿ*) has been linked by modern scholars to
contemporaneous changes in the socio-political environment of tenth-
century Baghdad. In light of Ibn al-Muʿtazz's accomplishments,
commentators have taken to speaking of a tenth century "renaissance"

---

[27]Rather than suggest any direct influence of al-Jurjānī's on Rādūyānī, my goal here is
to argue for the usefulness of thinking through al-Jurjānī and Rādūyānī together.

[28]Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab for example states that Shams-i Qays "in many
respects surpassed earlier Persian works on literary theory" with his *Muʿjam* ("Intro-
duction: Persian Rhetorical Figures," in *Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry*, ed.
Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab [Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012], 3). Although
Seyed-Gohrab speaks for the scholarly consensus, I find this hierarchy unpersuasive.

[29]On the *Muʿjam*, see now Justine Landau's pioneering study, *De rythme et de
raison: lecture croisée de deux traités de poétique persans du XVIIIe siécle* (Paris: Presses
Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2013).

in Arabic literary theory and poetics.[30] Comparable claims could be
made for Rādūyānī's later innovation.

DISTINCTIONS AND TAXONOMIES

Rādūyānī acknowledges three modes through which comparisons
(*tashbīhat*) attain to efficacy. First, there is the comparison that takes an
object (*chīz*) and brings it into external proximity with an object that
resembles it; second, there is the comparison which takes an object that
possesses the qualities (*ṣifathā*) of another object accidentally into a
relation of resemblance; third, there is the comparison that takes two
or three ideas (*maʿānī*) intrinsic to an unlimited variety of objects and
intensifies these qualities within the objects themselves. Rādūyānī's
functional enumeration is followed by a catalog of five types of compa-
risons according to the nature of the relation between topic and
analogue: absolute comparison (*al-tashbīh al-maknī*); preferred compar-
ison (*al-tashbīh al-murajaʾa*); conditional comparison (*al-tashbīh al-
mashrūṬ*); inverted comparison (*al-tashbīh al-maʿkūs*); and dual compar-
ison (*al-tashbīh al-muzdawij*).

Diverging from Aristotelian poetics, al-Jurjānī distinguished meta-
phor from comparison, and stressed the former's grounding in cate-
gory crossing as compared to the latter's grounding in the dialectics
of sameness and difference. With the help of this distinction, al-Jurjānī
created a new literary theory, directed towards the elucidation of
ambiguities that require mental exertion in order to be adequately per-
ceived. But while al-Jurjānī and Rādūyānī approach comparison from
perspectives that appear mutually exclusive on first glance, the deeper
motivations behind their treatment of this device converge on closer
scrutiny. Anyone who reads *Tarjumān* in conjunction with *Asrār* can-
not fail to notice crucial convergences between the two approaches
to literary figuration. In addition to the fact that both theorists classify
comparison within the field of rhetoric (*balāgha*) rather than relegating
it to the domain of beauties (*maḥāsin*), as Ibn al-Muʿtazz had done, a
statement at the close of Rādūyānī's chapter on comparison defines
the mutual relations of *istiʿāra* and *tashbīh* in terms that strikingly echo
al-Jurjānī's earlier attempt to achieve lucidity concerning the relation
between comparison and metaphor.

---

[30]See the *Kitāb al-Badīʿ* of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Muʿtazz, ed. I. Krachkovsky (London:
Gibb Memorial Series, 1935). For the "renaissance" of tenth-century Arabic literary
culture, see Adam Mez, *Die renaissance des islams* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1922), Joel
L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the renaissance of Islam: the cultural revival during the Buyid
Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986) and *idem, Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān
Al-Sijistānī and his circle* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

Rādūyānī's account of rhetoric speaks most directly to that of al-
Jurjānī at the close of his chapter on comparison. "Before concluding
this chapter," he writes, "we must distinguish between *tashbīh* and
istiʿāra. These two terms are quite close to each other in conception
[*be maʿnī*]. Metaphors [*istiʿārat*] are comparisons [*tashbīhat*] that lack
verification[31] [*taḥqīq*] while comparisons are metaphors that lack [the
capacity to induce] confusion [*iḍṭerāb*]. In producing these taxonomies,
one should be aware that the elements [*ḥurūf*] of metaphor are shared
by comparison."[32] To the extent that he understands each category in
terms of the other, his definitions are negative. However, this form of
explanation brings about an inversion in al-Jurjānī's hierarchy.
Suddenly, metaphor no longer reigns supreme in Islamicate aesthetics;
the field has shifted to comparison.

While comparisons participate in metaphor, he suggests, they are
ultimately autonomous from metaphor. By contrast, metaphor is not
autonomous from comparison in Jurjānīan poetics. For the first time
in the extant history of Islamic aesthetics, a critic has defined compari-
son as a mode of perception autonomous from metaphor, and made
the two basic categories of literary cognition, comparison and meta-
phor, equivalent to each other. This incommensurability between the
dominant modes of literary perception was to serve as the basis for a
new aesthetic system specifically attuned to the New Persian aesthetic.

The positive valuation Rādūyānī places on comparison is as signif-
icant as is the negative valuation he places on metaphor. If metaphors
lack verification (*taḥqīq*), comparisons by implication abound in this
quality. Whereas the suggestion that comparisons (*tashbīhat*) differ
from metaphors in that they are subject to verification does suggest
their status as tools of logical analysis, Rādūyānī's second qualification
speaks to their status in the realm of poetic figuration. Comparisons are
metaphors that do not cause confusion (*iḍṭerāb*); they specify the nature
of the relation between the two objects compared, whereas a metaphor
relies on an unstated object that nonetheless motivates the image. Here
as elsewhere, Rādūyānī's lexicon is difficult to dissect analytically
because, while the concepts he evokes and the distinctions in which
he deals are philosophically implicated, his lexicon is conditioned by
the infancy of New Persian as a medium for analytical expression.
Hence the opacity and occasional inconsistency of Rādūyānī's terminol-
ogy. The point is nonetheless clear: comparisons do logical and ontolog-
ical work that cannot be performed by metaphors.

---

[31]For this rendering of *taḥqīq*, see Dmitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian
Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 188–191.
[32]Rādūyānī, *Tarjumān al-balāghah*, 157.

In contrast to al-Jurjānī, Rādūyānī includes no extended discussion of the relations between various metaphors and makes no attempt to distinguish between metaphors based on comparison (*tashbīh*) and metaphors based on analogy (*tamthīl*). Instead, metaphor is described broadly as a borrowed thing (*chīzī-i ʿārīyat*) that possesses a noun (*nām*) wherein literal meaning (*ḥaqīqa*) or utterance (*lafẓ*) merge with the idea (*maʿnī*)."[33] A metaphor is especially successful, Rādūyānī continues, when the signified (*nām*) and its phonic signifier (*lafẓ*) are used interchangeably. Once the borrowing process is completed, Rādūyānī concludes, a fresh leaf appears in rhetoric's garden (*bustān-i balāghat*).

Before analyzing Rādūyānī's multivalent definition of metaphor, it is worth considering how his account works in practice. One of the first illustrations that Rādūyānī provides for the trope of metaphor is, perhaps not coincidentally, a poem that plays on the many meanings attached to the term "translation" (*tarjumān*). The text is by ʿUnṣurī of Balkh (d. 1040), the most frequently cited poet in Rādūyānī's treatise and author of many panegyric odes addressed to the Ghanzavids, a dynasty that ruled over much of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and what is now Pakistan from 977–1186:

<div dir="rtl">

تومرمرچرخ إقبالرا آفتابی
تومرگنجه فرهنگ را قهرمانی
خرد را کند رای تو پیش گوبی
وفا را کند عهدِ تو ترجمانی
(Tarjumān 41)[34]

</div>

You are a sun to fortune's wheel.
You are a winner of knowledge's repository.
Your opinion heralds your intellect.
Your covenant translated your fidelity.

---

[33]Here is Rādūyānī's full introductory description of *istiʿāra* (*Tarjumān* 28): معنی
وی چیز عاریت خواستن باشد. و این صفت چنان بود که اندر آن چیزی بود نام را حقیقی یا لفظی بود که مطلق آن
باز گردد مخصوص آنگه گوینده مر آن نام را یا آن لفظ را بجای دیگر استعارت کند بر سبیل عاریت . و آن
بمعنی قسم اندر بوستان بلاغت تازه برگی است. In rendering *maʿnī* by "idea" rather than the "meaning," I follow Alexander Key, whose dissertation offers a new way of conceiving the *maʿnī/ lafẓ* relation. See Alexander Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind: ar-Rāġib al-Iṣfahānī and What it Meant to be Ambiguous" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2012), and pp. 6–7 for reflections on this translational choice.

[34]Page references to the poetic quotations from *Tarjumān* refer to *Kitāb-i Tarjumān al-balāghah: dar ʿilm-i badīʿ va ānchih az sināʿāt-i mustaḥsin kih fuḥūl-i shuʿarāʾ va nivīsandahgān-i ʿaṣr-i Sāmānī va Ghaznavī dar naẓm va naṣr bi-kār mī burdah and, Bā muqaddamah va zayl va ḥavāshī va tarājim-i aʿlām bi-khāmi-yi ʿAlī Qavīm* (Tehran, Chāpk-hānah-yi Muḥammad ʿAlī Fardīn, 1339/1960). See below n53 for reference to prose citations.

These four lines bring into relation several types of borrowing. The poem's addressee is of course neither the sun nor a champion of knowledge's repository. The imprecision of ʿUnṣurī's references does not however constrain his literary ambitions, for the poet goes on to claim that fidelity (*wafā*) is the surest interpretation (*tarjumān*) of the addressee's covenant (*ʿahd*). In citing these verses, Rādūyānī demonstrates how poetry shifts the identities of things by transferring qualities from certain objects onto others. In contradistinction to a comparison, the transfer of attributes in a metaphor is transient. Although this poetic mediation is already on display in incipient form in Rādūyānī's discussion of metaphor, it is intensified with comparison.

Rādūyānī's definition of metaphor consists of two parts: first, a proposed merger between one aspect of the signified / signifier relation, either literal (*ḥaqīqa*) or auditory (*lafẓ*), with the idea (*maʿnī*); second, and most consequentially for subsequent Persian poetics, an argument for the interchangeability of signifier (*lafẓ*) and signified (*nām*) as the basis for high aesthetic attainment in the realm of metaphor. The hermeneutic challenge posed by this passage is its usage of terms such as *nām* (a likely calque for the Arabic *ism*) in multiple and contradictory significations. In the first part of the definition, *nām* is simply the verbal sign that renders the metaphor. In the second instance, *nām* is opposed to *lafẓ*, as the ideational component of the verbal sign rather than as its sum total.

Rādūyānī's inconsistent deployment of his New Persian lexicon suggests an author bewildered by his own innovation. Faced with the task of translating Arabic rhetoric into Persian, Rādūyānī resorted to polyvalent terms such as *nām*, which had yet to be incorporated into a knowledge system, to reference as well as to revise longer standing Arabic concepts. Rādūyānī does not use his new terminology consistently enough to enable a systematic account of his theory of literary signification. The contemporary interpreter is therefore compelled to deduce his meaning through speculative comparisons with Arabic precedents. Nonetheless, Rādūyānī's decision to part ways with the Arabic tradition already signaled a significant departure from the norm.

Another dichotomy structuring Rādūyānī's text is between *maʿnā* (the Persian *maʿnī*) and *lafẓ*, conceptual and phonological content, or idea and expression in the careful glossing of Alexander Key.[35] The *lafẓ* / *maʿnā* distinction may be explained in multiple ways. Most pertinent for present purposes, this distinction can be rendered in terms of

---

[35]Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind," 109–119.

translatability: *maʿnā* refers to what survives translation; *lafẓ* refers to what is lost.[36] According to the litterateur Raghīb al-Iṣfahānī, speech (*nuṭq*) derives from the Arabic word for belt (*niṭāq*) because the utterance (*lafẓ*) is "like a belt that surrounds and encompasses the idea [*maʿnā*]."[37] Both Ibn Rashīq and al-ʿĀskarī explain that *lafẓ* is to *maʿnā* what a body is to a soul.[38] *Lafẓ* cannot be transported outside the context of its utterance; conversely *maʿnā* is as amenable to translation as any concept. *Maʿnā* pertains to semantics; *lafẓ* pertains to sound.

Another term that occurs in *Tarjumān* by way of contrast with *lafẓ* is *ḥaqīqa*. The most general term in the Arabic lexicon to describe literal (as well as transcendent) reality, *ḥaqīqa* is used in *balāgha* as an antithesis to figurative language (*majāz*).[39] For the purposes of poetics, it can be rendered as "literal signification." Rādūyānī understands the relation between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* in multiple ways. His syntax implies a relation of congruence; historical precedent suggests a relation of contrast. In the first instance, *ḥaqīqa* refers to a realm of perception conceptually inaccessible to humans, who resort to *majāz* as Vico resorts to *certum*: to describe a realm of human perception that contrasts with *ḥaqīqa*, the Vician *verum*, and which is unavailable to human adjudication.[40] In the second instance, *ḥaqīqa* implies the reverse: not unerring transcendence, but hermeneutic fallibility.

Insofar as *ḥaqīqī* and *maʿnī* function as antitheses to *lafẓ*, these concepts confound any true/false dichotomy. The operative distinction in the *ḥaqīqī / lafẓ* and, analogously, the *maʿnī / lafẓ* dichotomy approximates more closely to sense versus sound. *aqīqī* in this secondary sense deployed by Rādūyānī here, as an antithesis of *lafẓ*, cannot be opposed to literary figuration (*majāz*). Another way of accounting for *ḥaqīqa's* contradictory double valence in Rādūyānī's text—firstly as a reality exclusive of the imagination and secondarily as a reality inclusive of categories of perception specific to the imagination—is suggested by Wolfhart Heinrichs. "Since *majāz* had been used as a term

---

[36]See William Smyth, "Persian and Arabic theories of literature: a comparative study of al-Sakkâkî's *Miftâh al-ʿulûm* and Shams-i Qays' *al-Muʿjam*" (PhD dissertation, New York U, 1986), 155.

[37]Raghīb al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Gharīb al-Qurʾan al-Karīm*, ed. Ṣafwān ʿAdnān Dāwūdī (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1992), 812.

[38]I.M. Filshtinskii, *Istoriia arabskoi literaturyi* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 2: 434.

[39]For the genealogy of this distinction, see Wolfhart Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* Dichotomy," *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 111–140.

[40]Buddhist philosophy presents yet another analogous pairing: *vyavaharika and paramathika* sat (conventional and ultimate truth). See Andrew Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 87–88.

describing the idiomatic use of certain words and constructions,"
writes Heinrichs, "it was all but natural that *ḥaqīqa*, when coupled with
majāz, should gradually be wrested from its ontological moorings and
acquire a secondary, linguistic, meaning-that of the non-idiomatic, lit-
eral, use of a word or a construction."[41] Although Heinrichs is concer-
ned with an Arabic textual tradition from which Rādūyānī distances
himself, his findings provide a helpful framework for understanding
the first extant New Persian treatment of rhetoric.

By not opposing *ḥaqīqa* to *majāz*, as previous theorists of the
Quran's inimitability (*iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*) had done, Rādūyānī brought
ḥaqīqa into a state of internal contradiction.[42] Metaphor in Rādūyānī's
treatise indexed a mode of literary perception with a substratum in
reality (*ḥaqīqa*). Although this substratum was conceptual (*maʿnawī*),
it presented a challenge to *ḥaqīqa*. Nor could it contrast literal reality
to figuration, as with the traditional deployment of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz*
distinction. Had Rādūyānī been writing as an exponent of Quranic ini-
mitability, the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* distinction would have provided the ideal
framework for explicating metaphor. But the traditional Arabic
deployment of *ḥaqīqa* as an antonym to *majāz* could not elucidate the
New Persian aesthetic. Hence Rādūyānī's turn to a new *ḥaqīqa*, now
an antonym to utterance (*lafẓ*) rather than to figuration (*majāz*). In this
refurbished semantic status, *ḥaqīqa* could accommodate rather than
oppose *majāz*. Hence also Rādūyānī's argument for the controvertibi-
lity of signifier (*lafẓ*) and signified (*nām*) in the superior variety of met-
aphor. Rādūyānī used *ḥaqīqa* to supplement *lafẓ*, the phonological
dimension of a verbal sign.

The shift from *ḥaqīqa/majāz* to *ḥaqīqa/lafẓ* in Rādūyānī's text para-
llels an analogous shift in the status of figuration as such. No longer
is transcendent truth opposed to figurative implication in the New Per-
sian aesthetics of *Tarjumān*. Whereas much Arabic theology and liter-
ary criticism had opposed transcendent truth to the literary
imagination through the *ḥaqīqa / majāz* dichotomy, Rādūyānī's defini-
tion of metaphor incorporates both into its definition of literary truth.
Meanwhile, in the Arabic tradition, treatises prior to and contempora-
neous with Rādūyānī did not discuss *ḥaqīqa* in the context of literary
analysis; from Ibn al-Muʿtazz's *Kitāb al-Badīʿ* up to al-Jurjānī's *Asrār*,

---

[41]Heinrichs, "On the Genesis," 137–8. Whereas Rādūyānī uses *ḥaqīqa* to supple-
ment rather than oppose *lafẓ*, Waṭwāṭ's usage of this semantic pair in his definition
of *istiʿāra* suggests a more antithetical relation.

[42]For theorists of *iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*, which teaches that the beauty of the Quran can-
not be reproduced in poetry or any other human creation, see Heinrichs, "On the
Genesis."

literal reality (*ḥaqīqa*) was a negation of figuration (*majāz*), not a source of meaning. In Rādūyānī, by contrast, *ḥaqīqa* equates with the idea (*maʿnī*); it is modified by the literary imagination, by metaphor certainly, but most especially by comparison. In short, it is no accident that the first work to translate Arabic literary theory into Persian changed the meaning of literal signification (*ḥaqīqa*). Rādūyānī's redefinition of the relationship between metaphor and comparison made it necessary to reconceive the process through which literary form enters the imagination.

What holds true of Rādūyānī's text holds true for all subsequent works of Persian *balāgha*: whereas the *ḥaqīqa/majāz* dichotomy is foundational to Quranic hermeneutics, this binary does not do the same work within Persian literary theory. In part, the reorientation of Persian literary theory meant a return to the modernist (*muḥdathūn*) poetics pioneered by Ibn al-Muʿtazz in tenth century Baghdad.[43] But the twelfth-century Persian evocation of a modernist Arabophone past was accompanied by crucial ruptures. Although Ibn al-Muʿtazz's *Book of the New* is arguably Rādūyānī's most important source, Rādūyānī's citations attest to a sharp difference between the Arabic and Persian texts. With few exceptions, Rādūyānī cites exclusively from recent New Persian poets, many of whom were contemporary with the theorist himself.

ANTICIPATING COMPARISON

Rādūyānī's account of *istiʿāra* partially reproduces al-Jurjānī's distinction between metaphors based on analogy (*tamthīl*) and metaphors based on comparison (*tashbīh*). For al-Jurjānī, perceiving analogy-based metaphors requires great mental exertion inasmuch as they are grounded in a theory of reference subordinate to *ḥaqīqa*. By contrast, perceiving comparison-based metaphors requires less mental exertion, inasmuch as they are grounded in a figural system (*majāz*) that does not aspire to approximate or reproduce literal reality (*ḥaqīqa*).[44] Al-Jurjānī's preference for analogy-based metaphor, and

---

[43]For general discussions of *muḥdathūn* poetry, see S.A. Bonebakker, "Poets and critics in the third century AH," in G.E. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in classical Islamic culture* (Wiesbaden 1970), 85–111.

[44]This distinction is clearly formulated in the following statement from *Asrār*: "Unlike the similarity in an *istiʿāra* based on *tashbīh*, the similarity in an *istiʿāra* based on *tamthīl* is one you have to reflect on and think about to discern." Cited in Margaret Larkin, *The Theology of Meaning: ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Theory of Discourse* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1995) 77; Arabic text p. 189.

for *tamthīl* generally, over comparison and comparison-based metaphor, is apparent to any reader of his *Asrār*. Analogy is superior to comparison in Jurjānīan aesthetics inasmuch as the former requires greater reflection and discernment than the latter. Due to its elision of the particle of comparison, metaphor asks more of the reader and more intensely activates his or her creative participation in the process of literary figuration.

Later in *Asrār*, al-Jurjānī explains the grounds for his preference for metaphor over comparison (*tashbīh*): the former to his mind leaves more space for interpretation. A Jurjānīan metaphor can be interpreted literally; a Jurjānīan comparison must be figuratively read. The purpose (*qaṣd*) of comparison on this construction lies in making obvious "the intention to similize [such that it is] explicit and presupposed by the expression [*al-kalām*] itself, and by its form and subject matter, to the extent that if the expression were not interpreted [to convey similarity figuratively], it would fail to signify."[45] The Jurjānīan comparison depends on non-literal interpretation (*majāz*) in order to make its meaning clear. Al-Jurjānī does not consider this the highest mode of poetic meaning making because he prefers tropes that ask the reader to adjudicate relations between reality and the imagination rather than narrowing hermeneutic possibilities in the way he perceives comparison to require. In Jurjānīan aesthetics, hermeneutic ambiguity is aesthetically superior to transparency.

Rādūyānī follows al-Jurjānī in distinguishing between literal and figurative literary expression, but he does not accept his conclusions. In particular, he refutes the Jurjānīan subordination of comparison to metaphor. Unlike al-Jurjānī, Rādūyānī does not prefer metaphors based on analogy (*tamthīl*) to metaphors based on comparison, nor does he prefer metaphor to comparison. To the contrary rather, Rādūyānī devotes significantly more space to comparison than did any of his Arabic predecessors, just as he devotes significantly less space to metaphor than did any of the Arabic texts on which he based his treatise.[46] Indeed, many of Rādūyānī's illustrations for the trope of metaphor uncannily

---

[45]*Asrār* 299: 8–11.

[46]I have in mind especially Ibn al-Muʿtazz's *Kitāb al-Badīʿ* and al-Marghīnānī's *al-Maḥāsin*. My findings resonate with those of William Smyth, who notes that in all his extensive researches into the history of Arabic and Persian poetics, he was unable to locate Arabic sources for Rādūyānī's classification of *tashbīh* ("Early Persian Works on Poetics and Their Relationship to Similar Studies in Arabic," *Studia Iranica* 18 (1989): 44.)

anticipate comparison, in the Jurjānīan sense that they require fig-
ural interpretation to be understood. Here is one example from
ʿUnṣurī, requesting the destruction of an enemy army:

<div dir="rtl">

زگَرد موکبشان چشم روز روشن کور

زبانگ مرکبشان گوش چرخ گردان کر

</div>

(*Tarjumān* 43)

> May the eye of the bright day go blind from the dust of their mount.
> May the wheel's ear go deaf from the braying of their mount.

The enemy's army is likened in these lines to the heavenly firma-
ment. The key term in the first hemistich, *chashm*, means both eye
and source; its qualification here as the eye of the bright day (*chashm-i
rūz-i rawshan*) suggests the necessity of keeping active the second
meaning alongside the first. *Chashm* here is not only an eye; it is also
the source of the day; its blindness is a catastrophe of cosmic rather
than local proportions. Likewise for the second hemistich: "wheel's
ear" (*gush-i charkh*) obviously refers to the enemy army; no less obvi-
ously, it references the heavens. Like *falak*, encountered frequently else-
where in *Tarjumān*, *charkh* is a metonym for the earth itself, it is the
wheel that makes the world turn. ʿUnṣurī's imagery in these lines relies
equally on figural and literal meaning; the two levels of interpretation
cannot be severed from each other. In spite of its classification as a met-
aphor in Rādūyānī's treatise, the operation of figural expression within
this verse, cited to illustrate metaphor, approximates what al-Jurjānī
calls *tashbīh*, wherein figurative interpretation is requisite for compre-
hension. Unlike the Jurjānīan metaphor, these lines cannot be under-
stood ambiguously: a non-literal, figurative reading is the only viable
interpretation. In the absence of a figural interpretation, the image
would convey only nonsense.

The following verses Rādūyānī cites by an unknown poet named
Qaṣṣār are an even clearer example of the classic Arabic metaphor
transformed by the New Persian aesthetic:

<div dir="rtl">

ای شگفته گلبن پیوسته با خورشید سر

طرفه بیخ و طُرفه شاخ وطرفه برگ و طرفه بر

بیخ و شاخ و برگ و برت از سیم و ماه و مشک و عود

ماه گِرد و سیم خام و مشک ناب و عودتر

</div>

(*Tarjumān* 42)

> Oh blooming rosebush, connected to the sun above!
> How striking are your elements: root, branch, leaf, and fruit!
> Your root, branch, leaf, and fruit are from silver, moonlight, musk,
> and aloe.
> The moon is full, the silver raw, the musk pure, and the aloe moist.

Composed in the *ramal* meter, which allows from sixteen to twenty-two syllables to the line, these distichs perfectly illustrate the distinction between metaphor and comparison foundational to Persian literary theory. The poetry of the images evoked in these lines depends on a series of ascriptions which in their length recapitulate the *ramal* meter's breathless pace: the rosebush's roots derive figurally from silver; its branches descend figurally from the moon; its leaves are figurally fabricated from musk; and its fruit are the figural yield of aloe. That the relations implied in this text between root and silver, branches and the moon, leaves and musk, and fruit and aloe can only be cognized through mental exertion is one measure of their poeticity from the perspective of Rādūyānī's New Persian poetics.

Typically of *tashbīh*—though we have not yet parted ways officially with metaphor—the logical connections linking each image in the above-cited text are counterfactual.[47] Yet, the success of the text's poetic imagery is not inhibited by the counterfactual linkages of roots to silver, branches to the moon, and leaves to musk. In the hemistich that follows, the genitive relations attending this counterintuitive series of images are made contingent on each other, which has the effect of intensifying the reader's aesthetic experience while confounding logical comprehension: the moon is full, the silver is raw, the musk is pure, the aloe is moist. These lines contain little in the way of positive content, but that is precisely what enables their magic: they are condensations of the literary imagination. Rādūyānī's New Persian aesthetic privileges poetry for poetry's sake. Rather than providing a basis for poetic efficacy, New Persian poetry generates and legitimates aesthetic judgment.

Rādūyānī's choice of citations epitomizes the process through which New Persian poetics acquired prestige. Whereas simple metaphor of the kind commonly encountered in Arabic poetry and poetics after the advent of Islam generally permitted only one genitive relation per poem, the loan metaphor in Qaṣṣār's text entails four contingently linked images.[48] The extended genitive metaphor, of which Qaṣṣār's lines are stunning examples, was first pioneered by the Arabophone

---

[47]For a parallel account, see Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind*. Rādūyānī's *tashbīh* resembles Heinrichs' account of the *muḥdath* metaphor, as elaborated in this work.

[48]For the argument that pre-Islamic Arabic poetry relied more extensively on *tashbīh* than did Arabic poetry composed after the establishment of the Caliphate and the consolidation of Arabic literary theory, see van Gelder, *EI²*, "Tashbīh").

poet of Persian background Abū Nuwās (756–814), and bore the fullest fruit not in Arabic but in Persian poetry.[49] These details suggest a divergence between Arabic poetry of the classical period and New Persian poetics.

Rādūyānī's focus on Persian-inflected genitive metaphors deserves close attention in this account of the historical transition from metaphor to comparison in Islamic poetics. While technically belonging to the rubric of metaphor, Qaṣṣār's verses anticipate comparison. If within *tashbīh*-based poetics, as the examples that follow elucidate, poetic perception unfolds through the perception of relation, within a metaphorical poetics that anticipates comparison such as Qaṣṣār's, the genitive relation prevails: objects are indentured to each other, but only temporally, through the hypothetical ascription of attributes. Thus is the poetic transformation effected by Rādūyānī's genitive metaphors temporally circumscribed. These poetic figures are subjected to the rules of grammar less rigorously than the images Rādūyānī classes under comparison.

One of the unusual aspects of Rādūyānī's account of metaphor is his statement that the most successful metaphors are those that substitute a noun (*nām*) for an utterance (*lafẓ*). This formula alters the more common pairing of *ḥaqīqa* to *lafẓ*, substituting a part of speech, the noun (*nām*), for the former. Rādūyānī yokes together first *ḥaqīqa* and utterance (*lafẓ*) and subsequently noun (*nām*) and utterance (*lafẓ*) to suggest that poetry makes porous the boundaries among the two categories. The categories are inconsistently defined; hence the difficulty in identifying Rādūyānī's precise meaning. Although his categories are not easily fixed, the boundary Rādūyānī wishes to trouble, between the literal and the figural, *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, is clearly and consistently delineated. While this distinction is rooted in an Arabic tradition, in his linguistic transposition, Rādūyānī grafted the intellectual movement set in motion by al-Jurjānī onto a distinctively Persianate agenda.

In reconstructing the New Persian translation of Arabic literary theory we must attend to the impossibility that any verbal sign will signify in precisely the same way across time. We can infer from Rādūyānī's definition of metaphor that words stay the same, while the realities they reference change. Rādūyānī's insight helps elucidate the variegated trajectory of *tashbīh* across the disciplines of literary theory (*ʿilm al-balāgha*), theology, and Quranic exegesis.[50] Rādūyānīan

---

[49]See Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Paired Metaphors in *Muḥdath* Poetry," *Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies* (1986): 12.

[50]For *tashbīh* in the sense of anthropomorphism as it occurs in Islamic theology see Wesley Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: A Study

comparison is not Jurjānīan comparison, although the two theorists bring many of the same assumptions to its conceptualization. As Rādūyānī's substitution of *nām* for *ḥaqīqa* illustrates, language is often the last social institution to register temporal change; new ideas enter the world along with new experiences, and only much later, sometimes at removes of centuries, are language's guardians able to register the implications of these changes.

DEFENDING COMPARISON

The story of *tashbīh's* peregrinations from Ibn al-Muʿtazz's *Book of the New* (*Kitāb al-Badī*) to Rādūyānī's *Tarjumān* should not be reduced to a single word's etymological divagations. While the precise and often contradictory deployments of the word *tashbīh* are internal to the history of the relation between metaphor and comparison in New Persian poetics, usage must take precedence over etymology if the implications of the transformation effected by the Persianization of Arabic literary theory are to be made palpable. The striking newness of *Tarjumān* consists less in its transformed lexicon—all the old Arabic tropes make their appearances and Rādūyānī does not explicitly state why Arabic poetics cannot adequately represent the New Persian aesthetic—than in its subtly distinct and discretely innovative deployments of old Arabic terms that entered the literary-theoretical canon centuries earlier, as a result of the *muḥdathūn* poetics formalized by Ibn al-Muʿtazz.

One discrete innovation sets *Tarjumān* apart from its Arabic predecessors. In his chapter on comparison, Rādūyānī calls *tashbīh* a "division of rhetoric" (*jumla-yi balāghī*, 44). Subtly revising the treatment granted this term by Ibn al-Muʿtazz, Rādūyānī moves it closer to the usage of al-Jurjānī. Rather than counting *tashbīh* among his five basic literary tropes, Ibn al-Muʿtazz assigned it to the more mundane category of "beauties" (*maḥāsin*). One consequence of Ibn al-Muʿtazz's taxonomy is to make literary comparison (*tashbīh*) into an aftereffect of language, much as Aristotle does for *phantasia* in *Rhetoric* 1404a. Inspired by currents in Islamic theology, especially Muʿtazilī hermeneutics, al-Jurjānī was the first theorist to probe *tashbīh* for new conceptual content, although his use of this term was fraught with reservation. Located as he was within an Arabic discipline that was centered on comprehending and explicating the miracle (*iʿjāz*) of the Quran in linguistic

terms, al-Jurjānī could not regard literary comparison on its own terms, or make it the basis of literary perception.[51] For such a transformation to take place, Arabic literary theory had to await its translation into Persian.

Rādūyānī's account of comparison rubs even more strongly against the grain of normative Arabic literary theory than his account of metaphor. While al-Jurjānī initiated a new focus on *tashbīh* as one of the three basic dimensions of literary perception along with metaphor (*istiʿāra*) and analogy (*tamthīl*), he did not conceive of comparison as a basis for the literary imagination.[52] Jurjānīan poetics in fact suggest a different trajectory: while poetic perception may originate in *tashbīh*, Jurjānī's theory of poetry moves away from comparison and towards metaphor and analogy (*tamthīl*). Al-Jurjānī acknowledges the concept's centrality to the literary imagination by characterizing both metaphor and analogy in relation to *tashbīh*, and by arguing for metaphor's origination in comparison. Used in this context, *tashbīh* is distinct from *tashbīh* used elsewhere by al-Jurjānī to signify comparison as a literary trope.[53] As the form II verbal noun of the root *shīn-bā-hā*, the comparison that presides over metaphor and functions as a condition for its possibility is more than a rhetorical trope; it is also a mental process. *Tashbīh* here simply means the "creation of similarity," not the more formal device for generating literary comparisons.

Even as he gropes towards a new concept of comparison, Rādūyānī remains tied to old paradigms, including especially the *badīʿ* poetics of Ibn al-Muʿtazz, who classed *tashbīh* among the mundane beauties (*maḥāsin*). Rādūyānī follows Ibn al-Muʿtazz in this regard; three "beauties" immediately follow the presentation of *Tarjumān's* five basic comparisons (*tashbīhat*): beautiful openings (*ḥusn al-maṭālaʿ*), beautiful transitions (*ḥusn al-makhālaṣ*), and beautiful endings (*ḥusn al-maqāṭaʿ*). These three beauties are, as with Ibn al-Muʿtazz's *maḥāsin*,

---

[51]For the impact of the Islamic teaching concerning the Quranic miracle, see Rebecca Gould, "Inimitability versus Translatability: The Structure of Literary Meaning in Arabo-Persian Poetics," *The Translator* 19.1 (2013): 81–104.

[52]For an isolated exception to this claim, see the following note.

[53]When, for example, al-Jurjānī says that "*istiʿāra* is a type of *tashbīh* and a form of *tamthīl*" (أما الاستعارة فهى ضربٌ من التشبيه *Asrār* 20) he may simply mean that metaphor is a type of comparison or simile but rather that the act of transference, which is the literal meaning of the Arabic word for metaphor, is one way through which similarities between objects can be established. This also applies to the statement that "*tashbīh* has the status of an origin for *istiʿāra*, and *istiʿāra* has the status of a branch of *tashbīh*" (والتشبيهُ كالأصل فى الاستعارة وهي شبيه بالفرع له *Asrār* 28). On the two different senses of *tashbīh* and its plural, *tashbīhat*, in al-Jurjānī see K. Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery* (London: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1979), 68 n15. (I introduce these examples in order to provide counterevidence to my argument.)

distinctively formal, non-semantic categories; they do not impinge directly on poetic ontology. Unlike metaphor, comparison, and analogy they do not address the basic perceptual structures underwriting the aesthetic encounter. Rādūyānī's *maḥāsin* are clearly distinct from conceptual (*maʿnawī*) tropes; but whereas Rādūyānī's source for this distinction may be Ibn al-Muʿtazz and his followers, the Persian theorist differs from the Arabic poet-theorist in assigning particular tropes to particular categories.

Rādūyānī's chapter on comparison immediately follows his chapter on metaphor. He defines *tashbīh* as a division of rhetoric (*jumla-i balāgha*) distinct from metaphor. Recalling Rādūyānī's earlier definition of metaphor, which privileged those metaphors that effected substitutions of a name (*nām*) for an utterance (*lafẓ*) and vice-versa, the New Persian *tashbīh* places compared objects (*mānandeh*) in each others' places (*be ja-i yek digār*) through their form (*ṣūrat*) and conceptual content (*maʿnī*).[54] *Tashbīh* in Rādūyānī's account thus reproduces the basic feature of metaphor, while also significantly exceeding it.

In a radical departure from al-Jurjānī, Rādūyānī appends to his presentation of comparison, drawn heavily from Arabic sources, the unprecedented argument that the most correct (*rāsttarīn*) and the purest (*nīkūtarīn*) type of *tashbīh* is that which reflects an action.[55] Such an enthusiastic defense of *tashbīh* is nowhere to be found in Arabic literary theory. This earlier tradition instead formalized poetic meaning in terms of metaphor, and rejected *tashbīh* as anthropomorphism.[56] *Tashbīh* on this account indexes the incommensurability between a linguistic order established by humans (*aṣl al-lugha*) and divinely ordained truth (*ḥaqīqa*). Given his divergence from *tashbīh*'s signification in Arabic theological and literary contexts, we may reasonably wonder whether Rādūyānī was seeking with *Tarjumān* to generate a New Persian ethos alongside a New Persian aesthetic.

---

[54]Page references to prose quotations from *Tarjumān* refer to Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Rādūyānī, *Tarjumān al-balāgha*, ed. Ahmed Ateş, Tawfīq Subḥānī, and Ismāʿīl ḥākimī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2001); see above n34 for page references to poetry quotations. The passage quoted here is at p. 150 and is given in full in the appendix to this article. Note that *lafẓ* is conspicuously absent from Rādūyānī's account of *tashbīh*.

[55]For *shugūna*, see Muḥammad usayn ibn Khalaf Tabrīzī Burhān's seventeenth century dictionary, *Burhān-i qāṭī*: "دشاب اہزیچ نتسناد کار بم و نتشادر ب لاف ہب و کین لاف ہک" ہب عم ن نگشنی ا تس [meaning: an auspicious omen and good fortune, and things are moving ahead and good will come]." See *Farhang-i fārsī burhān-i qāṭi* (Tehran: Nīmā, 1379/2000), 580.

[56]See for example al-Jāḥiẓ, "Fī nafy al-tashbīh," in *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1964–1979), vol.1.

Our extant sources, which are of course limited, suggest that the
New Persian distinction between comparison and metaphor begins
with Rādūyānī. The task facing contemporary scholarship is there-
fore to assess the significance of Rādūyānī's rhetorical transforma-
tions. Going beyond the text's explicit statements, we may note
that because comparison relies on the perception of dissimilarities
between objects to a greater extent than metaphor, it also relies
more heavily on figural interpretation. Figural interpretation pre-
mised on dissimilarity was better suited to a poetics that could
"cope with linguistic change" because it was not required to accom-
modate an already perfect text.[57] The Quran's discursive perfection
imposed a necessary restriction on the meaning that could accrue to
tashbīh in Arabic literary criticism.

The metaphor / comparison distinction is made palpable in
another of Rādūyānī's citations from ʿUnṣurī:

هزیمت رفتگان چونان همی رفتند روی از پس
چُن اندر رُستخیز آن کس کجا گوینده بُهتان
دو دست اندر عنان چونان چُن اندر سلسله دوزخ
دو پای اندر رکاب ایذون چُن اندر کُسده زندان

(*Tarjumān* 45–6)

The flight of the defeated ones when they backed away.
Where is the slanderer on the day of resurrection?
His two hands tangled in reins, as if tied to hell's chain,
his two legs bound in the stirrup, as beaten in a prison cell.

ʿUnṣurī's lines exemplify what Rādūyānī considers a more success-
ful (*balīghtar*) comparison, wherein an idea that has been concealed
(*pūshīde*) is presented in external form (*ẓāhir*). ʿUnṣurī's comparison
evokes the suffering endured by those on the wrong side of war: the
defeated warrior grips with his two hands the reins of his horse, which
resembles a chain leading to hell, while his feet on the horse's bridle
evokes the column to which the prisoner's legs are inextricably tied.
ʿUnṣurī's comparison suggests a resemblance between sinners and
defeated enemies. The logic implies that the incarcerated deserve cap-
tivity just as enemies who die on the battlefield deserve death. Even
more revealingly of Rādūyānīan poetics, and of New Persian poetic
generally, the literal is made figural; war becomes a site of confine-
ment, and the enemy's body comes to resemble a prisoner. Far from
critiquing power, as with many of the comparisons adduced by later

---

[57]I cite here from Utas, "The Aesthetic Use of New Persian," 14.

Persian theorists, ʿUnṣurī validates the ethics of war in relation to religious norms.[58]

A more profoundly figurative comparison with less ominous implications occurs in a citation from Kisāʾī Marwazī (b. 953). Like ʿUnṣurī, Kisāʾī Marwazī composed for the court of Maḥmūd of Ghazna. Judging from his *qaṣīdas* in praise of ʿAlī b. Abī ṭalib, he appears to have been partial to Shīʿism. This inclination is not however in evidence in the following citation by Rādūyānī:

دو دیدهٔ من واز دیده اشک دیدهٔ من
میانِ دیده و مژگان ستاره وار پدید
بجزع ماند یک بر دگرسیاه و سپید
برشته کرده همه گرد جزع مروارید
(*Tarjumān* 46)

Tears from my two eyes, and from their pupils,
appear like a star between my eyes and eyelashes.
All that remains visible is a shell, patterned black and white.
Everything is burned around this pearl shell.

These elegant lines fulfill the formal conditions for comparison in Rādūyānī's sense. The suffix *vār* ("resembling"), alerts the reader to the similitudinous nature of the figuration in the second hemistich, and excludes it from the class of metaphors. But the poem's importance for our purposes resides in other aspects of its figural method. Like al-Jurjānī, Rādūyānī prefers modes of poetic meaning making which leave the greatest scope for the literary imagination; the two theorists differ only in their understanding of the role played by comparison in activating this imagination. Had al-Jurjānī's examples been drawn from Persian rather than Arabic poetry, *Asrār* might have generated a different account of *tashbīh*'s validity. The hermeneutical freedom integral to al-Jurjānī's concept of the literary imagination might have come to be associated more with comparison than with metaphor. Instead, Rādūyānī achieved with New Persian aesthetics what al-Jurjānī could not, or did not wish to, achieve in Arabic.

Although tears have little in common with stars, eyes are distant from shells, and the pupils they hold are not pearls, Kisāʾī's imagery acts powerfully on our imagination, inviting us to compare and contrast the literal with the figural, to measure the distance between the two worlds, and ultimately to obliterate the line dividing one from

---

[58]For Persian poetry that elaborates a critique of idioms of conquest, see Rebecca Gould, "Wearing the Belt of Oppression: Khāqānī's Christian Qaṣīda and the Prison Poetry of Medieval Shirvān," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9(1): 19–44.

the other. Prior to the advent of the New Persian aesthetic, a literary critic might have followed Aristotle in classifying Kisā'ī's comparison as a kind of metaphor.[59] Instead, Rādūyānī assigns Kisā'ī's lines to the rubric of comparison. In doing so, he follows, while also expanding on, al-Jurjānī. Both critics agree that, although similar, comparison and metaphor involve distinct conceptual operations.

One need not look far to discern the reason for the imprecision of Rādūyānī's terminology (for example with regard to *iḍṭerāb*, *nām*, and *ḥaqīqa*): no philosophical lexicon existed in New Persian at the time that could easily accommodate the conceptually dense semantic field of Arabic rhetoric or the broader philosophy of language of which it was a part. Rādūyānī created such a lexicon for New Persian. In the process he rearranged the lexicons he inherited (directly and indirectly) from Ibn al-Muʿtazz, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Jurjānī. Perhaps due to its investment in poetic ambiguity, literary theory could not transcend the vagaries of linguistic signification in the ways that philosophy could. Hence the basic irony of *Tarjumān's* reception history. Never having been adequately interpreted, Rādūyānī's conceptual innovation awaits its translation.[60]

Because he privileged the intellectual resources furnished by his vernacular over the more easily assimilible Arabic tradition, Rādūyānī's achievement had to wait for centuries to enter mainstream Islamic literary theory. Even its reception within Persian literary criticism has been partial and incomplete, as witnessed by the dismissive comment of Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwaṭ (d. 1182), Rādūyānī's successor in the art of New Persian rhetorical theory. Writing in a different milieu and for a different patron, Waṭwaṭ had much to gain from criticizing his predecessor and clearing a space for himself. His dismissive account of Rādūyānī's treatise suggests a personal interest in

---

[59]Aristotle begins the chapter on metaphor in book three of his *Rhetoric* by asserting that the comparison (εἰκών) is a metaphor. The difference is small (διαφέρει γὰρ μικρόν)" (1406b). (Εἰκών is most commonly rendered as simile; I have rendered it here as comparison in order to maintain consistency.)

[60]This is certainly the case for English-language scholarship, in which context there are to date no sustained treatments of this work, and a prominent scholar such as Hamid Dabashi could perpetuate the erroneous attribution of this work to the poet Farrukhī (see Dabashi, *Truth and Narrative: The Untimely Thoughts of ʿAyn Al-Quḍāt Al-Hamadhānī* [Surrey: Curzon, 1999], 151). French scholarship has done better, thanks to the pioneering work of Stéphane Diebler (d. 2002), and specifically his unpublished MA thesis, "Le Livre de l'interprète de l'art du style. Traduction" (Université Sorbonne nouvelle – Paris III, 1993–1994). Justine Landau (Institut für Iranistik, Austrian Academy of Sciences), is currently preparing a French edition of Rādūyānī on the basis of Diebler's thesis.

self-aggrandization.[61] Without naming the author, Waṭwaṭ reports that his patron, Khwarezmshah Atsiz (1127–1156), gave him a copy of *Tarjumān al-Balāghah*. As he glanced through the text, Waṭwaṭ determined that Rādūyānī's examples were arbitrarily chosen, and that the book was filled with errors. He proposed to offer a superior work, which he entitled *Gardens of Magic* (*ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr*). This treatise subsequently became the best known and most widely referenced treatise on Persian poetics until the *Compendium* (*Muʿjam*) of Shams-i Qays Rāzī (fl. 1232). Waṭwaṭ thereby erased Rādūyānī's treatise from subsequent Persian literary history. Partly as a result of his revision of literary history, attention to Rādūyānī's work within Persian literary studies lags far behind the attention lavished on Shams-i Qays and later critics.[62]

Jurjānīan aesthetics helped to consolidate a new discipline in the Arabic curriculum: *balāgha*, classically divided after al-Jurjānī's death into semantics (ʿilm al-maʿānī), eloquence (ʿilm al-bayān), and tropology (ʿilm al-badī). Analogously with Rādūyānī's place in Persian, Jurjānīan aesthetics did not however generate a new philosophical school in Arabic; his impact was limited by and large to the *madrasas*, as attested by the productions of his followers in ʿilm al-balāgha, al-Sakkākī, al-Qazwīnī, and al-Taftazānī. For the philosophical impact of Jurjānīan aesthetics, and in order to witness its creative potential, one must turn not to late medieval Arabic scholasticism but to the New Persian literary theory pioneered by Rādūyānī and, after him, Waṭwāṭ and Shams-i Qays.[63] This triumvirate of Persian literary theorists may diverge in crucial respects from post-Jurjānīan Arabic literary theory, yet the Persian works are even more attentive than the later Arabic texts to the work of comparison within the literary imagination. This essay has argued that Rādūyānī provides the key to this difference.

---

[61]Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwaṭ, *ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr fī daqāʾiq al-shiʿr* (Moscow: Vostochnoi literatury, 1985), 226.

[62]For examples of such scholarship, see William Smyth, "Persian and Arabic Theories of Literature: A Comparative Study of al-Sakkâkî's *Miftâḥ al-ʿulûm* and Shams-i Qays' *al-Muʿjam fî maʿâyîr ashʿâr al-ʿajam*" (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 1986); Jerome Clinton, "Shams-i Qays on the Nature of Poetry," *Edebiyat* 1.2 (1989): 101–128.

[63]I am unaware of any complete synthesis of these three works. The best work available in French is Landau, *De rythme & de raison*. The best work available in Russian is Natalia Chalisova's introduction to Shams-i Qays, *Muʿjam (Svod pravil persidskoi poezii. Chast II, O nauke rifmy i kritiki poezii* [Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 1997]), which synthesizes much prior scholarship on the new Persian *balāgha* tradition.

To summarize its achievement, Rādūyānī gave the generative aspect of poetry a new location in the hierarchy of human knowledge. Poetry's task in comparison-based poetics was to create resemblances in a world of incommensurable differences, and, further, to insist that these resemblances be understood ontologically, notwithstanding their figurative origins. In certain respects, this signified a further iteration of the shift from simple to complex metaphors that Heinrichs identified in his pioneering study of *muḥdathūn* poetics.[64] In this instance, however, the shift transpired in a new language. With Rādūyānī, the figural become literal; the *ḥaqīqa / majāz* dichotomy atrophied from within.

The first two hemistichs of Rādūyānī's final citation to illustrate comparison reveal how *tashbīh* shifted from its original status as a hermeneutical error (specifically involving the anthropomorphization of the divine, which is understood to exist beyond representation) to its subsequent association with hermeneutic richness and poetic genius. They are by an unknown poet named Manṣūr Manṭiqī. Aside from the following *ghazal*, Manṣūr's poetry has been lost to history:

یک لفظ ناید از دل من وز دهانِ تو
یک موی ناید از تنِ من وز میانِ تو
شاید بدن کی آید جفتی کمانِ خوب
زین خم گرفته پشته من وابروانِ تو
شیز و شَبَه ندیدم مشک سیاه و قیر
مانند روزگار من و زُلفگانِ تو
مانا عقیق نارد هرگز کس از یمن
هم رنگِ این سرشک من و دو لبانِ تو
(*Tarjumān* 53–4)

No words come from my heart or from your mouth.
No hair separates my body from yours.
Perhaps we make a good pair of bows:
my humped back and your eyebrows.
I see no ebony or black coral, no black musk or tar
darker than my fate and your hair.
Although no one will bring an agate from Yemen
The color of my tears and the lips of my beloved will suffice.

Alongside its purely aesthetic virtues, Manṣūr Manṭiqī's poem advances our understanding of New Persian comparison through the relationship it articulates between literal and non-literal language (*ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*). Rādūyānī classifies this as a double comparison

---

[64]See Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind*.

(*al-tashbīh al-muzdawij*) because it involves two objects requiring poetic elucidation, rather than, as more commonly, only one. Both the lover and the beloved are rendered in a series of striking images. The poet's humped back and his beloved's eyebrow are compared to an archer's bow; his fate and her hair are compared to various forms of blackness (ebony, mahogany, black musk, and tar); finally, his tears and her lips are compared to agate. These comparisons suggest resemblances between the compared objects (*mushabbah*) and the objects to which they are compared (*mushabbah bihi*). Even more originally, they effect similitudes between the two compared objects, the lover and his beloved. In contrast to metaphor, which presumes the transference of qualities in order to bring them into relation with each other (hence the elision of the particle of comparison), comparison effects a poetic relation while also keeping differences intact (hence the particle of comparison is preserved). Not coincidentally, the poetics of the text reproduces the lover/beloved relation: the speaker and his beloved merge as they are compared to related objects: a bow, blackness, and agate.

Even more basic than the question of how this particular citation fits into Rādūyānī's taxonomy of comparison is the sense in which it clarifies his departure from al-Jurjānī. Had this text been cited by al-Jurjānī, he would have classified it as a metaphor. We have only to recall the defining characteristic of the Jurjānīan metaphor, which encourages literal reading and elides any trace of its figurative status.[65] Al-Jurjānī's endeavor to conceal poetic artifice obviously stands in tension with his preference for ambiguity over transparency. This implicit contradiction notwithstanding, Manṣūr Manṭiqī's verse satisfies both criteria set forth by al-Jurjānī as preconditions for a metaphor's efficacy: it is readable literally and figurally, metapoetically, as a similitude of itself, and, at a discursively mundane level, as a description of sexual relations between two lovers.

Pace al-Jurjānī, Manṭiqī's comparisons do not foreclose poetic meaning. Perhaps we would be getting closer to the truth by

---

[65]The most perfect *istiʿāra* in Jurjānīan aesthetics is one from which the *mushabbah* (the object which is the explicit subject of a comparison) is entirely elided. "The expression should be such that its form [*ẓāhir*] gives no indication of the intended referent" (17–16 :296 *Asrār*)ذكر المشبه من البيان حتى لا يُعلَم من ظاهر الحال أنك أردته. Elsewhere, al-Jurjānī clarifies this through examples (*Asrār* 299). Both the phrases "a sun rose (طلعت شمس)" and "I wielded a sword against my enemies (هززتُ على الأعداء سيفًا)" signify at the literal and figurative level. The poetic validity of these metaphors consists in their ability to conceal the figurative meaning by making the literal meaning appear dominant.

pointing out that we are witnessing less a shift in the aesthetic criterion of validity than a reorientation between signifiers and signifieds. This aesthetic transformation was already effected by al-Jurjānī, who nonetheless remained confined to the traditional approach of his Arabic predecessors. It remained for the first literary theorist writing in Persian to apply Jurjānīan hermeneutics to a new linguistic reality. Manṭiqī's *ghazal* contains no metaphors according to Rādūyānī's reading. The Persian theorist adduces the *ghazal* to illustrate a particular comparison, whereas Jurjānīan aesthetics would have found the text more serviceable as an illustration of *istiʿāra* at the most refined aesthetic level.

What can be said of the historical forces driving this epistemic transformation from one meaning of *tashbīh* to another? Certain connections between the reality on the ground in the medieval Islamic world and the shifts internal to contemporaneous literary theory may be noted. Arguably, the most intriguing evidence for a connection between social and political life under Ghaznavid and later Khwarezmshah rule and the New Persian literary imagination is the many new literary genres that entered the worlds during this period. There is much evidence to suggest that the bacchic poems (*khamrīyyāt*) of Abū Nuwās would not have entered Arabic literature without the benefit of the literary-critical transformations that preceded this literary genre. Ibn al-Muʿtazz stated in the opening to his *Book of the New* that his intention in composing his treatise was to make available an already existing body of modernist (*muḥdath*) poetry.[66] Likewise, Rādūyānī composed his *Tarjumān* to make the New Persian poetics of ʿUnṣurī, Kisāʾī Marwazī, and Manṣūr Manṭiqī comprehensible to a wider readership. With Rādūyānī, comparison acquired precedence over metaphor, and thereby both extended and revised al-Jurjānī's contribution. Rādūyānī's revision consisted of a refusal to categorize *tashbīh* as an inferior mode of literary perception, subordinate to metaphor. *Tarjumān*'s extension consisted of applying the Jurjānīan preference for imagery that demanded the reader's active participation in the process of figuration to a literary tradition that had yet to internalize the reader's response as an aesthetic value.

Rādūyānī, the first Persian translator of Arabic rhetoric, followed al-Jurjānī and other Arabic theorists of literary expression, such as Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (fl. 1018), in preferring ambiguity to singular

---

[66]Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Kitāb al-Badīʿ*, 2.

signification.[67] The congruity between words and things assumed by Arabic literary theory's emphasis on metaphor was assimilated in New Persian poetics to a concept of language wherein poetic perception alone could relate *lafẓ* to *maʿnī*, signifier to signified. Thus was laid the foundation for the discursive autonomy of the literary imagination within the hierarchy of human knowledge. This transformation in literary knowledge laid the groundwork for a transformation in the sociology of poetic form: of the text, the poet, the critic, and the reader. It also appears to have contributed to the proliferation of a new set of politically oriented genres across the eastern Islamic world, the most notable among them being the prison poem (*ḥabsīyyāt*).[68] Under the influence of new socio-political possibilities stimulated by the eastward movement of Islamicate literary culture and the consequent ascendancy of a New Persian linguistic and literary consciousness, poets and their publics suddenly began to demand new things from poetry, and to pursue new aesthetic agendas through their reading practices.

Appendix I: Opening and Closing Sections from Rādūyānī's Chapter on *Tashbīh*

opening discussion to *faṣl 17, fī al-tashbīh (Tarjumān* 150–151)

دیگری از جملهٔ بلاغت تشبیه گفتنست و راسترین و نیکوترین آنست که چون با شگونه کنیش تباه نگردد و نقصان نپذیرد و هر یکی از مناننده کردگان بجای یکدگر بایسد بصورت و بمعنی و تشبیه بر چند گونه است : یکی آنست که چیزی را بچیزی منننده کنند بصورت و بهَیئت یا چیزی را بر چیزی مانننده بصفتی از صفتها چون حرکت و سکون و لون و رنگ و بشتاب و درنگ چو اتّفاق افتاد بچیزی مانننده کرده دو معنی یا سه معنی از وصفهای تشبیه آنگه قوی تر گردد و . سخن اندرین باب و دقیقها بسیارست . و اگر آن همه را یاد کنیم کتاب دراز گردد و از غرضِ خویش برون شود و من اکنون بیتهای این باب یاد کنم تا نگرنده تآمل کند و وی را روشن شود

---

[67]For ambiguity in Arabic literary culture, see, in addition to Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind," Thomas Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligion, 2011).

[68]For the development of the *ḥabsīyyāt* genre in relation to these literary and political transformations, see Rebecca Gould, *The Persian Genre of Incarceration: Prisons and the Literary Imagination* (book manuscript in progress).

closing discussion to *faṣl* 22, *fī al-tashbīh al-muzdawij* (*Tarjumān* 157–158)

وپیش ازآن که این فصل را ختم کنم فرق بگویم میان تشبیه و استعارت تشبیهی بوَد بی تحقیق و تشبیه استعارتی بی اضطراب و اندر جمله بباید دانستن کی تشبیه از استعارت بحروفِ تشبیه مانده بود. و حروفِ تشبیه آنست کی یاد کردم . رکه تأمّل کند بداند و بشناسد

Title page of the unique ms. of *Tarjumān*.