

## A FEW ISLAMIC CRITICS

### *Al-Ġurġānī as a Critic*

There is a literary critic who seems to have been more or less overlooked by the older orientalist literature. Al-Ġurġānī's name cannot be found in, for example, the older edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam. An important reason for the later recognition of Al-Ġurġānī's merits seems to be Hellmut Ritter's translation of the 'Secrets of Rhetoric'.

To begin with some quite general impressions of al-Ġurġānī, it might be said that in the outward mode of his writing, in his selection of subject matter, he did not break with tradition. As for the poet's language, he sought after approved and grammatically correct usage. »The better the borrowed word defends its place, the better it is embossed in the sentence through adherence to the rules of grammar, the better is the speaker assured that his speech will be accepted as ordinary speech and his metaphors and similes, again, as normal usage; and the stronger will be his ability to persuade, and the more credible and successful his thesis.» (pp. 344—345) (The references are to H. Ritter's translation 'Die Geheimnisse der Wortkunst', Wiesbaden 1959). This is typical of the critics of the Islamic area or, to use Spenglerian concepts, of the critics with a 'Magian soul'.

Of course, this anxiety to abide by the petty rules of grammar is also met with in Europe. In France, wanton use of language was allowed until »Malherbe finally came». Malherbe was followed by Boileau, Pope and other purists of the classical school: but a strong revolt against rules came with the breakthrough of the romantics, and this revolt has continued to this day. Diderot's 'Rameau's Nephew' would do nothing the same way as his esteemed uncle and thus became an archetype of the cultural rebel of all times. He dressed carelessly and was dirty and his art was disdainful of agreed standards. It might here be noted that the appearance and manners of Rameau's Nephew bear a strong

resemblance to the appearance and writing of an Islamic mystic, a Sufi, a *qalandar*.

Yet, in the realm of Islam, there was not a single critic to defend an infraction of rules. Continuing this line of thought, we must also observe that the Sufi poets did not break the rules in this manner, either. Their revolt took place in the subject matter of their poetry, in praising the forbidden wine, in ranting against the orthodox creed. Still there was a revolt, not against correct language, but against the rules for simple and understandable style. The rules of simple usage lasted only one century after Mohammed in Arabic Literature. Afterwards the language of poetry was correct grammatically, but by the 9th century poetry was just as easy to explain as Ezra Pound's *Cantos* would be for Alexander Pope to explain. If some later Arabic or Persian poet revolted by carrying the strange metaphor or far-fetched allusion farther than his predecessor, al-Ġurġānī would follow him on his way.

In clinging to the doctrine of the excellence of the Koran as a supreme model for all poetry (in his book 'On the Uniqueness of the Koran'), al-Ġurġānī shares the limitations of his fellow Arabic critics as well as the limitations of many critics of late antiquity who held that the Holy Scriptures were the supreme literary work. »The Venerable Bede (d. 735), for example, looks upon the language of the Holy Bible much as Bāqillānī does upon the language of the Koran. In his treatise 'De schematibus et tropis Sanctae Scripturae', Bede proposes to show that the images and figures of the Bible surpass in age and beauty anything offered by profane authors. But it remained for the Victorians of the twelfth century to recognize the Bible as a whole as one supreme work of art, as a universal allegory whose linguistic and stylistic uniqueness is due to its being the sole repository of the highest Being, Truth and Beauty» (von Grunebaum, 'A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism', p. XV).

As a general notion about al-Ġurġānī, it might still be said that he, like Ibn Khaldūn or Ḥāzīm, surpasses the limitations of his time and culture. This he does in his syntactic analysis, which is so well wrought in detail that it can be compared with certain modern linguistic studies in the syntax of Latin or Greek authors. In his psychological penetration into the ways metaphors and tropes work, he is also unique. Furthermore, he has a general theory of the important role of poetry and the poet, and this kind of theory, as has been mentioned, does not to my knowledge exist elsewhere in Islamic criticism. Furthermore, he has given to *taḥyīl* (imitation, phantasmagoria) a meaning which makes him the strongest exponent of what we have earlier termed the literary

arabesque. Separating the metaphor from its one source, reality, he has fortified the ambitions of Islamic literary culture.

Al-Ġurġānī puts a strong accent on syntax in his analysis of style. Weisweiler says in his study 'Abdalqahir al-Curcani's Werk *Über die Unnachahmlichkeit des Korans und seine syntaktisch-stilistischen Lehren*' that this incisive analysis is quite new and remains unique in Arabic literature. Leaving al-Ġurġānī's syntactic analysis without further comment, we refer the reader to Weisweiler's study. Al-Ġurġānī's psychological and esthetic explanations of how metaphors and tropes work interest us here more. The older critics — and al-Ġurġānī is among them — look at the *metaphor* as an esthetic device. Nowadays, especially after Sigmund Freud, it is often customary to see in all metaphoric use of language manifestations of the subconscious. Without going into psychoanalytic message hunting, we should note, at any rate, that the metaphor is closely connected with the idea of the *symbol*. Today we often say that symbols both present and represent. They have an existence of their own, yet also a close connection with their object. This view is shared by al-Ġurġānī.

Wellek states in his 'Theory of Literature' that metaphors developed out of the taboos of primitive peoples. The Israelites had many names for Jahve, whose name was not allowed to be uttered: Rock, Sun or Lion. Al-Ġurġānī, on the other hand, gives a psychological explanation. On p. 172, he explains how the human mind is ravished when it can perceive uniting or separating laws, which thereby give shape to chaotic masses of details. We dealt at some length with al-Ġurġānī's idea of *taḥyil* in our historical survey of imitation. Although it is his most important invention, there is no point to repeating what has already been said; so the reader is referred to the historical survey. When things which seemingly have no connection with each other are seen in close association, an instant feeling of joy arises. »It is not reality that is interesting, but the act of uniting it with the thing compared« (p. 172). This is remindful of Goethe and Coleridge and many new critics, such as I. A. Richards (Coleridge on Imagination). Reality according to Goethe and Coleridge consists of two parts: the chaotic mass of data and the human act of adding to it the mysterious elixir of seeing something all animals do not see: relations between these data. This seeing of relationships inspires the complete joy of which al-Ġurġānī speaks.

Bold use of metaphor is the essence of Arabic and Persian literature. Mention has already been made of Coleridge. His ideas about imagination as being something quite different from fancy, which alone can arrange reasonable relations, have been welcomed as something like

a creed by users of strange metaphors. Al-Ġurġānī differs from Coleridge in the fact that his ideas have not so much to do with philosophy as stylistics and psychological explanation. The gift of al-Ġurġānī is that he not only propagates strange metaphors but leads us ingeniously step by step from one metaphorical extremity to another. Al-Ġurġānī's style is marked by clarity and intelligibility. He is patient enough always to keep an eye on his goal and finally to reach this goal by slow-winding, clearly formulated phrases. The old aesthetic concept of unity in variety is much stronger in al-Ġurġānī's work than in that of Ibn Khaldūn or al-Bāqillānī, who touch this concept only passingly. In Ḥāzīm and the Aristotelian tradition of poetics this concept of unity is observed to a certain degree, but more in imitation of Aristotle than as a clearly felt and expressed necessity. We must here remember that al-Ġurġānī belongs to the indigenous Arab tradition of criticism — which differs from the Aristotelian tradition.

Al-Ġurġānī is, typically enough, matter-of-fact and dryly rationalistic. When he wishes to do so, he proceeds from persuasion to transport, to use the modern equivalent of technique and ecstasy of Longinus in antiquity. When al-Ġurġānī speaks of the poet as the greatest of liars and alchemists, he in several passages abandons his usual low-grade scholastic habit of getting lost in petty reasoning or displaying erudition rather than insight. He rises to the level of research where visionary views seemingly cut off the flow of logical reasoning. Men of great ability in the annals of thought leap from conclusion to conclusion; and while in the act of seeing the connections between phenomena that appear widely separated to the average man, such extraordinary minds often forget or are unable to move slowly along the road of causality. Like the coachman in Plato's 'Phaedrus', they become unable at a certain point to drive in the same manner as they have done before.

For al-Ġurġānī, to use his own words, the greatest liar is the best poet. He vigorously champions the poet's right to pick the strangest metaphors. When it comes to poetry, al-Ġurġānī holds a liar in higher esteem than a writer who cannot lie. The latter, in his view, strives to avoid high-flown and magnificent figures. This gives us the right key to Arabic and Persian poetry of a later period.

When al-Ġurġānī vindicates strange metaphors in poetry, he brings to mind a certain period of literary criticism — the critical movement that flourished from 1910 to 1940 in England and America, at the same time as the 'difficult' modern poetry started. Al-Ġurġānī is a representative of Alexandrine taste. E. R. Curtius writes about T. S. Eliot: «Eliot ist im genauesten Sinn des Wortes ein alexandrinischer Dichter — so wie er

heute aussehen muss und darf. Er ist zunächst ein gelehrter Dichter. Er kennt die Sprachen, die Literaturen, die Techniken. Er schmückt sein Werk mit den Juwelen des Zitats, mit den Reminiszenzen der Lektüre». (Curtius, 'Kritische Essays zur europäischen Literatur, Bern 1950, p. 303). This applies to Eliot's own criticism and it is applicable to the later Persian and Arabic poetry and al-Ġurġānī's criticism, too.

We must keep in mind that this love of the bizarre is found more than occasionally in al-Ġurġānī's poetical theory, for it is the central theme of his psychology of the metaphor. (See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *Balāgha*.)

Having dealt on general lines with al-Ġurġānī's 'Secrets of Rhetoric', let us now take a look at certain details in his book. Both Ritter and Weisweiler maintain that al-Ġurġānī would not set forth his ideas in any clearly formulated system. He is carried from one thought to another and returns to old subjects.

If we look, however, at the table of contents of the 'Secrets of Rhetoric', we will see that the book proceeds quite consistently from one kind of metaphor to another. First it discusses metaphors with a substratum from the sensuous world, then with metaphors without any such substratum. Next it proceeds to simile, where al-Ġurġānī again divides his subject into logical subdivisions. First he deals with the psychological effect of the simile and proceeds to the grammatical and syntactical reasons for the effect of similes. The last part of the book is dedicated to the trope, which is again divided into subsequences.

The disposition of the book is logical; another matter is the fact that the author expresses his greatest ideas in passing, *obiter dicta*. In this he is by no means alone among the critics and philosophers of the world. It has been remarked about Goethe that everything important he had to say, was said in passing. The same observation applies to such critics as Coleridge, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Among philosophers we might cite for example Spinoza, who wanted to prove the existence of God in geometrical terms. The geometrical disposition of its contents adds much that is useless to his book and must be overlooked.

On pages 5—35 al-Ġurġānī deals with the pun. In the time of French classicism, the pun was only a joke. Contemporary critics understand that a pun can add to the ambiguity of a poem. Al-Ġurġānī deals with different kinds of puns. His main point, where he approaches modern views, is that the effect of a pun depends on the general meaning of the statement and adds something to a thought that in itself must be interesting or otherwise the pun will also be lost.

On page 36, the reader is stirred to attention by reading of two kinds of imagination. He is tempted by the thought that Coleridge's idea of two

forms of phantasy, viz., fancy and imagination, is nothing of as late as 19th century invention but must be, like so many other great ideas of criticism, ages old. We do not, however, find in al-Ğurġānī so complete an exposition of this matter as to justify calling him a 'pioneer of fancy and imagination' in the Coleridgean sense. He only says that we must draw a line between an imagination that is so strong that it makes the listener believe **totally** and one that only gives vague hints. It seems to me that here again al-Ğurġānī shows his powers as a psychologist. He is trying to convey the idea that 'vague hints' are means used by artists, while complete believing refers to everyday statement of fact. Here again we see al-Ğurġānī's rational stance as a critic. Living inside the area where Platonic ideas were the meat and bread of the mystic, he does not assert that vague hints might give us some true knowledge of the thing under observation. To al-Ğurġānī, the positivist, the incomplete persuasion of art was merely less complete than the statement of fact. In Europe, the concept of the metaphor is heavily laden with elements taken from idealistic philosophy or transcendental thinking. One quite pragmatic critic who lays his accent on psychology, I. A. Richards, explains the metaphor in very much the same way as al-Ğurġānī does. Richards changes the **transcendental** tuning of Coleridge's literary philosophy to one of matter-of-fact psychological causalities, and in this he reminds one very much of al-Ğurġānī. Since E. Cassirer's time, European criticism during the present century has learned that the metaphor may both present the picture of a flower or depict something else, youth, the **awakening of Nature**, love, etc.. The myths in poetic language have brought European critics again to a viewpoint where they can see at the same time the unique, real flower and some transcendental flower, besides. Myths have taken European critics away again from the strictly matter-of-fact psychological realm where al-Ğurġānī dwells.

It may be appropriate to compare modern European views on the metaphor somewhat later, when we have studied how al-Ğurġānī sees the metaphor. Even al-Ğurġānī conceives of two kinds of metaphor, but he does not draw any comparison between these two kinds of metaphor by extending them to the two opposite limits, like such modern European critics as Wellek. According to Wellek, the two kinds are: 1) The metaphor with a close connection to the object and 2) the metaphor that has no connection with any outward phenomenon but rather to something internal, something personal. According to I. A. Richards, metaphors are vestigial memories. Considerable investigation into the nature of these vestigial memories has taken place. Scholars like Galton have found not only gustatory, olfactory metaphors but also kinesthetic,

haptic, emphatic and synesthetic metaphors (Wellek). All these metaphors belong to the first category. But the whole band of myth critics, including Suzanne Langer, their latest and perhaps now most perspicacious representative with her book 'Philosophy in a New Key', believe that metaphors have a deeper meaning, that they are more than vestiges of the senses preserved in the memory. To a myth critic, the metaphor does not necessarily have a connection with its object but with man's inner life, which is studied by comparative religion, anthropology, folklore, sociology and psychoanalysis.

Al-Ġurġānī does not go this far. His first kind of metaphor is closely related to the objective world, the second kind, not to objects, but to concepts. He examines many of these, as, for example, 'he wrote in water' or 'he is a smith of cold iron'. Even here al-Ġurġānī slowly proceeds to syntactic problems.

Al-Ġurġānī's explanations reveal a strong affinity to positivist thinking, what with his ability to explain everything in psychological and syntactic terms. His explanation of the causes of the effect produced by metaphors is superb: »In normal or everyday comparisons, two objects are seen, but in the metaphor one sees the same object first as it is in reality and then as if as a reflection in a mirror. In the metaphor, the poet always finds new ways to create new observations as well as new things to add to the old. He can find new forms or enliven old ones» (p. 258).

The indefatigable investigating spirit of al-Ġurġānī goes even further: »The following consideration will make the matter even clearer. If we think that the qualities of phenomena (things) — their nearness, their remoteness — might suddenly vanish from our mind, then we could not mentally grasp any of their qualities, we would not be able by sheer speculation to bring to our minds the qualities of the things» (p. 258). This love of the nearness of real things is as far from the ideas of Plato as can be.

When al-Ġurġānī declared that in the metaphor one can see at the same time the object as it is in reality and at the same time as in a mirror, we might be tempted to see in the statement a modification of Schiller's 'Scheinthorie'. Schiller wanted to say that the artist does not see the object as it is in nature but as a shadow or a reflection in a mirror. But Schiller had in mind Goethe's idea of the artist as a double agent. He sees the world as it is but adds something to it: the world of ideas, the world of concepts, from which two worlds the complete reality has actually been first created. As such, nature has no laws and no beauty. This dual-rôle view of the artist is, in a distant way, presented by al-Ġurġānī.

The 'eye-connection' (*mulāḥaḥa*) is an important concept in al-Ġurġānī's theory of how the metaphor acts; in fact one could say that the concept of 'eye-connection' is al-Ġurġānī's real achievement in the psychology of the metaphor.

Al-Ġurġānī defines the trope as follows: «Every word that takes on a meaning different from what is said, is a trope. This happens expressly in the case of the eye-connection between the first-mentioned and the second-mentioned thing.» This eye-connection is an important factor in all comparisons. This connection can be stronger or weaker. «When you say in the foregoing manner, 'I saw a lion', and mean by it that you saw a man like a lion, it becomes evident that you can not dissociate the first meaning from the second. For in a man you can never find the properties of a real lion, but you know that with the word lion you always have a predatory animal before your eyes.»

Continuing, al-Ġurġānī goes again over to syntactic elucidations of the effects of the trope. These had been previously well explained by Weisweiler in his 'al-Curcānī's Werk Über die Unnachahmlichkeit des Korans und seine syntaktisch-stilistischen Lehren'. A reading of almost any part of al-Ġurġānī's work shows how much more deeply and broadly he had studied the different types of poetic language than, for example, Ibn Khaldūn.

In the European history of criticism, it is difficult to find quite comparable representatives of the psychology of the arts before the last hundred years. In Wellek & Warren's 'Theory of Literature', we find names like Francis Galton, I. A. Richards and Middleton Murry, who study the metaphor with the same persistence, but in earlier literary criticism, we almost always run across certain Platonic concepts — inevitably we are confronted with the transcendental.

Now we consider al-Ġurġānī's ideas about the artist. Here our author suddenly gets on more familiar terms with the reader, who has forgotten the short period of positivistic and mechanistic literary criticism in Europe.

In his theories of the literary artists al-Ġurġānī comes nearest to the tradition that runs from Longinus and Aristotle to Coleridge and all the German idealists as well as the New critics, who oddly enough have the German idealists and Coleridge primarily in mind rather than the positivistic philosophy of our own time. (Wellek, Concepts of Criticism.)

As pointed out before, al-Ġurġānī's ideas about the artist are the ones that seem to break the rigid boundaries he has set for himself. His notions are not put into any specific chapter devoted to this subject; but we find them *obiter dicta*, scattered among his succinct studies on how the effect of the metaphor is produced.



Al-Ġurġānī is an early defendant of baroque taste. In his view the most difficult thing in poetry is uniting faraway things. »The thing that really extends the far side of the race track to infinity and that makes the task of the archer so difficult is nothing more than the true ability to see common traits between faraway things. Between the things that belong to the same species, there exists a natural affinity; hence it is not a heavy task and it does not take great pains to establish unity between them. Real art, real craftsmanship, the eye for the exact lies expressly in the ability to bend the neck of things that when placed together arouse disgust, or things that constantly and naturally run in opposite directions, under one and same yoke.»

Al-Ġurġānī sets up the ability to bring faraway things together as a criterion of a poet's rank. »With the grading of this ability you may rate poets as wise, talented, inspired, genial, or truly masterful. The master is one who has invented a new form of art.»

This sounds highly romantic, and there is a temptation to see in our author a precursor of the view that set as the ultimate artistic value the obligation to scrap the old and invent something totally new in its place.

But let us take a closer look at al-Ġurġānī's instinct for innovation.

In chapter 20/1, our author for once speaks of poets and not of poetry. In 'Yād-nāme-ye Jan Rypka' (1967) Boldyrev contends that there existed a demand for originality in Persian literature not only in earlier times but also in the period usually marked by gross plagiarism. »Thus the designation of originality as the highest criterion of poetic mastery not only did not disappear in the period of unrestrained imitative epigonism during the 15th and 16th centuries but seems to have subordinated to itself the very term of epigonism. In Vāṣifī's memoirs, there are also two affirmations that 'originality' was highly estimated also outside the narrow field of poetic imagery.»

What then was this originality in terms of al-Ġurġānī? Al-Ġurġānī contends (p. 364) that one cannot speak of plagiarism if the general line of thought of two poets is similar. »A general similarity between two poets exists when they call their patron brave and hospitable, or if they say that his face is radiant and beautiful, or that his horse is fast, and so on.»

Plagiarism is not present if two poets use the same theme, provided that in rare motifs the precedence be stated.

The same is true if old motifs are expanded or refined.

As regards similarity of expression, al-Ġurġānī wants to make certain reservations when it comes to something that the writer has grasped only after great deliberation, something that he can find only at the end of a

long quest, something that eludes discovery except after a painstaking search: something that costs the poet great effort, striving after, working over, weighing of this and that way, something hidden behind a veil. Here he sees a slight chance of plagiarism.

Is then Boldyrev's assertion that there was a demand for originality in Persian poetry of the 15th century correct? I believe this to be a demand of quite a different sort from the demand for originality in Europe. Europe is not here held up as a measure for everything, but Boldyrev seems to regard the criteria of originality in Persia and in Europe as identical. This error must be corrected.

In Europe, as in the mediaeval Middle-East, plagiarism has been the life and blood of literature. The Middle Ages had no idea of ownership of literary subjects, only some kind of vague idea of original forms. Translations were very often canonized and looked upon as original works. The best example is, of course, the Vulgate translation of the Bible, which still today is the only accepted version in the Roman Catholic church. Later, Chapman's Homer, Luther's Bible, Fitzgerald's Omar were canonized. It was only in the 19th century that a concept of literary ownership originated in Europe, but as late as 1890 Paul Albrecht began to publish his life-long work 'The Plagiarism of Lessing' (eventually in 6 vols.) in which he exposed the vast amount of plagiarism to be found in Lessing's works. W. Kayser (*Das Sprachliche Kunstwerk*, pp. 57—59) sees Lessing's plagiarisms as justified and Gero von Wilpert sees a difference between great and petty plagiarism. Great plagiarism takes the borrowed material and places it into a closed 'Weltanschauung' or into connection with great and original ideas, which really rescue the borrowed stuff from oblivion or — however great the borrowed stuff might be — otherwise give to it a new life. Examples of this are K. L. Ammer's translations from Villon, which were used as such in Brecht's 'Beggar's Opera'. Even such literary terms as euphuism or wertherism refer to the fact that most great works of literary art in Europe have been imitated.

Still, the concept of plagiarism in the Islamic sphere is different from the corresponding concept in Europe. In Persian and Arabic rhetoric we find at least five terms for the various kinds of literary borrowings.

Among the poetic devices Haft Qulzum or Rückert's adaptation of it cites (on pp. 188—191) *saraqāt-e še<sup>c</sup>rī*, meaning poetic thefts. This heading covers three different kinds of thefts, or plagiarism: 1) 'intiḥāl', or presenting a quotation as one's own lines, 2) 'maskh', where the meaning of the metaphor is taken but the expression modified, 3) 'salkh' where the expression is unaltered but some ingenious change is made in

the meaning. It does not appear from Haft Qulzum directly whether these are allowed a poet or not. Only the pejorative word theft seems to indicate that they are forbidden. If they are not allowed, as Browne says (II p. 73), why are they so common in the best of Persian poets? To the above three terms we could add 'ibdā<sup>c</sup>', which is similar to 'salkh' and 'taḍmīn'. The last mentioned means, according to Haft Qulzum, borrowing somebody else's poetry and assimilating it so deftly in one's own verse that it cannot be called a theft. It emerges then that there did indeed exist in Persia a concept of literary theft.

The representation by Haft Qulzum of the term 'saraqāt' is unsatisfactory. 'Intihāl' seems to be forbidden, but 'maskh' and 'salkh' cannot be damned since they are common in all poetry.

In the Islamic sphere, the poet enjoyed great freedom in making use of other poets' work, without any risk of being called a literary thief. This statement scarcely needs perhaps any substantiation; it probably suffices to call to mind the debts owed by Ḥāfiẓ to Sa<sup>c</sup>dī (Browne I, pp. 538—539), Salmān Sāveġī, Hwāġū Kermānī and many others.

If we here make a comparison with the poetic conventions of Europe, we meet the afore-mentioned figures. We might say that European poets take other poets' metaphors but change the mode of expression ('maskh'); they borrow expressions and change the meaning ('salkh'); but they do *not* borrow as freely from other poets' metaphors, expressions and meanings without change as the Arabs and Persians did.

Again there is an exception. In an earlier study, I drew attention to the similarity between the poetic conventions of Ḥāfiẓ and the modernist movement in Europe (c. 1860—1960). Both periods seem to use freely a collage technique, and both periods have an 'arabesque' attitude to the continuity of poetry: their ideal is a continuity achieved by means of psychological association. Suddenness and surprise are the cherished virtues of the poet. We might here quite well compare al-Ġurġānī to, for instance, T. S. Eliot as a literary critic. What we have said about al-Ġurġānī as a progenitor of arabesque as a literary genre in the first of our essays might usefully be recalled here. But perhaps we shall have a chance to return to the matter and treat Islamic poetry as a baroque type of poetry, a type which recurs throughout the entire history of literature. Then the literary arabesque would gather meaning outside the Islamic realm, and al-Ġurġānī would stand in wider historic perspective.

We have tarried long with the concept of plagiarism in Islamic poetry. Still, if we want to study the original ideas that al-Ġurġānī brought to the history of criticism, it would be more important than to study his ideas about the poet's originality, for it is here that he deviates from the usual

ideas of an Islamic critic. He leaves alone the presenting of rhetorical figures, which we meet in the same form and almost in the same order in treatises like Qivāmī's 'Ornate Qasīda' and 'Haft Qulzum', although even along this line he delves more deeply into the psychological layers of the rhetoric figures.

For al-Ġurġānī the greatest liar is the best poet, to use his own words. Al-Ġurġānī strongly champions the poet's right to use the strangest metaphors. When it comes to poetry, al-Ġurġānī holds a liar in higher respect than a poet who cannot lie. The latter, according to him, tries to avoid high-flown and magnificent figures.

The following passage might have been written by some romantic critic like Goethe, Schelling or Coleridge. It is full of bathos, hailing the poet as an individualist, and it is in sharp contrast with the principle so often met with in Islamic criticism (e.g., Ibn Khaldūn and al-Bāqillānī) that poetry can be learned and should be learned as artisanship.

»These (phantasmagories) please, agitate, charm, exciting wonder and inspiring abandon in the viewer. They induce in the soul of one who has fallen under their spell a strange feeling, which previously was not there. They act seductively, and their potency is not to be denied in any connection nor should it be underestimated. (The phantasmagories of the poets) work in the same way as idols, and exert the same degree of temptation. The same effect is produced by poetry with metaphors, those strange apparitions which it creates out of nothing. With these metaphors, dead and mute things are given life and associations the reason can grasp» (p. 369).

Very often in the history of Arabic criticism has the poet's personal creativity been grossly underestimated and often has the accent been strongly placed on technique and craftsmanship. Ibn Khaldūn and al-Ġurġānī fall outside this main stream. The wonder is, therefore, that al-Ġurġānī showed no understanding of al-Mutanabbī's or al-Maʿarrī's strange metaphors, as he declares that they are no poets at all.

In his essays on Coleridge and Wordsworth, T. S. Eliot remarks that in fact Coleridge only invented the rules of imagination. We cannot speak of two kinds of poetry since fancy always is just bad poetry. In Islamic poetry the distinction between fancy and imagination becomes more meaningful, for every poet has so much of the craftsman in him and it is easier to find the purely technical layer. Islamic poets almost invariably have poems that can be described as mere technical exercises. Moreover in Islamic poetry the poet's personality is more hidden underneath the technical layer: the 'Stimmungslirik' poetry of feeling exists only occasionally. The previous and following passages are characteristic of

another of Coleridge's as well as Goethe's and Schelling's leading ideas: to wit, that nature as a whole does not exist if we do not induce in it its own reason, the laws of nature do not exist if we do not perceive them, its beauty does not become articulate if we do not articulate it. Thinking is a very active verb. In man there is united in a neoplatonic way the godly and the physical side of the cosmos. The miracle of the poetic image is powerfully vindicated here.

Al-Ġurġānī must, however, correlate this powerful ability of the poet with man's ability to lie, since in the tradition of Islamic literary criticism, there existed no Platonic or other explanation for the seemingly supranatural force that poetry or the poet carries. In the Islamic sphere there existed no metaphysics of poetry. This rational psychologism forms the sharp dualism between here and there in Islamic poetics and poetry, the dualism that becomes apparent in the cavern feeling.

»The others who say that he who lies most is the best poet, hold the opinion that the art (of poetry) can prosper and attain to its greatest glamour and develop to its maximum versatility only where it can operate freely and with the maximum of elbowroom. Here the poet will find a way to create something new and to add to the old something new, to see new forms or to enliven the old ones; here he will find a field of action stretching as far as he might ever desire. Unceasingly, the motifs stream to him, he pours water from a well that will never be empty, takes out things out of a holder which is forever full. He who wants to express the plain facts is confined in a narrow compass and his feet are fettered, and he cannot move in every direction he wishes, and he cannot apply his strength» (p. 293).

Both the Sufi philosophy and the mystical poetry, fervent and visionary, offer plenty of transcendental explanations for seemingly supernatural phenomena in human behavior. But there was no room in Islam for poets to play the prophet.

#### *Ibn Khaldūn as a Critic*

Scholars representing the European cultural sphere have in many ways rewarded a certain Arabian theoretician because in his own cultural sphere he underwent the destiny of having neither precursors nor

disciples. Ibn Khaldūn's life seems to prove the validity of the myth or basic pattern dominating the existence of human beings and nations, as expounded by Arnold Toynbee: withdrawal from the madding crowd for the restoration of creative power. Ibn Khaldūn (1332—82) gained such notoriety as a master of intrigue in all the courts of western Islam, from Tunis to Granada, that at the age of 43 he was obliged to take leave of his life as a man of the world and a born fortune hunter. External circumstances forced him to concentrate upon his great plan, the writing of »an encyclopaedic synthesis of the methodological and cultural knowledge necessary to enable the historian to produce a truly scientific work» (Encyclopaedia of Islam).

Ibn Khaldūn started his project in Ibn Salāma's castle, six kilometers southwest of modern Frenda, near Oran. It has been remarked that »if Thucydides was the father of historical writing, then Ibn Khaldūn was the father of history as a science». He has also been hailed as the father of sociology. Ibn Khaldūn's 'new science', *ʿilm al-ʿumrān*, of which he was proud, was sociology. In his view, »the basic causes of historical evolution are in fact to be sought in the economic and social structures». In a famous statement, he declares: »The differences which are seen between the generations in their behavior are only the expression of the differences which separate them in their economic way of life.» This sentence is often compared with an equally famous one of Marx's: »The method of production in the material matters of life determines in general the social, political and intellectual processes of life.» The Encyclopaedia of Islam, from which the foregoing quotations are drawn, further observes that »the explanation he gives is not exclusively a socio-economic one but also psychological».

It may be said that besides being an evolutionary historian, sociologist, Marxist before Marx, Ibn Khaldūn was also an innovator in some fields of literary criticism. At the end of his celebrated *Muqaddima*, or preface, Ibn Khaldūn presents his views on poetry. At the same time as he gathers together the old ideas, his presentation rises above the level of a mere review of the general rhetoric figures worked with till then. Ibn Khaldūn's literary criticism signifies a clarification and culmination of the principles of Arabic-Persian criticism. The psychology of literary creation is typical of indigenous Arabic criticism, of Ibn Qudāma and al-Ġurġānī. The Aristotelian line of Arabic criticism was quite a different thing; it was begun by al-Kindī and al-Fārābī and brilliantly continued by Ḥāzīm. Ibn Khaldūn's work likewise means a beginning of the comparative study of different literatures. Ibn Khaldūn is also an example of the Arabs' peculiar and recurrent confinement to

the literary expression, a limitation they imposed upon themselves and within which they developed to mastery. He delved, however, more deeply than others into the meaning of words and language; beyond these two concepts Arabian literary scholarship never ventured. In quoting Ibn Khaldūn. I have utilized Franz Rosenthal's translation (*The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History, Vol. 3, New York 1958*). Ibn Khaldūn's exposition on poetics is about 150 pages long. He complains (p. 337) that while the cataloguing of rhetorical figures is easy, the analysis of style is difficult. And it is for this reason, he declares, that literary critics refrained from engaging in it. Defining poetry, he states (p. 381) that no other scholar had previously done it. »Now that the meaning of 'method' is clear, let us give a definition or description of poetry that will make its real meaning clear to us. This is a difficult task, for, as far as we can see, there is no such definition by any older scholar. The definition of prosodists, according to whom poetry is metrical rhymed speech is no definition or description of the kind of poetry we have in mind. Prosody considers poetry only under the aspect of the agreement of the verses of a poem, with respect to the number of successive syllables with and without a vowel, as well as with respect to the similarity of the last foot of the first hemistich of the verses of a poem to the last foot of the second hemistich. This concerns meter alone and has nothing to do with the words and their meaning. The definition of the prosodists mentioned can serve as a definition of poetry for them. But as we look at poetry, as including vowel endings, eloquence, meter, and special molds of expression peculiar to poetry, there can be no doubt that the definition of the prosodists is no valid definition of poetry for us. We must have a definition that will give us the real meaning of poetry in our sense.

»We say: Poetry is eloquent speech built upon metaphoric usage and descriptions, divided into cola agreeing in meter and rhyme letter, each cola being independent in purpose and meaning from what comes before and after it; and using the methods of the Arabs peculiar to it...

»The phrase 'eloquent speech' in our definition takes the place of genus. The phrase built upon metaphoric usage and descriptions differentiates poetry from eloquent speech, which does not have that and which must be differentiated because it is mostly not poetry. The phrase 'divided into cola agreeing in meter and rhyme letter' differentiates poetry from the kind of prose speech that nobody would consider poetry. The phrase 'each cola being independent in purpose and meaning from what comes before and after it' explains the real character of poetry, because the verses of poetry can be only this way. This does not

differentiate poetry from other things. The phrase 'using the methods... peculiar to it' differentiates poetry from speech that does not use the well-known methods of poetry. Without them, it would not be poetry but merely poetical speech, because poetry has special methods which prose does not have. Likewise, prose has methods which do not apply to poetry. Rhymed speech that does not use those methods is not poetry. It was in this sense that most of the professors of literature whom we have met were of the opinion that the rhymes of al-Mutanabbī and al-Ma<sup>c</sup>arrī are by no means poetry, because these two men did not follow Arab poetical methods.» Ibn Khaldūn wants to say that rhymes do not make poetry, which is a sensible statement.

This citation proves also that Ibn Khaldūn's definition of poetry is — notwithstanding the fact that nobody else had previously crystallized it — typical Arabian, that is to say, technical and scholastic. It seeks to circumscribe the area of meaning of words. Further on, however, he nevertheless reveals noteworthy psychological insights. »It should be known that both poetry and prose work with words, and not with ideas. The ideas are secondary to the words. The words are basic. Now, tongue and speech deal only with words. Ideas are in the mind. Furthermore, everyone may have ideas. Everyone has the capacity to grasp with his mind whatever ideas his mind wants and likes. No technique is required for their composition. But the composition of speech, for the purpose of expressing ideas, requires a technique, as we have stated. Speech is like a mold for ideas » (pp. 391—392). Ibn Khaldūn's psychological instinct, which again as in other Islamic critics (al-Ġurġānī, Hāzīm) is very poignant and carries to some extent over the Arabic dualism of rhetoric aesthetics. »Now the habits obtained by the soul are obtained only gradually, as we have mentioned before. The poetical habit originates with the memorizing of poetry. The habit of secretaryship originates with the memorizing of rhymed prose and prose correspondence. The scientific habit originates in contact with the sciences and with various perceptions, research, and speculation. The juridical habit originates in contact with jurisprudence and through comparing the problems and considering them in detail and through deriving special cases from general principles» (p. 394). »After the requirements of a given situation have thus been indicated, there come the diverse ways in which the mind moves among the ideas with the help of different kinds of word meanings. In its conventional meaning, a word combination indicates one particular idea, but then the mind moves on to what might be the consequence of, or have as its consequence, that idea, or what might be similar to it and, thus, express some idea indirectly as metaphor or



metonymy, as has been established in the proper places. This moving around causes pleasure to the mind, perhaps even more than the pleasure that results from indicating the requirements of the situation. All these things mean attainment of a conclusion, as one knows, is one of the things that cause pleasure » (p. 400). As v. Grunebaum remarks (pp. 335—336): «It is well to note that the Arabs never analyzed the concept of the beautiful in literature — in other words, that they never attempted to develop an aesthetic.» Even Ibn Khaldūn's psychological deliberation does not come close to this kind of aesthetic; although we must notice that there do exist branches of aesthetics that are based upon psychology. «The poet, then, needs solitude. The place he looks at should be a beautiful one with water and flowers. He likewise needs music. He must stir up his talent by refreshing it and stimulate it through pleasurable joy. In addition to the afore-mentioned conditions, there is another. The poet must be rested and energetic. This makes him more collected and is better for his talent, so that he is able to create a loom similar to that which is in his memory. It has been said: 'The best time for it is in the morning right after waking up, when the stomach is empty and the mind energetic, and in the atmosphere of the bath.' It has also often been said: 'Stimuli to poetry are love and drunkenness'» (p. 384). We might say that Ibn Khaldūn's psychological approach means a restatement of the old indigenous Arab critical term according to which the technique of poetry can be learned by memorizing and practicing.

At the conclusion of his poetics, Ibn Khaldūn expounds a kind of evolutionary concept of literature. On page 412, he observes that the Persians and the Greeks, too, had poets, among the latter of which the name Homer is mentioned. He then proceeds to discuss the Arabic poetry of his own time (14th century), which was written in the vernacular and no longer in classical Arabic. In the speech of the Arabs, the vowel endings denoting the nominative, genitive and accusative cases, which had played a significant part in older, classical verse, had been dropped. Orthodox authorities on poetics were unwilling to recognize poetry written in such eroded and abbreviated Arabic. Ibn Khaldūn deals harshly with such conservative philologists: «Most contemporary scholars, philologists in particular, disapprove of these types of poem when they hear them, and refuse to consider them poetry when they are recited. They believe that their literary taste recoils from them, because they are linguistically incorrect and lack vowel endings. This, however, is merely the result of the loss of the habit of using vowel endings in the dialect of the Arabs. If these philologists possessed the same speech habit, taste and natural feeling would prove to them that these poems are

eloquent, provided that their own natural disposition and point of view were not distorted. Vowel endings have nothing to do with eloquence » (p. 414). As an Arabian critic, he demonstrates in these observations a high degree of emancipation from preconceived notions.

In his poetics Ibn Khaldūn has a few pages where he is truly modern. Analogies are discerned by v. Grunebaum between the defenders of European 'secentismo' and 'conzettismo' and Arabian poetics. Both had a peculiar tendency to fall back on devices aptly termed by v. Grunebaum as 'Kunstgriffe'. Such similarities can be found to a greater extent. Literary criticism of the present day consists largely of the defense of a kind of contemporary conzettismo. Conzettismo produced excellent poetry; take, for example, Góngora. By contrast, the literary criticism of those times was not on a par with the poetry, or, then, the worth of the theoreticians of secentismo has not been appreciated. With the passing of romanticism, our own era has once more discovered the 'device'. Now, the grasp of criticism is stronger and goes deeper than in the time of conzettismo. The myths of C. G. Jung and E. Cassirer are frequently used as ladders to reach the lofty altar of poetry.

The organic structure of poetry has been nowadays analyzed considerably more accurately. One could call New Criticism the criticism of organicity. And despite the fact that the sheer language of poetry constitutes the main objective of inquiry, the thought, just as in the case of Ibn Khaldūn, frequently extends beyond its bounds into the areas of aesthetics, psychology and sociology. One amazing likeness is presented by the contrasting pair, texture - structure, although in Rosenthal's English translation instead of 'structure' the word 'construction' is used. As I see it, Ibn Khaldūn has treated the texture of poetry in such a way as to approach the present meaning of the word texture in many of his definitions of eloquence. (Rosenthal's translation, pp. 373—380.) One current definition of the word texture is: »the quality of a poem beyond the merely paraphrasable rational content ... Irrelevant to the structure, but highly visible...» (A Glossary of the New Criticism, Poetry 1949, p. 305).

Aristotle, too, differentiated between the concepts of 'lexis' (style, expression) and 'taxis' (structure, construction or architecture). It is possible that Ibn Khaldūn has these terms through some mediator in earlier Arabic literature, although he rather belongs to the indigenous Arabic critical school, and not to the Aristotelians. Anyhow, this resemblance to 20th century concepts is striking. It is thus apparent that, as a stranger in the field of literary criticism and to his cultural sphere, Ibn Khaldūn was not building a bridge forward alone but backward as well, toward Aristotle.

*Some Other Critics of the Islamic World*

In his study 'The Aesthetic Foundation of Arabic Literature' (Comparative Literature 1952, IV:4), Gustave E. von Grunebaum expounds the well-known fact that Arabic — as well as, it may be stated, Persian — literary criticism regards the beauty of poetry as a sum total of technical devices, which can be taught and learned as any technical craft. He lays the blame for this confinement to technique on Aristotle, whose thinking he finds reproduced by the Arabs.

»He is the better poet who describes the better horse. And the better horse is the one whose characteristics correspond more closely to the canon. To live the convention is to live the ideal. To make convention live or at least to assert its validity in description is the task of the classical poet. His ode is marred when the poet represents his courser as trailing its tail — the correct (though perhaps not the true) statement shows the tail trimmed just above the ground » (p. 332). Passages in which Grunebaum designates Aristotle as the main instigator of the Arabian critics' proneness to concentrate on poetical technicalities are to be found on pages 323, 326, 328, 329, 330, 331 and 332.

The question now arises: is this mechanistic view of aesthetics a clinging to form and to genres, and is this strange attitude toward imitation really Aristotelian? For Aristotle, as for Plato, art is in its essence imitation. They both take this basic principle for granted, without any questioning.

At first glance at the Arab critics, their eagerness to imitate bears a resemblance to Aristotle. Art, according to Aristotle, does not, however, imitate singular, accidental phenomena: only insofar as phenomena are representative of the general, the universal, do they serve for imitation by art. Here we have, in a sense, the Arab critic's best horse. But did any Arab critic expound the idea of a horse — or any other accidental thing — in the way Aristotle did? Not to my knowledge! The Arab poets imitated the horses of Arabic poetry of antiquity, not the horses of reality. They studied different kinds of arabesques played on the theme of a horse.

Art, in Aristotle's view, represents only the innermost core of individual phenomena, their truest essence, that which is universally valid and typical of the kind. A work of art is the purged representation of a real phenomenon. Art idealizes, it idealizes always and inevitably,

for idealization belongs to its nature and its essence. The artist rejects from the phenomena of the real world their accidental ballast, which prevents us from seeing clearly in them the idea. Art finishes the job when nature fails, that is, it imitates the missing parts.

To me, contrary to the point of view of v. Grunebaum, the *ṣināʿa* of the Arabian critics and the *tekhne* of Aristotle lie fairly far apart from each other. Although Aristotle's poetics had been translated into Arabic, although all eminent Arab scholars and philosophers from al-Kindī to Ibn Khaldūn mention the work while discussing poetry, and although Arab scholars gave the Greek philosopher a place of honor among the greatest of learned men, it is apparent that they did not even know what Aristotle's aesthetic views were. Arabian literary criticism undertook its mission in the annals of criticism partly independently and partly leaning on Aristotle's poetics, which it mostly did not understand. Very often the Arab philosophers mention terms from Aristotle's poetics, e.g., imitation; as often have they misinterpreted the meaning of imitation (with Ḥāzīm as the exception). Arabic criticism rose to heights of originality on the strength of its own creative vitality and, spurning alien models, guided by its own internal laws. »Of the two basic lines of approach developed by antiquity, they did not follow the Platonic and Plotinian tradition to investigate the nature of the beautiful but rather took up the Aristotelian problem of the nature of literary art« (v. Grunebaum, p. 336). Although in this discussion I owe a heavy debt to v. Grunebaum, I cannot refrain from remarking that he, as one who finds fault in the mechanical approach of Arabic literary criticism, himself seems to be expressing mechanistic views on Aristotle's aesthetics. Aristotle's views on poetics, all his poetic terms, do not mark a step towards *concettismo*, but a step towards understanding the organicity of literary works of art. Most modern critics set great value on Aristotle as the precursor of the holistic view on literary art, a view that concentrates not on technicalities but different kinds of tensions and ambiguities that together form unity in variety.

We shall now briefly consider the views of al-Bāqillānī and certain other critics. The first reference work we might consult is 'A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism'. (Chicago 1950). In the preface to his study, v. Grunebaum defines the position of al-Bāqillānī (1013) in the history of Arabian literary criticism in this way: »Bāqillānī's position in the development of rhetoric may be summed up as follows: (1) His outlook is that of an educated layman rather than that of a specialist. He does not seem to have felt the urge to build up or to adopt a consistent system of terms and definitions. (2) It

cannot be said with certainty whence al-Bāqillānī derived his terms and definitions. (3) His list of figures of speech shows most resemblance to that offered by al-<sup>c</sup>Askārī: out of the 34 figures which al-Bāqillānī mentions, 26 occur in the Kitāb aṣ-ṣinā<sup>c</sup>atāin. It must be noted, however, that the arrangement of the figures in Bāqillānī is greatly inferior to that chosen by al-<sup>c</sup>Askārī and that, moreover, only one of the six figures first observed by al-<sup>c</sup>Askārī appears in his book. (4) On the other hand, the influence of Qudāma b. Jaffar (d. 922) is still fairly strong in Bāqillānī. When Qudāma and al-<sup>c</sup>Askārī disagree, Bāqillānī does not necessarily take sides. There is, however, only one term, takāfu', which Bāqillānī and Qudāma share without its appearing in the Kitāb aṣ-ṣinā<sup>c</sup>atāin as well. (5) In relation to contemporary non-specialist terminology as represented by al-Khwārizmī's Mafātīh al-<sup>c</sup>ulūm, Bāqillānī's vocabulary is better developed: he employs 34 terms where al-Khwārizmī offers only 19. (6) The progress over Ibn al-Mu<sup>c</sup>tazz' pioneering Kitāb albadī<sup>c</sup> is considerable. (7) Bāqillānī's defective training is visible, e.g., in his inclusion of musāwāt, adequacy of style, in the figures of speech » (pp. XX and XXI).

Al-Bāqillānī wishes to show in his work that anybody is capable of learning the craft of writing poetry, provided he practices long enough, climbs rung by rung up the poetic ladder, although no matter how high he might climb, he can never reveal the uniqueness of the Divine Word nor overcome the marvelous disproportion between human and divine expression (p. 54). The art of human poetry can be acquired: »On the contrary, it can be improved upon by study, training and application, just as can the composition of poetry, the making of prose addresses, the writing of epistles, and the skill in eloquence. And toward this skill there exists a trodden path, a traditional approach, a ladder which can be ascended step by step, and a pattern which the student may follow.»

Herein is revealed once more the dualism of Arabic poetics, from which no path leads to the other side of the vault of Heaven. This dualism gives two kind of literature: the Koran and all other literature. In the history of Arab and Persian *criticism*, Mohammed alone rides to Heaven, not the poets. We have often noticed that in the history of Arab and Persian *poetry* this was not the order of things. Speaking about al-Buḥturī, al-Bāqillānī refers to certain features that in his mind are valuable assets to a poet: »... And at that you, thus, deem al-Buḥturī superior in this racetrack, surpassing everybody by far in all these respects; and that you are aware, that the scribes (kuttāb) prefer his diction (kalām) to every other, and place his opinion on eloquence (balāġa) above every other opinion; that, similarly, you detect in Abū

Nuwās splendor of diction and subtlety of ideas which stun even experts of rhetoric and which men of subtle taste and of wit prefer to every other poet because they attribute to his composition such elegance (rau<sup>ca</sup>) as they do not attribute to anybody else, and such ornateness (zibrij) as has not been attained by anyone apart from him » (p. 87).

In spite of his vaunted materialism, Ibn Khaldūn was not free of the over-riding veneration for the Koran as literature, either. He held the opinion that the urban poets who wrote subsequent to the establishment of the Mohammedan world state were superior to the pagan Mu<sup>ca</sup>allaqāt poets by virtue of having been ennobled by the style of the Koran. At many points, however, Ibn Khaldūn forgets this idea, so beloved even to Iqbal for all his infiltration with the European culture of our day, about the Koran being the quintessence of literature. In al-Bāqillānī's work, this idea is the predominant theme.

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More examples of Middle-Eastern rhetoric are to be found in E. G. Browne's 'Literary History of Persia', I, p. 47, etc. Qivāmī's 'Ornate qasīda', which is cited by Browne as an example of 12th century Persian poetics, displays the same tendency to exploit poetic devices as one meets with in Haft Qulzum. Works written by Saifī (completed A.D. 1491) and that by Ğāmī (ed. and translated by H. Blochmann, Calcutta 1872, Repr. Amsterdam 1970) are concerned solely with prosody. A. F. M. Mehre's Rhetorik der Araber (Copenhagen 1853) touches more than Saifī and Ğāmī the general problems of literary criticism. In this sense it goes just as far as Rückert's adaptation of Haft Qulzum. On p. 147 it restates almost the same idea of plagiarism as we find in Haft Qulzum. Even Mehre's book does not, however, elaborate any aesthetical problems of literary criticism, and will not, therefore, fit in the same class with al-Ġurgānī, Ibn Khaldūn or Ḥāzīm. The last name, Ḥāzīm, would be worth a long discussion, but we have given him more space in our Historical Review of Imitation in Literature.

We now return to Haft Qulzum. Compared with this formalistic, if in its thoroughness astonishing, study on prosody (we refer here to F. Rückert's adaptation 'Grammatik, Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser', the original author of which is Qabūl Muḥammad), al-Bāqillānī's work nevertheless possesses a substantially more personal and individualistic approach to the matters treated. Written in India nearly eight hundred

years (A.H. 1237) after the golden age of Arabic poetry, *Haft Qulzum* is a remarkable document testifying to the conservatism of Arabic-Persian poetry. The book depicts the voyages of a poetic novice over the Seven Seas, the narrative beginning with the first steps taken upon the first shore (1—7 shore and even the 28 initial stages across the first sea are expositions of Persian grammar). Each 'sea' is divided into several 'streams', 'stages of the journey' or 'ships'. The 'ships', which contain an exposition of the devices employed in poetry, are divided into several dozen anchors. In these anchors, every device is set forth by way of examples, which have been taken from the entire range of the fertile period of classical Persian literature, from the times of Farrukhī and Manūčehrī, in the 11th century, to the court poets of the last Great Moguls. In addition to this, the book has Rückert's acute commentaries at every stage. In teaching the craft of constructing stanzas, the work is, as already noted, thorough-going. It turns linguistic usages and verbal devices inside out and back again, and it examines systematically and with microscopic care the possibilities of varying every phrase and expression. Its confinement to linguistic usage alone is a magnificent display of discipline. The number of poetic devices that it produces and demonstrates in practical applications is extraordinarily large. 'Haft Qulzum' pokes words around like glowing embers to extract from them all possible warmth. We might speak of a master's limitations, perhaps of an unspoken pact made by an entire culture to concentrate its creative power upon a circumscribed sector in cultivating the art of words. The Arabs and the Persians never asserted, as did Somerset Maugham, that a writer's most important tool is his personality; for these peoples, this tool was language unto itself. It was T. S. Eliot who commented upon literary criticism with the dictum that «the only method is to be very intelligent». 'Haft Qulzum' with all its concettismo and preciosity presents a massive example of the diametrically opposite view of literary criticism.