The Broken Spell: The Romance Genre in Late Mughal India

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ABSTRACT

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This study is concerned with the Indian "romance" (*qiṣṣah*) genre, as it was understood from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century. Particularly during the Mughal era, oral and written romances represented an enchanted world populated by sorcerers, jinns, and other marvellous beings, underpinned by worldviews in which divine power was illimitable, and "occult" sciences were not treated dismissively. The promulgation of a British-derived rationalist-empiricist worldview among Indian élites led to the rise of the novel, accompanied by élite scorn for the romance as an unpalatably fantastic and frivolous genre. This view was developed by the great twentieth-century romance critics into a teleological account of the romance as a primitive and inadequate precursor of the novel, a genre with no social purpose but to amuse the ignorant and credulous. Using recent genre theory, this study examines the romance genre in Persian, Urdu, Punjabi, and Braj Bhasha. It locates the romance genre within a system of related and opposed genres, and considers the operation of multiple genres within texts marked as "romances," via communal memory and intertextuality. The worldviews that underpinned romances, and the purposes that romances were meant to fulfill, are thereby inspected. Chapters are devoted to the opposition and interpenetration of the "fantastic" romance and "factual" historiography (*tārīḵh*), to romances' function in client-patron relationships via panegyrics (*madḥ*), and to romances' restagings of moral arguments rehearsed in ethical manuals (*aḵhlāq*).

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Dedication

To my parents, Yasmeen and Waheed Ur-Rehman Khan

Transliteration Scheme

The range of languages used in this dissertation has necessitated the creation of a reasonably accurate, convenient and consistent system of transliteration for Urdu-Hindi, Persian, Arabic, Punjabi and Braj Bhasha. The orthography of quotations from MSS has been treated as though it were modern. For instance, in the case of the following,

کہوري ني جاره نہين کہايا

what looks like *kahorī nī jārah nahīn kahāyā* is rendered as *ghoṛe ne cārah nahīṅ khāyā*, i.e.,

گھوڑے نے چارہ نہیں کھایا

On the other hand, punctuation has in most cases been left out of texts that would not have borne it in their original forms, even when, as is usually the case, the modern edition from which the quotation is taken has inserted punctuation marks into the text.

Arabic

(1.1) I have distinguished between Persian-Urdu-Punjabi and Arabic pronunciations of certain consonants. Therefore, when they appear in an Arabic context, the following letters are transliterated according to their *fuṣḥah* Arabic pronunciations: *th̲ā'*, *dh̲āl*, *ḍād*.

(1.2) "Dagger *alif*" is transliterated like a normal *alif*, i.e., as *ā*. For instance: *bi-'ismi Allāhi al-Raḥmāni al-Raḥīm*—both *ā*'s here represent dagger *alif*s. The *alif maksūrah* is written *à* as in *kubrà*.

(1.3) What appear to be word-initial vowels in Arabic are in theory preceded by the vowel *hamzah* (glottal stop). This kind of *hamzah*, *hamzaṭ al-qat'*, has not been indicated, for convenience's sake, when it appears at the beginning of a word. In the middle or at the end of

the word it appears as a left apostrophe, as in *su'āl* and *shurafā'*. The other *hamzah*, *hamzaṭ al-waṣl* (indicated by a word-initial left apostrophe, as in *bi-'ismi Allāh*) is generally elided. *Hamzaṭ al-waṣl* is most often encountered at the beginning of the Arabic definite article, *al-*, but due to the ubiquity of this word I have not made its *hamzaṭ al-waṣl* explicit. The same is true of the word *Allāh*, which similarly begins with *hamzaṭ al-waṣl*; therefore I write *'Abd Allāh* rather than *'Abdu'llāh*. When *al-* is followed by one of the so-called sun letters (*al-ḥurūf al-shamsiyyah*: *t*, *th*, *d*, *dh*, *r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ẓ, l, n*), the *lām* is elided in speech and the sun letter is doubled (e.g., *al-zamān* becomes *az-zamān—zā'* takes a *shaddah*); again I have left this to be inferred.

(1.4) *Tā' marbūṭah* is generally unpronounced, in which case it is transliterated as *-h*, but when it bears a case ending it is pronounced, in which event it is transliterated as *-ṭ*.

(1.5) Arabic case endings are in general indicated as pronounced, with the notable exception of the definite nominative ending (*-u*), so that *dāru al-ḳhilāfah* is transliterated *dār al-ḳhilāfah*. Indefinite triptote endings (i.e., those exhibiting nunation or *tanwīn*) have always been indicated via superscripting (*walad*^{un}) except, in general, in the case of proper nouns. Apart from the Arabic-specific transliteration of *th*, *dh* and *ḍ*, all of the above applies to Arabic phrases in Persian, Urdu and Punjabi, e.g., "*bi al-kull.*"

Persian

(2.1) Adhering to the likely pronunciation of Persian in India up to the 19th century (and up to this day, by many Urdu speakers) I have almost uniformly respected the *maj·hūl* vowels (o, e), provided that they are not forced to be *ma'rūf* by the rhyme-scheme of a poem. So, *dalere ū-rā mī-goyad*, rather than the modern Iranian standard *dalīrī ū-rā mī-gūyad*. William Jones' *Grammar of the Persian Language* and Steingass' dictionary are useful for ascertaining the *ma'rūf*-ness or *maj·hūl*-ness of vowels (see Jones 1969 [1779], 12, for a late-18th-century view of the values of

Persian vowels). However in the case of 20th-century Iranian texts I have treated all vowels as *ma'rūf*.

(2.2) *Iẓāfat* is indicated by *–i*, not *–e*, which latter with its hyphen is used to indicate the *yā'-i tankīr* and *yā'-i ṣifat* (indefinite and qualificative enclitics) in confusing cases; e.g., when the enclitic follows a silent *hā'* and suffixing it without the hyphen would make the *–h* seem as though it were pronounced. For example: *ḳhānah-e*: "a house," instead of *ḳhānahe* (see Jones 1969 [1779], 24, for the *maj·hūl* value of the indefinite enclitic). The modern practice of prefixing a *y* to *iẓāfat*s following long vowels and silent *-h* (*ḳhānah-yi dūst*) is eschewed except in modern cases.

(2.3) Word-final *zabar + hā'* is written *–ah* rather than *–eh*. I do not use *-a* alone, in order to avoid confusing these endings with the definite accusative ending on Arabic substantives. The *hā'* in this ending is almost always unpronounced, but when it must be pronounced I have indicated this by prefixing a middle dot to it, so *ḳhānah* but *jaga·h*.

(2.4) Finally, *nūn-i ġhunnah* (*ṅ* as in "*bishanau az nai* cūṅ *ḥikāyat mī-kunad*") has been indicated when it is represented in the original, as well as in poetry where the meter requires it.

Urdu, Hindi, Braj Bhasha

(3.1) In the transliteration of Urdu (as well as Hindi, Braj Bhasha and Punjabi), aspiration (*do-cashmī he*) has been indicated by a following *–h-* without any other mark. The aspirated consonants are: *bh, ph, th, ṭh, jh, ch, dh, ḍh, ṛh, kh, gh,* and occasionally *lh* and *mh.* To show that *–h-* stands alone, not indicating aspiration, a middle dot is prefixed to it, as in *mub·ham* or *waj·h*.

(3.2) Words have been generally been transliterated according to spelling rather than pronunciation, hence *waj·h* and *subḥ* rather than *wajah* and *subaḥ*.

(3.3) Words in the Devanagari and Gurmukhi scripts have been transliterated as such. I have sometimes rendered *w* as *v*, usually in the case of Sanskrit-derived words such as *kāvyā*. This is despite the fact that the phonetic values of *wā'o* and *va* are the same—or, to be more accurate, similarly variable.

(3.4) *Nūn ġhunnah*, along with its Devanagari and Gurmukhi equivalents, has often not been indicated when it precedes a plosive consonant (*b, bh, p, ph, k, kh, g, gh*), as its presence is generally inferable. So, *ṭāṅg* and *ḍhāṅp* are rendered *ṭāng* and *ḍhānp*. This applies to Persian and Punjabi as well.

(3.4) A consonant bearing *sukūn* (*jazm*) followed by the same consonant is distinguished from a doubled consonant (bearing *tashdīd*). In this way, for instance, *sun·nā*, "to hear," is differentiated from *sunnah,* "Prophetic Tradition."

Punjabi

(4) Punjabi words are transliterated differently depending on whether they are written in Gurmukhi or Shahmukhi (the Urdu script). Punjabi has two retroflex consonants not normally found in Urdu: *ṇ and ḷ*. The former is shared with Braj Bhasha and Hindi. Neither consonant is unambiguously represented in Shahmukhi but they have been included for the sake of pronunciation.

Persons' Names

(5.1) I have treated all pre-twentieth century names as though there were no surname present. Consequently, in the Bibliography the names of these persons will be alphabetized according to the first element of their names, if they do not possess a "surname" such as a *taḳhalluṣ*, an appellative beginning with *Ibn*, or the like. Demonymic *nisbah*s like "Shīrāzī" are not

considered surnames for the purposes of this work. For example, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī will be found under "A" for "Abū al-Faraj."

(5.2) The definite article *al-* is not capitalized unless it is the first element of a person's name; the same is true of other particles and *bin* and *bint* (discussed below). For instance, Al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī.

(5.3) Outside of quotations, the Arabic *ibn* (son of) has been substituted for other indicators of *nasab*, such as the *wald* sometimes used in Urdu. *Bin* (son of) has been abbreviated as "b." in conformance with Arabist practice, while *bint* (daughter of) becomes "bt." (Saffānah bt. Ḥātim, for instance). However, *Ibn* beginning a surname remains as it is, e.g., Abū ʻAlī al-Ḥusain b. ʻAbd Allāh *Ibn Sīnā*.

(5.4) *Taḵhalluṣ*es are placed *before* the *nasab* and *nisbah*, as in Mirzā Amān Allāh *Ġhālib* Lakhnawī. The reader would be well-advised to read the *Encyclopedia of Islam* entries on "Ism" and "Ibn" in order to fully appreciate the foregoing.

Toponyms and the Like

(6) Toponyms with Anglicized equivalents have not been transliterated unless they are quoted; so, I write Lucknow rather than Lakhnau, and Delhi rather than Dihlī. The same principle applies to well-established Anglicizations of other words such as "vizier" and "sultanate," which are rendered *wazīr* and *salṭanat* only in phrases and quotations.

English Words in Non-Roman Scripts

(7) English words that appear transliterated in a non-Roman script are rendered as they would be in English. So, Gurū Nānak Dev Yūnīvarsiṭī becomes Gurū Nānak Dev *University*.

Transliteration Table

Roman	*Arabic*	*Devanagari*	*Gurmukhi*	*Examples*
a	اَ	अ	ਅ	abad
ā	آ	आ	ਆ	āqā
i	اِ	इ	ਇ	islām
ī	اِی	ई	ਈ	ījād
u	اُ	उ	ਉ	ulfat
ū	اُو	ऊ	ਊ	ūnṭh
o	او	ओ	ਓ	ojhal
au	اَو	औ	ਔ	ḳhauf
e	اے	ए	ਏ	mez
ai	اَے	ऐ	ਐ	ṣaif
à	ىٰ	___	___	‘alà al-faur
un	ٌ	___	___	nabiy^{un}
an	ً	___	___	faur^{an}
in	ٍ	___	___	min kitāb^{in}
’	ء	___	___	qā’il
’	ٱ	___	___	bi ’ismi Allāh

b	ب	ब	ਬ	bayān
bh	بھ	भ	ਭ	bhūt
p	پ	प	ਪ	pārah
ph	پھ	फ	ਫ	phurtī
t	ت	त	ਤ	tarbūz
th	تھ	थ	ਥ	thūk
ṡ, <u>th</u>	ث	___	___	ṡābit, <u>th</u>ābit
ṭ	ٹ	ट	ਟ	ṭoknā
ṭh	ٹھ	ठ	ਠ	ṭhokar
j	ج	ज	ਜ	jāgīr
jh	جھ	झ	ਝ	jhanḍā
c	چ	च	ਚ	cālāk
ch	چھ	छ	ਛ	choṛnā
ḥ	ح	___	___	ḥāfiẓ
ḳh	خ	ख़	ਖ਼	ḳharāb
d	د	द	ਦ	dāl
dh	دھ	ध	ਧ	dhū'āṅ

ḍ	ڈ	ਡ	ડ	ḍanḍā
ḍh	ڈھ	ਢ	ઢ	ḍhol
ẕ, d̲h	ذ	___	___	ẕarī‘ah, d̲harī‘ah
r	ر	ਰ	ર	rabb
ṛ	___	਋	___	amṛt
ṛ	ڑ	ੜ	ડ઼	toṛnā
ṛh	ڑھ	ੜ੍ਹ	ઢ઼	paṛhnā
z	ز	ज़	ઝ઼	zanjīr
żh	ژ	___	___	żholīdah
s	س	ਸ	સ	saudā
sh	ش	ਸ਼	શ	shikāyat
ṣh	___	਷	___	jyotiṣh
ṣ	ص	___	___	ṣabr
ẕ, ḍ	ض	___	___	ẕarar, ḍarar
ṭ	ط	___	___	ṭarḥ
ẓ	ظ	___	___	ẓill
‘	ع	___	___	‘aib

ġh	غ	ਗ਼	ਗ਼	ġhalīẓ
q	ق	क़	ਕ਼	qanā‘at
f	ف	फ़	ਫ਼	fāriġh
k	ک	क	ਕ	kān
kh	کھ	ख	ਖ	khopṛī
g	گ	ग	ਗ	gandam
gh	گھ	घ	ਘ	ghar
l	ل	ल	ਲ	libās
ḷ	ل	___	ਲ਼	kāḷā
m	م	म	ਮ	māl
n	ن	न	ਨ	nek
ṅ	ں	ँ	ਁ	māṅ
ṇ	___	ण	ਣ	bhaiṇ
w, v	و	व	ਵ	walī, vijai
ẉ	و	___	___	ḳẖẉāb
h	ہ	ह	ਹ	hind
-ah, -ih	ہ	ह	ਹ	ā’īnah, kih

ṭ	ة	–––	–––	tuḥfaṭ al-mulūk
y	ى	य	ਯ	yād

1. Introduction: The Romance in the Age of the Novel

This study of the genre that came to be known as the "romance" in English (the *dāstān*, *qiṣṣah* or *ḥikāyat* in Urdu, Persian and Punjabi) seeks to understand romance as it was—that is, as it was seen—during a particular historical period stretching from approximately the fifteenth century to the early twentieth. It focuses upon romances from the Indian subcontinent, though the genre and related texts range over the entire Islamicate world. This geographical breadth is particularly true of the set of romances that I will be calling the *Ḥātim-nāmah* or *Book of Ḥātim*, with which I was originally concerned to the exclusion of other romances. The necessity of understanding the genre itself and its construction led me to stray from the *Ḥātim-nāmah* corpus, yet to a large extent the stories of Ḥātim remain central, particularly in the later chapters of this work. An introduction to the *Ḥātim-nāmah* romances, and to Ḥātim himself, therefore seems in order.

Ḥātim b. 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd belonged to the Arab tribal grouping of Banū Ṭā'ī (or Ṭayy, Ṭayyi', Ṭai, etc.). The genealogies of the Arabs tell us that the Bānū Ṭā'ī were a tribe of the "Southern Arabs," i.e., descended from Qaḥṭān, about whom little is known despite his ubiquity in genealogical filiations. Because Ḥātim's son 'Adī was a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad, and his eldest child, his daughter Saffānah, was briefly in the captivity of the Muslims, there is little doubt that he existed, and it is generally agreed that he passed away before the coming of Islam at the beginning of the seventh century CE. While the story of Saffānah's being taken prisoner and her release at the hands of the Prophet is attested to earlier on, the greater part of the early information we have on Ḥātim himself comes from the tenth century *Kitāb al-Aġhānī* (*Book of Songs*) by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, which collects reports (*aḳhbār*) of Ḥātim, and his poetry. Although the romances make Ḥātim out to be a Yemeni

monarch, the South-Arabs no longer lived in their ancestral lands, and Ḥātim almost certainly lived further north on the Arabian peninsula, certainly not as a king of any sort, but as a tribal leader, according to Saffānah's testimony. The *Aġhānī* indicates that he had dealings with Nu'mān III b. Al-Mundhir (rt. ca. 580-602), the last sovereign of the Laḳhmid (Bānū Laḳhm) dynasty at Al-Ḥīrah in modern day Iraq. This is probably the source of the tales in Sa'dī's *Bostān* and in the *Qiṣṣah-i Cahār Darwesh* (*Tale of Four Dervishes*), which do not go as far as to confer royalty upon Ḥātim himself, but make him interact with the King of Yemen. The Laḳhmids were clients of the Sasanians, a convenient buffer against Byzantine power to the west, but tensions between Nu'mān's court and that of Ḳhusrau II led to the suzerain executing Nu'mān, effectively making him the last of the dynasty. This was significant for the Bānū Ṭā'ī, for Ḳhusrau subsequently appointed one of their own tribesmen, Iyās b. Qabīsah al-Ṭā'ī, to the governorship of Al-Ḥīrah, which ended around the year 612. The tribe was therefore highly important during Ḥātim's lifetime.

The *Aġhānī* recorded accounts of Ḥātim's life on account of the poetry that he left behind, but particularly in the Islamicate East and in non-Arabic sources, his poetry is forgotten, and what remains is his reputation for extraordinary and exemplary generosity, which is also the image that suffuses the romances. As a preliminary sample of this trait, consider this account of the young Ḥātim, who has been entrusted by his grandfather Sa'd with a large herd of camels. He espies a group of travellers, and approaches them:

> They called out, "Young man! Is there anything with which you might regale us?"
>
> He said, "Do you ask about hospitality when you have already seen the camels?"
>
> Those whom he saw included 'Abīd b. Abraṣ, Bishr b. Abu Ḳhāzim, and Nābiġhah Al-Dhubyānī.[1] They were seeking Nu'mān. Ḥātim slaughtered three camels for them. 'Abīd said, "We sought to be regaled with milk! A cow would have sufficed for us; then you would not have had to go to such pains!"

[1] This is the famous pre-Islamic poet who authored one of the *Mu'allaqāt*.

> Ḥātim said, "I know that. But I saw that your faces are different, and your complexions varied, and I thought that you must not belong to a single country. So I hoped that each of you would mention what you have seen here when you go to your own peoples."
>
> Then they spoke verses eulogizing him, and they made mention of his excellence. Ḥātim said, "I wished to do you a favour, but you have excelled me! I promise to God that I will cut the hamstrings of these camels, down to the last one—or go to them [yourselves] and divide them up!" They did so, and so the men gained ninety-nine camels, and went along on their journey to Nu'mān.
>
> *fa-qālū yā fatà hal min al-qirà fa-qāla tas'alū-nī 'an al-qirà wa qad tarauna al-ibil wa alladhīna baṣura bi-him 'Abīd b. Al-Abraṣ wa Bishr b. Abī Ḵhāzim wa Al-Nābiġhah Al-Dhubyānī wa kānū yurīdūna Al-Nu'mān fa-naḥara la-hum thalāthah min al-ibil fa-qāla 'Abīd inna-mā aradnā bi-al-qirà al-laban wa kānat takfī-nā bakraṭ[un] idh kunta lā budda mutakallif[an] la-nā shai'[an] fa-qāla Ḥātim qad 'araftu wa lākinnī ra'aitu wujūh[an] muḵhtalifaṭ[an] wa alwān[an] mutafarriqaṭ[an] fa-ẓanantu anna al-buldān ġhairu wāḥidah fa-aradtu an yadhkura kulla wāḥid min-kum mā ra'à idhā atà qauma-hu fa-qālū fī-hi ash'ār[an] imtaḥadū-hu bi-hā wa dhakara faḍla-hu fa-qāla Ḥātim aradtu an uḥsina ilai-kum fa-kāna la-kum al-faḍl 'alaiyya wa anā u'āhidu Allāh an aḍraba 'arāqība ibilī 'an āḵhiri-hā au taqūmū ilai-hā fa-taqtasamū-hā fa-fa'alū fa-aṣāba al-rajul tis'aṭa wa tis'īn ba'īr[an] wa maḍau 'alà safari-him ilà Al-Nu'mān* [2]

The *Ḥātim-nāmah* corpus might be said to begin with the Indo-Persian *Haft sair-i Ḥātim* (*Seven Journeys of Ḥātim*). This text or group of texts appears mysteriously in the first decades of the eighteenth century. We have no date of composition, and we cannot be entirely sure of the author, although as I have shown in Chapter 4, there is a 1799 Lahore manuscript of the *Haft sair* that is unique in that it contains a preface by one Mullā 'Abd Allāh, who purports to be the creator of the work. However, the oldest dated manuscript of which we are aware was copied on the 8th of Rajab, 1136 H, or April 2, 1724 CE, and bears no author's name. The *Ḥātim-nāmah* proper was preceded by structurally similar stories of Ḥātim contained in the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* (*Beloved of Hearts*) of Barḵhwurdār Mumtāz (fl. 1694-1722), and more loosely, as we will see throughout this study, by a long series of representations of Ḥātim beginning in the eighth century. But the *Haft sair* was unique in its "fecundity," for copies of the manuscript are legion in South Asia, and as were its adaptations into Urdu, Hindi, Braj Bhasha, and Punjabi, as the

[2] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:2298.

Appendix shows. In the South, it was versified into Dakkani Urdu first by Sayyid Iḥsān ʻAlī in 1755/6, and then by Mihmān Dakkanī in 1800/1801. Several variant Indo-Persian copies were produced, including Raḥmat Allāh Jaisalmerī's ornate prose 1751 *Nigār-i dānish* dedicated to the Mughal ruler Aḥmad Shāh; a "sequel" to the *Haft sair* entitled *Haft inṣāf-i Ḥātim* (*Seven Just Deeds of Ḥātim*) and composed between 1780-1790; and Diyānat Allāh's 1818 version, written for the British students of Fort William College in Calcutta. The romance was very important as a text for language learners not only in Persian but also in Urdu; the British Library's 1799 Patna manuscript may have been used by its British owner for this purpose. But the 1799 MS is unmentioned except by its cataloguer; it is much outshone by the most important translation by Ḥaidar Baḳhsh Ḥaidarī, completed at Fort William College in 1801 at the behest of John Gilchrist, and chronogrammatically entitled *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* (*Adornment of the Gathering*). This was phenomenally successful in lithograph form in the Urdu, Devanagari and Gurmukhi scripts, as well as in manuscript, and gave birth to other Urdu versions later in the nineteenth century, such as the versified *Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī* written for the Nawab of Awadh, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, by Tansukh Rā'e Raġhbat in 1853. In Chapter 6, I will also look at the Braj Bhasha and Punjabi *Ḥātim-nāmah*s, two of which were dedicated to the ruler of Punjab, Ranjīt Singh. A look at the British Library's lithograph holdings shows that as print technology boomed in India, the *Ḥātim-nāmah* became available in many other languages: Pashto, Sinhalese, and Marathi, to name a few. Two English translations were made, one by an unknown author on the basis of Diyānat Allāh's version, and one of the *Haft sair* proper, by the Orientalist Duncan Forbes. It was relatively popular in Iran as well from the late nineteenth century onward, under the title *Siyāḥat-i Ḥātim* (*Travels of Ḥātim*).

My own interest in the *Ḥātim-nāmah*s began in the summer of 2005, when I chanced upon a copy of the *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* at Robarts Library in Toronto, and took it into my head to read it. The marvellous texture that tends to be characteristic of the genre set Ḥaidarī's work apart from any Urdu prose that I had read. Why had I not known of such works before? Part of the answer to this is given in this chapter: the novel, and to some extent the short story, which tends to share the novel's worldview, dominate the hierarchy of Urdu narrative genres. This domination has in fact changed the manner in which audiences regard the romance genre itself, and older ways of understanding the romance are forgotten. Hence the need for a study such as this one. But in the beginning I was not interested in the genre itself, only in the *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil*, and, gradually, in the other romances produced at Fort William College. It soon became evident, however, that in order to write literary criticism of a group of texts called "romances," I must come to some understanding of what is meant by this genre label, "romance," and so the foundation of the present study was laid.

As the genre theorist Ralph Cohen has indicated, genre is one of the categories of literary study that most closely links literature—or in this case, what I will call "verbal art"—to history, because genres are always historically constituted. Therefore I soon discovered that this study must perforce be a work of verbal artistic history. This discovery was a shock for me, since I had been trained in a literary theory that, at one extreme, was highly suspicious of historical context, and sought to make texts speak "on their own terms," with their timelessness in view. In contrast, my methodology here is firmly historicist. This means—and I say it with a pang—that close reading, the foremost weapon in the literary scholar's arsenal for many decades now, is not much in evidence, not being centrally important to my methodology. What matters in these pages is not so much the texts themselves and their

syntax, styles, turns of phrase, "voices," and so forth, but the images of the texts down the years. But more detailed analyses of specific romance texts are also valuable, and it is my hope that this study will lay a groundwork that will encourage and enable such micro-analyses.

The Romance in Decline?

In many respects, the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah* (*Romance of Amīr Ḥamzah*) best represents the romance genre in Urdu and Indo-Persian. At least at the courtly level, the evidence that we have suggests that the most commonly-recited romances in Islamicate India were the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah* or *Ḥamzah-nāmah* and various versions and spin-offs of the *Shāhnāmah* (*Book of Kings*). It was the former rather than the latter that was selected by the Mughal emperor Akbar to be collected into a luxurious manuscript, with handsome illustrations, a masterpiece which, though now scattered, remains legendary. A well-known anecdote tells of the pangs of the eighteenth-century Mughal ruler Muḥammad Shāh, who, when Delhi was sacked by the recently-declared Iranian emperor Nādir Shāh, begged the conqueror not to loot the *Ḥamzah-nāmah*, abandoning the Koh-i Nūr diamond and the Peacock Throne to Nādir Shāh's mercy. By the seventeenth century, professional performers of the *Shahnāmah* were known as "Shahnamah-reciters" (*Shāhnāmah-ḳhwān*), whereas those who performed the *Ḥamzah-nāmah*, like the Iranian émigré 'Abd al-Zamānī Faḳhr al-Zamānī, were known simply as reciters of *the* romance, *qiṣṣah-ḳhwān*.

At the end of the nineteenth century we have ample indications of the immense popularity of romances in general, but of the *Ḥamzah-nāmah* particularly. This is shown with great clarity by the production of the immense forty-six volume *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah* by the Lucknow-based Naval Kishor press, which employed the storytellers of Lucknow to dictate their romances. This cycle of tales was probably begun at the beginning of the 1880s with the

first volume of the *Ṭilism-i Hoshrubā* (*The Sense-stealing Tilism*) by the storyteller Muḥammad Ḥusain Jāh, and did not cease until the publication of the third volume of the *Gulistān-i Bāḳhtar* (*The Rosegarden of Bactria*) in 1917 by Taṣadduq Ḥusain and Muḥammad Ismā'īl Aṡar (albeit that there was an unusually long gap of eight years between the 1909 publication of the second volume of *Gulistān-i Bāḳhtar* and that of the third volume).[3] The total length of the entire cycle exceeded 42,000 pages.[4]

The art of storytelling, to which the Naval Kishor Ḥamzah-nāmah owed its genesis, was also flourishing during this period, both in courts and in more public spaces. In his *Āṡār al-ṣanādīd*, Sayyid Aḥmad Ḳhān for example notes that a storyteller would set up a reed stool at the northern gate of the Jāma' Mosque in Delhi at the third watch of the night, and the audience would be regaled with the tales of Ḥamzah, as well as of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, the *Bostān-i Ḳhayāl*, and so on.[5] 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar describes the storytellers of Lucknow in his *Guẕashta Lakhnau*, as did Rajab 'Alī Beg Surūr before him in the preface to his own romance, *Fasānah-i 'ajā'ib*.[6] After Nawwāb Wājid 'Alī Shāh was ousted by the British in 1856, the storytellers of Lucknow were sometimes summoned to other courts, such as that of the young Nawwāb of Bahawalpur, Muḥammad Bahāwal Ḳhān V. In the princely state of Rampur, Nawwāb Kalb-i 'Alī Ḳhān was similarly an ardent patron of romances and storytellers of the Ḥamzah-nāmah in particular, as the poet Mirzā Asad Allāh Ġhālib (himself a great admirer of the story of Ḥamzah) understood when he sent to the Nawwāb a Persian panegyric in which each line alluded to the tale.[7] If we believe the biographers of the later storyteller Mīr Bāqir 'Alī, this

[3] Faruqi 2006, 2:125–126.
[4] According to Faruqi's calculation, the total number of pages is 42,282. Faruqi 2006, 2:120.
[5] Sayyid Aḥmad Ḳhān 1965, 278.
[6] Sharar 2000, 148ff. Surūr 2008, *muqaddamah*.
[7] Ġhālib 1969, 470–475.

storyteller's family seems to have access to the Mughal court itself prior to Bahādur Shāh Ẓafar's exile to Rangoon in 1858.

It would be imprudent to state definitively that the romance genre went into decline, particularly before we have even caught hold of any clear sense of what the romance genre *was*. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi does speak of such a decline, but what was it that declined? What would be the measure of such a decline? Clearly the steady disappearance of Indian princes and potentates left elite storytellers bereft of much of their traditional patronage; as the twentieth century progresses we hear less and less of storytellers who were able to find courtly support. Yet it appears that the storyteller Mīr Bāqir 'Alī, for example, was able to find alternative patrons among the wealthier citizens of Delhi, including the well-to-do merchant Chunnā Mal, and the politically influential physician Ḥakīm Ajmal Ḳhān. There are clear indications that Nawal Kishor's *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah* was popular. The mere size of the work might be enough to confirm this, and we may add to this the fact that several works went into multiple editions, reprintings of *Ṭilism-i Hosh-rubā* being particularly frequent. Frances Pritchett's summary of the incomplete British records shows that printed chapbook editions of smaller romances were also quite common; for example there are records of 108,500 copies of the *Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī* printed in India from 1896 to 1945—69,000 copies of 28 Hindi editions, and 39,500 copies of 20 Urdu editions. From 1904 to 1945 at least 265,600 copies of the *Qiṣṣah-i Ṭoṭā mainā* were printed, and other short romances boast similar numbers.

It was, of course, the romance as it was then commonly defined, and particularly on the elite level, more visible to cultural historians because of the fact that romance production at this level was more often recorded. That is not to say that there were not survivals of this kind of romance in other literary and non-literary genres—in film and pulp fiction in particular, and

in children's fiction. In these senses the romance lived on in spite of the presumed extinction of the courtly storytelling tradition to which it had once been intimately tied, and despite the virtual end of new production—though the fact that twentieth-century romances tended to be very imitative is not an ideal gauge of the decline of a genre that tended to be conservative in its storylines in any case.

What we can say with great conviction is that the romance as *adab-i laṭīf*, as "refined literature," has undergone several vicissitudes since the late nineteenth century. Firstly, at the beginning of this period, it was laid open to a new and particularly potent kind of criticism, allied to the criticism levelled at the old poetry. Secondly, in the mid-twentieth century when romances came to be studied, catalogued, and pronounced upon at length by literary scholars, the same kind of assumptions that had been at the heart of the nineteenth-century criticisms revealed themselves in a more sophisticated, drawn-out form. The characterizations made during this latter period by such critics as Gyān Cand Jain and Wiqār ʻAẓīm were not necessarily unsympathetic, but they were antiquarian and took for granted the nineteenth-century intellectuals' prescription that romances properly belonged to a bygone and superseded age. But let us take the developments of the nineteenth century as our starting point.

The genre that we are calling the "romance" was never without its detractors. As we will see in subsequent chapters, the supposed mendacity of romances was often targeted, and romances dealing with the Prophet's era, or with sacred and semi-sacred figures such as the prophet Yūsuf or Ḥamzah b. ʻAbd al-Muṭṭalib, were particular objects of suspicion. To a great extent we may say of the criticisms of the nineteenth century that *plus ça change, plus c'est la*

même chose. What changed were the grounds upon which criticisms of the romance could be leveled.

In her study of the Urdu ghazal, *Nets of Awareness*, Frances Pritchett has shown that during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the influential Urdu litterateurs Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād and Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī developed readings of Urdu poetry that painted its history in largely negative terms. In bygone days, the *maẓmūn*s (themes or propositions) of the Urdu ghazal in particular were fresh and close to "nature," but later imitators merely re-masticated and regurgitated the material that they should have discarded in order to make way for their own, similarly fresh and original creations. Re-use and subtle reworking of pre-established themes was part of the game of the Urdu ghazal, particularly via the method that Shamsur Rahman Faruqi calls "*maẓmūn-āfirīnī*" or "proposition-creation," whereby, for example, the proposition that the beloved figuratively kills the lover is extended by degrees into a new proposition: the beloved is a hunter who slays the lover with the arrows of his gaze. To multiply this process was, for Āzād, to stretch originally quite natural poetic images to their breaking point by rendering them unnatural. This was perhaps the most striking form of criticism directed by Āzād against Urdu poetry as it was prior to the reformation that he and Ḥālī would prescribe for it. Literature, according to these redoubtable thinkers, should be "natural" and the problem with it was that in the decadent period immediately preceding British Imperial rule (and extending into the critics' lifetimes) literature was too often "unnatural."

What was this "nature" that was to be the touchstone for literature, including prose as well as poetry? Islamicate languages did not have a directly equivalent term, and therefore we find Ḥālī in particular importing the English noun "*necar*" and the adjective "*necaral*" into his

works of criticism. The concept of a "natural" poetry appears to have had both romantic and rationalist-empiricist overtones. Natural poetry was faithful to nature and not padded with unnatural exaggerations, which might be caused, in the ghazal, by prolonged *maẓmūn-āfirīnī*, or in the romance simply by the flights of imagination, the representations of jinns and heads growing on trees, man-eating ducks and so on, that were *de rigeur* for the storytellers. Literary representations ought to aspire to the fidelity of photographs; instances of this dictum abound. Clearly such a demand could only be made in an age in which an awareness of photography prevailed, whereas previously both written and performed romances were safely lauded as painting pictures (of the non-photographic sort), which meant not that they should be imitative of "nature," but that they should produce images in the imaginations of the audience. As the end of the century drew nigh this quality referred to a kind of evocative realism, a representation rooted in what really and empirically existed, and in what could rationally exist. "Natural" also seems to have implied an immediate connection to the over-brimming emotions of the artist, whose poems or romances were spontaneous outpourings, not intricately-worked artifices.

It is not that Ḥālī was at all dismissive of the role of the imagination (*taḳhayyul*, which Ḥālī explicitly glosses as *imaijineshan*) in the *Muqaddamah*. On the contrary, imagination was for Ḥālī the most important prerequisite to being a poet, and it was something that a poet was born with—here it seems possible to detect a distinctly Romantic notion of genius. Nevertheless the supreme importance of the imaginative faculty was tempered by Ḥālī in several ways. In his enumeration of the qualities that a good poet ought to possess, the second quality that Ḥālī mentions after imagination is the habit of observing the world. Critics like Ḥālī often performed the interesting double gesture of adopting identifiably Western ideas but also

giving them an indigenous veneer by relating them to germane Islamicate ideas. In this case it is simple for Ḥālī to connect what is in effect a clear empiricism to the Qur'anic injunction to observe the signs of God in the horizons and within themselves—without quoting the Qur'an he very clearly alludes to this verse. But his example is that of Walter Scott, who, according to Ḥālī, was discovered by a friend to be engrossed in the painstaking work of taking notes on minute wild plants and berries, the better to lend realism to his poem "Rokeby." Empirical observation, which is not mentioned at all in previous poetological manuals, is thus given pride of place in Ḥālī's treatise. The freshness of personal observation is opposed to conventional poetry which simply regurgitate the endlessly masticated, used-up propositions of which Āzād speaks.

Having expanded upon the importance of observation, Ḥālī implicitly sets up the empirical as a limit upon the imagination's range by introducing a new faculty onto the scene, the discriminatory power (*quwwat-i mumayyizah*). The imaginative faculty, he writes, must be governed by discrimination in order to remain within its bounds and produce good poetry, free from an excess of fancy. Discrimination is made possible by the familiarity with the empirical world that Ḥālī has already advised. If the mind of the poet is deprived of "its proper food; that is, of the provisions of truths and real events [*apnī ġhiẕā ya'nī ḥaqā'iq o wāqi'āt kā ẕaḳhīrah*]," it will perforce feed upon the unhealthy wild vegetation [*banāspatī*] of far-fetched fancies.[8] In order for a poet's mind to be able to discriminate between wild fancy and proper ideas based on reality, the poet must habitually regale himself or herself with intellectual food gathered by the senses from "nature."

[8] Ḥālī 1964, 165–166.

The *Muqaddamah*'s subject is poetry rather than prose, and prose romances are therefore not touched upon, but romances in versified form—specifically, in *maṡnawī* form—certainly are. Ḥālī singled out several for criticism. The poem *Ṭilism-i ulfat* by the Lucknow-based poet Ḳhwājah Asad ʻAlī Ḳhān Qalaq is disparaged as self-contradictory, as well as bawdy, as is Dayā Shankar Nasīm's masterpiece *Gulzār-i Nasīm*.[9] In casting such a sprinkling of aspersions Ḥālī is only warming to his real subject, namely the unnaturalness of such romances. He writes,

> With regard to the story, it is necessary to take care that nothing is expressed that is contrary to experience and observation. Just as nowadays it is not becoming to ground the story in impossible and extraordinary things, it is absolutely unacceptable to narrate episodes in the story that are belied by experience and observation. It is not simply the bad taste of the story-writer that is thus proved, but his lack of knowledge, unacquaintedness with the facts of the world, and his indifferent attitude towards the gathering of necessary information.
>
> *is bāt kā bhī ḳhayāl rakhnā ẓarūrī hai kih qiṣṣah ke ẓimn meṅ koʼī bāt aisī bayān nah kī jāʼe jo tajribah aur mushāhidah ke ḳhilāf ho jis ṭarḥ nā-mumkin aur fauq al-ʻādah bātoṅ par qiṣṣah kī bunyād rakhnī āj kal zebā nahīṅ hai. isī ṭarḥ qiṣṣah ke ẓimn men aisī juzʼīyāt bayān karnī jin kī tajribah aur mushāhidah takẕīb kartā ho har-giz jāʼiz nahīṅ hai. is se qiṣṣah-nigār kī be-salīqagī ṡābit nahīṅ hotī jitnī kih us kī lā-ʻilmī aur dunyā ke ḥālāt se nā-wāqifiyyat aur zarūrī iṭṭilāʻ ḥāṣil karne se be-parwāʼī ṡābit hotī hai.* [10]

Without being over-simplistic about the roots of this new emphasis on nature, which no doubt looked to an already existing Islamicate rationalism and other "indigenous" conceptual systems for a buttress, it is safe to say that it was part and parcel of the overturning of traditional ways of thinking and seeing that was intimately tied to the increased control asserted by the British over elite Indian education and culture after they had quelled the 1857 rebellion, exiled the last Mughal emperor Bahādur Shāh Ẓafar, and put India under the rule of the Crown. Famously in 1835 the British politician and litterateur Thomas Babington Macaulay

[9] Ḥālī 1964, 366–367.
[10] Ḥālī 1964, 368.

championed the withdrawal of British funding for traditional Indian educational institutions, and support for English-medium education with a Western cultural slant. These insistences were enshrined in the 1835 English Education Act. Ḥālī's *Muqaddamah* draws heavily upon Macaulay, and upon the ideas of other Britons such as Walter Scott and Milton.

It is another set of British literary critics that are important to Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād in his reforming work of Urdu literary criticism, *Nairang-i ḳhayāl* (*The Enchantment of Thought*), the first half of which was published in 1888. The second half was not published until 1923, long after Āzād's death in 1910. In his foreword to *Nairang-i ḳhayāl* Āzād adopts an unmistakeably fawning attitude vis-à-vis the technology, culture and literature of the British rulers of India:

> Just as the English arts and sciences are improving our clothing, our dwellings, our living conditions, and our former knowledge, English literature, too, goes on correcting our literature.
>
> *'ulūm o funūn-i Angrezī jis ṭarḥ hamāre libās, makānāt, ḥālāt, ḳhayālāt aur ma'lūmāt-i sābiqah meṅ tarmīm kar rahe haiṅ, isī ṭarḥ us kī inshā-pardāzī bhī hamārī inshā meṅ iṣlāḥ detī jātī hai.*[11]

Āzād paints an image of a befuddled and backward Urdu literature that is fortunate to be subject to the influence of the much more advanced English literature. His main point of contrast between the two literatures will be taken up shortly, but here we should note the similarity between his criticisms and those of Ḥālī. For, like Ḥālī, Āzād attacks the faulty representation that Urdu literature indulges in, and he singles out romances as principal perpetrators of this crime:

> That era has passed during which we would tell our boys stories from the mouths of parrots and mynah-birds. And if we made some progress we would have four faqirs tie on their loin cloths and settle down, or fly fairies, or produce demons, and waste the whole night speaking of them. The times are different, and so we too must act differently.

[11] Āzād 1998, 46.

> *ab wuh zamānah bhī nahīṅ kih ham apne laṛkoṅ ko ek kahānī ṭoṭe yā mainā kī zabānī sunā'eṅ, taraqqī kareṅ to cār faqīr langoṭ bāndh kar baiṭh jā'eṅ, yā pariyāṅ uṛā'en, de'o banā'eṅ aur sārī rāt un kī bātoṅ meṅ gaṅwā'eṅ. ab kuch aur waqt hai. isī wāsiṭe hameṅ bhī kuch aur karnā cāhiye.*[12]

The changing times necessitate the discarding of the fantastic forms of representation provided by the kinds of texts that Āzād alludes to above. His readers would have understood that he was referring to well-known romances in the passage quoted above: the storytelling parrot or mynah-bird refers to the various versions of the *Ṭūṭī-nāmah* (*Parrot's Tale*) and the four faqirs are the dervishes in the *Qiṣṣah-i Chahār darwesh* (*Tale of the Four Dervishes*), while the fairies might have appeared in any number of romances. The point is that such stories must be done away with in favour of English-style representations, which have a solid basis in reality.

We must add the caveat that representations that are incongruous with the rational-empirical world are not thrown out completely by Āzād, but their existence must be justified in one of two ways: either they should form useful allegories, or they should be self-critical—absurd enough to be read as explosions of the romance genre. The latter is the manner in which Ratan Nāth Sarshār's prose books such as *Fasānah-i 'ajā'ib* and *Ḳhudā'ī ḳhidmatgār* might be read, for example, while the allegorical romance—a subgenre of which there was a long tradition in South Asia—was represented by many of the essays in *Nairang-i ḳhayāl* itself. Later, Munshī Premcand's story *Dunyā kā sab se anmol ratan* might be said to constitute another example of the allegorical romance.

But in the absence of one of these two motives, romances were simply without utility, according to Āzād's logic. English literature, in contrast to literature Urdu, always aims toward a beneficial purpose, edifying and informing. While he praises many of the Urdu poets of the past, he laments that in general Urdu writings have been without practical use, that they

[12] Āzād 1998, 49.

groan under the weight of stylistic and rhetorical ornamentation, and that the Urdu language, being championed primarily by such impractical poets, altogether lacks a vocabulary suited to the modern era. By contrast, English writings, according to Āzād, are only lightly garnished by the imagination; their foundation is in reality.[13]

Nairang-i ḳhayāl consisted of a set of essays on literary criticism which, as I have mentioned, made heavy use of allegorical narrative, and which were meant to reform what Āzād considered to be the backward literature of the Urdu language. While Āzād did not specify his sources, *Nairang-i ḳhayāl* was clearly a translation of a collection of English essays. While doing research for his dissertation in the 1930s, Muḥammad Ṣādiq ascertained the identities of the English originals, and discovered that the first seven chapters were translations of the essays of the much lionized eighteenth-century English critic Samuel Johnson in his periodical *The Rambler*, with the exception of one essay by Johnson's earlier fellow-critic Joseph Addison.[14] Given that Johnson was exceedingly influential throughout Britain, it is not surprising that he was also known to Indians with a knowledge of British literature. As early as 1839, Johnson's allegorical tale *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* was translated into Urdu by the combined efforts of Munshī Muḥammad Fatḥ Allāh Ḳhān Akbarābādī, Father John James, and Sayyid Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥaidar, better known as Muḥammad Mīr Lakhnawī. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Ṣafīr Bilgrāmī included Johnson in the assemblage of celebrated figures who arose to give voice to their ideas in his book *Maḥsharistān-i ḳhayāl* (*The Mustering-place of Thought*), and quoted a version of *Rasselas* different from the 1839 translation,

[13] Āzād 1998, 48.
[14] Ṣādiq 1998, 8–9.

which suggests that there may have been more than one version of *Rasselas* available in Urdu translation.[15]

Qiṣṣah and Romance: A Genre Equation Revisited

A brief history of the equation between *qiṣṣah* or *dāstān* and "romance" will shed light on the otherwise suspect terminology used in these pages. Why, after all, refer to *qiṣṣah*s as romances? The decision is one regarding which I have been a great deal conflicted, early on attacking any use of the word "romance" to refer to such texts before hunkering down to use it more or less uniformly myself. The reason for this has nothing to do with translational accuracy, and everything to do with generosity to the nonspecialist reader and continuity with previous English-language criticism. The enormous downside to such a decision is, of course, that the reader may assume that the answer to the central question of this study— "What is or was the *qiṣṣah* genre?"—is simply that the *qiṣṣah* is and was the same as the Western romance, with a few Eastern touches here and there. Not only would such an assumption be a mis-characterization of the *qiṣṣah*, it would also do a disservice to the Western romance genre by taking for granted a certain "frozen" idea of what it is, and neglecting to probe its history.

Most European languages do not distinguish between romance and novel. In English, the two genres appear not to have been well distinguished until the florescence of the novel genre in the eighteenth century. Even during that pivotal century, the idea of the novel genre was in its birth throes, and had not extricated itself from the midst of the congeries of genre designations that were available at that time. It is not clear that the works of a writer like Henry Fielding would have been understood as novels, though Fielding has been cast in Ian Watt's classic study *The Rise of the Novel* as one of the most celebrated fathers of the genre.

[15] Mushfiq Ḳẖwājah 1981, 161.

Fielding's *History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742) was apt to refer to itself as a history, as the title indicates, or as a "comic romance," or biography. This was in spite of the fact that it presented itself as a new kind or genre of writing: a "comic epic poem in prose."[16] This latter designation is also found in *Tom Jones* (1749), which, however, is more fully entitled "*The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*," and more frequently calls itself a history. *Tom Jones* does hint, unlike *Joseph Andrews*, at its being a "novel," but such hints are so sparse and so well counterbalanced by other designations that they can only be made much of by tendentious critics who seek them out retrospectively as proof of the novel genre's pedigree.

What is striking about *Tom Jones*, however, is that while it does not present itself boldly as a "novel," it does make it clear that whatever it is, it should be distinguished from "romance"—though even this distinction is made by Fielding because he feels that he must make it in order to escape censure.[17] As we have noted, he had been quite content to refer to *Joseph Andrews* as a romance not once but repeatedly. His making this distinction in *Tom Jones* was symptomatic of the split that was taking place in the middle of the eighteenth century between romances and other forms of prose fiction. It is highly important to understand the basis of this split. In the seventeenth century there already existed a distinction between false romances and true histories. Pierre Daniel Huet's "Sur l'origine des Romans" (1670) was adapted into English in 1715 by Stephen Lewis as "The History of Romances." Lewis' essay assured the reader that the term "romance" should not be taken to comprehend histories—not even histories that contained falsehoods (Herodotus, for instance). While the essay acknowledged that histories could have false information within them, and that romances

[16] Fielding 1986, 25
[17] Fielding 1998, 423.

could contain truths, the one genre was by and large veracious, and the other generally mendacious.[18]

The term "novel" very gradually came to designate writings intermediate between romances and histories. Though novels may have been fictitious like romances, it eventually came to be thought that of the two sister genres, the romance generally represented improbable things, while novels represented what was probable, and thus were closer to "history" as a record of events (history increasingly being laid under the rationalist and empiricist strictures). Writers such as William Congreve and Marie de la Rivière Manley had characterized the novel in these terms early on, in 1695 and 1705 respectively.[19] Nevertheless, the distinctions between the three terms, romance, novel, and history, were far from settled until the end of the eighteenth century, as the example of Henry Fielding shows. In 1762, Hugh Blair could still write about the romance/novel as "fictitious history" with impunity.[20] But as the difference between the romance and the novel grew better accepted, a struggle arose between the proponents of the two genres, from which, as we know, the novel emerged victorious.

Fielding's choice of nomenclature may have been made under duress, but the book prefaces to *Tom Jones* are quite explicit with regard to the desirability of writing prose fiction that represents the probable, against the representation of the improbably and impossible that was increasingly coming to be seen as the sign of the romance genre. "As for elves and fairies, and other such mummery," Fielding wrote, "I purposely omit the mention of them, as I should be very unwilling to confine within any bounds those surprising imaginations, for whose vast

[18] Williams 1970, 47.
[19] Williams 1970, 27 and 33-35.
[20] Williams 1970, 247.

capacity the limits of human nature are too narrow [...]." Going further, Fielding proclaims, "nor is possibility alone sufficient to justify us; we must keep likewise within the rules of probability."[21] Eventually such sentiments were to be challenged, often by conservatives (Fielding was a Whig), but in 1750 even such a Tory literatus as Samuel Johnson was eager to pooh-pooh the narratives that would become known as romances. Johnson made the withering remark in the *Rambler* that "almost all the fictions of the last age will vanish, if you deprive them of a hermit and a wood, a battle and a shipwreck." The aim of the new kind of fiction as popularized by Fielding, Tobias Smollet, Samuel Richardson, and so on, was deemed by Johnson to be representation of the natural, and not the improbable, however agreeably wondrous the latter might be:

> Its province to bring about natural events by easy means, and to keep up curiosity without the help of wonder; it is therefore precluded from the machines and expedients of the heroic romance, and can neither employ giants to snatch away a lady from the nuptial rites, nor knights to bring her back from captivity; it can neither bewilder its personages in deserts, nor lodge them in imaginary castles.[22]

Increasingly the primacy of reason and sense was being established in Britain, and personages as different as Johnson and Fielding were united in depreciating improbable narratives, however far apart these two men may have been on other points.

By the last decades of the eighteenth century, the opposition between novel and romance had become well established, as had the hierarchy which had assured probable fictions primacy even before they had been widely known as "novels." Even proponents of the romance genre accepted the line that was drawn between these two genres, and they certainly found themselves on the defensive in their attempts to reduce the genre hierarchy to an equal relation. The emerging subgenre that came to be known as the Gothic novel did not scruple to

[21] Fielding 1998, 348.
[22] Williams 1970, 142.

strain credulity, but as the works of its leading light Ann Radcliffe demonstrate, the incredible was kept within bounds. The most remarkable scholar and proponent of the romance genre during this period was Clara Reeve. Her book *The Progress of Romance*, which appeared in 1785, was both a history of the genre and a reflection upon its properties. Reeve mentions a few British critics who gave the romance its due, but she makes it clear that the proponents of the romance were in a decided minority.[23] She adheres to the definition of the romance that had come to distinguish it from the novel, suggesting that it was an extreme fiction, at a far remove from probability and fact.[24] One of the purposes of her writing her book was to challenge the romance's opponents; yet even so she added the caveat that the genre would benefit readers only if its use were properly regulated, particularly in the case of juvenile readers.[25] Reeve conceded, too, that the romance was moribund, and that its sister the novel had sprung from its "ruins."[26]

Clara Reeve's criticism also touches upon the question of whether the romance was a Western genre alone. The very fact that we are discussing romances at such length in a study of the *qiṣṣah* genre shows that the idea of the romance as a worldwide genre came to be well-accepted, and the *qiṣṣah*, along with various other narrative genres, came to be equated with the romance. It is to the development of this "genre equation" that we will now turn, having established the history of the romance's split from the novel. Along with *The Progress of Romance*, Reeve also published a translation, from French, of an Egyptian tale that she entitled *The History of Charoba Queen of Aegypt*. She did so in order to prove the existence of "Eastern romances" to a skeptical friend—but the idea of the Eastern romance was already well

[23] Reeve 1930, xi.
[24] Reeve 1930, 6.
[25] Reeve 1930, xvi.
[26] Reeve 1930, 8.

established in the minds of British critics and readers. Galland's *Les Mille et une nuits*, a version of the *Alf lailah wa lailah* (*One Thousand and One Nights*) was rendered into English a number of times over the course of the eighteenth century, and its popularity led to the confabulation of other "Oriental romances" such as *Almoran and Hamet*, written by John Hawkesworth and published in 1761. Fielding alluded to these romances—or so-called romances, depending on our perspective—in *Tom Jones*, as a foil for the new and better form of fiction:

> The Arabians and Persians had an equal advantage [to the ancients] in writing their tales from the genii and fairies, which they believe in as an article of their faith, upon the authority of the Koran itself. But we have none of these helps. To natural means alone we are confined [...].[27]

Not only were Western and Eastern "romances" understood as belonging to a single, worldwide genre, but very often the former was understood to have descended from the latter. The opinion that the Eastern romance was the *fons et origo* of the Western romance had a long history. It was probably already available in the sixteenth century, when Giammaria Barbieri postulated that Arab verses had led to the rise of troubadour lyrics, as a result of Christendom's contact with Moorish Spain.[28] In 1671, Huet similarly suggested that the prose romance was originated by Asians.[29] We have already seen that Huet's *De l'origine des romans* was translated into English in the eighteenth century, and it appears to have been quite influential. One of the English critics it influenced was Thomas Warton, who wrote in the latter half of the eighteenth century that the Western romance possessed a double ancestry. Its first origin was in Gothic-Germanic narratives, but this was eventually superseded by a second, Hispano-Arab source.[30] Warton in his turn had a great influence upon Reeve, who, as we have seen, wholeheartedly accepted and controverted in favour of the Hispano-Arab thesis, and

[27] Fielding 1998, 773.
[28] Boase 1977, 11.
[29] Boase 1977, 13.
[30] Boase 1977, 15–16; see also Reeve 1930, 10.

who was an advocate for the romance, Eastern or Western, within certain bounds. Romances according to Reeve, were a "universal growth."[31] More specialized Orientalists agreed that Indian and other Asian narratives were indeed romances, and so the genre equation was settled, for better or for worse.

This equation endured through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the effect that most scholarly works in English on the *qiṣṣah*, *dāstān* or *ḥikāyat* have referred to them as "romances"—William Hanaway, Frances Pritchett and Aditya Behl, for instance, have all done so.[32] Northrop Frye sounds like a twentieth-century echo of Clara Reeve when he asserts that the romance, in contrast to the novel, was not merely western, but "world-wide."[33] The value assigned to the *qiṣṣah* genre has therefore been bound up with that assigned to the romance—and, by extension, the novel, since the valuation of the romance has since the later eighteenth century been tied to the rising fortunes of the novel.

One nineteenth-century example of the equation of *qiṣṣah* and romance is the Orientalist Duncan Forbes' 1830 translation of the Persian story of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, which he entitled *The Adventures of Hatim Tai: A Romance*—a telling title. This was not the first appearance of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* in English, as Forbes discovered. Like other *qiṣṣah*s the Persian *Ḥātim-nāmah* was often considered to be a text suitable for learners of Persian, and it is likely that the British were not far behind Indians in using it for Urdu language learning, once it had been translated into Urdu. One of the Urdu *Ḥātim-nāmah*s in the British Library, copied in Patna in 1799, belonged to the Orientalist John Shakespear, and some early folios contain transcriptions of key Urdu words in the Roman script, leading the cataloguer to guess that "this manuscript was

[31] Reeve 1930, 16.
[32] Hanaway 1970; Pritchett 1985; Manjhan Rājgīrī 2000.
[33] Frye 1973, 307.

intended as a working copy for learning Urdu."[34] While the most important Urdu version was produced two years later (in 1801) by Ḥaidar Baḳhsh Ḥaidarī at the behest of John Gilchrist at Fort William College, Calcutta, for the use of British Urdu-learners, Fort William was also the site of the production of a seemingly original Persian version. This occurred after the College's heyday, in 1818. The author of this work entitled in English "Hatim Ta,ee, a romance, in the Persian language" was a Diyānat Allāh, who worked under the supervision of James Atkinson.[35] Diyānat Allāh's version, which is remarkably different from the Persian *Haft siyar* and its many versions, was worked into English by an unknown author as "The Adventures of Hatim Beni Tye" in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany* of January-June 1829. The appearance of this translation of the aberrant *Ḥātim-nāmah* scarcely a year before the publication of Duncan Forbes' *Adventures of Hatim Tai* appears to have given Forbes a start. It prompted him to write to the editor of the *Asiatic Journal* a somewhat indignant letter beginning with the epigraph "*Mon Dieu! Il y en a deux!*"[36]

Even Clara Reeve acknowledged that the romance is the preserve of a bygone era before the coming of the novel. The notion that the romance belonged to a defective past, and the novel to an improved present, becomes, in the writings of the Orientalists, entangled with the idea that India suffers from a case of arrested development. The fact that India continued to produce romances could be explained by the altogether common assertion that India was stuck in a past that Europe had thankfully escaped. This axiom is evident in Duncan Forbe's introduction to his translation of the *Haft siyar*. "In Europe," Forbes wrote,

> the last three centuries have wrought mighty changes in the state of society, while Asia remains, comparatively speaking, unaltered. Among the natives of Persia and

[34] Quraishi and Sims-Williams 1978, 52. *Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī* 1799.
[35] Diyānat Allāh 1818, title page.
[36] Forbes 1829, 403.

> Hindustan, the belief in demons, fairies, magicians with their enchanted palaces, and talismans and charms, is as prevalent as it was in Europe in the chivalrous ages that succeeded the crusades. Hence the most celebrated works of fiction in the East abound with the incredible, the wild, and the marvelous, like the productions of the bards and story-tellers of Provence and their imitators, which enchanted Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries.[37]

The *Ḥātim-nāmah*, according to Forbes, contains elements that British readers in the nineteenth century would have thought incredible and uninteresting because it was produced within a culture that lacked the solidity of reason and sense that Europe had gained since the Enlightenment. This kind of statement would be repeated again and again, for example by Āzād when he calls for a new literature to suit a new time. In it there is both condemnation and apology. The preposterous romance genre's time is thought to be long gone, and in this sense it is devalued against the novel. But Forbes implies that the genre—and, more to the point, the translation that is the fruit of his toils—is at least useful as a museum-piece, in the case of Western romances, or, in the case of the "romances" of India, as a symptom that helps Orientalists to understand Indian culture, and what ails it. As one writer put it in a review of Forbes in the *Asiatic Journal*, "The literature of a nation affords the best guide to researches into its character, manners, and opinions; and no department of literature contains a more ample store of data in the respect, than the light and popular part, consisting of tales, romances, and dramatic pieces."[38]

A second stage in the development of the *qiṣṣah*'s or romance's image occurred in the twentieth century when systematic attempts were made to define the genre by Urdu critics. The views expressed by these critics with regard to Urdu romances were in essence extensions of the views held earlier by writers such as Ḥālī and Āzād, albeit in a more sophisticated and

[37] Forbes 1830, v.
[38] "Review of The Adventures of Hatim Tai" 1830, 67.

far more sympathetic form. These include the greatest scholars of the *qiṣṣah*, researchers who have made available to us the materials that have made it possible to study the genre in depth. The exertions of these forerunners, however they may have stumbled, have made it possible for us to understand the Urdu romance better by learning from their errors.

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi shows in the final chapter of *Sāḥirī, Shāhī, Ṣāḥib-qirānī* volume one that the most important among the Urdu critics of the twentieth century, clung to Ḥālī's and Āzād's prejudices regarding the Urdu romance, and that they did this even when defending the romance from the partisans of the novel. The novel was by the mid-twentieth century in the ascendant in the hierarchy of prose genres, and the production of romances was not as visible, though it had by no means ceased. Prose criticism took the novel as its touchstone; the romance was increasingly being perceived as a thing of the past, just as its western namesake had already been a hundred years before. Thus, for example, when Rāz Yazdānī mounted a defence against Rām Bābū Saksenah's accusations that romances were deficient in the consistency of their characters, that they were far-fetched, and so forth,[39] he seems to have found himself unable to take a step back from Saksenah's assumptions in refuting his argument. Indeed, Faruqi shows that Yazdānī demonstrates even in his defence that he shares Saksenah's novel-centred values and therefore his resistance is rather futile.[40] Such was the hold that the dominant genre had established within the ecosystem of genres.

A full description of the infelicities of twentieth-century Urdu romance criticism would be nothing more than a translation of Faruqi's chapter, and therefore I will not attempt it here. Apart from Rāz Yazdānī, Faruqi tackles Suhail Buḳhārī, Waqār ʻAẓīm, Rāhī Maʻṣūm Raẓā, Suhail Aḥmad Ḳhān, Shamīm Aḥmad, and Muḥammad Salīm al-Raḥmān. But by far the most space is

[39] Saksenah 1966, 101; Faruqi 1999, 1:496.
[40] Faruqi 1999, 1:497–502.

devoted to a critique of Kalīm al-Dīn Aḥmad's *Urdū zabān aur fann-i dāstān-go'ī* (*The Urdu Language and the Art of Storytelling*). In this work Kalīm al-Dīn Aḥmad, while affirming the usefulness of studying the romance, refers repeatedly to the genre as the work of "savages" (*waḥshī insān*) or of "immature children" (*kam 'umr bacc[e]*).[41] In the 1960s, long after the era of Ḥālī and Āzād, Kalīm al-Dīn Aḥmad followed a familiar line of reasoning and insisted that irrational events such as those depicted in romances could be appreciated by civilized readers only insofar as they were still possessed to some degree of a childlike mindset, or, what was practically the same, a savage mindset:

> The similarity between a child and a savage lies in the fact that both of them enjoy stories, and do not weigh them upon the scales of ratiocination and criticism. When a child's mind has developed, and when the savage pushes forwards through the stages of civilization, he feels that there is something lacking in these stories.
>
> *kisī bacce aur waḥshī meṅ yih mushābahat hai kih donoṅ kahāniyoṅ ko pasand karte haiṅ aur unheṅ ta'aqqul aur tanqīd kī mīzān par nahīṅ tolte. jab bacce kā dimāġh taraqqī ke madārij ṭai kartā hai, jab waḥshī tahẕīb kī manziloṅ se guẕartā hai to wuh un kahāniyoṅ meṅ ek kamī maḥsūs kartā hai [...].*[42]

The idea that *qiṣṣah*s were suitable only for children was nothing new. British critics were asserting this in the nineteenth century as a strategy to legitimize the reading of these "romances," though to say that they thereby sought to valorize them would be saying too much. A rather late review of Forbes' translation of the *Ḥātim-nāmah*, published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1883, informs us that "There is no use whatever in our sitting down to read the adventures of Hatim Tai, unless we first revive in our souls the rainbow hues of early youth [...]."[43] Kalīm al-Dīn Aḥmad's criticism follows a familiar logic, as Faruqi helps to point out. According to this logic, the novel is the properly modern and rational form of fictional narrative. The romance is useful mainly because it belongs to a previous era, going all the way

[41] Aḥmad 1965 quoted in Faruqi 1999, 1:504.
[42] Aḥmad 1965 quoted in Faruqi 1999, 1:513.
[43] "Review of The Adventures of Hatim Tai" 1883, 506.

back to a period of "savagery," and it can be studied as a relic of the past. Children, like savages, are credulous and imperfect in their appreciation of the strictures reason and sense impose upon reality, and therefore they enjoy romances. Fully civilized adults, on the other hand, should only be able to enjoy romances insofar as there is some residuum of the child or savage left in them.

Representation and Exemplarity

The rest of this study is structured in response to a two-pronged criticism of the romance genre. Chapters 3 to 6 look at four genres, the romance, historiography, panegyric, and ethical literature, the last three in connection in romance, in line with the insight revealed in Chapter 2; namely, that genres cannot be understood except in relation to other genres, and texts that have been identified as romances are inhabited by other genres as well. But the way in which the four aforementioned chapters are organized can only be understood once we have grasped the logic of the romance's critics, whose work tended to imply that the romance failed in terms of its representation, as we have seen, but also that this failure of representation contributed to a failure of *exemplarity*.

Naẕīr Aḥmad's 1874 novel *Taubaṭ al-Naṣūḥ* (*The Repentance of Naṣūḥ*) narrates the moral and religious reawakening of the title character, Naṣūḥ, following a feverish dream. Abashed by his vision, Naṣūḥ sets out to reform not only himself but also his family. His son Kalīm, who is addicted to all manner of luxury, is refractory, and his father and younger brother 'Alīm resort to ransacking Kalīm's apartments. In a scene highly reminiscent of the burning of Don Quixote's library, Naṣūḥ and 'Alīm come upon Kalīm's book-cabinet, and resolve to consign his collection to the flames. The books thus destroyed are decribed as "short romances, uncouth ideas, obscene meanings, debased subjects, far from morals, distant from shame [*choṭe qiṣṣe, be-*

hūdah bāteṅ, fuḥsh maṭlab, lucce maẓmūn, aḳhlāq se ba'īd, ḥayā se dūr]."[44] Another brother, Salīm, describes how the voluptuary Kalīm advised him to buy such distasteful romances as the *Fasānah-i 'ajā'ib*, *Qiṣṣah-i Gul-i Bakāwalī, Ārā'ish-i maḥfil, Maśnawī-i Mīr Ḥasan* and *Bahār-i dānish*.[45] Similarly, 'Alīm speaks regretfully of the time that he has wasted in the *maktab* or writing-school, where he has only mouthed the words of the Qur'an without understanding its words, but has read worthless romances like the *Bahār-i dānish*.[46]

It is not surprising that such extreme opinions regarding romances should appear in one of the earliest examples of the genre that would go on to take the romance's place in the ecosystem of Urdu and Indo-Persian genres. The relationship between the "genre war" between the Urdu romance and novel and that which had taken place in England in the eighteenth century is demonstrated by Muḥammad Ṣādiq's discovery of Naẕīr Aḥmad's English source for *Taubaṭ al-Naṣūḥ*: Daniel Defoe's 1715 work *The Family Instructor*.[47] While this work was not itself a novel, it is not irrelevant that Defoe is popularly known as the progenitor of the English novel. The worldview that he espoused, and which was passed from *The Family Instructor* to *Taubaṭ al-Naṣūḥ*, permeated the definition of the novel genre, and set it against the romance. The writing of *Taubaṭ al-Naṣūḥ* itself was spurred by Naẕīr Aḥmad's hope of winning the literary prize awarded each year by the British in the North-Western Provinces. He did win this prize, to the tune of 500 rupees.[48]

Upon closer inspection, however, Naẕīr Aḥmad's allegations of obscenity appear to be directed not so much toward romances, but towards other texts that he mentions, such as the

[44] Naẕīr Aḥmad 1964, 253.
[45] Naẕīr Aḥmad 1964, 254.
[46] Naẕīr Aḥmad 1964, 130.
[47] Muḥammad Ṣādiq in Naim 2004, 130.
[48] Naim 2004, 129.

marvelously scurrilous works of Ja'far Zaṭallī and Bāqir 'Alī Cirkīn.[49] Romances are tainted by association. For the most part, the genre was not considered immoral so much as amoral—they were, it was thought, too ineffective to project any sort of morals, good or bad. When Āzād writes of them in *Nairang-i ḳhayāl*, for example, he does not make them out to be maleficent, but simply soporific entertainments. This was a long-held view in the Islamicate world, but towards the end of the nineteenth century, Orientalist historiography and nascent Indian nationalism gave rise to a new etiology for the supposedly effete genre. According to the historiography that took hold, Islamicate India was in an advanced state of decadence and decline at the time that the East India Company wrested territories away from its rulers. Rulers and members of the nobility became increasingly slothful and addicted to luxuries, among which was the habit of listening to romances. An unlikely exponent of this prejudice is the early twentieth century littérateur Walī Ashraf Ṣabūḥī, an admirer and biographer of Delhi's "last" storyteller, Mīr Bāqir 'Alī, about whom we will hear more in Chapter 4. Despite his sympathetic portrayal of Bāqir 'Alī, Ṣabūḥī weaves a typical picture of the background of the florescence of the romance genre:

> [Properly military] feelings of bloodthirstiness were changed into thoughts of cock- and quail-fighting, hunting, music and dance, and other entertainments. A state of impassivity was cast over what had been an active life. Their limbs began to go numb in consequence of sitting on couch-cushions all day, and at night the quality of their sleep was affected. They needed lullabies, and so, romances were begun. This was how storytelling began. Whether Iran invented it or India, it was the product of the people's slumber and the government's numbness.
>
> *ḳhūn-āshāmī ke jaẕbāt murġh-bāzī, baṭer-bāzī wa ġhaira-h meṅ aur sawārī shikārī ke ḳhayālāt. nāc rang aur dūsre, tafrīḥī mashāġhil meṅ badal ga'e. ḥayāt-i mutaḥarrik par jumūdī kaifiyyat ṭārī hū'ī tamām din masnad takiyah lagā'e baiṭhne meṅ a'ẓā shall ho jāte the, rāṭoṅ kī nīnd bad-mazah hone lagī. loriyoṅ kī ẓarūrat paṛī. qiṣṣe kahāniyāṅ shurū' ho ga'īṅ. yih goyā dāstān-go'ī kī*

[49] Naẕīr Aḥmad 1964, 254.

> *ibtidā hai ḳẖwāh us kā maujid Īrān ho yā Hindūstān lekin hai yih qaum kī ġẖunūdagī aur ḥukūmat kī afsurdagī ke daur kī paidā'ish.* [50]

While Ṣabūḥī's historiography is inherited from the British and from Indian "reformers" such as the novelist 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar (to whose account of Awadhi decadence in *Guẕashtah Lakhna'u* Ṣabūḥī's views can be compared), his narrative of Indian decline points towards the possibility of a more active future—keeping in mind that Ṣabūḥī was active in the movement to save the Caliphate (*ḳẖilāfat* movement). This highly critical view of the romance, then, was well entrenched in the twentieth century, among nationalists as well as admirers of the British.

Leaving aside the historical circumstances thought to underlie the deficient romance genre, there was a particular logic at work that linked the amply demonstrated view that romances were far-fetched in their representations of things, to their ineffectiveness, particularly as moral exemplars. In order to probe this logic no romance seems as suitable as the story of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, whose title character was famed for his generosity. The romance of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī might be taken for an exceptionally moral tale, given that it is replete with episodes in which Ḥātim performs tremendous feats of liberality. The Urdu novelist Sharar argued, however, that while the historical personage was undoubtedly an outstanding exemplar of a particular kind of ethics, the romance that bore his name was not an outstanding vehicle for Ḥātim's exemplarity.

Sharar argued thus in his series of character sketches entitled *Mashāhīr-i 'ālam* (*Famous Personages of the World*). He begins by stressing that Ḥātim's name is well-recognized in India as a byword for generosity, and suggests that for this reason it is doubly shameful that the "historical"—and maximally exemplary—Ḥātim should be obscured by the romance circulating about him. Whenever anyone "should mention generosity, the name of Ḥātim will perforce

[50] Ṣabūḥī 1963, 43.

trip off of someone's tongue [*saḳhāwat kā ẕikr cheṛegā to Ḥātim kā nām ḳhwāh ma-ḳhwāh kisī nah kisī kī zabān se nikal hī jā'egā*]," Sharar writes.[51] But the popular romance, whose Urdu versions had become legion by the late nineteenth century, did no service to Ḥātim's moral exemplarity, as Sharar explains:

> Today I commemorate the name of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, that poor man whose biography is cast in more darkness than even that of Qais [the historical name of the famous lover Majnūn, who also featured in many romances]. There is a romance of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī current in Urdu-knowing society; a minor *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah* in its own right. Aside from its events being against nature, absolutely absurd and nonsensical, the very worst of it is that there is no sense of Ḥātim's circumstances and his character to be gleaned from this romance.
>
> *āj hameṅ Ḥātim Ṭā'ī kā nām yād āyā hai. jis ġharīb kī sawāniḥ-i 'umrī Qais se bhī zyādah tārīkī meṅ paṛī hu'ī hai. Ḥātim Ṭā'ī kā ek qiṣṣah Urdū kī sosā'iṭiyoṅ meṅ shā'i' hai jo apne maqām par ek choṭī sī Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah hai. un ḥālāt ke ḳhilāf-i necar aur bi al-kull muhmal o be sar o pā hone ke 'ilāwah qiyāmat to yih kī ga'ī hai. kih is qiṣṣah meṅ Ḥātim kī ḥālat aur us ke kerakṭar kā bhī patah nahīṅ lagtā.*[52]

Ḥātim's "character" in the sense of his moral constitution is not evident from the romance, according to Sharar, in spite of the fact that the Urdu *Ḥātim-nāmah*s, like the Persian ones before them, depicted Ḥātim offering his flesh to hungry lions and foxes, and setting off on quests for the sake of his friend the prince Munīr Shāmī. The reason implicit in Sharar's diatribe is that the absurdity of the tale, upon which he has laid such enormous stress, acts as a barrier to exemplarity.

This view continued to be current well into the twentieth century. One amusing example is Shafīq al-Raḥmān's short story "Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī be-taṣwīr [The Un-illustrated Romance of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī]," which pokes fun at the supposed breakdown of Ḥātim's exemplarity as a result of romance hyperbole:

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[51] Sharar n.d., 109–110.
[52] Sharar n.d., 110.

> Along the way, he came to the aid of countless creatures. Someone was drowning. Ḥātim immediately threw him a twig, but the twig did not reach the drowning person, and so Ḥātim jumped in himself. He had just reached him, when a scream arose from the direction of the shore. Ḥātim left [the drowning person] and immediately sprang back—and he saw that there was a bear giving someone a sound drubbing. Ḥātim was about to help him when he heard a sigh coming from some bushes, and so he turned his attention that way.
>
> *rāste meṅ us ne lā-ta'dād maḳhlūq kī madad kī. ek shaḳhṣ ḍūb rahā thā. Ḥātim ne faur[an] ek tinkā phenkā lekin tinkā ḍūbte hū'e shaḳhṣ tak nah pahauncā. Ḥātim ne ḳhvud chalāṅg lagā'ī. abhī us shaḳhṣ tak pahauncā hī thā kih kināre par ek cīnḳh buland hū'ī. Ḥātim use choṛ kar faur[an] wāpas lapkā aur dekhā kih ek rīch ek shaḳhṣ kī marammat kar rahā hai. Ḥātim us shaḳhṣ kī madad karne hī lagā thā kih jhāṛiyoṅ se ek āh sunā'ī dī aur Ḥātim us ṭaraf mutawajjih hu'ā.*[53]

The exaggeration that pervades the Urdu *Ḥātimnāmah*s provides Shafīq al-Raḥmān with fodder for his travesty. The romance-Ḥātim's absurdly prodigious propensity to help all and sundry, when translated into real-world terms, ultimately causes his ethics to fail. This manifestation of Ḥātim—unlike the historical Ḥātim that Sharar seeks to uncover—cannot operate as a moral exemplar, because he is too far removed from the sphere of real world action for there to be any way for the audience members to compare themselves to Ḥātim and to emulate him.

Sharar's and Shafīq al-Raḥmān's logic tying the romance's failure of representation to a failure of exemplarity is prefigured in an essay by Samuel Johnson, who, as we have already seen, was well-known to Indian litterateurs of a particular class. Bearing in mind that "instruction," usually moral, was considered the *raison d'être* of English literature, Johnson's essay in the *Rambler* provides a very clear and explicit formulation of the dismissal of the romance's exemplarity that was current in Britain at the time, and which appears to have been transmitted to élite Indian circles in the late nineteenth century. It is all the more remarkable for being relatively sympathetic towards the romance:

> In the romances formerly written, every transaction and sentiment was so remote from all that passes among men, that the reader was in very little danger of making any

[53] Shafīq al-Raḥmān 1980, 34.

> application to himself; the virtues and crimes were equally beyond his sphere of activity; and he amused himself with heroes and with traitors, deliverers and persecutors, as with beings of another species, whose actions were regulated upon motives of their own, and who had neither faults nor excellences in common with himself.[54]

This straightforward denial of any kind of exemplarity, positive or negative, to "far-fetched" romances, was meant by Johnson to show that romances were relatively benign, at least in comparison to novels that took representation of the familiar too far by creating mixed heroes and villains. In such extreme cases of rationally and empirically sound representation, it becomes possible, according to Johnson and others and other "Conservative" literary critics after him, for readers to learn vice from novels, instead of moral rectitude. However, the novel that is selective in its representations of the familiar, calculated to show the fruits of virtuous actions and the pitfalls of vicious ones, is superior to both the deleterious "mixed-character" novel and the ineffectual romance. The romance is left bereft of any moral force, which in Johnson's time and for a long while after, was tantamount to being sub-literary.

The image of the Urdu and Indo-Persian "romance" genre that emerged in the late nineteenth century and continued throughout the twentieth century has come to define it. The romance was a deficient ancestor to the novel, a primitive and outdated relic of a bygone and stagnant age. Because its representations were incongruent with the world of reason and sense, it could have no effect upon its audiences other than to amuse them or put them to sleep. Audience members who tried to take romances like the *Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī* as exemplars would fail in their endeavour, or end up like South Asian Don Quixotes, growing ever madder in their attempts to emulate the absurd and impossible.

[54] Williams 1970, 144.

In the disparagement of the romance as a residue of an age gone by there is perhaps a kernel of wisdom. Thus qualified, the criticism recognizes, at least, that if the genre was unsuited to the present age, there was some reason for its flourishing during a previous historical era—the *historicism* of genre, its being bound to its temporal, cultural and material contexts is acknowledged, however hazily. Like other genres, the romance genre, which is equivalent to the *image* of the romance genre, has changed over the course of history, and prior to the development of the image that I have outlined in part, the genre possessed a very different valence. The aim of the present work is to repurpose the term "romance," which I will nevertheless retain as a convenient and longstanding translation of *dāstān*, *qiṣṣah*, *ḥikāyat*, *afsānah*, and so on. In these pages it will be shown that the absurdity of its representation was not always universally acknowledged, and that its exemplarity was not always questioned as it was by Sharar and his ilk. Before this previous image of the romance can be excavated, however, some theoretical clarifications are in order. Before we can discuss what the "romance genre" was, we must come to a rigorous understanding of what "genre" itself is.

2. Genre

If we wish to come to an understanding of the romance genre, surely we must first have an understanding of genre itself. Moreover, we are in the first place confronted with the problem of the very genre of "literature." The modern term remains passably true to its etymology, usually encompassing all fictional writing, or, at most, all writing that is of a certain length. That "literature" is no longer restricted to writings is shown by the fact that the term "oral literature" now tends to pass without comment. Yet when it comes to Islamicate verbal artworks, the importance of orality is so great as to render the term "literature" insufficiently expressive. The Urdu word "*adab*," which has become a close translation of the English "literature," was not the most common name for verbal artworks until the twentieth century, and in fact it long signified only a limited genre of writings *within* the general field of verbal artworks. During the period with which this study is concerned the names for this general field were *suḳhan* and *kalām*, best translated as "speech" and encompassing both written and spoken works of art. However this phonocentrism may strike us, it is embedded in the terminology in spite of the inextricability of writing from our understanding of the verbal art of this period—and, indeed, the importance of performative and specifically gestural elements to the romance genre in particular (see Chapter 3). Therefore I will usually refer not to literature but to speech, or to spoken or verbal art.[55]

A similarly cursory historicization might be attempted with regard to the concept of genre itself. Again it is worthy of note that it was not until very recently that a consistent equivalent of the word "genre" was available in Urdu. Sundry words such as "*qism*" and

[55] The term "verbal art" has been scavenged from the folkore theory of William Bascom (Bascom 1955), without at all coinciding with his controversial definition of this term. See also his note regarding the ancillary usefulness of the term "spoken art" (Bascom 1955, 246 n. 9). Where an adjective is required I will generally use the word "discursive." This is not meant to call to mind any of the structuralist or poststructuralist concepts that go by the name of "discourse." Where required, the term "text" will also be used to refer to both spoken and written artworks.

"*nau*'"[56] were used by poetologists before *ṣinf* finally became standard in the twentieth century.[57] The idea of genre was not particularly important to pre-twentieth-century commentators, and one searches in vain for recognizable genre theories in this period. Yet, at the same time, it is certainly true that *specific genres* and the relationships between them were very important.

The Genre Code: Institution, Ideology, Historicity

In order for a genre to be recognized by its reader or hearer, it must possess particular genre *traits* which can then be deciphered according to a genre *code*. This model of genre production is described both by Jacques Derrida and by Todorov.[58] According to Derrida, genre, like any other class, is dependent upon "the identifiable recurrence of a common trait by which one recognizes, or should recognize, membership a class [*la récurrence identifiable d'un trait commun auquel on reconnaît, devrait reconnaître, l'appartenance à la classe*]"[59] To take an example of an obvious formal genre trait, rhyming couplets cause a text to be recognizable as belonging to the *maṡnawī* genre—provided that this trait is combined with certain other traits, viz., that the text in question is in verse, that every verse (*bait*) is a rhyming couplet, and that it is written in a particular language (Punjabi, Persian, Urdu, etc.). However, such a work would not be recognizable as a *maṡnawī* were there were not also a genre *code* enabling such a recognition.

[56] See Kāshifī 1977.
[57] This is not unlike the situation in English: Ralph Cohen points out that until relatively recently English-writing commentators referred to literary "kinds" rather than "genres" (Cohen 1986, 203)
[58] Derrida 1980a; Todorov 1990. In Derrida's case I refer to his French essay (Derrida 1980b) along with the translation.
[59] Derrida 1980a, 63; Derrida 1980b, 184.

The genre "trait" or "*remarque du genre*" is discussed at length by Derrida in his demonstration of its liminality.[60] We will return to this point later in a variety of ways. For the time being, let us unpack the concept of the "code." Features of a work cannot be recognized as traits of a particular genre without some notion—preferably a relative consensus—that there exists a genre that is recognizable by means of a certain assemblage of traits corresponding to the features in question. The genre code is simply this thesis regarding what traits mark a text as belonging to a particular genre. The code and the traits that it chooses are soldered together to form a machine for genre production; the genre, or at least the specific conception of the genre, does not exist before the genre code brings it into existence. Thus when the genre code is set down, so does the genre come into being.

For the historian of verbal artworks, the unearthing of a programmatic genre code is a chanceful and significant happening, rare because of the diffuseness of the code's expression, fragments of which may lie scattered across many texts. The genre code is often known only as the aggregate of such a number of dispersed statements on the genre. If we find the genre code expressed in full in one place at all, it is a happy chance, but occasionally recourse may be had to a surviving metatext of some sort: a review, an entry in a poetological manual,[61] a preface, etc. It is upon such metatexts, for the most part, that the historian must rely.

However, it must not be thought that the genre code that is inaccessible to us in an explicit form simply does not exist, and that codes and traits are therefore not the engines of genre production. This is the conclusion reached by Ralph Cohen, who forms his exemplarily

[60] It is worth noting that Cohen objects to what might be called "trait essentialism." He objects that not all texts participating in a genre necessarily share traits in common, since the definition of a genre, and therefore the traits that are its criteria, may change over the course of history (Cohen 1986, 207–210). In reality, then, Cohen's grievance is misdirected. It is not the necessity of the genre trait that is in question, but the idea that genre traits are eternal and universal. While Cohen's criticisms are ultimately misguided, his resulting theory of "processuality" is important, and I will take it up shortly.

[61] Kāshifī 1977. Kāshifī's fifteenth-century *Badā'i' al-afkār fī ṣanā'i' al-ash'ār*, for example, contains definitions of a number of verse genres.

historicist theory of genre as a result of his conviction that genres are formed simply by the grouping-together of set of texts—"empirically" rather than "logically"—and that where traits do appear to exist, they are too fixed and unchanging to be the proper identifiers of genre.[62] Cohen's conclusions, however, do not necessitate the dismissal of the trait-code system at all; they only add a much-needed diachronic dimension to it, which will be taken up shortly. In truth the assignation of a new text to a genre is not simply empirical, but it is based upon or produces a genre code with a new logic, even if that logic is not explicitly stated. And it is most often not explicitly stated. Thus genre-identifying metatexts like book titles, subtitles ("*The Adventures of Hatim Taï: A Romance*"), and sections in bookseller's advertisements and catalogue, are also sites for the deduction of implicit genre codes, which may have been expressed at one time in oral or written form, or which may have been implications through and through. It is very likely that the genre code may not find expression except in the very act, privileged by Cohen, of assigning a work to a genre. A poem by Mirzā Asad Allāh Ġhālib lamenting the despoliation of Delhi in 1857 may be collected in the same volume as a poem by Mirzā Muḥammad Rafī' Saudā mourning a similar event during the previous century. They may both be referred to in the collection as "*shahr-āshob*" without further explanation.[63] It is then up to the reader to reconstruct or construct the code of the *shahr-āshob*—i.e., that set of traits that are demanded of the *shahr-āshob* genre—by comparing the two poems to one another and to other poems called *shahr-āshob*. It remains to be said that this act of *assignation* to a genre, more common than either a full or partial description of the code, generally takes the form of a genre *identification*; a particular poem, for example, is identified, recognized as belonging to pre-existing *shahr-āshob* genre that is understood to have similar genre traits validating the

[62] Cohen 1986, 207–210.
[63] The reference is to the post-1857 anthology *Fuġhān-i Dihlī* (*Fuġhān-i Dihlī* 2007).

identification. This is the case whether or not that genre in fact exists prior to the identification, which often in fact produces the genre code for the first time through alteration of preceding versions. Therefore this study will often refer to genre "identification" when what is happening is in fact the assignation of a text to a genre on the basis of an implicit genre code that may or may not have been created in the very act of assignation.

If anything is evident from the foregoing, it is that genre cannot be taken as a given, a fact of textual nature there to be discovered. The genre code must be actively formulated in order for the genre to exist, and the very traits of genre are empirically present in the text only as features; the agency of the code is needed to pluck certain features out from the mass and distinguish them as genre traits. To use Todorov's term, genre is "institutionalized."[64] That is, it is set up as a quasi-empirical fact through greater or lesser social consensus upon a particular genre code to the exclusion of others, such that the institutionalized genre code comes to be seen as the correct one for the genre. An accepted genre code replicates and institutionalizes itself largely through the contract that it establishes with its audience. "Genres are essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact."[65] Audiences who accept this contractual obligation read in function of genre, not necessarily in conformity with it, but against the scaffolding of generic limits.[66] A strongly institutionalized genre code will be set up as a shibboleth: the audience is more likely to question a wayward text's fidelity to the genre to which it owes allegiance, than to contemplate changing the genre code itself. This is not to say that the genre code does not change—far from it, as we shall see.

[64]Todorov 1990, 198–200.

[65] Jameson 1981, 106. Jameson's notion of the institutionality of genres is clearly different from—more specific than—Todorov's.

[66] Todorov 1990, 200.

But the institutionalized genre code, masquerading as a fact of nature, sets itself up as a law and defends itself against such change.

"Like any institution, genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong."[67] Todorov's dictum expresses the second axiom that we wish to highlight: behind the institution of a genre, there stands an *ideology*. Genre codes are not institutionalized in an absolutely disinterested way, but are fashioned in the glow of the generally covert force of some ideology or another. The articulation of a code of genre, the choosing of certain features of a text as traits of a genre, the identification of a text as a member of a certain genre; all of these acts of genre production or perpetuation involve a decision guided by a particular worldview. Our discussion in the first chapter of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century origins of the equation between "*qiṣṣah/dāstān*" and "romance" bears this out. It will be recalled that the English romance was defined against its sister prose genre, the novel, by virtue of its reigning trait of an improbable plot. This conception of the romance genre was transferred whole onto the *qiṣṣah* texts then being encountered by Orientalists. Both of these genre-making operations had an ideology behind them. The split between the probable novel and the improbable romance would have been unthinkable without the surging rationalist and empiricist epistemologies that allowed such distinctions to be made. And the *qiṣṣah* was assimilated to the inferior member of this pair due to certain ideas about the Eastern mind perpetuated by the ideology that we now understand as Orientalism. The ideologies driving the institutionalization of genre codes need not be so dramatic or political as this, but where a decision is made regarding genre, there is sure to be a motivating ideology not far behind.[68]

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[67] Todorov 1990, 200.

[68] Cohen's skepticism with regard to the ideological nature of genres should be noted. He dismisses the notion, which he unfortunately reads in Jameson rather than Todorov, that genres express ideologies (Cohen 1986, 109). Jameson's expositions of the "ideologemes" of various genres can certainly be far-fetched, as in the case of his claim regarding the mediaeval

This is not to say that other motivations are not operative. For instance we would be remiss if we did not draw attention to the enormous power of fiduciary motives. Booksellers' catalogues, advertisements printed inside lithographs, shelves dedicated to certain kinds of books, professional divisions between the storyteller (*dāstān-go*), poet (*shā'ir*) and chronicler (*wāqi'ah-nawes*); and even the similarity of book titles to one another (very common in the Islamicate world)—all of these produce genre divisions for financial reasons. A very common move was to capitalize upon the popularity of a particular work by assigning other new or old works to the same genre, thereby creating a penumbra of related works likely to be snapped up by avid audiences. The success of Niẓāmī's *Ḳhamsah*, for example, cannot have been far from Amīr Ḳhusrau's mind when he produced his own quintet, while Aḥmad Yār very explicitly hoped that his *Shāhnāmah-i Ranjīt Singh* would achieve a success similar to that of Firdausī's *Shāhnāmah* (both works failed, of course, with their intended patrons).[69] But ideology is involved in such fiduciary motives as well. A publisher's decision to list the *Fasānah-i Āzād* as a *qiṣṣah* must be justifiable with reference to an existing genre code formed by ideology (it must be possible to demonstrate that the *Fasānah-i Āzād* is identifiable as a *qiṣṣah*). If it is the engine of a new genre code, the logic behind this innovation is explicitly or implicitly ideological. Nevertheless, the economic dimension of genres, would form a fruitful subject of history on its own, and not only in the modern period, during which genre is increasingly degraded into a tool of the market economy. Despite Jameson's nostalgic lament ("the older generic specifications are transformed into a brand-name system against which any authentic artistic expression must struggle"), genres have surely been involved in some form of

European romance's acting as a mirror of knightly identity (Jameson 1981, 118–119). See below for a further discussion of Jameson's suggestion.

[69] See Chapter 5.

commodification for many centuries prior to modernity, as indeed the fifth chapter of this study will show.[70]

A third axiom: The genre code is always put into operation in a particular context; genre is always *historical*. This repudiation of the assumption that genres are primal and timeless is especially emphasized by Todorov, who writes that one should "call genres only the classes of texts that have been historically perceived as such"; Cohen is even more forceful in his insistence that "genre concepts in theory and practice arise, change, and decline for historical reasons."[71] The historical nature of genre follows from the fact of their being made and institutionalized rather than simply discovered—the creation of the genre code must occur within a certain context. Cohen bases his impressive theory of genre upon this insight, thereby developing his ideas of generic flux which will be important for this study. Moreover, the ideologies behind genres are similarly historical. Again, we might refer to the first chapter and the novel/romance binary, which could only have arisen in this particular historical moment characterized by the increasing dominance of certain epistemologies. "Historicity" and "historical moment" should be taken as shorthand for an aggregate of factors including not only time but also regional, cultural, social, linguistic, and other specificities of the situation in which the genre code is articulated.

Genre Systems and Generic Flux

The example of the relations between the novel, (English) romance and *qiṣṣah* shows that it is virtually impossible for a genre to be understandable alone. Two tools are available to help us meet the exigency of examining genres and their codes in relation to one another along the synchronic and diachronic axes: genre systems and generic flux.

[70] Jameson 1981, 107.
[71] Todorov 1990, 198; Cohen 1986, 204.

Within any given historical moment, there will exist a variety of different genres that cannot but come into relation to one another. In eighteenth-century India, for example, the romance (*qiṣṣah*), history (*tārīḵh*), panegyric (*madḥ*) and ethical manual (*adab* or *aḵhlāq*) were imbricated within a system of genres, whose exposition is the task of this study. Genres within a system derive meaning from one another in various ways, perhaps the most stark mode being that of opposition, as for example in the obvious case of *madḥ* (panegyric) and *hajw* (satire), which are defined against one another; or—from a certain point of view—as in the defining opposition between romance and history.[72] To take the oppositional mode as an example of intergeneric relationship, the genre codes of the panegyric and the satire (at least in some historical moments) privileged certain traits of verse works—which were clearly opposed to certain traits of other verse works—as the defining traits of the genre. On the other hand, traits were shared between the *hajw* and *madḥ* that allied them in opposition to other genres: both *hajw* and *madḥ* were versified, and as such they were united in opposition to genres of prose. Different traits of a pair of texts would have been highlighted depending upon what generic category they were being considered under: oppositional traits if considered as *hajw* versus *madḥ*, shared traits if considered as verse, just as in the "genre system" of religion Christians and Muslims are understood to be opposed on account of a number of traits, but allied as "Abrahamic" on account of a number of others.

Not only genre codes and genres, but also whole genre systems, are washed into novel shapes by the tides of time. One of the principal aims of Cohen's theory of genre is to drive home the notion of "processuality," or what I will refer to as generic flux. His version of the argument for process rests upon the idea that genres are formed primarily by assigning texts

[72] See chapters 3 and 4.

to genres; in the process the genre changes in order to accommodate any awkward features of the new addition.[73] While I have re-affirmed the importance of such an act for the formation of genres, it is not necessary for a text to be added to a pre-existing genre for the genre to change over time; this may be effected upon an unchanging corpus of texts by dint of ideological forces. The historicity of the genre code makes possible generic flux; being timebound, a particular genre code may give way to others. The very premise of this study provides an example: the genre code of the romance changed over the course of the later nineteenth century, reflecting the effect of the British worldview upon the Indian culturati, obscuring its predecessor and necessitating the excavation of the genre code of the romance prior to this shift. Perhaps a clearer, because more drastic, example is that of the *shahr-āshob*, which genre once consisted of poems describing the parlously beautiful young boys of a city, and then, in some ill-understood manner, transformed into a genre of lament-poems for historical despoliations of cities.[74] Of necessity, flux in one member of a genre system is the catalyst of change throughout the entire system.

Both genre systems and generic flux are arenas for the play of ideology that we have already mentioned as occurring at the level of the individual genre. Indeed it is often more apparent at the broader synchronic or diachronic level than it is when if we should consider the genre in isolation, which operation would in any case be little more than a needless feat of critical virtuosity. The relations operative within a genre system are themselves ideological; the example previously given of the romance/novel opposition is already a case of an ideology manifested by the relation of two genres within a system. As in this particular case, genres within a system are often related hierarchically, with greater value placed upon the novel

[73] Cohen 1986, 204; 209.

[74] This transformation has been remarked upon often from the mid-twentieth century onwards, but never satisfactorily explained. For a classic exposition, see Na'īm Aḥmad 1968. For more updated commentary, Sharma 2005.

genre than upon the romance genre due to the ideological imperatives of the age. The genre systems of the Islamicate world were surmounted, of course, by a genre containing a single text: the Quran. The fascinating dilemma of the Quran's place in a genre system requires book-length exposition. The Quran is not simply *sui generis*, the doctrine of its inimitability (*i'jāz*) is central to most systems of thought within Islam. Yet this lofty genre, which on the one hand stands aloof from genre systems, is by virtue of its superior value claimed from time to time as the *fons et origo* of genres, as when, for instance, romances, and particularly various versions of the romance of Yūsuf and Zulaiḳhā, remind the reader that the Quran itself refers to the story, recounted within it, as the "best of stories" (*aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ*).[75] This move by some writers to validate the romance genre by providing a Quranic pedigree for it speaks volumes about the ideological priorities of their times, as does the resultant cavilling of commentators like Fā'iz Dihlawī, who in the eighteenth century excoriated Jāmī's verse romance *Yūsuf o Zulaiḳhā* for misrepresenting the truth of the story recounted in the Quran. In the process Fā'iz treats the Qur'ān as a source not quite of romance but of what we would understand as history, revealing the influence both of Islamic piety and a certain rationalism not only upon his reading of the Quran, but also upon his understanding of the higher status of history and the degraded nature of romances like Jāmī's.[76] Similarly, changes in the genre code are indicative of the operation of ideological forces, as in the case of the shift in the definition of the romance over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in India.

In speaking of ideology, it behooves us to be wary of the fallacy of understanding the genre in its historical moment as a puppet animated by a lonely and all-powerful *Zeitgeist*, like a busy Muslim or Jewish God moving and ordering the cosmos. Any historical moment will be

[75] See for instance Shackle 1995 for thoughts on the Quranic story of Yūsuf Zulaiḳhā and the Indian versions in Punjabi and other languages.
[76] See Chapter 4.

inhabited by multiple ideologies, each brandishing its power and each claiming a greater or lesser number of adherents. Rationalism and empiricism were quite different and very powerful in the eighteenth century. Albeit that in slightly different ways these two ideologies, which were often in competition, tended to bring the English novel/romance pair into the same hierarchical configuration, it would have often been the case that rivalry between ideologies produced discernible effects upon genre codes and systems. This will become clear in Chapter 3, which will show how species of rationalism and fideism brought about a split *within* the identity of the genre of historiography, such that it is possible, from our perspective, to speak of at least two genres called *tārīḵh*, motivated by two different genre codes and ideologies.

Genre, Memory, Intertextuality

The effect of genre is to establish a "horizon of expectations" for its audience, to establish a contract between the text marked by genre and its audience, such that the audience member understands the text within the bounds of the rules established by the genre to which the text supposedly belongs. Hans Robert Jauss provides a succinct statement of the necessity of genre and the manner in which it works:

> it is [...] unimaginable that a literary work set itself into an informational vacuum, without indicating a specific situation of understanding. To this extent, every work belongs to a genre—whereby I mean neither more nor less than that for each work a preconstituted horizon of expectations must be ready at hand (this can also be understood as a relationship of "rules of the game" to orient the reader's (public's) understanding and to enable a qualifying reception.[77]

The import of Jauss' pronouncement is quite clear. The reader of a Sufistic poem like 'Aṭṭār's *Manṭiq al-ṭair* (*Conference of the Birds*) expects to encounter allegory, edificatory discourses, and so on. Within a text understood to participate in such a genre, the sudden appearance of

[77] Jauss 1982, 79.

astronomical charts or an enumeration of poetic devices is an unexpected and, at least initially, an extra-generic event. Unless the way is paved for it in some manner, it jars and leaves the reader with a sense of transgression, until the reader's expectations with regard to the genre have been re-adjusted; either the genre assignment is deemed to be incorrect, or the genre code itself begins to undergo change. A third and very telling option is to continue to consider the jarring element to be in some manner extraneous, usually with the judgment that the integrity of the work has been marred and it is worthy of criticism, but occasionally with a sense of piquancy.

What is the relation of such misfit fragments to genre? I have just described them as extra-generic, but by this I only mean that they appear to be extraneous to the genre within whose rules the text containing them is initially assumed to operate. Cannot such fragments be said, rather, to participate in genres independently of the works in which they appear? Of course, they can and they do; we regularly and quite unreflectively speak of the genres of passages appearing within works already marked by a different genre. It is well-known that Islamicate verbal artworks usually begin with such heterogeneous passages: the *ḥamd* (praise of God), *naʿt* (praise of the Prophet), *madḥ* (general panegyric), and so on. Some texts such as Miyāṅ Muḥammad Baḳhsh's Punjabi verse romance *Saif al-Mulūk* (*Sword of Kings*) also contain less common elements such as a description of the *miʿrāj* or Heaven-ward ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad.[78] Such pieces of the text are of course framed in certain ways, often set off by headings in the written text, as the *miʿrāj* description in *Saif al-Mulūk* is separated from the rest of the text by the heading "*dar bayān-i miʿrāj-i durr al-tāj-i anbiyā' ʿalai-hi al-salām* [Describing the Ascension of the Pearl in the Crown of Prophets, Peace Be Upon Him]."[79] Other

[78] Miyāṅ Muḥammad Baḳhsh 2003, 19–24.
[79] Miyāṅ Muḥammad Baḳhsh 2003, 19.

passages that seem out of place in terms of their genre are not as well fenced-off from the rest of the text; for instance near the end of the *Romance of the Rose of Bakāwalī* [*Qiṣṣah-i Gul-i Bakāwalī*], there suddenly appears a historical anecdote regarding the Mughal emperor Jahāngīr's death and the internecine rivalry that ensued between the princes Ḳhurram and Parwez.[80] That it could be taken as historical (in the sense to which we are most used) is shown by the comments, seventy years later, of the Urdu translator Nihāl Cand Lāhorī.[81] The fact that such heterogeneous fragments exist, however innocuous and commonplace it may seem, is one whose consequences must be considered carefully.

Theorists like Jauss and Derrida insist that works must be situated within a genre.[82] This does not mean that the genre of a work is immediately apprehended by its reader or hearer. Even when it is, the genre identification of the newly-experienced work does not necessarily refer back to the genre itself (i.e., the genre code), but rather to previously-experienced works exemplary of the genre, and particularly canonical works. If and when Sulṭān 'Abd Allāh Quṭbshāh read or heard the ethical manual (*aḳhlāq*) *Tuḥfah-i Quṭbshāhī* written for him by 'Alī b. Ṭaifūr al-Bisṭāmī, his reference-point when it came to the genre of the *Tuḥfah* would almost certainly have been Kāshifī's famous *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* (*Muḥsinian Ethics*; this was, indeed, quoted verbatim in'Alī Bisṭāmī's text).[83] The genre code was understood to be particularly well exemplified by such texts, and could be easily extracted from them. So the process of genre identification is essentially an intertextual process in which the audience's memory travels from the newly-experienced text, to a previously-experienced and often a well-known or foundational work representative of the genre, if not to the genre code itself.

[80] 'Izzat Allāh Bangālī 2007, 721.
[81] Nihāl Cand Lāhorī 2008, 156.
[82] See the quotation from Jauss, above; Derrida 1980a, 64.
[83] 'Alī b. Ṭaifūr al-Bisṭāmī 1635; see Chapter 6.

If this is true of the work as a whole, it is equally true of the fragment; truer, perhaps, given that the fragment is more likely than the work as a whole to echo a previously experienced text with some precision. In Gérard Genette's terminology, the genre of a fragment is often readily identified due to the memory of some "hypotext," the source text in the intertextual relation, relative to which the newly-experienced fragment is a "hypertext," more commonly referred to as an intertext. Just as the language of rhetorical manuals in the West gives us such names for the transformations of the hypotext into the intertext as quotation, allusion, paraphrase, and the like, so do classical Islamicate poetological manuals—handbooks of *'ilm-i badī'*—recognize and deal with intertextuality in some detail. They do so mainly under the rubric of *sariqah* or "plagiarism" (sometimes given the less judgmental name of *aḵhdh*). The enumeration of types of *sariqāt* is the subject of the conclusion (*ḵhātimah*) of many a manual of poetics. In addition, we find mentioned several other forms of intertextual transformation, often based on the premise that the Quran is the hypotext in question (*talmīḥ*, *'aqd*, and so on).

Neither the Western nor the Islamicate categories of intertextual transformations are numerable here, but we might just mention three broad types that will be important in later chapters. The first occurs when the decontextualized intertext is identical in its very words to the hypotext. Such *literal* intertextuality is obvious if less common than other forms: quotations of the Quran, aḥādīth, and well-known poets are examples of this. So is the case, alluded to above, of the *Tuḥfah-i Quṭbshāhī*'s word-for-word lifting of passages from its illustrious predecessor the *Aḵhlāq-i Muḥsinī*. Romances give us many more instances of intertextuality that is not literal at all, but which may be termed *substantial*, reproducing as it does the content of a previous text or texts. For example, Ḥātim Ṭā'ī's donation of the flesh of

his buttock to a hungry wolf whom he has deprived of its prey is, with certain substitutions, the same as the story recounted four hundred years earlier by Ẓiyā' al-Dīn Naḵhshabī, of a prince's succouring of a frog about to come to its end by a viper's fangs, and his subsequent gift of a piece of his own arm to the famished snake. This tale, in Naḵhshabī's *Ṭūṭī-nāmah*, is likely to have been a paraphrase of 'Imād al-Dīn b. Muḥammad Al-Ṡaġhrī's *Jawāhir al-asmār* (*Jewels of Night-Tales*), written during the reign of 'Alā al-Dīn Ḵhaljī something over a decade earlier. Both Naḵhshabī's and Al-Ṡaġhrī's works themselves contained further analogues in the form of a story of the Prophet Moses offering his own flesh to an eagle pursuing a dove who seeks refuge in Moses, and finally this tale, which can be found in at least one Arabic source, is an apparent adaptation of the *Mahābhārata* story of the generous King Shibī.[84] Among these narratives, there is not a single pair that is identical on the level of words, but a core of actions depicted are equivalent in spite of substitutions of characters, objects, and settings. A folklorist would recognize these instances of substantial intertextuality as "motifs." Finally, it is possible to speak of a second sort of non-literal intertextuality, which we may call "formulaic," not reproducing content so much as a number of traits. These include passages of genres such as the prefatory *ḥamd* and *na'ṯ* described above (one example of a "formula" with traits being genre itself); further examples of this kind of intertextuality appear in Chapter 4.

For the time being let us suspend the very important question of how the genre of the hypotext may be modified by its situation within the text in which it appears (the "hypertext"). This must be taken up in our discussion of genre dominance later on. Let us for now assume—incorrectly, of course—that when the new text, and the intertextual passage within it, are experienced, and the hypotext of the passage is recognized along with the

[84] See Chapter 6 for these tales in the two *Ṭuṭī-nāmah*s and *Mahābhārata*.

hypotext's genre, the genre of the passage is simply considered to be the same as that of the hypotext. The point to grasp for now is simply that genres are identified through such literal and non-literal intertextual relationships.

With regard to the intertextual categories that have just been outlined, one more point needs to be made clear, which is that the hypotext need not be a *particular* textual fragment. One of the great challenges—as much for the cultural historian as for the conscientious reader or hearer—of experiencing a work is the task of recognizing intertextuality when it occurs. In more precise terminology, we may refer to this as the task of recognizing the hypotext from which any given intertext is derived. But intertextuality is not reducible to direct influence; often the individual consuming a work encounters a fragment that is recognizable as an echo, not of any particular previously-experienced textual passage, but of a whole multitude of such passages, among whom it is impossible to pick and choose and say which one is the lineal predecessor of the passage being experienced in the present. For instance, romances very often begin with the motif of the wealthy and/or powerful yet childless man, who gains a child and has its horoscope drawn; the story of Ḥātim begins in this manner, as does the story of the Gul of Bakāwalī, and other tales so numerous to sift. The real hypotext may in that case be thought of as an abstract type in which each of the possible specific source-texts share. It may be impossible for the reader or hearer, who has come across so many instances of the same motif, to think of one or another as the source text for the new passage being experienced. It may indeed be the case that the one experiencing the work does not recall a specific source-text at all, but is clearly aware in her or his memory of a hypotext in the form of such a type.

To come back to the task of recognizing intertextuality: It is important for the sensitive reader or hearer to be able to identify these links to previously-experienced texts that

augment the pleasure of experiencing artwork. For the scholar practicing historical genre theory it is still more important. Recognitions of intertextuality are very rarely recorded, and it is therefore necessary, in order to reconstruct the genrescape of a particular period, to have as full a sense as possible of the population of works inhabiting the memories of the society of that period. It goes without saying that such a labour, however necessary, involves at least as much guesswork as the pragmatic history of the period, and is befuddled by the decay of the written archive and the irretrievability of the oral discourse that would once have formed an even more significant source of hypotextual material for late Mughal society. Nevertheless, we may hypothesize about the makeup of the *hypotextual archives* existing in the memories of historical audiences, on the basis of the moiety of written texts that have been preserved for us.

Memory serves as the repository of what I have just referred to as "hypotextual archives," by which I simply mean the corpora of texts experienced directly or indirectly by an individual or several individuals (from the longest written epic to the briefest oral remark, from works of literature to account registers to proverbs and chance utterances), considered in their potential function as intertextual reference points (hypotexts). Where it is unnecessary to emphasize their potential hypotextuality and more urgent to stress their location in the memories of individuals, one might refer to "textual memory." To give an oversimplified example: Without necessarily being sure, we might expect a certain individual living in nineteenth-century Lahore to have read or heard the Quran and perhaps a tafsīr, the *Dīwān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī, the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*, Wāriṡ Shāh's *Hīr* or another version of the same romance, and possibly the latest faddish poem by Dayā Shankar Nasīm. He (if it is a he) is likely to be up to speed on the current jokes and insults, the proper formulas by which to

address his father and his superiors, and the set phrases by which to woo a beloved. He may have studied one of the prevalent manuals of letter-writing (*inshā'*) in order to attain epistolary proficiency, and perhaps he has read an abundantly-available history like the *Rauẓaṭ al-ṣafā'*. Of course memory fluctuates; throughout his life this man will go on adding texts to the archive in his brain, and losing a great many of them through forgetfulness. We can guess this much about him—if we have some sense of who he is.

The identity of the reader/hearer is of course paramount. The hypotextual archive posited above might be likely to reside in the memory of a middle-aged man in the upper echelons of society who has benefited from a good education. On the other hand, the textual memory of an elderly imam living in Lucknow might be quite different; more expansive, perhaps, and more replete with hadith, supplicatory prayers (*waẓā'if*), stories of the prophets, and so on, and it might show evidence of his greater knowledge of local poets. Age, language capabilities, profession, education, location, social status, and other such considerations will have a bearing on the textual memory of an individual. In effect communities can be said to exist that share similar textual memories because of one or another of these factors. Punjabis are likely to be familiar with the poems of Bullhe Shāh, physicians with medical works, Awadhi courtesans with *ṭhumrī*s, and so on and so forth.

Thus when we are aware of the nature of the society of readers and hearers in question, it is a matter of making an educated guess with regard to the kinds of texts that they could possibly have experienced and borne in their memories. This guesswork is more likely to be correct when applied to the society than it would be at the level of the individual; it is almost certain that Sindhis at large would have been familiar with the poetry of Shāh ʻAbd al-Laṭif Bhiṭā'ī, even if it impossible to say whether a particular Sindhi person was familiar with it. The

importance of this inexact but credible operation lies, of course, in what we have said with regard to genre, fragments, and hypotexts. Consider an individual reading the Persian *Ḳhāwarān-nāmah* in the seventeenth century: if her hypotextual archive included some smattering of truth-claiming narratives about its hero ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭ̤ālib, perhaps orally recounted on the basis of Ibn Iṣḥāq's biography of the Prophet, this might cause her to activate those previously-experienced texts as hypotexts, and understand the new text, at least at first, as belonging to the genre of history. If the audience member had, on the other hand, also read a work like Baihaqī's history, she might revise her opinion of the genre of the *Aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ* after encountering sufficient evidence of its infidelity to a certain conception of what is possible, such as ʻAlī's various encounters with demons in the *Ḳhāwarān-nāmah*. I might give another example involving a fragment: in Wāriṡ Shāh's *Hīr*, when the hero Rānjhā encounters the eponymous heroine for the first time, the poet describes her lingeringly, part by part, from the red ribbons in her hair to her eyes, eyebrows, lips, nose, neck, arms, chest, breasts, navel, the line of hair descending from her navel, her hips, and, finally, her shins.[85] Among the audience assembled to hear the bard recite the poem, there might be many who have encountered and retained in their textual memories other examples of the genre (or device—in this case it is impossible to distinguish) called *sarāpā* or *nakh-sikh-varnan*, in which a beautiful person's body is described from head to toe or from toe to head. The two stanzas in which Hīr is described may be identifiable only to such cognoscenti as *sarāpā.* The genre of the fragment, thus identified or left unidentified according to the state of the audience's textual memory, has an important impact on the genre of the text in which it appears, as we will continue to see.

[85] Wāriṡ Shāh 1986, 27–28.

There are various ways of determining the likelihood of a certain text's being known to a certain audience community. The researcher gains some sense of which texts would have been widely available by considering the frequency of their appearance in manuscript archives, and how often they are mentioned or cited by authors of the time. The *Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī*, for example, is amply represented in archives in its various forms, although references to it in other texts are very few and far between. The evidence points, then, to the romance's having a moderate currency, and perhaps a less than prestigious reputation. It is easy, on the other hand, to point to the texts that dominated the textual memories of late Mughal society: these are works like the Quran, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa,* the *Dīwān-i Ḥāfiẓ, Gulistān* and *Bostān* of Sa'dī, the *Shāhnāmah*, *Rauẓat al-ṣafā*, *Inshā'-i Harkaran*, etc. These are texts that appear with great frequency in manuscript catalogues and which are referenced or mentioned very often. Such texts can be said to have much "visibility" among a certain segment of society, while the more moderate visibility of other texts can also be established with relative certainty, as we will see in Chapter 4.

One Text, Many Genres

Once we have accepted that the unit to which genre is applicable may be much smaller than the work with its conventionally-prescribed limits, that fragments and passages within a work may also be identified as bearing the traits of a particular genre on the basis of a previously-experienced hypotext—once this complex-seeming but really quite elementary insight is digested, the obvious consequence is that we cannot continue to think always of the work as a whole, or if we do, we cannot assume that the work participates in only one genre. There are several different forms of potential and actual generic multiplicity, some of which we can readily recognize. There are situations in which it is quite uncontroversial to say that a

work actually belongs to two genres at the same time. Such a felicitous situation tends to arise when the two genres co-assigned to the work are harmonious, and do not clash with one another, as for instance, one genre is formal, while the other is substantial. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Maṡnawī-i ma'nawī* is, in terms of its form, a masnawi, and a "mystical" or Sufi work in terms of its content. Two other forms of potential generic multiplicity are part and parcel of the principles of diachronic generic flux on the one hand and synchronic contestation on the other. It is possible, that is, for a work as a whole to be legitimately identified as a participant in different genres during different periods of history, and it is also possible that during a single historical period a work's genre will be contested according to the ideological bent of each party, which will lead each to have a different understanding of the genre traits or codes in question. One person may believe the work to be a history, while the other, having an entirely different and more restrictive notion of what constitutes the genre of historiography (i.e., its genre code) will understand it as a "mere" romance. Two different parties might identify the same poem as praise or as satire depending on the genre traits that each of them highlight in the poem. In all of these cases, multiple genres are really or potentially present across the work as a whole. The less obvious form of generic multiplicity has to with the level of the textual fragment.

Given that every work is, from a certain perspective, a patchwork of various intertextual fragments, it presents a corresponding variety of genres as it unfolds. As we have seen, genre applies to the fragment as much as it does to the work. Inevitably then, the work, being made up of fragments, will also be pervaded by the genres with which those fragments are identified by its audience. This important principle will be borne out by the remainder of this study and therefore does not admit of detailed demonstration here, but a preview of the

ensuing chapters will make it clearer. The manuscript *Ṭirāz al-aḵhbār*, in which the seventeenth-century storyteller ʻAbd al-Nabī Faḵhr al-Zamānī describes the oral-performative production of the romance of Amīr Ḥamzah, provides us with remarkable evidence that storytellers in fact constructed their romances out of pre-existing materials, often substantial but sometimes literal, drawn from texts of a variety of genres: epistolography, mysticism, history, and so on, as well as romances. A certain number of these elements would have been recognized by a section of the audience. If it did not happen that the audience's memory identified the fragment with its hypotext in the process of its being spoken by the storyteller, it is quite possible that the genre of the hypotext would be identified as other than romance. At the end of Ġhālib Lakhnawī's version of the romance of Amīr Ḥamzah, for instance, the reader or hearer would find recounted the participation of Ḥamzah b. ʻAbd al-Muṭallib in the Battle of ʻUhud, and his death and cannibalistic mutilation at the hands of "Hindah":

> That accursed one struck Amīr Ḥamzah's blessed head with her blood-thirsty, poisonous sword so that the Amīr's head separated from his body. She cut open the warrior's stomach and devoured his liver.
>
> *us ḵhānah-ḵharāb ne talwār-i ḵhūn-āshām zahr-ālūdah Amīr Ḥamzah ke sar-i mubārak par aisī lagā'ī kih Amīr kā sar tan se judā ho gayā daler ka peṭ cāk kar ke kalejah nikāl kar khā ga'ī* [86]

Many hearers, and certainly most Muslim hearers, would recognize this as a (heavily modified) retelling of the killing of Ḥamzah and gnawing of his liver by Hind b. ʻUtbah, which was narrated in historical works.[87] Although many of the circumstances and even names are changed from the most standard accounts, this portion of the romance certainly recalls historiographies such as Ibn Isḥāq's biography of the Prophet, and while the hearer very likely would not have linked these passages to any single hypotext, he or she would be sure to recognize the historical account, however imperfectly. The "extra-generic" elements might

[86] Ġhālib Lakhnawī 1855, 492.
[87] For example, Ibn Isḥāq 1987, 371–376.

have been even more minute than passages of text; the simple mentioning of names such as "Ḥamzah b. 'Abd al-Muṭallib," "Buzurgmihr" and "Nausherwān" is enough to bring the genre of historiography into play in this work that we suppose would most frequently have been identified as a romance.

We may say at this point that a work of verbal art contains within itself an ecosystem of genres mirroring the one that we have already come across in discussing the interrelationship between verbal artworks in a given historical moment. This study, for instance, looks at works that are identified as romances to glimpse the interaction *within* them of the genres of romance, historiography, panegyric and ethics. The concept of the genre system is much the same whether we consider it as operating upon a network of works, or within a single work. If romance and historiography are opposed on the level of the work, as for instance the *Shāhnāmah* versus Baihaqī's *Tārīḵh*, the existence of elements of romance and history within, say, the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah*, is productive of an internal tension. We might say in many cases that the dynamics of the "external" genre system are not merely mirrored by those of the "internal" system, but actually give rise to them; the opposition of romance and history within the work is a consequence of the oppositional manner in which the two genre codes are configured at large. On the other hand, certain inter-generic relations are more discernible within the work. For example, the force lent, within romances, by historical elements to panegyric and ethical (*aḵhlāq*) elements, and the complementary relationship between panegyric and ethics, will be viewed in chapters 5 and 6.

The concept of internal generic multiplicity has a centrifugal effect on our understanding of the work, as if the identification of the work as a whole with a single were a meaningless sham, and the work were a jigsaw puzzle of fragments, each with its own genre.

While this perspective is important because it is prone to neglect, having presented it we should not brook any diminishment in the importance of the dominant genre that envelopes and to some extent subsumes the rest within itself. The power of the dominant genre is such that the generic alterity of a particular fragment is likely to resolve itself one way or another into the genre to which the work as a whole is supposed to belong, or else to be consigned to a quasi-external location relative to the work proper. Fragments bearing genres that are not in conflict with the dominant genre may be summarily dismissed as paratextual excrescences upon the "real" body of the text which hews to the dominant genre, as, for instance, the panegyrics that begin certain romances are thought to be outside of the romance proper even if they are bound between the covers of a book that goes by the name of *qiṣṣah*, *dāstān* or *ḥikāyat*.

If the fragment's genre stands opposed to that of the work, on the other hand, as that of history might be to romance, the historiographical genre of the fragment is likely to be overpowered and overthrown by that of the whole by being understood as part of its fiction. It is less likely—but nevertheless possible—that the introduction of historiography into the work might cause readers or listeners to change their opinions with regard to the genre to which the work belongs, either revising the genre code of the romance to fit the case of this otherwise problematical text, or altogether abandoning the identification of the text with the romance genre in favour of the genre of historiography.

Concluding Axioms

If the foregoing description of genre seems overly thetic rather than descriptive, or tersely theoretical instead of concrete these infelicities will be overcome over the course of the next four chapters, in which many of the principles sketched out here will be unfolded in a

more organic manner as they are used to explain various features of the romance and its related genres. The lessons of this chapter might conveniently be summed up in a number of axioms :

1) Genre is not innate or natural, but *instituted* by various discourses.
2) What is instituted is the *genre code*, which specifies the *traits* that characterize the genre.
3) The assignation of a text to a particular genre most often takes the shape of an *identification*, on the basis of the idea that the text "naturally" belongs to a pre-existing and pre-constituted genre (whereas this may not be the reality).
4) The manner in which genres and their codes are produced is *ideological*.
5) Genres and their codes are *historical*, situated in a particular context or historical moment.
6) Any given genre exists and is defined within a synchronic *genre system* in which all of the genres of its historical moment participate.
7) Genres are not static, but undergo diachronic *flux*, changing over time.
8) The makeup of the synchronic genre system and the trajectory of diachronic generic flux reflect ideological forces.
9) The existence, within a historical moment, of various and conflicting ideologies means that various and conflicting genre codes and genre systems may coexist.
10) It is not only full works that are identified with genres, but also *fragments*—i.e., passages of varying size may possess genres different from the work itself, and different from other passages within the work.

11) The genre of these fragments is generally identified by referring to *hypotexts* from which they are supposed to be derived. The memories of audience members in effect contain an *archive* of such potential hypotexts; i.e., the sum of the texts that they have experienced and of which they have retained a remembrance. Communities of readers and hearers are likely to bear in their memories hypotextual archives of a somewhat uniform nature.

12) By partially reconstructing the collective textual archives in the memories of audiences and considering the *visibility* of a text in a given period, it is possible to conjecture the likelihood of a particular hypotext's being available to serve as a generic exemplar with which a fragment (or work) may be identified.

13) The fact that fragments bear genres means that works are *internally varied* in terms of their genre, forming internal genre systems parallel to and affected by the external genre systems already mentioned.

14) Any number of relationships are possible between the genre of the work and that of its fragments. Generally however, the genre of the work maintains something of a subduing influence over the genres of its own fragments.

Most important to the structure of this study are the various facts of generic multiplicity; that genres exist in relation to one another, and are situated in genre systems both within corpora of works and within individual works themselves. In the chapters that follow, aside from considering the romance genre in itself, we will look at its relationships, both in terms of the external and internal genre systems, with three other genres: historiography (*tārīḵh*), panegyric (*madḥ*) and ethics (*aḵhlāq*). I have chosen this set of genres in order to highlight the two fallacies outlined in the first chapter, which played a role in the

devaluation of the romance genre. In the case of the romance's relation to historiography, I wish to question the view that the romance genre was necessarily characterized by representation of the improbable or impossible. In the cases of the elements of the panegyric and ethical genres within romance works, my desire is to highlight the exemplarity of romances such as the *Ḥātim-nāmah*, against the notion that they were failures in this regard. Needless to say, the romance genre interacted with a multitude of genres aside from these three, but it is to be hoped that these examples will give a taste of the manner in which inter-generic relations work to give shape and function to the romances under scrutiny.

3. Romance

We saw in the first chapter that the very term "romance" must be hedged with caveats if we are to use it to designate the object of our study for the sake of the non-specialist reader. At the very least, the Urdu and Persian genre to which we have been referring under that name must not be thoughtlessly assimilated to the European romance with all of its commentarial baggage, although it is likely that many of our findings regarding the Urdu/Persian romance will apply to its namesake as well. It is not clear in the first place that the Persian or Urdu languages possess any unambiguous word that we could equate with the English "romance"—but then this English word itself is not unambiguous, as we have already seen.

By way of Persian, the Urdu language possesses a number of words that are understood to be names either of a single genre that we have called "romance," or of a number of related but non-identical genres. *Dāstān*, *qiṣṣah* and *ḥikāyat* are undoubtedly the most frequently used of these genre names, as a glance through a library catalogue will confirm. But bound up with each of these words is a more or less vague idea of a narrative of a particular length, which fact puts some pressure on the idea of the romance as a unified genre. "*Dāstān*" often refers to lengthy narratives such as the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah*, the *Shāhnāmah* or the *Bostān-i Ḵhayāl*—yet it is not infrequently used to refer to narratives of much more moderate length. On the other hand "*ḥikāyat*" is frequently used to designate very short narratives, sometimes consisting of no more than a few phrases, and yet it sometimes names moderate-length narratives as well. Thus the possible objection that *dāstān* and *ḥikāyat* refer only to specific forms of narrative is difficult to corroborate; we can only say that preponderance of evidence suggests that the definitions of both of these words slide towards each other along a continuum, at the centre of

which there is a considerable area of overlap. Insofar as the two designate different things, it may certainly be possible to study the *dāstān* and the *ḥikāyat* separately, but such is not the purpose of this study. It is only the word "*qiṣṣah*" that is in general devoid of connotations of length and which encompasses all narratives, long and short. Therefore when the "romance" is mentioned, the word should be understood to refer to the *qiṣṣah* genre, it being understood that this genre is either the same as or encompasses the *dāstān*, *ḥikāyat*, *naql*, *kahānī*, *afsānah*, *fasānah*, and so on.[88]

Of course, to say that the *qiṣṣah* or romance genre comprises the entire corpus of narrative verbal art hardly seems correct. Surely *qiṣṣah*s are not simply any narratives, but specifically *fictional* ones. It would seem obvious that any study of the *qiṣṣah* should proceed along the assumption that *qiṣṣah*s are works of narrative fiction—and yet this common notion of the *qiṣṣah* does not fully tally with the historical significations of the word, or indeed with its present-day meanings. The exposition of this problem will be one of the main tasks of this chapter and of the next. For the time being, suffice it to say that it is here that the translation of the word "*qiṣṣah*" as "romance" is inadequate, and that in order to retain it we must do some violence to the English term by repurposing its meaning.

The Last Storyteller of Delhi

The largely oral nature of storytelling in Urdu and Indo-Persian forces the historian to be content with those few fortunate traces that historiography has preserved for our study. Nevertheless, scholarly works like *The Romance Tradition in Urdu* and *Sāḥirī, Shāhī, Ṣāḥib-qirānī*

[88] I will occasionally use words such as "tale" and "story" in place of "romance," particularly in translations, in order to distinguish between different terms in the original language.

gather those traces in sufficient quantity to piece together a ravaged image of the practice, and it is upon such seminal works that we must rely.

Around 1928, the city of Delhi bore silent witness to the death of storytelling when Urdu's "last" great storyteller Mīr Bāqir 'Alī Dāstān-go was gathered unto his fathers. So, at least, goes the long-told tale. During the years leading up to his death, Mīr Bāqir 'Alī, his audience decimated by the success of Indian cinema, had taken to preparing and selling betelnuts supplied to him by charitable benefactors such as the famous physician Ḥakīm Ajmal Ḳhān.[89] Attendance at his storytelling soirées, held each Saturday at Mīr Bāqir 'Alī's house in Sayyidoṅ kī galī on Bhojlah Pahāṛī from 9pm to midnight, had dwindled, and along with it the 2-anna-per-person admission that was a source of revenue for the aged performer,[90] who had once charged each listener 2 rupees for a public performance.[91] One of his votaries, Ashraf Ṣabūḥī, describes meeting Bāqir 'Alī in his later days living the life of a pedlar strolling about Delhi with two sacks of merchandise: one was filled with betelnuts, the other with short chapbooks that he had penned in an effort to compress his oral art into a profitable commodity. Countering Ṣabūḥī's pained remonstrance, Mīr Bāqir 'Alī retorted that the only hearers with any taste for storytelling were dead and buried: "Shall I go and tell stories in the graveyards? [*Qabristānoṅ meṅ jā kar sunā'ūṅ*?]"[92]

Things had not always been thus. According to Delhites who had memories of Bāqir 'Alī, he had from the late nineteenth century onward been in great demand throughout India, and particularly among princes and potentates. He was, from time to time, summoned southward by the Nizam of Hyderabad. He entertained the romance-loving Nawab of Rampur. And for a

[89] Sayyid Yūsuf Buḳhārī Dihlawī 1987, 21.
[90] Sayyid Yūsuf Buḳhārī Dihlawī 1987, 22.
[91] Shāhid Aḥmad Dihlawī 1979, 192.
[92] Ṣabūḥī 1963, 37–38.

period he was regularly employed by the Maharajah of Patiala, who treated him with great familiarity. The British had in some manner become aware of his abilities, which circumstance has ensured the preservation of Linguistic Survey of India recordings of Bāqir ʻAlī's voice dating from 1920.[93] His considerable abilities had been gained from the training he received at the hands of his maternal uncle, the renowned Mīr Kāẓim ʻAlī Dastān-go, storyteller to the Nizam. Kāẓim ʻAlī had in turn learned from Bāqir ʻAlī's grandfather Mīr Amīr ʻAlī, who is said to have been a storyteller at the Mughal court prior to his death around 1857. In Delhi itself, Mīr Bāqir ʻAlī gave well-attended hour-long performances weekly at the Farāsh-ḳhānah,[94] and in the public hall (*dīwān-ḳhānah*) of Ḥakīm Ajmal Ḳhān.[95]

From the accounts of Bāqir ʻAlī given by his younger contemporaries, what we learn above all is that the romance was bound up with an *oral*, *physical*, and *visual* practice of story-telling, and that it is not, therefore, merely reducible to its written representatives. As Faruqi has abundantly shown, it is particularly the pervasive orality of the romance that has shaped the written remains of the genre in unmistakable ways. The gestural and visual components of Bāqir ʻAlī's performances are also worthy of mention in passing. Describing Bāqir ʻAlī's performances, eyewitness Shāhid ʻAlī Dihlawī wrote:

> Mīr Ṣāhib would describe battles and courtly gatherings in such a manner that the entire image would be drawn before one's eyes. While he went on telling the story, he would go on acting from time to time, and an effect would also be produced by the tones and modulations of his voice.
>
> *Mīr Ṣāhib bazm aur razm ko is andāz se bayān karte kih ānkhoṅ ke sāmne pūrā naqshah khiṅc jātā. Dāstān kahte jāte aur mauqaʻ ba-mauqaʻ aikṭing karte jāte. Āwāz ke zer o bam aur lab o lahjah se bhī aṡar paṛtā.*[96]

Sayyid Yūsuf ʻAlī Buḳhārī similarly wrote:

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[93] Mīr Bāqir ʻAlī Dāstān-go 2010.
[94] Shāhid Aḥmad Dihlawī 1979, 190.
[95] Sayyid Yūsuf Buḳhārī Dihlawī 1987, 25.
[96] Shāhid Aḥmad Dihlawī 1979, 191.

> His storytelling was such that, aside from the cadences of his pronunciation, through the modulations of his voice, the variations of his accents, and by the fitness of the occasion and placement, he would copy the actions of every living thing with such success that he would become the very image of it himself.
>
> *dāstān-go'ī kā yih 'ālam thā kih talaffuẓ-i alfāẓ kī ūnc nīc ko choṛ kar wuh apnī āwāz ke zer o bam, lab o lahje ke utār caṛhā'o aur mauqa' o maḥall kī munāsibat se har mutanaffis kī ḥarakāt o sakanāt kī aisī kāmbyāb naql utārte kih ḳhwud taṣwīr ban jāte the.*[97]

From the above descriptions it may well be imagined why Bāqir 'Alī's storytelling performances would have faced competition from the newly popular Indian cinema. Bāqir 'Alī's craft had much in common with the theatrical arts, albeit that it relied much more on the power of his speech to incite the audience's imagination, since the range of the storyteller's movements was circumscribed.

The feats of memory involved in the kind of storytelling practiced by Mīr Bāqir 'Alī were undeniably prodigious. But it must not be imagined that the stories that he told—mainly the stories of Amīr Ḥamzah—were merely memorizations of texts. His contemporaries are at pains to inform us that Bāqir 'Alī extemporized abundantly and reveled in audience interaction, adjusting his narration to his hearers' demands.[98] It is acknowledged that Mīr Bāqir 'Alī showed an uncommon superiority in his bent for extemporization, for not all of his fellow storytellers practiced such virtuosity. Shāhid Aḥmad provides an anecdote in illustration of this important fact:

> Mīr Maḥmūd 'Alī has told us that once in Calcutta a great fuss was made over a certain storyteller of Lucknow. One day I went to listen to him as well, and what should I see, but a book placed open before the storyteller! He went on reading from it, and if ever he became unusually excited, he would raise up one hand. I was quite vexed. I wished that Mīr Bāqir 'Alī could somehow come so that the people of Calcutta might discover what real storytelling is.

[97] Sayyid Yūsuf Buḳhārī Dihlawī 1987, 24.
[98] Shāhid Aḥmad Dihlawī 1979, 191.

> *Mīr Maḥmūd ʻAlī Ṣāḥib ne batāyā kih Kalkatte meṅ ek daf'ah Lakhnau ke ek dāstān-go kī dhūm macī. Ek din ham bhī sunne ga'e to dekhā kih dāstān-go ke āge kitāb khulī dharī hai. Us meṅ se paṛhte jāte haiṅ aur bahut josh meṅ āte haiṅ to ek hāth ūncā kar lete haiṅ. Tabʻīyyat baṛī mukaddar hū'ī. Jī cāhā kih kisī ṭarḥ Mīr Bāqir ʻAlī yahāṅ ā jāte to Kalkattah-wāloṅ ko maʻlūm hotā kih dāstān-go'ī kise kahte haiṅ.*

There were gradations, then, of storytelling modes according to the extent to which they depended upon a text. In the manner of Plato exposing Phaedrus for pretending to read a speech from memory when in fact he has the written text under his cloak, Mīr Maḥmūd ʻAlī expresses his disgust with this simulacrum of a storytelling performance offered by the storyteller from Lucknow. Indeed, the very next day, Mīr Bāqir ʻAlī makes a fortuitous appearance in Calcutta, and performs his highly extemporaneous form of storytelling, causing mouths to gape at his skill—including the mouth of the disgraced book-reading storyteller.[99]

The storyteller's craft, according to this view, is properly oral, and written aide-mémoires cannot but contaminate it. And yet the relationship between written text and oral romance is more complex than this, for did not the great and epoch-marking storyteller Mīr Bāqir ʻAlī also produce chapbooks to peddle along with his betelnuts, and did he not accompany the publication of his "Gāṛhe Ḳhān" romances with oral performances for college-going students?[100] In any case, while we push for greater recognition of the effects of orality upon the romance genre, we must not throw writing out of the window absolutely. Faruqi suggests that while "great"—usually courtly—storytellers were adept memorizers and extemporizers, there was not only the inferior kind of storyteller who simply read from a book, but also an intermediate class that would memorize a written romance and recite it with little or no textual modification, though they had no need for the presence of the written

[99] Shāhid Aḥmad Dihlawī 1979, 192.
[100] Sayyid Yūsuf Buḳhārī Dihlawī 1987, 22.

original.[101] On the other hand, the vector of influence was not unidirectional, as many romances were written down only after oral composition, the most celebrated of these in Urdu being the 46-volume Naval Kishore *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah*.

The Ḥātim-nāmah and the Traces of Orality

Where was the romance of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī situated along the speech-writing continuum? Its extraordinary proliferation both as a manuscript and as a printed book should not trigger in us a myopia with regard to the possibility that it was also popular as an orally-recited romance. The evidence available to us from the Mughal period suggests that courtly storytellers focused upon two long romances: the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah* and the *Shāhnāmah*. However, Mīr Bāqir 'Alī's example suggests that while the *Ḥamzah-nāmah* might have been by leaps and bounds the most important romance in a storyteller's repertoire, that repertoire would not be bare of other, pettier items such as, in Bāqir 'Alī's case, the stories of Gāṛhe Ḳhān and Ḳhalīl Ḳhān Fāḳhtah, as well as the numerous brief stories recounted in collections such as his *Kānā-bātī*.[102] Furthermore, the case of the Lakhnawī storyteller in Calcutta shows that there were professional storytellers who merely read from books—a feat which, if stripped of the vocal and semi-dramatic ornaments of the storyteller's craft, might be accomplished by any sufficiently literate person. The romance was profoundly shaped by the complex phenomenon of professional storytelling that Faruqi has described in his work, in ways that we will consider here. Yet there is no need to imagine that its oral performance was limited to this class and barred to non-professionals altogether.

[101] Faruqi 1999, 1:411.

[102] This has recently been edited by Muḥammad Salīm al-Raḥmān (Mīr Bāqir 'Alī Dāstān-go 2011). I thank him for his kindness in providing me with a copy.

Faruqi seizes upon very clear evidence to show that the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah* was at no point a particularly stable written text. This instability, or what Faruqi regards as "flexibility," is, he argues, a sign of its oral nature; its pliancy to the exigency of a storyteller's situation and to the impress of his invention. The written text changed over time, according to this argument, because of the fluidity of the oral romance, a new instance of which was never identical to its predecessor, at least upon the tongue of a skilled storyteller. It must be noted that the story of Ḥātim is unlike the Ḥamzah-nāmah in this: the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persian manuscripts show little variation, and the large changes that do appear follow a predictable pattern, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Furthermore, the translations of the story into Urdu, Punjabi, and Braj Bhasha tend to follow the Persian text with relative faithfulness, offering only prefatory or stylistic changes, which can be very fruitfully analyzed, but not with regard to questions of orality. Few exceptions to this rule are available to us.[103] The logic of Faruqi's argument, then, would appear to show for the Ḥātim romance the opposite of what it claims for the Ḥamzah romance. It would seem to indicate that the Ḥātim-nāmah was a romance with a largely written tradition.

Evidence of oral performances of the romance of Ḥātim Ṭ̣ā'ī is scanty but decisive where available. The earliest proof that we have that the Ḥātim-nāmah was being told orally comes from a manuscript that is also the earliest Urdu translation of the romance that we possess. This version, entitled the *Gulshan-i Iḥsān*, was written in Dakkani Urdu verse, and completed in Hyderabad in 1169 H (1755/6).[104] The author, a young man named Iḥsān 'Alī, describes himself as the scion of an important Sayyid family of the South, mentioning his

[103] Those that stand out are the Punjabi maśnawī by Faiẓ Muḥammad and the later Fort William Persian retelling by Diyānat Allāh.

[104] I am aware of only one manuscript extant in Pakistan, in the collection of the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū; this is the (defective) version that I have seen. Another copy may be available in the Sālār Jang Museum in Hyderabad.

paternal grandfather Sayyid Muḥammad ʻIshratī, his maternal uncle Sayyid Aḥmad Hunar. His grandfather was himself a composer of romances in Dakkani; Iḥsān ʻAlī mentions two of his compositions, entitled *Nityah-darpan* and *Avtār-ban*. According to Iḥsān ʻAlī's preface, this distinguished family would assemble for gatherings in which literature was discussed. It was in this setting that, one fine day, the Persian Ḥātim-nāmah was read aloud by Iḥsān ʻAlī's paternal uncle:

> One day all of my elders were assembled;
> once seated, they discussed all manner of literature.
> My paternal uncle ʻAlī Akbar came
> and recited this romance from beginning to end.
> Someone had written it down in Persian,
> and so he brought it and showed us the whole story.
> If it were imprisoned in one's sight,
> its wonders would capture the heart.
> My honoured father Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī
> and Sayyid ʻAtīq Allāh, my guide upon the path,
> said, "If you were to write this down,
> "how could it fail to be of value?"
>
> *so yak roz jamaʻ buzurgān tamām*
> *jo baiṭhe the maẕkūr thā har kalām*
> *ʻammū ʻAlī Akbar āʼe wahāṅ*
> *sarāsar yih qiṣṣah kā bole bayāṅ*
> *likhā Fārsī se kisī ne kalām*
> *so le ā dekhāʼī kahānī tamām*
> *kih yaʻnī agar howe dekhne meṅ qaid*
> *ʻajāʼib kahānī kare dil ko ṣaid*
> *so Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī qiblah-gāh*
> *bhī Sayyid ʻAtīq Allāh hādī-i rāh*
> *kahe gar likhā jāʼe tere sūṅ yih*
> *nah ḳhālī kis ṭarḥ bahre sūṅ yih*[105]

What we witness through Iḥsān ʻAlī's description is an impromptu storytelling scene during a family gathering, in the context of a general discussion of verbal artworks. It is only following the romance's recitation by Sayyid ʻAlī Akbar that the Persian manuscript is brought out and

[105] Sayyid ʻAlī Iḥsān 1755, f. 14v

shown to the members of the assembly. Strikingly, the text in its written form is made out to be an imprisonment of the romance, verifying the priority of the contrastingly "free" oral romance even when it is, as in this case, a telling on the basis of 'Alī Akbar's memory of the Persian manuscript.

One hundred years later there appears a second mention of the oral performance of the Ḥātim-nāmah—very different, in its setting, from 'Alī Akbar's recitation. In a description of the cultural life that centred around the central Jāma' Mosque in Delhi, Sayyid Aḥmad Ḳhān remarks,

> While on one side sit the kabob-sellers, and the merchants set up their shop, on the other side the *madārī*s and storytellers make their exhibit. At the third watch of night, a storyteller comes, sets down a cane stool, and tells the romance of Amīr Ḥamzah. On one side the tale of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī is performed; on the other, the romance of the *Bostān-i Ḳhayāl*, and hundreds of people gather to listen.
>
> *agarcih is ṭaraf bhī kabābī baiṭhe haiṅ aur saude-wāle dūkāneṅ lagāte haiṅ lekin baṛā tamāshah us ṭaraf madāriyoṅ aur qiṣṣah-ḳhwānoṅ kā hotā hai. Tīsre pahar ek qiṣṣah-ḳhwān moṇḍhā bichā'e hū'e baiṭhtā hai aur dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah kahtā hai. Kisī ṭaraf qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī aur kahīṅ dāstān-i Bostān-i Ḳhayāl hotī hai aur ṣad-hā ādamī us ke sunne ko jama' hote haiṅ.*

It is a testament to the status gained by the Ḥātim-nāmah in the nineteenth century that, by the southern gate of Delhi's main mosque, it was being told alongside the two longest and most prestigious of Indo-Persianate romances, the Ḥamzah romance and the *Bostān-i Ḳhayāl*. In 1755—about thirty years after the appearance of the earliest-known manuscript—it had been a relative novelty to the young Iḥsān 'Alī and his family. By the time of the British Raj, it was being told on the street, and, we may gather, in Urdu rather than in Persian. The great success of Ḥaidar Baḳhsh Ḥaidarī's Urdu translation *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* and the lesser popularity of Mihmān Dakhanī's manuscript version in the South had brought the story of Ḥātim decisively

into the Urdu linguistic sphere. Once the romance was no longer the preserve of a Persian-knowing class, it could be performed for non-courtly, non-elite or semi-elite audiences.

Clearly there is a massive gap in the record of Ḥātim-nāmah performances, and to over-generalize about its history as oral art is unjustifiable. What we have are two performances bookending one hundred years. The first performance takes place in an intimate, elite setting, and there is no indication that the reciter possesses the skill of a professional storyteller. Nor is it clear whether he recites in Persian or in Urdu; we only know that the manuscript upon which he relies was undoubtedly one of the Persian prose copies that had been circulating for the past decade or two, or else there would have been no impetus to translate the story into Dakkani Urdu. By the time that it has become part of the professional North Indian storytellers' repertoire, it has proliferated greatly in manuscript and printed form, and probably in orally-recited verse form as well. It has acquired an aura of adaptations and, more importantly, it has been translated into Urdu and other languages, becoming suitable for a more widespread Indian audience. Yet, as we have already noted, a survey of written Ḥātim-nāmahs reveals the corpus as a whole to be quite stable in terms of its diegesis.

The stability of the corpus is, at first blush, a blow to the notion of the orally-determined poetics of the romance. In order to show that the Ḥātim-nāmah is a romance shaped by oral performance, it would seem necessary to show not only that it was now and then performed or recited orally, but also that the text as it has come down to us was in some manner affected by its oral productions. As it is, we only have evidence of oral performances *subsequent* to the 1724 appearance of Persian Ḥātim-nāmah manuscripts upon the record. But in fact the resolution of the question of the degree of the Ḥātim-nāmah's orality ought not to hang by this thread. Individual artworks attach themselves to a generic corpus by way of

replication of its characteristics, regardless of whether the new artwork shares the conditions of production of the models upon which it bases itself. As such, the "mannerist" impulse of genre should allow us to contend that the Persian-Urdu romance genre in general is shaped by oral performance; whether or not particular texts were in fact performed or not, they will bear the oral-performatively constituted impress of their genre.

This is not the place to detail the symptoms of orality that appear in Urdu romances like the romance of Ḥātim Ṭ̤ā'ī. It is just such an exposition that has been performed by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, and what he calls the "poetics" (*shi'riyāt*) of the romance need not, therefore, be needlessly repeated here. However, in order to illustrate the principle of polygeneity it will be important to draw attention to one vital structural characteristic of the Urdu/Indo-Persian romance that Faruqi relates to orality—or, rather, a fused pair of structural characteristics. According to Faruqi, romances tend to be both episodic (*manẓ̤arātī*) and paratactic (*silsilah-jātī*).[106] The romance narrative is composed of a series of episodes paratactically arranged—that is, not arranged according to any principle of necessary causation. An episode trailing its predecessor is not to be seen merely as a *non sequitur*; therefore Faruqi attempts to formulate parataxis positively as a succession of events based on "similarity and harmony [*mushābahat aur ham-āhangī*]" rather than upon causation.[107] Given Faruqi's borrowings from Russian literary theory, it is not surprising that his premises mirror those of Mikhail Bakhtin in his discussion of the "chronotope of adventure" exhibited by the ancient Greek romance.[108]

[106] Faruqi 1999, 1:439. Faruqi in fact claims that episodicity and parataxis are part of the "nature" (*fiṭ̤rat*) of the romance; I will not go so far.
[107] Faruqi 1999, 1:440.
[108] Bakhtin 2004, 86 ff.

The story of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī is indeed strikingly paratactic. As a demonstration of this feature, consider the unfolding of Ḥātim's third quest in the Urdu version by Ḥaidar Baḳhsh Ḥaidarī:

A. Ḥātim sets off on his third quest to find the man who says "Do evil to no one, for if you do, it will come back upon you." (123)

B. Encounters youth in forest who has been tricked by his parī beloved, goes off to find Algan Parī (124)

C. Encounters a second youth who must fulfill three quests to gain a parī princess, vows to act as his substitute. Sets off to find a pair of parī-faced animals. (128)

C.1. Saves a community of people from a monster with eight feet and seven heads. (130)

C.2. Comes across two jinns fighting in the guise of a snake and mongoose. Resolves their differences. (133)

C.3. Saves a gharial from torment at the hands of a gigantic crab. (135)

C.4. Finds the parī-faced animals, takes a pair of them with him back to the second young man. (137)

C.5. Witnesses several killings performed by the Angel of Death (139)

C.6. Receives a magical bead from a red fire-breathing snake. (145)

C.7. Teaches the second young man how to dive into boiling ghee without dying. Young man marries parī princess. (147)

B.1. Reaches Alqā Mountain and reconciles Algan Parī to the first young man. (149)

A.1. Finds Aḥmar the Merchant, the man who says "Do evil to no one, for if you do, it will come back upon you."

A.2. Aḥmar tells his story.

A.3. Ḥātim cures Aḥmar of his blindness. Carries report back to Ḥusn Bāno. (157-162)

As the summary demonstrates, this section of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* is triply nested. The third quest frames the quest for Algan Parī, which in turn frames the quest for the parī princess. The three nested narratives are remarkably similar in their premises; in each case Ḥātim comes across a distractedly lovelorn young man who lacks the ability to gain his beloved by his own efforts. This perhaps vindicates Faruqi's assertion that paratactic episodes are related via "harmony and similarity," in which judgement he echoes Erich Auerbach. What is, however, crucial to note, is that the narratives are not causally related to one another, but arise due to happenstance, each one taking the shape of a distraction from its predecessor. Furthermore, the third narrative—the most eventful of the three—is internally riven with diversions without any causal relation to the quest that initiates it. In place of causality, the interstices of these episodes are punctuated with markers of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "adventure time."

Bakhtin's formulation of the "chronotope" of the Greek adventure romance is remarkably germane to the case of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* and to many other Urdu/Indo-Persian romances.[109] The interstitial events that produce parataxis in the classical romance are, according to Bakhtin, dictated by chance:

> All moments of this infinite adventure-time are controlled by one force—chance. As we have seen, this time is entirely composed of contingency—of chance meetings and failures to meet. Adventuristic "chance-time" is the specific time during which irrational forces intervene in human life.[110]

Bakhtin's translators also refer to "Fate" as the operative power controlling adventure-time.[111] Ascribing inter-episodic shifts to a near-inscrutable and therefore surprising divinely-ordained fate is perhaps a better characterization than "irrational chance." For it is clear that the freaks

[109] A chronotope is a particular (mainly literary) configuration of space-time, which Bakhtin imagines to be one of the prime constituents of a genre (Bakhtin 2004, 84–85).
[110] Bakhtin 2004, 94.
[111] Bakhtin 2004, 95.

of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* universe are the products of the divine will, as evidenced by Ḥātim Ṭā'ī's expressions of trust in God as he ventures forth into many an unpredictable situation, and, indeed, at the very beginning of his great adventure:

> When Ḥātim had travelled some way, he said to himself, "Now what shall I do, and who shall I ask; without having seen [my object], where shall I go? [...] But I have taken this trouble upon myself for the sake of God, and He will make it easy. I can do nothing." Saying this, he went forward, trusting in God.
>
> *Ḥātim jab thoṛī dūr gayā tab apne jī meṅ kahne lagā "ab maiṅ kyā karūṅ aur kis se kahūṅ, be-dekhe kidhar jā'ūṅ [...] magar barā-i ḳhudā yih mushkil apne ūpar lī hai aur wahī āsān karegā mujh se to kuch ho nahīṅ saktā." Yih kah kar tawakkul ba-ḳhudā āge baṛhā [...].*[112]

Such expressions of reliance upon the will of God are repeated throughout the book, casting Ḥātim and other actors as receivers of that will, and instruments of God. Divinely-ordained fate, rather than irrational chance, leads Ḥātim into unforeseeable situations. To take some examples from the third quest outlined above, the quest itself begins: "Remembering God, he went out into the wilderness [*ḳhudā ko yād kar ke sar ba-ṣaḥrā niklā*]." Soon he hears the lamentations of the first young man to whom he is to render assistance. He sees the young man and is "amazed—what mystery was this! [*Ḥātim use dekh kar ḥairān hu'ā kih yih kyā bhed hai*]."[113] It is in the very midst of his quest to help this first young man that Ḥātim is diverted from his purpose by the tribulations of another such lovelorn youth, whom he encounters, once again, without any warning:

> After a month he arrived at a fork in the road. He stayed there all night, and after a few watches of the night had passed, the sound of lamentation came to his ears from the direction of the habitation. He awoke with a start.
>
> *ek mahīne ke ba'd wahāṅ jā pahauncā jahāṅ ek dorāhā thā. rāt kī rāt wahīṅ rahā. do cār ghaṛī rāt guẕre ek bastī kī ṭaraf se giryah o zārī kī āwāz us ke kān meṅ ā'ī. wuh caunk kar uṭh baiṭhā* [114]

[112] Ḥaidarī 1972, 50.
[113] Ḥaidarī 1972, 123.
[114] Ḥaidarī 1972, 128.

The inter-episodic portions of the romance tend to be marked by such ventures into unfamiliar landscapes, and the commencement of an episode occurs with an unexpected disjunction like the ones we have seen above: a sharp cry in the night, a confused awakening, astonishment, and so on. The relative passivity of Ḥātim during these interstitial moments can be read in the manner that both Bakhtin and Fredric Jameson have read similar moments in certain western narratives, as manifestations of what Jameson terms "worldness": Ḥātim moves in a world enchanted, either primarily by God, or secondarily by sorcerers, and it is the world that proves as puissant an actor as the humans who meander through it, blazing paths or straying from them as God wills. In such a universe, the human actor is "something like a registering apparatus for transformed states of being, mysterious heightenings, local intensities, sudden drops in quality, and alarming effluvia."[115]

If by "parataxis" we refer to the interstitial points of disjunction in the narrative, often marked by strange and surprising landscapes and events, then by "episode" we denote the modular narratives that are enabled by parataxis. The episodes of the Ḥātim-nāmah are self-contained tales, discrete narrative units embedded paratactically in one of the romance's frames, be it primary, secondary, or of an even greater order. Their logic owes next to nothing to their predecessors or successors, so that any given episode may be detached from its neighbours and told as a separate story. Within the third quest, we have the example of Ḥātim's encounter with the Angel of Death (*Malak al-maut*). This occurs while Ḥātim is on his tertiary quest (C in the outline above; the quest within a quest within a quest). While answering the call of nature during his quest, Ḥātim observes an enormous varicoloured scorpion kill a number of cowherds and their herd. The amazed hero is overcome with

[115] Jameson 1981, 112. See also Bakhtin 2004, 105.

curiosity, and suspends his quest in order to follow this unheard-of creature. As he follows the scorpion, it becomes, in turn, a black snake, a tiger, a beautiful woman, and a buffalo, causing death in each of these forms.[116] At last the buffalo becomes a venerable old man, at which point Ḥātim approaches and, questioning him, discovers him to be the Angel of Death. The angel then informs Ḥātim that more than half of his life remains, and that at the age of fifty he will suffer a fall from a balcony, which will cause him a fatal nosebleed.[117] After receiving this welcome news, Ḥātim gives thanks, and goes on his way, ending the episode. He arrives in a strange new landscape, the typical sign of an inter-episodic transition, heading towards the red wilderness, and trudging across snake-infested lands of various colours along the way. Reaching the red wilderness, he comes close to dying of thirst, saying to himself, "Perhaps I am fated to die in this very place. [...] There is no option left for me but death—yet there is nothing better than to be killed in God's path, for the sake of another [*shāyad isī jagah marnā merī qismat meṅ hai* [...] *har ṭarḥ martā hūṅ lekin ḳhudā kī rāh meṅ ġhair ke wāsiṭe māre jāne se ko'ī bāt acchī nahīṅ*]."[118] As twentieth-century criticisms demonstrate, the discrepancy between Ḥātim's knowledge of the remoteness of his life's end in the first episode and his expectation of death in its successor is abhorrent to the logic of the causally connected plot. It is only comprehensible within a paratactic framework in which self-contained episodes are the rule.

Again, in the Ḥātim-nāmah the episodes tend to have the character of *diversions* from the thrust of the framing quest: the point of Ḥātim's third quest is to bring news of a certain man back to the merchant's daughter Ḥusn Bāno so as to enable her marriage to the lovestricken Munīr Shāmī. But Ḥātim quickly veers from his purpose out of sympathy for

[116] Ḥaidarī 1972, 139–144.
[117] Ḥaidarī 1972, 145.
[118] Ḥaidarī 1972, 146.

another emaciated young man, and very soon this secondary quest itself falls prey to Ḥātim's inability to resist the lamentations of a third youth. The ingenuity of the diversions in the Ḥātim-nāmah lies in their ability to signify not only the bare chronotope of adventure, but also to manifest Ḥātim's generosity, hyperbolically bestowed upon every single deserving being. What is legible here as an exemplary character was, in the twentieth century, lampooned as a kind of hyper-ethical attention deficit disorder by the popular writer Shafīq al-Raḥmān in his parody "*Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī be-taṣwīr*":

> He helped countless beings. A man was drowning. [...] Ḥātim jumped in himself. He was about to reach the man when a scream arose from the river bank. Ḥātim left him and immediately turned back; he saw a bear giving a man a sound hiding. Ḥātim was just about to help the man when he heard a sigh coming from the bushes. Ḥātim turned around in that direction....
>
> *us ne lā-ta'dād maḳhlūq kī madad kī. ek shaḳhṣ ḍūb rahā thā. [...] Ḥātim ne ḳhud chalāng lagā'ī. abhī us shaḳhṣ tak pahauncā hī thā kih kināre par ek cīḳh buland hū'ī. Ḥātim use choṛ kar faur*[an] *wāpas lapkā aur dekhā kih ek rīch ek shaḳhṣ kī marammat kar rahā hai. Ḥātim us shaḳhṣ kī madad karne hī lagā thā kih jhāṛiyoṅ se ek āh sunā'ī dī aur Ḥātim us ṭaraf mutawajjih hū'ā.*[119]

The humour that Shafīq al-Raḥmān and his readers find in Ḥātim's profuse but diffuse generosity signals not only that new valorizations of the "real" made an absurdity of Ḥātimian ethics, but also that the paratactic-episodic structure of the romance driven by the logic of this ethics was no longer palatable to a certain class of South Asians. This is a point taken up by Faruqi, who faults modern critics with failing to understand the episodicity essential to the romance. Because of this oversight, or rather this historically blind devaluation of episodic narrative due to the worth of the connected plot, critics of the romance understood episodic narrative as the product of a weak rational faculty, unable to join scenes together in a lengthy causal chain.

[119] Shafīq al-Raḥmān 1980, 38.

And if parataxis and episodic narration were not the symptoms of an author's inability to sustain a causal plot, then why do they appear? The most convincing hypothesis is that parataxis in Urdu/Persian romances was a result of the storyteller's performative exigencies. Mīr Bāqir 'Alī's biographers all marvel at his ability to lengthen his storytelling performances. According to Shāhid Aḥmad Dihlawī, the staff of Bāqir 'Alī's patron Chunnā Mal informed him, "We have been hearing Mīr Sahib's romances since childhood. In fifteen to twenty years, not a single romance has been completed [*ham Mīr Ṣāḥib se bacpan se dāstāneṅ sun rahe haiṅ. bīs paccīs sāl ho ga'e, ek dāstān hi ḳhatam hone meṅ nahīṅ ātī*]." When asked whether he had ever reached the end of a single one of the Ḥamzah romances, Bāqir 'Alī responded, "Once in my entire life [*'umr bhar ek daf'ah*]."[120] The prestige attached to this art of extending or "arresting" a romance (called "*dāstān roknā*" according to 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar)[121] partially explains the immensity of the Naval Kishor *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah*. Whether the situation required the romance to be lengthened or shortened, the episode was an immensely useful unit of the narrative, which could be added to or subtracted from the concatenation of episodes at the storyteller's will.

How did individual episodes come into being? Were they "newly" produced by the storyteller? Gleaned from collections of tales or other texts? Learned from other storytellers? In all likelihood episodes were derived from all of these sources. But a very special source for these episodes also appears to have existed, intimately connected with the storytelling profession. In a review (*taqrīẓ*) of the second volume of *Ṭilism-i Hoshrubā*, the most famous section of the Naval Kishor *Ḥamzah-nāmah*, Ja'far Ḥusain Hunar Faiẓābādī explains the origins of the romance:

[120] Shāhid Aḥmad Dihlawī 1979, 190.
[121] Pritchett 1991, 20; Faruqi 1999, 1:430.

> This romance was written in Persian by Faiẓī (upon whom be mercy), every section of whose version was merely a *patah* [indication] of the larger romances. Mīr Aḥmad ʻAlī the Storyteller took this *Ṭilism* from [Faiẓī's work], and wrote it according to the *patah*s for the sake of [other] storytellers. But even to get a hold of that was extremely difficult. With fathomless effort and much searching [Muḥammad Ḥusain] Jāh has provided it. But to understand its marks and its *patah*s and to comment upon them was very difficult. The truth is that to write them with elegance, beauty and excellence was Mīr [Aḥmad ʻAlī]'s work.
>
> *is daftar-i dāstān ko Faiẓī ʻalai-hi al-raḥmah ne bah-zabān-i Fārsī likhā thā, jis meṅ ek ek fiqrah baṛī dāstānoṅ kā ṣirf patah thā. us meṅ Mīr Aḥmad ʻAlī Ṣāḥib Dāstān-go ne isī ṭilism ko dāstān kahne-wāloṅ ke liye pate-wār likhā thā. wuh bhī dastyāb honā kāmil dushwār thā. Jāh Ṣāhib mauṣūf ne saʻī-i be-shumār o talāsh-i bisyār farmā kar ba-ham pahauncāyā. lekin un nishānāt o patoṅ kā samajhnā bhī bahut mushkil thā, kih sharḥ karnā. sac hai kih yih Mīr Ṣāḥib kā kām thā, jis ko is laṭāfat o ḥusn o ḳhūbī se taḥrīr kiyā.*[122]

Faruqi's analysis suggests that "*patah*" was a technical term used among storytellers for pre-existing romance episodes.[123] We may speak of the *patah*, then, as an important type of intertextually-purposed episode, whose raison d'être was to be grafted into a longer narrative. Hunar's testimony indicates that *patah*s were passed down from master storytellers to their disciples and colleagues. Oral transmission was surely the rule, either in the shape of a full romance that one storyteller would tell or write for the benefit of students, or in individual units plucked from the master's story or told as short tales. The importance of the above passage, as Faruqi recognizes, is that on occasion *patah*s might have been compiled in book form, as the reference to Faiẓī's lost work indicates. We may speculate that Faiẓī's collection of *patah*s was meant specifically for storytellers, but no doubt such episodes could equally be taken out of any collection of short tales such as Saʻdī's *Gulistān* or ʻAufī's *Jawāmiʻ al-ḥikāyāt*. The concept of the *patah* underscores the heavily intertextual and formulaic nature of the romance. Like the dominant Urdu/Indo-Persian oral genre, the ghazal, the romance was

[122] Quoted in Faruqi 1999, 1:348–349.
[123] Faruqi 1999, 1:438.

formed via the transformation of pre-existing narrative modules, and their recombination with other episodes.

As an example of the intertextual trajectory of a *patah*, we could hardly do better than to consider the frame story of the merchant's daughter Ḥusn Bāno and her wooing by Prince Munīr Shāmī. Ḥusn Bāno, the daughter of the wealthy and royally-favoured merchant Barzaḳh, inherits her father's fortune upon his death. One day Ḥusn Bāno extends her hospitality to a dervish, Azraq, who returns her generosity by robbing her of all of her possessions. The ruler Kurdān Shāh, when petitioned by Ḥusn Bāno, becomes irate at her presuming to accuse the holy man, and she is sent into exile. Sleeping in the wilderness, she is blessed with a dream which tells her of buried treasure, which she exhumes, thus becoming wealthy. Ḥusn Bāno constructs a palace on the spot, but the architect afterwards reflects that such a venture should not have been undertaken without the ruler's permission, and Ḥusn Bāno dresses as a man goes to Kurdān Shāh with her request. Kurdān Shāh receives the pretended young man with great favour and invites him to an interview with the mountebank dervish Azraq, and Ḥusn Bāno subsequently invites the dervish to her home once more and makes a display of her newfound wealth. Azraq and his accomplices once more attempt to steal everything in the place, but are this time caught in the act by Ḥusn Bāno's well-prepared servants and the city *kotwāl*'s men, who have been previously alerted. Azraq is brought before Kurdān Shāh, and justice is done. Ḥusn Bāno sets herself up as a great philanthropist, and the fame of her generosity spreads far and wide, reaching the ears of the fourteen-year-old Prince of Khwarizm, Munīr Shāmī, who travels to her city of Shāhābād to press his suit. There she repulses the young man, stipulating that he must fulfill seven quests in order to win her hand. Munīr Shāmī becomes stricken with a savage melancholia, and wanders about in the wilds

weeping hysterically. Ḥātim encounters the prince while hunting, learns his story, and offers to undertake the seven quests on his behalf, commencing the main body of the romance.[124]

Producing a definite genealogy of episodes or *patah*s and their retellings is a futile task, in part because of the paucity of traces left to us by oral romances. That a *patah* may have been orally transmitted is always a possibility, but to turn this possibility into an assured fact is generally impossible. And even in the case of written *patah*s it is usually very difficult to tell whether an episodic intertext should be traced to the written *patah* that we possess, or whether there may have been another such written source that has been consigned to oblivion by historical accident. Such was the fate of the manuscript of the romance-anthology *Maḥfil-ārā*, collected and written by the litterateur Barḳhwurdār b. Maḥmūd Turkmān Farāhī, alias "Mumtāz." Mumtāz was secretary to the nobleman Ḥasan Qulī Ḳhān Shāmlū in Iṣfahān when, one day, "this one without being, like a speck of dust [*īn be-wujūd-i ẕarrah-namūd*]," (i.e., Mumtāz himself), "happened upon a gathering [*ba-maḥfile ittifāq uftād*]." Many storytellers were present, but "among those narrators of romances and tales of knowledge and eloquence there was one, the treasure of whose gentle temperament was near to overflowing from the gold and silver of his intellect [*az ān rāwiyān-i qiṣṣah o ḥikāyat āgāhī o faṣāḥat-i yake-rā ganjīnah-i ṭab'-i salīm-ash az zar o sīm-i ḳhirad o dānish sarshār būd*]."[125] From this storyteller Mumtāz heard the romance of Ra'nā o Zebā which was to become the kernel of the collection that he later wrote, entitled *Maḥfil-ārā*.[126] However, the manuscript in Mumtāz's possession was looted

[124] Ḥaidarī 1972, 24–49.
[125] Mumtāz 1957, 11.
[126] Mumtāz 1957, 12–13.

during a skirmish between the forces of the Isfahani governer Manūchihr Ḳhān and a party of Chimishgazak Kurds.[127]

Unlike the Ḥātim-nāmah the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* is not a continuous narrative but a series of shorter *ḥikāyāt*, which, however, often appear as microcosms of larger romances in that they frame even smaller tales. An example of this is the story of Ḥātim that is recounted by Mumtāz. It comes to Ḥātim's ears that he is being outdone in hospitality by a generous lady. Ḥātim travels to her palace, witnesses her bounty first-hand, and, securing an interview with her, asks her regarding the source of her wealth. But the lady stipulates that before she tells him from whence her riches have come, he must fulfill two quests. After he has fulfilled one of the two quests, the lady is content to tell him her story, which is nearly identical to that of Ḥusn Bāno, recounted above. The unnamed lady, the daughter of a Chinese merchant, inherits great riches upon her father's decease. The dervish, named Tamurtash in this version, robs the lady unawares. The king is deaf to her complaints, and banishes her. Rather than miraculously discovering buried wealth, the lady travels to India, selling her ruby ring for ten thousand dirhams, and gradually accumulating money on the basis of this capital. When she has become rich again, she returns to China, becomes close to the king, and traps the thieving dervish in the manner described in the *Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī*. The tale ends in Ḥātim revealing his own identity, at which the lady offers him her hand in marriage.[128]

Based on his bureaucratic offices, we know that Mumtāz was active from about 1694-1722. Assuming that the Indo-Persian Ḥātim-nāmah did not exist in its current semi-static form until the early decades of the eighteenth century, it must have been composed contemporaneously with or just after the writing down of the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*. It is a moot

[127] Mumtāz 1957, 22–23.
[128] Mumtāz 1957, 306–326.

question whether Mumtāz's written text was a source, whether the story was transmitted via an oral version of the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* or parts of it, or whether the Ḥātim-nāmah frame story was derived from the same oral tale that gave rise to the story in the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, or possibly a cognate of it. What we may say is that a *patah* existed that either came to be used by both romances, or that was in fact inscribed in the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* and taken up by the *Haft sair-i Ḥātim.*

Oral and written works like the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, comprising framed but non-linked stories, could be performed in their entirety as well as piecemeal. The *patah*s that they contain are narrative units to be changed and reworked by storytellers into the hypotext. However, there also existed a kind of *patah*, or a kind of intertext, at least which was not primarily narrative, but which was, instead, meant to be quoted in the romance, according to a set of professional rules. As luck would have it, a text collecting such fragments has survived the indifference of collectors and scholars, to provide us with a very solid foundation for a theory of the romance genre on the basis of its intertextuality.

The Patchwork Romance

One of the most successful versions of the story Amīr Ḥamzah was published in 1855 in Calcutta. This is the version that Musharraf Ali Farooqi has recently translated as *The Adventures of Amīr Ḥamzah*, and of the translation written by Frances Pritchett in *The Romance Tradition in Urdu*. The 1855 text, entitled *Tarjama-i Dāstān-i Ṣāḥib-qirān* (*Translation of the Story of the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction*), was written by Mirzā Amān ʻAlī Ḳhān "Ġhālib" Lakhnawī (not to be confused with his more famous Delhite contemporary, the Urdu poet Mirzā Asad Allāh Ḳhān Ġhālib). In its preface Ġhālib Lakhnawī is found making the customary self-effacing remarks about being a blithering know-nothing, and claiming in the next breath that he is

married to the granddaughter of no less than Ṭīpū Sulṭān, the late ruler of Mysore. Beyond these remarks, we know little about Ġhālib Lakhnawī aside from what ʻAbd al-Ġhafūr Nassāḵh tells us in his prosopography (*taẕkirah*) about ten years after the *Tarjamah*'s publication, which is that Ġhālib was a Deputy Tax Collector, the disciple of a poet named Qatīl and a Hindu convert to Islam. He had lived in Patna as well as Lucknow and had at last settled in Calcutta.[129] Whoever he was, he appears to have been coaxed into writing the dastan by a friend, a physician of Calcutta named Ḥakīm Imdād ʻAlī b. Ḥakīm Shaiḵh Dilāwar ʻAlī, who then printed the book using what seems to have been his own personal press (the Matbaʻ-i Ḥakīm Ṣāḥib or Matbaʻ-i Imdādiyyah). It seems that the hakim wished to translate the romance himself (from a deliciously withheld Persian text), but did not do so, on the grounds that his medical practice would suffer. Ġhālib's account recounts Hakim Imdad ʻAlī's distraction and his reluctant delegation of the task, in the hakim's own words:

> I receive no respite from the clinic, for which reason it is difficult for me to finish [the dastan]; and if I abandon the clinic I am helpless to cure the servants of the Absolute Sage [*Hakim*].
>
> *mujhko maṭab se furṣat nahīṅ hai is sabab se anjām ūskā dushwār hai aur maṭab se hāth uṭhātā hūṅ to bandagān-i Ḥakīm ʻalà al-iṭlāq ke ʻilāj o darmāṅ se maʻẕūr rahtā hūṅ* [130]

In response to Hakim Imdad ʻAlī's appeal to Ġhālib's "regard for an old friend [*liḥāẕ-i muḥibb-i qadīm*]" caught up in his medical work, Ġhālib Lakhnawī took on the task of writing the romance, [131] and the hakim published it himself. Alas, Ġhālib's alleged kinship with Ṭīpū Sulṭān

[129] Nassāḵh 1982, 149, cited in Faruqi 1999, 1:209. Nassāḵh was himself Deputy Collector and Deputy Magistrate for Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh), making it likely that he met Ghalib while on the job. I translate the entry on Ghalib from Nassāḵh's *Suḵhan-i shuʻarā* (*Speech of Poets*) below:

Pennamed Ġhālib: Mirzā Amān ʻAlī Ḵhān ʻAzīmābādī [ʻAzimabad = Patna]. Author of the Urdu *Qiṣṣa-i Amīr Ḥamza*. Disciple of Qatīl. For a time he was Deputy Collector. For a long while he has chosen to reside in Calcutta. He also composes verses in Persian. He was formerly a Hindu, but was then graced with Islam. I met him in Chandannagar, popularly known as Fransidanga. I have seen his *Qiṣṣa-i Amīr Ḥamza*. [A selection of verses by Ghalib follows.] (Nassāḵh 1982, 149)

[130] Ġhālib Lakhnawī 1855, 2.

[131] Ġhālib Lakhnawī 1855, 2.

did not avail him: his fame quickly faded thanks to the romance's superb plagiarism by 'Abd Allāh Bilgrāmi, who stuffed, padded and ornamented his version, which ultimately eclipsed Ġhālib Lakhnawī's work.[132] The romance became very popular in this puffed-up form and was thenceforth famous as Bilgrāmī's child.[133] The Bilgrāmī editions naturally omitted Ġhālib Lakhnawī's telltale preface with its concern for Ḥakīm Imdād 'Alī's patients and its important throwaway remark on the four pillars of the romance—a remark which appears to be a reformulation of a statement about the genre made more than two centuries previously.

It is to this remark that I now turn. "There are four things," Ġhālib wrote, "in this romance: battle, courtly assemblies, enchanted worlds and trickery [*is dāstān meṅ cār cīzeṅ haiṅ razm bazm ṭilism aur 'ayyārī*]."[134] Later in the nineteenth century, the Lakhnawi intellectual 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar echoed Ġhālib's assertion, with one difference: according to him the four elements were "*razm, bazm, ḥusn o 'ishq*" (love and beauty) and "'*ayyārī*."[135] Whence this substitution of Ġhālib's third pillar of the romance genre, the *ṭilism*, for Sharar's *ḥusn o 'ishq*? Shamsur Rahman Faruqi suggests that Sharar may have chosen *ḥusn o 'ishq* rather than *ṭilism* due to the influence of an Iranian style of storytelling.[136] But Faruqi's hypothesis that the category of *ḥusn o 'ishq* might be from Iran is not based on a notion that Iranians are incurable romantics. Rather, it stems from the striking fact that the same four elements recounted by Sharar—*razm, bazm, ḥusn o 'ishq, 'ayyārī*—are enumerated in the early seventeenth century by 'Abd al-Nabī Faḳhr al-Zamānī, who was a storyteller in Jahangir's India, but who was born in Iran and professed to know a good deal about the Iranian tradition of storytelling.

[132] Pritchett 1991, 30.
[133] In the summer of 1985 Frances Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi unearthed a rare copy of the 1855 edition. Pritchett subsequently made a copy of the Ġhālib Lakhnawī text available to the Library of Congress in microfiche form (call number LOC Microfiche 85/61479 (P) So Asia). I am obliged to her for allowing me to peruse her copy of the romance.
[134] Ġhālib Lakhnawī 1855, 2.
[135] Sharar 2000, 149.
[136] Faruqi 1999, 1:410

The information that we possess regarding Faḳhr al-Zamānī's activities and ideas with regard to the romance genre comes from a singular book of his: the *Ṭirāz al-aḳhbār* (*The Embroidery of Tales*),[137] a manual for storytellers, from before which we now lift the curtain.[138] Three manuscripts of the never-printed *Ṭirāz al-aḳhbār* are extant, not in South Asia but in Tehran and Qom in Iran, therefore for this chapter I have had to rely on two descriptive articles by the Iranian scholars Muḥammad Ja'far Maḥjūb and Muḥammad Riẓa Shafī'ī-Kadkanī. The former describes and quotes large swathes of the *Ṭirāz*'s fascinating *muqaddamah* or Foreword, while the latter outlines the body of the text.

Faḳhr al-Zamānī and the Ṭirāz al-aḳhbār

Given the unwarranted obscurity of the *Ṭirāz al-aḳhbār* it seems proper to say a few words about its author and his life. We may deduce from what he writes of himself in the *Maiḳhānah* that familial networks played an important role of in his working life, and we may also see the usefulness of storytelling in gaining patronage. 'Abd al-Nabī Faḳhr al-Zamānī was born in the city of Qazwin in Iran in the late sixteenth century, a time when Iranian emigration to India was not infrequent. He writes that his father Ḳhalaf Beg was a retiring man of a Sufistic bent who had the prescience to foretell the hour of his own demise, predicting that he would die on such-and-such a day during the Friday prayer.[139] However, 'Abd al-Nabī recognized the atavism of his own poetic skill, and changed his sobriquet from "'Izzatī" to "Faḳhr al-Zamānī"

[137] The title is polyvalent. Tiraz or taraz means "embroidery," with secondary meanings including "workshop, factory"—a particularly apt metaphor for the productive function of Fakhr al-Zamani's manual. The additional meaning "form, kind, type" seems the most appropriate one when we consider the division of the book into twelve sections, each called a tiraz. Finally, the word may also be read as tarraz, meaning an "embroiderer."

[138] The most complete MS is in the library of the Majlis-i Sina-yi sabiq, no. 358. Two others exist in Tehran University's Central Library and the Ayat Allah Mar'ashi Library in Qom (Shafi'i-Kadkani 1381, 109). This has so far made it difficult for me to gain access to the text itself.

[139] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 758.

in honour of his more learned and famed paternal grandfather Faḳhr al-Zamān.[140] He claims that in his youth his memory was so powerful that when "out of youthful desire he sought knowledge of romances, [...] by the absorptive force of his memory he retained the entire romance of Amīr Ḥamzah ʻAbd al-Muṭṭalib in his mind after hearing it only once [*az rū-i hawas-i jawānī dar pai-i qiṣṣah-dānī mī-shud* [...] *ba-quwwat-i jāẕibah-i ḥāfiẓah tamām-i Qiṣṣah-i Amīr Ḥamzah bin ʻAbd al-Muṭṭalib rā ba-yak shanīdan ba-ḳhāṭir girift*]."[141] At the age of nineteen he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Imām Riẓā in Mashhad, where he was enthralled by merchants' and travelers' accounts of India. As a result, he found himself trekking through Qandahar and on to Lahore, where he made his entrance in 1609.

He stayed on in Lahore for four months before moving on to Jahangir's capital at Agra.[142] Faḳhr al-Zamānī's account makes this move appear more or less fortuitous, but it is telling that in Agra he met a relative named Mirzā Niẓāmī Qazwīnī, who was at the time a royal *wāqiʻah-nawes* or chronicler (later the *dīwān* of Bihar). In all likelihood Faḳhr al-Zamānī knew of his kinsman's presence in the Mughal capital and exploited it as a way to gain employment. Given this probability, it is likely that his apparent drifting off to India was quite purposeful and that he had been captivated not simply by accounts of India's beauty, but also of the opportunities it afforded of self-promotion.

It seems that Mirzā Nizami was fond of hearing the romance of Amīr Ḥamzah, and it was at his urging that Faḳhr al-Zamānī honed the skills that he had acquired in his youth, and properly learned the art of storytelling.[143] When Mirzā Niẓāmī moved with the royal court to Ajmer, Faḳhr al-Zamānī tagged along, and there he met another of his compatriots, named

[140] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 758–759.
[141] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 760.
[142] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 761, 919
[143] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 762.

Masīḥ Beg, who was in the employ of the *Amīr* Zamānah Beg Mahābat Ḳhān "Sūsanī." With Masīḥ Beg's help, Faḳhr al-Zamānī gained an audience with Mahābat Khan's son Mirzā Amān Allah "Amānī," who appears to have been a fan of romances as well. Faḳhr al-Zamānī writes of this meeting:

> After I had been at his service for a little while, as per his command I presented a section of the romance before that Issue of Lords. After he had given ear to this speech, that Master of Speech became, to some degree, desirous of this beggar.
>
> *cūṅ sā'ate dar bandagī-i eshān ba-sar burd ḥasb al-amr faṣle qiṣṣah dar ḳhidmat-i ān natījaṭ al-ḳhawānīn guẕrānīd ba'd az ān istimā'-i suḳhan ān ṣāḥib-i suḳhan ba-martabah-e ḳhwāhān-i faqīr shud* [144]

After all, the "youthful desire" which led Faḳhr al-Zamānī to memorize the romance and to become a storyteller—beginning perhaps at home, outdoors or in the coffee-house—proved to be the making of a skill that could be used to secure patronage, not imperial, perhaps, but certainly courtly. The possibility of this process highlights the difficulties involved in drawing a bold line between courtly and popular romances, especially before the age of print, when evidence is relatively sparse. If Faḳhr al-Zamānī's progress is any indication, romance that began at the "popular" level could, given a chance and perhaps with some stylistic alterations, eventually be performed in the courts of nobles and preserved as manuscripts in their libraries.

After being forced to leave Amānī's service under ignominious circumstances, he eventually wound up in the employ of Sardār Ḳhān Ḳhwājah "Yādgār" in Bihar.[145] It was to Yadgar that Faḳhr al-Zamānī dedicated his most famous work, the *Mai-ḳhānah* (*Wine Tavern*), a prosopography of poets who wrote *sāqi-nāmah*s (poems addressed to the *sāqī* or cup-bearer). In the *Mai-ḳhānah* Faḳhr al-Zamānī mentions a book that he wrote in Kashmir as a guide for

[144] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 763.
[145] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 770–771.

storytellers, and particularly the tellers of the story of Amīr Ḥamzah. This book, entitled *Dastūr al-fuṣaḥā'* (*Rules for the Eloquent*), was probably finished around 1616 or 1617 according to Muḥammad Shafī'.[146] Whenever it may have been written, it appears to have vanished without a trace, perhaps reduced to cinders when Faḳhr al-Zamānī's house in Patna caught fire in 1620 (886).[147] Surviving the *Dastūr*, we have a book entitled *Ṭ̈irāz al-aḳhbār*, a creature halfway between a professional storyteller's handbook and a glorified *bayaz* or commonplace book. If the chronogram ("*zebā Ṭ̈irāz-i aḳhbār*") is correct, it was finished in 1032 H (1622/3 CE), and the colophon of the most complete manuscript tells us that the scribe Sayyid Muhammad b. Mas'ud Ahmad Husaini Bahari finished copying it about a decade later on 7 Safar 1043 H (August 12, 1633 CE) in Patna ("*dar balda-i ṭ̈ayyiba-i Patna itmām yāft*")—the perplexing question is how it came about that manuscripts of this work are now non-existent in India and Pakistan.[148] The only other extant work by Faḳhr al-Zamānī is a now-rare collection of tales, presciently called *Nawādir al-ḥikāyāt* (*Rare Tales*), supposedly consisting of five volumes, only the first of which remains at the British Library. This volume was composed in 1041 H (1631/2 CE).[149]

The *Ṭ̈irāz al-aḳhbār* is divided into a *muqaddamah* (foreword) and a main body, which I am comparing to a well-organized *bayaz* (a commonplace book for snatches of poetry). It is in the *muqaddamah* that the genre code is most evident, and in the discussion that follows I will focus at first upon Faḳhr al-Zamānī's descriptions in this section of the book. The *muqaddamah*

[146] In fact the Mai-khāna provides a chronogram for the Dastūr al-fuṣaḥā' ("dastūr ba-anjām rasīda") that yields 1046 H (1636/37 CE; Fakhr al-Zamani Qazwini 1983, 770). However Shafi', in trying to square this date with the period of Fakhr al-Zamani's Kashmiri sojourn, concludes that if the Dastūr al-fuṣaḥā' was finished in Kashmir as Fakhr al-Zamani claims, it would have to have been completed between the years 1025-6 H (about 1616-1617 CE; Shafi' 1983, xiv). The Mai-khāna itself was not completed until 1028 (1618/19 CE; Fakhr al-Zamani Qazwini 1983, 924). The chronogram appears, therefore, to be erroneous.

[147] Faḳhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī 1983, 886.

[148] For the 1633 colophon, see the facsimile in Shāfi'ī-Kadkanī 1381, 122.

[149] Rieu 1883, 3:3:1004.

itself is divided into five sections (*faṣl*) according to Maḥjūb: (1) Regarding various accounts of the origin of the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah*, (2) On the attributes of the romance, (3) On the storyteller's superiority to the poet, (4) On the storyteller's religious leanings and moral conduct, and (5) On the performance of the romance.

The Four Repertoires

We will return to the question of purposes and particularly the multiplicity of purposes enumerated in the *Ṭirāz*. But the romance is not encoded merely as a performative fictional genre with linguistic, practical, and moral uses. We must not forget the four categories with which we began: *razm, bazm, ḥusn o 'ishq* and *'ayyārī* (the third of which, the reader will recall, was substituted for *ṭilism* by Ġhālib Lakhnawī). A look at the organization of the main part of the *Ṭirāz* tells us that Faḳhr al-Zamānī conceived of these four not simply as elements of the genre but as the discursive and, moreover, *performative* bricks with which the storyteller built the edifice of the romance, the repertoires from which the romance was pastiched together.

We have already looked at the *muqaddamah* of the *Ṭirāz al-aḳhbār*; let us now turn to the body. This *bayāẓ*-like portion consists of prose and verse quotations from a variety of written sources, from the Persian poet Ẓuhuri's poems to the tales of Sindbad, from odes to the cupbearer to tales of Alexander to animal fables. But rather than being scattered randomly like verses in a standard *bayāẓ* or commonplace book, they are corralled into the four categories of *razm, bazm, ḥusn o 'ishq* and *'ayyarī*. Each of these four chapters (each one called a report or *ḳhabar*) is subdivided into twelve sections or workshops (*ṭirāz*), and finally there is an extra chapter, seemingly for leftover odds and ends, subdivided into nineteen sections, for a total of forty-nine sections.

These classified quotations were meant to be memorized and recited or reworked ex tempore by the storyteller during the performance of the romance. For example, the storyteller might be describing a battle (*razm*) when the story's focus falls upon a war-elephant. His searching memory might then take him to the sixth section of the first chapter of the *Ṭ̈irāz*, which contains descriptions of elephants and wolves, and it might alight on this passage from the *Tāj al-ma'āṡir* (*Crown of Great Deeds*):

> Cloud-shaped and moving like the wind, with a serpentine trunk and a fantastical mouth. Its tusks: you would think that they were the pillars of a palace [i.e., the head] attached to Mount Bīstūn [the body], and you would think its trunk, curved like a polo stick, might be able to steal from the arched vault of the heavens.
>
> *abr-hay'ate bād-ḥarkate barq-sur'ate aẓhdahā-ḳharṭ̈ūme dahān-i mauhūme kih dandān-ash go'ī sutūn-i īn bār-gāh-i mu'allaq-i Bīstūn* [or *be-sutūn*] *ast wa ḳharṭ̈ūm-i ḳhamīda-i caugān miṡāl-ash go'ī rubāninda-i īn saqf-i gardūn* [150]

The chapter from which this quotation is taken deals with various descriptions of battle (*razm*). Similarly, when describing courtly situations, the storyteller would dip into the chapter on *bazm*, and the same goes for *ḥusn o 'ishq* and *'ayyarī*. The four elements of the genre were, as we can see, codified by Faḳhr al-Zamānī according to the exigencies of the performance. They were not simply there as inert facts, they were toolboxes to be selected properly or improperly.

These four styles were not simply textual; they were fully performative. Faḳhr al-Zamānī prescribes postures and modulation of the voice for each style. During the narration of a battle, the storyteller must slowly raise his body (sitting on one knee, rising to a standing position) as he reaches the climax. When narrating a courtly scene, he must ease his voice, and in the narration of love scenes, he must perform the expected *nāz o niyāz*, the blandishments of

[150] Shafi'i-Kadkani 1381, 111.

the beloved and the pangs of the lover.[151] The *Ṭirāz al-aḵhbār* seems, in other words, to provide a repertoire of four major styles—or perhaps we might say that it provides four repertoires to be used in the correct parts of the romance. But these repertoires are not only memorized collections of classified verse and prose—they are distinct narrative situations that cue the storyteller to summon up prescribed quotations *and* which demand from him a certain set of vocal and physical shifts. It is difficult to imagine that the styles did not intermix at all, but Faḵhr al-Zamānī frowns upon undue movement between two different styles as evidence that the storyteller lacks *jam'iyyat-i ḥawāss*, which is to say that his senses are scattered and unfocused.[152]

The case of the *Ṭirāz al-aḵhbār* and the manner in which such intertextual sources were used by the crafters of romances is a particularly striking example of a reason for the heavy intertextuality of romances. It allows us to see very clearly that romances were constructed from pre-existing bits and pieces, whether we refer to them as *patah*s or intertexts. Furthermore, it demonstrates to us that romances were inhabited by fragments that were marked by many different genres. With the knowledge that we now have of their intertextual genesis, romances should be visible to us as heterogeneous collages onto which storytellers judiciously pasted the materials available in the receptacles of their memories, without forbidding themselves the use of bits and pieces of verbal artworks that were not romances.

The romances whose performance Faḵhr al-Zamānī describes are shot through with intertexts of many different genres. Based on the *Ṭirāz al-aḵhbār*'s list of quotations, we know that in Faḵhr al-Zamānī's romances, excerpts from the *Shāh-nāmah*[153] and Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār's

[151] Maḥjub 1991, 194.
[152] Maḥjub 1991, 192.
[153] Shāfi'ī-Kadkanī 1381, 111.

Sufi *Manṭiq al-ṭair*[154] might mingle freely with epistolary specimens (*inshā'*),[155] *sāqi-nāmah*s, and the moral fables of Kalilah and Dimnah.[156] History is well-represented: Mirḳhwānd's history the *Rauẓat al-ṣafā* (*Garden of Purity*), Hatifi's *Timūr-namah*,[157] the *Tāj al-ma'āṡir* (*Crown of Great Deeds*), the *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, Amir Khusrau's *Qirān al-sa'dain* , and the *Tārīḳh-i mu'jam*[158] are all quoted in the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*. We will not pause to do a close reading of interpolated fragments, as such readings will appear frequently in later chapters. What needs to be borne in mind is simply the heterogeneity of the source-texts out of which romances were crafted.

As the previous chapter has shown, a text does not simply appear in the world bearing a genre; a genre identification must occur in order for it to be marked as a romance or history, an ethical or a medical text. From our perspective, it must at least bear the requisite marks of genre that will allow it to be identified in a particular way according to the prevalent or *a* prevalent genre code of the period in question. Often genre identification is simply a question of the hearer's or reader's recognition of the genre of the text, as dictated by one tradition or another, and as such it is as much an affair of the memory as the process of the storyteller's insertion of a fragment into the romance. A story present in Mīr Ḳhwānd's history is recounted in an oral romance. It is recognized by most of the audience as an account that they have read in Mīr Ḳhwānd's history, or in both Mīr Ḳhwānd's and Ṭabarī's histories. Or, what is more likely, they recognize it as history because they have heard that it is historical, without actually having read any of the histories in which it appears. It is also possible that they recognize it, with less certainty, as an account bearing the marks associated with the history genre, and are able to connect it to their memories of other histories.

[154] Shāfi'ī-Kadkanī 1381, 113.
[155] Shāfi'ī-Kadkanī 1381, 121.
[156] Shāfi'ī-Kadkanī 1381, 110.
[157] Shāfi'ī-Kadkanī 1381, 113.
[158] Shāfi'ī-Kadkanī 1381, 110.

Whatever the manner in which genre recognition occurs, it is not possible to assume that it will lead to a uniform identification of genre. The texts and metatextual information present in a particular reader's or hearer's memory will not be the same as that present in the memory of his or her fellow reader/listener. We can, however, posit the existence of groups of individuals sharing a common trait, who are likely to have memories of a similar group of texts, and who are therefore likely to be uniform in their identification of the genre. This uniformity will probably be due to similarities between individuals' experiences of verbal art. To give some examples at random: Social class is likely to determine whether a reader is familiar with the intricate poetry of Bedil, or with the popular poems of Shāh Ḥusain. Related to this are the linguistic communities to which one belongs; without a knowledge of Persian, Bedil can only be known second-hand, and the same goes for Punjabi with regard to Shāh Ḥusain. Geographical location, religion, occupation, gender, and a host of other sociological factors come into play in the formation of these "communities of textual remembrance." Any given individual will of course belong to any number of these communities, and as textual remembrance produces fissures in the "collective" discursive memory of a given period, these fissures are replicated in the genre identification practices of a culture.

There is no single mode of relationship between the genre of a source-text and that of the text that it inhabits. One genre may be read as contained within the other, or it may be said to contaminate the genre of the host text. The genres may be mutually reinforcing, or they may be positioned in opposition to one another as romance and historiography were according to a certain worldview and a certain code of genre. Non-oppositional relationships take a wide variety of forms; a panegyric within a romance might merely signal the work's status as an item of exchange in a patron-client relationship, or it may go further and adumbrate the

romance with its presence, making the entire work doubly readable as romance and panegyric. A hemistich of a ghazal quoted in a romance might stand aloof from the romance genre, might signal a certain detail-based "realism" of the narrative, or, cleverly used, might form part of the narrative, assimilating itself to the genre.

What must be said—and this cannot be stressed enough—is that the presence, within the romance, of texts of various genres exerts a centrifugal force upon the romance genre, causing it to come apart at the seams. The romance genre is pulled apart, reduced to an agglomeration of rags, when the fragments composing it are seen in the specificity of their various genres. There is no pure and flawless romance; there is no romance that is uninhabited by other genres in the form of its constituent fragments, which allow it to be apprehended, in part or in whole, as other than a romance. In the chapter following this one, we will see the most radical example of this: the presence of history in the "romance" allows, under certain ideological circumstances and given a certain genre code, the possibility of the work's being read as history. Yet to other kinds of readers or hearers, the historiographical fragments intruding upon the romance might be understood to be seamless with the romance, to be contained within it without affecting its genre, or they simply be condemned as foreign excrescences and flaws in the romancer's art.

Genre is an effect of memory and intertextuality. Like all intertexts, the fragment marked by a particular genre stands both inside and outside the romance, making several approaches to it possible. This study focuses on three genres that we find inhabiting the body of romances in their various ways: historiography, panegyric and ethics. However, neither is internal generic multiplicity unique to the romance, nor does our trio of genres exhaust the list of genres found in romances. Take, for example, the genre of the Sufi manual, exemplified

by classical texts such as Aḥmad Ġhazālī's *Sawāniḥ* or his brother Abū Ḥāmid Ġhazālī's *Kīmiyā-i sa'dat*. This is a genre that we find "mixed" into many a romance. An interesting example is 'Izzat Allāh Bangālī's *Gul-i Bakāwalī*, probably composed around the same time as or just after the *Ḥātim-nāmah*, in the decade from 1720-1730. While it is recognizable as a romance, *Gul-i Bakāwalī*, is interspersed with commentarial passages leading away from the narrative itself and into Sufistic speculation identical to the kind that eighteenth-century Indians would find in the writings of the Ġhazālī brothers or in the sayings of the Delhi saint Niẓām al-Dīn Auliyā' (collected in *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*). For instance, in order to smuggle the love-stricken Bahrām into the home of his beloved, the fairy Rūḥ-afzā, his mother Saman-rū disguises him as a lady's maid (*mashshāṭah*):

> Saman-rū dressed him up in women's clothes and decorated him with studded jewellery. Because Bahrām was a beardless man, he became like a pretty-faced young maid.
>
> *Saman-rū o-rā jāmah-i zanān poshānīd wa ba-zewar-hā-i muraṣṣa' bi-ārāst az ānjā kih Bahrām mard-i be-resh būd cūṅ doshīzah-i pākīzah-rū gasht.* [159]

This relatively common motif of cross-dressing, used to delightfully humorous effect by the mischievous *'ayyār*s of the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamzah*, is not left along without a remarkable commentary:

> Let it not remain hidden from the minds of the wise that had Bahrām not donned the garment of womanhood, he would never have gained his heart's desire—union with his beloved—with such speed. It is for that reason that the Prophet (blessings of God be upon him), enjoining the refinement of morals, said, "*Take on the attributes of God*"—that is, take on God's qualities. From the string of lovers, the Beloved takes that lover who colours himself in the Beloved's colour.
>
> *bar ẓamā'ir-i dānāyān poshīdah na-mānd kih Bahrām agar jāmah-i zanī dar bar na-kashīde hargiz ba-zūdī az wiṣāl-i yār kām-i dil ḥāṣil nakarde az īn jā-st kih Ḥazrat-i Risālat-panāh salawāṭ Allāh 'alaih-hi dar bāb-i tākīd-i tahẕīb-i aḵhlāq farmūd kih taḵhallaqū bi-aḵhlāqi Allāh*

[159] 'Izzat Allāh Bangālī 2007, 712.

> *yaʿnī ḵhaṣlat girāʾīd ba-ḵhaṣlat-i Allāh ʿāshiqe-kih rang-i maʿshūq paẕīrad maʿshūq o-rā az silk-i ʿāshiqān bi-gīrad.*[160]

This passage displays many characteristics that would put the reader/hearer in mind of a manual for the Sufistically-inclined. Prophetic sayings supplement the language of lovers and beloveds, all bending towards an advisory function. The familiar phrase "union with the beloved" might just as easily belong to some genre of amatory prose or to the ghazal, but its potentialities as a circumlocution for an approach to the divine is soon signaled by the appeal to the hadith in which the Prophet enjoins the taking on of God's attributes. This hadith in conjunction with the notion of union would turn the minds of many towards the Sufis' commentaries on "*taḵhallaqū bi-aḵhlāqi Allāh*," and the Sufi notion of *taḵhalluq* or taking on of attributes, a well-known way of approaching *wiṣāl* or union. Thenceforward the *ʿāshiq* and *maʿshūq*, lover and beloved, cannot be understood in their worldly senses alone.

How does the genre of this passage, for example, interact with the genre of the text in which it is located, for those who recognize it as being akin to the genre of a text like Aḥmad Ġhazzālī's *Sawāniḥ*, ʿAṭṭār's *Manṭiq al-ṭair*, or Faḵhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī's *Lamaʿāt*? It is difficult to see it as contained unless one wishes to dismiss it as a superfluity. Such an approach might be better suited to a ghazal verse quoted in the course of a romance narrative. One might see it as partially effective, imbuing only the particular part of the narrative upon which it comments with a possible secondary meaning, while the text as a whole retains its character as a romance. It is alternatively possible to use such passages to classify *Gul-i Bakāwalī* as belonging to the mystical sub-genre of the romance; in other words as a sister of the *Manṭiq al-ṭair* or the Avadhi *Madhumālatī*; this sub-genre designation is well-established by now, used by Gyan

[160] ʿIzzat Allāh Bangālī 2007, 715.

Chand Jain, among others.[161] It would then be a fully "mixed" genre in which nearly every element of the romance narrative would be interpretable in mystical terms, allowing the hearer to pass, in the elder Ġhazālī's terms, from the *majāzī* (roughly: metaphoric) surface of the romance itself to the *ḥaqīqī* or real substratum of the mystical text.[162]

What such relational possibilities rest on is a judgment regarding to what extent a fragment and its genre are "outside" or "inside" the larger text and its genre. In terms of time (for an oral romance) or space (in the case of a written romance) the passage under scrutiny above is very much "in" the text, appearing as a brief detour from the narrative. In this sense it does not have the somewhat indeterminate status possessed by prologues and prefaces, appended chronogrammatical verses (*qiṭ'āt-i tārīḵh*), colophons, laudatory reviews (*taqrīẓ*) marginalia, and so on. Gerard Genette refers to the latter group of textual elements as "paratexts." They are part of the text and yet stand outside of it, guarding it and controlling its reception. Genette's term is derived from J. Hillis Miller's usage. "*Para*," he writes,

> is an antithetical prefix which indicates at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority...a thing which is situated at once on this side and on that of a frontier of a threshold or of a margin, of equal status and yet secondary, subsidiary, subordinate, like a guest to his host, a slave to his master.[163]

Given our analysis of the embedded Sufistic commentary in the *Gul-i Bakāwalī*, we can see that it, too, is paratextual. Depending on the hearer's perspective shaped by her/his memory of texts, the passage might seem to fit seamlessly within the romance, or it might appear strangely foreign to the romance. More likely, it will appear to be, simultaneously, not quite a part of the romance insofar as it is a romance, and yet undoubtedly understandable as part of the romance. The same can be said of the genre with which it is marked. This is indeed the

[161] Jain 1969, *passim.*
[162] Ġhazālī 1998.
[163] Miller 1979, 219.

nature of any "intertext"—which at the end of the day means every single part of any text, since all language is ultimately intertextual—"After Adam there are no nameless objects nor any unused words."[164]

The idea that romances, and indeed all genres, are ultimately "mixed," inhabited by a multiplicity of genres, means that when we analyze the romance genre, we cannot ignore other genres. Ultimately the critic must pay attention to three distinct modes in which other genres have an effect on the romance (the first two of these we saw in our previous chapter). 1) Diachronically, in that genres are produced, branch off, and evolve from, previous genres, or previous versions of a synonymous genre. This is Ralph Cohen's idea of "processuality": the romance genre, for example, was, thanks to the rise of the novel, not quite the same in the twentieth century as it had been in the eighteenth and nineteenth. 2) Synchronically and with regard to the genre system of a particular milieu. Within any given historical moment, culture and worldview, a system occurs in which genres are related to one another in various ways, in terms of hierarchy, shared characteristics, opposition, and so on. Through these relations the different genres in a genre system are distinguished from one another, and so a genre's identity is dependent upon its position in the system and upon the other genres in that system. 3) Synchronically and intratextually. No text can be said to universally participate in one genre alone. All texts are potentially multiple in terms of genre; the activation of this potential being dependent upon the hearer or reader. This does not mean that a text's genre is infinitely centrifugal and simply impossible to pin down; this is prevented by the existence of genre systems *within* texts: some genres—usually one genre—within a text is likely to be

[164] Todorov 1984, x.

dominant over the others. Given that this is the case, we would do well to look carefully at our dominant genre, the romance genre itself.

4. History

While the far-fetchedness of romances lowered them in the estimation of some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers, it acted as an identifying trait, along with the criterion of a sustained narrative. At least, we have so far been led to believe that distance from factuality is one of the markers of the genre and one of the demands made by the code that defines it. In that case, in order for a verbal artwork—a speech or a text—to maintain its identity as a romance, it must not display a convincing propensity to tell the truth. The romance genre should be non-contiguous with any genres marked by *ṣidq* or sincerity. It should stand resolutely opposed to them in order for its identity to remain intact. Yet the impracticality of this ideal is quite plain, and it will be made plainer in this chapter, in which we will spy on the seamy underside of the romance, and tease out the intrusive threads of the very genre that ought, by virtue of its truth-telling properties, to be the romance genre's antithesis. This latter genre is the *tārīḵh* or history.

The Ḥātim-nāmahs *as History?*

The origins of the *Seven Journeys of Ḥātim* are lost in a bramble-bush of contradictory data. There is no date of composition, and no manuscript or published version supplies us with an author's name—with one exception. Unbeknownst to the editor of the *Seven Journeys* and to any of the editors of Ḥaidarī's Urdu translation, there is in Lahore a unique manuscript of the *Seven Journeys*, apparently copied on the 27th of Sha'bān 1213 H (1799 CE),[165] in which we find a preface written by a man who claims to be the author, one Mullā 'Abd Allāh.

[165] In the colophon, a blot of ink appears following the first three digits of the year ("121"), possibly obscuring an incorrect or suppressed digit. The "3" appears directly following this blot. It has occurred to me that this might be a cause to dispute the generally-accepted date.

For a textual critic who would regard the context of production of the *Seven Journeys* as crucial to its study, the discovery of Mullā ʻAbd Allāh's preface would seem providential. But the hopefulness of such a critic would turn to despair in the face of two difficulties. The first is that a name as common as Mullā ʻAbd Allāh is not easily found in the prosopographies, and we therefore know nothing of who Mullā ʻAbd Allāh was or when he might have written the *Seven Journeys*. Secondly: Even without being able to say when the author lived, it would be easy to hypothesize that the date of copying of the only manuscript containing the preface (1213/1799) is at least likely to be close to the date of composition. But this fragile hope is easily dashed; the *Seven Journeys* could not have been composed as late as 1799. The oldest dated manuscript, also in the Sherānī collection, was copied by a scribe named Fāẓil Beg on the 8th of Rajab, 1136 H (1724), and between 1136 and 1213 H, at least 14 other manuscripts were copied. Furthermore, in each of the outer margins of the first two pages of the 1724 manuscript, the word "*dībacah*" ("preface") is inscribed, as if the copyist Fāẓil Beg knew nothing of the preface written by Mullā ʻAbd Allāh even at this early date.[166]

It is not impossible that Mullā ʻAbd Allāh was a belated plagiarist who sought to present an orphaned text as the fruit of his own labour. This was not unheard of in Mughal India, even when the appropriated work was already widely known. Punjabi scholar Muḥammad Āṣaf Ḳhān provides us with a clear example in the poet Saʻīd Saʻīdī (fl. 1628-1658), who claimed that the Punjabi romance of the lovers Hīr and Rānjhā was told by him for the first time: "No one has ever told the tale of Hīr, / No one has ever bored this pearl [*afsānah-i Hīr kas na-guftah ast / īṅ durr kase na-suftah ast*]." This, notwithstanding the fact that Bāqī Kolābī (d. 1559) had attested to the tale's popularity a hundred years before: "In India, folks clamour for Hīr and Ranjhā; /

[166] The same portion of text that Fāẓil Beg marks as the preface is in the 1799 MS subsumed under the heading "*ibtidā-i īn kitāb*" (Mullā ʻAbd Allāh 1799, 1r).

The tale of those two is on everyone's tongues [*dar Hind za Hīr o Rānjhā ġhauġhā-st / k-afsānah-i har do dar zabān-hā-st*]."[167] If Mullā 'Abd Allāh was illegitimately claiming the story as his own, he would not be the first Indo-Persian writer to do so.

Sneaking opportunist or unsung originator, Mullā 'Abd Allāh put his name to a noteworthy preface that reflects singularly on the genre of the text of which it forms a part. The preface is short, and worthy of translation in full:

> It so happened that this lowly slave of God, the dust of the foot of God's creation, Mullā 'Abd Allāh, desired to compose a book of histories. Meanwhile one of the friends of this grape-plucker of the field of speech arrived and said, "I want you to apprise me of the qualities of Ḥātim b. Ṭai, who risked his head and his life in the path of God. This wretch said, "If God the Exalted wills, I will busy myself with the compositions having to do with that Yemeni king's particulars, and I will write down whatever I am able to verify on this subject from the trusted histories."
>
> After my friend had become curious to find out the particulars of Ḥātim Ṭai, I made a mighty effort. But when I saw that it would be difficult, indeed, a great labour, to write all of the acts of that God-pleasing man from beginning to end, I found myself helpless. At last I wrote these seven journeys of Ḥātim, which are only a single instance of the doings of that high-born prince, as one would take a drop from the sea or a seed from a field, by way of summary and in an easy idiom. I have named it *The Seven Journeys of Ḥātim*.
>
> *īn kamtarīn bandah-i ḳhudā wa ḳhāk-i pā-i ḳhalq-i Allāh Mullā 'Abd Allāh ḳhwāst kih nusḳhah az tawārīḵh taṣnīf kunad dar īn aṡnā yake az dostān-i īn ḳhwushah-cīn-i ḳhirman-i suḳhan rasīdah guft kih mī-ḳhwāham az kaifiyāt-i Ḥātim-i Ṭai kih dar rāh-i ḳhudā sar o jān-i ḳhwud bāḳhtah ast āgāh kardam īn ḥaqīr guft kih inshā Allāh ta'ālà dar taṣnīfāt-i aḥwāl-i ān shāh-i Yaman mī-pardāzam wa har-cih kih az tawārīḵh-i mu'tabarah dar muqaddamah-ash ba-taḥqīq rasīdah mī-nigāram ba'd az ān dar tajassus-i ān uftādah dar-yāftan-i aḥwālāt-ash sa'y-i balīġh numūdam cūn dīdam kih hamah-i wāqi'-i ān maqbūl-i ḳhudā banawishtan az awwal tā āḳhir mushkil o maḥnat-i kamāl ast lā-cār gashtam āḳhiru al-amr īn haft sair-i Ḥātim kih yake az kār-i ḳhair-i ān shah-zādah-i 'ālī tabār ast cūn qaṭrah az daryā wa dānah-e az ḳhirman giriftah ba-'ibārat-i sahl az rū-i iḳhtiṣār nawishtah Haft sair-i Ḥātim nām nihādam* [168]

Let us take our turn at plucking the necessary grapes from this speech. Mullā 'Abd Allāh claims to have been incited by his desire to compose a work of *history*. Encouraged by a curious friend, he announces that he will scour the histories that already exist, in order to gather together his

[167] Ḳhān 1995, 16–17. Muḥammad Āṣaf Ḳhān notes that in fact Sa'īdī claimed to have seen Rānjhā's father Maujū with his own eyes!

[168] Mullā 'Abd Allāh 1799, 1r. Mullā 'Abd Allāh's *ḳhātimah* to the MS also represents his sources as being historical: "*cunāncih dar tawārīḵh masṭūr-ast*."

promised account of Ḥātim. More accurately, his initial source material consists of accounts that purport to represent the *aḥwāl* or particulars of the hero. Given that the sense of *ḥāl* already inclines toward the verifiable, these sources may be identical with the "trustworthy histories." Or, say that these initial sources are not the same as the trustworthy histories; nevertheless our Mullā, intending the utmost diligence, conjures up the sense of a careful historian's attention to fact by suggesting that he will winnow out the residual chaff of falsehood by means of *taḥqīq* or verification using the "trustworthy histories" as a touchstone. What will be written down in the end, so the promise goes, will be that which has been verified via these reliable books.[169]

As the foregoing exposition indicates, the preface tells us that its author intended to write the *Seven Journeys* as a history anchored in pre-existing historiography. If this beggars belief, we must nevertheless scrutinize the claim. A reader familiar with European literature might instinctively take this as transparently spurious, comparable to Cervantes' claim that *Don Quixote* was a translation from an Arabic manuscript record of events, or Daniel Defoe's claim that *Robinson Crusoe* was a "just History of Fact," without "any Appearance of Fiction in it."[170] But the very vehemence with which Defoe's critic Charles Gildon, excoriated its historical infelicities,[171] ought to alert us to the perceived danger of Defoe's claims, which would not require refutation were there not the possibility of their being believed by some segment of *Crusoe*'s audience.[172]

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[169] This is despite the fact that Mullā 'Abd Allāh has in his preface contradicted historians such as Ibn al-Kalbī, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, and Kāshifī on two points. Firstly, he refers to Ḥātim as the son of Ṭai rather than that of 'Abd Allāh (see the discussion of Ḥātim's genealogy below). Secondly, he alleges that Ḥātim is the ruler of Yemen, whereas the only traces of nobility that Kāshifī is able to find for Ḥātim is an unspecified relation to the Laḵhmid monarchs through his mother (Kāshifī 1941, 7).

[170] Quoted in Williams 1970, 56.

[171] Quoted in Williams 1970, 57–63, 66–70.

[172] The early 18th century was after all a late transitional period in the history of European disenchantment. It is likely that there was a residue of belief in the factuality of things that were increasingly regarded as impossible and therefore unhistorical. Defoe himself wrote pamphlets tempering but not dismissing the belief in ghosts.

In any case, to dismiss Mullā ʻAbd Allāh as a charlatan would be to stir up the hornets' nest of authorial intention, for even if we are certain that the *Seven Journeys* could not be historical, nevertheless we cannot conclusively determine Mullā ʻAbd Allāh's sincerity or insincerity. With this escape route barred, we are left at the mercy of an undecidable dilemma: Ought we to read this preface as though it has already been swallowed up by the romance genre, such that its apparent sincerity has been digested into mimesis (*muḥākāṭ*) even before we come to the body of the romance? In other words, is the idea that this romance is somehow historical itself part of the lie of the romance? Or shall we treat the preface as standing outside of the qiṣṣah, preserving its status as a sincere (albeit falsifiable) claim?

Any attempts to uncover the sincerity or mendacity of Mullā ʻAbd Allāh's preface are bound to founder. We might reframe the question, however, by shifting the focus from the writer to the audience and asking whether or not hearers and readers *could* have credited the *sincerity* of the narrator or narrators of the *Ḥātim-nāmah*s, and whether they could have believed in the *factuality* of the events related by the *Ḥātim-nāmah*s. (In the face of the sparseness of recorded responses to the *Ḥātim-nāmah*, we will content ourselves with asking whether they *could* and not whether they *did* believe.) Asking these two questions regarding sincerity and factuality amounts to asking whether the stories of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī were susceptible to identification as histories, or what sort of relationship they reveal between the allegedly antithetical genres of history and romance. Whatever Mullā ʻAbd Allāh thought in his heart of hearts, could his *Seven Journeys of Ḥātim* have been taken as historical?

Switching Genres: The Shāhnāmah *as History*

Take, first of all, the question of factuality. That is, would readers of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* and other marvellous narratives have been able to believe that the events and beings in these narratives were possible, and therefore possibly historical? This amounts to asking about the epistemological assumptions of romance audiences. From the outset let us note two depressing possibilities regarding this question: It may be impossible to answer in practice, and it may be the wrong question altogether. The reconstruction of the epistemology of an entire past culture is a Herculean task which, if it can be done at all, certainly cannot be done within the confines of a single chapter. This is so, not least because of the variety of epistemologies that must have been available to different social groups and adherents to different schools of thought; we cannot really speak either of the "epistemology" or the "culture" in question in the singular. Nevertheless, we will take some preliminary steps toward understanding the worldviews available. Reckless though it may be, we will for the time being bracket the possibility that the very question is misguided.

The *Ḥātim-nāmah,* like most romances, possesses a relatively meagre tradition of surviving responses for us to examine. Answers to the questions surrounding it might be better approximated by turning to more prestigious romances, that can present us with a fuller metatextual archive. That it was indeed possible for romances to be read as histories (or histories as romances, depending on one's perspective) is shown by the history of responses to the great epic most famously indited by Abū al-Qāsim Firdausī, the *Shāhnāmah* or *Book of Kings*. Particularly thanks to its orally-recited prose manifestations, the *Shāhnāmah* is the archetypal instance of the long romance—which subgenre is often (but not always) called the *dāstān*. Its archetypal status consists in its providing the model for later romance-epics; in South Asia the

most notable of these are the Indo-Persian romances of Amīr Ḥamzah and the *Bostān-i Ḳhayāl*, but other examples include the *Dārāb-nāmah*, *Garshāsp-nāmah*, *Ḳhāwarān-nāmah*, and other romances which were mainly popular elsewhere in the Persianate world, and which borrow characters as well as narrative structures from the *Shāhnāmah.* This family relation alone might have sufficed to mark the *Shāhnāmah* as a romance.

Furthermore, we can be certain that the *Shāhnāmah* shared the same performative contexts as other romances; in situations of oral recitation it was almost undoubtedly the main feature of many if not most storytellers' repertoires. The scant information that we possess regarding storytellers in India does not always allow us to ascertain what precisely they were reciting, but we may speculate that Iranian émigrés like Mullā Asad Qiṣṣah-ḳhwān (active in Thattha, Sindh) did much to whet the appetite of Indian courtly audiences for the *Shāhnāmah.* We do not know what Mullā Asad was reciting to his patron, the governor of Sindh, Mirzā Ġhāzī Waqārī Tarḳhān, but he came from a family that was renowned for its devotion to the performance of the *Shāhnāmah* at the court of the Iranian Shāh 'Abbās in the 17th century. Aside from his father, Maulāna Ḥaidar Qiṣṣah-ḳhwān, his maternal uncles Maulānā Fatḥī Beg and Muḥammad Ḳhwurshīd were well-known reciters of the *Shāhnāmah*. Based on this performative context it is relatively clear that Indians would have been likely to understand the *Shāhnāmah* as a romance.

But why attempt to prove the obvious? As in the case of the *Seven Journeys of Ḥātim*, it does seem obvious to modern readers that the *Shāhnāmah* is a romance or epic—certainly not a history. There are important exceptions to this among modern scholars; Julie Meisami, for instance, insists that Firdausī wrote his *Shāhnāmah* primarily as a historical work.[173] Her article

[173] Meisami 1993, 253 and ff. See also William Hanaway and Jan Rypka, both of whom Meisami cites in order to bolster her suggestion.

should be referred to for a general explanation of this genre identification; my own purpose in this chapter is to extend her argument and to localize it by focusing on responses to the *Shāhnāmah* within the Mughal empire. The *Shāhnāmah*'s genre was a field for battles of ideology, which Meisami characterizes as conflicts over whether "Islamic historiography" was the sole mode of history, or whether "Persian histories" like the *Shāhnāmah* were also legitimate. By the time of the *Shāhnāmah*'s completion, Meisami notes, the ongoing shift in genre perceptions toward the triumph of "Islamic historiography" meant that it was already "something of an anomaly: not quite literature and not quite history."[174] Almost a millennium later, the ambiguity of the *Shāhnāmah*'s genre is still discernible in the comments made upon it by the 19th-century poet of Urdu and Persian, Mirzā Asad Allāh Ḳhān Ġhālib.

On April 4, 1865, Ġhālib was reading the *Awadh Aḵhbār* newspaper when he came across an advertisement for the newly-printed romance *Paristān-i ḵhayāl*. Written by Ġhālib's friend and student Sayyid Farzand Aḥmad Ṣafīr Bilgrāmī, the *Paristān-i ḵhayāl* was an abridged Urdu translation of an 18th-century Persian romance that Ġhālib had read before, the *Bostān-i ḵhayāl* by Mīr Taqī Ḵhayāl. According to the advertisement, the book had been published in two volumes by the Aẕīm al-maṭābi' press in Patna, and it was available for one rupee and 12 annas, plus postage. Ġhālib wrote immediately to the director, Mīr Wilāyat 'Alī, with an urgent order for two volumes of the romance. From his letter, it is clear that Ġhālib was eager to get his hands on the book. He writes:

> I just found out about this today, and today I'm sending off this letter and the postage. I ask you—indeed, I *urge* you—to act with similar promptness, and to send out the parcel on the very day that follows the arrival of my letter. In case of expedition, I am most grateful, and in case of delay, I make ready my complaint!
>
> *faqīr ko āj hī yih ḥāl ma'lūm hu'ā. āj hī ḵhaṯṯ ma' maḥsūl rawānah kiyā. āp se mustad'ī, balkih mutaqāẓī hūṅ kih isī ṭarh āp bhī 'ujlat ko kām farmā'iye aur jis din merā ḵhaṯṯ pahaunce, us ke*

[174] Meisami 1993, 263.

> *dūsre din pārsal rawānah kījiye. ṣūrat-i ta'jīl meṅ shukr-guẕār aur ṣūrat-i tawaqquf meṅ gilah-sanj rahūṅ gā.* [175]

After he had sent this letter, Ġhālib discovered that in his eagerness and haste, he had forgotten to send the postage. The next day he sent, along with the postage, a letter of apology for the decline of his mind, which he blamed on his declining years: "I'm seventy years old, my memory is extinct, forgetfulness reigns! [*Sattar baras kī 'umr, ḥāfiẓah ma'dūm, nisyān mustawalī*]."[176] Ġhālib's persistence in procuring this romance is one of the many proofs of his partiality for the genre which one finds in his letters.[177]

The *Paristān-i ḳhayāl* was an Urdu translation of Mīr Taqī Ḳhayāl's 18th-century Persian romance the *Bostān-i ḳhayāl*, of which many Urdu translations had already been made before Ṣafīr's ultimately unfinished attempt. In 1866, a year after the publication of Ṣafīr Bilgrāmī's volume, the Delhi press Akmal al-maṭ̣ābi' published the first volume of what would subsequently become the most famous Urdu *Bostān-i ḳhayāl*, written by Ġhālib's adoptive nephew (*bhatījā*) Ḳhwājah Badr al-Dīn Amān. This first volume was entitled *Ḥadā'iq-i anẕār*, and it boasted a preface by Ġhālib himself. The genre could not find a more eloquent champion than Ġhālib in the preface to his nephew's romance. Yet his defence strategy was one that later readers would find very odd indeed. Quite understandably, Ġhālib takes the romance's alleged inferiority to the genre of history as his starting point:

> You may see in biographies and histories what happened hundreds of years before you. But in stories and *dāstān*s, you may listen to what no one has ever seen nor heard. Howsoever it may be that the wakeful brains of intellectual men will incline by temperament toward histories, nevertheless in their hearts they will attest to the tastefulness and delightfulness of *qiṣṣah*s and tales.
>
> *siyar o tawārīḳh meṅ wuh dekho jo tum se senkṛoṅ baras pahle wāqi' hu'ā, afsānah o dāstān meṅ wuh kuch suno kih kabhī kisī ne nah dekhā nah sunā ho. har cand ḳhirad-mand-i bedār maġhz*

[175] Ġhālib to Mīr Wilāyat 'Alī, Delhi, 4 April 1865, in Ġhālib 1984, 1:1571.
[176] Ġhālib to Mīr Wilāyat 'Alī, Delhi, 5 April 1865, in Ġhālib 1984, 1:1572. See also Ġhālib 1969, 2:931—editor Ġhulām Rasūl Mihr tells us that Wilāyat 'Alī is *muhtamim* of the press, a detail that Ḳhalīq Anjum appears to have left out.
[177] See especially his letter to Mīr Mahdī Ḥusain Majrūh, Delhi, c. September 1860, in Ġhālib 1967a, 176–179.

> *tawārīḵh kī ṭaraf bi al-ṭab‘ mā’il hoṅ ge lekin qiṣṣah kahānī kī ẕauq-baḵhshī o nishāṭ-angezī ke bhī dil se qā’il hoṅ ge.*[178]

The division between the two genres seems quite clear. Histories portray events that have occurred in the past. Qiṣṣahs, on the other hand, present events that have always been non-observable because they have never occurred. The inclination of the intellect (*ḵhirad*) is toward historical fact. The heart, however, inclines toward the delectation afforded by qiṣṣahs. Delectable as they are, however, there is no gainsaying the fact that qiṣṣahs are lies—*jhūṭī kahāniyāṅ*, as Ġhālib says himself.[179]

The argument could not be clearer, and it seems apparent that all that Ġhālib has to do to gain his point is to elevate the heart over the mind—a quite standard move. But here is where Ġhālib does something provocative: he proceeds to put this perfectly straightforward genre division into question. “Aren’t impossible tales narrated in histories?” he asks, “You are unjust, it isn’t so! [*Kyā tawārīḵh meṅ mumtana‘ al-wuqū‘ ḥikāyāt nahīṅ? nā-inṣāfī karte ho, yih kuch bāt nahīṅ*].”[180] The word that Ġhālib uses is more precise than the English word “impossible.” Something that is *mumtana‘ al-wuqū‘* is something whose *occurrence* is strictly barred, an impossible event. Recall that Ġhālib has described history as a genre that recounts that which has *occurred* (*jo wāqi‘ hu’ā*), and it will become clear that if, as he claims, there is a history narrating events whose occurrence is impossible, this history is a traitor to its own genre. The effect of this surprising move is to demonstrate that historical works are, at least potentially, as blameworthy as romances with regard to their fantastic quality.

Before going on, let us examine the misfit history in question. The purportedly historical account that Ġhālib singles out for discussion is the description of the adoption of

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[178] Ġhālib 1967a, 449.
[179] Ġhālib 1967a, 450.
[180] Ġhālib 1967a, 449.

the albino hero Zāl, by a bird possessed of occult powers, the Sīmurġh. Throughout his life Zāl carries the feathers of the Sīmurġh, which he only has to burn in order to summon his foster-parent. When Rustam, son of Zāl, is wounded, Zāl summons the Sīmurġh, who gives Rustam a special weapon with which to slay his foe. Ġhālib recounts this episode with some hilarity:

> When Rustam despairs of his fight with Isfandyār, Zāl calls out that name without a named, and the Sīmurġh comes directly upon hearing the sound of the whistle, just like a trained pigeon. With a daub of its droppings, or some other medicine, it heals Rustam's wound, and, giving him a double-shafted arrow, it takes its leave.
>
> *Rustam o Isfandyār kī laṛā'ī se ghabrā'e, Zāl us ism-i be-musammà ko bulā'e. Sīmurġh gardāṅ kabūtar kī ṭarḥ sīṭī kī āwāz sunte hī calā ā'e aur apnī bīṭ ke lep se yā aur kisī dawā se Rustam ke zaḳhm achhe kar ke ek tīr-i do-shāḳhah de kar tashrīf le jā'e.*[181]

Most cultured individuals of Ġhālib's time would have been able to identify this episode with great ease as forming part of the *Shāhnāmah*, the Persian *Book of Kings* by Abū al-Qāsim Firdausī (based on a previous unfinished text by Daqīqī). As we have noted, the *Shāhnāmah* is now looked upon not as a historical work, which is how Ġhālib apparently characterized it, but as a *dāstān*—a romance or "epic." To modern eyes, Ġhālib appears to have grossly misidentified the genre of the *Shāhnāmah*. But the nature of genre makes it necessary to approach the question of the *Shāhnāmah*'s genre with an eye to the historical specificity and flux of genre identification. It seems possible that this text was received primarily as history at first, or as either history or romance, and that its identification as a romance hardened into dogma only in the twentieth century.

Let us proceed according to the hypothesis that it was possible in Ġhālib's time for the *Shāhnāmah* to be read either as a romance or as a history—or as both at the same time. Let us ask, then, whether the idea that the *Shāhnāmah* was a historical work would have been available to Ġhālib in the 1860s from any source other than his fecund imagination. It is

[181] Ġhālib 1967a, 449.

certainly the case that episodes from the *Shāhnāmah* are recounted in many Persian and Arabic books describing themselves as histories (*tārīḵh*). Ṭabarī's *Tārīḵh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, the *Tārīḵh-i Balʿamī*, and Mīrḵẖwānd's *Rauẓaṭ al-ṣafā* all contain a significant amount of material gathered from the *Shāhnāmah*, and Ġhālib is likely to have read Mīrḵẖwānd at least. Just as the *Shāhnāmah*'s influence on romances like the *Ḥamzahnāmah* and *Garshāspnāmah* points to its inclusion within the romance genre, the presence in these histories of information garnered from the *Shāhnāmah* might retroactively mark the *Shāhnāmah* as a history itself. The trouble is that none of these histories makes any mention of the episodes featuring the Sīmurġh, which are the ones that Ġhālib singles out for comment. Even the *Rauẓat al-ṣafā* omits the Sīmurġh, in spite of its pointed inclusion of other marvels, particularly in its opening sections.

The marvelous Sīmurġh narrative does find a place in one Arabic history, the *Ġhurar aḵẖbār mulūk al-Furs* (*Choice Reports of the Persian Kings*) by Abū Manṣūr al-Tha'ālibī. Tha'ālibī's history was not unknown to South Asian intellectuals around Ġhālibʾs time; however, whether or not Ġhālib was accustomed to reading books in Arabic is a moot question.[182] To find the Sīmurġh in a Persian historical work, we must turn to a history produced within the Mughal empire in the year 1063 H (ca. 1653 CE). Shāh Jahān's domains extended to Ghazni in the west, where one Shamsher Ḳẖān was posted as *ḥākim* or governor. One of Shamsher Ḳẖān's dependents named Tawakkul Beg wrote a history for his patron, entitled the *Tārīḵh-i dil-gushā-i Shamsher Ḳẖānī* (*The Heart-Opening History, for Shamsher Ḳẖān*). Tawakkul Beg describes the genesis of this history as follows: One day Shamsher Ḳẖān said to his companions, "If a book of history could be had, using which one could very briefly pick out and learn the particulars of past monarchs, and could be informed of all of their qualities, this would be very nice! [*agar*

[182] Ġhālibʾs much younger contemporary Shiblī Nuʿmānī writes about the *Tārīḵh ġhurar mulūk al-Furs* in his *Shiʿr al-ʿajam.* (Shiblī Nu'mānī 1962, 111). I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that Ġhālib was literate enough in Arabic to read texts like Tha'ālibī's.

kitāb-i tawārīḳhe ba-ham rasīd kih az aḥwāl-i pādshāhān-i māẓī ba-ṭarīq-i ijmāl tawān ba-suhūlat iḳhtiyār o ma'lūm numūd wa bar kaifiyyat-i ān muṭalli' shud bisyār ḳhūb ast]" The men present in the gathering replied, "There is no better book than the *Shāhnāmah* for the attainment of this object [*bar ḥusūl-i ān maṭlab bi·h az Shāhnāmah hec kitāb nīst*]." The genre identification being made in this courtly scene is clear: Shamsher Ḳhān asks for a *tārīḳh*, and his companions give him the *Shāhnāmah*. But Shamsher Ḳhān complained of the *Shāhnāmah*'s prolixity and of Firdausī's emphasis on poetic virtuosity, and therefore Tawakkul Beg was commissioned to write a summary in prose.[183] So the *Tārīḳh-i dil-gushā* was born.

The *Tārīḳh-i dil-gushā* is, according to both its title and the rationale for its composition (*sabab-i tālīf*), a book of history. Unlike many other history books that draw upon the *Shāhnāmah*, however, it includes the stories of the Sīmurġh as well as of the various demons that populate Firdausī's work. So we see that in 1653, as in 1865, the *Shāhnāmah* could be identified wholesale as a book of history. The continuing importance of the *Tārīḳh-i dil-gushā* well into the 19th century may have had something to do with the longevity of this genre identification. An illustrated manuscript was produced in 1831 Lahore, ruled at the time by Ranjīt Singh. Four years later, in 1835, another lavishly illustrated manuscript was produced for Ranjīt Singh himself, later presented to one of the Sikh ruler's allies, a French Lieutenant General, the Comte de Rumigny.[184] This manuscript, which also contains an illustration of Isfandyār putting the Sīmurġh to death,[185] extends the *Tārīḳh-i dil-gushā*'s life as a received text to Ġhālibʾs own lifetime.

As of this were not enough to show that Ghalib probably knew of the *Tārīḳh-i dil-gushā,* the Persian text had been translated into Urdu by Ġhālib's friend, the prosewriter Mirzā Rajab

[183] Tawakkul Beg 1999, 15.
[184] Payeur 2010, 224.
[185] Payeur 2010, 226.

‘Alī Beg Surūr. Surūr’s translation, entitled *Surūr-i Sulṭānī* (*The Sultan’s Joy*), was dedicated to the Awadhi nawab Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, and the first edition was printed by the royal press in 1847, less than twenty years prior to Ġhālib’s writing. Ġhālib showed great respect to his senior colleague in his letters,[186] and in the preface that he wrote to a later romance composed by Surūr.[187] Therefore it seems very unlikely that Ghalib was unfamiliar with the *Surūr-i Sulṭāni*. Rajab ‘Ali Beg Surūr was and is chiefly known as a writer of romances such as the *Fasānah-i ‘ajā’ib* (*Tale of Wonders*), and the editor of the *Surūr-i Sulṭānī* suggests that Surūr regarded it as a romance as well. But the more careful attitude is the one espoused by the preeminent Urdu romance critic Gyān Cand Jain, who did not include the *Surūr-i Sulṭānī* in his list of romances, objecting that “one cannot call it a *dāstān*, since on the face of it it is referred to as a history of a particular period in Iran [*use dāstān nahīṅ kah sakte kyoṅ-kih ba-ẓāhir use Īrān ke ek daur kī tārīḳh kahā jātā hai*].”[188] Surūr’s own preface mentions the genre of his book:

> That which has been versified by the poet Firdausī is also the subject of the *Tārīḳh-i dilgushā-i Shamsher-Ḳhānī*. However, the present writing is another matter, since [in the previous work] the genealogies of famous kings have not been attended to. A mere picture-album has been made with the force of [Firdausī’s] poetry, and with every hemistich, a painting caught in writing has been put on display. Therefore I have looked in the trustworthy works of history, whose names will be cited at the proper occasion and place, so that the readers will regard it as authoritative, so that there will be no doubt left, and so that the book will be worthy of trust.
>
> *jo kuch Firdausī-i suḳhan-dān ne naẓm kiyā hai wahī maẓmūn-i Shamshīr Ḳhānī hai lekin is taḥrīr-i ḥāl meṅ muqaddamah-i śānī hai kih ḥasab o nasab-i shāhān-i nām-dār meṅ taḥqīq kī ṭaraf ṭabī‘at mutawajjih nahīn hū’ī faqaṭ shā‘irī kī ṭāqat se muraqqa‘ banāyā hai har miṣra‘ taṣwīr taḥrīr kar ke dikhāyā hai li-hāẕā kutub-i tawārīḳh-i mu‘tabar se kih un kā nām mauqa‘ aur maḥall par ā jā’e gā dekh ke likhā kih nāẓirīn ke nazdīk us kā ‘izz o wiqār ho shakk bāqī nah rahe nusḳhah ẕī-i‘tibār ho* [189]

We see that it is Surūr’s ambition to make the *Surūr-i Sulṭānī* an augmentedly historical transcreation of the *Tarikh-i dil-gusha* by citing “trustworthy works of history.” He fulfils his promise by referring throughout the book to canonical histories such as the *Tārīḳh al-rusul wa*

[186] Ġhālib to Hargopāl Taftah, Delhi, 26 June 1858, in Ġhālib 1969, 1:1:212–213.
[187] Ġhālib 1967b.
[188] Jain 1969, 507.
[189] Surūr 1975, 54–55.

al-muluk, *Murūj al-dhahab*, *Rauẓat al-ṣafā*, *Tārīḵh-i mu'jam*, *Tārīḵh-i guzīdah*, and so on. Given this, it seems obvious that Surūr does not read his material as unhistorical, and he goes to some length to bolster its historicity even further. Surūr's act of genre identification makes possible Ġhālib's and allows us to regard it as a relatively normal gesture.

The surprise evinced by Ġhālib's assumption that the *Shāhnāmah* is a history can thus be attributed to our own alienation from the history of genre identifications preceding Ġhālib's. Based on the evidence presented above, Meisami's characterization of the *Shāhnāmah*'s genre appears correct. However, what remains strange is Ġhālib's suggestion that, while it is historical, the *Shāhnāmah* also contains beings and events that are *mumtana' al-wuqū'* (barred from occurring); in the language of poetics, he might have said that they were instances of *ġhulūw*: impossible according to both the intellect and to custom. Most epistemological systems would not have accepted an instance of *ġhulūw* as a veridical entity. How was it possible, then, for Ġhālib to believe that a history may contain impossible events? Was he expressing his amusement at the infection of the truthful history genre by the mendacious romance genre, or is he guided by a vision of a historiography that is not characterized primarily by its truthfulness? How substantial was the line between these two genres, the history and the romance, in the first place?

These are by and large heuristic questions with no decidable answer, but they are not the less fruitful for being insoluble. To be more specific, what is undecidable is the particular mode of interiority of the impossible to the sincere—or, one might say, of the romance elements to their containing history. Recall Ġhālib's question: "Aren't impossible tales narrated *in* histories? [*Kyā tawārīḵh meṅ mumtana' al-wuqū' ḥikāyāt nahīṅ?*]" Taking *ḥikāyat* as a a near synonym for *qiṣṣah* and *dāstān*, we may ask whether the history in fact "contains" the

elements of romance within it such that the line between history and romance is maintained despite the relationship of interiority. Or does the romance spill over into the history and dye it in its own colour? The third alternative is that, in contrast to the notion of history that we most often espouse today, there was not necessarily a "line" between history and romance—they were not opposed as a sincere genre against a mendacious one at all. It would be difficult to corroborate the second option of spillage in Ġhālib's reading of the *Shāhnāmah.* At first blush, it seems likely that when Ġhālib rhetorically asked "Aren't impossible tales narrated in histories? [*Kyā tawārīḳh meṅ mumtana' al-wuqū' ḥikāyāt nahīṅ?*]," he had in mind a contained interiority. In other words, the *Shāhnāmah* was a history into which romance had crept as a foreign body or excrescence—ludicrously, but without altering the containing text's status as history. This principle would then have to apply, of course, to texts like the *Tārīḳh-i dil-gushā* and the *Surūr-i sulṭānī* as well. However, it is also possible that Ġhālib was simply possessed of a conception of history that somehow did not exclude the romantic *mumtana' al-wuqū'*. Was it possible for the genre of history to include the impossible?

'Aqlī *and* Naqlī *Historiography*

It should strike us at this juncture that we have so far neglected to inquire into what precisely *tārīḳh* was. We have assumed that, like our own normative conception of history, *tārīḳh* was understood as a representation of facts about the past. This is why it seems unthinkable that Ġhālib should have an idea of history that included the fantastic and even the impossible. In assuming the identity of the genre of history with provably factual narrative, we may have placed too much emphasis on the question of factuality—although even if we have, surely we needed that false step to come to this point.

It should not after all be surprising that the definition of a genre as powerful as history was riven by differences among its producers and its audiences, on the basis of conflicting or simply divergent ideologies related to faith, politics, socio-linguistic identity, and so on. The heterogeneity of Islamicate ideas of history is the organizing principle of Tarif Khalidi's impressive work, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, while disputes over the quiddity of *tārīḵh* enable Julie Meisami's revisionary study *Persian Historiography*. We will require the insights of both of these scholars when we consider two particularly important historiographical methods competing with one another in the Islamicate world, which I will call the *'aqlī* or intellect-based, and the *naqlī* or transmission-based. The preponderance of evidence suggests that this methodological conflict, hinted at by Khalidi, was probably more crucial than the less frequently attested belittlement of marvelous histories on ethno-religious bases,[190] as when Abū Raiḥān al-Bīrūnī's disparaged the Persian language as fit for nothing more than tale-telling.[191] Bīrūnī's comment criticizes a language, and by extension its speakers, but arguably the real target of his excoriation is not the Persian language itself but the methodological deficiency of historiography produced by the Persians.[192] The important historian Abū al-Faẓl Muḥammad Baihaqī both undermined and affirmed these sentiments when he wrote an important history in Persian—one that was, however, distinctly rationalist in its method, unlike the Persian-language histories frowned upon by Bīrūnī. Meisami and the *Textures of Time* authors both refer to Baihaqī's grand Bīrūnī-esque condemnation of the tall tales (*ḵhurāfāt*) beloved of the credulous multitudes, who are inattentive to rationally acceptable history and "prefer impossible falsehoods [*bāṭil-i mumtana' rā dost-tar dārand*]," such as "reports of demons, fairies, and ghouls of the desert, mountains and sea [*aḵhbār-i dew o parī o*

[190] See the argument in Meisami 1993.
[191] Quoted in Meisami 1993, 264.
[192] Given that Bīrūnī was himself an Iranian, this cannot be a sweeping criticism.

ġhūl-i bayābānī o koh o daryā]."[193] No doubt he would not have countenanced historical sīmurġhs either. The fourth century Hijrī, inhabited by Bīrūnī, Baihaqī and Firdausī—and Tha'ālibi, whom we will meet shortly—was a fertile time for rationalism. Mu'tazilism, often caricatured now as a hyper-rationalist form of Islam, still held some sway a century after the sympathetic Caliph Al-Ma'mūn instituted an inquisition (*miḥnah*) on their behalf. But more to the point, most theologians (*mutakallimūn*) were rationalist to a greater or lesser extent, Mu'tazilī or no. By this time the concept of the intellect was imbued with Greek and specifically Aristotelian meaning, particularly through the various translations of and commentaries on Aristotle's *On the Soul* (*Kitāb fī al-nafs*), where it is given lordship over the faculties. Ġhālib subordinated the intellect to the heart, a position which was *de rigeur* in his time thanks to the by-then longstanding Sufi critique of the intellect, but Baihaqī took an opposing view in his *History* (*Tārīḳh-i Baihaqī*):

> The eyes and the ears are the heart's spies and watchman, who convey to the heart whatsoever they see and hear, [...] and the heart lays whatever it has found out from them before the intellect, who is a judge, in order for him to separate truth from falsehood.
>
> *cashm o gosh dīdah-bānān o jāsūsān-i dil and kih rasānand ba-dil ān kih babīnand wa bashanawand [...] wa dil ān-cih az īshān yāft bar ḳhirad kih ḥākim-i 'adl ast 'arẓah kunad tā ḥaqq az bāṭil judā shawad* [194]

The method of historiography that Bīrūnī and others set themselves against was the *naqlī* or transmission-based method, and this method was in fact probably dominant in most places at most times, having a noble pedigree in the methods of the *ḥadīth* scholars. *Naqlī* histories reproduced and collected historical reports from the oral testimony of witnesses (often handed down via chains of authorities) or from "trustworthy" written documents; in this they conformed to Baihaqī's own requirements. The difference was that they bracketed questions of

[193] Baihaqī 2009, 713. See Meisami 1993, 265; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 2003, 216.
[194] Baihaqī 2009, 715.

whether a given report conformed to reason. This understanding of *naqlī* historiography puts it very close to what Khalidi refers to as "Ḥadīth historiography"—depending on what precisely the latter is. Ḥadīth historiography often seems to be exclusively underpinned by the use of the chain of transmission (*isnād*), but Khalidi notes, for instance, that Ibn Isḥāq's 8th-century *Biography of the Prophet* does not always provide chains of transmission, but sometimes refers simply to a named or unnamed informant.[195] Later historians like Mīrḵẖwānd, who practiced source-citation referring to earlier texts rather than to oral testimony, should also be understood as *naqlī* because their textual sources are in effect links in a chain of transmission.

A kind of manifesto of *naqlī* historiography can be found in Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's canonical *History of Prophets and Kings* (*Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*). Ṭabarī (d. 932) is quoted in Khalidi:

> We rely in most of what we describe in this book of ours on traditions and reports from our Prophet—upon whom be blessings and peace—and from pious ancestors before us, to the exclusion of rational or mental deduction since most of it is an account of past events and present happenings, and these cannot be comprehended by rational inference and deduction.[196]

This quotation is well-chosen by Khalidi for its explicit rejection of the role of the intellect (*'aql*) in historiography. The notion of a self-subsistent transmission, unsullied by judgements made by reason, is central to Ṭabarī's conception of historiography. As Khalidi points out, Ṭabarī places historiography squarely in the category of the transmitted sciences (*manqūlāt*) as opposed to the intellectual sciences (*ma'qūlāt*), and denies the intellectual faculty the right to submit historical reports to a trial on its own terms. The reality of a report could be established only by means of a transmission (*naql*) that was either well-attested by a number of

[195] Khalidi 1994, 39.
[196] Ṭabarī 1960, 1:58; Khalidi 1994, 76.

transmitters, or one that was attested to by a trustworthy authority (the Prophet or ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭ̲ālib, for example). Therefore even reports that were repugnant to the intellect were allowable (*jāʾiz*) as long as they were well-transmitted,[197] a point that needs to be borne in mind when we consider reports of apparently impossible events and beings like the Sīmurġh or Rustam's foe Akwān Dew.

The *Textures of Time* authors see this detachment from reason as an "epistemological distancing" on the part of Ṭ̲abarī (and, presumably, other *naqlī* historians).[198] It may be better to cast it positively as a widespread type of fideistic epistemology, a belief, as Khalidi aptly puts it, in the power of God's creative decree (the well-known Qur'anic *kun fa-yakūn*),[199] which obviates any "procedure by which one can separate the true from the false in history since the command must always be admissible."[200] The 13th-century cosmographer Yāqūt al-Rūmī put it thus: "I have mentioned many things which rational minds would reject [...]. Yet, nothing should be deemed as too great for the power of the Creator or the wiles of creation [*wa la-qad d̲hakartu ashyāʾa kat̲hīraṭ*^{an} *taʾbā-hā al-ʻuqūl* [...] *wa in kāna lā yustaʻẓamu shayʾ*^{an} *maʻa qudraṭi al-ḳhāliqi wa ḥiyali al-maḳhlūq*]."[201] This submissive attitude towards the divine possibilitating power did not mean that Ṭ̲abarī claimed that everything in his *History* was true—to be a sincere historian he deemed it necessary only to sincerely transmit historical reports. In his role as a historian he did not need to concern himself with the final truth or falsehood of an account, and he is echoed, again, by Yāqūt al-Rūmī: "I am *sincere* in adducing them [i.e., falsifiable accounts] the way I have adduced them, so that you know what has been said, whether it be

[197] Khalidi 1994, 76–77.
[198] Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 2003, 213.
[199] Q. 2.117: "When He decrees a thing, He has only to say to it, 'Be!' and it comes to be [*id̲hā qaḍà amr*^{an} *fa-inna-mā yaqūlu la-hu kun fa-yakūn*]."
[200] Khalidi 1994, 76.
[201] Quoted in Zadeh 2010, 34. The translation is Zadeh's. I thank him for sharing a draft of this article with me.

true or false [*wa anā ṣādiq*^{un} *fī īrādi-hā ka-mā auradtu-hā li-ta'rifa mā qīla fī dhālika ḥaqq*^{an} *kāna au bāṭil*^{an}]".[202] Sincerity of this kind did not consist in telling the truth *stricto sensu*.

Given that Firdausī's *Shāhnāmah* could be understood as history, it was possible for it to be the basis for derivative histories such as the *Tārīḵh-i dil-gushā* and the *Surūr-i sulṭānī*, both of which can now be identified as *naqlī*. Tha'ālibī's *Choice Reports of the Persian Kings* has been mentioned above as one of the few histories aside from these two that included the Sīmurġh. The *Choice Reports* is much older than Tawakkul Beg's and Surūr's histories; it was written for the Ġhaznawid governor of Ḵhurāsān, Abū al-Muẓaffar Naṣr b. Sabuktagīn, in the 10th century.[203] Nearly contemporaneous with Firdausī's *Shāhnāmah*, it is not derived from the latter, but probably drew upon the same sources.[204] It also drew upon Arabic histories that are well-known to us—according to its editor, Tha'ālibī lists his sources in the unpublished portion of the work, and they include canonical histories such as those of Ṭabarī, Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahānī, Ibn Ḵhurradādhbih, and others.[205] Tha'ālibī appears more conflicted than Ṭabarī when it comes to marvelous accounts, but he submits to the principles of the *naqlī* method. Consider, for example, his comments regarding the piece of history ridiculed by Ġhālib, the Sīmurġh's foster parentage of Zāl:

> I do not take any responsibility for this story. If it had not been for its fame in every place and time, and upon every tongue, and its use as a means to delight and amuse kings into wakefulness, I would never have written it. In those first times, many strange things happened, such as the attainment of the age of one thousand years by a single person from among his family, and the subjection of the jinns and satans by kings.
>
> *anā abra'u min 'uhdaṭi hādhihi al-ḥikāyāh wa lau lā shuhratu-hā bi-kulli makān wa fī kulli zamān wa 'alà kulli lisān wa jaryu-hā majr*^{an} *mā yustaṭābu wa yulhà bi-hi al-mulūk 'inda al-araq*

[202] Quoted in Zadeh 2010, 34. I have modified Zadeh's translation very slightly. In this case Yāqūt al-Rūmī is claiming that he is sincere *even if the account is false.*

[203] The EI2 notes that there is much confusion regarding Tha'ālibī's identity, but in any case his patronage context can be established (Bosworth 2011).

[204] Chief among these was probably the same New Persian translation of the Pahlawi *Ḵhwadāy-nāmag* from which Firdausī's predecessor Daqīqī evidently derived his material. See Nöldeke 1979, 63.

[205] Zotenberg 1900, xix and ff.

lammā katabtu-hā wa qad kānat al-ʻajā'ib kaṯhīraṭ^{an} *fī dhāliki al-zamāni al-awwal ka-bulūġh ʻumri al-wāḥid min ahli-hi alf sanah wa ka-ṭāʻaṭi al-jinn wa al-shayāṭīn li-al-mulūk* [206]

Thaʻālibī seems to have a difficult time swallowing the Sīmurġh's existence, and yet he yields to the necessity of including the report on the basis of the abundance of its transmitters. He leaves his readers to form their own conclusions after chiming in with his caveats, yet we also see that he is unwilling to appeal to norms of reason or custom, arguing that in faraway times, things that his contemporaries would have found far-fetched *did* happen.[207] Thaʻālibī's wavering is remarkably similar to Yāqūt al-Rūmī's reluctance to credit some of the accounts that he records although he submits to the wide field of possibility that God's power provides; he write, "I am skeptical of such things and shrink away from them, discharging myself to the reader of responsibility over the truthfulness of these matters [*wa anā murtāb*^{un} *bi-hā nāfir*^{un} *mutabarri'*^{un} *ilà qār'i-hā min ṣiḥḥati-hā*]"—this is followed by his vindication of his own sincerity even in transmitting what might be identifiable as a lie.[208] Thaʻālibī, in the same boat as Yāqūt, Ṭabarī and many others, was merely submitting to *naqlī* methods when he included the Sīmurġh in his history, and in both cases the *sincerity* of the authors was not in question because marvelous beings and events were possible, however far-fetched.

When we come to examine instances of formal historiographical intertexts in the *Ḥātim-nāmah*—in particular *isnād*-like devices—it will become clearer how *naqlī* historiography and romances could be "mistaken" for one another, or rather how what one audience member would identify as a romance could be identified by another as history. The principle enabling their inter-identifiability, however, should already be clear: because transmissionist historians

[206] Thaʻālibī 1900, 69–70.

[207] Distance in terms of time and space is a common emollient offered to naysayers of such far-fetched accounts. The British traveler in Iran, John Malcolm, received the following explanation from his companion Ḥājī Ḥusain of the endangered status of *ġhūl*s in the 19th century: "The number of these ghools [...] has greatly decreased since the birth of the prophet, and they have no power to hurt those who pronounce his name in sincerity of heart" (Malcolm 1827, 2:78).

[208] Quoted in Zadeh 2010, 36.

simply provided transmitted reports without filtering them through reason, and without making definite claims regarding their truth or falsehood, leaving the decision up to the audience, all that really mattered was the transmittedness of the reports. Ġhālib's levity with regard to the *mumtana' al-wuqū'* portions of the *Shāhnāmah* may have been evidence that he considered these portions as romantic misfits in what was otherwise a history, but, particularly given that directly upon the cessation of his smiles he speaks of Rustam as a historical model for the romances of Amīr Ḥamzah, it is not impossible that what is going on is that Ġhālib nevertheless accepts the Sīmurġh as "historical" in the bare sense that it appears in a history, and the absurdity of its real existence and its having reared Rustam as its chick is a secondary consideration—as Zadeh observes, what matters is not the truth or falsehood, but the narration itself.[209] Human reason was in any case deficient and exceeded by the divine creative decree, as partisans of the *naqlī* method like Ṭabarī, Tha'ālibī and Yāqūt affirmed. Therefore that which broke with custom (*ḵharq al-'ādah*) and even that which defied reason was not to be brushed aside altogether.

In conclusion, we can see, first of all, that there was a tension between the two epistemologies that I am very provisionally calling rationalism and fideism, corresponding roughly to the two kinds of historiography that I have called *'aqlī* and *naqlī*. On the basis of the prevalence of *naqlī* histories, I gather that fideism was predominant in most places at most times, although it is exceeding difficult to make such a sweeping statement about when both the place and time in question are so vast. Belief in divine power greatly augmented the range of things that were possible; the field of factuality was rendered larger than it would have been under the censorship of reason. We should be careful not to overstate the case, and we ought

[209] Zadeh 2010, 35.

to affirm the sway that reason held even among many of those who hewed mainly to a fideistic worldview; Tha'ālibī's and Yāqūt's caveats are clear indications of this, and it may be hinted in Ṭabarī's defenses of his method as well. For out-and-out rationalists, marvelous romances would have been distinguished quite easily from histories, and Mullā 'Abd Allāh's claims would have been rejected. Even for many fideists, marvels, though possible, were at least far-fetched or custom-breaking and therefore subject to doubt. In the absence of the external genre identifiers that would usually have been present, one imagines that the question of whether a certain work was a romance or a history on the basis of its factuality would have been an aporia for fideists, answerable only with a cautious "*Allāhu a'lam bi al-ṣawāb* [God knows best what is right]."

But furthermore, factuality was not necessarily the goal of *naqlī* historiography at all—what was important was the sincerity of the narrator, and narrations could be sincere without being factual. We can do no better, in that case, to seize upon sincerity, rather than factuality, as the differentiating criterion between the two genres, at least for non-rationalist audiences. And yet this brings us no closer to solving the question of whether Mullā 'Abd Allāh, or a "historian" like Surūr, for that matter, would have been understood as being sincere. How was sincerity activated?

History in Romances

In addition to the distinction between sincere narration and factual narration, we should introduce another fine differentiation between *ṣidq* or sincerity proper and what I will call the "sincerity effect," or the *appearance of sincerity*.[210] This term is a precaution against the assumption that the appearance of sincerity *is* sincerity on the part of the narrator. It is

[210] This is a nod to Roland Barthes' "reality effect" (Barthes 1989).

possible that Mullā ʻAbd Allāh's claims might have *appeared* sincere to some readers, even if Mullā ʻAbd Allāh simply thought that to make such a claim was a good way to sell his manuscript, and even if, to us moderns, his intended sincerity is very doubtful. In the vocabulary of John Austin's speech-act theory, we might say that we are dealing with "illocutionary" sincerity, i.e., an illocution being a speech-act, like the act of promising, that is effectively accomplished whether or not the speaker intends it to be accomplished.[211] In his preface, Mullā ʻAbd Allāh effectively *claims* to be sincere, no matter whether he is sincere or not, and therefore, he is able to produce a sincerity effect, granted that the context in which he makes the claim does not cause his readers to doubt him. If it is successful, the sincerity effect of a narrative should allow its audience to identify and receive it as a history rather than as a romance. But as we have seen, it was possible for narratives that might otherwise have been received as romances to be taken for *naqlī* histories, and we can now suggest that this was because of the presence in the narrative of elements that produced a successful sincerity effect. The question is, what were these elements?

The most intriguing device in the Ḥātim-nāmah with a family resemblance to historiographical devices is found right at the beginning of the *Seven Journeys*. Following the genealogy—or, in certain manuscripts, immediately following the divine and prophetic praises—there is what I will call the transmission-claim: "The narrators of reports and transmitters of surviving accounts narrate that... [*rāwiyān-i aḵhbār wa nāqilān-i āṡār cunīn riwāyat mī-kunand*]." Numerous prose romances would begin with a formula of this kind, ranging from a simple "they have related [*āwardah and*]" to highly ornate versions such as those in the early 18th-century *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* (*Beloved of Hearts*): "The fruit of this little

[211] Austin 1975. See also Culler 1982, esp. his commentary on illocutionary utterances on p. 111: "to mean something by an utterance is not to perform an inner act of meaning that accompanies the utterance."

matter came into my hands thanks to a certain arborist of the orchards of reports and surviving accounts, in the date-palm grove of speech and expression [*śamar-i īn nuktah rā az shāḳhsār-i naḳhl-i ḥadīqah-i nuṭq o bayān yake az naḳhlbandān-i basātīn-i aḳhbār o āśār ba-dast āwurdam*]."[212] Implicit in these formulas is the assertion that the account to follow is merely being *retold* by the narrator, who received it from another transmitter.

In his study of the Persian *Cacnāmah*, Manan Ahmed has already laid his finger on the reason for the uncanny familiarity of such transmission-claims for readers familiar with Islamicate histories. The *Cacnāmah* is a lengthy 12th-century narrative by one ʻAlī Kūfī that presents itself as a history of Sindh. The author claims that it is his translation of an Arabic history by the well-regarded historian Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madāʾinī (fl. 8th-9th centuries), discovered in a private library in Bhakkar. As Ahmed points out, ʻAlī Kūfī sometimes provides a much-curtailed version of what ḥadīth scholars would call an *isnād*, a chain of transmission. He will, for instance, preface a supposedly historical report with "Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madāʾinī heard it from Hāẓlī." Very often, however, reports in the *Cacnāmah* are instead prefaced by what Ahmed calls "broad, generic *isnād* [...], which follow literary conventions," and which he later refers to as "pseudo-*isnād*s."[213] These *isnād*-like objects are what I am referring to as transmission-claims, of the kind common in texts generally read as romances. Indeed, one of Ahmed's main points is that the *Cacnāmah* is a polygeneous text marbled strongly with marvelous elements that he identifies with the romance genre (which he refers to as *ḥikāyat* or *dāstān*). Ahmed's key insight is that transmission-claims perform a function similar to the chains of transmission that are characteristic of rigorous histories.

[212] Mumtāz 1957, 148.
[213] Ahmed 2008, 118–119.

Among the key devices of *naqlī* historiography, the chain of transmission has been particularly seductive to scholars reflecting on the genre.[214] The fascination with it is understandable, for this device, which legitimates the entire corpus of hadith, powerfully symbolizes the historical endeavour at its most optimistic. The name of each transmitter is a link interlocking with its predecessor, forming a chain that recedes further and further into the past, culminating in the original authority who was contemporary with the Prophet himself. This eyewitness, usually one of the Companions, anchors the whole skein in the firm ground of the 1st century Hijri. Khalidi remarks that "the *isnad* was in reality a chain of *authorities* appended to each hadith" in order to compensate for the loss of the original witness.[215] Hence the importance of the "science of men" (*'ilm al-rijāl*) for *ḥadīth* critics who needed to establish transmitters as authorities by proving their trustworthiness.

The hadith genre certainly exerted an influence over histories written during the 'Abbāsid period, and as such, isnāds were often used in them. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's Book of Songs (Kitāb al-Aġhānī), which in the 10th century gathered together reports of Ḥātim as well as numerous other poets, presents its reader with an impressive forked chain of transmission for the account of Ḥātim's daughter being taken prisoner by the Muslims, and her interview with the Prophet:

> This was reported to me by Aḥmad b. 'Ubaid Allāh b. 'Ammār. He said: "I was told by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. Abū Sa'd, who said: 'I was told by Sulaimān b. Al-Rabī' b. Hishām the Kūfan....'" Besides, I found [the report] in some Kūfan manuscripts by Sulaimān b. Al-Rabī', more complete than the former [narration], so I copied it and composed the two together. He [Sulaimān] said: "I was told by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Ṣāliḥ al-Mauṣilī al-Burjamī, who said: 'I was told by Zakariyā b. 'Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Ṣuhbānī, who had it from his father, who had it from Kamīl b. Ziyād al-Naḳh'ī, from 'Alī—upon whom be peace!'"

[214] See, for instance, Khalidi 1994, 22–23. This is, not strictly speaking, a proper translation of *isnād*; the figure of the "chain" is not implied within it, and in certain contexts "warrant" is better.
[215] Khalidi 1994, 22.

> *aḵhbaranī bi-dhālika Aḥmad b. ʻUbaid Allāh b. ʻAmmār qāla ḥaddaṯha-nī ʻAbd Allāh b. ʻAmr b. Abū Saʻd qāla ḥaddaṯha-nī Sulaimān b. Al-Rabīʻ b. Hishām al-Kūfī wa wajadtu-hu fī baʻḍ nusaḵh al-Kūfiyyīn ʻan Sulaimān b. Al-Rabīʻ atamma min hāḏhā fa-nasaḵhtu-hu wa jamaʻtu-humā qāla ḥaddaṯha-nā ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Ṣāliḥ al-Mauṣilī al-Burjamī qāla ḥaddaṯha-nā Zakariyā b. ʻAbd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Ṣuhbānī ʻan abī-hi ʻan Kamīl b. Ziyād al-Naḵhʻī ʻan ʻAlī ʻalai-hi al-salām*[216]

This chain of transmission leads back to none other than ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭ̈ālib, who claims to have seen Saffānah bt. Ḥātim among the Banū Ṭ̈ayyi' prisoners; such a famed and reputable personage would have been taken at his word. The "sincerity effect" of this particular *isnād* is further enforced by Abū al-Faraj's corroboration of Aḥmad b. ʻUbaid Allāh's report of Sulaimān b. Al-Rabīʻ's statement via a written version of Sulaimān's own account. In other words, at least two aspects of this chain of transmission contribute to the sincerity effect that it bestows upon the report: the good names of its authorities, and—as a safeguard—its corroboration by means of a second branch within the chain.

It would be easy to describe the history of Islamicate historiography in terms of a steady diminution of authority-chains, signifying the degradation of historiographical rigor. This would be a caricature, for there was no golden age in which every historical report was upheld by a felicitous chain of authority. Nevertheless it is only natural that chains of authority should be increasingly replaced by more bibliographical modes of source indication. As we have seen in the case of the *K. al-Aġhānī*'s chain of authority for the report of Saffānah bt. Ḥātim's captivity, reliable books could be auxiliary components of *isnād*s. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, however, uses Sulaimān b. Rabīʻ's manuscript to *reproduce* the chain of authority leading back to ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭ̈ālib. What we see increasingly is the practice of citing books in order to *point to* chains of authority without going to the length of reproducing those chains—for once a chain has been established and recorded, it is only necessary to direct the audience to the record. This change was already occurring in the 10th century; A.C.S. Peacock's study of

[216] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:6694.

Bal'amī's Persian *Translation of Ṭabarī's History* (*Tarjamah-i Tārīḵh-i Ṭabarī*) makes much of the fact that Bal'amī forbore from copying the *isnād*s that Ṭabarī included in the *History of Prophets and Kings*.[217] Just as often, of course, a bibliographical citation would point to an *isnād*-less report that derived its authority in some other manner.

If, for "Hadith historiography," the authority empowering historical reports was the sincere witness at the end of an *isnād*—Muḥammad, 'Alī, 'Ā'ishah and so on—this authority soon transferred itself to books like Ibn Isḥāq's *Biography of the Prophet*, whose venerability was often but not always derived from Hadith historiographical methods. Mullā 'Abd Allāh and other writers often wrote vaguely of a corpus of "trustworthy histories" (*tawārīḵh-i mu'tabarah*); this phrase is used in many a romance as well as in histories. As in the case of the storyteller's *isnād*, the appeal to trustworthy histories is double-edged. On the one hand it is airy enough to appear evasive and to signify a romancing non-seriousness; on the other hand, it indicates the existence of a well-established canon that is too well known to require detailed description. Mīrḵẖwānd, the 15th-century historian attached to the court of the Timurid ruler Sulṭān Ḥusain Bāyqārā, is an example of a writer who does describe a canon of great historiographical works, apart from the other histories that he mentions throughout his history the *Rauẓat al-ṣafā* (*Garden of Purity*), which would enter this canon in its turn. His list of trustworthy histories in Arabic and Persian includes many of the stalwarts that we would recognize today: Ibn Isḥāq, Ṭabarī, Ibn Kaṯīr, Baihaqī, Dīnawarī, and so on, along with a few misfits (by modern standards) whom we will discuss later on in this chapter.[218] The canonicity of these historians would likely be corroborated by a survey of the frequency of manuscript library holdings of their works.

[217] Peacock 2007, 76–77. Peacock goes on, however, to point out that Ṭabarī himself fell a bit short of being the model "hadith historian" (Peacock 2007, 80).
[218] Mīr Ḵẖwānd 1959, 2:17.

Such a canon of historiography is an excellent indicator of the makeup of the history genre—of the corpus of works, I mean, that made up the genre. At least for a certain class of Persian- and Arabic-reading elites, then, it is possible that reports would be recognized as historical if they were repetitions of reports given in the familiar canon of historiography. The genre identification of such reports could be effected without source indication because of the power of the canon; passages from canonical books, at the zenith of their success, become recognizable without any hints to the memory apart from their own words, particularly among the cognoscenti within oral-mnemonic cultures. Books like the Qur'an or Bible, or corpuses of works such as those of Sa'dī and Shakespeare are prime examples.

In Islamicate culture the best example of the power of recognisability without source-indication (*tanbīh*) is clearly the Qur'an—so much so that entire intertextual "crafts" or figures (*ṣana'āt*) belonging to the poetological science of invention (*'ilm al-badī'*) were consecrated to intertextual situations involving the divine Lecture (in some cases Prophetic traditions were also included as subjects of these figures). The figures most frequently enumerated were *'iqd*—verse paraphrase of fragments of the Qur'an, with optional source-indication (*ishārah*)—and *iqtibās*—word-for-word citation of fragments from the Qur'an, without source-indication. In the case of *'iqd*, source-indication was permissible because of the possibility of the process of recognition being impaired by the looseness of the paraphrase. The reason that an instance of *iqtibās* could be recognized as such was the culture that placed a high value upon memorization (*ḥifẓ*) of the Qur'an. Where Qur'an memorization had been a part of an individual's education, *iqtibās* was almost sure to be successful, and even otherwise the discursive air was so thick with fragments of the Qur'an that they would have become lodged in the memories of many if not most Muslims.

While *iqtibās* is a particularly efficacious and clear example of the process of intertextual recognition without source-indication, it also had its more general counterpart in the intertextual craft of *taẓmīn*:

> [*Taẓmīn* occurs when] the poem incorporates something of another poem within itself [...], with an indication of the source, provided that the other poem is not well-known among the poetic savants. If it is well-known, there is no need to indicate the source.
>
> *fa-huwa an yuḍammina al-shi'r shai'an min shi'r al-ġhair* [...] *ma'a al-tanbīh 'alai-hi 'alà anna-hu shi'r al-ġhair in lam yakun dhālika mashhūran 'inda al-bulaġhā' wa in kāna mashhūran fa-lā iḥtiyāj ilà al-tanbīh*[219]

In the case of *taẓmīn* a distinction is made between intertexts that require source-indication to make the intertextuality (i.e., the *taẓmīn* itself) work, and those that, like the Qur'an, can be assumed to be famed (*mashhūr*) enough to be recognizable without any such hints, at least to a certain class of *bulaġhā'* whose business it is to carry about the cited verses in their memories. The fame of a work is concomitant with its canonicity, and it is in the cases of canonical works of poetry like the *Bostān*, the *Haft paikar*, and the ghazals of Ḥāfiẓ that *taẓmīn* would be successful without source-indication.

Clearly a similar principle would apply to a historiographical canon such as the one that Mīrḵẖwānd describes. Even without the aid of a chain of authority or source-indication, a report from a canonical historical work would be recognized as "historical" by any reader or listener with a memory of its presence within the canonical source text. For example, take the passage from the *Seven Journeys* in which Ḥātim Ṭā'ī's daughter is described:

> When His Majesty's [Muḥammad's] era had arrived, a daughter from among the children of Ḥātim came [to the Muslims] in captivity with the tribe of Ṭai. His Majesty (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "Whosoever among these [prisoners] does not profess the faith, cut his neck."
>
> The girl complained, saying "My greetings to you, believers! Convey to His Majesty that there is in this group a daughter from among the children of Ḥātim."
>
> His Majesty said, "Let her go, for she is the child of a generous man."

[219] Taftāzānī 2001, 725.

> The people said [to Ḥātim's daughter], "The Holy Prophet has freed you. Now return to your own country."
>
> The girl said, "Far be it from the humanity of the family of Ḥātim that I should free myself, and leave my people to be destroyed! [...] It is better that I should share their circumstances."
>
> The people said [to the Prophet], "Your Majesty, she will not be separated from her people!"
>
> The Master of the Two Creations said, "Ḥātim was a generous man. For his sake, I free them all."

jab Ḥaẓrat kā zamānah āyā Ḥātim kī aulād se ek laṛkī Banī Ṭai ke sāth bandī meṅ ā'ī thī. Ḥaẓrat ṣal'am ne farmāyā "jo ko'ī in meṅ se īmān nah lā'e us kī gardan māro." us laṛkī ne faryād kī "ai momino merā salām Ḥaẓrat sal'am kī ḳhidmat meṅ 'arẓ karo kih ek laṛkī Ḥātim kī aulād se is giroh meṅ hai." Ḥaẓrat sal'am ne farmāyā kih "use chhoṛ do kyoṅ kih woh mard-i saḳhī kī aulād se hai." logoṅ ne kahā kih "janāb-i paiġhambar sal'am ne tujh ko āzād kiyā! apne mulk ko jā." woh laṛkī bolī "Ḥātim ke ḳhāndān kī muruwwat se ba'īd hai kih āp ko chuṛā'e aur apnī qaum ko halākat meṅ ḍāl jā'e. [...] bihtar yeh kih jo un kā ḥāl ho wahī merā ḥāl ho." logoṅ ne 'arẓ kī kih "Ḥaẓrat wuh apnī qaum se judā nahīṅ hotī." sarwar-i kaunain ne farmāyā kih "Ḥātim mard-i saḳhī thā us kī ḳhāṭir se sab ko āzād kiyā."[220]

This portion of the account is not materially different from the historical account given in Mīrḳhwānd,[221] as Duncan Forbes noted in his translation.[222] As we have already seen, it is also provided in the *K. al-Aġhānī* with a lengthy chain of authorities; in Arabic it would also have been available via Ibn Kaṯhīr's history (*Al-Sīraṭ al-nabawiyyah*) and in Ibn Isḥāq,[223] as well as in any derivative biographies of the Prophet that may have been based on these works. Similarly, the sequel, the *Seven Deeds of Justice of Ḥātim Ṭai*, uses as its framing narrative the story of the courtship of Ḥātim and his wife the princess Māwiyyah bt. 'Afzar, in which Ḥātim vies with two rival suitors.[224] This story is recounted in the *K. al-Aġhānī* as an account given to the caliph Mu'āwiyah.[225] The genre of history is stamped firmly upon the first account in particular, which is another way of saying that for an audience with a recollection of the genre of previous texts in which it has appeared, the account would be accepted as sincere. The

[220] Ḥaidarī 1972, 244.
[221] Mīr Ḳhwānd 1959, 2:497–498.
[222] Forbes 1830, 181.
[223] Ibn Kaṯhīr 1964, 1:108–109. Ibn Isḥāq 1963, 4:1000–1001.
[224] "Haft inṣāf-i Ḥātim" 2007, 19–31.
[225] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:6715–6720.

simple memory of the genre of its previous places of appearance (established in this case by their placement in a canon) acts as a surrogate for a more explicit historiographical device such as a chain of authorities or source-indication.

The sincerity effect of the romance is enhanced on the one hand by such recognitions of *substantial* intertexts, in which the content of the element recognized as historical is traceable to a source text that is understood by the audience as a history. On the other hand it is also possible to recognize *formally* historiographical intertexts. The nameless *isnād* that begins most romances is a special instance of this. Another example is the genealogy (*nasab*) found in the *Seven Journeys*. Consider the earliest dated manuscript. On the first folio of the 1724 Sherānī manuscript, we read the following:

> The relaters of reports and conveyors of records relate that Ḥātim Ṭai is described as follows: Ḥātim is the son of Ṭai son of Rasn son of Kahlān son of Naḵhīsat[226] son of Qaḥṭān son of Hūd son of Atāmā.
>
> *rāwiyān-i aḵhbār o nāqilān-i āśār cunīn riwāyat mī kunand kih bayān-i Ḥātim Ṭai cunīn ast kih Ḥātim bin Ṭai bin Rasn bin Kahlān bin Naḵhīsat bin Qaḥṭān bin Hūd bin Atāmā-st* [227]

This genealogy is followed by an account of Ḥātim's forbears from Atāmā down to Ṭai. Atāmā's son Hūd, who has inherited the chieftaincy of a village from his father, leads a coup against the Yemeni ruler of the previous dynasty, and becomes king in his stead. Hūd and his descendants rule Yemen in peace until Naḵhshab's iniquitous reign, which is emulated by his son Rasn, who gives his father a taste of his own medicine by rebelling against him. Finally Kahlān, son of Rasn, restores tranquility to the country, and begets Ṭai, the father of Ḥātim.[228] Seven generations of Ḥātim's forebears are presented to the audience in a form that many would

[226] This is "Naḵhshab" in the modern edition and in many manuscripts.
[227] *Haft sair-i Ḥātim* 1724, f. 1.
[228] "Haft sair-i Ḥātim" 2007, 59–60.

have recognized as a standard genealogy. The *nasab* genre is well-established as a historiographical subgenre prevalent in the Islamicate world from the ʻAbbasid period onward.

A footnote in Duncan Forbes' translation apprises us of the Orientalist's low opinion of Ḥātim's genealogy as offered in the *Seven Journeys*. "This account," writes Forbes, "is rather questionable; at least, the translator has not been able to find any account of [Ḥātim] that agrees with this description."[229] Indeed, the *Seven Journeys*' version differs vastly from the version of Ḥātim's genealogy given in the 8th/9th century by Ibn Kalbī. [230] On the authority of Ibn Kalbī and Ibn Aʻrābī, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī repeats the same genealogy, with some lacunas, in the 10th century.[231] Even as late as 1486, Kāshifī was able to reproduce the genealogy more or less correctly.[232] The *Seven Journeys* is not completely off the mark; the names of Ṯai, Kahlān, and Qaḥṯān appear in the genealogy that it presents, as they do in Ibn Kalbī, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, and Kāshifī.[233] But for the most part the genealogy cannot be traced in its substance to any previous version of which we are aware. It is its *form*, then, which is important, along with the historiographical genre that its form announces. The simple recognition of the genealogical form would trigger the suspicion of historicity, and in this manner the genealogy is able to strengthen the romance's sincerity effect.

What Is Possible?

We have seen that the sincerity effect or appearance of *ṣidq*, which is generally consecrated to historiographical works, can make itself felt in works widely identified as

[229] Forbes 1830, 1.
[230] Ibn Kalbī's genealogy is: Ḥātim b. ʻAbd Allāh b. Saʻd b. al-Ḥashraj b. Imrū al-Qais b. ʻAdī b. Aḵhzam b. Hazūmah b. Rabīʻah b. Jarwal b. Thaʻal b. ʻAmr b. Al-Ġhauth b. Ṭayyi' b. Udad b. Zaid b. Yaḥshub b. ʻArīb b. Zaid b. Kahlān b. Saba' b. Yaḥshub b. Yaʻrib b. Qaḥṭān.
[231] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:6691
[232] Kāshifī 1941, 6.
[233] Qaḥṭān is the the putative ancestor of all Southern Arabs, while his descendant Kahlān is the forebear of most of the nomadic branch of this family (accounts of Ḥātim generally bear witness to his nomadism and that of his tribe).

romances, such as the Ḥātim-nāmahs, and it can be broadly stated that it does this through either formal or substantial intertexts. It would be rash to suppose that such localized manifestations of sincerity[234]—of the genre of history, in other words—necessarily saturate the entire work and give it a uniformly historical colouring. We might say that the strongest effect that devices such as the conventionalized romance *isnād*s have on the genre of the work may rather be to invest it with their own indeterminacy. The possibility exists, however, that the kind of saturation we have just described may occur. The question is whether these splashes of apparent sincerity continue to seep unchecked through the work, or whether they are insoluble in its fluid and therefore remain local.

At first glance these historiographical grafts do appear to be incapable of spreading, because of the decidedly un-historiographical nature of the work in which they are implanted. But where does this impression come from? Firstly from the apprehension of metatextual genre designations such as the title "*Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī*," or from orally-expressed statements with the same effect. Where these are not available or in question, however (as in the manuscript containing Mullā 'Abd Allāh's preface), a sliver of history such as the account of Ḥātim's daughter and the Prophet Muḥammad appears incongruous in its "host text" because of the incredible nature of the events between which it is sandwiched. The piece of history that we have just mentioned is recounted in the context of an exchange between Ḥātim and the fairy king Shams Shāh, who claims to have rebelled against the Prophet Solomon and to have been turned into a serpent for his insubordination, until the time of his salvation at Ḥātim's pious hands.[235] The introductory chapter begins with the conventional *isnād* and the

[234] Or, more strictly speaking, the "sincerity effect."
[235] Ḥaidarī 1972, 242–243.

genealogy of Ḥātim, but ends with the shamed retreat of a hungry lion at Ḥātim's generous readiness to offer himself and his horse to satisfy the predator's appetite.[236]

It is clear that these events are incredible to modern readers who have learned to bow to certain epistemological strictures. These readers would consider absurd the very existence of fairies, or the ability of a lion to understand human speech and show a sense of humiliation. For these readers, epistemological tenets preclude the possibility of either of these episodes from being factual or historical. It is not immediately clear, however, that such apparent absurdities would be absurd to early modern Indian readers, for whom much more may have seemed to be possible than it is for "us," if we are the kind of people who do not believe in fairies.

[236] "Haft sair-i Ḥātim" 2007, 62.

5. Panegyric

Of all of the mentions of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī that we find across the corpus of Islamicate verbal artworks, the most oft-repeated is this line in the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī Shīrāzī:

> Ḥātim Ṭā'ī does not remain, but may
> his lofty name remain forever, renowned for good conduct.
>
> *na-māND Ḥātim-i Ṭā'ī wa-laik tā ba-abad*
> *bimānd nām-i buland-ash ba-nekū'ī mashhūr* [237]

The Persian word *nām* requires some commentary. In the first place, of course, it denotes a "name" in the sense of a signifier pointing to a signified, in this case the name "Ḥātim Ṭā'ī" that designates the famous Arab. In prescribing the perpetuation of the name of Ḥātim, the verse can therefore be taken as simply making a plea for the *repetition* or *recitation* of "Ḥātim Ṭā'ī," the name that it itself repeats. This wished-for repetition of the name of Ḥātim may and has been accomplished by the repetition of the verse itself, so that the verse has historically proven apt at realizing the wish that it expresses. In the second place, we must consider the connotation that *nām*, like the English "name," possesses; a connotation of which we are reminded by the juxtaposition of *nām* with the word *mashhūr* ("renowned"). For *nām* also refers to the "fame" or "renown" of a person; their good name or their name that has been foully besmirched. These two meanings of *nām* are mutually reinforcing. It is through the repetition of the name of Ḥātim and the qualities associated with it that his fame is established, and it is through his fame that his name lives on.

Sa'dī's verse, on account of its own fame, contributes to the fame of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, perpetuating his name long after the disappearance of the historical original who was named with this name—if we trust that such an individual did indeed live and die. Ḥātim's name and

[237] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977a, 116.

fame survive him through this and other acts of repetition, or what in Arabic, Urdu and Persian is called *ẕikr*. The concept of *ẕikr*, like that of *nām*, is multivalent in a way that I would like to explain, as I will be using it in this chapter in a theoretical manner. According to a *ḥadīth* passed down by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and related by Ibn Kathīr in his biography of the Prophet, Ḥātim's son ʻĀdī approached the Prophet Muḥammad and asked, "My father was very generous to his kinfolk and very active on their behalf; does he get something for that, some reward? [*inna abī kāna yaṣilu al-raḥima wa yafʻalu wa yafʻalu, fa-hal la-hu fī dhālika? yaʻnī min ajr*^{in}*?*]" The Prophet replied, "Your father sought something, and he got it [*inna abā-ka ṭalaba shay*^{an} *fa-aṣāba-hu*]." What was this "something" that Ḥātim sought, according to the Prophet? Ibn Kathīr comments that it was *dhikr*.[238]

This is a word imbued with numerous connotations, the foremost among them being that of remembrance, and secondarily of "mention," the yoke being that it is only by dint of memory that something—a name, perhaps—can be mentioned. The mention is therefore necessarily a repetition of something that has been remembered. In the context of Sufism, and South Asian Sufism in particular, *ẕikr* came to mean something analogous to what, in Urdu-Hindi and Punjabi is called *jāpnā*: the repetition, audibly or silently, of a name, in Islam usually one or more of the Names of God. Thus *ẕikr* can be thought of as a repeated mention or *recitation* powered by memory. In other words, it is a kind of intertextuality, not necessarily of a certain textual passage—*ẕikr* is very often the recitation of a single word, and individual words, too, are intertextual, carrying with them an aura of meanings, connotations, a history of uses, genres, and so on. Through *ẕikr*, which I will refer to simply as commemoration, the name and fame of an individual are perpetuated; Saʻdī's verse, for instance, commemorates the

[238] Ibn Kathīr 1964, 1:107. Translation slightly modified from Ibn Kathīr 1998, 76.

name of Ḥātim and thereby amplifies his fame. Commemoration and the name are inextricable in this way.

Name or fame is, in a fairly obvious way, a prime example of social capital, the archetypal form, we might say. It is through fame that one has influence and a certain amount of power, even, as in this case, beyond the grave. Because commemoration is the engine of fame, this form of intertextuality earns social capital for the named being. After death consigns the soul of the deceased to an otherworldly fate, commemoration perpetuates his or her name, as a residue of his or her existence, in this lower world. In a verse quoted in the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah*, which we will consider shortly, the relation between *nām* and *ẕikr* is made clear:

> A man's name remains to be commemorated well;
> A good name is the harvest of a man's days.
>
> *bāqī ba-ẕikr-i ḵhair buwad nām-i ādamī*
> *nām-i nekū-st ḥāṣil-i ayyām-i ādamī* [239]

This is why Ḥātim's alleged quest for commemoration is criticized by Ibn Kathīr. It is not quite that Ḥātim's expected earning of his name turns his generosity into a transaction, for any kind of recompense, including Heaven, or God's favour, would do this. In a sense the problem is, first of all, that the reward for Ḥātim's generosity is worldly, and secondly that Ḥātim is implicitly accused of settling for the survival of his name in the world, rather than seeking the infinitely greater reward of a felicitous eternal life. Howsoever this may be, it will be scrutinized in greater detail in the next chapter. What we must bear in mind at present is the worldly power of commemoration; of the name, waxing greater with its every repetition.

[239] Kāshifī 1941, 3.

I have said that the *Gulistān*'s popularity, or its "visibility" is well-attested, which is to say that it was a very likely element in the textual memories of many across the Islamicate world. For example, it was among the texts used by ʻAbd al-Nabī Faḵhr al-Zamānī in his *Ṯirāz al-aḵhbār*, and it was one of the books that the Mughal secretary and poet Candrabhān Brahman recommended to his son to read. In India it was long a staple of a madrasa education. Let me, however, outline a more clearly observable process of the "commemoration" of the quoted passage in particular, which, as we established, is also the commemoration of the name of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī.

This story of intertextuality commences in Herat near the end of the fifteenth century. Herat was ruled by the Timurid Sulṭān Ḥusain Bāyqārā, the patron of the great intellectual Ḥusain Wāʻiẓ Kāshifī. In 891 H (1486 CE), Kāshifī composed a quasi-historical series of anecdotes regarding the life of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, entitled the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah*. Kāshifī often cites his sources, and while some of them are lost to us, a majority of his narratives (*aḵhbār*) can be traced back either to Saʻdī's *Gulistān* and *Bostān*, or to Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aġhānī*. We have already considered the historiographical nature of the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah* in the previous chapter, but for our present purposes we must focus on a single passage in the introduction, which establishes its date of composition:

> No praised attribute or pleasing quality remains as long as a good name upon the page of time, or a handsome commemoration upon the leaves of the books of day and night, because they are gotten through the habit of benevolent action and manliness, and the path of generosity and doing good [*nekū-kārī*]. The proof of this is that that the year is 891 H [1486 CE], and 936 years have passed since the death of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, yet the field of his good name is ornamented with praise and approbation. "Ḥātim Ṭā'ī does not remain, but may / his lofty name remain forever, renowned for good conduct."
>
> *az hec ṣiffate satūdah o ḵhiṣlate pasandīdah nām-i nekū bar ṣafḥah-i rozgār o ẕikr-i jamīl bar auraāq-i jarā'id-i lail o nihār cunān bāqī na-mī-mānd kih az shīmah-i iḥsān o jawānmardī o samt-i karam o nekū-kārī wa dalīl-i īn qaum ān ast kih cūn az wafāt-i Ḥātim-i Ṭā'ī dar īn tārīḵh kih sanah-i iḥdà wa tis'īn wa ṡamāni-mi'ah hijriyah ast nuh-ṣad o sī o shash sāl guẕashtah wa*

> *caman-i nek-nāmī-i wai bah perā'ish-i ṡanā o taḥsīn perāstah: "na-mānd Ḥātim-i Ṭ̈ā'ī wa-laik tā ba-abad / bimānd nām-i buland-ash ba-nekū'ī mashhūr"* [240]

Sa'dī's self-fulfilling verse is cited in Kāshifī's passage, amplifying the "visibility" of the verse and the name that it commemorates. The import of the passage reflects that of the verse, namely that the name of Ḥātim has survived, via commemoration, beyond the death of Ḥātim himself. The kind of commemoration is specified: Ḥātim is commemorated with praise. Praise is a form of commemoration, mention, intertextuality. But to return to intertextuality plain and simple, we must reveal that not only did Sa'dī's verse achieve citation in Kāshifī's *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah*, but the passage that Kāshifī built around Sa'dī's verse was itself cited, in the first place by Kāshifī himself.

It was to Sulṭān Ḥusain's son, Mu'īn al-Dīn Abū al-Muḥsin, that Kāshifī dedicated what was to become one of his best-known works, and possibly the most well-known work of ethics in the Islamicate world, the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*. This work, and some of its successors, will be discussed in the chapter on ethical manuals. Maria Subtelny has argued convincingly that the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* was composed in 907 H (1501/2 CE).[241] She proves this date of composition partly on the basis of a passage within the text itself, which runs as follows:

> When remembering some generous person who is no longer Life's prisoner, everyone praises him. And so it is with Ḥātim Ṭ̈ā'ī, since whose death around 940 years have passed by the year of the composition of this treatise, which is 907. Yet still the springtime of his commemoration [*ẕikr*] is bedecked with the fragrant herbs of laudation, and the field of his good name [*nek-nāmī*] is ornamented with praise and approbation. "Ḥātim Ṭ̈ā'ī does not remain, but may / his lofty name remain forever, renowned for good conduct."
>
> *agar karīme rā kih dar qaid-i ḥayāt na-bāshad yād kunand hamah kas ṡanā-i ū goyand cunāncih Ḥātim-i Ṭ̈ā'ī rā kih dar tārīḳh-i tālīf-i īn risālah kih nuh-ṣad o haft sāl ast az wafāt-i ū qarīb-i nuh-ṣad o cahl o panj sāl guẕashtah hunūz bahār-i ẕikr-ash ba-riyāḥīn-i āfirīn ārāstah ast wa*

[240] Kāshifī 1941, 3.
[241] Subtelny 2003, 602–604.

> *caman-i nek-nāmī-ash bah perāyah-i ṡanā o taḥsīn perāstah: "na-māND Ḥātim-i Ṭ̈ā'ī wa-laik tā ba-abad / bimānd nām-i buland-ash ba-nekū'ī mashhūr"* [242]

When we compare this passage to the one that we have just taken from the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah*, it is clear that it owes a great deal to its predecessor. What is, most practically, a device for expressing the date of composition in a novel manner, also commemorates through its recitation and reduplication, the name and generosity of Ḥātim in a laudatory manner. Much more so than the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah*, which appears with only moderate frequency in manuscript collections, the hugely successful *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* did a great deal to augment the visibility of Sa'dī's verse and the name of Ḥātim Ṭ̈ā'ī.

A book as popular as the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* could not but breed copycats. Let us look at two more examples from manuals of ethics that appear to have been inspired by the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*. I came upon these manuscript ethical manuals fortuitously during my research and was struck, as perhaps the reader will be, by the geographical distance between their respective places of production: Ottoman Turkey and Quṭbshāhī Hyderabad. This distance demonstrates the widespread fame and availability of the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*. The first is a work on the ethics of ministers, entitled *Dastūr al-wuzarā'*, and composed in 1534 by Shaiḳh 'Ālam for the Ibrāhīm Pāshā, the Prime Minister of the Ottoman Sultan Sulaimān I. Ibrāhīm Pāshā was an early companion of Sulaimān who became Prime Minister in 1523 at the age of thirty. He married the Sultan's sister Ḳhadījah and wielded enormous power, which likely led to his clandestine murder by strangling in 1536.[243] Like the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*, the *Dastūr al-wuzarā'* contained a chapter on generosity, in which various narratives about Ḥātim Ṭ̈ā'ī were

[242] Kāshifī 1878, 46.
[243] Gökbilgin 2011.

intermixed with stories of other personages. As the following quotation will show, the text of the *Dastūr al-wuzarā* was often very close indeed to that of the *Aḵhlāq-i Muḥsinī*:

> Among the characteristics of generosity is that if one makes an occupation of the art of generosity, he is accepted in the eyes of God, and he is honoured in the world. What hearts fall prey to him! Both the elect and the common speak his praises, even if he is no longer Life's prisoner. So it is with Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, since whose death 973 years have passed by the year [of composition] of this treatise, which is 940 [1534 CE]. Yet still his handsome commemoration flows upon the tongues of all mankind. "Ḥātim Ṭā'ī does not remain, but may / his lofty name remain forever, renowned for good conduct."
>
> *az ḵhawāṣṣ-i karam ān ast kih cūn kase shewah-i karam rā peshah kard manẓūr-i naẓar-i Allāh ta'ālà gardad wa dar jahān 'azīz bāshad wa chih dil-hā ṣaid-i ū shawand wa ḵhawāṣṣ o 'āmm ṡanā-i ū goyand agar-chih dar qaid-i ḥayāt na-bāshad cunān-cih Ḥātim Ṭā'ī rā kih dar tārīḵh-i īn risālah kih sanah-i 940 az wafāt-i ū nuh-ṣad o haftād o sih guẕashtah hunūz ẕikr-i jamīl-ash ba-zabān-i kāffah-i ḵhalā'iq jārī-st: "na-mānd Ḥātim-i Ṭā'ī wa-laik tā ba-abad / bimānd nām-i buland-ash ba-nekū'ī mashhūr"* [244]

The theme of the reflection, and the device used to indicate the date of the text's composition, are at any rate nearly identical to those that appear in both of Kāshifī's works that we have seen. Similarly, the *Tuḥfah-i Quṭbshāhī*, a text written for the ruler of Hyderabad, 'Abd Allāh Quṭbshāh, in 1635, echoes this formula quite clearly:

> Even if a generous person is no longer Life's prisoner, his name flows with eulogy upon tongues, and everyone speaks his praise. And so it is with Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, since whose death around 1015 years have passed by the year of the compilation of this manuscript, which is 1045. Yet still the springtime of his commemoration is bedecked with the fragrant herbs of laudation, and the field of his good name is ornamented with the jasmine of praise and approbation. "Ḥātim Ṭā'ī does not remain, but may / his lofty name remain forever, renowned for good conduct."
>
> *agar karīme dar qaid-i ḥayāt na-bāshad nām-i ū bar zabān-hā bā ḥusn-i maqāl jārī gardānad wa hamah kas ṡanā-i ū goyand cunān-cih Ḥātim-i Ṭā'ī kih az tārīḵh-i tartīb-i īn bayāẕ kih 1045 ast az wafāt-i ū qarīb-i hazār o pānz-dah sāl guẕashtah hunūz bahār-i ẕikr-ash ba-rayāḥīn-i āfirīn ārāstah ast wa caman-i nek-nāmī-ash ba-yāsmīn-i ṡanā o taḥsīn perāstah: "na-mānd Ḥātim-i Ṭā'ī wa-laik tā ba-abad / bimānd nām-i buland-ash ba-nekū'ī mashhūr"* [245]

The example of these five texts—Sa'dī's verse, its citation in a passage of the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyya*, the echoing of this passage in the *Aḵhlāq-i Muḥsinī*, and further echoes in the *Dastūr al-wuzarā'*

[244] Shaiḵh 'Ālam 1534, f. 62r.
[245] 'Alī b. Ṭaifūr al-Bisṭāmī 1635, f. 22r.

and *Tuḥfah-i Quṭbshāhī*—shows commemoration at work in a very concrete manner. The original aspiration expressed by Sa'dī for the perpetuation of the name of Ḥātim through commemoration is fulfilled not only by the verse itself, but also by the passages in which it is cited.

What I have been calling the "visibility" of a text (or textual fragment) is not entirely quantifiable, but as we can see from the example of Sa'dī's verse, there is enough evidence of the frequent citation of certain texts to make it quite evident that they were highly visible, and almost sure to constitute part of many "hypotextual archives." The visibility of these texts commemorating Ḥātim Ṭā'ī's name would have had the effect of making Ḥātim a very visible character, and of adding weight to his *exemplarity*, which we will next examine.

The Exemplar of Generosity

The reader will recall that one of the charges levelled against the romance genre by the new elite intellectual critics who began to arise by the late nineteenth century was that romances could have no effect on their audiences due to a failure of exemplarity. On the one hand, lack of direct evidence makes this accusation difficult to counter. Recorded comments on the effect of romances are few and far between, and if audiences were affected by their exemplarity, they rarely expressed this in writing. What we must settle for is to show that romance texts *could* provide their audiences with an effective exemplarity—and there is no better example of this than the romance of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī.

We would be hard-pressed to find a concept exactly equivalent to "exemplarity" expressed in Islamicate or Indic languages, but we can come relatively close if we consider the important concept of the *ẓarb al-maṡal*. Literally meaning, "striking a likeness," the phrase is used a number of times in the Qur'ān to indicate God's use of a similitude. In one of the earliest

commemorations of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi writes that many pre-Islamic figures went to great lengths in their generosity, "but as for those by whom a likeness was struck, there was only Ḥātim [*wa lākinna al-maḍrūb bi-hi al-ma<u>th</u>al Ḥātim waḥda-hu*]"[246] That is, Ḥātim came to provide a model to which likenesses could be struck and comparisons made. It would not be far-fetched to define an exemplar as a *maḍrūb bi-hi al-maśal*, one through whom a likeness is struck, the example of generosity to whom later generous figures are likened. Even at this early date (Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi lived during the first half of the tenth century CE), Ḥātim had evidently become such an exemplar, bound up with a notion of fantastic and extreme hospitality.

In the earliest narratives about Ḥātim, the extreme nature of his hospitality is evident—indeed Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi says as much when he classes Ḥātim among the pre-Islamic figures whose generosity reached the very limits (*alla<u>dh</u>īna 'antahà ilai-him al-jūd*).[247] Given that many of these narratives are recounted by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar in his collection of biographies, *Mashāhīr-i 'ālam*, as an antidote to the "unnatural" tales told of Ḥātim in the romance, we may surmise that their extremeness was of a sort that was compatible with his epistemological principles. One example will suffice. Sharar recounts a version of a narrative that was previously told by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī,[248] Ibn Ka<u>th</u>īr, and Kāshifī. The version below is Ibn Ka<u>th</u>īr's:

> Someone said to al-Nawār, wife of Ḥātim, "Tell us about Ḥātim."
>
> She replied, "Everything about him was wonderful. Once we were afflicted with a year of utter desolation when the earth quaked, the skies filled with dust, and wet nurses were too drained to suckle their children. The camels had become completely emaciated, their bones showing through, and not producing a drop of milk. And our money was all dried up.

[246] Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi 1981, 110.
[247] Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi 1981, 110.
[248] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:6728.

> "One interminable, cold night, with the small children writhing from hunger [...], he said, 'By God, we don't have anything to pacify them with.' So he arose to one of the boys and lifted him up, while I went over to the girl to pacify her. And, by God, they only quietened down after a good part of the night had elapsed. After that we went to the other boy and rocked him until he became quiet, or almost so. [...]
>
> "When the night became pitch black, the stars having almost disappeared and there was neither sound nor movement astir, the side of our tent was lifted. He called out, 'Who is there?' The person went away. At daybreak, or thereabouts, he again said, 'Who is there?' and a woman replied, 'It is your neighbour so-and-so, Abū 'Ādī [Ḥātim's patronym]; I have no one to turn to buy you. I'm coming to you from my children who are moaning like wolves from their hunger. 'Bring them to me quickly,' he told her. [...]
>
> "I jumped up and exclaimed, 'What are you doing? Lie down! Your children are writhing from hunger and you've no means to soothe them, so what can you do for her and her children?' He responded, 'Be silent; by God, I will satisfy you, if God wills it. [...]
>
> "So in she came, carrying two children and with four others walking at her side, as though she were an ostrich surrounded by her chicks. Then he went over to his horse, thrust his spear in its upper chest and struck his flint and lit a fire. Next he brought a long knife and skinned the horse after which he handed the knife to the woman saying, 'After you.' Then he said, 'Now send your children.' And she did so. [...]
>
> "He then went all round to each one of them until they had all got up and approached the horse. Then he wrapped himself up in his cloak and stretched out to one side watching us. And, by God, he did not taste one bite himself, even though he was the most of all in need. And by next morning there was nothing of the horse left but bones and hooves!"[249]

What is "wonderful" about Ḥātim's action is his regard for the children of the poor woman who approaches him in the night, his willingness to feed them even before he feeds his own starving family, and especially the fact that he sacrifices his own valuable horse. Without violating the rules of probability to which a man like Sharar would adhere, the narrative illustrates the kind of extreme hospitality that makes Ḥātim's exemplarity possible—he is an exemplar of generosity only because his generosity is extreme and therefore wonderful.

Later accounts of Ḥātim's generous sacrifice of his own horse are quite different from the story ascribed to his wife Al-Nawār (or Māwiyah, according to other tellings).[250] The famous story told by Sa'dī in the *Bostān* has to do with the Byzantine Sultan's desire to possess

[249] Ibn Kaṯhīr 1998, 77–78.
[250] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:6712 ff.

Ḥātim's steed, described as "wind-footed, like smoke / Swift as the eastern zephyr, thunder-loud, blue-black / ever taking the lead over lightning [*bād-pā'e cū dūd / ṣabā-sur'atī ra'd-bāng adhamī / kih bar barq peshī girifte hamī*]."[251] The Sultan sends a messenger to Ḥātim to ask him to make a present of the horse, but when the messenger arrives, Ḥātim gives him something to eat, first. The meat served to the messenger turns out to be that of the celebrated and valuable horse that the messenger had come to take—Ḥātim explains that under the circumstances he had no other food to give to his guest, and so he put the demands of hospitality above the safeguarding of the enormous value that the horse represents. Showing Ibn Kathīr to be correct in his assertion that Ḥātim desires commemoration, Sa'dī has Ḥātim explain, "A name I need, far-famed throughout the realm / What matter that I have one famous mount the less? [*ma-rā nām bāyad dar iqlīm fāsh / digar markab-i nāmwar go ma-bāsh*]."[252] With his generous sacrifice, Ḥātim hopes to buy commemoration, a name, and an exemplary status. When the messenger returns to the Byzantine monarch, Ḥātim reaps his reward in the form of the monarch's praise.[253] Ḥātim's habit of serving horse-meat is continued in the *Seven Journeys of Ḥātim*, in a manner that would have been less palatable to Sharar and his ilk: in the Indian romance, Ḥātim encounters a hungry lion, and offers either his horse's or his own life as an act of generosity to the predator, who, ashamed by this extraordinary offer, accepts Ḥātim's greatness and slinks off without having his dinner at all.[254]

The second tale of Ḥātim in the *Bostān* magnifies the price that Ḥātim is willing to pay, in a most ingenious manner. The ruler of Yemen is jealous of Ḥātim's fame, and dispatches an assassin to do away with the exemplar of generosity. The would-be murderer meets Ḥātim

[251] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 134; Translation: Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1974, 85.
[252] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 136; Translation: Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1974, 86.
[253] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 136.
[254] "Haft sair-i Ḥātim" 2007, 62.

without being aware of his identity; in due course he enjoys Ḥātim's lavish hospitality, and when Ḥātim asks him what errand it is that he has come to carry out, the assassin asks him where he can find the famous Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, who must fall prey to his sword. Ḥātim immediately offers up his head to his guest, who, overcome by his generosity, spares him and returns to the king with a glowing report of his erstwhile host. The king recognizes the exemplar's worth:

> The king poured praise upon the House of Ṭaiyi';
> To the envoy a sealed purse of money he gave,
> Saying 'Liberality's a seal on Ḥātim's name!
> In his case men may well bear witness
> That reality and reputation go together!'[255]
>
> *shahanshah ṡanā guft bar āl-i Ṭayy*
> *firistādah rā dād muhrī diram*
> *kih muhr ast bar nām-i Ḥātim karam*
> *ma-rā ū-rā sazad gar gawāhī dihand*
> *kih ma'nī o āwāzah-ash hamrah and* [256]

In this story, rather than simply offering his horse as a sacrifice, Ḥātim is ready to give his life for the sake of generosity—and, one presumes, for the magnification of the very name and fame that the King of Yemen covets in the first place. What is made apparent is that in ordering the execution of Ḥātim himself, the king has bungled his attempt to rid the world of the name of Ḥātim, which will live on beyond Ḥātim's death, especially as his death will have been the highest form of payment for the augmentation of that name. Sa'dī's tales of Ḥātim demonstrate both the transactional nature of *nām*, and the strategies that the various narratives deploy to enrich the name and increase the commemoration, fame, and exemplary power of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī.

This last-mentioned story in the *Bostān* has its own commemorations in the Indo-Persian romance the *Qiṣṣah-i cahār darwesh* (*Tale of Four Dervishes*), manuscripts of which begin

[255] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1974, 88.
[256] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 139.

to appear in the eighteenth century, and which in the nineteenth century was enormously popular through Mīr Amman's Urdu translation, *Bāġh o bahār*, written for the British students of the Hindustani language at Fort William College, which was moreover preceded by Mīr Muḥammad Ḥusain 'Aṭā Ḳhān Taḥsīn's Urdu version, *Nau ṭarz-i muraṣṣa'*, around 1775. In this case the story is told to the young prince of Persia, by a companion who is well-versed in history (*tārīḳh*)—this characterization signalling, of course, an assertion that the narratives that he relates are historiographical in terms of their genre. Following the narration of this "history," the Persian prince, like the Yemeni king in the tale that he has heard, is inspired to rival Ḥātim's generosity:

> When I had heard the whole of what happened to Ḥātim, I was filled with jealousy (*ġhairat*, i.e., a prideful sense of honour or shame). I thought, 'Ḥātim, was simply the chief of his people, yet because of his generosity he made such a name for himself that he remains renowned even today! God has decreed that I should be the Emperor of all Iran; it would be a shame if I should remain bereft of this good thing.'
>
> *jab yih mā-jarā Ḥātim kā maiṅ ne tamām sunā, jī meṅ ġhairat ā'ī aur yih ḳhayāl guzarā kih Ḥātim apnī qaum kā faqaṭ ra'īs thā, jin ne ek saḳhāwat ke bā'iṡ yih nām paidā kiyā kih āj talak mashhūr hai; maiṅ ḳhudā ke ḥukm se bādshāh tamām Īrān kā hūṅ; agar is ni'mat se maḥrūm rahūṅ, to baṛā afsos hai.*

Ḥātim's exemplarity is efficacious because his *nām* is so highly valuable and therefore such a powerful object of desire to others, who can only earn for themselves a similar sort of social wealth by emulating the good deeds by which he has gained his name. As a result the prince builds a palace in which he himself spends all day and night dispensing riches to anyone who enters.[257] Within the romance, then, the effect of the exemplarity of Ḥātim is shown—his exemplarity "works" by inciting a spirit of emulation, rivalry, and one-upmanship in the one who hears of Ḥātim's fame and his deeds. A similar story is recounted in the romance *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, also written in the early eighteenth century. In this case, Ḥātim is dispensing wealth

[257] Mīr Amman 1992, 73.

to all comers, when a dervish disabuses him of his pretensions by asserting that in his homeland, China, there lives a woman whose generosity is such that "in years upon years, a hundred Ḥātims could not even in their imaginations shoulder the good deeds that she performs in one day. [*ṣad Ḥātim ba-candīn sāl iḥsān-i yak-rozah ū-rā ba-dosh-i andeshah na-tawānad kashīd*]."[258] Now it is Ḥātim himself whose pride is cut to the quick, but when he anonymously meets the generous Chinese lady, he finds that she herself is so jealous of *his* famous name that she has redoubled her efforts at generosity—and, like the Yemeni king, she wishes to do away with her renowned rival.[259] Whether or not we are ever able to find examples of Ḥātim's exemplarity having an effect on real-world audiences, such stories must be taken as meta-exemplary: the name of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī is supposed to enable exemplarity when its desirability impels audiences *in the real world* to emulate Ḥātim's generous behaviour, just as it incites audiences *within the romances* to do so.

Commemorations of Ḥātim in early texts like Ibn Isḥāq's *Biography of the Prophet*, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aġhānī*, and Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi's *Al-'Iqd al-farīd* and so on quickly led to an augmentation of his fame to the extent that the mere mention of Ḥātim's name was able to convey the memory of his extreme generosity, without any need to biographize Ḥātim by telling stories of his generosity, as the early commemorators did. Already in the tenth century, Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi's contemporary Rūdakī is able to use Ḥātim's name to describe a generous person in this manner in his poetry, which is among the very earliest that survives in New Persian. The name of Ḥātim soon became capable of being used via antonomasia; a poet had only to refer to a person as a "Ḥātim" to signify that person's generosity. In Urdu this kind of antonomasia continues in the present, in the kinds of proverbs that the British Orientalist S.W.

[258] Mumtāz 1957, 308.
[259] Mumtāz 1957, 310.

Fallon collected between 1870 and 1880. For instance, "*Yeh bhī apne vaqt ke Hātam* [sic] *haiṅ.* Prov. Saying. He is the Hatim of the age."[260] This was evident in Punjabi as well, as in Sultan Bāhū's seventeenth-century verses:

> What good are the likes of Plato and Aristotle before me?
> A hundred million like Ḥātim came begging at Bāhū's door.
>
> *Aflāṭūn Arisṭū jiheṅ mere agge kis kamm de hū*
> *Ḥātim jiheṅ lakh karoṛāṅ dar Bāhū de mangde hū* [261]

There is no need to mention who Ḥātim was or to recount his generous deeds; because of the force of repeated commemoration, his name and his generosity are well-known enough to be recognized by Indians of all sorts.

As Bāhū's verse shows, while the name of the exemplar might conjure up the superlative possession of a particular quality—generosity, in Ḥātim's case—exemplarity was not always used by way of equivalence ("He is Ḥātim"). Very often, the comparison favoured the person being compared to Ḥātim ("He is more generous than Ḥātim"), the power of such a formulation being that if Ḥātim Ṭ̈ā'ī represents the pinnacle of generosity, the person who is able to displace him in this position must be generous indeed. Furthermore, as we will see more clearly in the next chapter, specific reasons were put forward to devalorize Ḥātim in comparison to later generous individuals to which he was compared. Sa'dī's *Bostān* provides an exceptionally well-known example of setting the praised not simply side-by-side with, but potentially above Ḥātim. Addressing his patron, the Salġhūrid atabeg Abū Bakr b. Sa'd Zangī, Sa'dī wrote:

> No man generous like Ḥātim
> has emerged from the revolutions of the world, except
> Abū Bakr b. Sa'd—for his grace

[260] Fallon 1886, 572.
[261] Sulṭān Bāhū 1998, 133.

places the hand of bounty upon the mouth of solicitation.
[…]
[You are] like Ḥātim. If it were not for his name
no one in the world would mention the name of Ṭai
That famous one leaves behind praise in books—
but for you, not only praise is left, but also [heavenly] reward.

cū Ḥātim bih āzād marde digar
zi daurān-i gītī nayāmad magar
Abū Bakr-i Sa'd ān dast-i nawāl
nahad himmat-ash bar dahān sawāl
[…]
cū Ḥātim kih gar nīste nām-i wai
naburde kas andar jahān nām-i Ṭai
śanā mānd az ān nāmwar dar kitāb
to rā ham śanā mānd o ham śawāb [262]

Ḥātim is nearly incomparable, but—unsurprisingly—there is one exception, Abū Bakr b. Sa'd, who outstrips even the exemplar. This rhetoric of excess is quite common in the praise of patrons in particular. In the middle of the eighteenth century the poet Raḥmat Allāh b. Shaiḳh Muḥammad Baḳhtyār Jaisalmerī wrote what he believed was a stylistically improved version of the prose *Haft sair-i Ḥātim*, dedicating it to the Mughal ruler Aḥmad Shāh Bahādur. That this work, entitled *Nigār-i dānish*, did indeed reach the court is shown by the fact that it is mentioned in a late-eighteenth-century Mughal library catalogue.[263] In its preface, Raḥmat Allāh described Aḥmad Shāh as follows:

The keeper of the lands of India and Arabia,
whose surname is "Son of Muḥammad [Shāh] the First";
his youthful fortune, like the crescent moon,
waxes in beauty with its every phase.
Because of his great generosity, Ḥātim
wrote a refutation of his own liberality.[264]

[262] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 141.
[263] Shaiḳh Sharaf 'Alī 1797, 20r. This is apparently a list of the books in the library of Muḥammad Shāh's brother, Prince Buland Aḳhtar, also known as "Acche Ṣāḥib."
[264] The last hemistich contains two double entendres (*īhām* or *tauriyah*), one more productive than the other. *Rādd* means "one who rejects," but also "a generous person." Therefore the verse could be translated, "Thanks to his [Aḥmad Shāh's] great generosity, Ḥātim / could write of his own liberality"—implying that Ḥātim's generosity flows from that of Aḥmad Shāh. *Ṭai*

wālī-i mulk-i Hind o mulk-i ʻArab
bin Muḥammad Wāḥid ast laqab
nau-jawān baḳht-i o cū māh-i hilāl
mī-fazāyad ba-har zamān-ash jamāl
Ḥātim az himmat saḳhāwat-i wai
nāmah-i rādd-i ḳhwesh sāḳhtah ṯai[265]

Raḥmat Allāh's final verse contains a double entendre based on the two meanings of the word "*rādd*," which may signify either "someone who rejects," or "a generous person." Therefore it can mean that upon encountering the generosity of the Mughal ruler, Ḥātim was forced to disavow or reject "himself"—i.e., the superlative generosity that his name conjures up—in recognition of the ruler's superior claims. Or, it may convey the anachronistic notion that Aḥmad Shāh's generosity is so archetypal that Ḥātim was only enabled to write the book of his own generosity by means of Aḥmad Shāh's example. In either case, the point is the same: The individual's generosity is praised by putting him above the exemplar, and even implying his displacement of the exemplar. But the very possibility of such gestures in expressions of praise only underscores the power of Ḥātim's exemplarity.

Before moving on to our particular historical case study, there are a few words to be said about the nomenclature connected with the panegyric genre, which is the genre in which we can most easily consider how exemplarity, and the commemoration of the name of the exemplar, might have operated in the world. When I resort to using an Arabic-derived word, I will opt for "*madḥ*" rather than the more well-recognized "*qaṣīdah*," both because the word *qaṣīdah* also refers to a rather different genre in Arabic, and because *madḥ* seems to better encompass the range of texts that one might refer to as "praise," from complete poems to brief statements.

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can mean "to complete [a piece of writing, e.g.]," but it is also a variant of the name of Ḥātim's tribe, also known as Ṭā'ī or Ṯayyi'.

[265] Raḥmat Allāh Jaisalmerī b. Shaiḳh Muḥammad Baḳhtyār 1751, 3r.

A Case Study: The Ḥātim-nāmah in the Punjab

In what follows I will consider a number of Ḥātim-nāmahs produced in the Punjab, and in particular the romance of Ḥātim written by the Punjabi-language poet Maulwī Aḥmad Yār (1768-1845) during the reign of Mahārājah Ranjīt Siṅgh. Aḥmad Yār Here it is primarily the ill-defined courtly aspect of Aḥmad Yār's career that I want to look at. There is little evidence that Punjabi was ever a major courtly language, unlike Persian or Braj Bhasha. But that has never dampened Punjabi scholars' fascination with the question of its patronage, particularly during the rule of Ranjīt Siṅgh and his successors. On the one hand, there are the historians who insist that Ranjīt Siṅgh was illiterate and uncultured, and cared only for the arts of the vintner and the nautch girl; sunk in the pleasures of wine and women he sponsored no literature or visual art of any kind. On the other hand, there is a plethora of offhand and strained attempts to prove that various Punjabi poets received patronage from Ranjīt Siṅgh. In particular, histories of Punjabi literature unquestioningly repeat the stories of Hāshim Shāh being Ranjīt Siṅgh's court poet, and of Qādir Baḳhsh receiving a well as a reward. Neither dismissal nor incuriosity have done much to further our knowledge. A handful of scholars in Patiala have examined the issue, and Ajmer Siṅgh's doctoral work, published as *Mahārājā Ranjīt Siṅgh ate Panjābī sāhit*, is particularly valuable. Ajmer Siṅgh broadens the archive to include manuscripts, and while he does not come up with a treasure-trove of Punjabi-language works commissioned by Ranjīt Siṅgh, he draws attention to neglected works that were patronized by high-ranking administrators under Ranjīt Siṅgh, particularly Hari Siṅgh Nalwā and Rājā Gulāb Siṅgh of Jammu, and courtly texts in Persian and Braj Bhasha that are passed over in the course of the nationalistic project to zero in on *Punjabi-language* works. Aḥmad Yār's *Ḥātim-nāmah* is one of a

handful of Punjabi-language works that were offered to Ranjīt Siṅgh, but as we will see, Braj Bhasha is very much part of this story as well.

While Aḥmad Yār's fame is not as great in the present age, as that of the canonical Punjabi Sufi poets such as Wāriṡ Shāh, Bullhe Shāh, Sulṭān Bāhū and so forth, in the nineteenth century his star shone brightly. As his poetic masterpiece *Saif al-Mulūk* came to a close, the great Sufi versifier Miyāṅ Muḥammad Baḳhsh sang the praises of an inventory of Punjabi poets, closing with his senior contemporaries, Hāshim Shāh, Aḥmad Yār and Qādir Baḳhsh. I will quote the first three verses of his portrait of Aḥmad Yār:

> Then Aḥmad Yār took up the government of poetry,
> He made an assault and sat upon the throne, and received the region of the Punjab,
> Wielded the sharp sword of his tongue in the land of the five rivers,
> Struck the coin of poetry's kingdom, set its laws.
> When he struck it, it caught on so strongly in the land,
> Many moneychangers jangled it, but recorded no defect.
>
> *pher wilāyat shi'r suḳhan dī Aḥmad Yār saṅbhālī*
> *dhaunsā mār taḳhat par baiṭhā mil Panjāb ḥawālī*
> *teġh zabān calā'iyos tirkhī wic Panjāb zamīne*
> *sikkah mulk suḳhan de utte jaṛi'os nāl̤ ā'īne*
> *aisī ġhālib baṇ̤ ke calī ẓarb ohdī wic dhartī*
> *bahut ṣarrāfāṅ ne chiṇ̤kā'ī waṭ̤ā lāh nah partī* [266]

In Muḥammad Baḳhsh's masterful verses, probably written just over a decade after Aḥmad Yār's death around 1845, Aḥmad Yār is the hot-blooded ruler and the skilful treasurer of the Punjab. His poetry is a trustworthy and rich currency to be dealt out generously to his countrymen. These metaphors of kingship and wealth are an inverted reflection of the historical conditions in which Aḥmad Yār's later work was produced. As Mahārājah Ranjīt Siṅgh consolidated his control over the Punjab, it was Aḥmad Yār who sought, through poems

[266] Miyāṅ Muḥammad Baḳhsh 2003, 961–962.

of praise, to submit to kingship rather than to wield it, and to be the recipient, rather than the donor, of wealth.

I want to say a few words, first, about the history of Murālah in Gujrat, where Aḥmad Yār lived. (This is not the Gujarat that is now an Indian state, but the region of Punjab that lies between the Jhelum and the Chenab rivers.) When Aḥmad Yār was writing his earlier works in the late 18th century, Gujrat was controlled by Ṣāḥib Siṅgh Bhangī; the up-and-coming Ranjīt Siṅgh took his territory as the 19th century began, and farmed it out to a series of administrators. The governor of Gujrat with the longest tenure under Ranjīt Siṅgh was the raja of Jammu, Gulāb Siṅgh, whom we will discuss shortly.

Sometime in the first decades of the 19th century Aḥmad Yār moved to the town of Murālah, where he would remain for the rest of his life. In spite of his long residence in Murālah, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Aḥmad Yār despised his fellow townsmen. He suggests, in a supplication to the saint ʻAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī, that it would not be so bad if the lowborn idiots of Murālah were to be swept away by a pestilential flood like that of Noah. Aḥmad Yār was, among other things, the imam of the local mosque, and it seems that what precipitated his outburst and his longstanding distaste for the Murālawīs was the construction of a new mosque to replace the old one, which had fallen into disrepair. According to him, the incompetent townsfolk built the new mosque in such a way that the prayer niche (*miḥrāb*) was not properly oriented toward the Kaʻbah, and when Aḥmad Yār remonstrated with them, they were not ashamed to manhandle their respectable imam. This memory of this insulting event was not quickly forgotten by Aḥmad Yār, but he remained in Murālah—he claims that he was

compelled to stay because of his routine of devotions at the nearby shrine of the *darwesh* Faqīr Ṣalāḥ, whom he had known while he was alive.[267]

Previous Punjabi Ḥātim-nāmahs

The other history that shadows the production of Aḥmad Yār's *Ḥātim-nāmah* is the history of the story of Ḥātim itself in Punjab. Aḥmad Yār was not the first to write a *Ḥātim-nāmah* in Punjabi, nor was he even the first to include within his *Ḥātim-nāmah* a panegyric to Maharaja Ranjīt Siṅgh. In the century in which it was presumably composed, the Persian *Haft sair-i Ḥātim* was undoubtedly circulating in the Punjab. As evidence we may point, for instance, to a 1782 manuscript in Shaikhupura copied by Muḥammad Qāsim b. Nūr Aḥmad Amritsarī.[268] Not long afterwards we find evidence of extended Punjabi-language versions of the romance. As in many other Indian languages, Ḥātim's name was used in Punjabi to signify the exemplary generosity for which Ḥātim was famous; the stanza by Sulṭān Bāhū that I have already quoted is confirmation of this. In Islamabad there exists an almost completely unknown manuscript in Persian and Punjabi written by one Faiẓ Muḥammad in 1789/90, consisting mainly of devotional poems in praise of the saint 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī. This manuscript contains a highly unusual Ḥātim-nāmah, relatively far-removed from the Persian romance. In this version, which is the first Punjabi romance of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī of which I am aware, the frame narrative and the device of the seven quests are stripped away, leaving a simple narrative studded with homages to 'Abd al-Qādir. In the penultimate verse, Faiẓ Muḥammad praises the saint in the manner that we have been considering in this chapter: by comparing his generosity favourably to that of the exemplary Ḥātim Ṭā'ī: "You are the object of desire, the master of munificence,

[267] Aḥmad Yār 1923, 231.
[268] *Ḥātim-nāmah* 1782.

equal to hundreds of Ḥātim Ṭ̈ā'īs [*tū maqṣūd eṅ ṣāḥib jūd eṅ sau sau Ḥātim Ṭ̈ā'ī*]."[269] The saint's generosity is said to outstrip that of the exemplar himself, a common enough panegyric strategy, as we have seen. While the other examples of panegyric within Punjabi romances of Ḥātim will be addressed to a temporal ruler rather than to spiritual masters, the connection of Ḥātim's generosity to spiritual virtue applies in these later cases as well.

The next example of a Punjabi Ḥātim-nāmah was completed in 1807 or 1808, by a Sikh poet named Saundhā who lived and worked in a village named Kale, near Amritsar. Aside from an opening section in praise of the ten gurus, Saundhā's *Hātamnāmā* contains many other references to Sikh figures and God is often referred to as *Vāhaguru*. However, it also contains references to figures from what we moderns might think of as Hindu lore, which is in keeping with what we know of Saundhā's other works, four of which are classified by the modern editor Dharam Siṅgh as belonging to a genre he calls *Hindū bhakti-kāvyā*. He was a prolific author and a polygraph, writing historical works as well as poems on Rāma and Kṛṣḥṇa, and one book on astrology. Despite his otherworldly interests Sauṅdhā does not seem to have been aloof from courtly life; the Lahori court was situated at a distance of only 20 *kos* from Kale, as Sauṅdhā tells us. Nor was he disinterested in political life. Interestingly, he was the author of book on politics addressed to the Sikh *miśaldār*s (perhaps written before Ranjit Singh's 1801 coronation). I have not seen it, but perhaps it was something like another Braj political text presented to Ranjit Singh: a Braj Bhasha translation of Ḥusain Wā'iẓ Kāshifī's *Anwār-i Suhailī* (a version of the *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* narratives) preserved in the British Library.

Saundhā's *Hātam-nāmā* differs from Faiẓ Muḥammad's and the later romance by Maulwī Aḥmad Yār in that it was not written in Punjabi, but in Braj Bhasha. It should not

[269] Faiẓ Muḥammad 1789, 107.

surprise us that a poem ultimately offered to Ranjīt Siṅgh should have been written in Braj Bhāsha, which had long been a favoured vehicle for courtly poetic production, as Saundhā's own previous composition history demonstrates. Aside from his more voluminous Punjabi output, Aḥmad Yār himself dabbled in Braj Bhāsha under the pseudonym "Gurdās,"[270] and there are other instances of Braj texts composed or copied for the Maharajah, including two manuscripts on politics (*rājnītī*) by Budh Siṅgh Amritsarī and Devīdās.[271] Unlike Aḥmad Yār, Saundhā announces the fact that he has translated his *Hātamnāmā* out of Persian. He writes:

> I took the Persian Ḥātim-nāmah and rendered it into Bhasha,
> Let intelligent men read and hear it, and take heed.
> I rendered it into Bhasha during Ranjit Singh's reign,
> Ganesha! Bestow wisdom fourfold into my mind!
>
> *Hātamanāmā Pārasī Bhākhā karī banā'i*
> *jāko dekhata catara nara paṛhe sune cita lā'i*
> *Raṇjīta Siṅgha ke rāja mahi Bhākhā kīnī ehi*
> *he Gaṇesa mama ride mahi budhi caugunī dehi* [272]

At first Saundhā describes his work as an orally-delivered didactic work (*updesh*) written at the request of a friend of his named Cain Siṅgh.[273] Ranjīt Siṅgh's praises are not sung until the *Hātam-nāmā* draws to a close. At this point Saundhā praises Ranjīt Siṅgh as a generous, just and pious ruler under whose reign Hindus and Muslims live together in peace and harmony:

> May the kingship of Lord Ranjit Singh be firm,
> this is the servant's wish: may his works be prosperous.
> As long as the waters of the Ganga and Jamuna remain,
> let Sri Raghubīr [Rāma] keep safe his kingship.
>
> *Raṇjīta Siṅgha bhūpāla kī, asathira hovai rāja*
> *iha hai bhāvanī dāsa kī, savarahi tāṅ ke kāja*

[270] Malik 1984, 153.
[271] Shackle 1977, 29–30.
[272] Saundhā 1982, 43.
[273] Saundhā 1982, 43.

jaba lau asathira jagata mahi, Gaṅga Jamana ko nīra
taba lau tā ke rāja ko, rākhe Sṛī Raghubīra [274]

Aḥmad Yār began his work four years after the appearance of Saundhā's *Hātamnāmā*. Given that Ranjīt Siṅgh is the only ruler I am aware of who was plied with not one but two *Ḥātim-nāmah*s appearing within less than a decade of one another, one wonders whether he was known to be particularly fond of being compared to Ḥātim, whether he was presiding over a Ḥātim-nāmah contest of some sort, and whether Saundhā's offering was successful enough for Aḥmad Yār to catch wind of it and attempt to follow suit—otherwise it is not clear whether Saundhā's *Hātamnāmā* in fact reached Ranjīt Siṅgh's court; the best that we can say in this case, as in so many others, is that it was intended for the ruler. Given Aḥmad Yār's proficiency in Braj Bhasha and his ability to read and write the Gurmukhi script, it is not impossible that he had read or possibly heard Saundhā's *Hātamnāmā*, or at least heard of it. Whether or not the appearance of his Punjabi version has anything to do with the Braj offering to Ranjīt Siṅgh is, I must stress, not at all clear, but the possibility exists.

Aḥmad Yār's Tale of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī

Aḥmad Yār's own autograph manuscript of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* still exists in a private collection in Lahore.[275] Because of this, we know that the text was written in eight parts corresponding to the hero's seven quests plus the introduction. After each part, Aḥmad Yār has written the year of completion, and therefore we know that the first part was completed around 1812, so that it took Aḥmad Yār a total of about two years to complete the entire manuscript, approximately 1812 to 1814. As in the case of Saundhā's *Hātamnāmā*, courtly patronage is not mentioned at all in Aḥmad Yār's introduction, from which circumstance we

[274] Saundhā 1982, 43–44.
[275] The MS is in Shahbāz Malik's collection, and he has provided a description in Malik 1984, 115–118.

may guess that it was not begun as a gift for Ranjīt Siṅgh. The serial manner of the text's production raises the likelihood that the intended destiny of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* may have changed as each part of the manuscript appeared in its turn. Throughout most of the text we find Aḥmad Yār alluding to harsh times, but his want appears most keenly in the 1812 portion, in which he writes as follows:

> It's at this time that I've been constrained to write the story of Ḥātim,
> A terrible period, a time of wrongdoing, in which no one takes pleasure.
> The days and nights pass miserably in schemes and worries—
> Men must eat, but are consumed with grief for want of wealth.
>
> *it wele Ḥātim dā qiṣṣah likhṇā payā asā'īṅ*
> *samāṅ bhaiṛā waqt ẓulam dā shauq kise nūṅ nāhīṅ*
> *dīṅh te rāt dalīlīṅ fikrīṅ jhoreyāṅ nāl̤ wahāwe*
> *riẕq khāwaṇ̤ bandeyāṅ dā baṇ̤eyā te zar dā ġham khāwe* [276]

This description of the miserable 1810s has two aspects. On the one hand, it is assuredly a description of the state of Murālah society at large. Aḥmad Yār goes on to lament that hard times have made his fellow men grasping and covetous. His position as imam of the local mosque and spiritual leader leads him to remonstrate against such greed, to little effect, although he holds out some little hope that the composition of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* and the exemplarity generosity of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī will make a dent in their stinginess. This negative portrait of the Murālawīs is consistent with his condemnatory response to their handling of the mosque debacle, and by 1814 we find him insulting them in the *Ḥātim-nāmah* as well.

But it is equally likely to be a description of his own difficult position. Aḥmad Yār was a hereditary physician (*ḥakīm*), and is not known to have held any land, at least at first; therefore he depended upon his skill as a service provider in order to make ends meet. When the locals became tight-fisted and did not pay for his services, Aḥmad Yār was put into difficult straits,

[276] Aḥmad Yār 1923, 5.

and he alludes more directly to this fact later in the book. Aḥmad Yār may have been the king of poetry and the treasurer of literary wealth according to Miyāṅ Muḥammad Baḳhsh, but when it came to pragmatic power and cold, hard wealth, he makes it clear again and again that circumstances were not as he would have wished. However, in 1812 Aḥmad Yār did not give any sense of how his poetic labour might lead to an escape from his economic troubles. For he does appear to have seen the *Ḥātim-nāmah* as part of a possible solution to his problems.

Two years later, when the *Ḥātim-nāmah* is brought to a close, the connection is much clearer. At this point, Aḥmad Yār tells us, "I have made this gift for the sake of asking a reward [*asāṅ in'ām mangaṇ dī ḳhāṭir tuḥfah eh baṇāyā*]." He then claims that he has written the work at the request of "Rājā Baḳhtāwar," "the Fortunate King," evidently an epithet for Ranjīt Siṅgh ("*Ḳhwāhish dī farmā'ish ho'ī Rāje Baḳhtāwar dī*"). The ruler is mentioned under his customary name a few lines down in a laudatory verse about the extent of his dominions:

> Attock and Multan were attacked, and all the way to the Jamuna River,
> By the time I wrote this, it was Ranjīt Siṅgh's reign.
>
> *Aṭakoṅ te Multānoṅ caṛhde tā Jamunā dhā'ī*
> *tāṅ te rāj Ranjīt Siṅghe dī jāṅ likh kītī āhī* [277]

The attacks on Attock and Multan happened a few years before the writing of the *Ḥātim-nāmah*. Their mention indicates how far north and how far south the Lahori powers had reached by 1814, and the mention of the Jamuna River adds a huge eastward distance to the area. Rather than a simple statement of historical fact, this verse was probably a piece of flattery for the ruler who is said to have commissioned the work. Aḥmad Yār's late revelation that the *Ḥātim-nāmah* was written at Ranjīt Siṅgh's instigation—that it was his *ḳhwāhish* and that he made the *farmā'ish*—is strangely placed, however. Works in Persian and Urdu that were commissioned by

[277] Aḥmad Yār 1923, 283.

rulers generally divulged this information from the beginning, praising the ruler after the praise of God and the Prophet, or at least in the explanation of the reason for composition, the *sabab-i tālīf*. Either Saundhā's and Aḥmad Yār's *Ḥātim-nāmah*s are participating in a different tradition, or Aḥmad Yār has invented a royal origin for the text after the fact.

The Path to Patronage

Finally, I would like to ask two questions about Aḥmad Yār's *Ḥātim-nāmah*. Firstly, how can we explain the transition from avowed penury in 1812 to royal attention in 1814? Secondly, what made the *Ḥātim-nāmah* a compelling text for a poet to present to his patron? Let us deal first with the issue of Aḥmad Yār's path to patronage.

In the 1810s Aḥmad Yār was in his forties and he had already written several works including the story of Kāmrūp and Kāmlatā, a masterpiece completed at the end of the 18th century which earned him continuing recognition. As we have mentioned, he was probably not landed, but he was a *ḥakīm* like his father and grandfather before him, and he wrote a number of Punjabi texts on medicine including the *Ṭibb-i Muḥammadī* and the *Ṭibb-i Aḥmad Yārī*, which latter was successful in lithograph form. *Ḥikmat* was of course no mean profession; the highest-ranking Muslim in the Punjab at the time was Faqīr 'Azīz al-Dīn, Ranjīt Siṅgh's highly cultured personal physician who rose to become the *dabīr al-mamlakat* or Secretary of State. Together with his position as imam, Aḥmad Yār's profession would have given him some status and the ability to build social connections, even if it did not necessarily ensure a steady income.

Aḥmad Yār's devotional practices would have provided additional avenues for upward mobility. He made the pilgrimage across the Chenab River to the shrine of the important saint Saḳhī Sarwar Sulṭān at Dhaunkal; Harjot Oberoi tells us that as late as 1911 nearly eighty

thousand Sikhs described themselves as followers of Saḳhī Sarwar on the census, so that the pilgrimage would have been an opportunity to meet Hindu and Sikh devotees as well as other Muslims.[278] And, as I have already mentioned, Aḥmad Yār was swept up in the ʻAbd al-Qādir-mania that pervaded Punjab at the time, looking upon the Sufi saint as a locus of enormous divine power. Gujrat was an important center for the Qādirī order, a latecomer to India which had been invigorated by the saint Naushah Ganj Baḳhsh in the 16th century. Naushah Ganj Baḳhsh had been a native of Gujrat and his shrine is situated in modern-day Manḍī Bahā al-Dīn district, not far from Murālah. As Christopher Shackle observes, there is no particular evidence of Aḥmad Yār's having been a formal member of the Qādiriyyah order.[279] Nevertheless, he was sufficiently implicated in Qādirī networks to come into contact with a descendant of Naushah Ganj Baḳhsh, Sāhan Pāl Bībī, and to write a romance at her request.

By 1813, when the sixth part of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* was completed, the imam of the Murālah mosque had an interesting source of income, possibly helped by his devotion to Saḳhī Sarwar, that may have had something to do with his connection to the court. In 1813 Aḥmad Yār complains bitterly about Murālah and its people in a much more forthright manner than he had adopted when he began the story, accusing them of loose morals and of withholding payment from him. But now there are rays of hope. Deprecating his fellow Muslim townspeople, Aḥmad Yār writes:

> How much better is Nānak's party than they!
> They do not hide anyone's money, nor do they aggrieve anyone—
> The Lord has given me provision through the Sikhs
> they show respect, humility, and helpfulness—I've tested them a hundred times.
>
> *Nānak wāḷā panth ihnāṅ thīṅ caṅgā kitne ḥiṣṣe*
> *nah oh māl chupā'uṇ kise dā nah ranjānaṇ kisse*

[278] Oberoi 1994, 148.
[279] Shackle 2012.

riẕqe dā sabab merā rabb Sikkhāṅ waloṅ baṇāyā
adab tawāẓu‘ ḳhidmat karde sai wārī azmāyā [280]

Aḥmad Yār's comments regarding Sikh-Muslim relations deserve a separate study. He deprecates fellow Muslims who toady Sikhs only in order to benefit from their support. However, his own insistence that Sikhs should be treated with the same respect that the Prophet accorded to Christians and Jews is accompanied by his expressions of thanks to the Sikhs for providing him with a living. He does not appear to mean that these generous Sikhs give him money for being the imam of the crooked local mosque. We may speculate that they were, first of all, medical patients of his and consulted him regarding other matters that a *ḥakīm* would have been expected to know, such as astrology and various forms of divination. But apparently he performed another role for the Sikhs that would have been highly unusual for a Muslim *ḥakīm*. He writes:

Some say, "Respect to you, Miyāṅ!," and the Sikhs make much of me;
Some call me astrologer, and some call me a *bhā'ī*.

ko'ī ākhe adab Miyeṅ dā Sikh karaṇ waḍiyā'ī
ba‘ẓe kahṇ nujūmī miyāṅ ba‘ẓe kahṇ bhā'ī [281]

Shahbāz Malik understands this verse to mean that Aḥmad Yār was a *bhā'ī*, an important authority figure to the Sikh community, at the same time as he was an imam to the apparently ungrateful Muslims of Murālah.[282] I am not aware of whether such a situation would have been possible or precedented. Certainly Aḥmad Yār could have possessed some of the requisite knowledge.

In any case, when he says that the Sikhs give him provision, he does not simply mean that they pay him per session for his services as an astrologer or *bhā'ī*. Perhaps as a result of his

[280] Aḥmad Yār 1923, 230.
[281] Aḥmad Yār 1923, 230.
[282] Malik 1984, 33.

connections among people of status and among the Sikhs, he is already a stipendiary of the Lahore court in 1813, if we are to believe his own testimony, referring to "that which I receive from the King annually or semiannually [*gharoṅ rāj deyoṅ qismat jihṛī warhe chamāhīṅ āwe*]." It is not at all clear what this stipend was for; whether it was a general recognition of Aḥmad Yār's literary talents, a grant to help the *Ḥātim-nāmah* along to completion, or, indeed, something that had nothing at all to do with the literary side of his life. Given that Aḥmad Yār was already being paid on a regular basis by the Lahore darbar, it is understandable that he may have received some intimation from Ranjīt Siṅgh's court that the *Ḥātim-nāmah* was a suitable work to present. And it makes it much less unreasonable for him to expect a reward from a quarter whence money was already flowing to him. The caveat must be added that the picture of the *Ḥātim-nāmah*'s patronage situation is very sketchy, unlike the information that we have of the inception of Aḥmad Yār's Persian work, the *Shāhnāmah-i Ranjīt Siṅgh*, commissioned by Rājā Gulāb Singh around 1838. It is not even clear that the *Ḥātim-nāmah* was accepted in Lahore. Shamsher Siṅgh Ashok tells us that Ranjīt Siṅgh's library did contain a work of that name, but it is impossible to say whether this was in Punjabi, Braj, Persian or Urdu.[283] However, the fact that we have solid knowledge that the later *Shāhnāmah-i Raṅjīt Siṅgh* was patronized by the Lahori court makes it quite plausible that the *Ḥātim-nāmah* was accepted by Raṅjīt Siṅgh earlier on, paving the way for the *Shāhnāmah*.

Panegyric and Exemplarity

Why would both Saundhā and Aḥmad Yār choose the *Ḥātim-nāmah*, a romance, to translate for their ruler? We have already seen in part why using the name and fame of Ḥātim would have been a potent panegyric strategy, but in order to more fully answer the question

[283] Saundhā 1982, 19.

we must consider the relationship that panegyric had to the romance genre to which the *Ḥātim-nāmah* is and was most often understood to belong.

Gérard Genette's concept of the "paratext," already used several times in previous chapters, is useful for thinking through this relationship. A paratext is first of all an element of a text that lies at its limit, determining its reception. The preface is perhaps the most cogent example of a paratext—and indeed the preface of a patronized or dedicated work was the most common place where we find panegyrics in Islamicate texts—but afterwords, footnotes, and even chapter headings, titles, and illustrations might be understood as paratextual marginalia. Indeed, at this level, any intertext may be understood as a paratext; for instance the fragments of the romance that would have been recognized as belonging to the genre of historiography can be understood as straddling the inside and outside of the text, and directing the audience to receive the text in a particular manner, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

More important in the case of the panegyric is Genette's insistence that the paratext is not only "heteronymous" to the main text, as fragments identifiable as historiography or panegyric can be understood to be generically heteronomous to the romance text in which they appear. The paratext is also an "auxiliary [...] discourse devoted to the service of something else which constitutes its right of existence, namely the [main] text."[284] For Genette the paratext's direction of the "proper" reception of the text is closely tied to the author's will, but because it is not at all clear that authorial intention is recoverable, it is better for us to understand the paratext simply as a textual fragment or element that directs reception in a non-oppositional manner. Very often a historiographical fragment in a romance text will not

[284] Genette 1997, 269.

be "paratextual" in this sense, if it clashes in some manner with the expectations set up by the audience's understanding of the main text as a participant in the opposing romance genre.

As an auxiliary paratext, the panegyric, wherever it might be positioned within the romance, directs the romance's reception in some manner. Indeed, panegyric elements within romances are particularly important because their control of the romance's reception usually points to how the romance is to have an effect upon a particular real-world audience, namely the object of the panegyric, who is often the actual or intended patron. Clearly this purpose undermines the late-nineteenth and twentieth-century notion that romances were ineffective. The panegyric was a genre that, almost by definition, was understood as tending towards effect. In the case of courtly texts in particular, panegyrics within romances often point to the function of the romance as an object of exchange in the world. So it was with Aḥmad Yār's *Ḥātim-nāmah*.

As we have seen, the power of repeated commemoration of the name of Ḥātim built up a sort of social capital associated with this name, producing its exemplarity. Aḥmad Yār recognizes the exemplarity of Ḥātim and the potency of his name quite explicitly:

> If someone showed enormous humanity, it would be said
> that the king of these times was like Ḥātim.
>
> *je ko'ī lakh murawwat karsī pher oh kahsī ehā*
> *es zamāne wic fulānā rājā Ḥātim jehā* [285]

The repeated mention of Ḥātim's good name in royal panegyric heightened his exemplarity and hardened the comparison of generous kings and Ḥātim into a powerful convention. This kind of comparison was not merely descriptive; it also had a quite obvious prescriptive function. When Fā'iz Dihlawī, inheriting his critique of the panegyric from Ibn Qutaibah, says

[285] Aḥmad Yār 1923, 283.

that to praise powerful men is servile and that the only exceptions are expressions of gratitude, what makes the second acceptable is that it acknowledges praiseworthy deeds that have already taken place, whereas praise more broadly can be arbitrary. But what this critique apparently overlooks is the potentially prescriptive intent of praise. The dual descriptive/prescriptive form of praise is evident in Sa'dī's work and finds expression most explicitly in the several accounts of Ḥātim in his *Bostān*. The *Bostān* functions as a manual of ethical advice for Sa'dī's patron Abū Bakr b. Sa'd, and Ḥātim's generosity is presented as a model for emulation. Praise and prescription are inextricable in comparisons to Ḥātim, because, in the process of connecting the *nām*—let us say the reputation—of Ḥātim to that of the patron, the praise-poem produces the expectation that the patron will not falsify its claim by not living up to it. This is why the comparison to Ḥātim is such a crafty transactional stratagem for the client: even as the *Ḥātim-nāmah* gives to the patron the kind of image that he desires, it puts him under a kind of obligation to live up to that image by being generous to the client author.

Aḥmad Yār certainly shows an awareness of the advantage of presenting the *Ḥātim-nāmah* as a royal gift. He is quite bold about declaring that he wrote it in order to get a reward from Ranjīt Siṅgh. But moreover, from the very beginning, he is aware that the story of Ḥātim is not simply an entertainment but a work of *adab*, and that Ḥātim is an exemplar to be emulated by his audience. He writes as follows:

> May he who hears the story of Ḥātim tread Ḥātim's path,
> May he give whatever he may possess, little or great, in the name of God.
> On Judgement Day, the shade of a green flag will be upon the heads of the generous,
> and the one holding Ḥātim's hand will go foremost.
>
> *Ḥātim dā ko'ī qiṣṣah suṇ ke Ḥātim dī rāh calle*
> *thoṛā bahutā nām ḳhudā de dewe jo kujh palle*

roz qiyāmat sar saḳhiyāṅ de sabz jhanḍe dā sāyah
Ḥātim de hath phaṛeyā hoyā hosī agge wahāyā [286]

This otherworldly argument once again has its roots in Sa'dī's discussion of Ḥātim's generosity in the Bostān, which makes much the same point: exceptional generosity leads to a good name in the world, and this is important for a ruler, but the world is not enough, and generosity considered as a religious duty will lead to salvation in addition to worldly fame. Saundhā in his Braj *Hātamnāmā* makes a similar point, drawing upon Indic discourses on the virtues of giving or *dāna*. The *Ḥātim-nāmah*'s ability to present this conjunction of worldly and otherworldly motives to give (cynically speaking, to give to the poet) further increases its power for both the patron and the poet.

Although our picture of the *Ḥātim-nāmah*'s patronage situation is far from clear, its case is the clearest that we have when it comes to patronage of poetry by the Lahore darbar, second only to the comparatively lucid story that we possess of the manner in which Aḥmad Yār's *Shāhnāmah-i Ranjīt Siṅgh* was brought into existence at the order of Gulāb Siṅgh. To reiterate the salient points, I have speculated that Aḥmad Yār's professional position and his practice of *ḥikmat*, together with his devotional activities and possible work as a *bhā'ī* for the Sikhs, could have given him a basis upon which to gain mid-level connections who in turn possessed the ability to put him into contact with the high and mighty. His literary reputation, particularly as the author of the story of Kāmrūp and Kāmlatā, was no doubt a great help to him as well. As we have seen, by 1813 he was receiving a stipend from Ranjit Siṅgh, and used this as a basis upon which to ask for a reward for his latest work, the *Ḥātim-nāmah*. The specific efficacy of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* as an item in a transaction between poet and patron is much clearer, and has also been discussed. The story of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī presented an exemplarily generous hero with a

[286] Aḥmad Yār 1923, 283.

long history of representations. The identification of his name and fame with the figure of the patron, in this case the sovereign, added a highly desirable sheen to the image of the king. This fact was so clear by the early 19th century that Aḥmad Yār had been preceded in dedicating a *Ḥātim-nāmah* to Ranjīt Siṅgh by a little-known Sikh colleague named Saundhā, and may even have taken his cue from this Braj version, for all we know. In any case, the desirable image that the *Ḥātim-nāmah* "sold" to the ruler was not only a description of what the ruler was already supposed to be, but an example to be followed and a coded way of exhorting the ruler to *become* generous. It was understood—or directly stated, in Aḥmad Yār's case—that the first recipient of the ruler's Ḥātim-like generosity should be the poet himself.

6. Ethics

In order for panegyric writings involving the figure of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī to be effective, the exemplarity—and particularly the *ethical* exemplarity—of Ḥātim had to have been established in the memories of audiences. The name of Ḥātim, and the fame of his generosity, was well-known, and this should have been enough to ensure that the *Ḥātim-nāmah* romances would have a whiff of the ethical about them. However, as we have seen in the first chapter, the effectiveness of Ḥātim's ethical exemplarity as refracted through the prism of the romance was not taken for granted by thinkers like 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sharar's essay on Ḥātim in *Mashāhīr-i 'ālam* consisted of a series of "historical" accounts of Ḥātim, most of which appear to have originated in the *Kitāb al-Aġhānī*. It is imperative to present the historical Ḥātim to the unaccustomed audience because, in Sharar's view, it is this representation of Ḥātim that conveys praiseworthy ethical qualities without distortion. But this memory of Ḥātim was supposedly in danger of being lost because of the extreme popularity of the Urdu *Qiṣṣah-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī* (by which designation, no doubt, Ḥaidar Baḳhsh Ḥaidarī's *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* was primarily meant).

By this point it should be clear that this argument holds only within Sharar's worldview, which was not universally shared, and within which it was, somewhat unusually, possible to effect a neat separation between history and romance. The tales of Ḥātim, while by no means the only ethically instructive romances, were surely among the most dramatically ethical, as they were able to activate the memory of previous texts featuring Ḥātim that participated in some manner in the genre of *aḳhlāq*.

I should note, in the first place, that just as I eschew the term *qaṣīdah* in favour of *madḥ* because of the potential for confusion with the former word, I use *aḳhlāq* rather than *adab*

because of the breadth of meaning of *adab*, which in Urdu has come to signify "literature" as a whole. Nevertheless it should be kept in mind that many of the texts or textual fragments discussed here as *aḳhlāq* could be and were described as *adab* as well. Unlike "panegyric," this genre identifier, "*aḳhlāq*," is generally applied to whole books rather than to short, often paratextual pieces of books. As in the case of many genres, a borderline runs through the *aḳhlāq* corpus on the basis of the presence of two prominent "family trees" within it. The two most renowned *aḳhlāq* texts—and therefore the two that generated the most imitators—were the *Aḳhlāq-i Naṣīrī* or *Nasirean Ethics* of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* or *Muhsinian Ethics* of Ḥusain Wā'iẓ Kāshifī. While the *Nasirean Ethics* has been showered with attention in the West due to its connection with Aristotelian philosophy (primarily the *Nichomachean Ethics*), it is almost certain on the basis of manuscript counts and proliferation of translations that it was the quite different *Muhsinian Ethics* that had the greater success. The *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* is divided into chapters, each of which is devoted to a particular ethical virtue, such as sincerity (*ṣidq*), justice (*'adl*), generosity (*saḳhāwat*) or bravery (*shujā'at*). The chapter is then composed of a series of tales in illustration of the virtue in question. This kind of structure was neither unique to the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* nor was it unprecedented. Nevertheless the influential force of the work was such that it must stand at the center of any study of representations of the particularly Ḥātimian virtue of generosity.

Before Kāshifī

However, the name of Ḥātim had been connected with ethical exemplarity long before Kāshifī's composition of the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī.* We might begin our discussion with Ibn 'Abd Rabbi-hi's tenth-century work, the *'Iqd al-farīd* (*The Unique Necklace*). A section of the *'Iqd al-farīd* deals with munificence (*jūd*), enumerating the most munificent (*ajwad*) men of the pre-Islamic

period (*jāhiliyyah*). Ibn ʻAbd Rabbi-hi stresses, however, that the only one of these paragons to have become proverbial for his munificence ("*maḍrūb bi-hi al-mi<u>th</u>l*") is Ḥātim al-Ṭ̲āʾī.[287] What follows are a series of accounts of Ḥātim's life and generous deeds. The section on Ḥātim in the *ʻIqd al-farīd* differs little from the accounts presented in the *Kitāb al-Aġhānī* by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī in the same century, with the exception of its explicit identification of the purpose of the accounts: to provide examples of a particular moral quality. The importance of the *ʻIqd al-farīd* lies, then, simply in that it, apparently for the first time, makes a clear attempt to mediate the reception of the accounts of Ḥātim and to focus the audience's minds on their ethical pith and essence.

Saʻdī Shīrāzī's representations of Ḥātim three centuries later are quite different from anything that preceded them, and not only because they were in Persian verse rather than Arabic prose. Prior to the *Bostān* and *Gulistān*, the mode of historiography that dominates Arabic sources—principally Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīrah*, the *Aġhānī*, and the *ʻIqd al-farīd*—is what Tarif Khalid has called "Hadith historiography." The Arabic sources bear traces of the ʻAbbāsid-period impulse to commemorate pre- and early Islamic history; in particular to recover an image of the Prophet Muḥammad's age with the safeguard of chains of transmission, but also to excavate the values of the *jāhiliyyah*, and record pre-Islamic poetry, often for philological reasons as the Arabic of the Qur'an grew increasingly strange to new generations. Ḥātim was, in the *Aġhānī*, a poet first and foremost, and the *ʻIqd al-farīd* quotes Ḥātim's verses copiously. Similar traits may be observed in later Arabic works that represented Ḥātim, such as the fourteenth-century *Sīraṭ al-nabawiyyah* of Ibn Ka<u>th</u>īr. The *Bostān* and *Gulistān* show no signs of any interest in Ḥātim as a poet, and the chain of transmission is reduced to a perfunctory "I

[287] Ibn ʻAbd Rabbi-hi 1981, 110.

have heard [*shanīdam*]."[288] The *Bostān* contains four stories of Ḥātim: his sacrifice of his best horse for the sake of feeding a messenger from the Sultan of Rūm; his mollification of the ruler of Yemen, who is jealous of his good name and wishes to have him murdered; the speech of Ḥātim's daughter before the Prophet; and the story of Ḥātim and an old man. With the exception of the story of Ḥātim's daughter, none of these accounts are attested in the Arabic sources. Nevertheless, the conventions of *naqlī* historiography are observed with some consistency, with a *shanīdam* here and a reference to a previous narrator there (during the last narrative, the poet assures us, "*zi rāwī cunān yād dāram ḳhabar*").[289] The thread attaching the tales to historical happenings is just secure enough to lend force to Ḥātim's example. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the ethics presented in the *Bostān* is very much shaped by its circumstances of production. Without being as bold as Aḥmad Yār in turning Ḥātim's exemplary generosity into a plea for the ruler to be generous to his client, the poet, Sa'dī's purpose is clearly to provide an example of virtue for the young Abū Bakr b. Sa'd:

> No man generous like Ḥātim
> has emerged from the revolutions of the world, except
> Abū Bakr b. Sa'd—for his grace
> places the hand of bounty upon the mouth of solicitation.
>
> *cū Ḥātim bih āzād-marde digar*
> *zi daurān-i gītī nayāmad magar*
> *Abū Bakr-i Sa'd ān kih dast-i nawāl*
> *nahad himmat-ash bar dahān-i sawāl* [290]

This reminds the audience that the book itself is nothing if not a guide to conduct for the young noble, and that it has a prescriptive purpose. It describes the ethics of Ḥātim in order that they may be replicated, and by suggesting that they already are replicated by Abū Bakr b. Sa'd, it suggests to the patron that it would be well for him to live up to the reputation for

[288] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 134 and 139.
[289] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 140.
[290] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 141.

generosity that he supposedly already possesses. The manner in which it does this will be examined more closely later in the chapter.

Kāshifī's Ḥātim and His Successors

Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain Wā'iẓ Kāshifī, the extraordinary fifteenth-century polymath patronized by the Timurid ruler Sulṭān Ḥusain Bāyqārā of Herat, produced the important but much-overlooked work the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah* in 1486. As I have shown in the previous chapter, this *Risālah* had a direct influence firstly upon the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* (composed in 1501 or 1502), and then upon the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*'s descendants, such as the Turkish (but Persian-language) *aḳhlāq* text *Dastūr al-wuzarā'* (1523) and the South Indian *Tuḥfah-i Quṭbshāhī* (1635). It was dedicated to Sulṭān Ḥusain, and evidently its writing was in fact commanded by him, if we are to believe Ḥātim's preface:

> The august and noble command has been issued that the lowly and mean Ḥusain Kāshifī, may he be forgiven, should capture in writing in the Persian tongue some of the stories and traditions of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī—the fragrant breezes of whose bounty and manliness are diffusing perfume in the garden of tongues and mouths, and the flashes of the sun of whose generous giving and generosity are as clear and resplendent as the bright day upon all of the cosmos' inhabitants—that he had seen in some book or heard from some friend, so that he would gain a total understanding and complete information of his particulars. On the basis that "The one who is commanded is powerless," he chanced to inscribe these lines, and to represent a bit of the lineage and traces of Ḥātim from the creditable histories and the trustworthy books that had come before his gaze. He is hopeful that it will prove acceptable to the alchemic gaze of his Majesty, so that this mean one may be honoured and exalted by the acceptance of this wretched present, for "presents are as worthy as their givers."
>
> *farmān-i humāyūn-i sharf-nifāẕ yāftah kih kamīnah-i be-biẓā'at Ḥusain al-Kāshifī 'afà 'an-hu az ān-cih az qiṣaṣ o āṡār-i Ḥātim-i Ṭā'ī kih nafaḳhāt-i karam o murawwat-ash dar riyāẕ-i alsinah o afwāh-i fā'iḥ ast wa lama'āt-i ḳhẉurshed-i buẕl o saḳhāwat-ash cūn roz-i roshan bar hamah-i 'ālamiyān wāẓiḥ o lā'iḥ dar kitābe dīdah yā az 'azīze shanīdah bāshad ba-'ibārat-i Fārsī dar qaid-i kitābat ārad tā bar ka-mā-hiya-i aḥwāl-i ū wuqūfī-i tāmm o iṭṭilā'ī-i tamām ḥāṣil āyad bar qā'idah-i al-ma'mūr ma'ẕūr ṡabt-i īn suṭūr ittifāq uftād wa az nasb o ḥasb wa aḳhbār o āṡār-i Ḥātimī ān-cih dar tawārīḳh-i mu'tabar o kutub-i mauṡūq bahā ba-naẕar āmadah būd shammah-i bāz numūd wa ummed-wār ast kih maqbūl-i naẕar-i kīmiyā-aṡar-i ān ḥaẕrat gardad tā*

> *kamīnah ba-qabūl-i īn tuḥfah-i muḥqar kih inna al-hidāyāt ʻalà miqdār mahdiyi-hā muʻazziz o sar afrāz shawad* [291]

In this passage a hint of each of our four genres are discernable. Kāshifī declares that the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah* is to consist of some "stories" (*qiṣaṣ*) of Ḥātim, but that these tales are not the "false romances" of the *ʻaqlī* historiographers is seen by his typical insistence that his sources are "trustworthy histories" (*tawārīḵh-i muʻtabar*). The book is written for a ruler who takes an interest in Ḥātim's generosity, which interest is noted after a panegyric description of the ruler's own generosity; he is

> adorned with the ornaments of [...] the jewel of natural generosity and ennobled and exalted by the nobility of munificence and beneficence, of frequent giving, and high magnanimity.
>
> *ba-[...]ḥilyah-i saḵhāwat-i jabalī muzayyan o muḥallà wa ba-sharf-i jūd o samāḥat o kaśrat-i baẕl o ʻulw-i himmat musharraf o muʻallà* [292]

Kāshifī's *Risālah* is set up from the beginning as place where these genres may assemble. On the face of it, it is primarily collection of romances or a work of transmission-based history—it is the preface that sets it up for the audience as a work on ethics, and one directed towards a prince, both as a mirror in which he may see himself, and as the original of which he himself strive to become a mirror.

The bulk of the *Risālah* is made up of a series of *aḵhbār* or accounts of Ḥātim, beginning with his genealogy, and ending with stories of his family after his death. Most of these accounts can be traced either to the *Aġhānī* or to the *Bostān* or *Gulistān*, although there are a number whose provenance has proven difficult to ascertain. This is not on account of Kāshifī's slovenliness as a historian. While he does not emulate Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's practice of providing long chains of transmission, he often provides some sort of reference. Before

[291] Kāshifī 1941, 4–5.
[292] Kāshifī 1941, 4.

recounting the generosity of Ḥātim's son 'Adī, he notes that the tale comes from 'Aufī's *Jawāmi' al-ḥikāyāt*,[293] while another story is referenced as being drawn from a biography of the Prophet, the *Kitāb Zalāl al-ṣafā fī sīraṭi al-Muṣṭafà.*[294] His genealogy of Ḥātim—unlike that of the *Haft siyar*—tallies with Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's,[295] and he provides links to historical facts even when recounting tales from Sa'dī. The story of the Byzantine emperor's mission to Ḥātim to demand of him his famously swift horse, is clearly taken by Kāshifī from Sa'dī, and the text quotes the *Bostān* as an indirect way of indicating this source. However Kāshifī provides additional touches, informing us that the covetous ruler of the Byzantines was Heraclius (r. 610-641).[296] At the very beginning of the main portion of the *Risālah* Kāshifī provides a partially romance-like chain of transmission: "Narrators of excellent perception and informants sincere in their narration [...] are agreed that... [*rāwiyān-i bāhir al-dirāyah wa muḳhbirān-i ṣādiq al-riwāyah* [...] *muttafiq and kih ....*"[297] Reading only the *Risālah*'s main portion, the genre of *aḳhlāq* would be evident only by the choice of accounts, all of which have something to do with Ḥātim's ethical exemplarity, and almost nothing to do with his poetic skill, or his part in raids or in politics—excepting the interesting detail that Ḥātim was related to the Laḳhmid monarchs through his mother, an important morsel of information for Suḷṭān Ḥusain if he were to accept Ḥātim wholeheartedly as worthy of emulation by nobility.

It is the preface that establishes *aḳhlāq* as the dominant genre of the book. Here Kāshifī expatiates at length on why generosity (*jūd*, *saḳhā*, *karam*) is at the very head of the list of virtues. The very existence of the world is described as an act of generosity on the part of God: "Out of His munificence, He created the world's being [*zi jūd-ash wujūd-i jahān āfirīd*]"—Kāshifī

[293] Kāshifī 1941, 53.
[294] Kāshifī 1941, 33.
[295] Kāshifī 1941, 6.
[296] Kāshifī 1941, 18.
[297] Kāshifī 1941, 6.

uses the partial homonymy of *jūd* (munificence) and *wujūd* (being) to underscore the relation of primordial generosity to all that exists.[298] He uses this device again further on, when he warns that existence without generosity is as good as nonexistence:

> Being without munificence is tantamount to nonexistence. The munificent man is commemorated by the world even though he perishes.
>
> *wujūd-i be-jūd dar ḥukm-i ʻadm ast wa mard-i jawwād agar-cih fānī shawad maẕkūr-i ʻālam* [299]

Commemoration (*ẕikr*) is not for the ungenerous, and only through commemoration of one's name is one able to survive in the world after death. This logic of worldly survival, already glimpsed in Saʻdī's verse on the name of Ḥātim (also quoted by Kāshifī) is the strongest inducement to generous behaviour in Kāshifī's arsenal. Sulṭān Ḥusain will, like Ḥātim Ṭā'ī live on in the world, if he only makes a name for himself by means of his generosity. This argument, which we have already dealt with in the previous chapter, had its detractors. But Kāshifī also has another argument to coax the ruler and any other audience members to act generously: the promise of a felicitous afterlife. He quotes the Prophetic tradition that has Muḥammad commend generosity: "The generous person is near to God, near to Heaven, near to humankind, and far from the Fire [*al-saḳhī qarīb min Allāh qarīb min al-jannah qarīb min al-nās baʻīd min al-nār*]."[300] It is the Prophet who most strongly represents this alternative, which is offered in other texts as well.

The *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah* provided the material for Kāshifī's subsequent mentions of Ḥātim in his well-known and archetypal *aḳhlāq* work, the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*. Maria Subtelny has highlighted the lack of attention given to this work so far, despite its enormous popularity throughout the Islamicate world, including India. This is perhaps in part because of its dearth

[298] Kāshifī 1941, 1.
[299] Kāshifī 1941, 3.
[300] Kāshifī 1941, 1.

of theoretical argumentation, in contrast to philosophical *aḳhlāq* works in the *Aḳhlāq-i Nāṣirī* mould, and its relatively loose "episodic" structure, in which a number of accounts or tales are grouped together as exemplifications of various ethical qualities, much as the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah* gives the reader a series of accounts of Ḥātim, collected from an unprecedented variety of sources, designed to tell us of various facets of his generosity. While the *Muhsinian Ethics* drew upon the *Nasirean Ethics* in places,[301] the effect of its structure was to make it a more practical handbook of morality than an exposition of an intricately-argued ethical system. It did not describe ethics themselves as much as it exemplified them via a series of short narratives, easily remembered and told. It repeated four of the tales told in the *Risālah-i Ḥātimiyyah*, three of which pertain to Ḥātim's interactions with rulers, and are explicitly grouped together:

> When the report of the chivalrousness of Ḥātim seized the Arabian Peninsula, all the way to the country of Yemen, and the fame of his generosity reached the nations of Syria and Byzantium, the king of Syria, the governor of Yemen, and the Byzantine emperor conceived an enmity toward him, for each of them made claims of generosity and bragged of chivalrousness.
>
> *cūn āwāzah-i jawānmardī-i Ḥātim jazīrah-i 'arab rā tā dār al-mulk-i Yaman firo-girift wa ṣīt-i saḳhāwat-i ū ba-wilāyat-i Shām o mamlakat-i Rūm rasīd wālī-i Shām o Ḥākim-i Yaman o Bādshāh-i Rūm ba-'adāwat-i ū bar-ḳhāstand cih har yak az eshān da'wà-i saḳhāwat kardande wa lāf-i jawānmardī zadande* [302]

In addition to these three narratives, the story is retold of the exhumation of Ḥātim's dead body, and the perfect preservation of his generous right hand.[303] These four tales are also told in the two manuscripts inspired by the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī*: the *Tuḥfah-i Quṭbshāhī* and *Dastūr al-wuzarā'*, whose status as proofs of the "visibility" of Kāshifī's text we have encountered in the previous chapter. Like others before him, Kāshifī presents the good name of Ḥātim as the most

[301] Subtelny 2003, 606.
[302] Kāshifī 1878, 46.
[303] Kāshifī 1878, 51.

obvious and compelling inducement to emulation of his generosity. However, this was not considered the only reason to take Ḥātim as an example, nor the most noble by any means.

Infidel Ethics

The *Haft siyar-i Ḥātim* and the *Ḥātim-nāmahs* that follow it are filled with brief moral statements and demonstrations of extreme generosity that link them to the *aḳhlāq* tradition. But the strongest link to past representations of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī and to discussions of his ethics may be found in the passages of the *Ḥātim-nāmah*s that suddenly break from the time of the story to a future when Ḥātim lies upon his deathbed and predicts the coming of the Prophet Muḥammad. It would perhaps be more fruitful, however, to discuss these remarkable portions of the romance after providing an explanation of the long tradition of debate that appear to have prompted them.

The recorded beginning of the controversy is no less remarkable than the *Ḥātim-nāmah*'s late response. This appears in the *Kitāb al-Aġhānī*, in the form of a tradition regarding the Prophet and the Muslim son of Ḥātim, 'Adī:

> 'Adī had submitted to Islam, and his submission was good. With regard to the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, it has reached our hearing that after 'Adī asked him, "Messenger of God, my father used to give, and take burdens upon himself, and was faithful to his contract, and was entrusted with noble character traits," the Prophet said, "Your father is a timber from among the timbers of Hell." The Prophet saw the dejection in his face, so he said to him "'Adī, your father and my father and the father of Abraham are in the Fire."
>
> *wa qad kāna 'Adī aslama wa ḥasuna islāmu-hu fa-balaġhnā anna al-nabī ṣallà Allāhu 'alai-hi wa sallama qāla la-hu wa qad sa'ala-hu 'Adī yā rasūla Allāh inna abī kāna yu'ṭī wa yaḥmalu wa yūfī bi-al-dhimmah wa ya'muru bi-makārimi al-aḳhlāq fa-qāla la-hu rasūl Allāh ṣallà Allāhu 'alai-hi wa sallama inna abā-ka ḳhashabaṭ[un] min ḳhashabāti jahannam fa-kāna al-nabī ṣallà Allāhu 'alai-hi wa sallama ra'à al-ka'ābaṭa fī wajhi-hi fa-qāla la-hu yā 'Adī inna abā-ka wa abī wa abā Ibrāhīm fī al-nār* [304]

[304] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:6720.

‘Adī’s assumption or hope is that his father’s superlative ethics form a kind of capital that is in some manner redeemable after his death. The Prophet’s blunt reply indicates that good works, however excellent, are not in themselves exchangeable for Paradise. What Ḥātim and the other two parents mentioned by the Prophet lack, ostensibly, is the proper sort of beliefs. If they are not believers, this tradition tells us, not even the most commendable ethics will save men and women from Hell.

This is, at least, the most obvious explanation, and in general discussions of Ḥātim’s perfection or imperfection as an ethical exemplar would focus on the question of whether he should be understood as a believer or a misbeliever, and whether this mattered. The exemplarity of Ḥātim would, after all, be much better and forceful if those who imitated his generosity could also be sure that their exemplar was well-rewarded for his pains. There was little point in emulating Ḥātim’s sacrifices in life, if the afterlife were to be sacrificed as well. The reports in the *Aġhānī* make it quite clear that Ḥātim could not be counted as a Muslim. According to the report of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib recorded in the *Aġhānī*, the Prophet, while freeing Ḥātim’s daughter Saffānah, praised her father in a limited manner: “The Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said to her, ‘Dear lady, this [generosity] is the attribute of the believer. Had your father submitted to Islam, we would surely have had mercy upon him.’ [*fa-qāla la-hā rasūl Allāh ṣallà Allāhu ‘alai-hi wa sallama yā jāriyah hādhihi ṣiffaṭu al-mu’min lau kāna abū-ka islāmiy*^{an} *la-taraḥḥamnā ‘alai-hi*]”[305]. Therefore those who would later tout the generosity of Ḥātim were often constrained to voice similar caveats, none turning them to account as brilliantly as Sa‘dī Shīrāzī in the *Bostān*, as we will see shortly. In a discussion of *istiġhfār* (seeking forgiveness), written in 1126, the scholar Abū al-Faẓl Rashīd al-Dīn Maibudī

[305] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1970, 19:6695

weighed in on the issue of Ḥātim's fate, and came to the same conclusion as most of his contemporaries. According to his book, the *Kashf al-asrār*, 'Adī asked the Prophet about his father, and the Prophet replied that his extraordinary generosity "did not avail him, for there was not a day when he said, 'My Lord, forgive me!' [*mā yaġhnà 'an-hu wa lam yaqul yaum*^{an} *rabbī 'ighfir lī*]."[306]

In the *Bostān*, Sa'dī seizes upon this shortcoming of Ḥātim's to present to his patron the possibility of bettering the most generous man of all. The coming of Islam gives Abū Bakr b. Sa'd the chance to gain both the worldly name and commemoration that Ḥātim gained, and something better besides:

> Praise of that famous one remains in books—
> but for you will remain both praise and heavenly reward.
> Ḥātim desired a name and fame from his generosity,
> but your struggle and striving is for the sake of God.
>
> *ṡanā mānd az ān nām-war dar kitāb*
> *to rā ham ṡanā mānd wa ham ṡawāb*
> *kih Ḥātim az ān nām o āwāzah ḳhẉāst*
> *to rā sa'y o jahd az barā-i ḳhudā-st* [307]

By emulating Ḥātim's generosity, the young Abū Bakr can not only equal his moral stature, but outdo it, because his purpose is nobler. This is one of the most striking arguments made with regard to the "economy" of generosity in discussions of Ḥātim. Enacting generosity for the "wrong" reasons is in effect to mar generosity's worth; ultimately the only correct reason to be generous is that God bids one to do so, or more literally, simply "for the sake of God"—*barā-i ḳhudā*. This logic bears several interpretations. One way of understanding Sa'dī's verses is to emphasize the soteriological capital, the *ṣawāb*, that is built up by the generous person who is also believer. Good deeds can be bartered, after death, for entry into Heaven. While this is

[306] Maibudī 1942, 4:41–42.
[307] Sa'dī Shīrāzī 1977b, 141.

straightforward enough, the closing statement regarding generosity "for the sake of God" presents a fruitful paradox. On the one hand, the implication is that by being generous, one gains God—God is potentially a good in a transaction. On the other hand, we recognize the impossibility of this arrangement: God is transcendent and incomparable (*mutanazzah*) and cannot enter into an economy, strictly speaking. Therefore either generosity for the sake of God is tantamount to giving without hope of receiving, or the generosity of the creature is overmatched by the infinite generosity of a God performing the impossible by giving Himself.

Sa'dī's account specifies Ḥātim's specific shortcoming more precisely than those of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī or Maibudī. Ḥātim's generosity, according to the *Bostān*, is not for God or for its own sake, but for the sake of *nām o āwāzah*; name and fame. Evidently this imputation was not Sa'dī's own, for it was fleshed out much more fully by Ibn Kaṯīr soon after Sa'dī's time, in his fourteenth-century *Biography of the Prophet* (*Sīraṭ al-nabawiyyah*), which reproduced a hadith similar in its thrust to the one given by the *Aġhānī*, but worded quite differently, and legitimized by multiple chains of transmission. The first was quite simple: "Ḥātim was referred to in the presence of the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, and he commented, 'That man wanted something, and he attained it.' [*ḏukira Ḥātim 'inda al-nabī ṣallà Allāhu 'alai-hi wa sallama fa-qāla ḏāka arāda amr*^{an} *fa-adraka-hu*]."[308] The second is fuller, and recalls the *Aġhānī*'s version to some extent:

> Imām Aḥmad (b. Ḥanbal) stated that Yazīd b. Ismā'īl related to him, as did Sufyān, from Sammāk b. Ḥarb, from Marī b. Qaṭarī, from 'Adī b. Ḥātim who stated that he said to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, "My father was very generous to his kinsfolk and very active on their behalf; does he get something for that, some reward?" He responded, "Your father had sought something, and he attained it."[309]

[308] Ibn Kaṯīr 1964, 1:107. Trans. modified from Ibn Kaṯīr 1998, 75.
[309] Modified from Ibn Kaṯīr 1998, 76.

> *wa qāla al-imām Aḥmad ḥadaṯha-nā Yazīd b. Isma'īl ḥadaṯha-nā Sufyān 'an Sammāk bin Ḥarb 'an Marī b. Qaṭarī 'an 'Adī b. Ḥātim qāla qultu li-rasūli Allāh ṣallà Allāhu 'alai-hi wa sallama inna abī kāna yaṣilu al-raḥima wa yaf'alu yaf'alu fa-hal la-hu ḏhālika ya'nī min ajr[in] qāla inna abā-ka ṭalaba shai'[an] fa-aṣāba-hu* [310]

Ibn Kaṯhīr provides another version with a different chain of transmission, in which the Prophet's words are somewhat different: "Your father had wanted something, and he got it [*inna abā-ka arāda amr[an] fa-adraka-hu*]." To this report, an explanation is appended, stating that the "something" that Ḥātim desired was commemoration (*ḏhikr*). Ibn Kaṯhīr drives home his point by recounting an authentic hadith according to which the ranks of the hellbound include the man who is generous in order to have his generosity known.[311] These traditions, which may have been familiar to Sa'dī, insist that the very commemoration of Ḥātim's good deeds in which Ibn Kaṯhīr and others participated was the only purpose to which his ethical behaviour was bent, and as such it did not avail him when it came to seeking the greater rewards of the full pleasure of God, and eternal life in Heaven. Such traditions regarding Ḥātim, while not recorded in the authentic (*saḥīḥ*) collections of hadith, were reasons for wariness to those who would set up Ḥātim as a perfect ethical exemplar, and who would exhort others to follow his example for the sake of replicating his good name. The exemplarity of Ḥātim was possible and powerful because his name was commemorated with such frequency and accumulated such force with successive commemorations in well-known works such as the *Bostān*. Ironically, this commemoration, or at least Ḥātim's purported desire for it, is also the great flaw in his ethics.

The problem of Ḥātim's misguided purpose could not have been forgotten; Sa'dī and Ibn Kaṯhīr continued to be two of the most well-known authors in the Islamicate world well

[310] Ibn Kaṯhīr 1964, 1:107.
[311] Ibn Kaṯhīr 1964, 1:108, translations modified from Ibn Kaṯhīr 1998, 76.

beyond their own times. Kāshifī admits in the fifteenth century that Ḥātim's generosity "had no benefit besides [the acquisition] of name and fame [*juz nām o āwāzah fā'idah-e na-burd*]," and was exceeded by the generosity of the Prophet himself.[312] However, the assumption of a flaw in Ḥātim's motives rests largely on the premise that Ḥātim was a misbeliever and therefore could not have been motivated by love of God or Heaven. There is also the evidence of his poems, which in typical *jāhilī* style describe Ḥātim's generous deeds with loud braggadocio, but in the Islamicate East these were likely known only to those with the linguistic skills and desire to read the *Kitāb al-Aġhānī* in which these poems are recorded, and we have no evidence of anyone doing so for many centuries, perhaps until 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar sought to reconstruct the "historical" Ḥātim. Therefore it was the assurance that Ḥātim was not a believer that allowed Sa'dī to show Abū Bakr b. Sa'd that outstripping his generosity was possible for a Muslim.

It is this premise that is questioned in the *Haft sair* and its "descendants." Prior to the romance's retelling of the liberation of Ḥātim's daughter by the Prophet, in the main narrative, Ḥātim has been aided by a snake. This creature later turns into a human-shaped figure, who informs Ḥātim that his name is Shams Shāh, and that he was a *parī-zād* (a male *parī*) who rebelled against Solomon. He was turned into a serpent, and doomed to maintain that form until Ḥātim should come. In the words of the Urdu translation *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* (which differs little, for our purposes, from the Persian), an invisible voice informed the serpentine Shams Shāh:

> One day a young man of Yemen—thirty years of age—will come here, and when you see him you will resume your own form. You should busy yourself in your service with all your heart, for if he prays for your sake, you will maintain your own form, and if not, you will take the shape of a snake [one more].

[312] Kāshifī 1941, 58.

> *ek din jawān-i Yamanī tīs baras kā idhar ā'e gā to us ko dekhte hī apnī ṣūrat par ā jā'e gā. cāhiye kih tū us kī ḳhidmat meṅ bah dil maṣrūf rahnā kyoṅ-kih wuh tere ḥaqq meṅ du'ā mānge gā to tū apnī ṣūrat par rahe gā. nahīṅ to sāṅp kī shakl par ho jā'e gā* [313]

Upon hearing Shams Shāh recount this story, Ḥātim promptly performs the prayer that was foretold: "Ḥātim arose, bathed and put on clean clothes, and prayed for the *parī-zād*. His prayer was accepted in the court of the Creator of the Earth and Heavens [*Ḥātim ne uṭh kar ġhusl kiyā kapṛe pākīzah pahne parī-zād ke ḥaqq meṅ dil se du'ā kī us kī du'ā dar-gāh-i ḳhāliq-i arẓ o samā meṅ qubūl hū'ī*]." The question then arises, if Ḥātim was not a Muslim, how is it that he prayed to the correct god, and had his prayer answered? The romance explains: "Though Ḥātim was of the Jewish people, yet he knew God to be one, and day and night he busied himself in His remembrance [*Ḥātim agar-cih qaum-i Yahūd se thā par ḳhudā ko ek jāntā thā. din rāt us ke ẕikr men mashġhūl rahtā thā*]." Ḥātim is in fact represented as prognosticating the coming of the Prophet and recommending that his tribe should accept Islam, as his daughter does when she is captured by the Muslims.

There may have been some dim memory of the creed of the Banū Ṭai at work in this depiction of Ḥātim. During Ḥātim's time the tribe are said by Ibn Kalbī to have possessed an idol of human form made of red stone, and named Al-Fals.[314] It was, however, reportedly rejected by Ḥātim's son 'Adī at some point prior to the coming of Islām; after witnessing the impotence of Al-Fals 'Adī is said to have become a Christian (*tanaṣṣara*).[315] So 'Adī is reported to have said of himself,[316] and it is further said that he is a *Rakūsī*,[317] a word interpreted as meaning a non-practising Christian.[318] However this may have been, the romance hits on the

[313] Ḥaidarī 1972, 242.
[314] Ibn Kalbī 1965, 59.
[315] Ibn Kalbī 1965, 61.
[316] Ibn Isḥāq 1963, 4:1000.
[317] Ibn Isḥāq 1963, 4:1002.
[318] Ibn Isḥāq 1987, 639.

best way to preserve Ḥātim's exemplarity without discovering blemishes in it on account of his alleged misbelief. The "*agar-cih*" aside, arguing that Ḥātim was a *muwaḥḥid* or believer in one god changes the value of his exemplarity altogether. Making him out to be a Jew, then, accomplishes a great deal—although there were variations in the copies of the main Urdu translation that lead to the modern Majlis-i Taraqqī-i adab edition of *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* to state that Ḥātim was of the "*qaum-i Gabr*"—i.e., a Zoroastrian or a member of a similar non-Muslim community.[319] The edited *Haft sair*, however, agrees with most copies of *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* in stating that Ḥātim was Jewish, and provides another detail that Ḥaidar Baḳhsh Ḥaidarī evidently neglected to translate or did not find in his Persian source: "Ḥātim arose, bathed, put on new clothes, and prayed, bowing his head down in prostration and turning his face toward the Ka'ba. [*Ḥātim bar-ḳhāst, ġhusl kardah, jāmah-i nau poshīd wa sar bah sajdah nihād, rūy bah Ka'bah āwurd wa du'ā kard*]."[320] Here not only is Ḥātim a *muwaḥḥid*, but he is aware of the correct modern manner of prayer.[321]

The solution provided by the *Ḥātim-nāmah*s to the dilemma of exemplarity and misbelief is unique among texts that deal with the issue. Other equally surprising answers to this problem were circulating in India during the century prior to the first appearance of the *Haft sair-i Ḥātim*. For example the *Dabistān al-maẕāhib*, a well-known Indian work on various creeds written in the 1650s, probably by a Zoroastrian author, gives us the following anecdote regarding one Pratāb Mal Caḍhā, a member of the sect that the *Dabistān* refers to as the "Vedāntīs" (*Vedāntiyān*):

[319] Ḥaidarī 2009, 218.
[320] "Haft sair-i Ḥātim" 2007, 325.
[321] It would have been known to some of the contemporary readers and hearers of the *Haft siyar* that very early Muslims in fact prayed towards Jerusalem, and that Muḥammad changed the direction of prayer only later.

> A Muslim said to him, "From among the misbelievers, two will go to Heaven: Nausherwān and Ḥātim." Pratāb Mal answered, "In any case, according to your faith two from among the unbelievers will go to Heaven—but our belief is that not a single one of the Muslims will go to Heaven!"
>
> *musulmāne ū-rā guft do tan az kāfirān kih Nausherwān o Ḥātim bāshand bah bihisht birawand Partāb Mal jawāb dād kih bāre bah ʻaqīdah-i shumā do tan az kāfirān bah bihisht ḵẖwāhand raft ammā iʻtiqād-i mā ān ast kih hec yake az musulmānān bah bihisht barawand* [322]

Ostensibly it is the overpowering virtuousness of the just Sassanian king Nausherwān and the generous Arab Ḥātim that causes this otherwise unexplained belief in their unique exemption from the torments of Hell. In being granted Heaven in spite of their misbelief, the two would also have retained their exemplarity whole, and indeed the wondrousness of their exceptional position raises their exemplarity to lofty heights. Another similar and even more extraordinary account was given by the poet and prosewriter Fuzūnī Astarābādī in his *Buḥairah*, written in Kashmir. Fuzūnī claims that "the people of traditions and commentaries [*ahl-i ḥadīś o tafsīr*]" have recounted the following story regarding the Prophet during his ascent to Heaven (*miʻrāj*):

> [Muḥammad] saw two gardens of Paradise in Hell, full of houris and palaces. He asked the Trustee of Revelation [i.e., Gabriel], "What place is this?" Gabriel said, "This is the place of Nausherwān the Just, and the station of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī. They have reaped the fruit of their justice and generosity, for His Glorified Majesty has kept in mind that the misbeliever should not be brought into Heaven, and the just and generous should not be tormented. Therefore even in Hell they have found the leisure of Heaven."
>
> *do rauẓah-i bihisht rā dar dozaḵh dīdand mamlū az ḥūr o quṣūr az Amīn al-Waḥy pursīdand kih īn cih makān-ast Jibrīl guft īn makān-i Nausherwān-i ʻādil ast wa maqām-i Ḥātim Ṭā'ī kih natījah-i ʻadālat o saḵhāwat-i ḵẖwud yāftah and cih Ḥaẓrat-i jalāl-i subḥānī yād kardah and kih kāfir rā bah bihisht na-barand wa ʻādil o saḵhī rā āzār na-kunand az īn jihat dar dozaḵh farāġhat-i bihisht yāftah and* [323]

It appears, then, that the romances of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī participated in a tradition of representations that sought to make sure that exemplarity of the figure was unimpaired. Indeed the author of

[322] Mullā Mubād Shāh 1963, 155.
[323] Fuzūnī Astarābādī 1910, 227

the *Haft sair*, presented with a variety of solutions to the problem, chose the safest route by making the generous hero out to be a *muwaḥḥid*, in spite of alleged prophetic traditions to the contrary.

A Note on Ḥātim's Gifts of Flesh

Finally, there is a practical aspect of Ḥātim's ethics that is worth noting. Sharar and other critics attacked the romance for being far-fetched and therefore ineffective. The feats of generosity performed by Ḥātim in the romances are indeed extreme in their nature, and it would perhaps be enough to say that the more extreme the works of an ideal exemplar, the better. But it is also likely that the highly intertextual, "motif-centred" nature of the romance genre contributed to the impression that these tales of munificence left upon Indian audiences in particular. Those familiar with the motifs underlying such "far-fetched" accounts and cognizant of a backdrop of other similar stories circulating in India and to the west would likely have been more receptive to these wondrous tales than those who did not hold them in their memories, or made little of them if they did.

Perhaps the most striking of these accounts within the romances are not the plentiful scenes in which Ḥātim makes rhetorical offers to give up his life for the sake of others, but the episodes in which he actively offers his body—in whole or in parts—to assuage the hunger of non-human creatures. Ḥātim makes several such offers in most versions of the romance, beginning with the introductory portion at the beginning of the book, in which Ḥātim, riding his horse, encounters a hostile lion. The merciful hero is unwilling to kill or even to wound what he calls, in Ḥaidarī's version, a "dumb beast" (*ḥayawān-i be-jān*), and finally decides that it would be a more virtuous act to allow himself to be eaten, and so he announces to the lion that he is ready to offer his own meat up for its delectation, or alternatively the meat of his horse.

The lion, though tongueless, recognizes the nobility of this supreme act of generosity, and grovels shamefacedly at Ḥātim's feet before slinking away, overcome by the hero's ethical power.[324] This strange scene is outdone by the tale of Ḥātim's first quest.

At the outset of the quest, Ḥātim is wandering about when he spies a wolf chasing after a female deer in order to eat her. As the predator is about to seize his victim, Ḥātim transfixes him with a stern reprimand: "Villain! Beware what you are doing! This poor [doe] is with child, and milk flows in her udders [*ai nābakār! ḳhabardār kyā karta hai. yih ġharīb bacce-wālī hai, dūdh us kī chātiyoṅ se bahā jāta hai*]."[325] Thus the doe escapes. However, the wolf does not fail to seek redress for having been denied his prey. In the Persian text he is quite indignant, though he recognizes Ḥātim by his sympathy with the doe:

> For it is Ḥātim who shows generosity and kindness to the servants of God, and for this reason he is famous and has become well-known among both humans and animals. But today you have kept my food from my jaws; if only you would give me something to eat!
>
> *kih saḳhāwat o shafqat dar bāb-i bandagān-i ḳhudā Ḥātim mī-kunad wa az īn sabab dar insān o ḥayawān mashhūr ast wa ma'rūf gashtah imroz to qūt-i ma-rā az dahan az dahan-i man bāz dāshtī bāre cīze ḳhordan bah man dih* [326]

A conversation ensues in which Ḥātim asks the wolf what he would like to eat, to which the wolf replies, in Ḥaidarī's version, "The meat of the buttock is boneless; if you give that to me I will relish it [*surīn kā gosht be-haḍḍī hotā hai agar wuh do to ḳhūb sā cakhūṅ*]."[327]

Ḥātim's generous spirit does not fail him. He promptly unsheathes his knife, chops off one of his own buttocks and casts it to the wolf to eat. Later we see that this is no mean sacrifice; Ḥātim is near death due to the loss of blood.[328]

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[324] Ḥaidarī 1972, 22–23.
[325] Ḥaidarī 1972, 50.
[326] "Haft sair-i Ḥātim" 2007, 91.
[327] Ḥaidarī 1972, 51.
[328] Ḥaidarī 1972, 51–52.

The strangeness of this story is surely part of its efficacy rather than otherwise. Yet to early modern Indian audiences it would not have seems wholly foreign by any means. The story is analogous to two stories in a pair of earlier texts composed in Delhi during the Sultanate period. The second of these is well known: Ẓiyā' al-Dīn Naḳhshabī's *Ṭūṭī-namah* (*Parrot's Tale*), written in 1330 during the reign of Muḥammad b. Tuġhluq, and often supposed to be a direct translation of the Sanskrit *Shukasaptati* (*Seventy Parrot's Tales*). But Naḳhshabī in his preface indicates that his *Ṭūṭī-namah* was neither a translation nor an original work but an improvement on a previous text derived from an "Indian" (*hindwī*) source.

It is almost certain that Nakhshabi's source was the similar but somewhat more detailed *Jawāhir al-asmār* [*Jewels of Night-Tales*] of 'Imād b. Muḥammad al-Ṡaġharī, who probably wrote his text about a decade and a half earlier at the end of the reign of 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḳhaljī. In contrast to Naḳhshabī, Al-Ṡaġhari does refer to the *Jawāhir* as a *jarīdah-i mutarjamah* (translated book). In his preface he states that he wrote the *Jawāhir* out of his conviction that the most learned men of every age have produced translations from Indian books (again he uses the term *tarjamah*) to increase the fame of their rulers (and of themselves). He then describes the labour of poring over the *dafātir-i hinduwān*, the books of the Indians, none of which stir him much until he comes across the text destined to be translated by him, comprising seventy-two stories.[329] However, Al-Ṡaġhari's text is significantly different from his original, for reasons that he faithfully outlines, and it winds up containing only fifty-two stories, whence Naḳhshabī's number.

Briefly, the story in Naḳhshabī is as follows. A prince, coming to the edge of a pool, finds a frog shouting for help as he is about to be devoured by a snake. With a yell, the prince

[329] Al-Ṡaġhrī 1973, 16–17.

orders the snake to let go of his prey, but as soon as his command has the desired effect, the prince considers that he has unjustly deprived the snake of his food, and he cuts off a bit of flesh from one of his own limbs and gives it to the snake. The snake takes the flesh to his wife, and tells her the story of how he got it. She protests that no human being could be so kind toward another human being, let alone an animal, and to justify her misanthropy she quotes the Qur'an 2:30.[330] As an example of the strong parallelism that leads me to believe that the *Jawāhir* is the source of the *Ṭūṭī-nāmah*, the *Jawāhir* quotes the very same Qur'anic verse at this point in the narrative. The snake's family in the *Jawāhir* protests:

> Since when do the Children of Adam have such mercy and compassion? In the hearts of all of them there is unkindness. Isn't it the case that at the time of the creation of Adam—peace be upon him—the angels said, *What, will You set therein one who will do corruption there, and shed blood, while We glorify you with Praise and sanctify You?*
>
> *dar banī Ādam īn-cunīn raḥmat o shafqat az kujā bāshad kih dar ẕāt-i eshān hamah be-mihrī ast nah āḵhir hangām-i āfirīnish-i mihtar-i Ādam 'alai-hi al-salām malā'ikah guftand kih a-taj'alu fī-hā man yufsidu fī-hā wa yasfiku al-dimā'a wa naḥnu nusabbiḥu bi-ḥamdi-ka wa nuqaddisu la-ka* [331]

The snake responds to her prejudices by telling another story. One day, the tale goes, the prophet Moses was approached by a pigeon seeking refuge from an eagle. But the eagle demanded its food, and finally Moses promised to give the eagle a portion of his own flesh equal to the weight of the pigeon. As he brought out a pair of scales, the eagle and the pigeon revealed themselves to be the archangels Michael and Gabriel, and explained that they were testing the limits of Moses' chivalry.[332]

This story would have been familiar to any audience member with a thorough enough knowledge of the great Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*. In the second book of the *Mahābhārata* we are introduced to King Shibi, who like Ḥātim is an exemplar of generosity. In order to test King

[330] Naḵhshabī 1993, 164.
[331] Al-Ṡaġhrī 1973, 227.
[332] Al-Ṡaġhrī 1973, 228ff.

Shibi's virtue, the gods Indra and Agni metamorphose into a hawk and a dove, respectively. Fleeing the hawk, the dove alights on King Shibi's knee and seeks refuge. The hawk protests that he must have his food, and he and Shibi begin to argue the matter. Shibi maintains that according to the Law (*dharma*), the refugee must be protected, but for his part the hawk complains that withholding nourishment from him and from his family and effectively starving them to death runs counter to the Law. At last the hawk offers Shibi a solution: if the king will carve out a piece of his own flesh equal to the weight of the dove and give that flesh to the hawk, he will be satisfied. The king immediately cuts a chunk of meat from his own body and tries to balance it on a scale against the dove, but no matter how much of his own flesh he cuts, the dove remains heavier. Finally the king climbs up onto the scale, and Indra and Agni cast off their avian disguises, revealing the dilemma to be a test, and promising the "Law-knowing" Shibi eternal fame on account of his deed.[333]

Versions of the same story of Shibi appear in Indian Buddhist sources as well, including Ashvaghoṣha's *Sūtrālaṃkāra* and Kṣhemendra's collection of *jātaka*s (stories of the Buddha's lives) the *Avadāna-kalpalatā*, and the story is represented in a cave painting at Ajanta and in steatite relief in Gandhara. Sanskritists will recognize it as a *dāna* or "gift" narrative of the sort that recurs frequently in the *jātaka* tales, and specifically as an instance of the "gift of flesh" motif, recently discussed in a book-length study by Reiko Ohnuma.[334] Given the unmistakable parallels between the stories of Moses in the *Ṭūṭī-nāmah* and *Jawāhir* on the one hand, and the *Mahābhārata* (and doubtless in Indian oral narrative) on the other, it appears that this motif also found its way into Islamicate narratives.

We have three clusters of stories 1) the Shibi episode in the *Mahābhārata*, 2) the tale of

[333] Vyāsa 1988, 2:367–370.
[334] Ohnuma 2007.

Moses and its frame story of the frog and the snake in the *Jawāhir al-asmār* and *Ṭūṭī-nāmah*, and 3) the story of Ḥātim's gift of flesh in the Persian *Ḥātim-nāmah* with its various versions, and its translations into other languages. It would be satisfying to see these three clusters as being linked together in a genealogical chain of texts. However, as so often happens when orally performed romances are involved, it is impossible to tell whether and precisely how the three groups are related. Compared to the quite striking similarity between the stories of Shibi and Moses, the correspondences between the *Ḥātim-nāmah* and the other texts are not well-established. It is only possible for us to say that they share a single motif that was evidently circulating widely in India for many centuries, probably primarily through oral narration. While Al-Ṣaġharī's version was quickly forgotten, Naḵhshabī's *Ṭūṭī-namah* was extraordinarily "visible," and would certainly have been well-known in the early eighteenth-century India in which the *Haft sair* was apparently produced, yet it is quite possible that the author of the *Haft sair* had heard another story altogether.

The relationships between all of these texts may be even more complicated. In at least one instance, Ḥaidarī's Urdu translation echoes Naḵhshabī's text (which Ḥaidarī also translated as *Totā kahānī*) whereas the Persian original does not. In the Urdu *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil*, after Ḥātim has fed the wolf, he continues on his quest, but he is only able to walk a few paces before being overwhelmed by the pain resulting from the gift of flesh that he has made at the expense of his posterior. While Ḥātim writhes about on the ground, along come a pair of jackals who live in that place. They proceed to discuss Ḥātim's deeds and his predicament. Ḥaidarī's Urdu text has the she-jackal animadvert upon the vices of humankind: "Since when are there such possessors of humanity among human beings, and since when do they have mercy upon anyone's helplessness? [*insānoṅ meṅ kab aise ṣāḥib-i muruwwat hote haiṅ aur kab kisī kī be-kasī par*

raḥm khāte haiṅ]," leaving the scandalized male to protest—" For God's sake, what are you saying? [*barā-i ḳhudā yih kyā kahtī hai*]"—and to insist that humans are the *ashraf al-maḳhlūqāt*, the noblest of creatures.[335] Yet in the Persian source, by contrast, the female jackal glorifies the children of Adam without reserve, testifying that "Man is noble above all in Creation [*dar ḳhalqat ādam bar hamah sharf dārad*]." Bypassing the Persian *Qiṣṣah* of which it is a translation, the Urdu *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* hearkens back to Naḳhshabī. In Naḳhshabī, as we have seen, when the snake brings home a piece of the prince's flesh, his mate is incredulous that a human being could have made such a sacrifice: "Man is of those who aggrieve a hundred hearts a day and who wound a thousand hearts. Since when is there such purity and loyalty in him? [*ādamī az anhā-st kih roze ṣad dil biranjānīd wa hazār bāṭin majrūḥ kunad dar ū īn ṣafā o wafā az kujā-st*]"[336] Ḥaidarī in his preface to his translation the *Totā kahānī* makes it clear that he is aware of Naḳhshabī's version as well. If it is the case that the female jackal's words in *Ārā'ish-i maḥfil* deliberately echo Naḳhshabī, then it is clear that even within each cluster of texts, we cannot distinguish one master text as the channel through which all other texts in this cluster are nourished by the earlier cluster of texts.

However these episodes of the *Ḥātim-nāmah* may have been generated, what is clear is that in some manner they are echoes of narratives that would have been available in the memories of at least some segment of the romance's audience. While they were clearly wondrous, their articulation of the ethics of generosity would have been prevented from being received as simply absurd by the fact that they would have been to some degree expected, and formulaic. The marvellous motif by which Ḥātim's extraordinary generosity was expressed was already a well-accepted medium for such expression. It is only when forgetfulness erased the

[335] Ḥaidarī 1972, 53.
[336] Naḳhshabī 1993, 143.

comfortable power of such conventions that critics like Sharar could object that the romance of Ḥātim was “absurd” and an inappropriate vehicle for ethical exemplarity.

7. Conclusion

As in the case of any other texts, we cannot understand in isolation the genre of those participating in the kind of Urdu-Hindi, Persian and Punjabi verbal art that has been given the name of "romance"—a possibly misleading and baggage-bearing name if it is not glossed. As I have stressed time and again in these pages, a text's genre is never singular, and even singular genres must be understood in relation to the entire genre system. Therefore we have looked at the romance with an eye to its relationships with four selected genres, the history, panegyric, and book of ethics, although this is hardly the end of the long list of genres with which the romance interacts. The ghazal verses with which they are often peppered, the travel narratives (*safar-nāmah*s) that are echoed by their heroes' wanderings, the Sufistic allegory to which a number of them are oriented, and many other genres not touch upon here, are woven into the fabric of romances. At best this can be considered a very preliminary study of the great multitude of ways in which romances are inhabited by other genres.

In part for the sake of limiting our scope, and in part in order to tackle some of the most prevalent prejudices against the romance, the study has been organized around the objections of critics from the late nineteenth century onwards against the romance's far-fetchedness, and, concomitantly, the failure of its exemplarity. We have investigated the supposed opposition between romance and history, and reached the conclusion that their relationship was not always oppositional; that there was a notion of what I have called "transmission-based" historiography that, while different from romance, was not a negative image of romance, unlike "rational" historiography, which is perhaps better understood in the modern period as "true" historiography. Coming to exemplarity, we narrowed our focus, concentrating on the *Ḥātim-nāmah*s, and examined the generation of exemplary force. The re-

citation or commemoration of the name of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī as an exemplar of generosity led to the accumulation, in connection with that name, of a kind of capital, a cachet that made it highly desirable for an individual to be identified with Ḥātim, and with the supreme generosity that he represented. The inclusion of panegyrics to real or intended patrons within *Ḥātim-nāmah*s highlighted the value of such textual offerings in the patron-client transaction. Romances bearing such panegyrics as paratexts, became in some sense imbued with the character of a panegyric themselves, insofar as they were concerned with a representation of the exemplar to which the patron was being compared. The commemoration of Ḥātim's name similarly lent force to ethical manuals like the *Aḳhlāq-i Muḥsinī* and related texts. The *Ḥātim-nāmah*s did not fail to participate in the tradition of representations of Ḥātim's exemplary generosity, and the controversies that accompanied those traditions. It should be remembered that the three genres that have been scrutinized aside from the romance interacted with each other as much as they did with the dominant genre of romance, panegyric depending on ethical representation for its force, both panegyric and *aḳhlāq* depending sometimes on the features of history, and sometimes on those of the romance, and history bent towards purposes of ethical instruction as much as towards the simple depiction of past events.

Despite the severely de-historicized view of the romance that has been prevalent since Āzād and Ḥālī's time, it would be wrong to say that the romance or its ethos is dead in South Asia. One "survival" involves the Parsi theatre of the late nineteenth century, which from the beginning used romance narratives as the basis of its dramatizations. At the Bombay theatre, the Victoria Nāṭak Manḍalī, in 1872, Dādā Bhā'ī Suhrābjī Paṭel produced and acted in a dramatization of the romance of Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, having commissioned an existing Gujarati script

by Edaljī Jamshedjī Khorī to be translated into Urdū by Nasarwānjī Mihrwānjī "Ārām."[337] Plays based on such marvellous narratives appear to have been popular, and continued to be so when Bombay became home to the thriving Bollywood film industry, in which Parsis were major contributors early on, and which showed many signs of continuity with the Parsi theatre of the late nineteenth-century. Along with the stories of the Four Dervishes, Lailà and Majnūn, and so forth, the romance of Ḥātim Ṭa'ī was made into several films and television programs, into the late twentieth century and perhaps beyond. Another area in which we might detect a whiff of the romance is in the world of Urdu pulp fiction, which in stark contrast to novels and short stories, very often included jinns, demons, mind-readers, hypnotists, and other such "supernatural" figures to amaze and terrify its readers. Both Bollywood (and Lollywood) and pulp fiction were very much influenced by many other forms of art as well, of course: Western sci-fi, fantasy and horror, for example. Nonetheless, in them we see traces of the characteristics that once made romances so rapturously received—and disdained—in South Asia.

[337] Ārām 1969.

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