CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PREFACES

A hundred regrets! Mālik, unique in his age, has departed this world.
He was a calligrapher, a scholar, a darvīsh following the right path.
He was the Yāqūt of his age; the day when he left this world,
Has become the chronogram of his death: "Yāqūt of the century—Mālik."[1]

In this poetic chronogram in two couplets the Safavid calligrapher Malik's achievements and personality are conveyed: he is compared to Yaqut, a thirteenth-century calligrapher who was regarded as the greatest master of the "six scripts" (*aqlām al-sitta*, *shish qalam, khuṭūṭ-i sitta*), and the year of his death, 968 (1560–61),[2] is conveyed by an artful combination of words, each letter of which is assigned a numerical value, their aggregate totaling 968. The source of the chronogram is unknown. It is recorded in Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar* (Rose Garden of Art, 1596–1606), in its comprehensiveness a behemoth of art historical-biographical writing.

Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar* came at the end of a century of art history writing in Iran that had its origins in the late fifteenth century. From then onward, biographical notices of calligraphers, painters, and other practitioners of the arts were inserted into historical works. Biographies of poets mentioned that they were also skilled in calligraphy, depiction, illumination, and bookbinding, but as auxiliary competencies. Technical treatises (*risāla*) composed by calligraphers sometimes contained passages that recorded aspects of art history in either prose or poetry.

By the middle years of the sixteenth century a new form of writing, the album preface, had become established. Written to introduce bound collections of previously loose calligraphies, paintings, and drawings, these prefaces often contained lists of the names of practitioners and brief biographical notes about them strung together according to master-student affiliations. These genealogies of practice formed "chains" (*silsila*s) that were staged as histories of art. Each renowned master was a link in the chain of practitioners that made up the history of transmission: it was a means of organizing information that was also used in other branches of knowledge. Although Qazi Ahmad employs a similar scheme—chains of calligraphers subdivided according to script type and material—to organize his biographical vignettes, his text remains somewhat confusing because it combines elements of the album preface and the technical treatise (*risāla*), but its comprehensive scope more closely resembles biographical compilations in narrative form.[3] His *Gulistān-*

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[1] Qāżī Mīr Aḥmad Ibrāhīmī Ḥusaynī Qummī [henceforth Qāżī Aḥmad], *Gulistān-i hunar*, trans. V. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qāḍī Aḥmad, Son of Mīr-Munshī (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)*, Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers 3, 2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1959), p. 144. For a Persian edition, see idem, *Gulistān-i hunar*, ed. Aḥmad Suhaylī Khvānsārī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1352/1973).

[2] In his text Qazi Ahmad gives the year of death as 969 (1561–62), as noted by Minorsky (ibid., p. 144, n. 497).

[3] Collections of biographies are usually compiled according to profession or avocation and are arranged according to subdivisions of class or rank.

i hunar is usually referred to as a treatise, but in many respects it resembles a gargantuan album preface.

This book is about the album preface (*dībācha*), a critical, but neglected category of sources that records the names of masters in the Persianate art tradition and organizes them into a history of art. The prefaces also express a culture's view of the procedures, principles, and practices of art and give some idea of its criteria of judgment. They were prescriptive in several ways: they defined aesthetic canons and named key masters for each art form; they assessed the value of the album's contents through the use of metaphor and association and by extension also defined the criteria for the album's reception. Their purpose was to introduce an array of loose materials ordered in the album and key participants involved in the album's inception and execution.

As in any book, the preface was placed at the front of the album to introduce it and its contents. A few albums also had a conclusion.[4] The terms used for prefaces to albums—*dībācha* or *muqaddima*[5]—do not distinguish between literary forms and are used interchangeably. In books, a clearer distinction between the two words is sometimes found.[6] Chahryar Adle has discussed the etymology and the additional meanings of the term *dībācha*: an introduction to a work, a text written in a "florid" style, and an illuminated double-page frontispiece,[7] all definitions that apply to most album prefaces. Referring specifically to the preface by Dust Muhammad, Adle concludes that translating *dībācha* as "introduction," rather than "preface," would better express its function of introducing the album's contents.[8] But an analysis of the contextual relationship between prefaces and albums shows that the preface's role varies considerably: some refer more specifically to the album's contents than others. The preface does not always operate as a paraphrase or gloss on the album's content; its role might be limited to the more abstract purpose of praising God, the Prophet Muhammad, the album recipient and maker, and the finished album.

Admittedly neither "introduction" nor "preface" in its current usage[9] perfectly conveys

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[4] Sultanov observes the alternatives for the conclusion to a written book—an epilogue (*guftār dar ikhtitām*), a conclusion (*khātima*), or supplement (*tatimma, zayl*). He notes that the ending "is not a summary of the work itself" and hence different from our understanding of a conclusion. T. I. Sultanov, "The Structure of Islamic History Book (The Method of Analysis)," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 1, 3 (December 1995): 16–21; esp. 20. For a general summary to the preface/introduction, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [henceforth *EI2*], *s.v.* "Muḳaddima" (P. Freimark). Freimark discusses basic features of the preface, provides an overview of its history, and mentions some parallels with other non-Islamic prefatory traditions.

[5] Additional terms include *risāla* and *nāma* in Dust Muhammad and *ta'līf* in Shams al-Din Muhammad.

[6] Sultanov ("Structure of Islamic History Book," p. 16) notes that an introduction can be combined with a preface. He lists the topics addressed in the introduction, including information about the author, the objectives of composing the work, the methods used to do so, and in some histories, the theoretical principles of historical writing.

[7] Chahryar Adle, "Autopsia, in Absentia: Sur la date de l'introduction et de la constitution de l'album de Bahrâm Mirzâ par Dust-Moḥammad en 951/1544–1545," *Studia Iranica* 19, 2 (1990): 219–56; esp. 248–49 and n. 157. Both meanings are found in Arabic usage; in the singular form the word means a preface or text that is "embellished or composed in an ornate style," and in the dual construction, the word has the sense of "two cheeks," a metaphor for the illuminated pages of an open book or album. See "*dībāja*" in Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon: Derived from the Best and Most Copious Eastern Sources*, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863–93).

[8] Adle adds that "introduction" is the more appropriate word in both its French and English senses (ibid., p. 249).

[9] Introduction: "1: something that introduces: as *obs* (1): a preliminary step . . . (2): initial instruction: a first lesson: instruction in rudiments B (1): a distinguishable part . . . that provides explanation, information,

the function and form of these introductory texts.[10] Ideally some neologism could be formed that would unite the senses of the two and convey the idea behind the habit of alternating between the terms *dībācha* and *muqaddima* in the prefaces themselves. This interchangeability in terms is to be expected, perhaps, in a situation where a construct—the preface—developed originally for a written text was then used for a volume whose content was largely visual. The term "introduction" is not used here simply because its function today is so closely associated with providing historical background that aids comprehension and evaluation of the rest of the text. "Preface" has a greater range of meanings and does not suffer from the limitations of other potentially viable English terms, such as preamble, proem, or exordium.[11] The preface served an introductory role: it presented its object, the album, that had come into being for a particular circumstance.

Ten prefaces written in Persian between the years 1491 and 1609, in Herat, Tabriz, Qazvin, Mashhad, and Bukhara, form the core of this book. Nine of them were composed during the first century of Safavid rule (r. 1501–1732 in Iran). They appear in the codex-format album (*muraqqaʿ*), a bound collection of calligraphies, paintings, and drawings, arranged on pages and framed with margins of decorated papers. In producing the album, the compiler, who was often also the preface author, supervised the selection and preparation of materials, including their repair, resizing, reformatting and decoration with illumination, rulings, the addition of colored grounds, and their arrangement on the page. Sometimes the album's patron was directly involved in its production, which in many respects paralleled the techniques used to make manuscripts. By the early sixteenth century, manuscripts were no longer conceived of as gatherings of single paper sheets, but rather as aggregates of pieces, each page a patchwork. The compiler usually assembled the album at the behest of a royal patron or a high-ranking courtier. When it was finished, members of the court formed an audience of arbiters, some of whom were also practitioners, who would gather to contemplate its contents—calligraphies, paintings, drawings, and illumination—and discuss them.

Although the majority of prefaces are to be found in Safavid-period albums, the earliest ones date from late-Timurid times (dynasty ruled 1370–1506). Beginning in the late fifteenth century and continuing throughout the sixteenth, calligraphers, librarians, and court functionaries compiled albums and wrote prefaces for them. While several prefaces were commissioned in tandem with the production of the album, some appear to have been written along with other "pattern" texts, for example, prefaces to collections of poetry and models of official and unofficial correspondence. They were then collected to make an *inshā'* (lit.,

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or comment preparatory or preliminary to the main portion or subject." Preface: "2: the introductory remarks of a speaker or the author's introduction to a book usu. explaining the object and scope of what follows" (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* [Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1976]).

[10] The modern sense of preface derives ultimately from its medieval European usage, the *accessus ad auctores*, literally, "means of approach to causer [i.e., author, producer]." On the medieval European tradition of the preface, see Edwin A. Quain, *The Medieval Accessus ad Auctores* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986). Quain observes that Greek philosophical commentators first used the preface (ibid., p. 49). On the Renaissance preface, which evinces many interesting parallels to the Persian album prefaces, see Kevin Dunn, *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[11] Exordium: Lat., literally "the warp of a web," used to refer to a part of a speech, an introduction (Cicero and Quintillian). Preamble: "1: an introductory part (as to a book, document) . . . *specif*: the introductory part of a statute, ordinance, or regulation . . . .. " Proem: "1: a preliminary discourse to a longer piece of writing; 2: an introductory comment before a speech" (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*).

composition; epistolary art). Although the practice of writing prefaces for albums is attested in the late fifteenth century, the earliest known album to contain a preface dates from 1544–45.

Both album making and preface composition were also common practices at courts contemporary with the Safavids, the Ottomans and Mughals, as was the general practice of art historical–biographical writing. A preface composed by Muhammad Cenderecizade and copied by Haydar al-Husayni (dated 1572–73, in Constantinople), accompanied an album for the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95).[12] Another, made for the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–17), has a preface composed by Kalender Pasha (d. after 1614–15), the superintendent of construction (*emīn-i binā*) at the sultan's new mosque in Istanbul.[13] An art-historical text, also written in an Ottoman milieu, and one which takes second place only to Qazi Ahmad in the frequency of its use in art historical scholarship, is Mustafa ʿAli's *Menākib-i hünerverān* (Books of Deeds of the Skillful) completed in 1587.[14] It inspired numerous later biographical works.[15]

Several prefaces in Mughal albums are recorded.[16] Two of the most famous albums, the *Muraqqaʿ-i Gulistān* and the *Muraqqaʿ-i Gulshan*, dating from the reign of the emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27), each contains a preface. Mawlana Muhammad Husayn Kashmiri composed both.[17] The *Muraqqaʿ-i Shāhī*, assembled for Jahangir, has a preface composed by Abu al-Fazl Naguri ʿAllami,[18] and an album for Shahdukht Zayb al-Nisaʾ Begum, a daughter of Awrangzeb (r. 1658–1707) has one by Mulla Muhammad Riza Rashid Dihlavi.[19] In the beginning pages of the so-called Kevorkian album, ordered by Jahangir but added to as

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[12] For a description of the album and its contents, see Dorothea Duda, "Das Album Murads III. in Wien," in *Ars Turcica: Akten des VI. Internationalen Kongresses für Türkische Kunst, München vom 3. bis 7. September 1979*, 2 vols. (Munich: Editio Maris, 1987), 2:475–89. Duda provides details about the preface (its author, scribe, date, and place of copying).

[13] Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi [henceforth TSK], B. 408. The preface is unpublished. Kalender Pasha also composed a *Fāl-nāma* that he dedicated to Sultan Ahmed I (TSK H. 1703). He became a vizier on 2 Shawwal 1023 (5 November 1614) replacing Ağa Yusuf Pasha. Kalender Pasha had been assistant treasurer before his appointment as superintendent of construction for the new mosque on the Hippodrome. See Mustafā Naīmā, *Tārīḫ-i Naīmā*, 6 vols. (Istanbul, 1864–66), 2:131. I thank András Riedlmayer for this reference.

[14] For an edition of Mustafā ʿAli's text, see *Hattatların ve Kitap Sanatçılarının Destanları (Menākıb-i Hünerverān)*, ed. Müjgan Cunbur (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1982). A Persian translation of the text is also available, idem, *Manāqib-i hunarvarān*, trans. and commentary by Tawfīq H. Subḥānī (Tehran: Surūsh, 1369/1991).

[15] Among the earliest works to make use of the Ottoman sources, including Nefeszade (*Gülzār ül-ṣevāb*, between 1623 and 1640) and Mustakimzade (*Tuḥfe-i ḫaṭṭāṭīn*, 1759), is Cl. Huart, *Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l'Orient musulman* (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1908).

[16] The most comprehensive list to date is in Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī," in *Farkhunda Payām: Yādgārnāma-yi Ustād Doktor Ghulāmḥusayn Yūsufī* (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1359), pp. 148–229, esp. 202–10.

[17] For a discussion of the Gulshan album and excerpts from its preface, see Aḥmad Suhaylī Khvānsārī, "Muraqqaʿ-i Gulshan," *Hunar va Mardum* 73 (November 1968): 16–18. Mawlana Kalim composed a chronogram for it (ibid., p. 18). For Muhammad Husayn Kashmiri, see Mahdī Bayānī, *Aḥvāl va āṣār-i khushnivīsān*, 2 vols., 4 pts. (Tehran: ʿIlmī, 1363/1984 or 1985), 2, 3:702–4, no. 1001. Bayani does not mention prefaces among Kashmiri's works. See also Dānishpazhūh, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī," p. 207.

[18] C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 5 vols. (rpt., London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1970–), vol. 1, pt., 1, no. 709; and Dānishpazhūh, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī," pp. 202–3.

[19] Information about the preface is provided by Dānishpazhūh, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī," pp. 211–12.

late as the reign of Awrangzeb, the preface for a treatise on calligraphy by Mir 'Ali is found enframed in luxurious illuminated margins.[20] The Mughals also produced a considerable biographical literature which supplies many references to practitioners of the arts.

While comparison of these Ottoman and Mughal album prefaces to the Safavid examples can be instructive, their art traditions followed a different aesthetic path and developed into distinct regional traditions. Local factors resulted in stylistic hybrids; indeed, visual styles were deliberately forged to distinguish one dynastic group from its neighbor, a process of self-definition analogous to corporate identity that often had political and overtly ideological purposes. Although the great art traditions of the Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughals shared common roots (e.g., the early history of calligraphy), similar practices and media, and peripatetic practitioners who effected a measure of continuity across the three traditions, each grew more distant from the others as time passed. Comparisons of the art historiographic literature are tempting especially because they share a courtly language and common literary practices. But this book sets out to study preface composition in the first century of Safavid rule to lay a foundation for further exploration of connections between the written sources and the images, traditions, and practices. Wider comparisons are beyond its scope. Also beyond its scope is a detailed analysis of prefaces in relation to the specific contents of each album, a project I hope to deal with in another book.

PRIORITIES AND PERCEPTIONS IN THE STUDY OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PERSIAN ART HISTORIOGRAPHY

Even at its earliest stages, the study of Persianate painting, drawing, and calligraphy used a panoply of written sources, like Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar*,[21] drawn from different literary genres and semantic contexts. The approach taken was to ignore their differences and assume that they contained documentary evidence essential to the identification of the canon of practitioners. Without attending to the literary aspects of the texts or other factors that may have shaped them, historians of art mined them for biographical elements in the hope of producing a historical construction. Textual criticism was not given priority. More pressing was the goal of reconstructing the practitioners' landscape, to delineate its borders, identify its centers and schools, and assess the roles played by its patrons. The larger objective was to narrate a history of artistic development from the study of material evidence, in which the role of schools in centers of production (e.g., Baghdad, Herat, Tabriz, Shiraz),

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[20] See Stuart Cary Welch, Annemarie Schimmel, Marie L. Swietochowski, and Wheeler M. Thackston, *The Emperor's Album* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), pp. 84–85, trans. on p. 91. That the album began with a treatise by the calligrapher is not surprising given that virtually every calligraphic specimen in the album is copied by him (or by his students and signed with his name). A synopsis of the album's history is provided in ibid., pp. 11–30.

[21] Among the texts made available in early studies were Dust Muhammad's preface to the Bahram Mirza album and biographical passages on painters from Muhammad Haydar Dughlat's *Tārīkh-i rashīdī* (after 1541) (Laurence Binyon, J. V. S. Wilkinson, and B. Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting* [London: Oxford University Press, 1933], apps. 1 and 2; and Khvandamir/Amini's preface to an album compiled by Bihzad (Thomas W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1965], pp. 35–37). Mughal historical sources were available in translation slightly earlier, as were excerpts from Turkish and Arabic texts on calligraphy (see Huart, *Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l'Orient musulman*).

and an artist's oeuvre could be determined and constantly refined.[22] Basically, scholars were preoccupied with questions of attribution and provenance.

The value of primary sources for this methodology resides in their potential for historical reconstruction and for further refining the classification of material. Scholars view the texts as transparent, offering themselves to interpretation as a form of objective documentation in which personal motives—one critical factor among others that could affect the shape and contents of a text—did not enter into the process of writing.[23] A variety of historical, cultural, literary, and physical dimensions are not considered. A good example is the treatment meted out to the preface in the Bahram Mirza album completed in 951 (1544–45) by Dust Muhammad. For scholars of Persianate painting, this preface is useful for the construction of a history of calligraphy and painting.[24] Scholars have adopted Dust Muhammad's narrative *prima facie*, and it has long since become the *locus classicus* for the history of Persianate painting. It is regarded as accurate in its sequence of art historical events, patron-artist relationships, and shifts in praxis and aesthetics, in part because it was one of only a few texts available to scholars in the early stages of the study of Persianate painting. As a result his narrative has in large part been reproduced in modern scholarship.[25] The clarity of Dust Muhammad's references to books commissioned by princely patrons also tempted scholars to identify them among extant manuscripts and to place these into the taxonomy of Persianate painting.[26]

The emergence in recent years of many other sources has made it clear, however, that

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[22] A rare statement on this method was made by B. W. Robinson in response to the newly formulated ideas and methodologies advanced in the late 1980's by two exhibitions and their publications. Robinson writes, "I do not think I need apologize, at my age, for following the old and tried methods, rather than joining the somewhat esoteric and abstruse *nouvelle vague* approach set in motion at the symposium that accompanied the exhibitions of Timurid art and of the Vever Collection at the Sackler Gallery in 1989. As an old museum man, I prefer to deal in objects, facts, dates, and human personalities" (B. W. Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting: Problems and Issues* [New York and London: New York University Press, 1991], p. 2).

[23] Perhaps the earliest study to do so was Schroeder's essay of 1939 (Eric Schroeder, "Ahmed Musa and Shams al-Din: A Review of Fourteenth Century Painting," *Ars Islamica* 6 [1939]: 113–42). In it Schroeder used Dust Muhammad's 1544–45 album preface as a normative history of the art that modern scholarship had dated to the fourteenth century. The same method of using textual sources in the study of Persianate painting has continued (B. W. Robinson, "Survey of Persian Painting," in *Art et société dans le Monde iranien*, ed. Chahryar Adle [Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1982], pp. 13–82). Some of the dangers in an uncritical acceptance of sources were exposed by Massumeh Farhad and Marianna Shreve Simpson ("Sources for the Study of Safavid Painting and Patronage, or '*Méfiez-Vous de Qazi Ahmad*'," *Muqarnas* 19 [1993]: 286–91). They showed chronological inconsistencies between the *Gulistān-i hunar* and *Khulāṣat al-tavārīkh* written by Qazi Ahmad and a general augmentation of data about the Safavid prince Ibrahim Mirza. Both features, they conclude, were intended to improve Ibrahim Mirza's status in the *Gulistān-i hunar* and his wider recognition as a patron of painting and calligraphy (ibid., pp. 287–89). One factor that may account for chronological discrepancies could be the use of two calendars, the solar and lunar. McChesney discussed the use of two calendrical systems in Iskandar Beg Munshi's history and adds that Qazi Ahmad did the same (Robert D. McChesney, "A Note on Iskandar Beg's Chronology," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 39, 1 [January 1980]: 53-63; esp. 61).

[24] Scholarship on each preface is summarized in appendix 1.

[25] A similar phenomenon has been observed in the discipline of history. See Jean Aubin, "L'Avènement des Safavides reconsidéré (Études safavides III)," *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 5 (1988): 1–130.

[26] For example, see Schroeder, "Ahmed Musa and Shams al-Din," and Robinson, "Survey of Persian Painting." Danishpazhuh identified an album in the Topkapi Palace Library (H. 2152) as the anthology (*jung*) made for Baysunghur mentioned by Dust Muhammad in his preface (Dānishpazhūh, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī," p. 169). It is hard to imagine how any of the techniques or forms of expertise of the practitioners named by Dust Muhammad could have resulted in this album, especially in its reference to the illustration of particular scenes in relationship to the text: the album is a collection of drawings, paintings and calligraphies, not a manuscript of text illustrated by paintings.

Dust Muhammad was not the first to take up the practice of recording an art historical tradition; it predated him by some thirty years in a variety of texts. Extensive references to practitioners, patrons, and techniques are found in such disparate sources as biographies, collections of poetry, and histories, and in technical treatises that include advice as how to select and trim the reed pen, shape letters, make ink, and select and tint paper.[27]

It seems clear, then, that Dust Muhammad's narrative could be replaced by others, for he was only one of several people engaged in writing a history of art and his understanding of that history developed from the sources that he had available to him: communications from his peers (critics and practitioners), a variety of written sources including histories, biographies, and poetic texts,[28] and what remained of the art itself, either collected in royal libraries or distributed and exchanged by peripatetic artists seeking patronage in the courts of Central Asia, Iran, India, and Turkey.[29] This last category is perhaps the most important because it provided the author of the preface with subjective judgment beyond the conventional received wisdom of his time, and was the source of variations between Dust Muhammad's narrative and those composed by other authors.[30] He composed his history of art by selecting from his sources and describing particular royal courts with their patrons and practitioners.

In writing his history Dust Muhammad had certain objectives in mind that gave his art historical conception its particular shape. His text was not a comprehensive listing of practitioners—if this had been his objective there are some notable absences—and certain

[27] Two handlists of texts devoted in part or in whole to the subject of art, its techniques, and practitioners were compiled by Habibi and Danishpazhuh. See Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, "Sar guzasht-i nāmahā-yi khushnivīsān va hunarmandān," *Hunar va mardum* 86–87 (1348): 31–43; idem, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī"; and ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, "Literary Sources for the History of the Arts of the Book in Central Asia," in *Arts of the Book in Central Asia 14th-16th Centuries*, ed. Basil Gray (Paris: Unesco, 1979), app. 1, pp. 273–80. Several sources about technique were compiled by Storey (*Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study* 1:2, "N. Biography: [d] Calligraphists and Painters," pp. 1071–78; and 2:3, "G. Arts and Crafts, [d] Calligraphy," pp. 382–87). For the most comprehensive and synthetic study of these texts, one that also attempts to examine them in light of the physical evidence, see Yves Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre: Essai sur la littérature technique indo-persane*, Bibliothèque iranienne 35 (Paris and Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1992).

[28] In the preface he alludes to unnamed historians and biographers to support his contention that calligraphy originated with Adam; on Daniel as the originator of portraiture he invokes "the writings of the great"; on ancient painters he refers the reader to the *Khamsa*s of "several great [poets]," no doubt referring to Nizami and Amir Khusraw Dihlavi. Traditions on the origin of writing long precede Dust Muhammad, although it is not possible to identify the specific traditions that he drew on with greater precision. For example, Ibn al-Nadim cites a tradition attributed to Kaʿb al-Ahbar who stated that the first "to originate Arabic and Persian script and other forms of writing was Adam." Ibn al-Nadim adds that he wrote on baked clay. See Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge, 2 vols. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1:7.

[29] Dust Muhammad notes that during the reign of Sultan Husayn Mirza (r. 1470–1506) three fourteenth-century illustrated manuscripts with paintings by Ahmad Musa were in the Timurid sultan's library. The existence of these manuscripts could have been reported to him, or Sultan Husayn Mirza's ownership of them may have been recorded by notes and seals added to the endpapers of the manuscripts. Dust Muhammad would have culled the information from his examination of the volumes in the Safavid royal library. Among the manuscripts were a *Miʿrāj-nāma* and a *Kalīla wa Dimna*. Paintings from the former are probably to be identified with those included in Bahram Mirza's 1544–45 album. This would confirm the theory that Dust Muhammad's historiographic method involved an examination of material artifacts. The second manuscript, a *Kalīla wa Dimna*, may be identified with the paintings mounted in a Safavid album compiled for Shah Tahmasp (IUL, F. 1422), most likely a few years later.

[30] Dust Muhammad's definition of the "six masters," or the students of Yaqut, for example, differs from that of other historians.

metropolitan traditions of bookmaking, analyzed in modern scholarship and accorded great significance, are ignored by him. This is one way in which Dust Muhammad's preface might be understood as canon-forming. Other factors that may have caused the particular inflections of Dust Muhammad's preface include its relationship to the album proper and his synoptic view of a history of art from a Safavid setting. Unlike several other preface writers, one of Dust Muhammad's central aims was to link Safavid practices of *nastaʿlīq* and depiction to their origins in the fourteenth century. A series of lengthy stories and anecdotes in Dust Muhammad's preface are unparalleled in any other preface. All of these dimensions constitute a caveat against treating the preface as normative, untouched by personal concerns or contextually induced factors.

Subsequent art historical research has continued to fill out the history of the Persianate art tradition, making necessary adjustments along the way in the face of an expanding corpus of objects and information. But several subjects have not yet been pursued. One is the examination of the language used to describe the objects, media, practitioners, and qualitative achievements of the art tradition. Related to it is the language of judgment, an untapped medium for understanding criteria used for criticism and evaluation.[31] Yet another concerns the analysis of texts as sources of artistic theories by which we might analyze ways of thinking about and seeing art if the study of Persianate visual culture is ever to escape from the strictures of certain forms of analysis (stylistic, taxonomic) and categorization (illustration, decoration).

The reception of Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar* is indicative of these priorities and approaches. Belying the text's reception, however, are two opposing trends that have run through the early study of Persianate painting and the arts of the book. In the first current, Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar,* such texts as Dust Muhammad's album preface, and references to practitioners in historical and biographical works from the late fifteenth century onward were read in a particular way. References to individual practitioners and patrons seemed to offer a cross-cultural parallel to the paradigm of Western art, especially of the Renaissance. In this model of Persianate art, aspects of the tradition's distinctiveness were overridden to harmonize it with its European counterpart.[32] Market forces and the concern to champion this tradition and thus make it equal to the Western one played a role in a formation that was designed to claim similarity.

The second trend was to try to define the aesthetics of Persianate painting as different. Insofar as painting remained confined to the book, it was diminished in value. Unlike the European developmental model in which painting traversed manuscript illustration to panel and then to oil painting and could be interpreted as the successive refinement of representational techniques from medium to medium, the Persianate tradition appeared to be bound up in a medium and context that was frozen in time—it would be medieval forever. The aesthetics of the Persianate painting articulated through opposition to the Western

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[31] Such a study faces some serious problems because the relationship between certain adjectives and the features or qualities of the artwork they describe can seem obscure and esoteric to the modern reader. In his discussion about the criticism of calligraphy, Grabar pointed to the problematic nature of the various primary texts that might be enlisted to reconstruct the language of judgment used by the culture that produced the art. Grabar identified five themes that emerged from a group of critical texts spanning a long chronological period. See Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), chap. 2, esp. pp. 83–92.

[32] For references to these comparisons, see David J. Roxburgh, "Kamal al-Din Bizhad and Authorship in Persianate Painting," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 119–46; esp. 119 and n. 9.

teleology of visual problem-solving and its formal priorities was defined as merely decorative, no different from ceramics, metalwork, glass, ivories, carpets and textiles. The objective in scholarship was to emphasize common aesthetic features of media as part of a larger effort to define what was particular to Islamic art.

One of the many benefits of studying primary sources lies in its potential to challenge, reshape, and perhaps eventually corroborate the cross-cultural paradigms and methodologies that have been applied, more often than not without questioning, to Persianate painting in general and the arts of the book in particular. Before detailing the manifold possibilities offered by a sustained scrutiny of the preface, it is important to lay out some of the perceptions and general notions that have blocked certain approaches to the study of texts. The power of such a perception is suggested by the absence of an interpretative literature or historical study about the written sources, either of separate genres or collectively. Because many preconceptions about the written sources are so deeply rooted, it is important to explain their history and foundation.

Research on the album preface and its historical context has turned up a number of written sources that have, by and large, evaded the attention both of scholars and a wider audience. Certainly still other written sources will be uncovered as manuscript cataloguing continues apace and scholars make a greater effort to cast their nets more widely and in less familiar waters.[33] In the meantime it would be imprudent to claim comprehensive coverage based on the temporal and geographical parameters defined by the prefaces discussed in this book.[34]

Scholars may have been deterred from analyzing the texts because of two deeply embedded notions that are quite alive in scholarship today. The first is that the Persianate art tradition's textual corpus is scanty, especially when compared with the mass of European and Chinese art-historiographic literature.[35] As Robert Hillenbrand puts it, "Dust Muhammad, the prime literary source for the latter art [viz., painting], is a very poor exchange for Vasari."[36] The second notion is that composing art historical texts was a short-lived and restricted activity.[37] In 1918, Edgard Blochet asserted, "In fact, Persian connoisseurs, no less than European collectors, did not know the names of artists other than those transmitted in the literary

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[33] An important aspect of the training and socialization of the homo academicus concerns the institutional framework in which his research practices occur. As a kind of disciplinary heritage, scholars tend to limit their activities to clusters of institutions where earlier generations of similar scholars have worked.

[34] At an advanced date in research another sixteenth-century album preface turned up. It is by Mawlana Muhammad Mirak Salihi Mashhadi, a grandson of Murvarid. He worked in the chancellery (*dīvān-i inshā'*) under Shah Tahmasp. The preface survives in an anthology (*jung*) of Khatunabadi. An edition, based on a recension in Tehran (Kitabkhana-yi Milli no. 3849, fols. 229–30), was published by Dānishpazhūh, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī," pp. 191–94.

[35] There is considerable reference material for European and Chinese art literatures in addition to synthetic investigations of major themes and problems. See, for example, Julius von Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur* (Vienna, 1924); and Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art: From Plato to Winckelmann* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1985).

[36] Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 28.

[37] Discussing art collecting, art history and the art market, for what he terms the "Islamic art tradition," Joseph Alsop remarked on the "transition from an almost wholly anonymous though very great art to an art with many remembered artists," and that "this transition occurred in Islamic art, although surprisingly late and in a relatively limited way" (Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1982], p. 255). Although Alsop's main reference was to an increased number of remembered masters, it necessarily depends on the "linked phenomena" of an art historical consciousness and writing about a history of art and its practitioners.

tradition of the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* and the *ʿĀlamārā-yi ʿabbāsī*, no painter except for those artists whose masterworks ranged between 1470 and 1540."[38] Referring to the histories by Khvandamir and Iskandar Beg Munshi, Blochet combines the notions of brief chronology and paucity of information on references to artists and a history of art. Early scholars like Blochet faced tough problems, given the limited resources available to them, but it is surprising that many of their notions should have retained currency until now.

The perception that the written record on calligraphy and depiction is meager also held sway until quite recently in the study of Islamic architecture,[39] but is now constantly being challenged. Three of the album prefaces, for example, are not known through the albums but through *inshāʾ*, manuals of exemplary texts compiled as reference works for epistolary composition. The *inshāʾ* provided models for various texts and instruction in matters of etiquette, rhetoric, and language. Usually short technical treatises are found in collections of texts often referred to as *majmūʿa*. *Inshāʾ* and *majmūʿa* typically do not have tables of contents, and they constitute such a massive number of manuscripts that cataloging even a fraction of them in any given library would be a daunting task. It is often pure serendipity that leads to the discovery of the written sources buried in them.

Throughout the twentieth century, however, significant efforts were made to compile lists of written sources important to the study of Persianate painting and the arts of the book,[40] even if the intention of making each source available in transcription and translation has not followed.[41] Making critical editions of those sources that appear in multiple recensions still remains to be accomplished,[42] and for unique autographs—as the majority of album prefaces are—published versions often contain errors in reading or intentional omissions

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[38] "En fait, les amateurs persans, pas plus que les collectionneurs européens, ne connaissent d'autres noms d'artistes que ceux qui leur ont été transmis par le tradition littéraire du *Habib al-siyar* et de *l'Alamaraï-Abbassi* aucun peintre hormis les virtuoses dont les chefs d'oeuvres s'étagent entre 1470 et 1540" (E. Blochet, "Les peintures des manuscrits persans de la collection Marteau," *Monuments et mémoires* 23 [Paris, 1918–19]: 129–214; esp. 166).

[39] For example, see Renata Holod, "Text, Plan and Building: On the Transmission of Architectural Knowledge," in *Theories and Principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies*, ed. Margaret Ševčenko (Cambridge, Mass.: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1988), pp. 1–12; esp. 1; and Howard Crane, *Risāle-i Miʿmāriyye: An Early Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Treatise on Architecture*, Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture 1 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1987), p. 1.

[40] Indispensable lists of Persian written sources for the study of the arts of the book, calligraphy and painting, composed in the pre-modern and modern periods were compiled by Dānishpazhūh, "Sar guzasht-i nāmahā-yi khushnivīsān va hunarmandān"; idem, "Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nivīsī"; idem, "Dabīrī va nivīsandagī," *Hunar va Mardum* nos. 101–6 and 109–18 (March 1971–August 1972); idem, "*Gulzār-i ṣafā*: Ṣayrafī," *Hunar va Mardum* 93 (1349): 30–42; esp. pp. 30–32; Ḥabībī, "Literary Sources for the History of the Arts of the Book in Central Asia"; and Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study* 1:2, "N. Biography: (d) Calligraphists and Painters"; and ibid., 2:3, "G. Arts and Crafts, (d) Calligraphy." A collection of Persian written sources was compiled by Najīb Māyil Haravī (*Kitāb ārāʾī dar tamuddan-i islāmī* [Mashhad: Āstān-i Quds Rażavī, 1372/1993]). In his encyclopedic work on calligraphers, Mahdi Bayani did not fail to mention primary texts composed by the calligraphers (*Aḥvāl va āṣār*). Studies on individual written sources and their authors are too extensive to list here, but many are referred to in the notes of the above-mentioned articles and books.

[41] A rare exception is Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar*, translated with annotations by Minorsky and a Persian edition published by Khvansari. A fairly extensive critical literature has developed from these two resources.

[42] Work still remains to be done on such a well-known and published text as Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar*. Recently, Porter studied an autograph manuscript of which Minorsky was unaware. See Yves Porter, "Notes sur le 'Golestan-e Honar' de Qazi Ahmad Qomi," *Studia Iranica* 17 (1988): 207–33. For biographical details about Qazi Ahmad, see Ehsan Echraqi, "Le *Kholâsat al-Tawârikh* de Qâzi Ahmad connu sous le nom de Mir Monshi," *Studia Iranica* 4 (1975): 73–89.

with or without indication. Transcription is often a selective process, with some passages privileged over others as being more significant in content—poetry or lengthy titles are routinely omitted, for example. Rarely are sources accompanied by a critical apparatus or commentary.

Most worrisome about the perception that the corpus of written sources is sparse, however, is the supposition that the lack of sources indicates an absence of a habit of thought.[43] When the perceptions of paucity and restricted duration are combined with disappointment, the result is overreliance on a few written sources—Dust Muhammad's preface and Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar*—over others because they match most closely the priorities and expectations of modern scholarship, including content that meets the modern criteria of usefulness and a mode of literary expression that suggests a truthful representation of historical events and an explication of cultural values and aesthetics.

Another aspect of written sources that precludes their analysis and interpretation is the language used by their authors. Considered verbose and hyperbolic, overly embellished in rhetorical expression and strewn with complex, amphibologous words (words with several different meanings) and tropes, the Persian language got in the way and led to two polarized approaches. The first was to dismiss the texts as hollow statements. Thus we encounter such assessments of the prefaces as "high-flown gush,"[44] where form is the content. Because the author's sole interest seems to be a demonstration of literary prowess and technical virtuosity, meaning is thought to reside entirely in the text's form (i.e., what is said is secondary to how it is said).[45] The critical reception of sixteenth-century written sources is an extension of the general attitude toward Persian literature of the period: much of modern scholarly literature involves the critical appraisal of individual authors, their work, and the definition of literary trends, but many of these judgments have little or nothing to do with the values and priorities of the Persian literary tradition of the time, and in assessing its literary merits, features like originality, the substance of images, and psychological dimensions of poetry, all values consonant with European literature or defined by relationship to it, tend to be favored.

The second approach is the opposite extreme of neglecting form—defined here as all aspects of the literary complex, including structure, language, rhetorical framework, and themes—in order to isolate content. This has produced a reductive attitude toward the array of textual sources, leading to a literal reading of figural texts like those by Qazi Ahmad and Dust Muhammad, assuming them to be purveyors of factual information. But even those using this second approach find the written sources inadequate and lament the nature of their content which results from the confluence of an author's choices and the practices

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[43] Thus, in an essay on criticism under the subsection on Islam, Gabrieli writes: "Even in an age in which art had such popularity and refinement, this tentative criticism lacked an adequate theoretical basis," *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Ltd., 1961), *s.v.* "Criticism" (Francesco Gabrieli), 4:143. The age he refers to is the sixteenth century of the Safavids, Mughals, and Ottomans.

[44] Discussing the theories of Dust Muhammad, Qazi Ahmad, and Mustafa 'Ali on the origin of painting, Rogers writes, "But these are *ex post facto* justifications, if that, and little better anyway than high-flown gush" (Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanındı, trans., edited and expanded by J. M. Rogers, *The Topkapı Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts* [Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1986], p. 23).

[45] In her study of late-fifteenth-century poetry and its increasing focus on technical embellishment, Subtelny agrees with Rypka's assessment that it resulted in "the culture of the word and form over content," but she concludes, "One can hardly expect from this literature something that it was never originally intended to provide" (Maria E. Subtelny, "A Taste for the Intricate: The Persian Poetry of the Late Timurid Period," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 136, 1 [1986]: 56–79; 78).

of a literary tradition that exert their own momentum. Thus, B. W. Robinson writes:

> One deplores the scarcity and often the unsatisfactory nature of the literary sources. Why could not the Persians record their artists and craftsmen as meticulously as the Japanese who have, for example, a dictionary of swordsmiths covering ten centuries and containing twelve thousand names, each provided with date, family, school, locality, signature, and characteristics?[46]

A frustration with language is transformed here into a regret about content: the Persian authors rarely record what one would have hoped or wished for. Aspects of the Persian language in which the texts are written only exacerbates this complaint about inadequacy of content. Rather than try to understand what was relevant to the authors, an anachronistic search for our own modes of thought ensues.

The Persian literary complex is so nuanced and challenging that it often defies easy comprehension. Multiple meanings of many passages are possible—especially in poetry— and the complete explication of alternate readings, cultural allusions, and images would require a lengthy gloss. The puns employed by authors, the inherent ambiguity of some words, and the easy slippage from one image into another yielding a sequence of diverse referents from single signifiers produce a textual structure that operates on numerous levels and that defies interpretative closure. This very feature only brings home the realization yet again that historical analysis of the written source must also attend to its literary dimensions and practices.

These responses stem from comparisons to the art literatures of other traditions, the seeming abyss that divides scholarly objectives from textual realities, and the implicit construction of culturally defining characteristics according to a framework of opposition. Embodying all three is Nabil Safwat's characterization of the Ottoman calligrapher Mustakimzade's *Tuḥfe-i ḫaṭṭaṭīn* (Gift of the Scribes, 1759); "Müstakîm-zade writes with simple, unpretentious scholarship, free from jargon, and with remarkable clarity; the sympathetic manner in which he integrates anecdotes, poems and biographical detail into a comprehensive history of Islamic calligraphy makes him an Ottoman Vasari, as it were."[47] Writing later in the tradition, Mustaqimzade comes closest to Giorgio Vasari because he is comprehensive and his language is seemingly original, free from the conventions of Persian literary practice. The subtext is that his biographies of calligraphers are of great use as a source and neatly intersect with the interests and priorities of the historian of art. Qazi Ahmad and Dust Muhammad might have been accorded the same comparison had they written in a different literary mode.

It is obvious that Persian art historical sources suffer from comparison to sources from other, especially European, art traditions.[48] But not one of these comparisons is supported

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[46] Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting*, pp. 77–78.

[47] Nabil F. Safwat, *The Art of the Pen: Calligraphy of the 14th to 20th Centuries*, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, vol. 5 (London and Oxford: The Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 9.

[48] In his overview of sources available for the study of architecture, Hillenbrand (in *Islamic Architecture*, pp. 26–30) focuses on their documentary dimension, and the potential of the texts to help modern scholars understand lost buildings and architectural traditions. Although he notes that "literary sources on the whole provide a disappointingly meagre range of information on medieval buildings" (ibid., p. 26), he also remarks on the massive range of references in K. A. C. Creswell's study of Islamic architecture. But the sources are still found to be wanting, especially compared to such writers as Alberti (ibid., p. 28), and Islam lacks the "invaluable and endlessly revealing sketchbook" of a figure like Villard d'Honnecourt (ibid., p. 27). By way of a concluding remark, he writes: "The collation of such scraps of information certainly helps to establish major trends, such

by a detailed analysis, and the comparisons require careful definition so that similarities and differences between discrete art traditions and the literatures that accompanied them are clearly articulated. Indeed, the various art historiographic traditions differ in significant details and concepts, but there are also many intriguing parallels.

Perhaps the strongest disabling force is the opposition between literal and figural writing, e.g., between Vasari and Dust Muhammad. This opposition begins with how meaning is constituted in a text—that is, the text's literariness and its rhetorical formation—and is then extended to encompass what is judged to be significant content, the presence of description and its nature, and the scope and comprehensiveness of the text. Of course, the two traditions are not truly in opposition; the texts by Dust Muhammad and Vasari each use both literal and figurative forms of discourse.[49] One of the greatest sources of criticism lies in the idea that the Persian written source is entirely figurative.[50]

This opposition between literal and figurative discourse has long since been challenged in other disciplines. The study of historiography has responded to literary theory and to its new ideas about literariness. On this very subject Hayden White observes:

> It is now possible to recognize that in realistic, no less than in imaginary, discourse, language is both a form and a content and that this linguistic content must be counted among the other kinds of content (factual, conceptual, and generic) that make up the total content of the discourse as a whole. This recognition liberates historiographical criticism from fidelity to an impossible literalism and permits the analyst of historical discourse to perceive the extent to which it constructs its subject matter in the very process of speaking about it. The notion of the content of linguistic form scumbles the distinction between literal and figurative discourses and authorizes a search for and analysis of the function of the figurative elements in historiographical, no less than fictional, prose.[51]

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as the continued existence of fire temples in Fars in early Islamic times.. . . At the risk of labouring the point, however, it must be repeated that the material is so scanty that it is inherently inadequate as a reliable guide to what has gone forever . . ." (ibid., p. 26). Sources like *vaqf-nāma*s are given emphasis over the references to buildings occurring in historical works.

[49] To this can be added numerous studies about the rhetorical aspects of Vasari's *Lives*. Key studies include Svetlana Alpers, "Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's *Lives*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23, 3–4 (July–Dec. 1960): 190–215; Michael Baxandall, "Doing Justice to Vasari," review of T. S. R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book*, *Times Literary Supplement*, February 1, 1980, p. 111; Carl Goldstein, "Rhetoric and Art History in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque," *Art Bulletin* 73, 4 (December 1991): 641–52; and Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), esp. chap. 4. Even within the study of Renaissance literatures increasingly fine distinctions are being made between texts. Thus while the figurative aspects of Vasari's language are now accepted, an author like Benvenuto Cellini was once accorded an originality of discourse (in contrast to Vasari) because of his text's non-learned literary aspects and the prevailing myth about its composition through dictation and without editing. For approaches to Cellini's text, see Paolo L. Rossi, "*Sprezzatura*, Patronage, and Fate: Benvenuto Cellini and the World of Words," in *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, ed. Philip Jacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 55–69, esp. pp. 56–57.

[50] In numerous studies, Barolsky has examined the literary dimensions of Vasari's *Lives* and notes that the approach to this work "still exaggerates the utility of the *Vite* as a source of historical information at the expense of its poetry" (Paul Barolsky, "The Trick of Art," in *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, ed. Philip Jacks [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], pp. 23–29, p. 28). For the manipulation of biographical profiles into typological frameworks, see idem, "Vasari's 'Portrait' of Raphael," in *Raphael and the Ruins of Rome: The Poetic Dimension*, exhib. cat. (Urbana-Champaign, Ill.: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1983), pp. 25–33.

[51] Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 4.

White's principal interests lie in the nature of historical discourse and the claims to truth granted to certain forms of literary representation, hence the subtitle of his book "mimesis effect." It is part of an interest he and others have long had in one of the central problems of history, namely its origin in rhetoric and the notion that history could free itself from the subjectivity of language. Nancy Partner put it thus: "Among the genres of serious literature, history . . . continued the longest in unself-conscious and serene oblivion to the treason within—which is, that it is made of words."[52] What White points to in his recent work on figural realism has relevance for the opposition forged between European and Persian written sources because it diminishes the tight distinction that is drawn between the two. Moreover, it also undoes the foundation of the comparison by showing that narrative, the most privileged of discursive modes (and attributed to Vasari but not to Dust Muhammad), falls subject to the same principles as other forms of discourse.[53] Hence narrative only appears to be doubly literal in its content and form.[54]

When we turn to Persian literature, and to the preface in particular, figurative discourse predominates even in those passages of text that refer to specific experiences and judgments. They are organized linguistically as non-particular and always tend to the formation of absolutes. Tropology—that is, a theory of figures of speech and of thought—dominates Persian literature. The response to the trope in particular is to understand it as a normative linguistic habit that by its ubiquity loses the power to convey originality of experience or of thought.[55] Describing this literary phenomenon as an analogical mode, Julie Scott Meisami has argued for the power of the trope in Persian literature, of how metaphor transcends itself by becoming allegory (the result of extended metaphors), a powerful device for human comprehension. She writes, "Metaphor transcends the status of a trope to become a 'consistent means for signifying the inner substance of things,' in a world in which 'everything is a figure,' a sign testifying to the unified, and unifying order of creation."[56]

We encounter a rhetorical mode of discourse that uses tropes to organize modes of perception, how experience becomes knowledge, or a means of accommodating the poetic in historical writing that was so well understood by Vico.[57] It is clear that such linguistic

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[52] Nancy F. Partner, "The New Corfinicius: Medieval History and the Artifice of Words," in *Classical Rhetoric and Medieval Historiography*, ed. Ernst Breisach (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985), pp. 5–60, esp. 23. Textual strategies used by historians to make this "scientific history" are listed in Partner after White (ibid., p. 24).

[53] Ibid., pp. 27–28.

[54] For an expanded discussion about the role of narrativity in the representation of reality, see Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), chap. 1.

[55] Some historians of art fully accept the trope's ability to have meaning but grant it primacy in its initial usage. Its subsequent use in the literary tradition diminishes its value by virtue of repetition. Discussing the relationship between art and eloquence in Byzantium, for example, Maguire notes how rhetorical structures were useful during the iconoclastic controversy and how the concepts about art "lived on as a literary conceit," and that by the twelfth century had "lost much of its force in polemic, but lived on as a convention in Byzantine literature" (Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981], pp. 11-12). On the Islamic tradition, Gabrieli writes: "But these descriptions are no more than intimations of esthetic criteria; conforming to the general conventions of the time, they often degenerate into affected conceits and maxims and thus they reveal no body of principles such as might be said to constitute an esthetic" (*Encyclopedia of World Art*, *s.v.* "Esthetics" [Francesco Gabrieli], 5:59).

[56] Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 38.

[57] See Partner, "The New Corfinicius," p. 38.

elements as the trope functioned in the preface's rhetorical scheme to define value and to program the reader's response to the album and its contents. The album and its preface were concerned with exemplarity; as we will see, the prefaces reveal that one of the album's cultural values lay in its collecting together the works of high-standing, morally perfected practitioners. Perhaps in this way, the rhetoric of the Persian tradition extended to the preface continued the classical, specifically Ciceronian, definition of rhetoric as "speech designed to persuade" comparable to Augustine's idea that the value of rhetoric lay in its power to induce action.[58]

APPROACHES AND METHODS IN LITERARY STUDY

Before proceeding with the study of the album preface, some additional words about working definitions and assumptions need to be said, particularly as they obtain to the literariness of the prefaces and the discursive tradition in which they developed. As in other domains of cultural practice, practitioners were intimately aware of the efforts of their peers. The later recopying of prefaces by Murvarid and Qutb al-Din Muhammad offers examples of the album preface writer's cultural memory. The strong elements of continuity across the array of extant prefaces is easily explained by the relatively circumscribed group of authors, who were more cognizant of their cultural history than previously acknowledged. Two forms of intertextuality are also evidence of the authors' knowledge of, and participation in, a literary tradition.[59] The first is the rather crude use of texts *grosso modo* composed by other authors; sometimes textual segments were split apart and put into a new order in addition to the substitition of occasional words and phrases and the reordering of poetic hemistiches. The second form of intertextuality is represented by recurring themes, quotations from the Koran and hadith (tradition), and images and metaphors cast in slightly varied turns of phrase woven into the text. The latter were perhaps necessary allusions to earlier prefaces intended for the culturally informed reader.

Despite differences between individual prefaces and the thorny problem of whether or not the preface constitutes a genre unto itself, features of the album preface immediately inform the reader of what it is—he can make no mistake about its being a preface. Although unexplained in the sources, the album preface's framework, language, and literary practice reveal that it was convention-bound and had to meet specific criteria of literary performance that were defined through precedent. The different forms of intertexuality indicate the requisite tradition-referencing in preface composition. In electing to compose a preface a particular

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[58] See Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), chap. 1, esp. pp. 4–6.

[59] Some scholars have offered more restrictive definitions of intertextuality, discounting "thematic or generic kinship." See Michael Riffaterre, "Textuality: W. H. Auden's 'Musée de Beaux Arts,'" in *Textual Analysis: Some Readers Reading*, ed. M. A. Caws (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1996), pp. 1–13; esp. 1–2. I thank Francisco Prado-Vilar for this reference. Riffaterre's concern is the loose application of the term as a synonym for literary influence, but in the case of the Persian literary tradition, it is clear that at the levels of genre (understood here to involve themes) and in the use of metaphors writers often did consciously allude to other texts. Moreover, it would be hard in some instances to define the border between the generic and thematic and what Riffattere defines as intertextuality, viz. "that form of reference experienced when the reader finds that a text presupposes another and that the latter provides the former with the means of interpreting it and of justifying its formal and semantic peculiarities" (ibid., pp. 1–2).

rhetorical complex was required, and the author's place within this framework was established through the reworking of thematic elements and the use of a repertoire of language.

The creative process that led to the production of a preface is similar to that in other fields of artistic production. Characteristic of the Persianate literary complex, a tradition dominated by poetry with its established rules of meter, rhyme, and structure as well as its constellations of images, is a strong intertextuality and referencing of precedent.[60] Poets were obliged to work in and through preexisting forms, as the rules of discrete genres circumscribed all creative activity, and they often chose consciously to re-cast images made by previous poets through a variety of imitative practices.[61] Each work of prose or poetry occupied its place in a sequence of texts that ran backward and forward in time.

Parallel creative processes obtained in the arts of calligraphy and depiction. Calligraphers and artists also looked to past models throughout their working lives and not only in their formative years when models were used for the purposes of training, and in various ways their newly made works responded and alluded to the art of the past.[62] It might even be accurate to say that the methods of creative conception and execution of calligraphy and depiction were as circumscribed as those of poetry, although this question has not been fully investigated.[63] These fundamental principles and the performative aspect of the literary and visual traditions have more often than not attracted negative appraisal; viewed through a modernist lens they are criticized for excessive emphasis on ornament and lack of originality, as it is understood in a Western European, post-Romantic context.[64] Rather than judge an

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[60] One of the clearest and most concise introductions to these very aspects of Persian literature is by Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, N.C., and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), esp. chaps. 1 and 2.

[61] For a discussion of different imitative practices in Persian poetry illustrated by specific examples, see Paul E. Losensky, "'The Allusive Field of Drunkenness': Three Safavid-Moghul Responses to a Lyric by Bābā Fighānī," in *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 227–62.

[62] Intermedial correspondences between visual and literary art forms acquire particular visibility under the Timurids, and though this has been observed by several scholars, it is not entirely accepted by all of them. On this issue Rogers writes: "In Timurid culture parallels between literature and the different arts are now standard, though some of them are thoughtless and most are too vague to be significant" (J. Michael Rogers, "Centralisation and Timurid Creativity," *Oriente Moderno* n. s. 15 [76], 2 [1996]: 533–50; esp. 542).

[63] Ehsan Yarshater was the first scholar to note and analyze connections between Persian poetry and painting in print ("Some Common Characteristics of Persian Poetry and Art," *Studia Islamica* 16 [1962]: 61–72). Adamova and Bürgel developed his observations. Bürgel explored structural affinities between the arts of calligraphy, painting, and literature (Johann Christoph Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh: The "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam* [New York and London: New York University Press, 1988]), and Adamova examined the repetition of compositions in illustrated manuscripts for which she suggests a parallel in poetry (Ada Adamova, "Repetition of Compositions in Manuscripts: The *Khamsa* of Nizami in Leningrad," in *Timurid Art and Culture*, ed. Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny, Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture 6 [Leiden, New York, Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1992], pp. 67–75).

Lowry and Nemazee also noted correspondences between painting and poetry. They write, "The generic use of images in Persian painting is directly paralleled in the typological treatment of experience characteristic of Persian literature," and remark that "these paintings . . . constitute an art of performance in which the artists are primarily engaged in the interpretation of a set series of forms. . . . Novelty and innovation in this context are achieved through the manipulation of an established canon of imagery" (Glenn Lowry and Susan Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye: Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* [Seattle and Washington, D.C.: University of Washington Press and Smithsonian Institution, 1988], p. 271).

[64] Although studies of Persian poetry generally acknowledge the impact that a defined corpus of images and the strict conventions of structure exerted on poetry, they did not prevent a criticism of these very features. See the excerpts from the separate studies of Browne, Gibb, and Rypka that are summarized in Subtelny,

art tradition for what it did not try to do, it would seem more appropriate to examine what it did do and to examine this aesthetic of familiarity, of repetition and perpetual return, of always already knowing.[65] By so doing we might be in a better position to assess and define the nature of a viewer's visual and verbal engagement with a work in the context of reception and parameters of judgment.

This book focuses on the album preface in sixteenth-century Iran when the practice of writing histories of art flourished. One of its objectives is to identify what may have given shape to its particular literary forms and the factors that prompted and sustained the habit. Regardless of the future discovery of now unknown texts and their addition to the corpus of what might broadly be referred to as art historiographic literature, at present all indications strongly suggest a critical mass of literature in the sixteenth century, particularly for the album preface. In this respect Blochet was not so far off the mark when he noted the density of references to practitioners between ca. 1470 and 1540. While the practices of recording the names of famous practitioners and of developing aesthetic criteria had emerged early on for the art of calligraphy, there are no comparable indications for the arts of depiction (painting and drawing). Nor is the evidence of a narrative history of practice in calligraphy as well as depiction until the early sixteenth century. In studying the prefaces, written sources are marshaled, including the manual or technical treatise and biographical notices (*tazkira*) about practitioners that are found in historical and biographical works,[66] not only to examine those distinguishing features of the album preface but also to establish a variety of contexts for the practices of album making and preface composition. The primary objective of this book is to study the preface through a variety of approaches—historical, cultural, social, and intellectual. That said, a preface's contextual relationship to the contents of its album is not a detailed subject of inquiry, although other forms of relationships are considered. The holistic examination of preface and album requires another optic and another book.

"Taste for the Intricate," pp. 56–79, esp. 56. Persian poetry and prose fare quite well in some studies that suspend a form of critical engagement and judgment to examine aspects of literary traditional practices. See Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 1998); idem, "Allusive Field of Drunkenness"; Jerome W. Clinton, "Šams-i Qays on the Nature of Poetry," *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān ʿAbbās on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1981), pp. 75–82; idem, "Esthetics by Implication: What Metaphors of Craft Tell us about the 'Unity' of the Persian Qasida," *Edebiyat* 4, 1 (1979): 73–96; and E. A. Poliakova, "The Development of a Literary Canon in Medieval Persian Chronicles: The Triumph of Etiquette," *Iranian Studies* 17, 2–3 (Spring–Summer 1984): 237–56.

An exception is Subtelny's article ("Taste for the Intricate") on late Timurid poetry. She examines the criticism of Mir ʿAli Shir Navaʾi, ʿAbd al-Rahman Jami, and Dawlatshah Samarqandi of the "new style" (*naw-āʾīn*) which they term *takalluf. Takalluf* involved the use of difficult meters, rhymes, and words, and the creation of unexpected, complex images. These three men, who flourished during the later Timurid period, voice criticism of features in contemporary poetics.

[65] For the parallel feature of the *ghazal*, Losensky examined responses to a work composed by Baba Fighani. He concludes, "Read as a sequence, each poem serves to refine and deepen our reception of the others, as the implications and exact shade of meaning of each is made clear through contrast and comparison. The themes, imagery, and language of the *ghazal* were fixed in their essentials by the fifteenth century, and later poets had at their command a rich and precise means of artistic expression and communication" (Losensky, "Allusive Field of Drunkenness," p. 255).

[66] Some steps taken in the study of nomenclature have begun to develop a glossary of technical terms and to analyze artist's materials and methods, the latter usually explored through questions of technological value and undertaken in the hope that tracking a given technique's development would provide additional diagnostic markers in time and space. Notable among these studies is Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre.*