

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERARY DIMENSIONS

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat begins his *Tārīkh-i rashīdī* by expressing doubt in his abilities to complete the project, for he finds it impossible to craft an encomium that would be adequate for the praise of God:

Poor me, smitten with melancholy and
perplexed, how can I proceed when I have
not been given the ability to write description
To proclaim Thy unity, alas, my heart
trembles. It is all I can do to mention Thy name.¹

It is a clever way of avoiding the requirement that a literary composition begin with praise of God, His Creation, and perhaps also the Prophet Muhammad, relying as it does on the conventional expression of man's limitations in attempting to describe God, never mind comprehending Him.² To make amends for his deficiencies—and for good luck—Muhammad Haydar Dughlat quotes the preface from Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *Ẓafar-nāma* (Book of Conquests, composed in the 1420's) up to the *ammā bā' du* ("now then"), the ubiquitous transition in literary works that connects preface to text.

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat's anxiety about his qualifications for writing a literary composition are not entirely disingenuous. By declaring his inability to fulfill the requirement of beginning with God and Creation, he refers to the convention of doing so, and thereby uncovers an unspoken rule of prefatory composition. An examination of prefatory texts across the formulaic gamut of Persianate literature turns up such recurring motifs and images, and a shared body of words and figures of speech. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat is far more comfortable once he gets into the body of his history, recounting events that he had heard about or witnessed, using a language mostly free of those metaphors whose usage would indicate fluency in a set of literary conventions. It is not that he does not know them, as he uses these tropes and metaphorical expressions in his text albeit with often rough transition.

That Muhammad Haydar Dughlat reveals the conventional aspects of Persian literary expression is less interesting than his indication that one had a choice between literary modes of expression. Other authors were far more explicit in their discussions of literary conven-

¹ Muhammad Haydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, trans. Thackston, p. 3.

² Muhammad Haydar Dughlat here indicates the impossible dilemma of describing God and the danger of ascribing attributes to the transcendent and ineffable, and hence of anthropomorphizing Him. Apophasis is the term given to the "linguistic regress" that follows the attempt to name qualities of God. For a complete discussion of apophasis, or "un-saying," see Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 1–5. The problem extends to the nature of the Koran—created or uncreated—as the word of God and the question of speech (*kalām*) as a divine attribute. For a summary of the different responses to these questions, see *EI2*, s.v. "Kalām" (L. Gardet).

tions, styles, and modes, given their clearest form in manuals of prosody that often combined general advice on composition and training with figurative expressions, metrics, rhyme, and guidelines for the critical judgment of texts. Writing in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, for example, Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Qays al-Razi wrote:

He [the poet] must not deviate with regard to the species of discourse and the varieties of poetry, such as: romantic and erotic preludes, praise and dispraise, encomium and imprecation, gratitude and grievance, stories and tales, question and reply, wrath and reconciliation, haughtiness and humility, disdain and forbearance; the mention of regions and customs, the description of the heavens and the stars, the depiction of flowers and flowing streams, the reporting of wind and rainstorms, the similes of night and day . . . in the manner of the most excellent and learned of the poets and the most poetic of the excellent and the learned.³

Levels of praise should be consonant with the rank of the subject:

He ought not to praise kings and sultans except with royal terms of description such as those mentioned in the chapter on hyperbolic description. Ministers and princes he should praise for prodigies of the sword and pen, drum and banner, sayyids and the ‘ulamā for nobility of descent and purity of lineage, for abundant culture and plenteous learning, for untainted honor and great merit. . . . Let him address each according to his station.⁴

Several aspects of the genres and motifs to which Shams Qays refers are found in the sixteenth-century album prefaces in which the criteria and levels of praise proportionate to subject are likewise followed.

Unlike Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, the preface authors selected a literary mode that made unrelenting use of the most complex forms of expression: an alternation of often internally rhyming prose (*saḡ*^x) and various poetic forms; the use of amphibologous words (i.e., words having multiple referents), and seemingly countless adjectives to modify them; long lists of honorifics that accompany references to people, living or dead; obligatory creative acts in line with extant practices, e.g., recrafting an image to lend it a new metaphorical dimension, to demonstrate literary prowess and to refer to the literary tradition. Dominating each album preface is the language and intent of praise. It was a literary complex of behaviors and modalities fashioned at the late Timurid court through its network of contexts and institutions, e.g., the literary majlis and the royal chancellery, where a particular style of literary expression was given precedence. Murvarid, Khvandamir, and Amini excelled in it. Although the literary practices and preferred aesthetics of the late Timurid period did not lack their contemporary (and modern) critics for their excessive ornamentation and artifice,⁵ they retained their currency into the Safavid period.⁶

³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qays al-Rāzī, *al-Muʿjām fī maʿāyīr ashʿār al-ʿajam*, trans. in Clinton, “Šams-i Qays on the Nature of Poetry,” p. 80. The discussion appears in his first chapter of the *khātima*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁵ Subtelny has written about the contemporary criticism of Timurid poetry by three of its practitioners, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami, and Dawlatshah Samarqandi. All three criticized the “new style” (*naw-āʿm*) which they called *takalluf* (lit. artificiality) which involved the use of difficult meters, rhymes, and words, and the creation of unexpected, complex images (Subtelny, “Taste for the Intricate,” pp. 57 and 59). By identifying internal criticism of literary trends, Subtelny is able to qualify the criticism of modern scholars like Rypka, Gibb, and Browne as “Orientalist.” Negative appraisal of both the poetry and prose of the Timurid and Safavid periods that pays little heed to the internal dynamics of the tradition has serious consequences, some of which are only now being addressed. Measured for their “quality” against the idea of originality of content, the literatures register for the modern critic a predominance of form over content, a deepening concern with intricate literary games and subtle references that would only change in the late sixteenth century.

In this literary tradition, imitation played an important role as a creative response to works of the past, as evidenced in the literary works of the age. The majlis discussed not only the extemporaneous response to model verses, but also poetry composed in the style of earlier poets and reworked using a corpus of inherited images, themes, and codified forms of imitative response.⁷ Reworking earlier texts to produce new versions was also common. When Husayn Va'iz Kashifi composed a new Persian recension of the *Kalīla wa Dimna*, titled *Anwār-i suhaylī* (The Lights of Canopus, before 1504–5),⁸ he mentions in his preface that he had embarked on the project in response to a request from Amir Shaykh Ahmad al-Suhayli (d. 1501–3), and explains the reason thus:

Value in modern reception is shifted to specific indices of originality and the performative dimensions of poetry; the mechanisms of reception are largely ignored. A few quotations from three scholars are indicative of the nature of the criticism generally. Writing on Timurid poetry, Shafī'i Kadkani describes it as a “versified gloss upon the poetic images and meanings of the Classical authors”; in prose writing he notes, after Bahār, that the quality is low “where firmness, fluency and other points of professional skill are concerned”; and that “the only innovations one sees in this period are the soubriquets, titles and flummery with which the later writers of the Timurid period dignified their patron at the beginning of their books and the openings of chapters—sometimes one has to wade through two or three pages and pick one’s way through ups and downs of eulogy, balanced and paired sentences, rhyming prose, and vacuous baseless titles” (Muḥammad Rizā Shafī'i Kadkānī, “Persian Literatures [*Belles-Lettres*] from the Time of Jāmī to the Present Day,” in *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, vol. 4, pt. 2, fasc. 2, *History of Persian Literature from the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day*, ed. George Morrison [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981], pp. 133–206, esp. pp. 142 and 143–44). Rypka described historiography of the Timurid period as “one of literary gourmets in high social positions who set more store by a refined artificiality than by eulogism,” and observes a “disregard of the substance in favor of the form,” and in poetry “an unusual increase in formal elements, presumably for the purpose of concealing lack of originality and poverty of thought” (Jan Rypka, “Timūr and His Successors,” in *The History of Iranian Literature* [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968], pp. 281, 283). Writing on Persian literature during the sixteenth-century, Safa says, “It must be confessed at once that, both in wording and in style, the poetry of this period lacks interest: except in a few of the more celebrated poets little of intrinsic value is to be found” (Z. Safa, “Persian Literature in the Safavid Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, pp. 948–64, esp. p. 952).

Some scholars, noting that the “writer’s literary fame came often to depend on his ability to engage in an excessive use of metaphors and tropes and to adorn his style with a variety of devices,” reserve judgment and accept the difference between sixteenth-century attitudes to the literary tradition and its nineteenth- through twentieth-century critical reception (Yarshater, “Persian Poetry in the Timurid and Safavid Periods,” pp. 966, 981, and 990). Another exception is Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, esp. chap. 1.

The literary qualities and practices to which the fifteenth-century critics mentioned by Subtelny refer require further scrutiny. For example, Subtelny emphasizes the role of the riddle (*mu'ammā*) in the Timurid period and how critical contemporaries were of it (also noted by Rypka, *ibid.*, p. 282), but Losensky has qualified her observation, noting that the total number of works written about the *mu'ammā* was actually low (Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality*, pp. 154–58) when compared to total poetic production. Indeed, if poetic imitation is understood generally as an index of “decline,” then Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i and Jami could equally well be considered culprits.

⁶ Shafī'i Kadkani (“Persian Literatures [*Belles-Lettres*] from the Time of Jāmī to the Present Day,” p. 147) claims that the major shift between the two dynastic periods is seen in the ghazal; in Safavid writing artifice is based not on metaphor but on the juxtaposition or opposition of words. Rypka notes that continuity was maintained into the Safavid period through particular practices, forms, and stylistic features (e.g., similes, allegorical expressions, proverbs, witty sayings, and paradoxes) (Rypka, “Timūr and His Successors,” p. 285; and *idem*, “The Safavids,” in *History of Iranian Literature*, p. 296).

⁷ A detailed analysis of specific examples of poetic response is presented by Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Poetic Imitation and Individuality*, chaps. 5 and 6. For different forms of response, see Losensky’s index entry for “imitation,” where the technical terms are listed (*ibid.*, p. 383). Also see Zipoli, *The Technique of Ġawāb*.

⁸ Kamal al-Din Husayn b. ‘Ali, surnamed al-Va’iz, Kashifi (d. 910/1504–5), worked for many years of his life in Herat for Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i. A summary of Kashifi’s biography and a list of his works can be found in *EI2*, *s.v.* “Kāshifi” (Gholam Hosein Yousofi). The exact date of composition is not known.

And, although those who sit on the throne of the court of style are unanimous in praise of the magnificence of the words, and in applauding the eloquence of its compounds [*miṣrā*], truly the word is that which Hazam said; nevertheless, through the introduction of strange words and by overstraining the language with the beauties of Arabic expressions and hyperbole in metaphors and similes of various kinds, and exaggeration and prolixity in words and obscurity of expression, the mind of the hearer is kept back from enjoyment of the meaning of the book, and from apprehending the pith of the subject . . . and this circumstance will undoubtedly be a cause of disrelish and a source of ennui both to the reader and the hearer, especially in this age, so characterized by fastidiousness, in which the minds of its children have become nice to such a degree that they expect to perceive the meaning without its being decked-out on the richly ornamented bridal-bed, as it were, of language; how much more when in some of the words they may require to employ a minute comparison of the dictionary, and to examine glossaries with care. Hence, too, it all but came to pass that a book of such preciousness [as this is] was almost neglected and abandoned, and that the people of the world were deprived of its advantages and excluded from them.⁹

To remedy this neglect, the Turkish amir ordered Kashifi to “clothe the said book in a new dress, and bestow fresh adornment on the beauty of its tales of esoteric meaning, which were veiled and concealed by the curtain of obscure words and the wimple of difficult expressions.”¹⁰ In other words the existing Persian translation of the original Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* by Nasr Allah b. Muhammad (done between 1143 and 1146) was still too Arabized in its vocabulary, and the obscurity of its expressions forced the reader to turn to dictionaries and glossaries. Kashifi was to produce a new version that would be readily comprehended by his audience and that would bring the aesthetic of the text up to date, thereby saving it and its valuable lessons from neglect.¹¹ Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i had given similar advice to Mirkhvand; he told him to write his history in a style “free from the artificial ornaments of allegory and metaphor, exempt from the reproach of plagiarism, and far removed from the fault of enigmatic and obscure expressions . . . observe the medium between prolixity and conciseness.”¹²

‘Abd al-Vasī‘ Nizami was another figure at the court of Sultan Husayn Mirza in Herat. Khvandamir/Amini writes in glowing terms of his “good personal qualities and . . . expertise in the art of composition and writing correspondence and edicts.”¹³ ‘Abd al-Vasī‘ Nizami compiled an *inshā’* (a model book of composition) from the materials that he composed.¹⁴ Khvandamir/Amini also comments, however, on ‘Abd al-Vasī‘ Nizami’s failure to write a history of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s reign that satisfied the ruler; he used too many similes and metaphors.

Continuity in literary tradition from the Timurid to the Safavid dynasty and into the

⁹ Husayn Vā‘iz Kāshifi, *The Anvār-i Suhailī; Or, The Lights of Canopus*, trans. Edward B. Eastwick (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1854), pp. 8–9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

¹¹ Browne considered the result of Kashifi’s reworking to have produced the opposite literary effect, “full of absurd exaggerations, recondite words, vain epithets, far-fetched comparisons and tasteless bombast and represents to perfection the worst style of those florid writers who flourished under the patronage of the Timurids” (Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia (A. D. 1265-1502)*, 4 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902–28], 2:352).

¹² Mirkhvānd, *Rawzat al-ṣafā’*, 1:7; trans. in Shea, *History of the Early Kings of Persia*, p. 17.

¹³ Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabību’s-siyar*, trans. Thackston, p. 520.

¹⁴ ‘Abd al-Vasī‘ Nizami’s *inshā’*, the *Manshā’ al-inshā’* was published by Abū al-Qāsim Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Khvāfi, 2 vols. (n. p.: Chāpkhāna-yi Khurramī, 1357).

remaining years of the sixteenth century is manifest in the history of album-preface writing. Murvarid's preface was used as a direct model and Khvandamir/Amini's was imitated more generally. Their prefaces, along with other texts written by them, survived into the Safavid period in *inshā'*. In choosing a preface for his history, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat went to Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi, who composed a preface for his *Ẓafar-nāma*, a text commissioned by the Timurid Prince Ibrahim Sultan to record and celebrate the military victories of his grandfather Timur. Yazdi's preface was available in manuscript copies of the *Ẓafar-nāma*, a text celebrated in the Safavid period, and also in his very own *inshā'*.¹⁵ In many respects, Yazdi's panegyric biography of Timur and his sons inaugurated a literary trend that reached its fullest development by the century's end.¹⁶ At the end of that Timurid century was Kashifi. A portion of his preface to the *Anwār-i suhaylī* would be used some eighty years later by Muhammad Muhsin for an album preface. The same procedure is found in Mir Sayyid Ahmad's use of models composed by Murvarid and Qutb al-Din Muhammad.¹⁷

Continuity of vocabulary and the repertoire of figures of speech and themes are joined by specific uses of and references to literary precedent. All of these facets—linguistic, thematic, and organizational—underscore the performative dimension of literary expression, including the album preface.¹⁸ In producing literature the outcome was always partly anticipated. The newly made work derived legitimacy and coherence from its predecessors, and its novelty lay in subtle departures and surprising changes from all that had come before.¹⁹ Some have criticized this literary process for producing a tropological literature devoid of originality, an inwardly spiraling circle of increasing self-referentiality whereby form became content. But this judgment can quite easily be turned on its head. In the process of imitat-

¹⁵ In his section on Timurid history, Yahya b. 'Abd al-Latif Qazvini refers to Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi and notes that the *Ẓafar-nāma* was completed in 828 (1424–25) at the order of Ibrahim Sultan. It is an unusual reference in Qazvini's general history, especially because he does not mention any of the cultural achievements of other Timurid princes (Yahyā b. 'Abd al-Latif Qazvīnī, *Lubb al-tavārikh* [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād va Giyā, 1363/1984], pp. 313–14). He dwells on Ibrahim Sultan's numerous calligraphies for buildings in Shiraz and his commissioning of Yazdi to write the book. Qazvini completed his history in 948 (1542). Elsewhere Qazvini singles out the *Ẓafar-nāma* when referring to the numerous histories that recorded Timurid victories (*ibid.*, p. 302).

¹⁶ In its time, Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *Ẓafar-nāma* represented a different literary aesthetic, an expansion and reworking of the earlier *Ẓafar-nāma* composed by Nizam al-Din Shami (806/1404). Shami wrote his text according to Timur's instructions that it should be "free from rhetorical artifice and preciousness so that it could be understood by the ordinary reader" (John Woods, "The Rise of Timurid Historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46, 2 [1987]: 81–108; esp. 85).

¹⁷ The same intertextual phenomenon is found in prefaces to Safavid chronicles studied by Quinn. See Sholeh Quinn, "The Historiography of Safavid Prefaces," *Pembroke Papers* 4 (1996): 1–25; esp. 2–20. Quinn studies instances of close references to preceding models, for example, Khvandamir's use of Mirkhvand's preface to the *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'* (*ibid.*, pp. 3–6).

¹⁸ The practice, also current in historiography, is often described as plagiarism, which Quinn notes is not "accurate or useful" (Sholeh Quinn, "The Dreams of Shaykh Safī al-Din and Safavid Historical Writing," *Iranian Studies* 29, 1–2 [Winter/Spring 1998]: 127–47; esp. 131). Quinn adds that in reusing models the author could modify them in various ways "such as versifying, simplifying, paraphrasing, and updating to make his own final version appropriate for the time" (*ibid.*).

¹⁹ One of the fascinating problems of this intertextual literary culture is recognizing a specific literary precedent. Even in those instances where a specific intertext was unidentifiable, knowledge of the creative process was such that a text's intertextuality was apprehended without knowing the source. For a different focus on this issue, see Michael Riffaterre, "L'intertexte inconnu," *Littérature* 41 (February 1981): 4–7. He suggests that what activates the "intertextual mechanism . . . is the perception of the traces of the intertext within the text" (*ibid.*, pp. 5–6).

ing a model, the coherence and legibility of the newly crafted text depended on knowledge of its literary references and might be said to confer further originality upon the model while acquiring its own measure of the same. In essence, each work is a step backward and forward to past and future performances.²⁰ Various levels of competence are evidenced in the prefaces, although all of their authors were immersed in modes of literary expression and tradition. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat and Mir Sayyid Ahmad, whose prefaces are appropriations and reworkings of earlier models, adequately attest to the challenge of responding to tradition.

ORGANIZATION AND SEQUENCE

All the prefaces have a set of motifs that constitute their building blocks;²¹ some are primary and others are secondary in importance. In selecting and joining these units together, considerable flexibility, not only in the length but also in sequence, was allowed. Only one unit, praise of God and Creation, had the exclusive right to come first so it appeared in all prefaces of albums and books. Other motifs—an account of the album's inception and praise of the album's patron, agent of production, and the resulting object—were almost always present, but could be arranged in any sequence and could reappear later in the preface for expanded treatment if earlier they had only been touched upon briefly.²²

The following analysis summarizes some of the prefaces to show how these motifs are presented in the order of appearance in the texts. Although this method runs the risk of identifying a genre by isolating key themes and elements and is thus a method of analysis that reflects its author's own priorities and interests, an attempt has been made here to identify and distill motifs inclusively while avoiding the attendant problem of establishing a fixed and rigid taxonomy of the genre by acknowledging those permutations that exist between individual prefatory compositions.²³ Permutations occur in both sequence and treatment: for example, one motif can be expressed in prose in one preface and poetry in an-

²⁰ On the interplay between original, copy, mastery and mastercopy, and a review of modernist and post-modernist attitudes to original and copy, see Richard Schiff, "Mastercopy," *Iris* 1, 2 (1983): 113–27.

²¹ Comparable flexibility is found in the *accessus ad auctores* tradition. See Quain, *The Medieval Accessus ad Auctores*, p. 1.

²² These motifs bear a striking resemblance to several genres in addition to the beginning section of the *maṣnavī*, a poetic form of rhymed couplet, generally romantic or mystical in nature. *Maṣnavīs* began with praise of God invoking His blessing, praise of the Prophet Muhammad, a eulogy to the poem's patron, and an explanation of the reason for compiling the book.

²³ Problematic aspects of this process of genre definition and classification are reviewed by Barbara K. Lewalski, "Introduction: Issues and Approaches," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 1–12, esp. pp. 1–2. Lewalski notes the persistence of such classifications in the "elaborate synchronic genre systems devised by structuralists" (*ibid.*, p. 1), although it must be said that Russian Formalist-Structuralist literature on genre theory, while aiming for definition through the identification of "genre-markers," did allow for the dynamic existence of genre. See Boris Tomashevsky, "Literary Genres," *Russian Poetics in Translation* 5 (1977): 52–93; esp. 52–53 (first published in *Teoriya literatury: poetika*, 4th ed. [Moscow-Leningrad, 1928], pp. 158–200). Cross-cultural comparisons of genre theory are uncommon, but one that introduces the problems of assumed homologies and cognitive classes is Earl Miner, "Some Issues of Literary 'Species,' or 'Distinct Kind,'" in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 15–44, esp. pp. 21–28.

other. In this way it becomes possible to discern patterns of convergence in, and divergence from, a specific literary practice and hence to understand how the reader apprehended a genre against or through which the new preface was composed.²⁴

Although a significant number of prosody manuals exist for Arabic and Persian literary traditions,²⁵ discussing the practice of their composition was apparently not an activity to which *littérateurs* habitually turned. The authors of prefaces do not say why or how they composed their texts, and the state of scholarly literature about these prosody manuals is such that many questions about literary practices and criticism remain unanswered.²⁶ Thus, deducing literary practices is only possible through a study of the texts themselves and the occasional references made by authors to their craft.²⁷ Indeed, preface authors did the same thing: when composing new prefaces they consulted earlier ones from albums and written texts available in sources like the *inshā's*. Aspects of style and language and the rules of performance were acquired through knowledge of precedent and absorbed, assimilated, and perfected by practice.

Murvarid's "Composition for an Album" (Inshā'-yi muraqqa' for Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i, 1491–92. Murvarid opens the preface with the image of the creation of the “multicolored album of the marvelous creation of the heavens”²⁸ followed by a series of quotations from the Ko-

²⁴ Faced by the absence of scholarship on genre in Persian literature, I have turned to comparative studies on the subject, bearing in mind the problems and shortcomings of such a move. I have found Todorov's study of genre particularly insightful, especially the concept of “horizon of expectations” which he derived from Husserl's phenomenology of perception, used extensively by Jauss in his work on reception. See Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Malti-Douglas has examined aspects of structure and organization in works of *adab*. She notes that the character of a work of *adab* is identifiable through its selection and arrangement of “micro-units.” After Kilito, she considers these units to be “reported discourse,” a notion of genre related to Todorov's (Fedwa Malti-Douglas, “Structure and Organization in a Monographic *Adab* Work: *Al-Tatfīl* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40, 3 [1981]: 227–45; esp. 228). For a brief discussion of genre in Arabic poetry, see Seeger A. Bonebakker, “Poets and Critics in the Third Century A.H.,” in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 1970), pp. 85–111, esp. p. 98.

²⁵ Among these studies are Wen-chin Ouyang, *Literary Criticism in Medieval Arabic-Islamic Culture: The Making of a Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, *The Hand of the North Wind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Isti'āra in Arabic Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977); idem, “Literary Theory: The Problem of Its Efficiency,” in *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 1973), pp. 19–69; *EI2*, s.v. “Taḍjīn” (W. P. Heinrichs); Clinton, “Šams-i Qays on the Nature of Poetry”; and idem, “Esthetics by Implication,” pp. 73–96. Additional Persian prosody manuals are listed in Tauer, “Persian Learned Literature from Its Beginnings up to the End of the 18th Century,” pp. 433–34.

²⁶ In her essay on metaphor (*isti'āra*), Meisami notes that many of the early Persian manuals of prosody are based on Arabic ones without too much critical analysis. In an analysis of a few manuals, she is able to demonstrate changes in the definition of metaphor across the Persian examples but emphasizes the “need for a comprehensive study that would trace developments in poetic practice through the comparison of different poets and of usage in different periods” (*EI*, s.v. “Este'āra” [Julie S. Meisami]). At this time the study of Arabic prosody is more developed than Persian prosody although some of its principles can be applied to Persian.

Of great interest are possible continuities in the science of rhetoric as a social practice. Numerous continuities are apparent between classical writers and early Arab ones and beyond. For example, see Kamal Abu Deeb, “Al-Jurjānī's Classification of Isti'āra with Special Reference to Aristotle's Classification of Metaphor,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 2 (1971): 48–75. For some of the problems involved in this connection, see Heinrichs, “Literary Theory: The Problem of Its Efficiency,” esp. pp. 32–33.

²⁷ As noted by Clinton, “Esthetics by Implication,” p. 74.

²⁸ *muraqqa'-i mulamma'-i badī' al-ibdā'-i sipihr*.

ran—including 91:3–4, “The night when it covers him over, the day when it reveals his radiance”;²⁹ and 81:17–18, “The closing night, the rising dawn”—and two hadiths—“The pen dried up with what would be [until doomsday],”³⁰ and a reference to God’s creation with “the first thing that God created was the pen”³¹—then two additional quotations from the Koran 3:47, “He says ‘Be!,’ and it is,” and 7:154, “Inscribed on them was guidance and grace.” The last quotation referred to the tablets given to the prophet Moses. Murvarid then goes on to say that studying the “fine meanings of the Koran” and the “seven traditions” for the creation of archetypes and forms was important, and adding that such a pursuit is not possible without rhetorical terms (*alfāz*), tropes (*ibāra*), words (*aqwāl*), and metaphors (*isti‘āra*).³² Ideas are preserved and immortalized through time only by the book and by writing. Reinforcement is provided by a poem that stresses the importance of books for allegory and topoi, concluding, “If there were no flowing streams in the orchard/no trace of flowers and basil would remain” (*zi āb salsalhā dar chaman agar nabūd/ namānad az gul va rayhān ba-bāgh hīch aṣar*).

In his next section Murvarid notes the degrees and ranks for each craft of refined artwork and every form of art: people who strive to reach the highest level in them, he says, should guard against pride. A poem attributed to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad and first Shi‘ite imam, is cited as an example of the benefits and value of calligraphy:

He who, if he struck his vengeful sword at the infidels’ head,
would cast them from the blackness of unbelief into the darkness of non-being.
And if his gem-scattering pen began to move,
at every minute it would obtain bounty from the origin of the tablet and pen.³³
*(ān-ki tīgh-i qahr agar bastī ba-sar kuffār rā
az savād-i kufr afgandī ba-zulmāt-i ‘adam
va ān-ki gar kīlk-i gawharbārash ba-junbish āmadī
yāftī har lahza fayz az mabdā³⁴-yi lawḥ va qalam)*

The importance accorded to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib in the prefaces, where his roles as calligrapher and inventor of Kufic and illumination are stressed and augment the status of both activities, took on a particular resonance among the Shi‘ite audience of the Safavid court. Murvarid continues with another of ‘Ali’s sayings, “I recommend to you the beauty of calligraphy for it is among the keys to sustenance.” He then makes a logical equation between ‘Ali’s involvement with calligraphy—a meritorious and noble craft³⁴—and the value attached to such a pursuit, citing calligraphic specimens that ‘Ali left to posterity. He adds a poem in praise of ‘Ali:

²⁹ Here the order of verses 3 and 4 is reversed.

³⁰ *jaffa al-qalam bimā huwa kā’in.*

³¹ *awwal mā khalaqa Allāh al-qalam.*

³² Believing the album to have been a collection of poetry, Subtelny interprets this passage as an apology for the poetic art. See Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 66.

³³ The last line is especially rich in meaning. *Fayz* also has the sense of a vessel brimming over with liquid, of copiousness and emanation, while *mabdā* can refer to a source, a principle. Together they conjure up an image of the pen brimming over with liquid, ink in the pen’s case, emanating from the divinely preserved tablet and pen.

³⁴ *qadr va sharaf-i īn fann.*

Like an unbored pearl from the ocean of sanctity
 is every point that came from his pearl-scattering pen.
 You say it was as if his fingers were in the hands of the Omnipotent
 as if the reed in his miraculous fingers were a sign of Him.

(*nā sufta gawharī ast zi baḥr-i valāyatash*
har nuqta kāmad az qalam-i dur-fishān-i ū
gūī ki būd dar yadd-i qudrat anāmīlāsh
chun khāma dar anāmīl-i mu'jiz nishān-i ū)

Murvarid returns to a saying, “Your offspring have studied writing because writing is one of the endeavors of kings and sultans.” This is meant to urge the reader to strive for perfection in calligraphy. The foundation for success lies in the imitation of calligraphic examples by those who have practiced this art.

At this point Murvarid turns to the album. He outlines the process of gathering materials and mentions that the objective of the album’s collector was to provide a means for protecting its separate pieces (*ajzāʾ*) in a solid and strong binding (*jild-i maʾmūl va mahfūz*). Some of the materials listed for inclusion in it are pages (*awrāq*), pieces (*ajzāʾ*), histories (*asāṭir*), royal mandates/diplomas (*manāshūr*) among other things (*va ghayr zalika*) that had been assembled (*ki mujmaʾ gashta*).³⁵ A few calligraphers (*baʾzī fuṣalāʾ-yi khaṭṭ shinās*) and artists (*ʿurafāʾ-yi hunar iqtibās*) busied themselves working on it until “a worthy arrangement and fitting decoration were brought into being.”³⁶ He gives the date of completion as 897 (1491–92), and notes that portions of the concluding poem yield a chronogram for the date. The poem is complex in its imagery:

So long as this album ornaments the book of the world,
 Mercury will use it to derive his order.
 So long as its camphor-like whiteness becomes appealing because of its script,
 at every moment it will surpass youths in excellence.
 Virgo casts her shadow on the pages of constellations Lyre and Eagle
 so long as powdered musk is scattered over silvery strata.
 If someone asked about its completion, [as] a chronogram,
 I would say “The pages were gathered to form an album.”

³⁵ The terms used for the album’s contents and the fact that he mentions a group of poets assembled to make the album led Subtelny to conclude that this preface was composed as an introduction to an anthology of poetry (ibid., p. 62). The terms used by Murvarid—*asāṭir* and *manāshūr*—are used by Khvandamir when he refers to the *inshāʾ* of both Murvarid and Isfizari. The album may have been composed entirely of calligraphies and poems, as opposed to other categories of materials like paintings and drawings. It is not likely that the term *muraqqaʾ* would be used for an edition of collected poetry, most commonly referred to by such words as *divān*, *jang*, *safīna*, or *kullīyat*.

One extant album dating to the early sixteenth century is composed of calligraphic exercises written in *nastaʿlīq* by Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi and Shah Mahmud al-Nishapuri (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. no. 179). It comprises eight folios (242 x 159 mm; written surfaces 127 x 75 mm) stitched into a lacquer binding. The calligraphies were executed as single sheets of paper that were gathered and framed in margins of colored paper sprinkled with gold. The album begins with Koran 1 (fol. 1b), and a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (fol. 2a); fol. 2a is signed by Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi. Subsequent pages (fols. 2b–7a and fols. 7b–8a) are a series of texts signed by Shah Mahmud al-Nishapuri (fol. 7a, “at Tabriz”). The book offers an interesting variation on sixteenth-century albums and a possible parallel to the contents of the album described by Murvarid. This book was assembled from calligraphies using a process then current for manuscript production, but these aspects of its structure are equally prevalent in album making. Further, its definition according to famous calligraphers and by specific texts also makes it similar to albums.

³⁶ *chunānchi zāhir ast tartībī lāʾiq va tazaynī muvāfiq dādand.*

(*tā nuskha-yi jahān rā zīnat shud īn muraqqāʿ*
yābad az ū ʿuṭārid dar kār-i khud nasaqhā
kāfir gūn bayāzash tā gasht dilkash az khaṭṭ
har dam barād ba-khūbī az naw-khaṭṭān sabaqhā
bar ṣafhahā-yi nasrīn andākht sāya-yi sunbul
tā rikht mushk-i sūda bar sīm-gūn ṭabaqhā
pursad agar kas az fann-i taʾrikh ikhtitāmash
gūyam pay-yi muraqqāʿ jamʿ āmada varaqhā)

The fifth hemistich could also convey the image of a hyacinth casting its shadow over fields of wild rose, but the constellation imagery makes more sense because of the following line of musk sprinkled on heavenly strata.

Khvandamir/Amini's Preface to an Album made by Bihzad (before 1523). Khvandamir/Amini's preface begins with an encomium to God, referred to as the "immortal" or "incomparable" painter (*naqqāsh-i azal*), and in it His creative act is likened to the arranging of an "album with the heavens for its leaves,"³⁷ but without pigments or pen (*bī-rang va qalam*). To emphasize God's creative act by speech alone, he cites Koran 3:47, "[He says] 'Be!', and it is." Creation is then compared to a workshop of variegated paintings of changing colors.³⁸ Khvandamir/Amini turns to God's fashioning of man, this time by reference to Koran 40:64 ("... who fashioned you and gave you excellent form"); and 17:70 ("... and exalted them over many of Our creatures").

He further develops the imagery of God's creative act in a *masnavī*, by referring to materials (pigments), and implements (brush and pen):

When the divine pen wrote forms,
 man became the manifestation of learning and skill.
 When He hastened to reveal His skill,
 the page of days was ornamented by Him.
 (*kilk-i ilāhī chu raqam zad švar*
mazhar-i faẓl va hunar āmad bashar
dar pay-yi izhār-i hunar chun shitāft
ṣafha-yi ayyām az ū zīb yāft)

Creation becomes an act of writing and of depicting:

The beauty of the writing and the beguiling image [painting/drawing]
 drives patience from the learned man's thought.
 The eye is favored for seeing the writing's form
 but the heart is ignorant of its meaning.
 Its form and meaning are praiseworthy,
 they brighten the pupil of the eye.
 (*husn-i khaṭṭ va sūrat-i mardum farīb*
mī-barad az khāṭir-i dānā shakīb
dāda shud az sūrat-i khaṭṭ bahravār
dil būd az maʿnī-yi ū bī khabar
šūrat va maʿnīyash pasandīda ast
nūr-dih-i mardumak-i dāda ast)³⁹

³⁷ *ārāst muraqqāʿī zi awrāq-i sipīhr.*

³⁸ *ba-ijād-i švar-i kārkhāna-yi būqalamūn mutʿallaq shud.*

³⁹ The final *bayt* employs the concept of form (*šūrat*) and meaning (*maʿnī*), which among other things signi-

Returning to prose and to the “excellence of writing,” Khvandamir/Amini cites more Koranic verses in support of the benefits of calligraphy. He then turns to the “human soul’s savoring of design and depiction.”⁴⁰ In an excursus into history, the preface brings the two occupations—calligraphy and depiction—together, claiming their continued practice by the noblest of Adam’s offspring since the beginning of time. In the next segment he deals with the album directly, noting the identification of important practitioners in the preface, and the inclusion of their calligraphies, paintings, and drawings in the album compiled (*jāmiʿ*) and arranged (*murattab*) by Bihzad.

A lengthy encomium to Bihzad, “the wonder of the age” (*nādir al-ʿaṣr*), follows. In it Bihzad is compared to Mani, founder of Manichaeism and painter of extraordinary skill, whom he has surpassed in the art of painting. The poem’s last two distichs praise Bihzad’s arrangement:

The beauty of these pages is a thing
that further perfects these rarities.
As for the calligraphy’s form and the painting’s beauty
no other page could have been written like it.
(*kār ast jamāl-i ʿin ṣaḥāʿif*
afzūd kamāl-i ʿin tarāʾif
dar ṣūrat-i khaṭṭ va ḥusn-i taṣvīr
zi ʿin sān varaqī na-yāft taḥrīr)

The album even rivals the “album of the sky” (*muraqqaʿ-i sipīhr*). Its calligraphies are described as “pearls brought forth by the bejeweled pen of the diver from the sea of the inkwell to the shore of these folios”;⁴¹ its paintings, memorials (*maʿāṣir*) of their makers, are transferred (*naql namūda*) from the heart’s tablet to the pages of this book⁴² and are compared to houris who enchant the soul.⁴³ Khvandamir/Amini finishes his praise of the album in a poem (*qifʿa*) whose dominant image compares the album and its contents to a sea containing pearls:

Every coveted pearl that is nourished in the ocean of contentment,
is to be found in this sea [i.e., album].
Like beauty, it lights the torch of the eye,
like the meeting of lovers, it seizes every heart.
(*har gawhar-i murād ki dar baḥr-i khūshdīlī*
parvarda-and jumla dar ʿin baḥr ḥāsil ast
hamchun jamāl mashʿala afrūz-i dāda ast
hamchun vaṣṣāl khurramī andūz-i har dīl ast)

As a conclusion he comments on the task of composing a description worthy of the album, underscoring that only certain people are capable of doing so. He then adds yet another

fies the relationship between exoteric and esoteric meanings. It is a commonly used vocabulary in poetry imbued with Sufi themes and related to Neoplatonic concepts. It is one of many recurring motifs regarded as a cliché because of its ubiquity (see Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, 1:260, n. 1). For an expanded discussion of form and meaning, see Yves Porter, “La forme et le sens: à propos du portrait dans la littérature persane classique,” in *Pand-o Sokhan*, ed. Christophe Balay, Claire Kappler, and Živa Vesel (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1995), pp. 219–31.

⁴⁰ *va iltizāz-i nafs-i basharī az naqsh va taṣvīr.*

⁴¹ *har qaṭra ki ghavvās-i qalam-i gawhar bār az luḡja-yi davāt ba-sāhil-i ʿin awrāq rasānīda durrī ast.*

⁴² *az lawḥ-i dīl bar ṣaḥāyif-i ʿin kitāb.*

⁴³ Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 36.

poem praising Bihzad, and ends with a blessing on God, the Prophet Muhammad and his family.

Muhammad Salih's Preface to an Album for Vali Muhammad, 1609. Muhammad Salih begins his preface with a poem praising God that describes His act of inscribing the events of time:

There is no friend sweeter in this world than a book
in the house of sorrow that is the world; there is no consoler [like a book].
Every moment in the corner of loneliness from it [the book]
are one hundred comforts and never an affliction.

Praising You is the pen's language,
paper became camphor-strewing in gratitude to You.
From Your prowess, the pen became musk-scattering,
by Your writing, the leaves of the world acquired impression.

*(khvushtar zi kitāb dar īn jahān yārī nīst
dar gham-kada-yi zamāna gham-khvārī nīst
har lahza az ū ba-gusha-yi tanhā'ī
šad rāhat hast va hargiz āzārī nīst
ay hamd-i tu khāma rā buvad vard-i zabān
kāghaz shuda az shukr-i tu kāfūr fishān
az qudrat-i tu qalam buvad mushk fazāi
awraq-i jahān az raqamat yāft nishān)*

A prose passage then praises creation with the help of Koranic excerpts. Creation is a variegated album, a painting of colored patches; the heavens are ornamented with stars in accordance with the decree (*tawqī'*), “He decked the nearest heavens with ornaments of stars” (Koran 37:6). Next the Prophet Muhammad is praised.

Muhammad Salih then moves into a statement about the benefits that accrue from contemplating calligraphic specimens and praises the album's arrangement (*tartīb*) and decoration (*tazyīn*); its works possess perfect grace and ineffable freshness. Vali Muhammad is invoked as the patron of the album, and his extensive titles are listed. It was because his opinion inclined to a “compilation of sweet calligraphies by the calligraphers of the world, colored specimens of worthy scribes, assemblies of paintings by masters of the profession, and the tablets of right-thinking limners”⁴⁴ that an album was assembled.

Muhammad Salih continues praising the album with a metaphor that likens its calligraphies to a collection of precious brides (*arā'is-i nafā'is*) housed in the tent's bridal chamber of concealment (*dar hijla-yi ikhtifā'*), and praising God and His creation: He is the “binder of the workshop ‘Be!’ and it is,”⁴⁵ who sewed creation together using the rainbow for stitches. The benefits of speech and discourse lie especially in their use for praising and recollecting God. A poem amplifies the idea of praising God, its final couplet a prayer of completion that reads, “. . . until heaven's album is colored by the light of the fixed stars.”⁴⁶ The poem introduces the final segment of the preface in which distinctions between Creation and created object—that is, the album—are blurred. Referring to Creation as “pages,” God is likened to a jeweler (*muraşşī*) who ornaments them with “intimate assemblies” (*majālis-i uns*), and

⁴⁴ *bar jam'-i khuṭūt-i shūrīn-i khushnivīsān-i āfāq va muqatta'āt-i rangīn-i khaṭṭā'āt-i bā istihqāq va majālis-i taşvīr-i ustādān-i hunar-i pīsha va alvāḥ-i muzahhibān-i şavāb andīsha.*

⁴⁵ *mujallid-i kārkhāna-yi “kun fayakūnu”* [Koran, 2:117].

⁴⁶ *tā muraqqā'-i gardūn az anvār-i kavākib-i şavābit mulamma' bāshad.*

who “shed light on the eyes of the inhabitants of Paradise.”⁴⁷ The final poems are two quatrains which draw a parallel between creation (“This rare meadow which refreshes the soul/ is beautiful writing by the musk-sprinkling pen”)⁴⁸ and the “new album.”⁴⁹ The album’s pages are “the envy of the rose gardens of Iram.”⁵⁰ A chronogram ends the second quatrain, followed by a colophon where Muhammad Salih signs his name and begs for God’s mercy, which completes the preface.

These summaries demonstrate that the three prefaces have much in common. Their overall structure consists of an opening passage in praise of God and Creation, followed by a passage on the excellence of calligraphy and depiction, and concluding with a segment that refers specifically to the album, its inception, the process of its formation and its compiler(s). Next comes praise of the album and compiler, and they end with a date of completion or a blessing. Muhammad Salih uses similar motifs but some elements are rearranged in sequence and other motifs recur. For example, the praise of both creation and the album is repeated at the end of the preface, giving Muhammad Salih an opportunity to deploy still more images that link God-made creation to the man-made album and to display his knowledge and a host of figures of speech.

The prefaces composed by Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Quli Khalifa are also similar to these three examples. The former’s preface for album H. 2156 was based on Murvarid’s. Shah Quli Khalifa’s preface further develops the theme of praise through an expansion of each topic while observing the general sequence: praise of God and Creation, praise of the Prophet Muhammad and ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, the *ammā ba’du* transition,⁵¹ Shah Tahmasp’s order for an album and Shah Quli Khalifa’s execution of it, praise of Shah Tahmasp, and thanks at the album’s completion. After a break, which might indicate the division of *ātibācha* (preface) from *khātima* (epilogue), though neither is marked by a rubric, the preface concludes with further praise of the album and praise of Shah Tahmasp, and the hope that if those looking at the album find omissions or faults, they will emend them and forgive.

The most significant difference between these examples and the later ones by Dust Muhammad, Malik Daylami, Mir Sayyid Ahmad, Shams al-Din Muhammad, and Muhammad Muhsin is their slight tendency to be art historical in approach and the absence of lists of names, short biographies, and anecdotes. Murvarid makes only passing reference to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, noting works by him, and to other calligraphers whose works are used as models. The people working on the album project are also not named, but referred to only as “calligraphers” and “artists.” When Khvandamir/Amini identifies the album’s compiler, he remarks that both calligraphy and painting have been practiced since the beginning of time by the noblest of Adam’s descendants and that his introduction will identify these important practitioners, though in fact it never does. The absence of long lists of figures important to the history of art is all the more puzzling because it does not correspond to contemporary patterns in biographical writing. Khvandamir included many short biographies of artists and calligraphers in his *Habīb al-siyar*; Dawlatshah did the same

⁴⁷ *va nūr zadā’i ‘uyūn-i sākinān-i quds bād.*

⁴⁸ *in turfa chaman ki tāza sāzad jān rā/ zībā raqamī ast kilk-i mushk afshān rā.*

⁴⁹ *in turfa muraqqā’.*

⁵⁰ *har ṣafha-yi ū ast rashk-i gulzār-i iram.*

⁵¹ Dust Muhammad, Shah Quli Khalifa, and Malik Daylami were the only authors to use this transitional phrase in their album prefaces.

in his *Tazkirat al-shu'arā'* (Biography of Poets, 1487). Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's *Širāt al-sutūr* (Way of Lines of Writing, 1514) also contains references to key figures in the history of calligraphy, though his primary focus is on advice about the practice, methods, and materials of calligraphy.

That Murvarid's and Khvandamir/Amini's prefaces are in *inshā'* may offer an explanation for the absence of lists of practitioner's names. Their main function was to provide a good example to the writer composing his own preface. Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini operate within the genre by using the requisite motifs and selecting choice quotations from the relatively narrow repertoire. The result is a framework of ideas and images that can be broken at different points for interpolations of prose or poetry, and expanded or shrunk according to the requirements of the new preface.

One wonders whether Murvarid's and Khvandamir/Amini's prefaces were intended as the final texts for the albums which they so clearly describe. They might constitute very polished and accomplished drafts, or prototypes suitable for *inshā'* because they are concise in their treatment of the most important aspects and elements of the genre. Khvandamir/Amini's reference to the list of names of famous practitioners in his *muqaddima*, which does not in fact appear, would tend to support the hypothesis that the preface is not represented here in its final form,⁵² but the examples of Shah Quli Khalifa and Muhammad Salih suggest that a preface in its final form need not include names of specific practitioners.

A second group of prefaces does include lists of names (e.g., calligraphers, painters, draftsmen, limners), in addition to abbreviated biographical notes, occasional anecdotes and stories, and references to the practice and reception of art. Two examples summarized here are the prefaces by Dust Muhammad and Shams al-Din Muhammad.

Dust Muhammad's Preface to the Bahram Mirza Album, 1544–45. Dust Muhammad's preface to the Bahram Mirza album opens with God inscribing the events of creation on the preserved tablet (*lawḥ al-mahfūz*), supported by a hadith, "The pen dried up with what would be until the Day of Judgment."⁵³ This is followed by God's act of creation, His rationale is given in the famous tradition, "I was a hidden treasure . . . that wanted to be known so I created creation in order to be known."⁵⁴ With the assistance of the pen, the first thing God created, He portrayed on the "slate of existence" (*takhta-yi hastī*). Creation is likened to a mirror (*ā'īna-yi kardār*) wherein names and traces were manifest (*mazhar-i asmā va āzār*). The seven heavens, stars, sun, and moon are next described. For this Dust Muhammad employs terms connected with the arts of the book and colors—ruling (*jadval*), page (*ṣafha*), white (*ṣafidāb*), azure (*lājvardī*), vermilion (*shangarf*)—as he develops the imagery of God making the sum total of creation. God also makes black pens from the eyelashes of houris and draws beautiful locks of hair on the "face of day" (*ba-rū-yi rūz*). Dust Muhammad then cites Koran 54:50, where God's creative act is said to have occurred in the "twinkling of an eye." God created both Jesus and Adam by an act of speech alone after He had fashioned them

⁵² Subtelny has remarked on the incomplete nature of many texts compiled in *inshā'* manuals and suggests that "only that part of the document was included that the writer thought was an illustration of good style." See Subtelny, "The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan," p. 61.

⁵³ *jaffa al-qalam bimā huwa kā'in illā yawm al-dīn.*

⁵⁴ *kuntu kanzan makhfiyan fa aḥbabtu in 'urifa fa khalaqtu al-khalaq lā 'arafa.*

from dust. He breathed life into Jesus (Koran 15:29, 38:72). A poem follows on God and His Creation.

Adam is the next object of praise. His is the first “portrait” (*paykar*) to be made on the page of existence, a tree nourished with the water of mercy and beauty (*āb-i raḥmat va jamāl*), whose branches produced flowers of saintliness (*karāmat*) and guidance (*hidāyat*). Adam’s beauty is likened to Joseph’s; it provokes astonishment (*ḥayrat*), wonder (*ta’ajjub*), and confusion (*tashvīr*) in people:

The Eternal artist who drew that black script
 O Lord, such wondrous forms are in His pen.
 (*naqqāsh-i azal ki ān khatt-i mushkīn raqam-i ū ast*
yā rabb chi raqamhā-yi ‘ajab dar qalam-i ū ast)

Next comes praise of the Prophet Muhammad. Through his prophecy he has abrogated “one thousand books” (*hizār nāma*) and past laws (*qavā’id*) and rules (*iḥkām*). Again a language of the arts of the book and calligraphy figures strongly, especially in a lengthy poem in praise of the Prophet whose predestination is confirmed by the hadith, “I was a Prophet when Adam was between water and clay.”⁵⁵

After noting the necessity of praising God, Dust Muhammad mentions the obligation of paying respect to the Twelve Imams who were the signs of God’s messenger. A poem praises the imams and ends in a prayer for the continuance of their offspring, and, as we move back into prose, the last of the imams’ descendants, Shah Tahmasp, is introduced, followed by a list of titles and honorifics. This provides the opening needed to praise Bahram Mirza, who is likened in a couplet to kings Faridun, Jamshid, Alexander, and Dara, and to turn to Bahram’s order that the album be made, and Dust Muhammad introduces himself as the scribe (*kātib*) who will arrange and ornament it.

Dust Muhammad then turns to the subject of calligraphy, noting that such an introduction is necessary in the album without saying why. He covers the early history of writing beginning with Adam and Enoch and the invention of different forms of writing by prophets and wise men; he credits Ya’rub b. Qahtan, identifiable as a progenitor of the Arabs, with turning *ma’qilī* script into Kufic, making him its inventor, and ‘Ali b. Abi Talib its perfecter. Ibn Muqla, a vizier during the reign of al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32), learns three scripts—*thuluth*, *muḥaqqaq*, and *naskh*—from ‘Ali b. Abi Talib in a dream, but then his fingers were removed as punishment for alleged treason (he used his left hand to teach his daughter). Ibn Bawwab was a “student” of Ibn Muqla.

Several centuries are passed over, and we next meet Shaykh Jamal al-Din Yaqut, whom Dust Muhammad identifies as active during the rule of the last Abbasid caliph al-Mustansir (r. 1226–42). Yaqut received instruction from Ibn Bawwab, though this must certainly refer to the study of models and not direct pedagogy. When Yaqut had perfected these scripts, he transmitted this skill to six students who are then given permission to sign their calligraphies with Yaqut’s name. The six students are divided into two regional schools—of Khurasan and Iraq—in later generations. Dust Muhammad notes how one, Master Pir Yahya al-Sufi, did not study directly (*bī-vāsīṭa*) with Khvaja Mubarakshah, thus introducing the notion of stylistic affiliation as opposed to direct pedagogical instruction. The next genera-

⁵⁵ *kuntu nabīyyan wa Ādam bayna al-mā’ wa al-ḥīn.*

tion of calligraphers in the six scripts is then introduced, their pedagogical filiations traced, and aspects of their achievements mentioned. The section closes with the mention of the *ta'liq* script, its inventor Khvaja Taj al-Din Salmani, and its major exponents up to the Safavid period.

The next section, subtitled “Explanation of the Masters of *Nasta'liq* Script,”⁵⁶ begins with the “qibla of scribes” Khvaja Zahir al-Din Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi inventing *nasta'liq*: “the descent of this chain can be traced no further back than him.”⁵⁷ A long list of the exponents of *nasta'liq* follows; pedagogical filiations are listed, praise is accorded to some, particular qualities are identified. A bifurcation of the *nasta'liq* style is hinted at when Dust Muhammad introduces calligraphers Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and his contemporary Mawlana Nizam al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahim Khvarazmi (known as Anisi), both active during the late fifteenth century. Some students of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi are identified, and one of them, Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Nur, is singled out for extended praise. To list all the names or discuss all the works of those in the chain (*silsila*) would be impossible but because their calligraphies are included in this tome (*mujallad*) the “description of the beautiful form and praise of grace of the pen of this group”⁵⁸ will be “placed before the gaze of those endowed with sight and knowledge.”⁵⁹ The section on *nasta'liq* closes with the Arabic *bayt*:

Verily, our works point to us;
so gaze after us at our works.
(*inna āthāmā tadullu ‘alaynā*
fa anzurū ba’danā illā al-āthārī)

The next major section, “Introduction to Artists and Limners of the Past”⁶⁰ is given over to the arts of depiction, Dust Muhammad connects the arrangement (*tartīb*) and decoration (*zīnat*) of Korans to the pen (*qalam*), design (*tarḥ*), and form (*raqam*) of the “masters of this noble craft.”⁶¹ He claims that ‘Ali b. Abi Talib was the first to ornament Korans and to develop the style of decoration that was later called *islāmī* (a variant on *islīmī*). He identifies Daniel as the originator of depiction (*taṣvīr*), recounting how the companions of the Prophet journeyed to Byzantium to meet with the emperor Herakleios and were shown a chest containing portraits of the prophets who came after Adam and culminated in Muhammad. God sent the chest to Adam, and Daniel had made copies of the portraits that the box contained. The line of depiction had continued since that time and the practice of drawing and painting was justified. The next transition is to Jesus and then to Mani, where he tells an anecdote about Mani’s Artangi Tablet, a silk painted with various images, and how it was received by potential converts to Mani’s religion. He mentions another “master of the past” (*mutaqaddīmīn*) named Shapur and suggests that the reader consult the *Khamsas* for further details about both him and Mani.

Dust Muhammad introduces the modern tradition through the person of Ahmad Musa, a contemporary of Sultan Abu Sa‘id Khudaybanda (r. 1317–35), whom he credits with the invention of the style of depiction still practiced in the Safavid period. He lists some of

⁵⁶ *bayān-i ustādān-i khaṭṭ-i nasta'liq*.

⁵⁷ *intisāb-i īn silsila rā az īshān tajāvuz dāda ba-dīgarī na-mī-tavān rasānīd*.

⁵⁸ *ta'rīf-i ḥusn-i raqam va tawṣīf-i luṭf-i qalam-i jum'atī*.

⁵⁹ *ba-nazar-i arbāb-i baṣar va baṣīrat bāz mī-guzārad*.

⁶⁰ *muqaddima-yi naqqāshān va muzahhibān-i māzī*.

⁶¹ *ustādān-i īn fann-i sharīf*.

the manuscripts for which Ahmad Musa executed paintings (they were later owned by the last Timurid Sultan Husayn Mirza) before he continues the genealogy of transmission—as he did for calligraphy—by naming masters and their students and patrons who sponsored artists. When he reaches Baysunghur, son of Shahrukh and grandson of Timur, he describes an anthology that Baysunghur commissioned and the team which he assembled to make it. The narrative of transmission picks up again when the anthology is completed with Ulugh Beg introduced as the next patron of significance, followed by three artists—Amir Ruh Allah, Mawlana Vali Allah, and Bihzad—all active during the late fifteenth century. He singles out Bihzad for particular praise, noting his numerous works in the album and mentioning that he had served Shah Tahmasp.

The next section, “Mention of Scribes of the Royal Library,”⁶² is devoted to contemporary calligraphers, including himself. He has spent his life in service and part of that time praising an unidentified person, whom he addresses in the second person singular, presumably Bahram Mirza.

A lengthy rubric introduces the next section as the painters and artists (*muṣavvirān va naqqāshān*) of the royal library. Because scribes (*kuttāb*) are “mentioned in every section of this preface”⁶³ artists will also be listed according to reputation, beginning with Sultan Muhammad, followed by Aqa Jalal al-Din Mirak al-Husayni al-Isfahani and Mir Musavvir. Next come references to limners of the royal library, again arranged according to reputation.

The preface closes with a prayer (*du‘ā*) in which Dust Muhammad expresses the wish that Bahram’s book (*nāma-yi shāhzāda Bahrām*) will endure as long as Bahram (Mars) remains at the apex of the heavens. A chronogram (*ta’rīkh*) is in a poem of five rhymed couplets where an angel praises the album’s completion and its calligraphy, depiction, and illumination. Bahram Mirza is extolled and the date of completion is given in the last line in a chronogram which combines Bahram’s name, title, and virtue.

Shams al-Din Muhammad’s Preface to an Album for Shah Ismā‘il II, before 1577. Shams al-Din Muhammad’s preface opens on a double-page illuminated frame, with captions above and below the prefatory text written in a white *thuluth* on gold. The beginning of the album is given as 976 (1564) in holy, praiseworthy Mashhad, and its completion as 984 (1577) during the “days of the reign of the greatest and noblest sultan, the most just and wise emperor, Abū al-Muẓaffar Sulṭān Shāh Ismā‘īl al-Ṣafavī al-Ḥusaynī.” It praises God and His Creation, drawing on the image of creation as a changeable album, and adduces the Koranic verse, “You make the night succeed the day, the day succeed the night” (3:27). The album of creation was ordered from pages of vernal and autumnal colors and bound together with the stitches of His benevolence. The Prophet Muhammad is praised and the segment closes with a reference to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib.

Shams al-Din Muhammad then moves to the benefits of writing that “elevates discourse,” supported by the verse, “Read, for your Lord is most beneficent, who taught by the pen” (Koran 96:3–4), and the hadith, “the first thing God created was the pen.” A poem elaborates upon the motif:

⁶² *zīkr-i kuttāb-i kitābhāna-yi sharīfa-yi a‘lā-yi humāyūn.*

⁶³ *dar īn dībācha az har bāb mazkūr.*

verse: Existence took form by the pen
and it takes its brilliance from the candle of the pen.

maṣnavī: Writer of marvels, ruddy cloaked reed
with two tongues but silent in speech.

A resplendent cypress in stature spreading shade
that draws its night-tresses underfoot.

Straight as an arrow, in nature like a bow
that hides the countenance of day with dark night.

(*naẓm*: *hastī zi qalam raqam pazīr ast*
va zi sham'-i qalam furūgh gīr ast
maṣnavī: *turfā nigāri qaṣab-i āl push*
bā du zabān dar suhkan ammā khamush
jilva-kunān sarv-qadī sāya sāy
gīsū-yi shabrang kishān zīr-i pāy
tīr-qadī hamchu kamān tūz push
az shab-i tārik rukh-i rūz push)

The poem uses the image of God’s creation as writing, a pen cloaked in red, no doubt referring to the reddish skin of the reed, which paradoxically has two tongues but does not speak (the tongues refer to the split nib of the pen). It is endowed with the capacity to speak but writes instead. It is cypress-like in its form (an allusion to the common metaphor of the beloved as cypress-like in form) and draws shadows beneath its feet, just as the pen leaves inky lines on the paper. The third and last couplet continues the theme of the pen’s form—another paradox, for it is straight as an arrow and curved like a bow—and the imagery of the pen writing: day and night refer to the white paper and dark ink. The simile of night and day, listed by Shams Qays, is used by other preface authors.

Shams al-Din Muhammad introduces the notion of the vegetal and the hair pen, treating the reed pen, the “palate sweetener of calligraphers and scribes”⁶⁴ first. He inserts more sayings (hadīth, *kalām*, *vaṣaya*) to support the exalted status of calligraphy before he introduces the concept of basic (*aṣl*) and subsidiary (*far'*) scripts of which he lists eight—the “six scripts” plus *ta'liq* and *nasta'liq*. We read the tradition, “Whoever writes basmala in beautiful calligraphy will enter paradise without account”; ‘Ali’s saying “I recommend to you the beauty of calligraphy for it is among the keys to sustenance”; “calligraphy is one half of knowledge”; “calligraphy is spiritual geometry made visible by a bodily instrument”; and “beautiful calligraphy is property for the poor man as it is adornment for the rich and perfection for the nobles.” He hints that there are many more such sayings.

In the six scripts Yaqut al-Musta‘simi is again the “qibla of scribes.” Two other masters of the canon are identified, Khvaja ‘Abd Allah al-Sayrafi, “who was without equal in this world,” and Mawlana ‘Abd Allah Tabbakh, whose basic and subsidiary scripts were “like a night illuminated by the moon and stars.”⁶⁵ The people of Khurasan considered Tabbakh’s script to be on a par with Yaqut’s. He begins with *naskh-ta'liq* and its inventor Khvaja Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi; he mentions his son, then Ja‘far al-Tabrizi, and Ja‘far’s students. He does not mention all the numerous calligraphers active during the fifteenth century, but after Ja‘far jumps to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi whose script is regarded “like the sun among all the stars,”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *kām shīrīn kun-i khushnūvīsān va kātibān.*

⁶⁵ *ki māha būda.*

⁶⁶ *ka'l-shams min sā'ir al-kavākib.*

and lists his numerous students, singling out in a couplet Muhammad Qasim Shadishah for praise.

Mawlana Mir ‘Ali, a student of Mawlana Zayn al-Din Mahmud and son-in-law of Mawlana Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, is the next subject. Full of praise for Mir ‘Ali’s level of attainment in calligraphy, Shams al-Din Muhammad writes of the impossibility of describing and commending the calligrapher’s work even if one were supplied with the pages of creation on which to write and the duration of creation in which to do it. Other images associated with writing and clever amphibologies on terms associated with scripts follow. A poem concludes with praise of Mir ‘Ali followed by the names of his students and of other calligraphers, ending with Mawlana Anisi Badakhshi and the poem, “Friends do not practice calligraphy! / For this art ended with Anisi” (*yārān makunūd khushniwīsī / ki-īn khatm shud ast bar Anīsī*). The imagery establishes a parallel between Anisi’s relationship to other calligraphers and Muhammad’s relationship to other prophets. Like the Prophet Muhammad, Anisi is the “seal,” the final figure in a long chain.

Other calligraphers are mentioned, among them Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari, Shams al-Din Muhammad’s master, who composed the *Tazkirat al-kuttāb* (Biography of Scribes) in the name of Shah Tahmasp. Shams al-Din Muhammad then quotes a couplet from it: “Manifest on the countenances of handsome people is down like sweet basil / like the script of the calligrapher Vaṣṣī on a red sheet” (*‘ayyān zi ‘āriz-i khūbān buvad khaṭṭ-i rayḥān / chu khaṭṭ-i vaṣṣī-yi khaṭṭāt bar jarīda-yi āl*). He concludes with the apothegm: “Calligraphy by the destitute is [like] potsherd and pieces of stone. Calligraphy by the eminent has the value of pearls and rubies” (*khaṭṭ-i faqīr khazaf-rizahāst va sang pārḥā va khaṭṭ-i sharīf-i īshān durar va la’ālī purbahā*). Here Shams al-Din Muhammad returns the praise of his master by deprecating his own achievement. He is destitute (*faqīr*) unlike his eminent (*sharīf*) master. As a conclusion to his section on the vegetal, or reed, pen Shams al-Din Muhammad notes that there are calligraphers other than those of Shiraz and Kirman, but that if he tried to single out some of them he would never come to an end. He then lists the names of those whose works are collected in the album, all of whom are his exact contemporaries.

The next transition is to the second pen, “the animal pen . . . [made] of hair,”⁶⁷ that is, the brush. Here he says he will discuss the “hair-splitting Manichaeans,”⁶⁸ the “sorcerer-like geniuses of China and Europe,”⁶⁹ and the paintings and drawings by the likes of Mani, Bihzad, Muzaffar ‘Ali, and Mawlana ‘Ali Musavvir, but instead of doing so, he turns immediately to Mawlana Kepek who made stencils for calligraphies and depictions. He singles out his polychrome stencils (*aks-i alvān*), color-sprinkling of various colors (*alvān afshān va ranghā-yi gūnāgūn*), design (*tarrāhī*), and duplication (*muṣannā*) for special praise: “Portraits of angels and the faces of houris which were impressed on the tablet of the artist’s mind and designed on the page of the draftsman’s heart have not been reflected in anyone else’s mirror of the mind.”⁷⁰

Shams al-Din Muhammad finally praises the album. “If the pages of the revolving heavens

⁶⁷ *dīgar qalam ḥayvānī ast va ān az mū ast.*

⁶⁸ *mūshikāfān-i Mānī farhang.*

⁶⁹ *jādū-tab’īn-i khūṭāi va farang.*

⁷⁰ *ḥaqqā ki parī paykarī va hūr manzarī ki bar lawḥ-i khāṭir-i naqqāsh va bar ṣafḥa-yi zamīr-i ṭarrāḥ jalva namāyad dar āīna-yi khāṭir-i hūchkas rūī na-namāyad.*

and the folios of the almanac of day and night became full with descriptions of the forms, figures, signs, and traces of this incomparable collection, this body of rich possessions, up to this time not a tenth part of a tenth, would have appeared on the mirror of fortune.”⁷¹ The album is a place to return to again and again, a paradise that protects its flowers, a jewel box. He comments on the benefits that accrue from studying the calligraphies and images in the album. Human nature (*tabā’i-i insānī*) acquires spiritual/contemplative pleasure (*hazz-i rūhānī*) and eternal bounty (*fayz-i jāvidānī*) from such works. Calligraphy is held in high esteem by elite and common people (*khavāss va ‘avāmm*) alike; even those who cannot read or write enjoy its visual contemplation. The final line of the album ends abruptly and is not a complete grammatical construction. This feature suggests that one folio of text is missing.

The second group of prefaces, illustrated here through the examples by Dust Muhammad and Shams al-Din Muhammad, differs from the first group only in its inclusion of lists of practitioners’ names and its anecdotes. Otherwise its treatment of motifs is the same though these motifs of praise and remarks about the album’s inception and completion are arranged in a variety of sequences. Shifts in balance also occur. Shams al-Din Muhammad expands his praise of the album and Muhammad Muhsin fills the entire epilogue with it. On the other hand, Dust Muhammad’s praise is brief, but his opening segment on God and His Creation is by far the most developed among the prefaces in the entire group as is his preface generally. It is also the clearest in establishing explicit pedagogical relationships between successive masters. In the other prefaces, lists of practitioners’ names are generally in chronological order, according to the successive generations after the founder. These lists embody a history through biography in much the same way as in the science of tradition the transmitters each form a link in a chain. Dust Muhammad divides calligraphy, depiction (painting and drawing), and illumination into separate parts (*bāb*). Like all the other preface writers, he covers calligraphy first, reflecting its preeminent status in Islamic culture. Through successive sections, each one dealing with a script or medium, Dust Muhammad covers the period from the time of the prophets to the Safavid dynasty.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface for Amir Ghayb Beg’s album comes closest to Dust Muhammad’s in comprehensiveness, in the range of media described, and in the number of practitioners mentioned. Shams al-Din Muhammad similarly covers the six scripts, *nasta’līq*, artists, and contemporary calligraphers in separate sections. Both Malik Daylami and Muhammad Muhsin concern themselves only with calligraphy. For Malik Daylami, the history of *nasta’līq* which he is most concerned to record begins with Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi in the later years of the fifteenth century and ends with his contemporaries. Muhammad Muhsin’s is more inclusive, treating Kufic and the six cursive scripts briefly, before listing masters of *nasta’līq* from its invention to his own time, albeit in the most selective of fashions.

Each section on script, technique, and medium presents a narrative of transmission and perfection in which selected practitioners are named. In each, the passage of time is implied through the master-student relationship or by the impact of one practitioner on an-

⁷¹ *agar šahā’if-i falak-i davvār va awrāq-i rūznāmcha-yi layl va nahār pur-i ān tā’rif-i šivar va ashkāl va ‘alāmāt va āsār-i īn jamā’at-i ‘adīm al-miṣāl va īn firqa-yi nā’im al-māl gardad hanūz zi ‘ushri az ‘ashūr-i ān bar ā’ina-yi zuhūr jalvagar na-shūd.*

other through the intermediary of works on paper. In some examples subdivisions are made according to metropolitan center or region. The only elements that break the narrative momentum are extended passages of poetry, especially numerous in Mir Sayyid Ahmad's preface to the Amir Ghayb Beg album, or stories and anecdotes. The biographies of practitioners are rarely of great length, and where they are, only one or two practitioners are accorded the expanded treatment. Some preface writers explain this by the too lengthy composition that would result; some limit themselves to practitioners whose works are actually in the album. Dust Muhammad is the only one to insert prose narratives culled from such sources as Mirkhvand's *Rawzat al-ṣafā'*. Mir Sayyid Ahmad also inserted breaks, but his are extended poems. In his section on the brush, he includes two versified tales, one extolling the artists of China, the other telling the story of a king's artist who could draw like Mani and of the competition that ensued between this Mani-like artist and another.

LANGUAGE

As in many other Persian literary genres, prose is interspersed with poetry, the movement between the two reflecting the author's literary talent. Poetry is introduced either according to its form—*masnavī*, *qit'a*, *rubā'ī*—or by the general term for a distich (*bayt*), hemistich (*miṣrā'*), verse (*nazm*), or single verse (*fard*). Poetry is an integral component of the preface; it can be used either to reinforce a concept or to amplify its meaning through metaphor and allegory. Poetry and rhyming prose (*saḡ'*) can also modulate the pace of the text, by altering its tempo and cadence. Changes in meter or verses that could be read equally well in another meter required the reader's close attention. Poetry was usually set off from prose, the poetic couplets arranged in a columnar format often inscribed with gold rulings.

Koranic excerpts and hadith in Arabic were also embedded in the prose, as in other genres. Both were selected for their suitability to the motif or theme at hand or as a source of authority, to ground statements in the uncontested truth of religious precepts and in a language, Arabic, still considered to be the most eloquent.⁷² Some prefaces included wise sayings attributed to other historical figures, for example, to 'Ali b. Abi Talib or unidentified men. An analysis of Koranic verses and hadith used reveals a shared repertoire.⁷³

⁷² Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i ranks Arabic first among the primary group of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. It has the "most eloquence and grandeur and there is no one who thinks or claims differently. For the glorious and sacred Qur'ān descended [from Heaven] in that language and the blessed ḥadīths of the Prophet were spoken in it" (Mir 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī, *Muḥākamat al-Lughatain*, introduction, trans. and notes by Robert Devereux [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966], p. 3).

⁷³ Murvarid: Koran 91:3–4, 81:17–18, 3:47 or 2:117, and 7:154. Khvandamir/Amini: Koran 3:47 or 2:117, 40:64, 17:70, 68:1, and 96:4. Mir Sayyid Ahmad (H. 2156): Koran 92:1–2 and 81:17–18. Dust Muhammad: Koran 54:50, 19:34, 15:29 or 38:72, 2:30, 42:23, and 96:4–5. Shah Quli Khalifa: Koran 96:4–5 and 37:6. Malik Daylami: Koran 2:117, 6:141, 2:25, 4:39, and 3:37. Mir Sayyid Ahmad (H. 2161): Koran 40:64. Shams al-Din Muhammad: Koran 3:27, 68:1, and 96:3–4. Muhammad Muhsin: Koran 40:64 and 96:4. Muhammad Salih: Koran 37:6, 2:30, 80:13–14, 2:117 and 102:5.

Another example, Koran 30:50, "So consider the signs of His benevolence," is among the verses cited verbatim in prefaces. It turns up with some changes in Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Ahmad Tusi's Persian edition of *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt* (for the preface, see Ziyā al-Dīn Sajjādī, ed., *Dībāchahā Nigāri dar Dah Qam* [Tehran: Zavvār, 1372/1993 or 1994], pp. 218–20, esp. p. 218), in modified form in Dust Muhammad's preface (in an Arabic couplet that he probably culled from another source), and earlier in Khvandamir's *Dastūr al-vuzarā'* (1510) (Ghiyās al-Dīn b. Humām al-Dīn known as Khvāndamīr, *Dastūr al-vuzarā'*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī

Handy manuals of quotations were available for reference, among them the *Nuzhat al-kuttāb va tuḥfat al-aḥbāb* (The Scribes' Diversion and the Friends' Gift; before 1327) by al-Ḥasan b. Mawlāna 'Abd al-Majīd al-Juwallī al-Muzaffārī, a compilation of Arabic and Persian quotations useful in epistolary composition.⁷⁴ It includes a hundred verses from the Koran, a hundred traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, a hundred sayings of saints and wise men, and a hundred couplets of Arabic poetry with Persian paraphrases. In the preface to his *Anwār-i suhaylī*, Kashifī addresses these very literary dimensions of his composition:

It is further to be noted that in the midst of the tales I have but briefly availed myself of the various sorts of Arabic expressions, by introducing certain verses from the Kur'an and sayings of the Prophet necessary to be mentioned, and traditions and well-known proverbs; and have not clogged the work by employing Arabic verses, but have adorned the page of the narrative with jewels of Persian poetry, which is inlaid like blended gems and gold.⁷⁵

A finely tuned balance between languages and between prose and poetry perfectly describes these features in the album prefaces.

In addition to compendia, *inshā'* also often contained lists of useful words and titles in both Arabic and Persian and model texts. Lists in a manuscript of Kashifī's *Makhzan al-inshā'* (Treasury of Composition) arrange such words in schematic grids. Although defined as written composition and compilation, the term *inshā'* (or *munsha'āt*) also refers to style and belles-lettres.⁷⁶ The Arabic root yields the Persian words for secretary, *munshū* (pl. *munshūyān*), and epistolary compilation (*munsha'āt*). An ideally qualified *munshū* ambitious to reach the highest levels of the state bureaucracy, and perhaps even to move in court circles, needed to excel in the art of composition. Like any other profession, advancement required strength in writing, the *munshū* had to have a store of knowledge of the minutiae of literary precedent, to possess sufficient verbal agility and intellectual acumen to navigate a course through it and to be fluent in Arabic as well as Persian. Early on, Nizami 'Arūzi Samarqāndī de-

[Tehran: Chāp-i Maḥfūz, 1317], p. 317). A reworked version appears again in Ḥasan Beg Rumlu's *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh* (1577) (Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh*, p. 305). Yet another version of the couplet is placed at the beginning of Browne's translation of Nizami 'Arūzi's *Chahār maqāla*, but it is not clear whether or not it is extracted from the text proper.

⁷⁴ Al-Ḥasan b. Mawlānā 'Abd al-Majīd al-Juwallī al-Muzaffārī, *Nuzhat al-kuttāb va tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*. For reference, see H. Ethé, *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindustani, and Pushtu Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889–1954), pt. 1, cat. no. 1338, cols. 826–27.

⁷⁵ Kāshifī, *Anwār-i suhaylī*, trans. Eastwick, p. 12.

⁷⁶ For descriptions of the different types of *inshā'*, see *EI2*, s.v. "Inshā'" (H. R. Roemer). It would seem unwise and inaccurate to force the distinction. Rare are the *inshā'* that belong exclusively to one type or the other. What seems to distinguish the two broad categories is the emphasis given to a particular text type in a compilation, the broader one often approaching encyclopedic scope. *Inshā'* remain understudied and deserving of detailed analysis. With the exception of Roemer's edition of Murvarid's *Sharaf-nāma*, accompanied by an introduction and useful notes, few others are available in an edited format. On the general subject of *inshā'*, see *Elr*, s.v. "Correspondence: ii. in Islamic Persia" (Fath Allāh Mojtābā'ī); and Mitchell, "Safavid Imperial *Tarassul* and the Persian *Inshā'* Tradition." For collected examples of *inshā'* documents, see 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'ī, ed., *Shāh Ismā'īl Ṣafavī: Asnād va Mukātabāt-i Tārīkhī Hamrāh bā Yāddashihā-yi Tafṣīlī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Arghavān, 1368 [1989]); and idem, *Asnād va Mukātabāt-i Tārīkhī-yi Irān* (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1361). I would like to thank András Riedlmayer for sharing with me a copy of a paper he presented at the International Workshop on Ottoman Sources of the Period 1580–1650, Balatonalmádi-Vörösbény, Hungary, June 1989. Titled "*Münşe'ât* and Other Copybooks of Correspondence as Source for Political and Cultural History," it contains many insightful observations that apply equally well to the Persian *inshā'* tradition and has an extremely useful bibliography.

fined the secretary's art in his *Chahār maqāla* (Four Discourses, ca. 1156)⁷⁷ as “. . . comprising analogical methods of rhetoric and communication, and teaching the forms of address employed amongst men in correspondence, . . . displaying in every case orderly arrangement of the subject matter, so that all may be enunciated in the best and most suitable manner.”⁷⁸

In his discourse on the secretary (the first of four professionals deemed essential to the ruler), Nizami 'Aruzi lists their ideal qualities as high birth, honor, discernment, reflection, and judgment. Achievement was possible only after immersion in the core curriculum of literature, defined by Nizami 'Aruzi as “the Scripture of the Lord of Glory, the Traditions of Muḥammad. . . , the Memoirs of the Companions, the proverbial sayings of the Arabs, and the wise words of the Persians; and to read the books of the ancients, and to study the writings of their successors, such as . . . [long list of authors follows].”⁷⁹ The secretary's patient study of these books “stimulates his mind, polishes his wit, enkindles his fancy. . . , and ever raises the level of his diction, whereby a secretary becomes famous.”⁸⁰

With such demands placed on the secretary, it comes as no surprise that style books were numerous and written by some of the most notable professionals.⁸¹ Among the best known and most widely copied *inshā'* from the Timurid and early Safavid periods are those of Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi, Murvarid, Kashifi, Mu'in al-Din Isfizari, 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, 'Abd al-Vasi' Nizami, and Khvandamir.⁸² Like the secretary, the poet also required extensive knowledge of the tradition. According to Nizami 'Aruzi, the poet is essential to the king, for he guarantees the ruler's immortality by writing about him in *dīvāns* and books. Like the secretary the poet must immerse himself in literary tradition. He must commit to memory “20,000 couplets of the poetry of the Ancients, keep in view 10,000 verses of the work of the Moderns, and continually read and remember the *dīvāns* of the masters of this art, . . . in order that thus the different styles and varieties of verse may become ingrained in his nature, and the defects and beauties of poetry may be inscribed on the tablet of his understanding.”⁸³

The preceding summaries of the prefaces highlighted some of the puns made by authors in their prefaces through the use of homonyms (*tajnīsāt*). One example of paronomasia—for there are several subcategories of *tajnīs*—is in Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari's poem about Shams al-Din Muhammad that he quoted in his preface: “Manifest on the countenances

⁷⁷ Browne produced a study and translation of the text. See Edward G. Browne, *Revised Translation of the Chahār Maqāla (“Four Discourses”) of Nizāmī-yi 'Arūḍī of Samarqand* (London: Luzac and Company, 1921).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

⁸¹ A list of such compilations in Persian is available in Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study*, 3:2, section E, “Ornate Prose.” Some of the examples that Storey lists were written explicitly for *inshā'*. Many more are devoted to the general subject of elegant prose composition and include diverse forms of advice for the writer on such subjects as sentence and phrase formation as well as examples of useful forms of address and other items that could be quoted in correspondence.

⁸² For a brief list of *inshā'* from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Tauer, “Persian Learned Literature from Its Beginnings up to the End of the 18th Century,” p. 434. One of the authors not already mentioned is Mu'in al-Din Isfizari who worked as the chief correspondence secretary at Sultan Husayn Mirza's court. He was skilled in diplomacy and epistolography. Of his books, the best known (Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, 3:430–31) is a history of Herat, *Rawḍat al-jannāt fī tārikh madīnat Harāt*.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

of handsome people is down like sweet basil/ like the script of the calligrapher Vaṣfī on a red sheet.” The use of the word *vaṣfī* referred to Shams al-Din Muhammad’s sobriquet, but the second line could equally well be read as a play on words, “like the script of a praiseworthy calligrapher on a red sheet.” Another pun may be adduced from Khvandamir/ Amini. In concluding his praise of Bihzad at the end of his preface he inserted a poem,

When one hair of your brush showed itself to the world,
 it placed a line of abrogation over Mani’s face.
 Many natures of good form are born from Him,
 but your talent was born better than all the others.
 (*mū-yi qalamat tā ba-jahān chihra gushād*
bar chihra-yi mānī raqam-i naskh nihād
bas ṭab’ ki šūrat-i nikū zād az ū
ṭab’-i tu valī az hama-yi anhā bih-zād)

In the final hemistich the phrase “was born better” (*bih-zād*) made a pun on Bihzad’s name by its homophony. Another form of homonymy involved the graphic form of words where changes in the placement of the diacriticals produced another word and another set of meanings.

Amphibologies are frequently used. In amphibology (*iltibās, thām*) the words have a meaning in their syntactic context and others even if they do not always work in the sentence.⁸⁴ For example, in his opening section praising God’s Creation, Shah Quli Khalifa uses terms that conjure up the names of the six scripts: viz. *thuluth* (“one third”), *muḥaqqaq* (“in truth”), *tawqī’* (“decree”), *rayḥān* (“sweet basil”), *riqā’* (“letters”), *naskh* (“archetype”). The same amphibologies are used by Shams al-Din Muhammad and Muhammad Muhsin, and some are found in the above-mentioned poem of Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari. Dust Muhammad also used some of them. Other commonly used examples include *ghubār* (a minute script/dust, fog), *jadval* (ruling/table or rivulet), *barg* (folio/leaf), *khatt* (calligraphy/the down on a youth’s face), and the pair of terms *aṣl* and *far’*, source/root and branch, respectively, applied to the basic and subsidiary calligraphic scripts.

Among the most common metaphors (*isti’āra/majāz*) is one which makes a correspondence between Creation and album (*muraqqa’*). Working by analogy rather than similitude,⁸⁵ it is used in every single preface, at least once. We come across the “album of fortune” or “album of heaven” (*muraqqa’-i gardūn*), “album of the world” (*muraqqa’-i jahān*), “the album of different colors” (*muraqqa’-i mulamma’*), “the variegated album of time” (*muraqqa’-i rūzgār-i būqalamūn*), and the “album of the firmament” (*muraqqa’-i sipīhr*). Other simple metaphors

⁸⁴ For a study of poetical language, specifically figurative language related to the body, see Cl. Huart, *Anīs el-‘Ochchāq: Traité des termes figurés relatifs à la description de la beauté par Cheref-eddīn Rāmi* (Paris: F. Viewig, 1875). The treatise, *Anīs al-‘ushshāq*, was composed by Sharaf al-Din Rami in 1423.

⁸⁵ Meisami draws a clear distinction between the two (*Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, pp. 37–38). Reading Jalal al-Din Rumi’s discussion of comparison (*miṣāl*) and likeness (*miṣl*), she concludes: “Metaphorical comparison—where the metaphor is essentially an extended or amplified simile—presupposes a gap between man and the universe that contains him, a gap that can be crossed only by grasping at perceived or imagined resemblances. Analogical comparison presupposes a continuity in which similitudes are, so to speak, generic constituents of existence. In a mode of composition based on analogy, 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. The ultimate manifestation of this style is, of course, allegory, in the broadest sense: analogy also presupposes polysemy.”

include references to a page or pages, thus: “revolving page of fortune” (*ṣafha-yi dawrān*), “page of being” (*ṣafha-yi kawn*), “page of the world” (*ṣafhā-yi rūzgār*), “pages of the sky” (*ṣahāʿif-i falak*), “page of the world [of] ‘Be!’ and it is” (*ṣahīfa-yi ʿālam-i kun fayakūnu*), “the page of ‘Nūn. By the pen and what they write’” (*ṣahīfa-yi nūn wa al-qalam wa mā yastārūna*). Variations on it substitute another word for page (e.g., folio, leaf): “folios of the world” (*awrāq-i jahān*), “folios of the age” (*awrāq-i zamān*), and “folios of the album of the firmament” (*awrāq-i muraqqaʿ-i sipihr*). In each instance, the metaphor invokes God’s created world and heavens, changeable, variegated and in motion, and these pages or folios of the world and heavens are inscribed with the signs of God. These simple comparisons are well suited to the album, also a created object of many pages or folios, multicolored, and inscribed with calligraphy, depictions (paintings/drawings), and illumination. The amphibologous use of *qalam*, lit. pen, also to mean brush, facilitates the conception of all of these creative actions as analogous to writing.⁸⁶

RECURRING THEMES AND IMAGES OF THE ALBUM

The summaries demonstrate how motifs and themes recur in this group of album prefaces and how certain metaphors or allegories were created for the album and its production. Sketching out these motifs helps to provide a frame of reference for the album, to uncover cultural views about it, and to understand the benefit thought to derive from contemplating its contents. The encomia to the album proclaimed in the prefaces are prescriptive and form an analogical framework of comparison for the viewer. Some motifs framed meaningful correspondences; others concerning the album’s production reveal key concepts of its creation and confer upon it the role of memorial, an aggregate of traces of past and present masters gathered between its two covers for posterity.

Metaphors are most commonly used by the preface writers to draw an analogy between God’s creation and the album. Murvarid’s opening image is of creation as “a multicolored celestial album,” closely related to Khvandamir/Amini’s “album of celestial pages” and expanded by him in his description of the album as resembling a workshop of textiles of changing colors. The analogy between creation, or also a textile, and album—an obvious development of the image of creation as a book assembled from pages—may be construed at a literal level as applying to its colored pages and diversity of contents. The implication is that the album stands as a microcosm of creation (figured in the numerous metaphors of the celestial album). Murvarid emphasizes God’s creative act by speech and observes that the first thing made by Him was the pen; the emphasis on the connection between creation and writing is made by his reference to the tablets inscribed with God’s law. Khvandamir/Amini names God the “immortal” or “incomparable” painter, and casts creation as an act of writing and depicting. Clearly, if God was to be likened to a painter, He had to be distinguished from any earthly counterpart by removing the temporal dimension of the pro-

⁸⁶ For detailed studies of metaphor, see Heinrichs, *Hand of the North Wind*, and *Elr*, s.v. “Esteʿāra” (Julie S. Meisami). Meisami’s essay highlights more complex forms of metaphor and contains essential references to studies that have attempted to create categories of metaphor.

cess and any trace of labor. Thus, God brought creation into being by saying “Be!,” and He required no instruments to achieve His task.

In his discussion of Khvandamir/Amini’s preface, Arnold says that the author compares God to the painter.⁸⁷ He casts Khvandamir/Amini’s discussion of painting as a kind of apologia. There is, however, little in this preface which would indicate that such an impulse should be interpreted as a defense of depiction in the light of the theological condemnation of the artist or his paintings. Although some tension between images might permit such a literal reading, Khvandamir/Amini also stresses why God’s creation is to be distinguished from the painter’s images. Dust Muhammad, after having implied a correspondence between God and man in their creative pursuits, also carefully removed both time and labor from God’s act of creation. Analogies between creation and album are developed through the use of terminology related to the arts of the book and calligraphy.

Similar metaphors recur in all of the other prefaces where creation’s qualities of changeability, movement, and multicoloredness—vernal and autumnal colors and shifts from black to white and from night to day—find correspondences in the man-made album. Shah Quli Khalifa describes the heavens as a patched cloak (*muraggaʿ*), using a term that was applied to the album. In Malik Daylami’s preface, the inhabitants of paradise wear such patched cloaks.

Shams al-Din Muhammad describes the Shah Ismaʿil II album as “an incomparable collection”⁸⁸ a “place to return to again and again.”⁸⁹ A poem follows which describes the album as a garden of roses and tulips, safeguarded from the destructive forces of the weather and decay. In his preface Malik Daylami deftly weaves together a series of interconnected images as he leads up to the album. God’s creation is a garden brought to order, elements of corruption removed and replanted with the pious; Amir Husayn Beg, the album’s patron, sits with fellow calligraphers in this ordered garden (i.e., the world) and practices *nastaʿliq* which is “the freshest herb in the garden of ‘calligraphy is one half of knowledge’ ”;⁹⁰ after a biographical interlude in which Amir Husayn Beg’s merits are described and his father’s death is noted, we learn of the album’s inception. It would be like a robe spun from gold and encrusted with jewels, each one of its pages resembling a garden. In this garden the greenery would be writings (*arqām*) the color of ambergris and the flowers would be drawings and illuminations (*nuqūsh va tazhībāt*). Its rulings (*jadval*) would be like flowing streams and its margins (*havāshī*) populated with designs of nightingales and partridges. Its paintings (*ṣūrathā*) would resemble youths and companions endowed with pomp and riches walking in the garden. Malik Daylami’s chronogram for the year of completion returns again to the image of the album as garden. Muhammad Salih and Muhammad Muhsin also make ample use of the garden metaphor.

Metaphors involving the world, the heavens, and the garden provide powerful images that make use of spatial analogies, comprehensive or circumscribed in scope, and, by alluding to change and flux, suggest that the microcosmic album could equal the infinite diversity of the macrocosm. Returning to an album brings surprises and unexpected discoveries, just as the changing seasons and times of day and night lend the world an altered aspect. The

⁸⁷ Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, p. 37.

⁸⁸ *in jamaʿāt-i ʿadīm al-miṣāl*.

⁸⁹ *ba-maṣāba-ist*.

⁹⁰ *rayhān-i tāza-yi bustān-i al-khaṭṭ nisf al-ʿilm ast*.

sensory pleasures of the album are also invoked: its contents are like sweet-smelling herbs, or ambergris, or like a tranquil place sheltered from the weather, lush in its greenery, watered by flowing streams. To look at an album engages the senses, not only of sight but also of smell. Although some of these sensory pleasures are false attributes—the album’s contents are not perfumed or animated by wind or gravity—the conceit of the synaesthetic metaphor only underscores the album’s power to delight.

ALBUM MAKING AS AUTHORSHIP

The long tradition of extolling a craft through well-chosen metaphors⁹¹ leads preface writers to praise the album compiler’s labor, a theme that would be addressed by all subsequent preface writers. Murvarid bases his judgment of the finished album on its arrangement and decoration. Khvandamir/Amini uses the same criteria, but goes further, comparing the album to a sea filled with pearls. Near the end of a poem he has composed about Bihzad’s work as compiler, Khvandamir/Amini writes: “The beauty of these pages is a thing/ that further perfects these rarities.” Murvarid’s and Khvandamir/Amini’s prefaces are filled with pearl imagery: calligraphy is likened to a string of pearls on a page brought “forth by the bejeweled pen of the diver from the sea of the inkwell to the shore of these folios”; ‘Ali’s calligraphy is likened to a trail of miraculous points made by his pen or fingers, each point pressed into paper “like an unbored pearl from the ocean of his sanctity”; ‘Ali’s pen sprinkles pearls from its nib.

Shah Quli Khalifa says of his album: “Its beautiful folios set with jewels are at the limit of favorable opinion”;⁹² it [the album] would make the seven heavens (*sab’ samavāt*) envious. In his preface, Muhammad Muhsin writes: “In this beautiful album the stringing together of royal jewels reached the limits of completeness, conclusion, and finality”;⁹³ “the perfection of the dazzling pearls [in] this gem-studded jewel box! What an album [it is]!; each of its pages is charming and has one hundred hearts in tow; its pages are paradisiacal specimens; all of its pieces are of ethereal constitution.”⁹⁴ Malik Daylami notes how the master Muzaffar ‘Ali, for “reasons of beauty and adornment,”⁹⁵ had ornamented the “calligraphies and fragments of past [masters].”⁹⁶ He was complete in his mastery of “calligraphic *découpage*” (*qīṭa’ āt-i marqūma*) who had “inscribed characters, forms, and written lines,”⁹⁷ all skills needed for the production of albums.

Similar imagery is also found in references to the poet’s craft and had long been used in both Persian and Arabic traditions.⁹⁸ In his so-called *Apologia* (ca. 1485–92), Sultan Husayn

⁹¹ For examples used by the poets Shams Qays, Farrukhi and Nasir Khusraw, see Clinton, “Esthetics by Implication.”

⁹² *chi ra’ nā’ awrāqī muraṣṣa’ī paztūfta anjām.*

⁹³ *ba sar-hadd-i itmām rasīd tanzīm-i javāhir-i shāhvār-i īn zībā muraqqa’ va ba-ghāyat va anjām kashīd.*

⁹⁴ *takmīl-i la’ālī-yi ābdār-i īn durj-i muraṣṣa’ chi muraqqa’ ki har varaq az vay dil-rubāy ast ṣad dilash dar pay ṣafhahāyash namūnhāy-i bihīst qīṭa’ hāyash hama ‘asir sirīst.*

⁹⁵ *sabab-i zīb va zīnat.*

⁹⁶ *khuṭūṭ va qīṭa’ āt-i sābiqa.*

⁹⁷ *muharrira ba-raḡam va qaṭ va tahrīr.*

⁹⁸ Mas’udi used the same metaphor in his history, *Murūj al-zahhab*, in the tenth century. Having found gems he “fashioned a necklace [*iqd*] and a precious adornment [*ilq*] to be treasured by the one who seeks it.” See Tarif Khalidi, *Islamic Historiography: The Histories of Mas’udi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p. 2.

Mirza calls the contemporary poet Jami “a master stringer of poetical gems,” and, invoking the other thousand poets in the Herat region, he states that their “job is to string pearls of meaning onto the cord of poetry and to enhance gems of precision with the garb of adornment and beauty.”⁹⁹ In the prefatory remarks to his *Muḥākamat al-lughatayn* (Judgment of Two Languages, 1499), Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i writes:

A word is a pearl in the sea of the heart, and the heart is a gift which gathers unto itself all meanings. The gem is brought to the surface by the diver but it becomes a thing of value only in the hands of the jeweller. Word pearls from the heart convey their value and degree when spoken by the masters of speech. Their value grows and they are praised according to the skill of the speaker.¹⁰⁰

On the reuse of figures and metaphors, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i noted how good poets could “reanimate the weary and the dead.”¹⁰¹ In his image, the distinction between the diver and jeweler at first implies two agents, but in fact signifies two processes that must be performed to make good poetry. It is not enough to retrieve the image like the diver; the image must be recrafted and enhanced by the jeweler. Later, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i recalls how “early in my youth I began to perceive a few jewels from the inkwell in my mouth. These jewels had not yet become a string of verse, but jewels from the sea of consciousness which were worthy of being placed on a string of verse began to reach shore, thanks to the nature of the diver.”¹⁰² In the next image, he enters a garden full of roses (roses stand for writing) where the thorns had prevented “many collectors of roses {*guldastaband*} from grasping . . . the roses waiting to be plucked. . . .”¹⁰³ Writing poetry was a tricky affair.

Vasifi imagines himself as a pearl diver “diving into the sea of thought and gathering up splendid pearls of images.”¹⁰⁴ An earlier use of this imagery is in ‘Ismat Bukhari’s qasida on Khalil Sultan’s *divān* (written before 1411), where he says, “Every string of pearls versified forms an/ordered whole in the thread of the *mastar*.”¹⁰⁵ Another, still earlier use is Shams Qays’s reference to the poet who “should be like a master jeweler who increases the elegance of his necklace by beauty of combination and proportion of composition, and does not diminish the luster of his own pearls by variations in joining and disorder in arrangement.”¹⁰⁶ Shams Qays also likened the good poet to a painter:

[The poet] should be like a skilful painter who in the composition of designs (*taqāsīm-i nuqūsh*) and in the drawing of the curving branches and leaves (*taṣāwīr-i shākh va barghā*) places every flower somewhere and draws each branch outward from it, and in the blending of colors uses each color in some place and gives every color to some flower. Where a deep color is appropriate he does not use a pale one, and where a dark color is appropriate, he does not use a light one.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā, “Apologia,” in *A Century of Princes*, trans. Thackston, p. 376. For reference to scholarly discussion of the period when Sultan Husayn Mirza composed the text, see *ibid.*, n. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Mīr ‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī, *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn*, p. 2. For Turkish text and facsimile, see *idem*, *Muḥākemetü’l-luğateyn*, ed. F. Sema Bartuçu Özönder (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1996). For analysis and English translation, see Mīr ‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī, *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn*, trans. Devereux.

¹⁰¹ Mīr ‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī, *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn*, trans. Devereux, p. 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Subtelny, “Taste for the Intricate,” p. 70.

¹⁰⁵ Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *Tazkirat al-shu’arā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbāsī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Kitābfurūshī-yi Bārānī, 1337), p. 401; trans. in Thackston, *A Century of Princes*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ Clinton, “Šams-i Qays on the Nature of Poetry,” p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ Trans. in Clinton, “Esthetics by Implication,” p. 81.

Shams Qays's comments distinguish between thematic and expressive elements in poetry and how they are brought together into an effective order.¹⁰⁸

Along similar lines is a passage in Nizami's *Haft Paykar* (Seven Portraits, 1197) where he refers to the process of poetic practice and also acknowledges the tradition's intertextuality:

I searched through books both fine and rare
for what would free the heart from care.
 Whatever chronicles might say
 of kings, that in books chosen lay,
 An earlier poet, of keenest mind,
 had ordered all in verse refined.
From it, some ruby chips remained,
shards from which others something feigned.
I, from those fragments, jeweler-wise,
 this precious treasure cut to size,
 So that the experts who assay
 all efforts, this most worthy weigh.
 That which was left by him half-said
I say; the half-pierced pearl I thread.¹⁰⁹

Thus, Sultan Husayn, 'Ali Shir Nava'i, Vasifi, 'Ismat Bukhari, Shams Qays, and Nizami all conceptualize the poetic process as one of selecting images from a repertoire of forms cast by previous poets and of subjecting them to perfecting and enhancing.¹¹⁰ The improvement occurs by remaking them (by addition or subtraction) and/or recombining them into an order—a thread or *mastar*—the linearity of which stands for the syntactic sequence of the hemistich/distich (*misrā' / bayt*).

Khvandamir/Amini and later album preface writers rely on this metaphor and its conceptual framework, which Khvandamir/Amini applies to Bihzad's album by an analogical process. Bihzad's compilation, arrangement, and decoration are freed from a neutral or passive characterization by Khvandamir/Amini's poetic imaging. Bihzad submits the materials to a series of transformations and recontextualizations by which they are perfected. We can, perhaps, take the liberty of invoking Nizami's image of recutting "ruby chips" and "shards," of piercing the "half-pierced pearl" and threading it, and compare these actions to the album compiler's processes of trimming, illuminating, framing, and so forth. Separate items—calligraphies, paintings and drawings—were brought together to form surfaces and sequences, like the string of pearls forming "an ordered whole on the thread of the *mastar*." Khvandamir/Amini's reference to the active role played by the album compiler offers further insight into the perception of the album as a collection. It is a product of a set of creative decisions and therefore in itself a form of authorship.

The preface writers used the metaphor of the poet's craft to describe the process of compiling an album. Numerous comparisons were drawn between the poet and the compiler: both worked with preexisting materials and reorganized them into new sequences which altered their meaning. The ubiquity of this metaphor of craft ensured comprehension and,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰⁹ Excerpt from Nizami Ganjavi's *Haft Paykar*; trans. in Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, p. 201.

¹¹⁰ For further discussion of intertextuality in the Persian poetic tradition, see Subtelny, "The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan," pp. 72–73; Losensky, "Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation, Influence," pp. 101–33; and Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, pp. 111, 153, 173 and 307–9.

introduced as a criterion of praise, it also established a theme for discussion of both content and production when the album was viewed. The analogy between poet and compiler applies equally well to preface authors—they too patched together components fashioned by earlier writers.

THE ALBUM AS MEMORIAL

Analogies drawn between an album and verdant gardens, richly woven textiles encrusted with jewels, and folios that resembled shores strewn with precious stones underscored the value of the album's contents and the pleasure to be found in contemplating them. The bright colors and hard edges of Persianate paintings were, like jewels and pearls, without defect or blemish and were unified and crisp in form. Writing was a succession of black dots joined together on white paper to form a continuous line, making it possible to imagine calligraphy as a string of pearls. When extended, this metaphor could also signify the album's orderly arrangement and the compiler's process (also referring to the notion of the poet's process). But another value is signaled in the prefaces, in both prose passages and in the wise sayings drawn from the repertoire of Arabic expressions, namely that calligraphy was of moral benefit, a notion derived from the particular status of writing in Islamic culture.¹¹¹ Value also lay in studying and practicing calligraphy, in applying oneself to the rules of beautiful writing and in mastering them.

Many of the quotations referring to calligraphy's merits had been used by calligraphers for exercises beginning in the fifteenth century, but the corpus itself dates to a much earlier time.¹¹² Some of these sayings turned up in the prefaces,¹¹³ and were copied in calligraphies to demonstrate knowledge of Arabic learning and, like Koranic verses, were used as authoritative texts.

Murvarid connects the agent of praxis and the resulting object, a nuanced play on the

¹¹¹ The most comprehensive gathering of sayings on calligraphy as a meritorious art can be found in Annemarie Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1984). Grabar (*Mediation of Ornament*, pp. 64–65) concisely summarized the importance attached to calligraphy in an Islamic context: “as writing was the vehicle of God’s message, so God’s message became a hallowed piece of writing. . . . From this sort of knowledge pertaining to the text of the Revelation itself, it was easy to imagine or assume that every letter or word had in it a particle of the divine, and thus that writing itself was holy.”

¹¹² See, for example, the treatise composed by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. after 1009–10) (Franz Rosenthal, “Abū Ḥaiyān al-Tawḥīdī on Penmanship,” *Ars Islamica* 8–9 [1948]: 1–27). The second half of al-Tawhidi’s treatise consists of anecdotes and sayings attributed to a host of historical characters.

¹¹³ Arabic sayings about calligraphy that appear in the album prefaces can be summarized as follows: “Whoever writes *basma* in beautiful calligraphy will enter paradise without account” (*man kataba bi-ḥusn al-khaṭṭ bi-ism Allāh al-raḥman al-raḥīm dakhala al-jannat bi-ghayr ḥisāb*), Shams al-Din Muhammad and Mir Sayyid Ahmad (H. 2161) [attributed to Muhammad al-Abtahī]; ‘Ali b. Abi Talib’s saying, “I recommend to you the beauty of calligraphy for it is among the keys to sustenance” (*‘allaykum bi-ḥusn al-khaṭṭ fa-innahu min mafātīḥ al-rizq*), Murvarid, Mir Sayyid Ahmad (H. 2161), and Shams al-Din Muhammad; “calligraphy is one half of knowledge” (*al-khaṭṭ nisf al-‘ilm*), Malik Daylami and Shams al-Din Muhammad; “your offspring have studied writing because writing is one of the endeavors of kings and sultans” (*‘allamū awlādukum bi’l-kitābat fa-innahu al-kitābat himam al-mulūk wa al-salāṭīn*), Murvarid; “calligraphy is spiritual geometry made visible by a bodily instrument” (*al-khaṭṭ handasatun rūḥāniyyatun yuzāhiru bi-‘ālatin jismāniyyatin*), Malik Daylami and Shams al-Din Muhammad; and “beautiful calligraphy is property for the poor man as it is adornment for the rich and perfection for the nobles” (*al-khaṭṭ al-ḥasan li’l-faqīr mālun wa li’l-ghaniy jamālun wa li’l-akābir kamālun*), Shams al-Din Muhammad. In other sources the saying, “Calligraphy is spiritual geometry,” is attributed to Euclid and Yahya b. Khalid. For Euclid, see Rosenthal, “Abū Ḥaiyān al-Tawḥīdī on Penmanship,” p. 15.

concept of calligraphy as the soul's geometry made "visible by a bodily instrument." In his poem, Murvarid describes every point made by 'Ali's pen as being "like an unbored pearl from the ocean of his sanctity." Each one is like a particle of his soul given physical embodiment on the page; writing stands for his ethical intent.¹¹⁴ Cast in terms of the miraculous, he asks if writing's cause is due to 'Ali's body or to his pen. The conceit might refer to 'Ali's sheer skill and proficiency, indicating that he does not need a manual instrument, or it might refer to his exceptional ability as a direct result of his innate qualities; he requires no mediating device to give his soul corporeal shape. Khvandamir/Amini goes so far as to state that "when the divine pen wrote forms/man became the manifestation of skill and learning." But what men?

Khvandamir/Amini describes Bihzad's supreme achievement in painting as being miraculous: his paintings astound the viewer because he has achieved perfection: "Bihzād unequaled in his time/ Mānī [was only] a fable in his time" (*Bihzād yagāna-yi zāmana/ Mānī ba-zamāna-yi ū fisāna*); "He took a hair from [Mani's] brush/and gave life to inanimate form" (*mū-yi qalamash zi ū sitādī/jān dāda ba-šūrat-i jumādī*). Khvandamir/Amini's comments may be regarded as referring to Bihzad's skill and dexterity as a painter; about the paintings he writes, "In delicacy of form it is hair-splitting."¹¹⁵ The poetic encomium to Bihzad is preceded by a description of the painter's moral disposition—"pure in faith, a traveler along the paths of affection and love"—and followed in a final poem by a pun on Bihzad's name, which he renders as "was born better." Thus, combined with his patient application of the methods of painting and to his skill, Bihzad's purity and moral rectitude seem essential components of—in fact prerequisites to—any explanation of his achievement. Not content with that, Khvandamir/Amini suggests that Bihzad had inherited a high moral disposition. Prefaces after Khvandamir/Amini's mention noble lineage and moral disposition with increasing frequency.

The favor accorded by God to mankind—singling man out over all other creatures—is reiterated in several prefaces by way of Koranic verses. But some men were accorded greater favors and virtues than others. Innate inherited qualities, as opposed to acquired ones, are frequently mentioned in such texts as Khvandamir's *Ḥabīb al-siyar*¹¹⁶ and in biographies of famous men arranged by profession or avocation and appended to the end of the narrative of a ruler's reign. Commenting on the ruler Sultan Husayn Mirza, Khvandamir writes, "Among the most generous gifts and weightiest signs by which God has singled out some great rulers is the gift of noble lineage, which insures nobility of character and praiseworthy conduct."¹¹⁷ Describing Amir Sadr al-Din Sultan Ibrahim Amini, Khvandamir writes that

¹¹⁴ Another frequently used saying, but one not attested in the album prefaces, is "Calligraphy is the tongue of the hand," often attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. It also suggests that calligraphy is a means of transfer between intellect and the physical world. Calligraphy as word and signifier of speech is entrusted with the power to speak on the individual's behalf and to act as a testament for his ethical state.

¹¹⁵ *dar diqqat-i ṭab' mū-shikāf ast*. A language of the miraculous also pervades writing about calligraphy. For example, one topos of the writing tradition is the reference to grains of rice inscribed with Koranic verses or even whole suras. Grabar (*Mediation of Ornament*, p. 85) has rightly suggested that calligraphy's power to amaze and surprise constitutes an important element in the aesthetic vocabulary of the judgment of calligraphy.

¹¹⁶ This is also the case with Dawlatshah. He says of Shahrukh, "through perfect religious observance, purity of innate nature and good moral character, [he] reached the station of sainthood and was aware of things unseen." See Dawlatshāh, *Tazkīrat al-shu'arā'*, p. 376; trans. in Thackston, *A Century of Princes*, p. 20.

¹¹⁷ Khvādamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 4:317; trans. in Thackston, *Habibu's-siyar*, 2:508.

he was not only “adorned with noble ancestry”¹¹⁸ but possessed “complete learning, polite behavior, and hereditary and acquired perfections.”¹¹⁹ His good conduct¹²⁰ was nourished by the divine.¹²¹

This conception of the source and cause of man’s talent has a history that long precedes Khvandamir and that underwent constant shifts in balance and emphasis according to whatever political or religious movement was dominant at a particular time.¹²² As we have seen, the conception is reiterated by both Khvandamir/Amini and Murvarid. Murvarid implies that calligraphy provides exempla, mentioning in particular ‘Ali b. Abi Talib’s specimens, which not only offered good calligraphic models but embodied a sign or trace (*āsār*) of the practitioner’s very moral essence. Such a symmetry between a person and his work is stated directly in yet another sixteenth-century text, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s *Širāṭ al-suṭūr*.¹²³ Studious application and the perfection of balance between body and pen bring about the manifestation of this essence.¹²⁴ Khvandamir/Amini’s focus on Bihzad indicates that paintings and drawings could also embody the practitioner’s essence, a transfer achieved through the creative process.

Khvandamir wrote a book entitled *Ma’āsir al-mulūk*, a compilation of information “on the institutions, foundations and wise sayings of kings and ancient sages.”¹²⁵ The book gathered the traces or memorials (*ma’āsir*) of famous figures from the past that had been transmitted by material and textual records.¹²⁶ The same term (*ma’āsir*) is used to refer to the contents of the album made by Bihzad, and it describes the process of how the calligrapher or artist moves an image of written characters or of forms occurring in the phenomenal world from the mind to the surface of the page. The identical process is mentioned by Malik Daylami, Shah Quli Khalifa, and Dust Muhammad, where the term *āsār* refers to the album’s calligraphies, paintings, and drawings. In the Arabic couplet cited by Dust Muhammad,

¹¹⁸ *sharaf-i nasab ārāsta ast.*

¹¹⁹ *ba-vuṣṭūr-i faẓl va adab va kamālāt-i mawrūṣ va muktasab pīrāsta ast.*

¹²⁰ *ḥusn-i sīrat.*

¹²¹ Khvāndamīr, *Habīb al-siyar*, 4:327.

¹²² For a comprehensive analysis of conceptions of social classes and stratification based on hereditary principles vs. individual merit up to the Mongol period, see Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 1–12.

¹²³ Ibn Khaldun describes calligraphy as “the outlining and shaping of letters to indicate audible words which, in turn, indicate what is in the soul.” He saw it as an ability that distinguished men from animals and revealed “what is in [people’s] minds.” See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 2:377. Schimmel has observed that “Calligraphy can be regarded as an expression of man’s spiritual state; for ‘purity’ of writing proceeds from ‘purity’ of heart”; see Annemarie Schimmel, “The Art of Calligraphy,” in *The Arts of Persia*, ed. R. Ferrier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 306.

¹²⁴ There are both earlier and later references in texts dealing with calligraphy to types of activity that should be avoided by the calligrapher. One account related by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. after 1009–10) consisted of ‘Ali b. Ja’far advising someone to avoid “using his hand for lifting up or putting down a thing, especially if it is heavy.” The second part of Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi’s treatise is comprised of nuggets of advice and choice sayings by eminent figures about calligraphy. See Rosenthal, “Abū Ḥaiyān al-Tawḥīdī on Penmanship,” p. 7. The article contains an Arabic transcription of the treatise. Rosenthal republished the article (without the Arabic text), with an updated bibliography and additions to his notes in *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), chap. 2.

¹²⁵ Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* 1:1, no. 125, (1).

¹²⁶ Khalidi notes that the quotation of a man’s verses in biographical works are often “taken to be an extension of his personality,” and says that this is “also true of a man’s other works.” See Tarif Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: A Preliminary Assessment,” *Muslim World* 63, 1 (1973): 53–65; esp. 63.

“Verily, our works point to us/so gaze after us at our works,” the notion that, like a footprint (another meaning of *āṣār*), the work was an imprint of the person is further developed into the claim that people could be understood through a visual analysis of their works.

This conception of the work as an imprint or trace of its maker was what made the sum total of the album’s contents a memorial. The notion of writing as recorded speech embraced calligraphy and could also be extended to paintings and drawings. These works were a record of a practitioner’s patient application of technique and practice and demonstrated their virtue through endeavor and achievement. Hence, beyond the significant sensory and contemplative pleasures that were to be derived from examining art, the album guarded for posterity and salvaged from ruin works that constituted mankind’s legacy.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND LITERARY BORROWINGS

Several aspects of literary congruence in the prefaces, basically lexical incidence, thematic topology, and recurring figures of speech, have, as noted earlier, been particularly criticized by modern readers of sixteenth-century literature. Repetitions of topoi and tropes are said to indicate lack of originality and the result fails to function as meaningful, communicative discourse.¹²⁷ Valuing original, substantive references to experience and looking for psychological insight, some modern readers have found the Persian literary tradition hackneyed and trite. Although imitation can be thought of as original and creative,¹²⁸ modern assessments devalue repetition and ignore the value attached to performance in the sixteenth century,¹²⁹ a feature no less true for the visual arts and calligraphy than for prose and poetry. Modern critical evaluations thus tend to lose sight of the mechanisms that drove the sixteenth-century literary and visual traditions and to impose upon them an entirely inappropriate value system. But more than that, such evaluations are founded on the idea that any given expression can be original and that, in its form, discourse is adequate to particularize the lived and felt experience of its author and that it can even succeed in doing so. This has grave consequences for the judgment of the trope and topos. It is their very literariness that so readily reveals them to us and that emphasizes shared experiences and cyclical patterns.¹³⁰ Despite surface differences in the aesthetics of discourse, all

¹²⁷ For the legacy of Romanticist notions of originality in the modern reception of Persianate poetry, see Losensky, “Allusive Field of Drunkenness,” p. 228.

¹²⁸ This was duly noted as early as 1944 by Gustave E. von Grunebaum (“The Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 [1944]: 234–53). Writing on Arabic poetry, he noted that “originality played a considerable part in the formation of the Arabs’ literary judgment” even though it is “hardly noticeable to us” (*ibid.*, p. 234). Von Grunebaum reviewed developments in the definition of theories of plagiarism in Arabic poetry and went on to develop his own notions of literary creation and literary creativity in another article (*idem*, “The Aesthetic Foundation of Arabic Literature,” *Comparative Literature* 4, 4 [1953]: 323–40) where he discussed the implications of a circumscribed field of creativity and topics and how originality functioned within it. Curiously, he ended by claiming that the adherence to tradition “prevented the Arabs from recovering their literary creativeness” (*ibid.*, p. 340).

¹²⁹ Losensky has examined the importance of repetition in poetry and the implications of the poetic process (*ibid.*, esp. pp. 238–54).

¹³⁰ Using Umberto Eco’s concepts of “iconic similarity” and “self-focusing,” Marilyn Waldman has studied narratives in Persian historiography to examine the relationship between the verbal description of the event and its referent and the ways in which the text “directs attention to its own shape.” See Marilyn Waldman, “Semiotics and Historical Narrative,” *Papers in Comparative Studies* 1 (1981): 167–88.

language can be reduced to repetition—otherwise how would communication be possible? And so we might ask if tropes and topoi make such experiences less true or less meaningful.¹³¹

Two additional aspects of the literary dimensions of the prefaces remain. The first is the use of textual excerpts, whether sentences or passages in prose, or couplets in poetry and the nature of this borrowing. Although direct quotations from the Koran and traditions are immediately recognizable and sometimes wise sayings are attributed to their author, poems or prose passages from other authors are hardly ever identified. While some are easily identifiable, they are in all probability the tip of the iceberg. The second aspect is the preface in written books and involves a comparison between them and the album prefaces.

As reworkings of existing prefaces, Mir Sayyid Ahmad's two extant prefaces, for album H. 2156 and for Amir Ghayb Beg's album, constitute significant challenges to determining the nature of authorship. In neither instance does Mir Sayyid Ahmad insert his own name into the body of the preface as other preface writers—for example, Malik Daylami, Dust Muhammad, Qutb al-Din Muhammad, and Shah Quli Khalifa—had done. By mentioning their names, they directly indicated their role in the execution of the preface and sometimes in the supervision of the album's production. Mir Sayyid Ahmad signs his name at the end of each preface, adding a colophon as if to imply that he only copied out the text, but in fact both prefaces show evidence of reworking.

For his preface to album H. 2156, Mir Sayyid Ahmad essentially followed the basic order of Murvarid's example. In the first half of the preface little is changed: some words are substituted or added, and transitional phrases modified. In the second half changes are more substantial; some segments are entirely deleted; others, for instance the section where Murvarid describes the formation of the album, are abbreviated. Mir Sayyid Ahmad substitutes Murvarid's "men accomplished in calligraphy and who procured knowledge about art"¹³² with "patchworkers and artists"¹³³ who were occupied with the album's production. He deletes the verse with which Murvarid ended his preface, and changes the date to the year in which he completed it. Given that the preface in album H. 2156 is dated some nine years before the album into which it was inserted, Mir Sayyid Ahmad could have copied it as an exercise in calligraphy without any specific album in mind. The Shah Tahmasp album has Murvarid's preface copied as an exercise in *ta'liq* by his son Muhammad Mu'min in among pages of finely written chancellery documents.

A preface to an album assembled for Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95)¹³⁴ also uses Murvarid's model. Its author was Muhammad Cenderezade and the copyist Haydar al-Husayni (it is dated 980/1572–73, in Constantinople). He kept somewhat closer to Murvarid's version, retaining three of the four couplets from the concluding poem and added the year he completed it and the place where it was copied at the end. Cenderezade inserted his name

¹³¹ For a rare study on the value of topoi in Arabic literature, see Lawrence I. Conrad, "Abraha and Muhammad: Some Observations Apropos of Chronology and Literary Topoi in the Early Arabic Historical Tradition," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50, 2 (1987): 225–40.

¹³² *fuzalā'-yi khaṭṭ shīnās va 'urafā'-yi humar iqtibās*.

¹³³ *vaṣṣālān va naqqāshān*. *Vaṣṣālān*: the term probably embraces the arts of binding, margin-making, and other skills essential for making an album (trimming, resizing, ruling, gluing).

¹³⁴ For a description of the album and its contents, see Duda, "Das Album Murads III. in Wien."

at the point where the process of album making is introduced, noting that he supervised its arrangement.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad did a major remodeling of Qutb al-Din Muhammad's preface.¹³⁵ The opening sequence where God, His creation, and the pen and tablet are praised has disappeared.¹³⁶ Mir Sayyid Ahmad takes up at the point where the two types of pen, the vegetal and the hair, are introduced. Occasionally substituting words, he otherwise follows Qutb al-Din Muhammad's course through the entire segment on the history of calligraphy, its scripts and masters, from its earliest period to his own time. He also keeps the next major section of his model where the hair pen is introduced and its Manichaean, Chinese, and European practitioners are mentioned; the segue into 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and the poem where the Chinese response to 'Ali's work is described. The hemistichs of one couplet are reversed and another couplet is deleted. A long segment of Qutb al-Din Muhammad's text is missing. Mir Sayyid Ahmad retained the transitional passage immediately after the poem and then picks up Qutb al-Din Muhammad's model at the next long poem that tells of the competition between two artists at the king's court. He retains the next transitional passage, where the seven modes of depiction are listed, and the poem that follows, with minor changes. The next three elements are reversed. Mir Sayyid Ahmad places the masters of Fars and Iraq first, and deletes the names of Master Sultan Mahmud and his son Mirza 'Ali. Qutb al-Din Muhammad writes that all of the masters were students of Bihzad and that they worked in the royal *kitābkhāna*. A poem of seven couplets in Qutb al-Din Muhammad is reduced to five in Mir Sayyid Ahmad. The transitional passage to the other group of masters is retained; in it we are advised that only recent masters will be mentioned. Mir Sayyid Ahmad next describes the masters of Khurasan (who had come first in Qutb al-Din Muhammad's preface) with no deletions and also keeps intact a poem praising Bihzad.

The next major theme is the album's inception. In form it follows Qutb al-Din Muhammad's model. Shah Tahmasp is mentioned and his titles are provided. But while Shah Tahmasp is the patron of the album in Qutb al-Din Muhammad's preface, he is only mentioned in Mir Sayyid Ahmad's preface because etiquette requires mention of the current shah. Amir Ghayb Beg's name is substituted for Qutb al-Din Muhammad's as the overseer of the album's production. The closing section follows Qutb al-Din Muhammad's model, with occasional word changes and the reordering of some lines of poetry. The chronogram that contained a portion of Qutb al-Din Muhammad's title (*qiṣṣa-khvān*) and name is deleted, replaced by Mir Sayyid Ahmad's signature, prayer for forgiveness, and year of copying. The colophon is broken by two couplets of poetry that do not appear in Qutb al-Din Muhammad's preface.

The immediate model for Mir Sayyid Ahmad appears to have been Qutb al-Din Muhammad.¹³⁷ Although we should bear in mind that some of Mir Sayyid Ahmad's changes

¹³⁵ Comparison is based on the version of Qutb al-Din Muhammad's preface published by Ḥusayn Khadīv Jam, "Risāla-ī dar tārikh-i khaṭṭ va naqqāshī."

¹³⁶ The theme is so central to the preface genre that its absence is puzzling. In its present binding, the preface begins on fol. 7a (prefaces usually begin on the *b* side of a folio). Given the codicological changes made to Amir Ghayb Beg's album, it is possible that the one or two folios onto which Qutb al-Din Muhammad's opening sequence could have been copied are missing, but there is no way to be certain.

¹³⁷ The relationship was already observed by Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, 1:281. They describe Mir Sayyid Ahmad's preface as a "plagiarized version."

might be attributed to his use of a different recension of the preface than that available to us, the scale and purpose of some changes are so significant that scribal variation cannot be the sole explanation. Recensions of Murvarid's preface in numerous manuscripts of his *inshā'* manual reveal only minor differences between texts.

Repeated passages are found in other examples. Some of the poetry composed by Qutb al-Din Muhammad and later copied by Mir Sayyid Ahmad with alterations was taken from an earlier text, the *Ā'īn-i Iskandarī* (Rules of Alexander, 1543–44) written by 'Abdi Beg Shirazi (1513–80).¹³⁸ The source was a section of his *masnāvī* that focused on “the virtues of art and the virtuous artists,”¹³⁹ especially “artists of Manichaeian pen”¹⁴⁰ and “portrayers of Artangi forms.”¹⁴¹ Qutb al-Din Muhammad extracted lines and modified them according to the principles of imitative response. Some hemistichs are kept intact; in others words are reversed or replaced. Later in the century, Shams al-Din Muhammad used three couplets of the poetry in Qutb al-Din Muhammad's preface without any modification: “Writer of marvels, ruddy cloaked reed/ with two tongues but silent in speech/ A resplendent cypress in stature spreading shade/ that draws its night-tresses underfoot/ Straight like an arrow, in nature like a bow/ that hides the countenance of day with dark night.” Only a few years later, Muhammad Muhsin would do the same, but his source was different. Fully two pages of his preface (fols. 66a and 66b) are taken directly from Kashifi's preface to the *Anvār-i suhaylī* (1504–5).

None of this should come as a surprise in a literary tradition where borrowing and imitation constituted a central element in creativity. Qutb al-Din Muhammad's poems are responses to models that followed accepted rules of imitation. Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Muhammad Muhsin are exempt from accusations of plagiarism (*sarq al-shī'r*, *al-sariqa*) because they make no claim to authorship—they simply signed the prefaces as if their only role consisted of transcribing the text. Shams al-Din Muhammad, however, does claim to have composed the preface and does insert poetry without any alteration.

As Losensky has noted, two forms of intertextuality in Persian literature need to be distinguished. The first is systemic, resulting from the conventional usage of language.¹⁴² This form applies to the repertoire of figures of speech, lexical incidence, and recurring themes. The second is intentional allusion to a literary source where “the poet consciously refers to an earlier text and expects his audience to recognize the reference.”¹⁴³ Distinct forms of conscious allusion were codified to reflect various relationships between model and imitative response.¹⁴⁴ In theorizing intertextuality, forms of borrowing needed to be separated out as did the nature of intent, whether such correspondences resulted from intentional theft or the unconscious repetition of literary property. Every imaginable outcome

¹³⁸ For an edition, see 'Abdī Beg Shīrāzī, *Ā'īn-i Iskandarī*, ed. Abū al-Faẓl Hāshim Ev-Oghli Rahimov (Moscow: Dānish, 1977). The full examination of this extremely interesting text extends beyond the scope of this study. For other compositions by the poet and biographical details, see *ER*, s.v. “‘Abdī Shīrāzī” (M. Dabīrsīāqī and B. Fragner).

¹³⁹ *faẓīlat-i humar va faẓl-i humarmandān*.

¹⁴⁰ *naqqāshān-i mānī-qalam*.

¹⁴¹ *sūratgarān-i arzhang-raqam*.

¹⁴² Some scholars have offered more restrictive definitions of intertextuality, discounting “thematic or generic kinship.” See Riffaterre, “Textuality: W. H. Auden's ‘Musée de Beaux Arts,’” esp. pp. 1–2.

¹⁴³ Losensky, “Allusive Field of Drunkenness,” p. 229.

¹⁴⁴ For examples and terms, see *ibid.*, pp. 229–55.

is covered in this literature, and a consistent system was developed by the twelfth century.

Qazvini's (d. 1338) system relied on the model Shams Qays composed in the early thirteenth century (where he applied Arabic theory to his works on Persian prosody). Qazvini's guidelines can be divided into four parts. In the first, he held that commonly used phrases, metaphors, and metonymies belonged to everyone and could not be plagiarized. In the second, he held that plagiarism could take two forms, either open or hidden. In the third, he claimed that accusations of plagiarism were valid only if one could be certain that the second poet intentionally copied the first.

The fourth part is divided into five sub-sections: a Koranic verse or hadith could be inserted into discourse without introducing it as a quotation and small changes to it were permissible; if a poem is inserted into a text the quotation should be indicated unless it is so well known as to obviate the need for identification—small changes were also permissible. Borrowed prose could be turned into poetry and vice-versa; a story and poem could be alluded to without any direct reference. To the last, al-Taftazani added proverbs or well-known sayings.¹⁴⁵ The preceding rules would absolve the preface writers of any accusation of plagiarism, especially since the vast majority of materials that they do cite were well within the bounds of well-known literary precedent.

The preceding discussion focused on various aspects of the literary dimensions of the prefaces and examined forms of intertextuality in literary practice. In addition to manuals of useful quotations, authors could consult references in compilations of *inshā'* which were an important vehicle of textual transmission and which shaped literary aesthetics. Several of them were available. Writing in his history *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, Khvandamir mentions notables who flourished during the reign of Sultan Husayn Mirza and who excelled in epistolography. Murvarid, Kashifi, Isfizari, 'Abd al-Vasī' Nizami, and Qadi Ikhtiyar al-Din Hasan were adept in *inshā'* and compiled manuals of texts that they had composed. Under the biographical notices of earlier rulers, Khvandamir identifies, among other epistolographers, Simi Nishapuri and Khvaja Yusuf Burhan (a descendant of Shaykh Ahmad Jam). Khvandamir describes Khvaja Yusuf's treatise as containing the epistolary compositions of past writers.¹⁴⁶ The habit of compiling *inshā'* collections from materials excerpted from another author's collected texts was as common as the production of entirely original ones. Numerous later manuals contain choice texts—letters, decrees, certificates, and prefaces—excerpted from and attributed to their original author's work.¹⁴⁷ This habit supports the contention that similarities between album prefaces are the result not only of conventions of organization, theme, and language, but of familiarity with specific models. Texts composed by figures like 'Abd al-Vasī' Nizami were still being used well into the Safavid period, with passages from his compositions turning up in Safavid correspondence.¹⁴⁸

The same reuse is attested in the examples of album prefaces described above. Several known instances of Murvarid as a model can be explained by the wide distribution of his *inshā'* (*Sharaf-nāma*), which served as a vehicle for dissemination. Qutb al-Din Muhammad's

¹⁴⁵ The list is paraphrased from von Grunebaum, "Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory," pp. 244–45.

¹⁴⁶ Khvandamir, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:407.

¹⁴⁷ One example is the excerpt taken from Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *inshā'* and found in a manuscript titled *Majmū'a-yi rasā'il*, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 3769. Included among the excerpts is Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *Dībācha-yi muraqqā'-i Khvāja 'Abd al-Qādir* (fols. 111b–17b).

¹⁴⁸ As noted by Mitchell, "Safavid Imperial *Tarassul* and the Persian *Inshā'* Tradition," pp. 205–6.

preface may have become known in a similar way, surviving as it does today in *majmūʿa* and *inshāʿ*. Khvandamir/Amini's preface survives today in Khvandamir's *inshāʿ* (*Nāma-yi nāmī*). But this is merely the most immediate connection between *inshāʿ* and the album; there are other conceptual relationships to consider.

First, both *inshāʿ* and album are collections of material defined by preestablished categories. Although no single album equals the *inshāʿ* in its textual content, the album did share the pedagogical and didactic function of the *inshāʿ* collection: the practice of compiling examples of letters and decrees composed by well-known historical figures and used by the *inshāʿ* reader as paradigms for construction, rhetoric, style and composition is not so far removed from the idea of the album. Second, albums were also assembled from important works—written, drawn and painted—that offered excellent examples for study. The biographical aspect inherent in the *inshāʿ* manual is taken even further in the album, a massively developed biographical object. Its contents also offered access to a host of prominent figures from the past, because their works were records of their skills and achievements.

Finally, preface writing was analogous to poetic practice and album composition. Several metaphors of process, first applied to the poet but also appropriate for the album compiler, have already been mentioned. The etymology of the word for album (*muraqqaʿ*) provides another linkage. The word means, in Edward William Lane's definition, "a garment or piece of cloth, much patched, or having many patches. And hence, as being likened to a garment much used."¹⁴⁹ It made perfect sense for the album as an object assembled from an aggregate, each of its pages a patchwork assemblage. The analogy extends equally well to the poet's practice of combining metaphors and textual fragments into a newly ordered whole.

In reading examples of prefaces from a variety of works, commonalities of structure, language, theme, and metaphor also come to the fore. Selected examples are summarized in appendix 2. A comparative study of prefaces and album prefaces reveal several literary continuities. For example, regardless of the project or field of endeavor, whether history in prose, works on ethics and philosophy, poetry, or a polemic tract on the Turkish language, that the preface introduced, God's creation played a critical role. God fashioned and favored man and provided him with prodigious gifts of thought and of communication through speech and writing. Man could create too, although the nature of his creativity required tempering and definition in relation to the *creatio ex nihilo*. The advantage acquired through these multifaceted endeavors was that they made a record of man's achievement, as a form of memorialization, a power also critical to the album.

Despite these numerous close relationships of theme, form, language, and the stress on human capacities to create, critical differences emerge between the prefaces written for albums and the prefaces written for books. In the album prefaces the themes of praise, whether to God, the Prophet Muhammad, the album owner and compiler, or to the finished album

¹⁴⁹ Edward William Lane, "r q 'a," *Arabic-English Lexicon*, bk. 1, pt. 3 (London and Edinburgh, 1867), p. 1138. The source is al-Mutarrizi (538–610/1144–1213), *al-Mughrib fī tartīb al-muʿrib*. The same meaning is attested in the sixteenth-century source of Vasifi's *Badāʾiʿ al-vaqāʾiʿ*, 2:154. In a poem Vasifi refers to a dervish's *tasbīh* and *muraqqaʿ*: *dalqat ba chi kār āyad va tasbīh va muraqqaʿ / khud rā zi ʿamalhā-yi nikūhīda barī dār / hājat ba kulāh-i barakī dāshatanat nīst / darvīsh šifat bāsh va kulāh-i tatarī dār*. It is an invective directed to a hypocritical dervish. The patched cloak also appears in Shah Quli Khalifa's preface among others.

are massively expanded. We find no articulated theory of method or consideration of the very foundations of knowledge. Comparison only highlights the album preface's rhetorical dimension, its coy relationship to the subject that it introduces. Theories of art, criteria of judgment, and the benefits acquired from the visual examination of calligraphy, painting, and drawing, while mentioned, are not described in detail or articulated to the reader as principles. There is a disconnection between visual experience and verbal articulation that cannot be adequately explained or understood as an absence of thought or of action. Rather, the literary dimensions of the album preface find their closest analogies in poetic practice, in the fun and games of saying one thing and meaning another, of fixing meaning. A complete verbal discussion of the album's contents could only occur in the context of viewing as a form of immediate reception integrated with seeing, a series of conversations, of observation, debate, and criticism. To record such discourse was deemed redundant. Instead, the prefaces drew on a store of examples and precedents written with a literary complexity that required the full attention of its reader.