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A SENTENTIOUS CHARACTER OF THE PERSIAN GHAZAL
AS ITS STRUCTURAL FEATURE

MOTTO I:

Before we can state with all certainty that
we have to do with science, with a novel, with
a political dissertation, a work by some author,
or even a book we are confronted with the
material that should be treated in its primary
neutrality — as population of events within the
general discourse area.

M. Foucault, *The Archeology of Science*, p. 51

At the first meeting with the Persian and Arabic belles-lettres our attention is drawn to the fact that the whole sphere of the so called genological problems in these literatures forms a totally different system of generic hierarchies based on the criteria whose explication in theoretical literary discourse as well as the principles of placing these criteria within given genre ranges—even if they appear to be analogical to those existing in the theory of literature of the European cultural world (rhythm, metre, subject matter)—maintain an overall difference of the generated genological formation of the Persian literature.

Literary genres are defined in a very simple way, undifferentiating in its simplicity (It is impossible to maintain a clear definition based on the number of bayts because of the changing number of bayts). The qasida, being a kind of a mother-genre in the Persian classification of genres defined once and for ever on the basis of its metre, composition principles and theme, is a constant point of reference (as well as an inseparable element of the definition) for such genres as the ghazal, the fard and the qit'a. Considering the fact that rhythm, metre and theme (of course in the scope limited by the number of the bayts of the given genre) are inherited by these "minor" genres from the qasida

the only fact which differentiates the qasida from the ghazal, the fard and the qit'a would be simply a relative brevity of the latter. The system—whose elements are the qasida, the ghazal, the fard and the qit'a which form successively the so called generic ranges such criteria as rhythm, metre and theme are written into—forms what is called the generated genological formation.

In this formally clear and stable classification showing analogy to the scheme of definition of mathematical induction in which a defined and known first word (qasida) appears as an element defining the following words (ghazal, fard, qit'a) the problem of the generic independence of the latter genres remains without answer nowadays.

Edward Browne pointed at the insufficiency of the generally accepted definitions in the second volume of his *The Literary History of Persia* saying:

> The classification adopted in the Haft Qulzum (and also by Galdwin) is neither clear nor satisfactory. [...] The fard [...] and the qit'a, as well as the bayt [...] have also no right to be reconed as separate verse forms, since the first and the last are the elements of which every poem consists, and the "fragment" is merely a piece of a qasida, though it may be that no more of the qasida was ever written, and, indeed, the productions of some few poets, notably Ibn Yamin [...] consist entirely of such fragments. (p. 23)

I can accept the sagacity of this remark only in the part where Browne reveals dimness of this type of classification. On the other hand there seems to be an assumption in Browne's remark about the way of understanding the w h o l e of the genological formation in question which cannot be, in my opinion, accepted.

In Browne's opinion the fard and the qasida, the fard being a part of the qasida, have the same ontological status, i.e. if there is a fard the qasida should exist in t h e s a m e s e n s e, the fard being its part; if there is no qasida, what is then the fard and, what follows, the ghazal? A vicious circle appears and there seems to be no way out of it. I think the possibility of its overcoming lies in the interpretation of the sentence: "The fard (qit'a, ghazal) is a part of the qasida" once again under the condition that the contexts of other discourses, first of all the philosophical and mathematical ones, will be included in the reinterpretation of this sentence in order to give a modern sense—in all its former specificity—to the essential relation the hierarchized genological formation seems to rest upon i.e. the relation of a part to the whole.

I can see no other way for the history and, first of all, the theory of the Persian literature to remain, indeed, the theory and the history of the Persian literature and not to be at the same time a set of ready-made labels-statements (in this case generic ones) whose theoretical sense is simply incomprehensible today. The Arabs' fascination with mathe-

matics was great. One of the first philosophers suggested that medicine was described in mathematical terms.

To end my preliminary remarks let me stress the fact that reconstruction and reinterpretation of the genological formation of the Persian literature are not only an introduction to understanding of the theoretical problems of the contemporary Persian prose but also they enrich the discussion carried on in our country about such phenomena as: dramatization and lyricization of the novel, collections of stories characterized by the unity of characters, place etc. which constitute 'some' whole etc.

The basic problem and the essential scheme which rose on this level of considerations, specific for the structure of the whole genological formation of the Persian literature, depends on the relation of a part to the whole. I am going to trace the dynamics of this relation within the framework of a single genre—the ghazal. The existing sententious character should be thus realized on this axis—the axis joining the part with the whole.

MOTTO II:

> Perhaps it would be possible to reveal here a discoursive unity, however, under the condition that we are going to look for it not in the coherence of notions but in their simultaneous or successive appearance, in their separateness of distances from each other and, possibly, in their lact of agreement.

M. Foucault, *The Archeology of Science*, p 61

In the following part of my paper I would like to concentrate on some acpects of the history of the Persian ghazal connected with the function that was attributed to it and the one it was supposed to have. It influences the consciousness connected with this poetical genre and the expectations it implied. It is not the ghazal as such that is an object of my interest, since its subject matter has found a mature, definite form. I have no intention to estimate the earlier phenomena given the same name through a presupposed form of the ghazal.

My attitude to the history of the development of the genre is the attitude to the set of different specimens of the ghazal where each of them needs unreading of its structure and of the context in which it appears. Perhaps, some features defining its constant tendency of development or, using Foucault's language—a constant relation that links it with other examples of the ghazal can be observed. In other words my aim is not to enumerate the features defining an ideal, static notion of the genre called 'ghazal' but the features which have their source

in the structure of particular examples of ghazals and which set up the changing, dynamic notion transcribed upon relations.

I seek legitimization for the intuition expressing a conviction about the sentential character of the Persian ghazal in history. J. E. Bertels places the ghazal beside roubaiyyats among the literary works introduced to the sufi sessions, the so called madjles, by Abu Sa'id ibn Abu--1-Khair (967—1049). Let me recall one of them in its full length:

> Az doust be har chiz cherā bāyad āzard
> kin eshq chenin bāshad gah shādi-o gah dard
> Gar khār konad mehtar khāri nkonad āyb
> choun bāz navāzad shavad ān dāgh-e djafā sard
> Sad nik be yek bad natavān kard farāmoush
> az khār bar andishi khormā natavān khord
> Ou khashm hami girad tou ozr hami khāh
> har rouz be nou yār-e degar mi natavān kard.

The philological translation is as follows:

Why should you be angry with your friend about everything,
Love is just like this—it is happiness, it is pain.
If your superior humiliates you, there is no dishonour in it,
because he will clasp you kindly—the fire of harm will cool down.
A lot of goodness one experienced can be forgotten due to a single wrongdoing,
you are afraid of thorns—you cannot eat dates.
He is angry, you should ask for forgiveness,
one cannot seek a new friend every day.

The above ghazal does not strike us with any refined specialized vocabulary, it is free of any excess of notions or symbols heavy with contexts of controversial reading. Nevertheless, the interpretation of its overall message is not such an obvious matter. The said clarity and simplicity rests on the level of each bayt, built consistently on the following scheme:
the first hemistich (misra')—an expression of some state of affairs, the second hemistich (misra')—an expression of a direct or an indirect motivation for such a state of affairs. On the other hand consistent parallelism of construction of successive bayts in the perpendicular and semantic closeness of the expressed states of affairs make us connect mutually subordinate notions that are opposite to each other:
'friend' and 'superior'
'love' and 'humiliation'
'goodness' and 'evil'
'thorn' and 'date'
'anger' and 'forgiveness'
This register is made of the system of couplets of notions which are independent in the sense of being closed up wholes (i.e. bayts) and which form a specific 'riddle' whose solution means populating the space of

silence spread between the extremes represented in turn by each of the two notions and, finally, an interpretation of an overall message of the ghazal. The abovementioned parallelism of construction of the bayts and the described states of affairs takes place on the level of what is expressed directly and their function depends on putting to the foreground and suggesting the completness of what is different and what apparently cannot be refered to itself.

A condition to find a common interpretation for these notions would be finding interpretations for hidden and superficial contents of successive bayts in which these notions are included. I can see no way of finding literal completness between such a succession of bayts unless we accept completness of the whole sequence with its gaps and jumps.

The last possibility makes us turn to the choice of another kind, the choice of a cognitive message such a structure of the ghazal is to manifest. I shall come back to this problem since it seems to form a context for the ghazal functioning as a maxim.

I think that in the case of the ghazal in question the relations between deep and surface structures (common interpretation) would develop as follows:

The motivation of the first bayt of the second hemistich expressed directly (misra'): "such is love—it is happiness, it is pain" constitutes the hidden contents, the hidden motivation of the state of affairs described in the next bayt of the first hemistich: "if you are humiliated by your superior, there is no dishonour in this humiliation", the intermediate notion between 'superior' and 'friend' is 'love' while the notion coresponding to love is 'humiliation'.

The following bayts are built in the same way, therefore the whole sequence of hemistiches makes us think of an analogy with the numerical sequence in which each following term (the hidden contents of the first hemistich of each bayt) is made of 'the sum' of preceding terms (the contents expressed directly in both hemistitches of the preceding bayt). At the same time the level of generalization of the contents of each bayt undergoes gradation reaching its climax in the third bayt of this ghazal: "A lot of goodness one experienced can be forgotten due to a single evil/you are afraid of thorns, so you cannot eat dates."

The direct generalization of this bayt is denoted by the first hemistich introducing abstract ethical notions of goodness and evil to which 'date' and 'thorn' correspond parallelly in the second hemistich giving the whole its sensuous, specific impact and somehow enlarging it to the dimension of the sentencious exemplum.

Thus the structure of this type assumes dealing with rational wholes, or bayts, which are reserved for themselves each time on a different level of generalization. Each of these wholes is independent within the boundaries defined by its own sense carriers. Such a whole may be

open to the following wholes, or bayts, by means of the suggested transposition of sense carriers. This opening, however, does not belong to the sphere of necessity but freedom.

MOTTO III:

Pas ba'd az ān kas boud ki dar haftād yek bār āgāh shāvad-o kas boud ko dar bist sāl-o kas boud ke dar dah sāl-o kas boud ke dar chohār māh-o kas boud ke dar har māh-o kas boud ke dar hafteh āgāh shavad-o kas boud ke har wagt-e namāzi, āgāh shodan-e ān bebin ke del-e ou bi khabar bāshed az hich khabar ndārad ke in djahān-o ān djahān ast.

Then (the sheykh said): There are those who achieve cognition once in seventy years, those who do it once in twenty years, those who do it once in ten years, those who do it once in four months and those who do it once in a month. There are also those who achieve cognition once in a week and those who achieve cognition in each prayer. Follow those whose heart is not disturbed by the knowledge about what this world is or what that world is.

(Sheykh al-Kharaqāni, *Nur al-ulum*, the VIII chap. „On the Glorious Act")

The right answer to the given riddle means full cognition of the mystery and entering the domain of the uncognizable and has its tradition in the Persian literature too. There are riddles which require direct pointing at the „hidden" object and those which, not being riddles in the sense of satisfying the definition of this genre, require the answer to the question about the mutual relation of notions put forward indirectly.

The ghazal can be placed among such phenomena, such 'riddles'. The reason for it are the characteristics of its structure described earlier. It seems it is due to them that this genre found its place beside roubaiyyats in the madjles of the Khorāsān sufis and became extremly popular as the means expressing philosophical and mystical contents. I think it is the consequence of the realization in terms of genres of the possibility of an epistemological motivation, which lies at the basis of the very structure of the ghazal. Thus, on the way to cognition, during the sufis'madjles the ghazal would function as a kind of a 'riddle' which mixed different notions but according to definite rules and in terms of the principle of unity governing this apparent 'chaos'.

Let me now return to the problem already mentioned in the previous part. I mean here the philosophical motivation of the structure of the ghazal, in other words, a cognitive message of this structure, its contents governed by the form of the unity of discourse the ghazal represents.

In the case of the ghazal one should separate the form of unity whose recording can be obtained by means of adequate analytical methods from the unity which does not stipulate any rationalization of this kind and inscribes in itself also the whole seeming incoherence of the ghazal's bayts. I mean here the problem of finding the philosophical motivation for the form of unity of the structure of the second type. The space occupied by the senses is defined within such a structure, its breaking in a formally motivated place always leads to cognition of some 'truth about something'. Travesting the words of sheykh al-Kharaqani it would be as follows: there are those who learn the truth enclosed in the ghazal having read the whole ghazał, there are those who do it after having read one or two bayts and those who learn the truth in each bayt they have read. I think the structure of the ghazal and its sententious character are directed at such a cognitive message. Such is the inner dynamics on the axis between the part and the whole. Such is also the intention of my earlier words that opening one whole (bayt) to the following whole does not belong to the sphere of necessity but freedom. This freedom is a condition for some bayts to function as maxims.

The second condition that makes possible the sententious character of the Persian ghazal is connected with the sphere of its lyrical subjectivity. This plane is also governed by the sphere of freedom. It is only in the ghazal subjectivity is understood in a broad sense of the word and the "speaking self", entangled in the system of 'self' inseparable of the ghazal, together with the one I am speaking to and the one in whose presence I am speaking, are all the elements of the conscious intellectual game which results in the negation of the "speaking self" and subjectivity while the whole assumes an impersonal character. Both what has been said about a cognitive message of the ghazal and what refers to the way of existence of subjectivity in the ghazal are the conditions of its sententious character. Similarly the sententious character is also a condition for the ghazal to function as a maxim.

Ending my reflections on the sententious aspect of the structure of the ghazal I would like to point out at the particularly important historical-literary information included in M. K. Sarbievski's rhetoric: "A maxim is built of words taken from life which teach briefly what is or what should be in life [...]." A short statement made of 2—3 sentences is associated with a maxim. It is not so (what is particularly important if we bear in mind the complex structure of the ganre we are speaking about), as Sarbievski says in the following part of his work:

There are direct and indirect or allegorical and imagistic maxims. The latter is used by a Scytian envoy speaking to Alexander: Well, don't you know that big trees grow for a long time and can dry in an hour? A fool is the one who looks for their fruit and does not measure their height. Be careful having reached the top you do not fall down together with the branches you

have clung to! Also a lion sometimes becomes food of tiny birds and rust devours iron. The following direct maxim is expressed here: None of the things is strong enough not to be threatened by the helpless.

The above maxim shows some features common with those characteristic for the ghazal: reference to somebody's knowledge and therefore the existence of an addressee who is to learn something, the play of opposites (strong-helpless, rust-iron, etc.). However, there is a significant difference between them. When we compare, quite conventionally, the successive sentences with the successive bayts in the ghazal we shall notice that its bayts constitute wholes closed up formally and intellectually which can live an independent life outside the body of the ghazal though not without its context (it seems, such is their use in the present day functioning of the ghazal in the literary life of Iran, which is an extention of the tradition of old madjles).

On the other hand the sentences from the maxim quoted above might be used as independent maxims provided we reformulate them and add the word 'trees' to each of these sentences, so that the first part of the maxim was linked in an imagistic and sense making whole.

Coming across the example of the extended imagistic maxim used by the Scytian envoy in *The Lectures in Poetics* by priest Sarbievski I faced a circumstance too extraordinary not to be tempted to make a wider reflection reaching somewhere at the beginnings of the Persian lyrical literary production. Taking all reservations while considering the information given us by the master of classical rhetorics i.e. even if we assume that there never existed such an envoy and he never delivered such words there still remains an undoubted fact that the particular literary form, which cannot de described otherwise but as an 'imagistic maxim' was attributed to the cultural circle we are interested in. On the one hand the information seems to point at an older Persian origin of the tendency discussed above in the Persian lyric, on the other hand it can make a historical record of anxieties and suppositions of the European rhetorician who was trying to define the phenomenon familar to him, yet alien.

SENTENCJONALNOŚĆ JAKO CECHA STRUKTURALNA GHAZALU PERSKIEGO

STRESZCZENIE

Autor stwierdza, że wyznaczniki gatunku przekazane przez klasyczną poetykę literatury perskiej są ogólnikowe i nieprecyzyjne. Definiowanie gatunków takich jak ghazal, fard i qit'a przez odnoszenie ich od qasidy, biorącej na siebie w tym układzie funkcję definiującego gatunku-matki, nie określa swoistości żadnego z wymienionych gatunków i staje się powodem definicyjnego błędnego koła. Zwrócił już na to uwagę angielski historyk literatury perskiej Edward G. Browne.

Autor analizuje sekwencje wersów (baytów) w wybranym ghazalu tak w aspekcie ich porządku powierzchniowego jak i w aspekcie porządku treści sugerowanej i dochodzi do precyzacji sentencjonalnego charakteru struktury ghazalu.

Autor w sentencjonalnym charakterze struktury ghazalu poszukuje racji dla tradycyjnego wiązania z ghazalem funkcji epistemologicznej i twierdzi, że taka struktura ghazalu jest nośnikiem określonego przesłania poznawczego.

W zakończeniu autor wskazuje na zbieżność sentencjonalności przejawiającej się w perskim ghazalu z sentencją obrazową przytoczoną przez M. K. Skarbiewskiego w jego *Wykładach z poetyki* i przypisaną tam posłowi scytyjskiemu, co stanowiłoby dodatkową, inspirującą informację historyczną.