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ARTICLE

Uninvited Guests and Biting Dogs: Munīr Lāhorī and the Definition of an Indo-Persian Literary Tradition

Thomas Bijan Parsa

History, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, USA
Email: parsabijant@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the criticism of Munīr Lāhorī (1610–44) regarding the early modern literary style of *tāza-gū'ī* (speaking anew) through his unedited commentaries on the qasidas of ʿUrfī Shīrāzī (1556–90). Munīr is critical of the Iranian poet's overly complex style, ungrounded in the literary tradition as he perceived it, and of developments in Mughal courts that began to favor Iranian literati over their Indian counterparts. His philological criticism of ʿUrfī's qasidas and the promulgation of *tāza-gū'ī* elucidates the methodologies of Safavid-Mughal literary criticism and illustrates how the prominence of Iranian figures in South Asian courts influenced the discourse on early modern Persian literary developments.

Keywords: early modern studies; Indo-Persian literature; literary criticism; Persian literature; poetry; prose; scribal class; social history

Introduction

Munīr Lāhorī (1610–44) was a prominent munshi (scribe) at the court of Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–58), born into an elite local family of courtiers who had served the Mughal court since the reign of Akbar (1556–1605). Although he is relatively obscure today, he was well known during his lifetime for his contributions to Persian literature, epistolography, lexicography, and literary criticism, composed in an ornate prose style (*nathr-i fannī*) that built upon the poetry he analyzed[1]. Munīr's works are evidence of the emergence of a new literary tradition and how it was regarded by contemporary local Persian litterateurs in Mughal India; in addition, they shed light on social divisions between Iranian émigrés and Indian-born elites, and on class tensions between the elite literati and the general public. His critical method is best observed in his commentary on the qasidas (panegyric poetry) of the eminent Iranian émigré Mughal poet, ʿUrfī Shīrāzī (1556–90).

In this article, I use Munīr's *Kārnāma*, which highlights his cultural and literary critiques of *tāza-gū'ī* (speaking anew), as a reference for analyzing his commentaries on the qasidas of ʿUrfī. Munīr was critical of the Iranian poet's extensive use of complex verbal metaphors, personification, boasting, formalism, and strange metaphors, which he viewed as falling outside the norms of the literary tradition. For him, ʿUrfī was symbolic of a wider emerging

[1] Ornate prose is not a strictly defined term. It refers to prose that is artistic, with rhyming, wordplay, and eloquence; a better term is not readily available in English.

literary and cultural movement that promoted popular literary tastes over elite ones, and emphasized poets of Iranian origin, while simultaneously detracting from the role of Indian poets in the development of the Persian literary tradition. His works became the center of debate during the eighteenth century, as evident by the intense focus they received from the famous philologist Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān Ārzū (1687/8–1756). In his articulation of literary and philological issues that emerged during the early modern period concurrent with the *tāza-gū'ī* literary movement, also known as *sabk-i hindī* (Indian style), Munīr became a model for the later philological and analytical approaches that examined the emergence and evolution of words, idioms, and phrases over the history of the Persian language. This paper argues that Munīr's critical works provide a unique insight into the literary and social dynamics of early modern Mughal India. By examining Munīr's critiques, we can better understand the tensions between Iranian émigré and Indian-born elites, the popularization of Persian poetry among non-elites, and broader cultural shifts within the Persianate world.

Terminologies

Prose, criticism, and exegesis were long neglected fields in the study of Persian literature because of the elevated status of poetry[2]. However, recent scholarship has begun to examine more critically the role of literary criticism in the history of the Persian language. Naturally, this raises the issue of terminology, due to a contrast between the Western European and Islamicate understandings of what it means to be literate. The conception of literary criticism and exegesis in the West is historically textual, whereas in the Islamicate context it is literary whether textual or oral; therefore the emphasis falls on speech (*kalām* and *sukhan*) in both oral and written forms[3]. On a certain level, oral tradition continued alongside written traditions in the same space, as demonstrated by the poetry recited at salons (*majlis*), royal courts, and local communal spaces. However, for lack of better terminology, literary criticism and exegesis are the closest terms that exist in English for the terms that early modern Persian literati would have known. Literary criticism, as defined in this paper, was known to Munīr and his contemporaries as *sukhan-sanjī* (speech weighing), the act of examining the value of speech; a *sukhan-sanj* (speech weigher) would be able to hear a poem and tell if it was of good quality or not. *Sukhan-sanjī* posited distinct types of speech, particularly between *sukhan* (elevated speech) and *qāl* (ordinary speech)[4]. As a genre of writing, it often appeared in the *tadhkira* (bibliographic anthology literature) tradition[5]. Exegesis and

[2] Rypka, *Iranian Literature*, 389; Matin-Asgari, "Academic Debate," 173–92; Jabbari, "Introduction," 257–80.

[3] Sharma, "Reading," 283–84.

[4] *Qāl* refers to the faculty of everyday speech that ordinary people (*ahl-i qāl*) utilize. Munīr distinguishes this from *sukhan*, which is the literary or high speech of "people of the pen" (*ahl-i qalam*). In the *dībācha* (preface) to Munīr's *Majmūʿa-yi mathnawiyāt*, Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn Ṭabāṭabāyī (1628–72) writes, "The parrot worships the mirror because, having mastered meaning, he reads unwritten pages by the blessing (*fayḍ*) of speech (*sukhan*), contrary to the people of form (*ṣūrat*), the nightingale of the garden praises [*sukhan*] because, having mastered the condition (*ḥāl*), he speaks speech (*sukhan*) unheard, contrary to the common-tongued people (*ahl-i qāl*)" (*Ṭūṭī āʾīna-parast chūn az fayḍ-i sukhan, ṣāḥib-i maʿnī shuda bar ʿaks-i ahl-i ṣūrat, wariq-i nānawishta mīkhwānad, wa bulbul-i gulshan sitā chūn az yamn-i sukhan, ṣāḥib-i ḥāl gashta, ba raghm ahl-i qāl, sukhan-i nāshanīda mīgūyad*). The speech Munīr critiques and examines is *sukhan*, therefore the term *sukhan-sanjī* appears frequently in his work. *Sukhan* is related to literature, and in the context of this paper it is highly textual. Yet it is improper to refer to this term as literature because one can participate in *sukhan* without the act of physically writing. Therefore, refined, or elevated speech is more appropriate a translation because of its importance to the recitation of poetry. The term "speech" will therefore refer to *sukhan* when discussing Munīr's criticism and commentary. See *Dībācha-yi Majmuʿa-yi Mathnawiyāt* from Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 356–57.

[5] Shahla Farghadani demonstrates how the *tadhkira* of Taqī Awhadī (d. 1640), *ʿArafāt al-ʿāshiqīn wa ʿarasāt al-ʿārifīn*, became a key critical biography of poets, particularly his contemporaries, and informed later philologists and critics, such as Ārzū. See Farghadani, "History of Style," 507.

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commentary, as defined in this paper, would have been known to Munīr and his contemporaries as *sharḥ*, which roughly translates as interpretation or explanation[6]. Rather than being the work of an individual author, the commentary tradition was a shared tradition, and does not share the same characteristics of an individual creating an elaborate independent discourse on a text. For example, Nawal Kishor editions of the qasidas of ʿUrfī include sections from Munīr's commentary alongside commentary from other authors, allowing readers to engage with multiple interpretations. Although it is difficult to trace the connection between early forms of the commentarial tradition and later lithographs, it is a topic of great interest and deserves further study[7].

A review of the sources

The primary sources I use in this study are an edited edition of Munīr's *Kārnāma* and a manuscript of his *Sharḥ-i qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī* (commentary on the qasidas of ʿUrfī). The *Kārnāma* is a work of literary criticism, whereas the *Sharḥ* is a work of exegesis. The edition of the *Kārnāma* relies on a single manuscript, but the editor has compared it with various manuscripts of Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān Ārzū's critical response to Munīr, the *Sirāj-i Munīr* (the Bright Lamp), published by the Iran Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies in 1977. The edition of the *Kārnāma* suffers from many issues of punctuation, word choice, and fragmentation. The *Sharḥ* has yet to be edited and published, and only exists in manuscript form. The main text used in this study was a manuscript preserved at Aligarh Muslim University. The name of the copyist was Niẓām al-Dīn, son of Qāḍī Muḥammad Nāṣir, and the date he provided places the work sometime between 1722 and 1723. He stated clearly that this was the work of Mullā Munīr[8]. The Bodleian archive at Oxford has a second manuscript of the *Sharḥ*, and a third manuscript is housed at the Ganj Bakhsh Library, Pakistan[9]. There is one manuscript with loose attribution to Munīr at Punjab University, but after I compared it with the Aligarh manuscript and the *Kārnāma*, it is apparent that this copy is the commentary of another author on ʿUrfī's qasidas.

Munīr's commentary on ʿUrfī's qasidas was one of the last works he started during his lifetime; he died before its completion. According to munshi Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbūh (d. 1675), there was a *majlis* (poetic gathering) where difficult poetry from Khāqānī (d. 1199), Anwarī (d. 1189), and ʿUrfī was brought forward to be explained and commented upon[10]. At this gathering no one except Munīr could interpret and explain the poems, and at the end of the gathering those present pressured him into writing a commentary on ʿUrfī's qasidas for the benefit of other people[11]. Kanbūh further noted that he received this commentary in the month of Ramadan 1665, about twenty-one years after Munīr's death, from one of his servants or students[12].

[6] The word *sharḥ* comes from the Arabic root "to slice something open" but, in this context, it relates particularly to the elucidation of something, to explain it, and make it clear; it is the explanation or elaboration on fine speech, written or spoken. See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1530–31.

[7] For an example of this in the evolution of lithographs and the commentary tradition, see Sharma, "Five Centuries."

[8] Munīr Lāhorī, *Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, folio 40b. I thank Thibaut d'Hubert for providing me with this manuscript.

[9] Due to the pandemic, I was unable to access these manuscripts at the time of writing.

[10] Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 41. Anwarī and Khāqānī were foundational poets by Munīr's time. It is possible that the masters of style criticized in the beginning of the *Kārnāma* included these two poets. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbūh was the most reliable witness to Munīr's life. Kanbūh was a great chronicler and wrote several *dībāchas*. In addition to Kanbūh's sources, the *Tadhkira-yi hamīsha bahār* by Kishan Chand Ikhlās (1683–1748) is a text that provides many details on Munīr's life. Yet Ikhlās is a later figure, and it is likely that he would have drawn most of his information from Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbūh: Aḥmad, *Pākistāṅ Meṉ Fārsī Adab kī Tārīkh*, 236–38; Futūḥī Rūdmuʿjanī, *Naqd-i Adabī dar Sabk-i Hindī*, 317, 429.

[11] Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lā*hūrī, 41.

[12] Ibid.

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To appreciate Munīr's commentary on ʿUrfī's qasidas, one must read them through the critical lens that he offers in his *Kārnāma*. The *Kārnāma* was a concise attempt by Munīr to critique the social and literary problems that he saw with the preferential treatment that Iranian émigrés received in the Mughal court and the popularization of Persian poetry. In it, he presents himself as part of a neglected guard of Persian literati protecting the "land of speech" (*zamīn-i sukhan*) from the demise of meaning. He portrays the growing prevalence of stylistic innovation that decentered traditional meanings and tropes as a threat to the literary tradition's survival.

The *Kārnāma* consists of eight parts. The first section begins with a short *ḥamd* (praise) after which the critic sets up a scene of himself in a *majlis*. He describes himself sitting in the corner and listening, enthralled by the verses he hears. But he is suddenly distressed and finds himself startled when the conversation and recitations become unpleasant:

> They all finished criticizing the foregone masters of speech, and in their place, they praised the master of the present-day stylists. They took to criticizing the leaders of the caravan of meaning and they took to praising those who had remained behind the point of true knowledge of speech[13].

The affront he takes toward their preference for newer poets highlights Munīr's sense of a poetic literary tradition that needs to be respected. It also demonstrates his displeasure at the emerging trend of literary popularization and the authors to whom it afforded status. He then transitions into the second part of the *Kārnāma*, where he outlines the approach that his treatise (*risāla*) will take. The next four parts offer a critique of four recent poets: ʿUrfī, Ṭālib Āmulī (d. 1626–27), Zulālī Khwānsārī (d. 1607–28), and Ẓuhūrī Turshīzī (1537–1616)[14]. The seventh part of the *Kārnāma* is a lament. In it he claims that all four of these poets are from Iran, and they commit a hundred wrongs against the Persian language. The Indian poet on the other hand, like the Indian sword, makes the essence of speech and poetry clear and does not seek praise[15]. He goes on to say that they are only given preferential treatment because of their lineage[16]. In his view, they have brought innovation to speech, and he believes if their poems were weighed (judged) they would be found to be weightless (worthless)[17]. He concludes his lament by deploring youth and the age he lives in, barred from paying respect to the great past masters of speech. He adds that because of his Indian heritage, he is unable to make the essence of himself become apparent. The *Kārnāma* concludes in the eighth and final part with an appeal to those who have read his work to see that Indians are capable litterateurs, as worthy of respect as their Iranian counterparts, if not more. He then goes on to list four masters of speech from the land of India—Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān (1046–1121/22), Abū al-Faraj Rūnī (d. 1122), Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325), and Abū al-Fayḍ Fayḍī (d. 1595)—as exemplary masters of the Indian tradition[18].

Style, genre, criticism, and exegesis in a regional context

Before going further, it is worth looking at the context in which Munīr wrote, as it will clarify the issues referenced above. Although the networks of interaction between Central–South Asian, Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal courts did not fit the model of the

[13] *Hamginān nikūhish-i sukhan-warān-i pīshīn sar kardand wa sitāyish-i ṣāḥib-i ṭarzān-i pīshīn dar-mīyān āwurdand, pīsh-rawān-i qāfila-yi maʿānī rā nikūhīdan giriftand wa pas māndagān-i marḥala-yi sukhan-dānī rā sutūdan āghāz nihādand*. Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 3.

[14] Ibid., 4–7.

[15] Ibid., 25–27.

[16] Ibid., 27.

[17] Ibid., 25–27.

[18] Ibid., 27–29.

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modern nation–state, there was nevertheless a perception of regional distinction[19]. Persian literati and elites from close-knit regional courts interacted with the wider Persianate world and writers in geographically distant lands[20]. These individuals viewed themselves as part of the scholastic community (*ahl-i qalam*). Due to his command of literary Persian and his origins in the former capital of the Ghaznavid dynasty (977–1186), an early center of New Persian patronage, Munīr considered himself a member of the community of Persian speakers (*fārsī-gūyān*)[21]. However, he also had a sense of himself and his local literary community as distinct. South Asia was a place of unique literary and cultural developments, and is much more central to the history of the Persian language and its literature than has been previously thought. Amir Khusraw (1253–1325) and Ḥasan Dihlavī (1253–1338) were among the most influential classical poets during the early modern period. Sayyid Farīd Akram and Sunil Sharma argue that South Asia during the time of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658) flourished in terms of literature and science[22]. Iranian émigré Mughal poet Ṭālib Āmulī (d. 1627) claimed that Hindustan was the land of speech (*sukhan*) endowed with wealth:

> Come to India, see the station of speech and generosity
> Here is the source of speech and the mine of generosity[23].

As this line demonstrates, many Iranian poets imagined the subcontinent as a place of material as well as intellectual wealth, a land of prosperity for aspiring scholars and poets. Subsequently, even though the *tāza-gūʾī* movement was transregional, it also was deeply associated with the Mughal court and its Indian milieu.

As Sunil Sharma has noted, one aspect of Persian literary development during the early modern period that has often gone uncommented upon is the evolution and proliferation of *mathnawī* (narrative poetry), qasida, and prose (*nathr*), alongside the more famous ghazal[24]. He highlights that scholarly trends seem to ignore the local context, in which regional differences again play a role. The ghazal evolved uniquely in South Asia to become a popular literary form rather than an elite one, as it was in Safavid Iran and the Ottoman Empire, and so may not have held as elevated a position[25]. In contrast, Sunil Sharma and Christopher Shackle highlight that the qasida, which as a genre extolled the virtues of the patron, cemented the poet's relationship to the ruler, and was therefore necessary for success at court[26]. Poets used it almost like a résumé, to demonstrate their literary skill to current and potential patrons. Even though ʿUrfī regarded himself as a ghazal writer, he took up the qasida to maintain his financial status and his relationship to his patrons, of which he had many; it is not surprising that his qasidas were numerically superior to his ghazals[27]. Munīr steadfastly devoted himself to the critical observation of the qasida; in his *Kārnāma*, he mostly critiqued ʿUrfī's qasidas and not his ghazals, as the qasidas were exemplary of rhetorical mastery. The fact that his companions and colleagues pressured him to write a commentary on ʿUrfī's qasidas demonstrates that interest in this genre extended to his contemporaries.

[19] Dhavan, "Marking Boundaries," 160–61.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 161–63. He may have spoken a local form of Persian, but this is speculative.

[22] Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 21; Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 106–8.

[23] *Dar-ā ba hind bibīn rutba-yi sakhā u sukhan / ki manbaʿ-i sukhan u maʿdan-i sakhā īnjāst*, Sayyid Farīd Akram, in Munīr Lāhorī and Khān Ārzū, *Kārnāma*, 21.

[24] Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 11.

[25] Ibid., 58–61, 130–131.

[26] Ibid., 37. Shackle, "Settings of Panegyric," 205, 208–9. For more on the place of the ghazal in Mughal India, see Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 2, 9, 56–58, 61, 130, 168.

[27] Shackle, "Settings of Panegyric," 208–9; Abdul Ghani, *History*, 103–7.

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Prose is another genre of this period that lacks critical attention. One of the most significant sources of early modern prose is readily available in the form of *inshāʾ* (letters of a literary nature) written by munshis. Yet, the last significant work on epistle writing and prose in early modern Persian literature was Momin Mohiuddin's *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals, from Bábur to Sháh Jahán* in 1971, which is now out of print[28]. The obscurity of his work is a metaphor for the treatment of Mughal literary prose by scholars of Persian. The innovative literary development of munshi ornate prose literature remains peripheral to poetry. Yet, prose had a unique historical and literary development in India because of the well-documented role of munshis in Mughal society[29]. It was a form that defined the early modern Persianate world but remains underexplored, and Munīr was one of its master practitioners.

The *sukhan-sanj* of Lahore as illuminator of speech

Munīr valued and esteemed prose, and his style shares many commonalities with his contemporaries, including Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbūh and Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn Ṭabāṭabāʾī. Accounts from his youth portray him as a precocious youngster—like the classical master poets before him—who read the poetry of Sanāʾī (1080–1131/41) and Anwarī (1126–89). Already in his youth he achieved a high level of proficiency in poetry recitation[30]. Shīr ʿAlī Khān Lūdī in the *Tadhkīra mirʾāt al-khayāl* (1691) wrote, "When he began to think about poetry, he wanted to give himself the pen name *sukhan-sanj*, but in the end he found the name Munīr pleasant."[31] Munīr fashioned himself as a word-weigher, or a literary critic, who focused on correct or incorrect usage of idioms, tropes, style, and meaning.

As a base for the Mughal elite, who used it as a political and military center, Lahore was a major site of literary production[32]. Although Munīr died at a relatively young age, the poet-critic had an expansive and exhaustive literary output[33]. During the peak of his career, Munīr was a part of a collective of four prominent munshis from Lahore that included Chandarbhan Brahman and the Kanbūh brothers[34]. Modeling himself after the famous Abū al-Faḍl (1551–1602), the emperor Akbar's chief scribe (*mīr munshī*), he spent his life attempting to emulate his predecessor's ornate prose writing and style[35]. Part of this veneration was because Munīr's father, ʿAbd al-Jalīl ibn Ḥāfiẓ Abū Isḥāq Lāhorī, a famous Akbar-era calligrapher and poet, lent his calligraphy skills to the *Akbarnāma* chronicle project that was penned by Abū al-Faḍl[36]. The influence that the munshi class had on Munīr's upbringing and education is evident in his comprehensive training on Persian literature, in all its forms, from a young age. In addition to being an exemplary prose writer, Munīr was also a skillful poet who wrote extensively in the genre of *waṣf* (description) in *mathnawī* form, which Momin Mohiuddin compared in quality to that of Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209)[37].

Munīr has received attention among scholars of Persian in Iran and South Asia as a significant early modern critic[38]. In Akram's view, his critical commentary on ʿUrfī represents

[28] Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*.

[29] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, 313.

[30] Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 22–23, Aḥmad, *Pākistāṅ Meṉ Fārsī Adab kī Tārīkh*, 56–57.

[31] *Dar ibtidāʾ-i fikr-i shiʿr, sukhan-sanj takhallus mīkard, dar ākhir lafẓ-i munīr dil-padhīrish uftād*. Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 23; Khān Lūdī, *Tadhkīra-yi Mirāt al-Khayāl*, 105.

[32] Dhavan, "Marking Boundaries," 159.

[33] Memon, "Abu'l-Barakāt Lāhūrī"; Sharma, "Abū l-Barakāt Munīr Lāhawrī." Many of Munīr's works still need to be edited and compiled.

[34] Dhavan, "Marking Boundaries," 160; Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 22–23.

[35] Memon, "Abu'l-Barakāt Lāhūrī"; Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 22–23.

[36] Memon, "Abu'l-Barakāt Lāhūrī"; Sharma, "Abū l-Barakāt Munīr Lāhawrī."

[37] Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, 222.

[38] See Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters*; Sharma, "Abū l-Barakāt Munīr Lāhawrī"; Kinra, *Writing Self*; Purnima Dhavan, "Marking Boundaries"; and Futūḥī Rūdmuʿjanī, *Naqd-i Adabī dar Sabk-i Hindī*. My use of the word

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a new movement within the exegetical tradition, and laid the framework for later literary critics, such as Ārzū, for developing a larger critical and philological movement[39]. His contemporaries certainly saw his work as fundamental for all Persian literati. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbūh writes in the *dībācha* (preface) to Munīr's *Sharḥ-i qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*,

> This newly made charming garden is pleasant and well composed, lacking nothing and needing no proof; and its every part is the universal book in colorful explanation itself. It is for a hundred eloquent speakers the book of medicine and the faithful manual of the fresh wordsmiths of prose[40].

This demonstrates that many among Munīr's contemporaries saw him as an influential figure whose work should be fundamental knowledge for any literate person, especially those who sought to write in prose.

During his lifetime and even after his death, Munīr became a towering figure for his literary production and became known as a model for munshis. Yet, despite his grandeur and skill, he claims to have spent the majority of his life impoverished[41]. Even if he was materially poor, the high social status his family had achieved at the Mughal court afforded him great social capital[42]. In his *inshāʾ*, he often writes that he was hard pressed with poverty, and that despite being materially destitute he had the land of speech (*zamīn-i sukhan*) to cultivate his spiritual contentment[43]. However, the nature of his poverty is unclear; it is possible that he used poverty as a trope to demonstrate his piety or, as he suggested, the influx of Iranian émigré poets led to the diminishment of his ability to find gainful employment[44]. This could have contributed to his ambivalent relationship with the *tāza-gūʾī* movement.

In many ways, Munīr was fond of *tāza-gūʾī*. This is evident in his style, which utilized complex wordplay, new stylistics, and metaphors. In the *Hamīsha bahār*, Kishan Chand Ikhlāṣ (d. 1754) wrote, "Munīr was the lover of metaphor (*istiʿāra-dūst*) and his poetry is famous for freshness (*tāzagī*)."[45] But despite his immersion in and advocacy for *tāza-gūʾī*, Munīr viewed it as a sort of aberration. The language that he employed regarding his repentance from *tāza-gūʾī* and his return to the true traditions of the grand masters of Persian poetry conveys religious notions of purity. In the *dībācha* to Munīr's *Kullīyāt*, Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn Ṭabāṭabāʾī writes, "After a conversation with Mīrzā Khalīl Allāh, he [Munīr] would forbid me from the use of unfounded metaphors and he would restrain me from unrefined ideas (*khayālāt-i khāmī*)."[46] He discusses how this awakening occurred as Munīr sat in seclusion studying with the master Mīrzā Khalīl Allāh. During this meeting (physical or metaphysical), Munīr appears to have had a change of heart and a self-realization about the nature of Persian literature, an event recounted to a lesser extent toward the end of the *Kārnāma* as well[47]. The figure Mīrzā Khalīl Allāh is obscure today but had a profound influence over

"India" and "Indian" is not used in the modern sense to denote a nation–state and its citizens, but are translations of the term "Hindustan" and "Hindustani" that emerge in Indo-Persianate texts of this period.

[39] Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 41.

[40] *Īn naw-āʾīn chaman-i dilfarīb ki ḥusn-adā wa nuzhat-ṣafā bī-niyāz wa mustaghnī az guwāh ast, wa har faqra-ash daftar-i kull dar bayān-i rangīnī-yi khwīsh, ba ṣad zabān gūyā qānūn-i shāfī wa dastūr al-ʿamal-i wāfī-i ṭarz-i tāza-ṭirāzān-i nathr ast.* Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbūh, "Dībācha-yi Sharḥ-i Mullā Munīr bar Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī," in *Majmaʿal-Afkār*, Chander Shekhar, ed., 372.

[41] Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, 221.

[42] Aḥmad, *Pākistāṅ Meṉ Fārsī Adab kī Tārīkh*, 55–56.

[43] Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, 221.

[44] Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 25–29.

[45] *Munīr istiʿāra-dūst būd wa ashʿār-ash ba tāzagī mashūr ast*. Futūḥī Rūdmuʿjanī, *Naqd-i Adabī dar Sabk-i Hindī*, 317.

[46] *Baʿd az muṣāḥibat bā Mīrza Khalīl Allāh, ū az istiʿārāt-i bī maghz manʿ-am mīkard wa az khayālāt-i khāmī bāz mīdāsht*. Ibid., 316.

[47] Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 32, 42–43; Futūḥī Rūdmuʿjanī, *Naqd-i Adabī dar Sabk-i Hindī*, 315–17.

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Munīr. It was under the former's influence that the latter decided to turn away from aspects of *tāza-gūʾī*. Munīr's form of traditionalism should not be confused with the traditionalist revivalist movement of the *bāzgasht* (literary revival) movement of twentieth-century Iran, but should instead be understood in the South Asian and Ghaznavid context that he highlights at the end of his *Kārnāma*, in which he praises figures of the Ghaznavid, Ghurrid, Delhi Sultanate, and Mughal courts as exemplary of the tradition he upholds.

In this context of repentance and return, Munīr's critique would find its target in the prominent literary figure ʿUrfī. ʿUrfī loomed large on the Mughal literary scene as one of the earliest *tāza-gū*s, alongside Bābā Fighānī (d. 1519)[48]. Traveling to the subcontinent in 1584 at around the age of thirty, ʿUrfī initially took up patronage at Ahmadnagar in the Deccan, but eventually made his way to Akbar's court and served there until his death of dysentery in Lahore in 1591. He was one of the most influential poets at Akbar's court, and many statesmen, nobles, and other poets regarded him highly. It is likely that he interacted with Munīr's father. ʿUrfī was known for using contradictory imagery, boastfulness (*fakhr*), and crude imagery, and had a disregard for standards and norms not only in poetry but also at court[49]. Given this history, Munīr's disdain for ʿUrfī could have had personal or political dimensions, but it is likely that he viewed him as a major figure of the *tāza-gūʾī* movement and symbolic of its issues.

The land of speech: Analysis of the *Sharḫ-i qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī* and *Kārnāma*

In his seminal work *Naqd-i adabī dar sabk-i hindī*, Maḥmūd Futūḥī Rūdmuʿjanī provides a critical analysis of exegesis, criticism, lexicography, and literature from South Asia while bringing them into contemporary discourse on the evolution of the Persian language. Futūḥī highlights technical aspects of Munīr's *Kārnāma* and outlines its criticisms in contemporary terminology[50]. Such a method is useful, but it is restrictive of Munīr's literary philosophy because our contemporary literary framework does not capture the full meaning of early modern terminology. Nonetheless, Futūḥī has laid out a useful road map to help the contemporary reader navigate difficult aspects of Munīr's criticism.

Futūḥī begins by highlighting that Munīr did not agree with formalism (*ṣūrat-girāyī*) in poetry, which meant that form (*ṣūrat*) should not take precedence over meaning (*maʿnī*), and traditional idioms, metaphors, and tropes should maintain their original understandings. Second, Munīr did not agree with personification (*tashkhīṣ*). The example Futūḥī provides to illustrate this point is as follows:

> Your essence is equilibrium and your justice is of Sulaymān's temperament
> Your intellect is the brain and the universal jewel that is the skeleton of knowledge[51].

Munīr disagreed with the personification of knowledge in this line, that is, ʿUrfī's application of a skeleton (i.e., foundation) to knowledge. Due to this contention, he says that this idiom is *bī-maghz* (brainless, unfounded) and does not have a precedent within the tradition. Munīr wrote, "those who choose wisely and are aware of the foundation of speech know that the skeleton of knowledge (*ustukhwān-i ʿilm*) is a metaphor without precedent."[52] As Futūḥī notes, there are four additional points of style, including two types of metaphors

[48] For more on Bābā Fighānī see Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*.

[49] Losensky, "ʿUrfī Shīrāzī"; Losensky, "ʿOrfi Širazi"; Nuʿmānī, *Shiʾr al-ʿAjam*, vol. 3, 65–67; ʿUrfī Shīrāzī and Shahriyārī, *Aḥwāl wa Afkār wa Muntakhabāt-i ʿUrfī Shīrāz*.

[50] Futūḥī Rūdmuʿjanī, *Naqd-i Adabī dar Sabk-i Hindī*, 315–17.

[51] *Dhāt-i iʿtidāl u sulaymān-mizāj ʿadl / ʿaql-i tu maghz u jawhar-i kull ustukhwān-i ʿilm*. Ibid., 317.

[52] *Hūsh-guzīnānī kiaz maghz-i sukhan āgāhī dārand mīdānand ki ustukhwān-i ʿilm istiʿārāʾī ast bī-maghz*. Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 12.

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(*istiʿāra*), that Munīr did not find suitable: boastfulness (*tafākhur*) in poetry; using constructions that went against poetic norms; the use of strange metaphors (*istiʿāra-hā-yi gharīb*) that were intentionally unconventional; and the use of verbal metaphors (*istiʿāra-hā-yi fiʿlī*) and expressions.

Munīr also took issue with the types of imagery that a poet used and whether those images were normatively appropriate. ʿUrfī was not the only poet of the time to use such imagery, but he was one of the most prominent[53]. As an example, Munīr cited the following line by ʿUrfī:

> When the witness of chastity seeks my company
> He will find the daughter of the vine's menstrual blood boiling from my lips[54].

The verse, in terms of verbal and metaphorical construction, is not complex or obscure. Munīr understood that the menstrual blood of the daughter of the vine referred to wine and its consumption in the presence of someone who was religiously pious[55]. His criticism lay in the ritually impure nature of this poem, which defied norms of literary taste. He wrote in his commentary,

> This line, which assaults the mind of pride, was written in self-debasement for the sake of shattering honor, and here it is infelicitous. The summary of the meaning is as follows: For the sake of impure lust, I have made my lips the kisser of the goblet and I sullied the ascetic garment with the dregs of wine, and if the witness of purity loses his good honor by talking to me then it is proper[56].

In the *Kārnāma* he wrote, "It is clear that writing filthy poetry in such a colorful way is spilling the blood of justice."[57] The justice he refers to is the upkeep of the literary etiquette of Persian poetry and its norms. As a result, ʿUrfī's explicit depiction of the ritually impure act of menstruation is a violation of those norms and etiquette rather than a violation of semantics and metaphor.

Another type of construction that Munīr took issue with was the creation of new metaphors and idioms using semantically related imagery in place of images from long-established idioms. Not only did metaphors need to be semantically correct in terms of meaning, but their meaning must rely upon established imagery. One word that carried the same meaning as another word could not simply function in its place because of the fixed nature of an idiom. The line of the poem is as follows:

> Your order brought it (pleasant weather) to Kashmir
> Because it brings fertility from one land to another[58].

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[53] For more on the topic of explicit imagery in early modern Persian poetry see Sprachman, *Suppressed Persian.* For more on the history of this literature from the beginning of New Persian see Zipoli, *Irreverent Persia*.

[54] *Shāhid-i ʿiṣmat talāsh-i ṣuḥbat-i man kay kunad / khūn-i ḥayḍ-i dukhtar-i raz jūshad az labhā-yi man*. ʿUrfī Shīrāzī, *Kullīyāt*, 307; Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 9; Munīr Lāhorī, *Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, fol. 15a–16b.

[55] *Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, fol. 15a–16b; Khān Ārzū and Shamisa, *ʿAṭiyya'-i Kubrā wa Mawhibat-i ʿuẓmā*, 76–77.

[56] *Ki īn bayt ki khāṭir-i mufākharat rā ba-shikasta, dar kasr-i nafs pardākhta, dar īnjā bī-mawqiʿ ast. Wa khulāṣa-yi maʿnī ān ast ki lab rā ba muqtaḍā-yi shahwat-i ālāyash-pardāz lab-i jām sākhta-am wa dāmān-i zuhd rā ba tah-i jurʿa-yi may ālūda-am, agar shāhid-i ʿiṣmat ba āmīzish-i man ābrū-yi ḥusn rīzad ba-jāst. Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, fol. 15a–16b; Khān Ārzū and Shamisa, *ʿAṭiyya'-i Kubrā wa Mawhibat-i ʿuẓmā*, 76.

[57] *Paydā-st ki az īn dast sukhan-i nāpākīza rangīn nigāshtan khūn-i inṣāf rīkhtan ast*. Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 9.

[58] *Ḥukm-i tu-ash āwurd ba kashmīr w-agarna / ān k-az gul-i īn khāk ba ān khāk bar āyad*. ʿUrfī Shīrāzī, *Kullīyāt*, 88; Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 11; *Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, fol. 35b.

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The issue here was the usage of the word for land (*khāk*), which also means dirt or earth. ʿUrfī has used this word instead of another synonym for land (*zamīn*) to play with the traditional trope *gul-i zamīn* (lit., "flower of the earth"), which was a fixed idiom meaning fertile land[59]. *Gul-i khāk*, however, was not a fixed idiom, and ʿUrfī has created it because of the semantic relationship that existed between *khāk* and *zamīn*. Munīr in his commentary wrote, "Using the flower of the earth (*gul-i khāk*) to mean fertile land (*gul-i zamīn*) has no familiar color or fragrance in discussion among the adorners of speech."[60] He objected to the exchange of a semantically related word in place of another because it was unestablished in the literary tradition. For Munīr, the fixed nature of the idiom should not be decentered. In the *Kārnāma*, he wrote,

> The example is that in place of *zāgh-i kamān* (the three corners of the bow, literally "the crow of the bow") they say *kalāgh-i kamān* (the crow of the bow) and for the position of the *khāna-yi zīn* (saddle seat, but literally "the house of the saddle") they write *kulba-yi zīn* (shack of a saddle) [in its stead][61].

Here he demonstrates his conceptualization of the fixed idiomatic nature of the Persian language. In the case of *zāgh* and *kalāgh*, both words mean "crow" independently, but when *zāgh* is combined with *kamān* it takes on a fixed and established meaning, and another synonym cannot be exchanged with *zāgh* and still convey the idiomatic expression. For Munīr, ʿUrfī's violation of these established norms regarding idioms not only was an affront to the literary tradition, but threatened to destroy its capacity to express true meaning.

Munīr feared that meaning would be lost through such modes of literary production. In his view, if literary meanings remained unprotected from the creation of new meanings through unestablished idioms and tropes, then meaning itself would become elastic, and all that would remain would be forms and images, and a sullying of the purity of Persian literature. These concerns also reflected his social views; he and his colleagues were the guardians of the Persian literary tradition and understood how to use it appropriately. He tended to favor elites and their forms of knowledge over those whom he saw as the unintelligent masses. This is made evident in the ways that he distinguished the people of *sukhan* and *qāl*. It is clear that he loathed not only the loss of meaning but also the democratization of the literary market and the inclusion of those he considered unworthy to participate in the literary tradition. This becomes evident in the way that he feared the displacement of the traditional literary canon and the "uninvited ones" (i.e., the émigrés) who would bring its downfall[62]. In place of literary meaning would emerge the parabolic imaginings of those unfamiliar with the traditional canon and its role in Persian literary production. If all idioms and metaphors lost their associated meanings, then one could infer any meaning or understanding from a line of poetry that one liked, regardless of any literary norms or conventions that would have otherwise prevented unfounded meanings and interpretations. The following couplet by ʿUrfī attracted Munīr's greatest wrath:

> Accepting generosity (*iqbāl-i karam*) bites the ambitious (*arbāb-i himam*)
> Ambition (*himmat*) does not withstand the lance of someone who says yes (*ārī u naʿam*).[63]

[59] Chand Bahār, *Bahār-i ʿajam*, 1811.

[60] *Ammā gul-i khāk rā ba-maʿnī-yi gul-i zamīn āwurdan dar guftugū-yi sukhan-ārāyān rang wa bū-yi āshnāʾī nadārad. Munīr Lāhorī, Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, fol. 35b.

[61] *Wa īn ba-ān mānast ki ba-jā-yi zāgh-i kamān kalāgh-i kamān gūyand wa ba-manzila-yi khāna-yi zīn kulba-yi zīn niwīsand*. Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 11.

[62] Ibid., 14; see later in article for translation of this passage.

[63] *Iqbāl-i karam mīgazad arbāb-i himam rā / himmat nakhwarad nishtar ārī u naʿam rā*. ʿUrfī Shīrāzī, *Kullīyāt*, 11; Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 14; Munīr Lāhorī, *Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, fol. 2b.

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In his commentary, Munīr wrote, "Therefore while he [ʿUrfī] bit hearts and lanced souls, he used fanciful metaphors in the matter of meaning. With the idea of speaking anew (*tāza-gū'ī*) he cut open the raw veins of speech."[64] For Munīr, ʿUrfī's metaphors were devoid of meaning, and not only were the images in the poem not beautiful or intelligently done but they were offensive to speech. In other words, ʿUrfī used speaking anew to butcher meaning. The critic also suggested that ʿUrfī's actions were not simply his own doing but that "he writes the meaning of the verse in accordance with the taste of people of the time."[65] For Munīr, verses that did not adhere to true meaning were emblematic of what people desired from poetry: images and forms filled by the musings of the masses. This also suggests that he did not agree with the inclusion of popular poetic and aesthetic tastes in high literature. He understood these as elite forms of knowledge that were only accessible through elite knowledge systems, that is, the elite training that he and his colleagues received. He commented on the poem,

> It is not hidden to the perceptive ones that the intention of the poet is that people who are fed at the table of ambition do not give into generosity. The gifts of the generous-minded ones cause the dulling of character because saying yes brings the bearers of generous gifts, which then becomes the cause of the person's torment[66].

As before, the line itself was not a complex or difficult verse; the meaning was straightforward and clear. However, was his criticism related to his perception of ʿUrfī as a popular poet? Did he take offense at ʿUrfī's attack on wealth and status as a type of weakness? It is difficult to determine from this line alone, but Munīr took offense at ʿUrfī's popularization of poetry and did not find the meaning of this line to be aesthetically pleasing because of the inherent break with the established literary tradition and disregard for correct usage to create meaning. His criticisms were not grounded in the ornamentation or difficulty of the poem, but rather the rhetorical notion of correctness and meaning[67].

Munīr in the *Kārnāma* ended his criticism of ʿUrfī with scathing remarks about what the loss of true meaning would mean for poetry. He viewed ʿUrfī's influence as destructive to tradition and meaning. Composing "meaningless" verses that rendered forms devoid of clear and precise meaning meant that everyone could become poets and connoisseurs of speech without any training or knowledge of the literary canon. Munīr wrote:

> One day I was in the solitary precincts of speech in discourse with one of the masters of friendship who is known throughout the land by the name of Khalīl Allāh, who is the founder of the holy sanctuary of speech. Suddenly a dear uninvited guest came in and asked me the meaning of this aforementioned line that is the eyebrow of the beloved of meaning. I told him that this charming verse can be called an eyebrow, in the sense that it has no meaning[68]. He was not well disposed toward my speech, which

[64] *Agar-chi dar īn muddat ki dilhā-rā mīgazad, wa bar jānhā nishtar mīzanad, ba istiʿārāt-i dūr-andīshī dar kār-i maʿnī zada ba andīsha-yi tāza-gūʾī rag-i khāmī-yi sukhan bāz namūda. Munīr Lāhorī, Sharḥ-i Qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī*, fol. 2b.

[65] *Ba muqtaẓā-yi madhāq-i ahl-i rūzgār maʿnī-yi ān padhīrā-yi taswīd mīgardad*. Ibid.

[66] *Bar arbāb-i fiṭnat makhfī nīst ki qaṣd-i ṣāḥib-i sukhan ast ki kasān-i parwarda-khwān-i himmat-and tan-i padhīrā-yi karam nimīdahand wa ʿaṭā-yi karam-andīshān mawjib-i malāl-i ṭabīʿat az īn karda ast. Zīrā-ki ārī wa naʿm ki muzhda-rasān-i badhl wa nuwīd-bakhsh-i sakhāwat ast, īshān-rā bāʿith-i āzār ast*. Ibid.

[67] For further reading on the topic of literary correctness in the Islamicate context see Key, *Language between God and the Poets*; and Harb, *Arabic Poetics*.

[68] The explanation of the usage of eyebrow as a technical term is provided here in Munīr Lāhorī, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 282:

zi nāz-i rutba-yi abrū buland mīgardad
Munīr abrū-yi bī-nāz bayt-i bī-maʿnī ast
The station of the eyebrow is raised because of pride

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> caused his eyebrow to arch because his forehead had no sign of insight. He saw in the fragrant harmony of my breath that I saw fault in that erroneous one, and the hair stood up on his skin. He frowned and endeavored to show the legitimacy of this line and he made flee the antelope of rational thinking. He said that Himam is the name of a village and a dog was in that village who had the name Iqbāl-i Karam and he would bite the people of that village. Himmat is the name of the leader of that village who was affected by blood-poisoning, and there were two brothers in that village who had a complete skill in the craft of bleeding a vein. One was called Ārī and the other Naʿam. This verse informs us about the calamity that is a dog bite, the lives of people in this village, the reason behind the illness of the head of the village, and the dexterity of the bleeders[69].

In this passage Munīr made his distain for the democratization of Persian literary knowledge clear, as well as his belief that to be a skillful poet one also must understand the literary tradition deeply. The way that the uninvited guest (uninitiated to the Persian literary tradition) draws wild abstractions about the meaning of the poetry without any knowledge of the literary tradition was symbolic of the literary world Munīr inhabited. For him this was the way that he saw the proliferation of popular poetry; the poets and litterateurs did not judge it, rather the masses judged it. Although this criticism does not offer any philological points to comment upon, it was his most scathing critique of developments in Persian literature during his lifetime. For Munīr, the loss of meaning coincided with the rapid growth of a market of poetry that favored the most colorful poets who used imagery in obscure ways to attract attention. He had elitist notions of the Persian language. In his view, only those trained in the tradition of the literary canon could understand and appreciate elevated speech, and the people of *sukhan* and the land of speech should remain separated from the people of ordinary speech (*qāl*). He viewed the incursion of those unfamiliar with the literary tradition and their perception of popular poetry as problematic for the tradition, because one who was unaware of established meanings, idioms, etiquette, and literary norms could extrapolate whatever they wanted from a poem without any thought to the inherent meaning of the line.

A boastful archetype of fresh speech and the mirror of munīr

Munīr's views of *tāza-gūʾī* have been discussed at length; it would be good now to see how later critics took up his methods. A century after Munīr's death, Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān Ārzū, a literary critic, poet, and theoretician of language, emerged as the strongest critic of Munīr. Ārzū, who wrote widely on lexicography and criticism, was one of the successors to the literary movement that Munīr and his contemporaries had established. The list of his scholarship is extensive, and includes works on rhetoric, such as the *Mawhibat-i ʿuẓmā* and the *ʿAṭīya-yi kubrā*, literary criticism, and lexicography. Ārzū respected Munīr and wrote in his *Majmaʿ al-nafāʾis*, "Master Abū al-Barakāt Munīr Lāhūrī is a superior master poet and

Oh, Munīr eyebrows without pride are a meaningless line.

[69] *Rūzī bā yakī az arbāb-i khullat ki ba-ism-i Khalīl Allāh shuhra-yi zamīn ast wa bānī-yi bayt al-ḥaram-i sukhan, dar khalwat-kada-yi sukhan ṣuḥbat mīdāshtam. Nāgāh ʿazīz-ī nākhwānda dar rasīd wa maʿnī-yi īn bayt-i madhkūr rā ki abrū-yi shāhid-i maʿānī ast, az man pursīd, guftam īn bayt-i dil-āwīz rā abrū mītawān khwānd, ba-īn maʿnī ki maʿnī nadārad. Az īn sukhan ān ʿazīz ki chūn abrū dar kaj-garāʿī ṭāq būda bā man kaj shuda, chirā-ki pīshānī rāst-guftārī nadāsht. Chūn dam-sāz-i mushkīn-i anfās-am dīd ki az āhū giriftam ān khaṭā-andīsh rā chūn nāfa mū bar tan bar-khāsta wa chīn dar pīshānī afkanda maḍmūn-i īn bayt rā ba-ṭaybat sar-karda āhū-yi andīsha rā ba-jast ū khīz dar āwurda, guft Himam nām-i dihī ast wa sag-ī dar ān dih būda ki Iqbāl-i Karam nām dāsht wa paywasta-yi arbāb-i ān dih rā mīgazīd wa Himmat nām-i raʾīs-i ān dih ast ki fasād-i khūn ba-ham rasānda būd, wa ham dar ān dih dū barādar būdand ki dar shīwa-yi fiṣād dast-i tamām dāsht, yakī Ārī mīguftand wa dīgarī rā Naʿam. Īn shiʿr mushʿir ast bar nakūhish-i gazīdagī-yi sag wa aḥwāl-i arbāb-i ān dih wa kayfīyat-i bīmārī-yi Himmat raʾīs wa tīz-dastī-yi faṣṣādān-i ān dih*. Munīr Lāhorī, *Kārnāma*, 14.

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wise speaker."[70] Despite this reverence, Ārzū was critical of Munīr's stances on *tāza-gūʾī* and criticized him for overlooking the role of innovation in the history of Persian literature[71]. For Ārzū, Persian was not a static language, and literary innovation was not a desecration of the tradition[72]. Ārzū wrote a strong response to Munīr's *Kārnāma* in his own treatise (*risāla*) called the *Sirāj-i Munīr*, which outlines his criticisms of Munīr's critiques. Arthur Dudney provides insightful elaboration on Ārzū's stance toward Munīr; Dudney demonstrates how the commentarial and critical tradition were hermeneutical in nature, and scholars relied on increasing each other's knowledge through the continuation of the *isnād* (chain of narration or knowledge) tradition in literary discourse[73]. One can disagree with another and still respect them and learn from their ideas. It is a form of respect to critique another's work. As the Aristotelian tradition holds, friends should correct each other, and the Greek tradition played a significant role in Islamic intellectual life[74]. Although they were not contemporaries, Munīr had a great influence over early modern literary criticism and philology, warranting a response from someone capable of "correcting" him and increasing shared knowledge. This work was undertaken by Ārzū as a response to Munīr's criticisms of ʿUrfī, but it also outlined issues that he took with Munīr's criticisms of other poets[75]. The Persian language, unlike Arabic and Sanskrit, is a relatively uninflected vernacular language that relies on idioms, metaphors, and tropes to build meaning[76]. This became a point of contention for Ārzū in his criticisms of Munīr during the age of high Persian lexicalization[77].

Conclusion

Munīr's literary criticism represented a decisive moment in the history of Persian literature and *tāza-gūʾī*. Before him no one had noted the influence of the popularization of Persian poetry on its literary development. In his attempt to critique philological and stylistic developments, he highlighted the emergence of a new trend in Persian literature that focused on expanding poetry to a mass audience and incorporating that audience's literary notions of taste. It is the synthesis of elite and colloquial language, literature, and culture that stands out in this context, because of the heightened popularization of Persian poetry during the early modern period. The *Sharḥ-i qaṣāʾid-i ʿUrfī* broke new ground in the commentary tradition: whereas other commentaries simply attempted to explain poetry and its meaning, this work highlighted some of the broader stylistic and philological issues at stake in its production. Munīr's reliance on analyzing words, idioms, and meanings through historical interpretations and precedents regarding their usage stands out for its attempt to historicize language, and provided the foundations for later philologists and lexicographers to formulate a literary criticism grounded in philological norms. Although ornate

[70] *Mūlānā Abū al-Barakāt Munīr Lāhorī khaylī shāʿir-i zibardast [wa] ṣāḥib-i talāsh wa pukhta-gū ast*. Akram, *Surūdahā wa Nawishtahā-yi Munīr Lāhorī*, 43.

[71] Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters*, 114–17.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 114–17, 119–23, 124–26.

[74] For more on the history of Greek philosophy in the Islamic world, see D'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic." For further reading on the Aristotelian tradition of friendship, see Biss, "Aristotle on Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 125–40.

[75] Sayyid Farīd Akram, "Pīshguftār," in Munīr Lāhorī and Khān Ārzū, *Kārnāma*, 26–27.

[76] Perry, "Lexicography, Persian."

[77] For a comprehensive work on Ārzū, read Dudney's work, *India in the Persian World of Letters*. Another work that examines issues relevant to Ārzū, *tāza-gūʾī*, literary criticism, and canonicity is Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi.* More recently the works of Jane Mikkelson have contributed to this discourse on literary criticism; see Mikkelson, "The Grounds of Verse."

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prose apparently did not survive long after Munīr's death as a method for critical and analytical writing, his methodology and approach to texts provided a crucial framework for later critics.

The *Kārnāma* highlights the critical points that Munīr wanted to make about the literary society he inhabited. He wanted to provide not only a literary critique, but also a social critique. Persian language and literature were rapidly evolving during his lifetime; through his work, he put forward criticisms of these changes as a reflection of the evolution of larger Persianate society. He saw an emerging tendency in courtly society to favor those Persian literati who were of Iranian descent, which highlights a social tension that existed between Iranian émigrés and Indian-born Persian literati[78]. He held elitist views on language and on who was entitled to engage in elevated discourses, although he was perhaps more troubled by what he saw as the inclusion of the commoner's aesthetic taste in literary discourse than he was by the presence of Iranian émigrés of high social status. This article elucidates Munīr's intellectual evolution; he began as an adherent of the *tāza-gū'ī* movement who admired the Iranian émigré poets, but at some point he had a revelation or awakening that caused him to reconsider his previously conceived notions about poetry and stylistic choice. This resulted in his emergence as a proponent of "traditionalist" notions of Persian literature. Furthermore, he may have reconciled these two schools of thought at some point, resulting in the development of a style that, although fresh and innovative, kept in mind the norms and etiquette of the literary tradition and its canon. Munīr's literary criticism and his exegetical works stand out for their critical and philological analysis of Persian literature. His methodology greatly influenced the later emergence and evolution of philological and lexicographical projects during the eighteenth century.

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Thomas Bijan Parsa is currently a PhD student at Northwestern in the History Department. His research interests include Persian literature, Early Modern and Medieval history of Iran, Central and South Asia, and the history of Iranian languages.

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