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is exactly the same as has come into vogue in modern times since the impact of Western literary influences.

It is interesting to note that the early trend towards compiling treatises dealing with words grouped around particular subjects did not die with the appearance of the general lexicons; it had an uninterrupted development on parallel lines. The greatest work of this kind is al-Muhakhtas, a twin of the general lexicon, al-Muhakhur, by the Andalusian Ibn Sidah. In al-Muhakhtas, the vocabulary is grouped under subject headings, e.g., the hair, the eye, etc., which are classified into "books" such as that on "human body." Even if the position of al-Muhakhur is not wholly unsurpassed, that of al-Muhakhtas is definitely so.

Once the framework of a general lexicon was fixed, the running commentaries on the rare and difficult words in the Qur’an and the Hadith were also brought under that form. Similarly, no time was lost in extending the facility and the benefits of a general dictionary to the other specialized branches such as zoology, botany, biography, geography, bibliography, and finally the encyclopedias (al-mawāli’a). It may be observed in this connection that interest in language and literature, which the scheme of a lexicon was originally designed to subsist, seldom disappeared in any of the works, however specialized and limited the scope of their treatment. It would, for example, be really odd to conceive of a zoologist or a geographer who was not familiar with the references in the Qur’an and the Hadith or who would be unable to recall poetry, proverbs, and pithy sayings concerning animals or towns. This all-pervading interest in humanities is perhaps the most valuable asset of Islamic culture.

In conclusion, it will be recalled that the early philologists were fully conscious of the sanctity of their task; they showed themselves to be scrupulous in method and honest in purpose. But the scope of the linguistic studies was bound in course of time to extend beyond what was strictly relevant to the Qur’an and the Hadith. As the bounds of the sacred faded into those of the profane, the common failings of vanity, mere guess or conjecture, or even unguarded reliance on genuine misunderstandings, contributed to the interpolation of the spurious. Also, as these studies came to be held in high esteem and patronized with abundant monetary gifts, the veterans in the field were sometimes tempted to window-dress faithless rarities in their shop. But the probe into their personal weaknesses, so characteristic of Islamic religious and literary tradition, and the severe tests subsequently applied to their statements served to a large extent to clear the chaff from the grain. On the whole, there is no doubt that a fair degree of reliability was achieved. In the same way it is impossible to claim that the entire vocabulary and usage were exhausted, yet there is no gainsaying the fact that an enormous part of them was actually encompassed. The charge that the Arabic philologists concerned themselves too exclusively with the idiom of the Qur’an and showed no interest in contemporary deviations from the same, tantamounts to questioning their objective or purpose, which has been steadily confirmed throughout the ages. In regard to the scheme and the arrangement of a lexicon, the early pioneers proceeded on the basis of a scientific etymological analysis of the structure of the vocabulary. Practical convenience was achieved later in the superbly original plan of al-Jahwari, which remains the one specially suited to the genius of the language. Even the model which has become so popular in modern times is traceable to al-Zamakhshari.

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Chapter LII

ARABIC LITERATURE: THEORIES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

In this account of the Arab contribution to the theories of literary criticism, the term "Arab" is used in a wide sense to include all the Arabic-speaking peoples, and the writers who used Arabic as their cultural medium, regardless of their racial origins.

Literary criticism is also broadly used to cover the whole field of literary appreciation, analysis, judgment, and comparison on the practical as well as the theoretical side. In this broad sense, Ralghā—what concerns itself with the study of the figures of speech and the stylistic aspects of literature in general—may be included under literary criticism, at least of the golden era of the early centuries of Hijrah, although, generally speaking, the relation between the two is a matter of controversy.

The period covered by our treatment is likewise a fairly long one. It extends from the first/seventh century to the present time, and it corresponds to the Islamic era in the history of the Arabs. For, although the Arabs achieved a high measure of perfection in their poetry two centuries before Islam, they did not reach the mature stage of theorizing about literature and its excellence until their minds were stirred and stimulated by the call of the new religion that arose in their midst. The fact that the miraculous sign of the religion of Islam came in the form of a "Clear Arabic Book" was destined to play
an important role in Arabic language and literature, and consequently in the enrichment of Arabic literary criticism.

From early times, the Arabs were noted for their literary excellence. Poetry and oratory were the chosen forms of their artistic expression. As early as the second half of the sixth century A.D., when Arabic poetry was in its flowering period, some rudimentary forms of practical criticism could be observed. These were preserved by narrators, and later recorded by the early authors of the general studies of the Arabic language and literature. Some time before Islam there grew a number of market-places in the Hijaz where people of different tribes used to assemble for trade as well as for literary contests. Names of recognized arbiters in those contests, such as that of al-Nābiqah al-Thaybi, and their judgments and criticism were passed down by word of mouth. Naturally, very little explanation or justification was offered for such judgments, and very often one verse or one poem would be given as a ground for a high praise of a poet or for a comparison between two contestants in the market-place. Some of the Prophet’s sayings on the different aspects of Arabic literary criticism were known for their appreciation and sound judgment of pre-Islamic poetry. The second Caliph ‘Umar, for instance, was reported to hold that al-Nābiqah was the greatest of the Ḥakīmiyyah poets, and when he was asked the reason for this pronouncement, he answered: “Al-Nābiqah never used redundant words, always avoided the unmeaning in poetry, and never praised a person except for true merit.”

By the end of the first/seventh century Arabic culture had spread outside Arabia in various directions with the spread of Islam. The mind of the new Muslim community was getting ready for a general intellectual awakening. The first to reap the benefits of those efforts were the religious fields on one side and the linguistic and literary on the other. Some scholars felt that they must explain the meaning of the Qur’an and the understanding of its challenge of miraculous literary excellence. Others concentrated on tracing pure linguistic usages of the Arabic language and standardizing its grammar and syntax. Some directed their efforts to collect pre-Islamic poetry and preserving it against loss. The stage was now set for the beginning of a golden era in authorship which lasted several centuries. The critical problems raised by the Arab authors during this period can be summed up under the following main heads:

1. Literary aspect of the Qur’anic ṣīţa (eloquence of discourse), and the extent to which literary criticism could aid in discovering the secrets of that ṣīţa.
2. Unique and sometimes obscure usages of the Qur’anic style.
3. Authenticity of literary texts transmitted by the ṣāḥib from pre-Islamic and early Islamic times.
4. Classification of the Arab poets, both Islamic and pre-Islamic.
5. Metres and dactyly of the ancients and moderns in Arabic literature, and the controversies between traditionalists and innovators.
6. Claims of meaning and expression to literary excellence. 7. Originality and imitation, and the phenomenon of plagiarism.

These various problems of literary criticism were treated sometimes separately in a specialized fashion, and sometimes together in manuals or text-books. The stylistic aspects in particular received a large share of the Arab authors’ attention, and the researches around them grew until they formed a separate critical branch under the name of Baladīk. This was mainly the outcome of the Muslims’ preoccupation with problems of the Qur’ānic exegesis and ṣīţa. Greek writings on rhetoric which were translated into Arabic as early as the third/ninth century also contributed to the growth of the science of Baladīk. In fact, that science dominated the Arabic critical field all through the later centuries of Islam from the seventeenth to the twelfth/eighteenth.

Some of the above enumeration of the different aspects of Arabic literary criticism will indicate the immensity of its wealth, and the difficulty of separating the Arab contribution in this field from their contribution to the development of Arabic language and literature in general. Many a general book on literature, such as the Kitāb al-‘Akhbār (Book of Stories) by abu al-Faraj, would also claim a place among the books of literary criticism. The same can be said of books, such as al-Baqillānī’s ṣīţa al-Qur’ān, which dealt exclusively with the unique excellence of the Qur’ān.

But in the following survey of the main features of Arabic literary criticism we shall limit ourselves to singling out some of its outstanding landmarks and making a brief halt at each of them.

1. One of the early grammarians, philologists, and literary critics of the first stage in Arabic authorship was ibn Sallān (d. 231/845). His book Tuhfat al-Shu’ārā‘ is representative of the critical attainments of his period. Criticism, he maintains, needs long training and experience, and a critic must be an expert on his subject and well versed in the practice of his art. In other words, taste alone does not meet the requirements of criticism, and must be supplemented by experience and long study. He also adds that poetry, like the sciences and other arts, needs its own special technique and culture. He was aware of the established truth that abundance of practical study is worth more than all academic knowledge.

The second point stressed by ibn Sallān in his book is the importance of verifying the poetical texts and of ascertaining their origin. This is the first step in textual criticism and must be taken as its foundation. He directed a violent attack on the manner in which some Arab chroniclers accepted and narrated ancient poetry, and, therefore, questioned the authenticity of many of their texts.

The other important point in ibn Sallān’s book is the division of poets into classes. With regard to time, poets were either Islamic or pre-Islamic.
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He tried to classify the poets of either era according to the abundance and excellence of their poetry. In his classification he also took into consideration the place of origin.

Although Ibn Sallam failed to support judgments he passed on poets and poetry by analyzing the texts or describing the qualities of each particular poet, yet it must be admitted that Arabic criticism was taken by him a step further, especially as regards questions of verification and classification of poets. What we miss in his book, however, is criticism in the sense of a disarming study and a methodological approach. The first attempts at methods are not to be found earlier than the fourth/tenth century.

Al-Jahiz (d. 255/869), who was one of the leading Mu'tazilites and writers of the third/ninth century, tried in his book al-Bughā's al-Talāqīn to give a picture of criticism in the pre-Islamic times and the first/seventh century. The criticism of that period, he maintained, was elementary, but, to a marked degree, sound and convincing, as it emanated from genuine practical literary taste. The critics of that period, according to him, managed to discover a number of defects in poetic craftsmanship and to give valuable practical advice to onlookers and poets.

Al-Jahiz's book was an echo of the intellectual life of the Arabs of the third/ninth century. At that time the mosques of Kifah and Basrah were not only places for worship and administration of justice, but also schools for the teaching of language, grammar, Hadith, and jurisprudence, as well as platforms for narrators to relate to the assembled audience the story of the Prophet's life and conquests. Leaders of theological schools and religious divisions used to go there for dialectical discussions, and a large number of people attended them in quest of knowledge. Anyone who spoke in the mosque had to possess the ability to express himself clearly, to attract and persuade the audience. Thus, a new kind of study came into being to show the qualities and defects, and to point out the defects of different speeches. Observations on effective and defective public speaking contained in al-Jahiz's book can be grouped under the following headings: (i) Correctness of pronunciation and defects caused by deformities of the vocal organs, (ii) Proper and improper employment of language and harmonious and disharmonious use of words, (iii) Syntax and the relations between words and their meanings, clarity, conciseness, suitability of expression to different occasions and audiences, and of speech to its intended objective. (iv) The appearance of the onlookers and the agreeableness of their gestures and mannerisms.

Another third/ninth century literary celebrity was the writer ibn Qutlubah (d. 274/889), the author of many books on literature and Qu'ranic usages. In one of his books, al-Shir's al-Shar'ani, he urged people to form independent judgments and use their own power of appreciation. He attacked the philosophers' approach to criticism and their use of logical method in the appreciation and analysis of literary texts. One of the critical problems he raised was that of the division of poets into those who deliberate upon, revise, and

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perfect their poetical works, and those who depend on the spontaneity and easy flow of their poetic inspiration. He also opposed the tendency always to give preference to the ancients just because they were ancients. Literary talent, he argued, was not confined to any particular period. A modern poet might easily surpass an ancient in literary creativeness and workmanship.

The contribution of the poet Prince 'Abd Allah ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 290/908) to the development of Arabic criticism and his influence on it were of a different character. He made a study of badr which was considered in his days an innovation in the poetical art, and set out to prove that it was not a new creation at all. His book al-Badr was the first attempt at a systematic treatment of the figures of speech, which he divided into three main categories: (i) the metaphor which is the pillar-stone of poetry; (ii) alliters connected with the form only and not with the essence of poetry; such as assimilation (tajall) and antithesis (mufrad), and (iii) the dialectical style which takes the form of a logical argument (al-mafrud al-kalami). By quoting copious examples from the Qur'an, the Hadith, the speeches of the Prophet's Companions, and the language of the Bedouins, ibn al-Mu'tazz tried to show that the use of the figures of speech was inherent in the nature of poetry, and that the Arabs practised the art long before the time of Baghshar, Muslim ibn al-Walid, and Abu Nuwas. These modern poets of the 'Abbasid period did not invent the art but simply extended its use until it was thought a new creation. It is an open question whether ibn al-Mu'tazz was influenced, in his Badr, by Aristotle's writings, especially the Poetics, translated into Arabic during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. But the treatment of ibn al-Mu'tazz has the unmistakable stamp of originality, and the subject seems to have begun to interest Arab criticism in the second/eighth century as an Arabic literary phenomenon. The influence, if any, might be sought in the prominence given to metaphor and in the attempt at definition and division of literary artifices.

But the real disciple of the philosophical sciences and the author who manifested Aristotle's influence very clearly was Qutbush ibn Ja'far (d. 337/948). His book Naf' al-Shir' is perhaps the first Arabic book to carry in its title the word sadf which is the Arabic equivalent of criticism. It is conceived and planned in the Aristotelian fashion of logical divisions and definitions. The author begins by defining poetry as regular speech with metres, rhymes, and meanings, proceeds to explain and justify this definition on logical grounds, and then adds words as the fourth element constituting poetry. Out of the relations between these four simple elements he creates four complex ones, which evolve out of the harmony between them. He points out that earlier Arab authors have neglected the critical side of the studies of the poetical art, and directed their energies to the less important aspects, namely, prosody and linguistic considerations. His, then, was an attempt to create a real science of criticism and set the norms of excellence for the principal categories of Arabic poetry.
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2. Arab contribution to literary criticism assumes clearer and mature form in the fourth/tenth century. On the specialized side we meet with al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1012), who gives a scholarly account of the Qur'ānic ḫīṣā; al-ʿĀmilī (d. 371/981), who leaves us the best classical Arabic comparison between two great poets, representatives of two schools of poetical art; and al-Qāḍī al-Jūrjānī (d. 366/976), the writer of the earliest critical treatise on a great Arabic figure in the literary history of the Arabs. On the general side, at least two contributions must be mentioned here. The first is that of abu al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 358/966), the writer of Faḥī ṣal-Al-Qāḍī (The Book of Songs), a unique book of its kind in the literatures of the world. The second is that of abu Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. 395/1004), who attempted to give a complete systematic manual of Arabic rhetorical and critical principles as they were known in his time. Now, to take the general contributions first. The “Book of Songs” is a literary encyclopedia, in twenty volumes, dealing essentially with lyrical poetry which was set to music and singing by the musicians and singers of the early centuries of Islam. But second this theme the author collected a large amount of critical and biographical information in a great number of Arab poets. The critical aspect of al-Qāḍī al-Jūrjānī has received the attention of modern academic research. The wealth of narratives and biographical data contained in the book has been a boon to modern Arabic play and storywriters.

Al-ʿAskarī made the two arts of poetry and prose the subject-matter of his treatment and tried to systematize and enlarge upon the earlier general attempts of al-Ḥāfiẓ, ibn al-Muttaż, and Qudāsān. The two Arabic rhetorical conceptions of ḫīṣā and thulūṣ were received at his hands satisfactory definitions, the first being connected with elegance and purity of style, and the second with communicating and conveying the desired meaning in a convincing and effective manner. Long chapters on distinguishing the bad in speech, on the nature of literary art, and on the techniques of composition and good description, with copious examples of excellent poetry and prose, occupy about half the book. The rest is an examination and elucidation of literary artifices, the number of which al-ʿAskarī raises to thirty-five, which is more than double the number given earlier by ibn al-Muttaż.

Al-Jūrjānī’s treatise on ḫīṣā takes its place among Arabic critical books on account of its attempt at applying the critical conceptions to reveal some of the secrets of the Qur’ānic literary excellence. In doing that the author subjected some of the highly esteemed Arabic poems to a severe test of criticism to show the fallibility of human products. The Qur’ānic ḫīṣā, he maintains, was something more than and above that which critical standards could explain, something that could be felt more than known by the expert and cultured reader or listener. This theory of ḫīṣā, peculiar to Muslim culture, we meet again in a different setting when we come to ‘Abd al-Qahir al-Jūrjānī.

The two treatises which exemplify Arabic criticism proper in its methodical form are those of al-ʿĀmilī and al-Qāḍī al-Jūrjānī referred to earlier.
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Muhammad al-Isami represents the peak of practical Arabic criticism and illustrates the Arabs' mature efforts in that field of literary study.

3. The climax of the Arab contribution to the theories of literary criticism is still to be reached in the fifth/eleventh century at the hands of 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani (d. 471/1080), the author of the two well-known critical books: Dal' il-il-jaz and Amr al-Balighah. The first book, although primarily concerned with explaining the secrets and signs of the Qur'anic iljaz, faces the wider issue of literary excellence in general and reaches a fundamental theory of structure, while the second searches deep into literary images and discovers, in the form of a psycho-literary theory, what the author takes to be the real secret of eloquence. Each of the two volumes advances a thesis, explains it, discusses its applications in different rhetorical species, and answers any adverse criticism which it might arousen. They survey the field of Arabic literary criticism in the author's time, point out the lack of true scientific thinking, and the preoccupation of authors with the non-essentials in literary art, and try to lay the foundations for a new science which would satisfy both the objective and the subjective aspects of literary appreciation. A modern reader of the two books feels inclined to presume that 'Abd al-Qahir thought of literary composition in terms of its two-fold division of structure and beauty. But it is also possible that when the author wrote his first book he was mainly occupied with and guided by the thesis that eloquence is a product of correct structure and signification. At a later stage, and perhaps owing to other cultural influences and maturation of thought, he found that an important aspect of literary art, namely, its impact on the reader or the listener, still called for a separate and fuller treatment. The starting-point in his line of thinking in Dal'il-i-jaz was the consideration of the place of words and meanings in the art of expression. Some of the universalities, e.g. al-Jabbi, had considered eloquence to be mainly dependent on the quality of the verbal elements, that is, the words. But, argued 'Abd al-Qahir, words in themselves do not make language. They do so only when organized in a system of construction according to the requirements of the meaning. The important element in literary composition, then, is structure, and the essence of structure is meaning. Once meanings are defined in the intellect in their proper order, their verbal expressions follow faithfully in a determined fashion. A literary composition achieves its end if it is properly and suitably constructed. It becomes vague, obscure, complicated, and generally defective when the verbal element does not harmonize with the meanings, or when the meanings themselves are not clear and coherent in the mind of the interpreter or reader. Hence it followed that the main concern in rhetoric should be with techniques of structure, such as junction and disjunction, mention and omission, definitiveness and indefinitiveness, etc. Our chief occupation here should be the study of the characteristics of meanings in construction, which is a combination of language and grammar. This new technique was able and effectively applied by 'Abd al-Qahir to the study of the Qur'anic composition.

And consequently to the analysis and appreciation of specimens of the highest literary models, and it yielded a completely complete system which later authors turned into a definite rhetorical branch, namely, the science of meanings (mu'amiin). In this analysis of the Dal'il, 'Abd al-Qahir found himself repeatedly resorting to the process of introspection, and suggesting that the best way to discover the secret of literary excellence is to look inwardly into oneself and find out what impressions, satisfactions, emotions, and excitements the whole composition leaves on one's soul. It appears as if this aspect of literary art directed 'Abd al-Qahir, in his second book Amr al-Balighah, to go deeper into the aesthetic side of literature and find out the secrets behind the feeling of enjoyment produced by beautiful literary works. Thus, the field of research was transferred to the laws of human thought. What goes on in our minds and souls when we hear a beautiful literary passage? Why do such artifices as alliteration and assonance please us? And, why do such phenomena as superfluity and obscurity of expression displease us? What is the secret behind the aesthetic effect of a good metaphor or a cleverly conceived compound simile? Which is more appealing to our taste — the spontaneous and easy-flowing poetry of al-Buhurri or the deep and meditative poetry of Abu Tammam? And why? If we can refer such questions to some inherent characteristics in our perceptions and conceptions, in our cognition and imagination, we can be assured of a solid foundation for a study of literary appreciation. In this part of his inquiry 'Abd al-Qahir shifted the emphasis from constructing the meaning to communicating it in an effective and pleasing manner. The new domain of his study becomes the variety of ways and means for expressing the meaning in an artistic fashion. In this he showed himself to be clearly aware of the fact that literature is part of a wider field, namely, art. Occasionally in his analysis and argumentation he would appeal to other fine arts such as painting and sculpture. His approach in this second inquiry gave later authors the basis for creating the two separate rhetorical sciences, the science of exposition (hujun) and that of embellishment (badri). Put together, the results of his two inquiries could be summarized as follows: (a) Excellence in literature should be judged from the quality of the structure of the meaning expressed and its pleasing effect on the mind and soul of the reader (or listener) rather than from its verbal aspects. (b) The beauty of metaphors lies in the fact that they give to style novelty, vigour, and movement, and that they bring out the hidden shades into a perceptual relief. (c) Composite comparisons by simile please the human understanding for a variety of reasons: all human souls enjoy being transferred from the hidden to the visible, from the abstract to the concrete, and from what is known by reflection to what is known intuitively or through sense-perception; man naturally enjoys seeing different things unified by links of similarities, and the enjoyment is enhanced when the discovery is reached after a reasonable amount of intellectual activity — if the intellectual activity involved is too little or too exacting, the enjoyment is diminished or marred; the functions of the intellect are thinking,
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reflection, analogy, and inference, and all these are exercised in creating and
perceiving relations between different things; the rhetorical figures are the
embodiments of all these considerations.

In assessing the value and scope of 'Abd al-Qahir's contribution to the
theories of Arabic criticism, we must bear in mind two considerations: the first is
that certain Arab scholars of the flourishing period of the third/ninth
and fourth/tenth centuries did anticipate 'Abd al-Qahir in some aspects
of his theory. Al-Jahiz, for example, discussed at length the art of oratory
from the point of view of its relation to the audience and expressed, though
briefly, the idea that good speech affects the heart in a variety of ways. Al-
Qadi al-Jurjani also showed his interest in the psychology of literature and,
as mentioned earlier, analysed in a psychological fashion the poetical ability
into natural and acquired elements. The second consideration was that
explored by modern research is that 'Abd al-Qahir must have been acquainted
with the Arabic versions of Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric where the First
Master probes the effective nature of literature both in its treatment of tragedy
and in its exposition of the art of metaphor. These various probable anti-
ceptions, however, do not diminish the claim of our later Arab author to
originality. It is to his lasting credit that in the sphere of a literary study he
tried to harmonize the rigour of scientific thinking with the spontaneity of
literary taste, and succeeded in this to a remarkable degree.

4. We do not come across another great figure in the study of rhetoric
during the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries A.H., like 'Abd al-Qahir, nor
even a vigorous follower of the founder of the science to develop further his
ideas and widen the scope of their application, yet during this period much
was added to the wealth of Arabic contribution to literary criticism, mostly
in general comprehensive surveys. One of the great minds of that period is Ibn
Rasagl al-Quraini (d. 436/1044), the author of a standard book on the art of
poetry entitled al-'Umdah fi Masalatin al-Qurani 'an Uddab. It is one of the
fattest treatments of the technicalities of Arabic poetry and its principal kinds.
Another fifth/sixteenth-century critic is Ibn Sinan al-Khazbij al-Halabi (d. 466/1072),
the author of Sirr al-Fayshah. Ibn Sinan's chief contribution is in the domain
of linguistic criticism where he deals with the sounds of the Arabic language,
their classifications, and their characteristics. Al-Zamakhshari of Khwairam
(d. 538/1144), the Qu'ranic commentator, deserves a special mention here
because of his consistent application of the rhetorical approach to the explica-
tion and interpretation of the Qu'ran. His book al-Kashshab claims a high
place among the Qu'ranic commentaries. He is also the compiler of Aads
al-Balaghah, an Arabic dictionary, which is unique in its attention to original
and metaphorical usages of the Arabic language. A later author and critic,
Diwar al-Din Ibn al-Aljhr (d. 587/1239), left us a most valuable and interesting
book on the two arts, of the writer and of the poet, entitled al-Muhasal al-Serir.
He dealt with the literary art in two sections: one on verbal expression and
the other on meaning, and managed to include under these two headings all

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the artifices and figures of speech which previous authors since the beginning
of the third/ninth century had been exploring, defining, and illustrating. He
also restated the problems of word and meaning, plagiarism, and norms of
comparison in a masterly manner, exhibiting searching, analytical power and
independence of thought. Moreover, he invented a practical method for the
training of the undeveloped literary talent, which relied on two factors: the
natural aptitude and the nourishing of the ability on classical models. The
method is explained in detail, and illustrated from the history of literature
as well as from the personal experience and literary works of the author.
Ibn al-Aljhr was so convinced of the originality and applicability of his method
that he claimed for himself the title of masu'di or Imám in the same way
as the founders of Muslim schools of jurisprudence, Malik and al-Qadi, for
example, were regarded by posterity.

We may end this series of the great minds with Yahya ibn Hamshah
al-Awali (d. 729/1328), one of the Imams of Yemen and the author of al-Tirci
al-Mustamsir, li Aaria al-Balaghah wa 'Ulum, haqqi, al-Fikhr. The author
criticizes books on the subject of literary criticism for being too detailed and
thus tedious, or else too brief and consequently insufficient. He acclaims
'Abd al-Qahir as the founder of the science but confesses that he knew of his
two books only indirectly through references to them in the writings of other
scholars. He mentions some of the authors with whose books he was acquainted,
including Ibn al-Aljhr. The motive for writing his book, he indicates, was to help
his students understand al-Zamakhshari's approach to the Qu'ranic exegesis
and Fikhr. According to al-Awali, the Arabic literary sciences are four: the
science of language which deals with the significance of separate words;
the science of grammar which deals with words in composition and predication;
the science of syntax which deals with the morpho-structure of single words and
their conformity to regular patterns in the Arabic language; and, lastly, the
combination of the two branches of Faisal and Balaghah which are called
masi' and amman respectively, and which are the highest of the literary
sciences. After a long introduction, the book proceeds to deal theoretically
with the cardinal questions in the rhetorical sciences: such as truth and
metaphor, kinds of truth, kinds of significance, divisions of metaphor,
linguistic sounds, single words and compound words and their characteristics,
and requirements and examples of excellence in the various literary artifices.
But here we seem to have reached a parting of the ways between rhetoric
and criticism. The separation is supposed to have been started by Abu Ya'qub
al-Sakkaki of Khwarizm (d. 636/1238), the author of Mi'tibal al-'Ulim. He
is credited with the delineation of the boundaries of literary sciences in the
manner referred to above which al-Awali must have followed in al-Tirci.
In the third division of these sciences, al-Sakkaki puts 'ilm al-ma'ani and
'ilm al-upin conjointly, the first dealing with the characteristics of speech
composition by virtue of which they conform to the requirements of the
occasion, and the second with the different ways of expressing the meaning
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to complete the desired conformity. By this division al-Sakkakí seems to have carried to a logical conclusion the distinction which Abú al-Qáhir indicated between questions of speech structure and composition and those of signification and effectiveness. To this dual division, al-Sakkakí appended a small section on the special arts to speech beautification, which later became the domain of a third separate science, namely, *bázi*. This process of narrowing the critical field to *Balághah* and of democratizing its sciences was completed and standardized a century later by al-Kháthír al-Ghazwíni (d. 739/1338) who condensed al-Sakkakí's *Múhádh* into a text-book called *Múta al-Tákkáy*. 

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Chapter LIII

PERSIAN LITERATURE

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PERSIAN LITERATURE OF EARLY TIMES

The earliest remnant of the Aryan languages of Iran which antiquity has bequeathed to us is the language of the Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrian religion.

For about nine hundred years the people of Iran had no script in which they could write the Avesta. So they continued to learn it by heart and thus communicate it from generation to generation right from the seventh century B.C. to the third century A.D.

A special script was at last invented for this book in the third century A.D. The Avesta written in this particular script has been known as the Zend Avesta. At times it has been just mentioned as the Zend. The French scholar Anquetil du Perron who was the first to have studied it in India at the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century, introduced it to the West. For a considerable time it continued to be known as the Zend language in Europe. At present, however, the more accurate term of "Avestic language" is in vogue. The script in which the Avesta was recorded should be known as the "Zend script."

Much has been speculated on the origin and times of Zoroaster, and different theories have been advanced in this respect from the earliest times. What appears to be most authentic at present, however, is that Zoroaster preached his religion between 660 and 583 B.C. in the north-eastern zone of the Iranian plateau in Central Asia. It is plausible that he sprang from the Median stock, lived in the north-west of the present-day Iran, and from there he travelled east to Central Asia. Of the extant languages and dialects of the Iranian plateau Pañhti or Pakhto has the closest affinity with the Avestic language. This lends support to the view that the Avestic language was spoken in the north-eastern regions of the Iranian plateau in the seventh century B.C. The Avesta is a massive work, a major portion of which has been destroyed and forgotten owing to the vicissitudes of time and the domination of Iran by foreign nations. What remains today of this book was compiled in the early days of the Christian era. It comprises fifteen out of the twenty-one original parts and if the extinct parts were proportionate in volume to those present about one-fourth of the book may be said to have perished.

From the philological point of view, the extant parts of the Avesta were not written in one period of history. On the contrary, its composition may be divided into three sections. The Ghitas, which are composed in poetry, doubtlessly constitute the earliest part of the book. The Avesta is a collection

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