

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR:

The editorial board of IS in a letter dated July 16, 1975 and signed by Professor Jerome Clinton, "released [me] from [my] obligation...to review The Divan of Manūchehrī Dāmgānī, A Critical Study." "We have fallen rather far behind in the publication of reviews," said the letter, "and in order to catch up, we have decided to cancel all those which have been outstanding for more than a year." And yet, to my great surprise and in blatant contrast to that alleged decision, IS, more than 18 months later, has now published a review of the same book (Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 76-79). Whatever the readers may think of this puzzle for which no explanation is needed, I feel entitled to offer some remarks, a brief substitute for what was to be a rather lengthy review, in the interest of our field of Persian literature and its students. I hope that they will be taken in the same spirit of objectivity and honesty as they are written.

The book has already been lavishly praised by several scholars. I join them by pointing out the merit Professor Clinton has earned by scrutinizing the work of an early poet and describing the categories of its contents. Without unnecessarily repeating much praise for the author, I like to show some of its shortcomings. It is regrettable that Mr. Clinton did not discuss his dissertation with some

one more knowledgeable in Persian before its publication. That would have saved him from a rather large number of very bad mistakes. Following are a few examples of total misunderstanding of the text and wrong translation (figures stand for pages and lines). 13/1 chang-e Rāmtin (written: changrā matin): from the harp also; 13/2 nāfe-hā-ye moshk-e Chin (written: moshkchin): sacks of the musk gatherer; 13/3 shā^ceri tashbib dānad shā^ceri tashbih-o madh - moṭrebi qālus dānad moṭrebi shakkar-tovin: a poet understands the language of lovers, poetry is eulogy and metaphor - a minstrel knows his notes, minstrelsy is tune-ful praise; 36/24 amān: Faith; 37/29 Bu-Zar ān tork-e kashi: ...that slayer of Turks (he obviously reads: tork-koshī, thereby destroying sense, grammar, and meter altogether); 41/63 sepehr: shield; 43/70 negār-e Āzar: a portrait of Āzar (sic, in fn. 30 he explains Āzar as being "the angel who presides over fire!"); 54/1 āhu-chashm: with wicked eyes; ibid. sha^crā: poetry; 63/1 be-digar zi: in turn; 65/3 goft-o-gu: company (=quarrel); 65/4 āb gozashti: you let water flow; 79/8 Rostam-barāz: Rustam in battle; 90/52 bā Ghazāri: in abundance! (the case of the poet Ghazā'eri with ^cOnṣori and Solṭān Maḥmud should be known to all first year students of Persian literature); 104/1 becham: bent down; 108/13 andar tak istād: he paused in his course; 118/23 mey-e moshkin: dark wine; 120/5 bebor-dam: he took; 144/64 ve-rā bud az ān qibal: he has been strengthened thereby. One could go on and on; see for example, 9; 32/1; 36/21, 24, 25; 42/68 (Mr. Clinton has changed ṭul'az-zaman of the text into zu'ṭ-ṭul va man and then has tacitly left it untranslated); 67/5; 77/1 (O Kāmkār !); 79/12; 80/22; 89/44; 90/49; 121/2-3; 132/4; 133; 134/3; 136/38; 138/44; 144/47.

There is a confusion in the translation of a passage from Shams-e Qays including 52, last 4 lines, 53,3 ar (not r), and the meaning of khvar (=sun, but never "companion, friend," or "despicable, base"). We are told, p. 106, that Saddah (sic) is celebrated at the winter solstice, although even Manuchehri himself gives the exact date in 107/2. Esfandiyār was a legendary king (148, fn. 27; too bad that Esfandiyār did not know it himself! Or was it Ferdowsi's mistake?). On p. 63 we read that "there is no extant" poem

from this period (ex. the 2 Manuchehri fragments) which contain "an extended architectural description." This is not true. One needs only to look at the titles of the poems by ^COnşori to find an entire qaşideh devoted to that subject (cf. Divan, ed., Dabir-Siāqi, 91-99, specially 1012-25 and 1128-31) as well as a large portion of another qaşideh (*ibid.*, 202ff., 1958-78). The assertion, p. 25, that "Māzandarān" serves the purpose of creating a "delightful pun" with "māz-andar-ān," is another hasty application of a cheap criticism often leveled at Middle Eastern poets. The fact is that "māz-andar-ān" owes its presence in the line to "Māzandarān," not vice versa. Is it so absurd to accept that our poet did see the Caspian region so close to the north of his native Dāmghān and the deserts just to its south?

Why does Professor Clinton simply transliterate original words instead of translating them? Is yakshanbah (sic, p. 136) other than Sunday? Or is bulbul, p. 104, different from nightingale? Is not ^CIsā ibn Maryam, p. 86, identical with Jesus son of Mary? What do jubba, rebab and kebab (sic), Khusraws, Shahriyār, Iram within Iram, the sulşul, shayāni and davāri, and arghavān (pp. 7, 12, 77, 82, 105, 89, and 136 respectively) mean? The low standard of the study is also visible in examples such as: 25 Umrān, 36/28 Hutī'ah and Umīyah, 37/29 Bū Sha^Cib, 59 daw (two), 146 Manes (Manī). Typographical (?) errors, in addition to those published earlier by the publisher, are also abundant (I have found 23 in the Persian quotations) and show still another aspect of carelessness.

In closing, not having the possibility of dwelling on some basic problems of method and approach, may I advise my young colleagues in the U.S. to be more modest, learn from some distinguished models of sound scholarship in Europe, and keep in mind that methodology with all its due importance can never substitute for the learning itself.

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