The Aesthetics of Medieval Persian-Arabic Poetry in

Ra**sh**īd Waṭwāṭ's *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*

This research aims to meticulously study a momentous book in the history of Persian rhetoric; *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr fī Daqāʾiq al-Shiʿr* (Gardens of Magic in the Minutiae of Poetry), by Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ (d. ca. 1177 or 1182), a book about rhetorical techniques and medieval poetics, with examples quoted from Persian and Arabic literary works. Although modest in size, it has been one of the most prominent books in the history of Persian (as well as Arabic) rhetoric. Despite this importance and influence, a comprehensive critical study of this book has not been done. This is the lack the present research aims to supply.

The basis of this research will be my Ph.D. thesis, defended in May 2021 at McGill University. However, it will have one added chapter and two appendices. This study, which consists of five chapters, analyzes the historical issues related to *Ḥadāʾiq* and its legacy in the history of literature, albeit the core arguments of this research are about the rhetorical content of this treatise and revolve around questions concerning how Waṭwāṭ presents those figures of speech that enhance the aesthetic aspects of the poem through the homogeneity of sounds. How does he look at semantic proportions that deepen the impact of poetry on the audience? How does he explain the methods of enriching the content of literary language?

In this regard, the first chapter examines the historical issues related to *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr* and will try to answer the questions related to the historical background and how the materials and contents of this book are provided. This chapter first deals with manuscripts and editions, the book's title, its introduction, and its author. Waṭwāṭ's sources of inquiry and the intellectual

origins and the sources of his rhetorical views are then examined. In addition, one of the aims will be to determine, as far as possible, the historical identities of the characters in *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*, the poets, writers, and scholars who are quoted but are not well-known. This chapter's analysis of the codicological aspects of *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*, as well as its models and reception, lay the ground for the analysis of its content in the following chapters.

The second chapter takes up the issue of the order of topics in *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*: what, if any, is the principle of order in the sequence of topics? Did the author imply a system, or did he list the topics randomly? This study argues that the order of chapters in *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr* follows a nascent system that is vaguely defined (and it is inevitably not without deficiencies). First, the coordinates of this system and Waṭwāṭ's reasons for adopting this approach will be discussed. Then, Waṭwāṭ's critical views and the book's function in understanding medieval criteria for the speech evaluation, the importance of *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr* in the evolution of the history of Persian literary stylistics will be analyzed.

The subject of the third chapter is what the post-Sakkākī tradition identifies as figures of wording (*al-muḥassināt al-lafẓīyya*). A number of stylistic devices, defined in the opening chapters of *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*, deal with the use of words and the music derived from the sounds and syllables of the language. This chapter analyzes the aesthetic mechanism of these figures, i.e., the rhetorical process through which literary beauty is generated, and analyzes Waṭwāṭ's understanding of these issues. The main question in all the discussions of this chapter is how vocal harmonies and phonetic resonance can contribute to the musical richness of literary language.

Chapter 4 deals with imagery and other figures of meaning. Verbal proportions help create acoustic music in literary discourse, but semantic harmonies increase the intellectual

density of the poetry. This chapter discusses the conceptual functions of metaphor and the visual aspects of simile. Methods of creating literary ambiguity in discourse and the mechanism of polysemy and amphiboly will be explored. This study offers an empirical analysis of stylistic devices and semantic strategies with the goal to discover Waṭwāṭ's innovations under the primary topics of Arabic and Persian *balāġġa*.

In chapter 5, the structure and mechanism of the rhetorical techniques related to the content and the figures of thought will be studied. This chapter focuses on the final parts of *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*, on sections that discuss topics such as interpretation, incorporation, translation, counterclaiming and fantastic etiology; alternatively stated, on chapters which deal with intellectual issues and methods of conception and the presentation of the thought-content of poetry. The subjects of discussion in Waṭwāṭ's book proceed gradually from the aesthetics of phonemes and words to the imagery and meaning and then to the intellectual depth of poetry.

A complete English translation of *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr* will also be added to the end of this research in the form of the first appendix. I have already translated many parts of this hand-book during the writing of my dissertation. My translation will be complemented by extensive annotations, relevant historical information, and bibliographies pertinent to Waṭwāṭ in Persian, Arabic, French, English and Turkish.

The second appendix will be devoted to the information yielded by the manuscript corpus of *Ḥadāʾiq*. The only critical edition of *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr* (by ʿAbbās Iqbāl) does not present the variants and other philological details found in the alternative manuscripts. However, these manuscripts contain valuable information and scrutinizing them can help deepen our understanding of *Ḥadāʾiq* in historically local ways.

By such text-critical philology across Persian and Arabic, historicist contextualization and exhaustive analysis, this research project will contribute to scholarship on pre-modern, non-western literary theory. With the exception of Julie Scott Meisami's work, western scholarship on Middle Eastern works of literature has focused on literary theory in only one language - Arabic or Persian. By contrast, my monograph promises in-depth understanding of a case of an intricately bilingual literary theorist. It will also offer an English translation of one of the most important books of Persian rhetoric that cast a long shadow on Arabic.