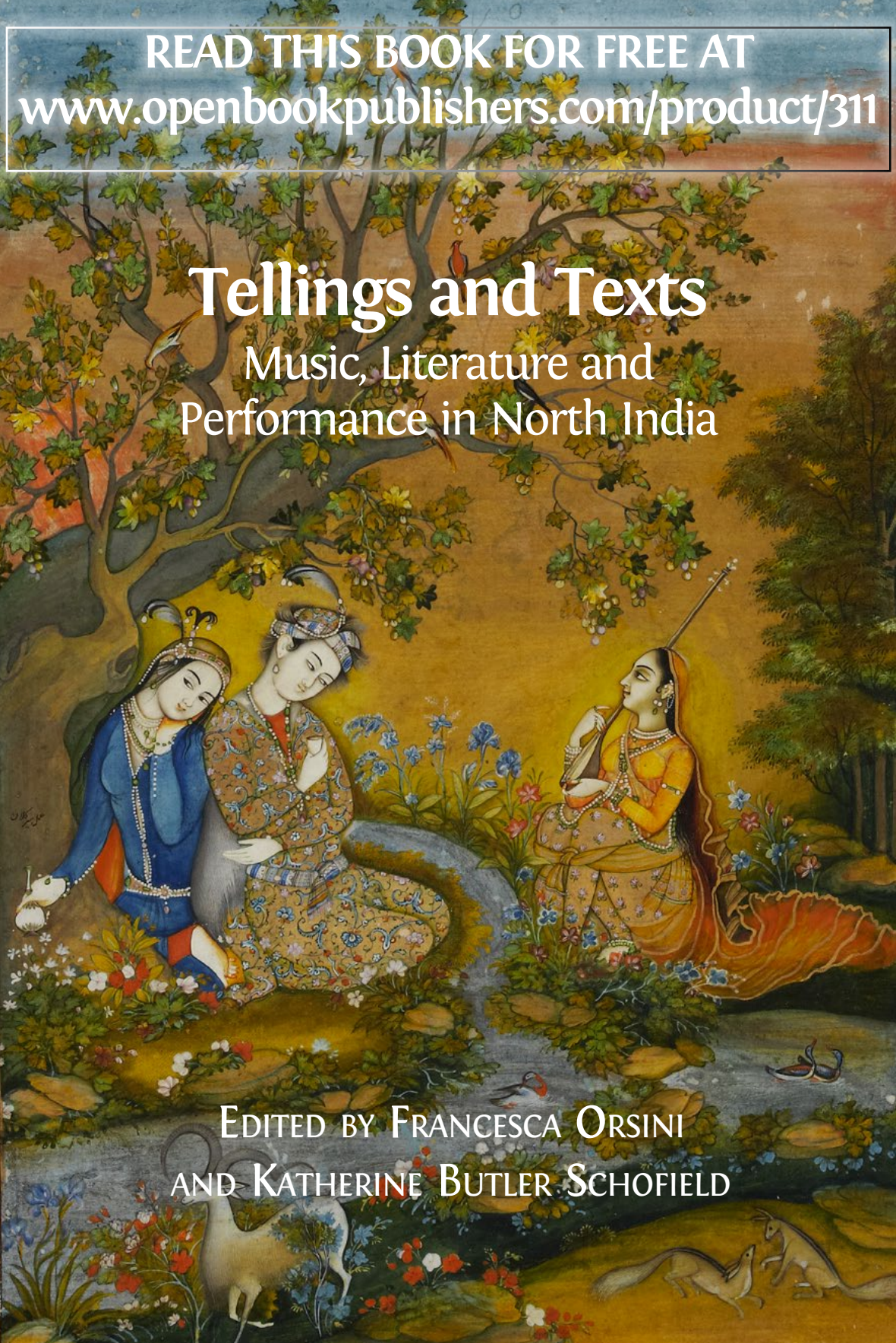
Tellings and Texts

Music, Literature and Performance in North India



Edited by Francesca Orsini
and Katherine Butler Schofield

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6. A Handbook for Storytellers: The *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* and the *Qissa* Genre[1]

Pasha M. Khan

The rise of the Urdu novel in the late nineteenth century and the growing celebration of the "natural" at the expense of the marvellous in the twentieth century pushed the Urdu and Indo-Persian romance genre—the *qissa* or *dastan*—into relative obscurity. When it has been studied by modern critics, there has been an unfortunate tendency to treat it as a primitive and imperfect ancestor of the novel. In order to recover a sense of what the *qissa* genre may have been before this recent period, we must examine the concept of genre itself as well as the concept of the *qissa* as a genre. As it turns out, the particular genre of the *qissa* sheds much light on questions of genre in general. One of the keys to understanding the

1 I must acknowledge my debts to four people without whom this contribution would never have existed. First of all, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, who first mentioned Fakhr al-Zamani to me in New York in September 2008, and who has already written about him at some length. Secondly, my friend and colleague Azfar Moin of the University of Michigan, who regaled me with his tales and ideas about Indian history over tea at the British Library that same Autumn, and who reminded me of Fakhr al-Zamani and gave me access to Mahjub's article—I am especially in his debt. Soon thereafter Francesca Orsini graciously invited me to the SOAS conference on orality despite my misgivings about my lack of access to the MS of the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*. Finally, in Chicago in March 2009, Paul Losensky introduced me to Shafi'i-Kadkani's description of the same MS, thereby enabling me to make a historical argument regarding the multiplicity of generic strands running through the *qissa*. Thanks are also due to Maria Subtelny for providing helpful comments on the penultimate draft. Research was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship.

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qissa as it may have been understood in its heyday is that it was an oral genre, and indeed a fully performative one, as I will show.

The text I examine in this paper, 'Abd al-Nabi Fakhr al-Zamani's manual for storytellers, is *sui generis* itself, but it gives us a uniquely clear window onto the process of *qissa* performance, shows us one manner in which the *qissa* was defined or "encoded", and, most importantly, lays before us the materials with which the *qissas* that it describes could be built. In doing us this last-mentioned service, it also in a sense undermines the very idea of monolithic genres, in a way that this study will explain. Connected to the fragmentation of the genre is the way in which the *qissa*'s prescribed use or purpose ought to be approached. The understandable aversion in some quarters to instrumentalising texts and spoken words should not blind us to the fact that they were meant to have certain effects, which were sometimes announced by the discourse itself, but more often implied within the discourse's genre as a result of its genre code.[2] A volume on oral performance has the advantage of highlighting the worldliness of the performed discourse—the music that is sung before the emperor or the tale that is told in the bazaar—making it difficult to ignore its relation to the world and its effects on its listeners. The healing properties of music discussed by Katherine Schofield, for instance, are as purposive as the disciplinary, "*adabi*" properties of the *qissa*. How the purposive nature of the *qissa* genre in particular relates to its fragmentation is a problem that will be considered at the end of the paper.

Given that this study will look at a particular conception of the *qissa* genre from the seventeenth century, it is legitimate to ask why this definition of the *qissa* is important and whether it was not a dead end. Indeed, one of the fascinating things about this very specific *qissa* "genre code", which has been discussed by only one Urdu critic so far, is that it appears to have survived well into the nineteenth century before falling into oblivion. To begin with, let us consider the most interesting later expression of this definition.

2 I will use the term "discourse" rather than "text" in order to signal my inclusion of non-written language; it is to be understood as approximating *sukhan* or *kalam* (see also d'Hubert in this volume).

Traces of Continuity and Influence

One of the most successful versions of the story of the Prophet's uncle Amir Hamza was published in 1855 in Calcutta. This is the source of the version that Musharraf Ali Farooqi has recently translated as *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*, and the basis of the translation written by Frances Pritchett in *The Romance Tradition in Urdu*. The 1855 text, entitled *Tarjuma-i dāstān-i Ṣāḥib-qirān* (*Translation of the Story of the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction*), was written by Mirza Aman 'Ali Khan "Ghalib" Lakhnawi (not to be confused with his more famous Delhite contemporary, the Urdu poet Mirza Asad Allah Khan Ghalib). In his preface, Ghalib Lakhnawi is found making the customary self-effacing remarks about being a blithering know-nothing,[3] and claiming in the next breath that he is married to the granddaughter of no less than Tipu Sultan, the late ruler of Mysore. Beyond these remarks, we know little about Ghalib Lakhnawi aside from what 'Abd al-Ghafur Nassakh tells us in his prosopography (*tazkira*) about ten years after the *Tarjuma*'s publication, which is that Ghalib was a Deputy Tax Collector, the disciple of a poet named Qatil, and a Hindu convert to Islam. He had lived in Patna as well as Lucknow and had at last settled in Calcutta.[4] Whoever he was, he appears to have been coaxed into writing the *dastan* by a friend, a physician of Calcutta named Hakim Imdad 'Ali b. Hakim Shaikh Dilawar 'Ali, who then printed the book using what seems to have been his own personal press.[5] It appears that the Hakim wished to translate the *dastan* himself (from a deliciously withheld Persian

3 That is, "*hec ma-dān-i kaj-maj zabān*", 'Abd al-Ghafur Nassakh, *Sukhan-i shu'arā'* (*Speech of Poets*, Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy, 1982), p. 3. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

4 Nassakh was himself Deputy Collector and Deputy Magistrate for Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh), making it likely that he met Ghalib while on the job; Nassakh (1982), p. 349 cited in Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Sāḥirī, shāhī, sāḥib-qirānī: Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamza kā mutāla'a* (New Delhi: Qaumi Council bara'e furugh-i Urdu zaban, 1999), Vol. 1, p. 209. Here is my translation of Nassakh's entry on Ghalib (1982, p. 149):
Pennamed Ghalib: Mirza Aman 'Ali Khan 'Azimabadi ['Azimabad = Patna]. Author of the Urdu *Qiṣṣa-i Amīr Ḥamza*. Disciple of Qatil. For a time he was Deputy Collector. For a long while he has chosen to reside in Calcutta. He also composes verses in Persian. He was formerly a Hindu, but was then graced with Islam. I met him in Chandannagar, popularly known as Fransidanga. I have seen his *Qiṣṣa-i Amīr Ḥamza*. [A selection of verses by Ghalib follows.]

5 The Matba'-i Hakim or Matba'-i Imdadiyya.

text), but did not do so, on the grounds that his medical practice would suffer. Ghalib's account tells of Hakim Imdad 'Ali's distraction and his reluctant delegation of the task in the Hakim's own words:

> I receive no respite from the clinic, for which reason it is difficult for me to finish [the *dastan*]; and if I abandon the clinic I am helpless to cure the servants of the Absolute Sage (*Ḥakīm*).[6]

Imagine the scandal had Imdad 'Ali sidelined his practice: perhaps he might have been busy scribbling scurrilous accounts of the artistic flair with which the trickster 'Amar 'Ayyar painted polka-dots on the hapless King Nausherwan, while his patients clamoured to consult him about their venereal diseases.[7] (Colonial records of the famous ailments of Lucknow were not kept until the passage of the Contagious Diseases Act nine years later.[8])

In response to Hakim Imdad 'Ali's appeal to Ghalib's "regard for an old friend [*liḥāẓ-i muḥibb-i qadīm*]" caught up in his medical work, Ghalib Lakhnawi took on the task of writing the *dastan*, and the Hakim published it himself. Alas, Ghalib's fame quickly faded thanks to the *dastan*'s superb plagiarism by 'Abd Allah Bilgrami, who stuffed, padded, and ornamented his version, which ultimately eclipsed Ghalib Lakhnawi's work.[9] The *dastan* became very popular in this puffed-up form and was thenceforth famous as Bilgrami's child.[10] The Bilgrami

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6 Ghalib Lakhnawi, *Tarjuma-i dāstān-i Ṣāḥib-qirān* (Calcutta: Matba'-i Imdadiyya, 1855), p. 2.

7 My speculations on the nature of the illnesses distracting Hakim Imdad 'Ali are admittedly the products of my fancy. However, 'Amar 'Ayyar does indeed apply a *pointillé* pattern to the royal cheek that I have mentioned, along with other pranks of a gross nature: "*Nausherwān kī dāṛhī mūṅcheṅ peshāb se mūnḍ ke hama tan barahna kar ke hāth pāṅw to nīl se range aur mūṅh kālā kar ke cūne ke ṭīke diye*"; Ghalib Lakhnawi (1855), p. 358. In Musharraf Ali Farooqi's translation, "He lathered up Nausherwan's beard and whiskers with his urine and shaved them all off. Amar then stripped Naushervan naked, dyed his hands and feet with indigo, and after blackening his face, made spots all over it with lime"; 'Abdullah Husain Bilgrami and Mirza Aman Allah Ghalib Lakhnawi, *The Adventures of Amir Hamza: Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction*, trans. by Musharraf Ali Farooqi (New York: Modern Library, 2007), p. 663.

8 See Veena Talwar Oldenburg, 'Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India', *Feminist Studies* 16, 2 (1990), 260.

9 See Frances Pritchett, 'Introduction', *The Romance Tradition in Urdu: Adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamza* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 30.

10 In the Summer of 1985 Frances Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi unearthed a rare copy of the 1855 edition. Pritchett subsequently made a copy of the Ghalib Lakhnawi text available to the Library of Congress in microfiche form (call number LOC Microfiche 85/61479 (P) So Asia). I am obliged to her for allowing me to peruse her copy of the *dastan*.

editions naturally omitted Ghalib Lakhnawi's telltale preface with its concern for Hakim Imdad 'Ali's patients and its important throwaway remark on the four pillars of the *dastan*—a remark which appears to be a reformulation of a statement about the genre made more than two centuries previously.

It is to this remark that I now turn. "There are four things", Ghalib wrote, "in this *dastan*: battle, courtly assemblies, enchanted worlds and trickery" (*is dāstān meṉ cār cīzeṉ haiṉ razm bazm ṭilism aur 'ayyārī*).[11] Later in the nineteenth century, the Lakhnawi intellectual 'Abd al-Halim Sharar echoed Ghalib's assertion, with one difference: according to him the four elements were "*razm, bazm, ḥusn o 'ishq*" (love and beauty) and "'*ayyārī*".[12] Whence this substitution of Ghalib's third pillar of the *dastan* genre, the *tilism*, for Sharar's *husn o 'ishq*? Shamsur Rahman Faruqi suggests that Sharar may have chosen *husn o 'ishq* rather than *tilism* due to the influence of an Iranian style of storytelling.[13] But Faruqi's hypothesis that the category of *husn o 'ishq* might be from Iran is not based on a notion that Iranians are incurable romantics. Rather, it stems from the striking fact that the same four elements recounted by Sharar—*razm, bazm, husn o 'ishq, 'ayyari*—are enumerated in the early seventeenth century by 'Abd al-Nabi Fakhr al-Zamani, who was a storyteller in Jahangir's India, but who was born in Iran and professed to know a good deal about the Iranian tradition of storytelling.

Genre Codes and Purposes

Before we broach the subject of Fakhr al-Zamani's work, which evidently inaugurated or at least accorded with a long-lasting definition of the *qissa/dastan* genre, there is a word or two to be said about the idea of genre.[14] Many literary critics have noted that genres (or their *codifications*—a concept to be explained shortly) tend to specify expected

11 Ghalib Lakhnawi (1855), p. 2. For a lengthy discussion of these elements, see S.R. Faruqi (1999), Vol. 1, p. 197ff.

12 'Abd al-Halim Sharar, *Guẕashta Lakhnau*, ed. by Rashid Hasan Khan (Delhi: Maktaba-i Jami'a, 2000), p. 149.

13 S.R. Faruqi (1999), Vol. 1, p. 410.

14 The words *qissa* and *dastan*, which I will use interchangeably, are generally used to denote a narrative account, especially a fictive one. The line between the two is fine almost to the point of non-existence: see Pritchett (1991), p. 5; however, see Faruqi's insistence that narratives such as Mir Amman's *Bāgh o Bahār* and Rajab 'Ali Beg Surur's *Fasāna-e 'ajā'ib* do not qualify as *dastans*; S.R. Faruqi (1999), Vol. 1, pp. 29, 194-95.

uses for the texts through which they flow;[15] it seems probable that codifications of the *qissa* genre do something similar. In fact, as we will see, Fakhr al-Zamani's formulation responds quite appropriately to the question, "what is the purpose of the *qissa* genre?"[16]

I concur with the view that no genre inheres essentially and irrevocably in a written or oral discourse as a fact of its nature. Genres are socially instituted laws, whose institution may be recorded. Tvetzan Todorov's bipartite model of the constitution of genres is useful: any given genre is marked by (1) a trait or a series of traits, but in order for those traits to be recognised as signals of a discourse's participation in a genre, they must be (2) *encoded* as traits of that genre by way of another discourse.[17] Such a *genre code*, if recorded, might take the form of a critical or metadiscursive text which explicitly describes or prescribes a genre. At least this is the most obvious form of the genre code, of which we have examples in the above statements on the *qissa* genre by 'Abd al-Halim Sharar and Ghalib Lakhnawi. These codes, as I have hinted, have a much more extensive antecedent in a text by 'Abd al-Nabi Fakhr al-Zamani, which will be the focus of this study. I will examine the traits of the genre as Fakhr al-Zamani presents them in his own codification.

The information that we possess regarding Fakhr al-Zamani's activities and ideas with regard to the *qissa* genre comes from a singular book of his: the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* (*The Embroidery of Tales*), a manual for storytellers, to which we now turn.[18] Three manuscripts of the never-printed *Ṭirāz*

15 For instance, Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 106.

16 I am grateful to my friend and colleague Abhishek Kaicker for initially posing this question.

17 Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 198. This other discourse might be *within* the discourse whose genre it encodes.

18 The title is polyvalent. *Tiraz* or *taraz* means "embroidery", with secondary meanings including "workshop, factory"—a particularly apt metaphor for the productive function of Fakhr al-Zamani's manual. The additional meaning "form, kind, type" seems the most appropriate one when we consider the division of the book into twelve sections, each called a *tiraz*. Finally, the word may also be read as *tarraz*, meaning an "embroiderer". The most complete MS is in the library of the Majlis-i Sina-yi sabiq, no. 358. Two others exist in Tehran University's Central Library and the Ayat Allah Mar'ashi Library in Qom; see Shafi'i-Kadkani, 'Nigāhī ba Ṭirāz al-akhbār', *Nāma-yi bahāristān* 1.5 (138), 109. This made it difficult, at the time of writing this essay, to access the text itself, though I was subsequently able to obtain and read it. My translation of the opening portions will appear in a forthcoming *Festschrift*. Therefore it is necessary to stress the strictly provisional nature of this study, which does not make use of the manuscripts.

al-akhbār are extant, not in South Asia but in Tehran and Qom in Iran; therefore for this chapter I have had to rely on two descriptive articles by the Iranian scholars Muhammad Ja'far Mahjub and Muhammad Riza Shafi'i-Kadkani. The former describes and quotes large swathes of the *Ṭirāz*'s fascinating *muqaddama* or Foreword, while the latter outlines the body of the text. It is possible that this distance from the source text means that my paper is not far from being a collection of bald lies. If this is so, at least it has the interesting quality of surreptitiously reflecting the genre it purports to describe.

Fakhr al-Zamani and the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*

Given the unwarranted obscurity of the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*, it seems proper to say a few words about its author and his life. We may deduce from what he writes of himself in the *Mai-khāna* that familial networks played an important role in his working life, and we may also see the usefulness of storytelling in gaining patronage. 'Abd al-Nabi Fakhr al-Zamani was born in the city of Qazwin in Iran in the late sixteenth century, a time when Iranian emigration to India was not infrequent. He writes that his father Khalaf Beg was a retiring man of a sufistic bent who had the prescience to foretell the hour of his own demise, predicting that he would die on such-and-such a day during the Friday prayer.[19] However, 'Abd al-Nabi recognised the atavism of his own poetic skill, and changed his sobriquet from 'Izzati' to 'Fakhr al-Zamani' in honour of his more learned and famed paternal grandfather Fakhr al-Zaman. He claims that in his youth his memory was so powerful that when "out of youthful desire he sought knowledge of *qissas*, […] by the absorptive force of his memory he retained the entire *qissa* of Amir Hamza 'Abd al-Mutallib in his mind after hearing it only once".[20] At the age of nineteen he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Riza in Mashhad, where he was enthralled by merchants' and travellers' accounts of India. As a result, he found himself trekking through Qandahar and on to Lahore, where he made his entrance in 1609.

He stayed in Lahore for four months before moving on to Jahangir's capital at Agra. Fakhr al-Zamani's account makes this move appear

19 'Abd al-Nabi Fakhr al-Zamani Qazwini, *Taẕkira-i maikhāna*, ed. by Ahmad Gulcin-i Ma'ani, 3rd edn (Tehran: Iqbal, 1983), p. 758.

20 Fakhr al-Zamani (1983), p. 760.

more or less fortuitous, but it is telling that in Agra he met a relative named Mirza Nizami Qazwini, who was at the time a royal *waqi'a-nawis* or chronicler (and later the *divan* of Bihar). In all likelihood Fakhr al-Zamani knew of his kinsman's presence in the Mughal capital and exploited it as a way to gain employment. Given this probability, it is likely that his apparent drifting off to India was quite purposeful and that he had been captivated by accounts not simply of India's beauty, but also of the opportunities it afforded of self-promotion.

It seems that Mirza Nizami was fond of hearing the *qissa* of Amir Hamza, and it was at his urging that Fakhr al-Zamani honed the skills that he had acquired in his youth and properly learned the art of storytelling.[21] When Mirza Nizami moved with the royal court to Ajmer, Fakhr al-Zamani tagged along, and there he met another of his compatriots, named Masih Beg, who was in the employ of the *amir* Zamana Beg Mahabat Khan "Susani". With Masih Beg's help, Fakhr al-Zamani gained an audience with Mahabat Khan's son Mirza Aman Allah "Amani", who appears to have been a fan of *qissas* as well. Fakhr al-Zamani writes of this meeting:

> After I had been at his service for a little while, as per his command I presented a section of the *qissa* before that Issue of Lords. After he had given ear to this speech, that Master of Speech became, to some degree, desirous of this beggar.[22]

After all, the "youthful desire" which had led Fakhr al-Zamani to memorise the *qissa* and to become a storyteller—beginning perhaps at home, outdoors, or in the coffee-house—proved to be the making of a skill that could be used to secure patronage, not imperial, perhaps, but certainly courtly. The possibility of this process highlights the difficulties involved in drawing a bold line between courtly and popular *qissas*, especially before the age of print, when evidence is relatively sparse. If Fakhr al-Zamani's progress is any indication, *qissas* that began at the "popular" level could, given a chance and perhaps with some stylistic alterations, eventually be performed in the courts of nobles and preserved as manuscripts in their libraries. Fakhr al-Zamani was far from oblivious to the success of storytellers like Zain al-'Abidin Takaltu Khan at the court of the Safavid ruler Shah Isma'il, and 'Inayat Allah

21 Ibid., p. 762.
22 Ibid., p. 763.

Darbar Khan at the Mughal Emperor Akbar's court.[23] He also shows that he was aware of his own contemporary, the storyteller Mulla Asad, who was lavished with gifts by Jahangir and given a *mansab* of two hundred.[24] Perhaps Fakhr al-Zamani desired similar emoluments for his storytelling skills. He claims to have become highly intimate with Mirza Aman Allah "Amani" but was later forced to leave his service under ignominious circumstances, and eventually wound up in the employ of Sardar Khan Khwaja "Yadgar" in Bihar.

It was to Yadgar that Fakhr al-Zamani dedicated his most famous work, the *Mai-khāna* (*Wine Tavern*), a prosopography of poets who wrote *saqi-namas* (poems addressed to the *saqi* or cup-bearer). In the *Mai-khāna*, Fakhr al-Zamani mentions a book that he wrote in Kashmir as a guide for storytellers, and particularly for the tellers of the story of Amir Hamza. This book, entitled *Dastūr al-fuṣaḥā'* (*Rules for the Eloquent*), was probably finished around 1616 or 1617 according to Muhammad Shafi'.[25] Whenever it may have been written, it appears to have vanished without a trace, perhaps reduced to cinders when Fakhr al-Zamani's house in Patna caught fire in 1620.[26] Surviving the *Dastūr*, we have a book entitled *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*, a creature halfway between a professional storyteller's handbook and a glorified *bayaz* or commonplace book. If the chronogram ("*zebā Ṭirāz-i akhbār*") is correct, it was finished in 1041 AH (1631/2 CE), and the colophon of the most complete manuscript tells us that the scribe Sayyid Muhammad b. Mas'ud Ahmad Husaini Bihari finished copying it two years later on 27 Safar 1043 AH (1 September 1633), not 7 Safar 1043 AH in Patna ("*dar balda-i Ṭayyiba-i Patna itmām yāft*").[27] The perplexing question is how it came about that manuscripts

23 See Muhammad Ja'far Mahjub, 'Tahawwul-i naqqali wa qissa-khwani', *Irannama* 9 (1991), 191.

24 Fakhr al-Zamani Qazwini (1983), pp. 458ff., for example; for the reward, see Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *Jahāngīrnāmah (Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī)*, ed. by Muhammad Hashim (Tehran: Bunyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1359 AH), p. 215.

25 In fact the *Mai-khāna* provides a chronogram for the *Dastūr al-fuṣaḥā'* ("*dastūr ba-anjām rasīda*") that yields 1046 AH (1636/37 CE); Fakhr al-Zamani Qazwini (1983), p. 770. However Shafi', in trying to square this date with the period of Fakhr al-Zamani's Kashmiri sojourn, concludes that if the *Dastūr al-fuṣaḥā'* was finished in Kashmir as Fakhr al-Zamani claims, it would have to have been completed between the years 1025-1026 AH (about 1616-1117 CE); Shafi' (1983), p. xiv. The *Mai-khāna* itself was not completed until 1028 (1618/19 CE); Fakhr al-Zamani Qazwini (1983), p. 924. The chronogram appears, therefore, to be erroneous.

26 Fakhr al-Zamani Qazwini (1983), p. 886.

27 For the 1633 colophon, see the facsimile in Shafi'i-Kadkani (1381 AH), 122.

of this work are now non-existent in India and Pakistan. The only other extant work by Fakhr al-Zamani is a now-rare collection of tales called *Nawādir al-ḥikāyāt* (*Rare Tales*), supposedly consisting of five volumes, only the first of which remains in the British Library. This volume was composed in 1041 AH (1631/2 CE).[28]

The *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* is divided into a *muqaddama* (foreword) and a main body, which I am comparing to a well-organised *bayaz* (a commonplace book for snatches of poetry). It is in the *muqaddama* that the genre code is most evident, and in the discussion that follows I will focus at first upon Fakhr al-Zamani's descriptions in this section of the book. The *muqaddama* itself is divided into five sections (*fasl*) according to Mahjub: (1) Regarding various accounts of the origin of the Dastan-i Amir Hamza, (2) On the attributes of the *dastan*, (3) On the storyteller's superiority to the poet, (4) On the storyteller's religious leanings and moral conduct, and (5) On the performance of the *dastan*.

Avicennian Mimesis

Elsewhere I have examined the post-Enlightenment identification of the *qissa* genre with the newly re-encoded English "romance" genre, the identity of which was often thrown into relief in the eighteenth century by setting it against its sister genre, the novel.[29] A particularly strong classificatory force was the text's mode of imitation which, focused through Enlightenment empiricism and rationalism, allowed for the sharp disambiguation of history from fiction, and worked within the genre of prose fiction to separate probable fictions (novels) from improbable ones (romances). Duncan Forbes' preface to *The Adventures of Hatim Tai: A Romance*—his translation of the Indo-Persian *qissa*, the *Haft sair-i Ḥātim*—is one of a number of nineteenth-century writings that take for granted the sameness of the improbable romance genre and the genre that Indians called the *qissa* or *dastan*. Forbes makes an apology for the improbability of the story of Hatim Ta'i, begging the reader to remember that the Eastern

28 Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1883), Vol. 3, p. 1004.

29 Pasha M. Khan, 'Genre Identifications: Hatim-namas as Romance and Qissa', paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (Chicago, 28 March 2009).

mind remained in thrall to a credulous belief in things whose existence was, for the English, irrational or unempirical.[30]

Leaving aside the Orientalist valuation that might be perceptible in Forbes' comments, is it possible that there were epistemologies prevalent in India that would have caused *qissa* to be received as statements of truth? After all, magical arts such as geomancy (*raml*) and the creation of *tilisms* (talismans and, in *qissas*, enchanted worlds) were not always perceived as charlatanry, and the existence of creatures such as the *jinn* is attested to by the Qur'an. Fakhr al-Zamani weighs in significantly on this question, but before getting back to his *muqaddama*, it will be useful to better historicise the categories we are dealing with when we refer to literary truth and lies.

Commenting on the Arabic version of Aristotle's *Poetics* (*Kitāb al-shi'r*), the philosopher Abu 'Ali al-Husain Ibn Sina spoke of two somewhat opposed modes of representation: *sidq* or veraciousness, and *muhaka* or mimesis. Its opposition to veracious representation does not mean that mimesis is simply false representation. But at least in part, mimesis is defined by its being mendacious (*kadhib*), a mendacity that, particularly when involved in *takhyil* (incitement of the imagination), has the ability to make the mimetic discourse more effective in certain ways than veracious discourse. Following the Arabic Aristotle, Ibn Sina speaks of poetry as the prime example of mimetic discourse.

It is important to note that for Ibn Sina, as for Al-Farabi before him, poetry *must* be mimetic and therefore mendacious. As an illustration: In the Autumn of 2008 at the Lahore Museum, I came across a manuscript of a versified Urdu tract on medicine (*hikmat*), in *masnavi* form, describing cures for two of the most grievous ailments of the day, *faqr-i sahl* and *ihtilam*—constipation and nocturnal emission. In the Avicennian scheme of things, such scientific treatises (as well as versified grammars and so on), however they may tickle us, are not mimetic but veracious, and therefore are not classifiable as poetry even if they are in verse.

30 Duncan Forbes, *The Adventures of Hatim Taï: A Romance* (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1830), pp. v-vi. My remark is not meant to deny the usefulness of translating "*qissa*" or "*dastan*" as "romance"; it is only necessary to be attentive to what it meant to perform this translation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, and to the kinds of assumptions that came along with such a genre equation. When speaking of the Urdu or Indo-Persian "romance", we must understand the previous history of the genre code of the "romance", we must have a sense of what the *qissa* was without reducing it to this pre-existent notion of the romance, and we must alter our ideas of what we mean by "romance" if we wish for this term to encompass the *qissa*.

However, despite the stress that he places on poetry, Ibn Sina notes that some prose works may also be imagination-inciting (*takhyili*) and mimetic.[31] But if we were to apply the Avicennian distinction to prose discourses, historiographical genres (*tarikh*, *sira*, *nasab*, *safar-nama*, etc.) are not likely to have been considered mimetic, given that mimesis involves mendacity (*kidhb*), whereas historiographical genres cause the reader to expect a veracious (*sadiq*) discourse.

On the other hand, is it possible that the *qissa* was, in Avicennian terms, a veracious genre, similar to a history, rather than a mimetic one? Generalising from the example of *Kalīla wa Dimna*, Ibn Sina insists that such stories ("*amāthil wa qiṣaṣ*"), though they lack metre and do not aim primarily at *takhyil* or imagination incitement, are in fact mimetic, like poetry.[32] A full investigation of this issue would, however, require attention to borderline cases such as Indian versified histories by authors known primarily as mimetic poets, such as Amir Khusrau's *Qirān al-sa'dain* (*Conjuction of the Two Fortunate Planets*), in which Khusrau, as Sunil Sharma reminds us, professes his preference for truthfulness (*rasti*) over falsehood (*durogh*).[33] Other examples include Keshavdas' *Jahāngīrjascandrika* or *Moonlight of the Fame of Jahangir* and the same author's remarkable *Ratnabāvanī* (*Fifty-Two Verses in Honour of Ratnasena*), about which Allison Busch has written; the fact that the latter text has "gods weaving in and out of the story" is only the beginning of its fascinations.[34] Indeed we have yet to come to grips with the alleged prevalence of mimetic elements in the historiography of the post-Mongol Islamicate world, whether in verse or in prose, which often pivot on the under-examined topos of the *kharq al-'ada* ("custom-breaking", extraordinary), exemplified by but not limited to *'aja'ib* (mirabilia) literature.[35] Other problematic texts include

31 Abu 'Ali al-Husain b. 'Abd Allah Ibn Sina, 'Fann al-shi'r', in *Fann al-shi'r*, ed. by 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi, 2nd edn (Beirut: Dar al-thaqafa, 1973), pp. 168, 183

32 Ibn Sina (1973), p. 183. In Ibn Sina's view, their aim is not *takhyil*, but the "diffusion of views (*ifādaṭ al-ārā'*)" (ibid.). Ibn Sina also differentiates these two genres from poetry on the basis of their "fantastic" representations, like the English romance critics of the eighteenth century.

33 Sunil Sharma, 'Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22.1 (2002), 113.

34 Allison Busch, 'The Courtly Vernacular: The Transformation of Brajbhaṣa Literary Culture (1590-1690)' (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003), p. 212ff. For the *Jahāngīrjascandrika*, see Allison Busch, 'The Anxiety of Innovation: The Practice of Literary Science in the Hindi/Riti Tradition'. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24.2 (2004), 45-59, and her essay in this volume.

35 The ongoing work of Travis Zadeh on the marvellous in Islamicate writings is useful

qissas that present themselves as participants in historiographical genres, such as the aforementioned *Haft sair-i Ḥātim*.

Falsehood and the Sin of Performance

Faced with the bewildering potential of such liminal cases, we may be relieved to find that Fakhr al-Zamani does not compound the sin of lying for a living by pretending in the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* that he is telling the truth. In the foreword to the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* we find him confirming expectations: he declares the *qissa* to be a falsehood (*durogh*), "devoid", he says, "of the fine ornament of truthfulness" (*az ḥilya-i ṣidq maḥrūm*).

Moreover, there was a malign aspect to this mendacity; the falsehood of the *qissa* was not value-neutral, but had a negative ethico-religious valence. This comes across most forcefully in the fourth section of the foreword, which concerns the religious conduct of the professional storyteller. In an exhortation worthy of an ethical manual, Fakhr al-Zamani enjoins his storytelling colleagues to practice *muruwwat* (roughly, "humanity")[36] towards their fellow creatures and help them in their time of need: "The best conduct for the speaker [i.e., the storyteller] is […] to expend in God's path whatsoever he acquires, and to behave with humanity towards everyone".[37] The storyteller's incentive for behaving with *muruwwat* is important to note:

> Perhaps in this way he will win the heart of some afflicted person, and ease a frustrated mind—so that it might be the cause of expiation in this world for his telling of lies, and of an honourable acquittal (*surkh-ru'i*) in the next.[38]

Virtuous conduct is valuable, according to Fakhr al-Zamani, as an antidote to the sins that are necessarily committed by the storyteller, given that the sin of telling lies is an insuperable part of the *qissa* genre. The mimesis inherent in the genre is therefore perceived by Fakhr al-Zamani as blameworthy; elsewhere he says that the *qissa*'s lies may bring disgrace (*ruswa'i*) upon

in this regard. See his PhD dissertation, 'Translation, Geography, and the Divine Word' (Harvard University, 2007), and his recent article 'Wiles of Creation', in *Middle Eastern Studies* 13.1 (2010), 21-48.

36 *Muruwwat* is an originally pre-Islamic Arabian complex of ethical virtues as changeful and difficult to define as it is old; "humanity" is an unsatisfactory translation. See "Murū'a" in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

37 In Mahjub (1991), 193.

38 Ibid.

their teller.[39] More than this, they are eschatologically harmful, as evidenced by the need for a life of *muruwwat* to counter the difficulties that mendacity will cause on the Day of Reckoning.

Fakhr al-Zamani's comments regarding the sinfulness of the *qissa* lies already present the *qissa* as a thoroughly oral genre, which does not stand aloof from the context in which it is recited in the way that written texts are sometimes imagined to do. Its production, as we read in the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*, has material, social, and soteriological effects on the storyteller who speaks it into being. In his landmark study, *Sāḥirī, shāhī, ṣāḥib-qirānī* (*Sorcery, Kingship, Lordship of the Auspicious Conjunction*), Shamsur Rahman Faruqi energetically stresses the orality (*zabani-pan*) of the story of Amir Hamza even when it appears in written form, for instance in the massive Naval Kishore printed cycle, which was itself authored by storytellers. At the outset Faruqi defends oral genres such as the *dastan*, *qissa*, and *masnavi* from Orientalist belittlement and goes on to present an impressive system of poetics based on the *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamza*'s orality.[40] When we read together Faruqi's study of Fakhr al-Zamani and the passages from the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* that Faruqi cites, it becomes clear that "orality" is a central and seminal element of the genre, but also that the *qissa* or *dastan* as Faruqi describes it is not only oral, but, moreover, *performative*.

The *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* makes it clear to us that the term "*qissa-khwan*" does not convey the full range and force of the storyteller's activities. Impressive as it seems that storytellers like Fakhr al-Zamani recited and improvised the interminable *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamza* from memory, they did not *simply* read them, but performed them. In his description of the presentation of the *qissa*, Fakhr al-Zamani prescribes not only modulations of the voice, but gestures and postures for the storyteller. The term *naqqali*, designating a sort of professional acting in which a performer conveys a story with words and actions, attempting to *embody* the narrative and its characters, might be a more expressive alternative to *qissa-khwani* in terms of its meaning, although *naqqali* was generally lower on the scale of professions than *qissa-khwani*, and I do not know that Fakhr al-Zamani ever uses the word. In the late nineteenth century Sharar described Lakhnawi storytellers as "imaging"—becoming *taswirs* of—the stories that they performed, allying the art of storytelling to the visual arts.[41]

39 Ibid., 192.
40 S.R. Faruqi (1999), Vol. 1, p. 198.
41 Sharar (2000), p. 149.

Similarly, Fakhr al-Zamani states in the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* that in the Iranian style of *qissa-khwani* (as opposed to the Indian and Turanian styles, which he also describes), the storyteller must marshal his gestures and postures in such a way that the audience members find themselves beholding the action with the imagination's gaze ("*naẓar-i taṣawwur*"). When a character in the *qissa* escapes from captivity, the storyteller must speak and act in such a way that the audience perceives him to be the one breaking out of his chains. In other words, the storyteller, in bodying forth the *qissa*'s characters, must engage in a mimesis and therefore a kind of mendacity that is not merely oral, but fully performative, for he pretends to be what he is not.[42]

Fakhr al-Zamani's wariness with regard to such imposture may be gauged from his comments on religious performance, which are so remarkable as to merit full translation:[43]

> The possessor of this heart-stealing art and the master of this assembly-adorning craft [i.e., that of storytelling] must be confined by his creed, not by the bonds of religious prejudice, because every one of the sultans of the day and the high-ranking nobles has a different religion and a separate law. Some are Sunni, a few are Shi'a. There is a group that affirms the unity of God, and a lot that disbelieve the resurrection of the dead. The storyteller must deal with each differing faction in each region according to need. First of all, he must not proclaim his own creed inconsistently in order to mix with the great men of each kingdom. For if he makes himself out to be Sunni in one place and makes himself known as a Shi'a in another, he will not be able to maintain this to the end. Because it is possible that, before he shifts locations, the reality of his religion will have been disseminated to every corner of the kingdom where he has long resided.[44]

This is an odd piece of advice—it is difficult to resist the biographical temptation, and to leave off wondering whether Fakhr al-Zamani had tried this trick out himself. What is notable for our purposes is the way in which the negative religious valuation of performative mimesis in the case of the *qissa* performance is paralleled by the analogous mimesis of *taqiyya* or religious dissimulation—the false performance of religion itself.[45] It is as if the

42 Mahjub (1991), 194.

43 Azfar Moin first noted and alerted me to this section of the *Ṭirāz*, for which kindness I am deeply grateful.

44 Mahjub (1991), 192-93.

45 With regard to specifically Shi'i *taqiyya*, we should remember that our storytelling émigré from Shah 'Abbas's Iran lived in a Mughal state whose relationship to Shi'ism was complexly fraught given the presence of other émigrés such as Nur Jahan on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the Shi'a qazi of Lahore, Nur Allah Shushtari,

storyteller's predilection for performance, which should have been restricted to storytelling situations, has burst its bonds, engendering characters that rampage about in the real world. The parallel, while by no means complete, is particularly strong given the chances, in each case, of prior knowledge on the part of the audience that an act is being put on. However, we will soon come to an important difference between the two types of performance.

What the *Qissa* is Good For

The storyteller, despite the sin implicit in his occupation, can redeem himself through doing good in his life. But how is the *qissa* genre itself redeemed? The *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* does not treat the *qissa* simply as "literature" in the poststructuralist sense summed up by Derek Attridge, as a discourse inhabited by otherness and irreducible to uses, ideologies, and the like.[46] It is easy to see how such a view of literature has participated in a crisis of genre theory, as it dissociates itself from the implicitly prescribed *uses* and *effects* to which genre is so often tied. Jameson writes pithily that "genres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact".[47] To take some examples of Arabo-Persian genres, the *marsiya* (lament) is meant to provoke mourning, the *hajw* (satire) to provoke laughter or ridicule, and the *qasida* (praise-poem, in the Persianate sense of this word) to please the one who is praised, to excite admiration, and possibly to earn a reward for the poet. Sunil Sharma's essay in this volume draws attention to the force that words were understood to have in the world, even to the extent of being able to kill. In this spirit, Fakhr al-Zamani deals with the *qissa* as something of the order of *adab* in the classical sense of a culturing, disciplinary discourse. Just as Indian music has curative properties, as Katherine Schofield explains in this volume, the *qissa* ameliorates its audience in particular ways. Fakhr al-Zamani very specifically spells out the genre's beneficial effects for the

executed at Jahangir's order in 1610; Sajid S. Alvi, 'Religion and State During the Reign of Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr (1605-1627): Nonjuristical Perspectives', *Studia Islamica* 69 (1989), 111-112.

46 Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004). This is not to say that this view of literature is incorrect—far from it—nor has genre theory's crisis been unfruitful.

47 Jameson (1981), p. 106.

listener, and, in doing so, offers answers to the question, "What is the purpose of the *qissa*?"

Fakhr al-Zamani lists three benefits of *qissa* recitation for the audience (aside from its benefits for the storyteller himself or herself, which we have glimpsed in the biographical accounts of his ingratiation with Mirza Nizami and Mirza Aman Allah). These may be characterised as linguistic, practical, and moral. First, by exemplifying speech that is eloquent ("*fasih*"), discursively mature ("*baligh*"), and current ("*roz-marra*"), it improves the listener's ability to manipulate language. Second, it serves as a prescription for worldly and state affairs ("'*umūr-i dunyawī wa ashghāl-i mulkī*'") and inculcates prudence ("*tadbir*") in the listener.[48] S.R. Faruqi reminds us that Ghalib Lakhnawi also mentions this purpose, stating that those who hear *qissas* "are able to imagine plans for battle, for subduing forts and conquering states, which is why they [i.e., *qissas*] were always told to emperors".[49] Finally, it deters the listener from vain thoughts, acting as a moral example. This last point is crucial because of its connection with the lie. What the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* says is that "despite its own falsity, it [the *qissa*] casts the powerful off the rope of false thoughts".[50] The term *batil* and its cognate *butlan* can be synonymous with *durogh* or *kizb*, for instance in the Qur'an we find the admonition "Do not clothe the real in untruth ("*lā talbasū al-ḥaqqa bi al-bāṭil*", 2.42). But *batil* also connotes nullity or void-ness, as in *batil al-sihr* or countermagic: that which renders enchantments null and void. The *qissa* is a kind of lie that has the effect of nullifying false thoughts, a lie which is also a counter-lie, and which therefore has a salutary moral effect despite its essential sinfulness.[51]

We may speculate that the anti-mendacious property of the *qissa* may be enabled by its announcement of its own falsehood, either explicitly or by virtue of its genre—note that this is quite unlike the dissimulation

48 Mahjub (1991), 191.

49 S.R. Faruqi (1999), p. 421; Ghalib Lakhnawi (1855), p. 3. The preface to the 1803 Fort William version of the story of Amir Hamza, written by Khalil 'Ali Khan Ashk, also contains this assertion in words similar to Ghalib Lakhnawi's; Khalil 'Ali Khan Ashk, *Dāstān-i Amīr Ḥamza* (Bombay: Matba'-i Haidari, 1863), Vol. 1, p. 2.

50 "*daulat-mandān rā az sar-rishta-i andesha-i bāṭil bā-wujūd-i buṭlān-i khᵛesh mī-andāzad*", quoted in Mahjub (1991), 191.

51 Faruqi clearly reads this generic purpose as moral, and even religiously moral, stating, by way of example, that "in the *dastan* sorcerers are always defeated eventually [...] but they are not simply defeated; indeed they die very ordinary and even commonplace deaths, and so it is fully proven that there is no difference between them or any other of God's servants"; S.R. Faruqi (1999), Vol. 1, p. 421.

of the hypothetical religious pretender that Fakhr al-Zamani imagines above. Let us put it simply, and refer to this announced falsehood of the *qissa* as a form of fictionality. When Fakhr al-Zamani announces that the *qissa* is a lie shorn of the finery of truthfulness (*az ḥilya-i ṣidq ʻāṭil*), he fixes this fictionality of the genre in the genre code that he is producing. His statement speaks to the Qur'anic phrase "*lā talbasū al-ḥaqqa bi al-bāṭil*", responding to it by inverting it: the *qissa* is not an untruth clothed in the true; it presents itself as a *naked untruth*. And it is perhaps for this reason that it is able to counter untruth despite its own falsehood.

The Four Repertoires

We will return to the question of purposes and particularly the multiplicity of purposes enumerated in the *Ṭirāz*. But the *qissa* is not encoded merely as a performative fictional genre with linguistic, practical, and moral uses. We must not forget the four categories with which this essay began: *razm, bazm, husn o ʻishq*, and *ʻayyari* (the third of which, the reader will recall, was substituted for *tilism* by Ghalib Lakhnawi). A look at the organisation of the main part of the *Ṭirāz* tells us that Fakhr al-Zamani conceived of these four not simply as elements of the genre but as the discursive and, moreover, *performative* bricks with which the storyteller built the edifice of the *qissa*, the repertoires from which the *qissa* was pastiched together.

We have already analysed the foreword of the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*; let us now turn to the body. This *bayaz*-like portion consists of prose and verse quotations from a variety of written sources, from the Persian poet Zuhuri's poems to the tales of Sindbad, from odes to the cupbearer to tales of Alexander to animal fables. But rather than being scattered randomly like verses in a standard *bayaz*, they are corralled into the four categories of *razm, bazm, husn o ʻishq*, and *ʻayyari*. Each of these four chapters (each one called a report or *khabar*) is subdivided into twelve sections or workshops (*tiraz*), and finally there is an extra chapter, seemingly for leftover odds and ends, subdivided into nineteen sections, for a total of forty-nine sections.

These classified quotations were meant to be memorised and recited or reworked extempore by the storyteller during the performance of the *qissa*. For example, the storyteller might be describing a battle (*razm*) when the story's focus falls upon a war-elephant. His searching memory might then take him to the sixth section of the first chapter of the *Ṭirāz*, which contains

descriptions of elephants and wolves, and it might alight on this passage from the *Taj al-ma'āṣir* (*Crown of Great Deeds*):

> *abr-hay'ate bād-ḥarkate barq-sur'ate ażhdahā-kharṭūme dahān-i mauhūme kih dandān-ash go'ī sutūn-i īn bār-gāh-i mu'allaq-i Bīstūn* [or *be-sutūn*] *ast wa kharṭūm-i khamīda-i caugān miśāl-ash go'ī rubāninda-i īn saqf-i gardūn…*[52]
>
> Cloud-shaped and moving like the wind, with a serpentine trunk and a fantastical mouth. Its tusks: you would think that they were the pillars of a palace [i.e., the head] attached to Mount Bistun [the body], and you would think its trunk, curved like a polo stick, might be able to steal from the arched vault of the heavens.

The chapter from which this quotation is taken deals with various descriptions of battle (*razm*). Similarly, when describing courtly situations, the storyteller would dip into the chapter on *bazm*, and the same goes for *husn o 'ishq* and *'ayyari*. The four elements of the genre were, as we can see, codified by Fakhr al-Zamani according to the exigencies of the performance. They were not simply there as inert facts, they were toolboxes to be selected properly or improperly.

These four styles were not simply textual; they were fully performative. Fakhr al-Zamani prescribes postures and modulation of the voice for each style. During the narration of a battle, the storyteller must slowly raise his body (sitting on one knee, rising to a standing position) as he reaches the climax. When narrating a courtly scene, he must ease his voice, and in the narration of love scenes, he must perform the expected *naz o niyaz*, the blandishments of the beloved and the pangs of the lover.[53] The *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* seems, in other words, to provide a repertoire of four major performative styles—or perhaps we might say that it provides four repertoires to be used in the correct parts of the *dastan*. But these repertoires are not only memorised collections of classified verse and prose—they are distinct narrative situations that cue the storyteller to summon up prescribed quotations *and* which demand from him a certain set of vocal and physical shifts. It is difficult to imagine that the styles did not intermix at all, but Fakhr al-Zamani frowns upon undue movement between two different styles as evidence that the storyteller lacks *jam'iyyat-i hawass*, which is to say that his senses are scattered and unfocused.[54]

52 Shafi'i-Kadkani (1381 AH), 111.
53 Mahjub (1991), 194.
54 Ibid., 192.

What Ails the *Qissa*

But, having described the four repertoires which supposedly define the *qissa* genre, I want to return to my initial caveats regarding the category of genre, and to recall that genres, by which I mean codifications of what constitutes various genres, are not inherent or given. They are products of socio-historical forces: ideologies, commercial and practical exigencies, and so on. As such they change over time, and they are objects of contention in any given period.[55] This means that it is possible that another contemporary authority whose testimony we have lost may have defined the *qissa* differently, but just as compellingly, as Fakhr al-Zamani. But Fakhr al-Zamani's codification of the genre, which turns out to be tied to the technicalities of the performative production of *qissas*, is important. This is not only because it presents uses for the genre beyond that of "mere entertainment", but also because it appears to have been re-cited and adapted by Ghalib Lakhnawi and Sharar. It is certainly the case that the nineteenth-century comments are sparse, and it is difficult to understand just how it is that the genre code was perpetuated, given that the quantity and present location of the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* manuscripts with which we are now familiar do not inspire confidence that they were circulating widely in nineteenth-century Awadh. It is very much possible that the notion of the *qissa* genre that we have discussed travelled orally, and that Fakhr al-Zamani's genre code was neither unique nor directly influential. Nevertheless, it is at the very least the most well-articulated example we have of a genre code that clearly survived, continuously or in stints, over several centuries.

What Jameson and others might call the institutionality of genres—the fact of their being "instituted" under particular socio-historical circumstances—is trouble enough; furthermore, we must consider intertextuality, which obviates the possibility of there being a chaste *qissa*, innocent of the crime of miscegenation. Any law of genre that implicitly prohibits the mixing of genres must overlook or repress this miscegenetic intertextuality.

This is not the place to elaborate a theory of genre mixing, but I will at least rehearse my argument. Without intertextuality, genres cannot

55 My view of genre as synchronically and diachronically divided has largely developed from Ralph Cohen and Hans Robert Jauss; Ralph Cohen, 'History and Genre', *New Literary History* 17. 2 (1986), 203-18, particularly 207-09; Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

exist; the family resemblance that allows us to group discourses into genres is intertextual. But even as intertextuality is the condition for such a classification, it shatters the image of the pure genre by virtue of the fact that each intertext is already marked by a genre (or genres, rather) of its own. Therefore we might consider each *qissa* as something of an intertextual tapestry that cannot be taken as a "pure" *qissa* and can only be comprehended as a complex of *multi-generic* intertexts that fall under the order of the master genre code of the *qissa*. Even as we read or hear a discourse overall as a *qissa*, submitting to the social force that encodes it as such, it is instructive to peel back the skin that gathers the discourse together into a single genre, and to view its multigenericity or heterogeneousness as well. Francesca Orsini first alerted me to this possibility with her suggestion of a "dual genealogy" for the Hindi-Urdu *qissa*, descended on the one hand from the *dastan* and on the other hand from the shorter *naql*.[56] To continue in this biological vein, Sunil Sharma has written of Khusrau's verse histories as "hybrid texts".[57] Riding on Orsini's and Sharma's coattails, what I am suggesting is that *all* genres—including the *dastan* and the *naql*, for instance—are already mixed and impure. As much as we try to fix a discourse's genre and decide that there is only one, close observation of its bloodstream will reveal that is infected with myriad others.

Unsurprisingly, an important formulation of the idea of heterogeneity appears in Mikhail Bakhtin's work, and particularly in his essay "Epic and Novel". Here literary history is envisioned as a conflict between a weatherworn host of ossified classical genres led by the epic, and the plastic, heteroglossic "novel" or, rather, *roman*.[58] The importance of Bakhtin's codification of the *roman* lies in the fact that the *roman* is defined precisely by its heteroglossia and therefore its heterogeneity.

56 Francesca Orsini, *Print and Pleasure: Popular Literature and Entertaining Fictions in Colonial North India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2009), p. 115.

57 Sharma (2002), 114.

58 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004). The scare quotes give voice to my uneasiness about the translation of what Bakhtin refers to as "*roman*" into the English "novel". The eighteenth-century sundering of the novel genre from its backward sister, the romance, appears to have been expressed much less vigorously outside of Britain, and Bakhtin often uses the word *roman* to designate what English speakers would think of as medieval romances. Therefore I prefer to leave the word untranslated.

Unlike Aristotle's traditional genres (epic, lyric, tragedy),[59] the *roman* engulfs other genres, playing with them and parodying them—even and especially "extraliterary" genres such as the newspaper report and the letter.[60] In effect *romans* are diseased bodies riddled with heterogenous discourses of various genres, and during periods in (Western) history when the *roman* genre is in the ascendant (as it was in the Greek classical period, classical Rome, and neoclassical Europe), epidemics take place in which *romans* infect other genres on a large scale. It is the effect of this contagion that is referred to by Bakhtinians as *romannost* or *roman*-ness: other genres are *roman*-ised ("novelised")—they become like *romans* by virtue of being contaminated.

Bakhtin's idea is useful and consonant with the vision of the *qissa* genre revealed by Fakhr al-Zamani. At the same time, Bakhtin's argument regarding the essentially sealed-off nature of "high genres" such as the epic is unconvincing, and "*roman*ization" arguably affects all genres; therefore it does not seem justified to single out the *roman* as the originary touchstone for this kind of heterogeneity. Finally, while Bakhtin's account seems to represent *roman*ization as a fate that befalls an originally pure genre, I wish to stress that a discourse in any genre may be regarded as heterogeneous from the start.

Once we look at them through such a lens, it is easy to see that the *qissas* whose performance Fakhr al-Zamani describes are shot through with intertexts of many different genres. Based on the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*'s list of quotations, we know that in Fakhr al-Zamani's *qissas*, excerpts from the *Shāh-nāma* and Farid al-Din 'Attar's sufi *Manṭiq al-ṭair* (*Speech of the Birds*) might mingle freely with epistolary specimens (*insha'*), *saqi-namas*, and the moral fables of Kalila and Dimna.[61] Most strikingly, the very genre of truth-telling historiography to which we might oppose the lying-mimetic *qissa* ends up infecting it. Mir Khvand's history, the *Rawżat al-ṣafā* (*Garden of Purity*): Hatifi's *Timūr-nama* (*Book of Timūr*); the *Tāj al-ma'aṣir* (*Crown of Great Deeds*); the *Ḥabīb al-siyār* (*Vademecum of Biographies*); Amir

59 Bakhtin's Manichaean vision of literary history seems wrongheaded insofar as it appears to posit the existence of epics and so on as monoglossic non-*roman* genres, unsullied by *roman*ization, often because they are supposedly older and predate the very appearance of the *roman* on the historical stage. But given the intertextuality of all discourses and, indeed, the intertextual foundations of language itself, the myth of a pure, pre-Babelian genre does not stand up to scrutiny.

60 Bakhtin (2004), p. 33.

61 See Shafi'i-Kadkani (1381 AH), 111, 113, 121, 110 respectively.

Khusrau's *Qirān al-sa'dain*; and the *Tārīkh-i mu'jam* are all quoted in the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār*.[62] This irruption of historiographical genres into the *qissa* does not make the *qissa* simply historiographical, but it suggests that we cannot ignore historiographical elements when we consider the purposes that the *qissa* serves.

It is important to remember that Fakhr al-Zamani mentions *more than one* purpose to the *qissa*: it makes the hearers eloquent, it makes them prudent, and it wards off falsehood. To the question, "What is the purpose of the *qissa*?", we must answer that there is no *single* purpose to the *qissa* because no *qissa* is reducible to a *single genre*, as it will always incorporate intertexts of various genres. At least, this is the view that I have attempted to justify.

62 Shafi'i-Kadkani (1381 AH), 113, 110.