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## Stylistic Analysis of Ancient Iranian Biographers

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### ABSTRACT

Studying the stylistic aspects of literary works in fact began since the Safavid dynasty, when many biographers in Iran and in India attempted to study and criticize the poems of Iranian and Indian poets. Although biographers were more or less studying the stylistic issues from earlier periods, they were not deeply involved and mainly attempted to criticize the works. This study concerns to determine to what extent the biographers in the past have addressed and studied stylistics in its current meaning. The study has employed the stylistic approach to literary works proposed by Cyrus Shamisa in his book *General Stylistics* including linguistic (at phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels), intellectual, and literary levels. Each biography is analyzed according to the linguistic levels. The study primarily aimed to address and study the stylistic aspects of selected biographies, from *Lubab ul-Albab* to *Sokhan Va Sokhanvaran*. These biographies were compared in terms of the three linguistic, intellectual, and literary levels. The results showed that before the contemporary period, most of these biographies had many similarities in addressing these three levels and only the contemporary biographies have paid more attention to stylistics issues. In addition, the literary level of the poems has been studied more than their intellectual level. It indicates that the figures of speech used in poems have been more important to biographies than their intellectual context.

**Keywords:** *Stylistics, Biographies, Linguistic Level, Intellectual Level, Literary Level*

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## 1. Introduction

In the past, stylistics did not refer to its present-day meaning and biographers mostly attempted to generally criticize and describe the poems. This, of course, was accompanied by exaggeration in praise of the poets – mostly through the terms derived from the poets' pen names and abundant figures of speech. Biographers have generally criticized the masterpieces of Persian poetry. However, poems by average poets can be also seen among these biographies and they cannot be distinguished from the poems by outstanding poets as they have been all described by similar phrases. Most of these anonymous poets have not composed poems but a few, which are not qualified when measured. Mostly, they have been among the friends and students of the biographers who have been mentioned as a sign of respect or friendship. Nevertheless,

leaving these defects, we can extract stylistic issues from the content of these biographies.

## 2. Stylistic Analysis of Persian Biographers at different Levels

So far, the stylistic aspects of the biographies written during the Safavid dynasty and in India have been studied, but no separate work has been conducted to study these issues from the beginning of writing biographies until the contemporary period. Scholars of stylistics have addressed the biographies in Safavid dynasty from the critical perspective and have not analyzed them as written stylistic texts. Stylistic issues in their today's modern meaning are more or less observed in these works, to which it will be referred as follows.

### 2.1 Linguistic Level

*Lubab ul-Albab* by Au'fi is the first available Persian biography, which is addressed at first here too. In this biography, rhetorical issues are of primary importance



and the poetry is measured through its meter, rhythm, rhyme, and figures of speech, especially rhetoric figures. In the phonological part and for the Leonine verse and balance, Afi gives an example from the poem by Abdolvase Jebeli. He says that Qatran Tabrizi “has often observed the pun” (Afi, 1985:214). Where it comes to the poems of Mohammad Alavi, he says that “he is remarkably good at using Leonine verse and rhymed poetry” (ibid: 267). Afi does not pay attention to the lexical level and at the syntactic level, he refers to the rhetoric and eloquence among the poets generally, and does not point to the details. He says that Mu'izzi “was the king of the eloquence territory” (ibid: 69). Similarly, he says that “Khalid Makki! You are the best in rhetoric and eloquence” (ibid: 138). However, he does not mention how and in terms of what aspects their poems are eloquent.

Similarly, this approach is observed in “Tazkirat ul-Shoara” by Dowlatshah Samarghandi. At the linguistic level and in the phonological part, Dowlatshah knows Ghada'iri as a powerful poet in because of the use of derivation. He sees Rashid Vatvat's poems abundant in Leonine verse and says that Sheikh Mahmoud “has written a narrative romantic poem through pun and repeated rhyme which is really good” (Dowlatshah, 2003: 471). He says that Nizami “has many acrostics” (ibid: 129). In lexical part, Dowlatshah points to the artistic use of the Mongolian idioms and words in an ode by Jami, which the author had rarely seen in other poets' works.

Like *Lubab ul-Albab*, the general term of eloquence is mentioned in this biography and no details are addressed in the syntactic part. For example, Dowlatshah writes that Firdowsi “is astonishingly eloquent” (ibid: 49) or “Farrukhi Sistani is considered unique in rhetoric and eloquence” (ibid: 57).

At the linguistic level and particularly the phonological part, Sam Mirza names the poets who are skilled in prosody in his “Tohfe-ye Sami”. For example, he writes that Hafez Ali “is skilled in prosody” (Sam Mirza, 2005:113). He repeats the same about Mir Taqi al-din Muhammad, Mir Azizallah, Hafiz Babajan, Mullah Ahli Shirazi, etc. The author's obsession with rhyme is interesting. He believes that Shah Hossein Saghi “has used many incorrect rhymes” (ibid: 217), or “incorrect rhymes are a lot in Adaie's poems” (ibid.: 239). Also, he knows Nazoky Hamedani and Ghotbi Jenabodi as owners of poems with incorrect rhymes. He says “as

Qovsi Tabrizi writes for ordinary people, he sometimes uses wrong rhymes” (ibid: 254). This shows that in Safavid period, ordinary people wrote poems without knowing literature. On the other hand, the accuracy used by Sam mirza in versification and studying rhyme shows that he has been skillful in this technique. The stylistic judgment of other biographers is also mainly descriptive and is expressed through statements with no analyses.

Nesari Bukhari points to Showqi Bukhari in his “Mozakker-e Ahbab” and indicates that “he has duple-meter acrostics” (Nasari Bukhari, 1998: 80) or he writes that Mulana Hussein “is truly skilled on prosody” (ibid: 232). Also, he says that Amir Tayeb “has written an ode which can be read through three meters” (ibid: 260). In another case, he describes an anonymous poet who “mostly writes poems with hard rhymes” (ibid: 267). Also, he writes that Majlesi Bukhari “is remarkably good at hard rhymes” (ibid: 82). At syntactic level, Nesari considers Abd ul-Aziz Bahadur Khan, Mulana Shukhi, Safi al-Din Mustafa, Mohammad Amin Bi, Mansur Tabrizi and some other poets as eloquent.

Amin Ahmad Razi in his “Haft Eghlim” believes that the rhymes of the praise poems of Shamsuddin bn Fakhr al-Din are among non-famous words. He says that Maulana Ahli “was more skillful than others in prosody and rhyme” (Razi, 2010: 223). Also, Razi considers the Am'aq's “Yusof and Zoleikha” as duple-meter. He does not address the lexical part and considers the poets such as Firdowsi, Asadi, Mulana, Vahshi, Am'aq, etc. as eloquent at the syntactic level.

At the linguistic level, Azar Bigdeli writes in his *Atashkadeh* that Firdowsi's Yusof and Zoleikha has *Tagharob* meter” (Bigdeli, 1958: 94). He writes that Mulana Ahli “has written a Mathnavi abundant in pun and duple meter” (ibid.: 270) or Am'aq “has written the Mathnavi of Yusof and Zoleikha with dual rhyme” (ibid: 231). He only refers to the term eloquence, does not address the lexical part, and like other biographers, attributes the term eloquent to some poets such as Mulla Hatefi, Amir Kamal ul-Din, Mulana Seyed Mohammad, Mulana Sharaf ul-Din Ali Bafqi, etc. in the syntactic level.

At the linguistic level and in phonological part, Khan-e Arezu in his “Majma al-Nafayes” mentions a poet called Ali as an example, who has written a very disordered Mathnavi with many meters. He

mentions that Faqir “is the best one in prosody and rhyme” (Arezu, 2006: 108) or Golshan “is completely skilled in rhythm” (ibid: 112). In syntactic part, Arezu mentions the eloquence of the poets in general and does not address the details.

Azad Bilgrami in his “Khizanah-i-Amirah” presents some issued of prosody concerning the meter of the poems while introducing some poets such as Shah Afarin, Mu'izzi and Ghoruri Shirazi. Azad says that Bidel “is powerful in using meters which are rarely used in sonnets, especially complicated and *Motadarek* meters” (Azad Bilgrami 2011:205) or says that Zolfaghari Sherwani writes verses having different meters as acrostic. He praises the poets such as Herafi, Sheida, Faqir Dehlavi and Raej because of being skillful in prosody and rhymes. In the syntactic part, Azad, like the other biographers, only mentions the eloquence of the poets and address the details.

Reza Gholikhan Hedayat in his “Majma-ul-Fosaha” writes that Sanai Ghaznavi “has six Mathnavies all with the same meter” (Hedayat, 1960: 713) or indicates that Am'aq's “Yusof and Zoleikha” has been read in two meters. He also refers to the poems of Shahab Isfahani, Nourali Shah Isfahani, Neshatt Gorji Isfahani and Vesal Shirazi. Also, he writes that the poems of Shahabuddin Modarani contain complicated “*Eltezam*” and the poems of Qatran contain Leonine verse, pun and double rhymes. Also, he acknowledges the presence of Leonine verse and pun in Mohammad Ghaznavi's poetry or sees no other poet better than Saba Kashani in reviving eloquent poems, especially in parallel pun. Like Auffi, Hedayat mentions the general term eloquence in syntactic part.

Forouzanfar in his *Sokhan va Sokhanvaran* maintains that “some verses with *Tagharob* meter are attributed to Rudaki, which is likely to be the remains of one of his mathnavies” (Forouzanfar, 1971:19). He believes that Daghighi's “Goshtasb Nameh” is the first Mathnavi with *Tagharob* meter” (ibid: 29). Concerning the rhythm, he writes that Unsury's “Shadbahr” has skillfully written with *Khafif* meter and fifty seven verses of the same rhythm attributed to Unsury has been mentioned in Asadi's *Loghat-e-Fors* (ibid.: 116). Forouzanfar writes that “Nasir Khusraw has written a delicate poem out of accurate meanings with the most difficult meters” (ibid: 155). He writes that in some of Khaghani's sonnets “rhythms are not

compatible with the sonnet” (ibid: 620) and Fakhruddin As'ad Gurgani “doesn't consider observing rhymes much necessary” (ibid: 363). He regards Khaghani's poetry as having *Eltezam* in difficult *Radifs* and Majir's poetry as having difficult *Radifs* and *Eltezam*.

This approach has even come to Badiozzaman Forouzanfar's *Sokhan va Sokhanvaran*. In its introduction, Forouzanfar states that old biographers have considered all of the poets to be at the same level and there is no good and bad among them. However, new stylistic points are not few in *Sokhan va Sokhanvaran*. In his book, Forouzanfar reminds simplicity in poets' style for the first time and praises those styles which are closer to the nature of the language. Although his criteria, like the old ones, are still rhetoric, he indicates semantic criteria into stylistics and criticism for the first time. Of course, his stylistic considerations have also entered the criticism domain and are somehow considered as critical consideration as well.

In the lexical part, he writes that Firdowsi “does not use far and strange Persian words (ibid: 48) or that Farrukhi Sistani “uses common words and avoids strange and malformed words (ibid: 125). Forouzanfar also indicates that Hakim Souzani “uses Arabic sentences and singular words very much while this is not the case in Farrukhi's poems”, or that “Souzani's Diwan contains numerous Persian words and lexical singular words which may be of native accent. So, it is considered as one of the sources on Persian culture” (ibid: 316). He mentions that “Anvari's poems are Arabic-like as if someone uses Persian singular words in an Arabic format and contain Arabic sentences. These cause the loss of balance between language and lexicon” (ibid: 334). He also states that “Asadi is one of the proficient lexicologists who has carefully read most of the Diwans written in the past decades and has extracted rare words and sometimes uses them in his poems. This is why *Garshasb Nameh* contains a lot of Persian words which are not usually used and are not often seen even in poems written in the late fifth and sixth centuries. Therefore, *Garshasb Nameh* can be considered as a brief Persian dictionary that uses and defines the lexicons” (ibid: 440-441). About Khaqani, he says that “his main superiority is seen through combination of singular words (ibid: 617). In the syntactic part, he points to the eloquence of poets like Firdowsi, Abu Taher



Khatouni, Khaqani, Khosravi Sarakhsi, Masoud Sa'd Salman and Asadi, and goes further and mentions the details about a number of them. For example, he writes that relating and separating conducted by Khosravi Sarakhsi's poem on reproaching the world "is unrivaled in Persian poetry and if one claims that there is no other poem such this Persian poems in eloquent relating and separating, appropriateness of singular words, and consistency of style, he will be right" (ibid.: 37). Similarly, he says that "everyone who is eager, open-minded and skillful in rhetoric would accept that Firdausi is unrivaled in creating new styles and using delicate word combinations, relations and separations" (ibid: 46-47). He writes that Farrukhi's poems "are simple and natural and contain no repetition and obscurity" (ibid: 124) and Nasir Khosraw's "poems sometimes contain paradox and obscurity" (ibid: 155). Similarly, he mentions that "not one verse is obscure in Souzani's poems" (ibid: 316). He also writes that Masoud Sa'd Salman "is nearly the best at organization and harmony of sentences. The most accurate connections among complicated sentences show his knowledge" (ibid: 208). Finally, he believes that Mu'zzi "uses many weak arguments and statements and redundant words and sentences which sometimes disturb the meaning" (ibid: 231).

## 2.2 Intellectual Level

Aufi does not consider the poets' intellectual level. At the intellectual level, Dowlatshah refers to the matters like the attributes of The Prophet and Imams. For example, he writes that Hasan Kashi "is one of the panegyrist of Ali ibn Abi Talib ... [and] his odes are well-known in describing attributes" (Dowlatshah: 297- 296). Similarly, he writes that "Lotfullah Neishabouri has eloquent odes on the attributes of The Prophet and Imams" (ibid: 319). He has the same opinion on the poems of Mohammad Katebi, Kamaluddin Qiyath al-Farsi, Hassan Salimi and Ibn-e Hesam. In addition, Dowlatshah addresses the topics of romantic and mystical poems. For example, he believes that Owhadi Maraghai "writes pleasing and delicate romantic and mystical sonnets" (ibid.: 212), or that Fakhr al-Din Iraqi "writes passionate mystical poems" (ibid.: 215). Dowlatshah has the same idea about Esmat Bukhari's and Kamal Khujandi's poems. He believes that the words of Attar and Molawi are about the unknown matters and the words of Hafiz are full of the facts and teachings. These issues reflect the growth of Shiite religion and

penetration of mysticism in the poems of Shiite poets and other poets since the sixth century. Additionally, Dowlatshah refers to a number of literary subjects such as the praise of the kings in the poems of Mohammad Katebi, Arefi Heravi and Muzaffar Heravi, and Facetiousness and humor in the poems of Barandagh Bukhari. At the intellectual level, many poets started to praise the religious Imams due to growth of Shiite religion in that time, whose names have been recorded in the biography written by Sam Mirza. They include Mohammad Jarjani, Khorasan Khani, Mulana Hairati, Mulana Ghazi Alaei, Mulana Heirani, Ataei Sabzevari, Mulana Sultan Mohammad, and Darvish Abdi Neishabouri. Sam Mirza sees Maktabi Shirazi's poems as cheering and knows the poems of Kaseb full of pain and sorrow. Also, he considers the poems of Aziz Bia' and Mulana Herzi romantic and reports that Khezri's poems describe the food.

At the intellectual level, the author of "Mozakker-e Ahbab" refers to Amir Nizamuddin Abulbaqa who has written an ode on describing and praising Imam Reza (peace be upon him). Nesari Bukhari writes that Vahiduddin Sheikh Mirjan "speaks on Sufism in details" (Nesari Bukhari: 230). He also refers to Mulana Fakhr al-Din ali Vaez, who praises the spiritual lineage of Sufi masters (Naqshbandiyyah) and Mir Divaneh, who "has written famous verses praising Nizam al-Din Khwaja Muhammad" (ibid.: 237).

At the intellectual level, Amin Ahmad Razi refers to the poets who have written poems on describing and praising Imams. Among them, one can mention Ghazi Shahabuddin Mahmoud, Kasaei, Sheikh Azari, Mulana Hassan, Mulana Ali Goli, Rafiuddin Abdulaziz Lonbani, Mulana Zamiri, and Mulana Nizam. Also, Mulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Davani, Mulana Hairati, Ibn-e Hesam, and Mulana Kamaluddin Hassan have written some poems on praising Amir al-Momenin Ali (peace be upon him), and Mulana Sultan Mohammad Sedghi on praising Imam Reza (peace be upon him). The next topic is Sufism on which poets like Nazari, Mulana Hossein, Hossein ibn Hassan Hosseini, and Iraqi have written some poems.

Azar Bigdeli introduces Hairati, Katebi, and Janabad as the poets praising Imams, or writes that "Forouqi has many odes on praising Imams" (Bigdeli: 157), "Mulana Nizam has some odes on praising Imam" (ibid.), and Qavasi "has written a

hundred thousand verses on praising Imams” (ibid: 268). Also, he writes that Shah Qasim Anvar “has written many poems by the way of mystics” (ibid: 29).

Khan-e Arezu considers the poems of poets like Ali and Aqel as witty and exuberant. Azad Bilgrami writes that Lotfullah Neishabouri “had Sufi manners” (Azad Bilgrami: 585). He also names Kashi and Amir Nizam al-Din Astarabadi as the poets praising Ahl al-Bayt.

Hedayat in his “Majma-ul-Fosaha” writes that Kasaei Marvazi “has been a panegyrist of Ahl al-Bayt” (Hedayat: 1134) or “Shabahang Razi was a panegyrist of Imams” (ibid: 470). He introduces Naderi Kazerouni as a Shiite poet and writes about Nasir Khosraw's religion in details. Other than religion, he refers to the poets who tend to orient themselves to mysticism. For example, he writes that Abed Lari has written many poems in the way of mystics. He sees the theme of Farrukhi's poems as romantic and praises Ashegh Isfahani for having beautiful gloomy sonnets with romantic themes.

Forouzanfar refers to the use of poets of their information and knowledge in their poems. For example, he writes that Firdowsi “has been knowledgeable on Islamic narrations and history and this is observed everywhere in his *Shahnameh*. Also, it can be believable that he knew the argumentative sciences (philosophy and mathematics) as he mentions some of the divine and natural laws at the beginning of *Shahnameh* as well as strong arguments” (Forouzanfar: 48). Similarly, he writes that “philosophical and ethical meanings are rarely seen in Farrukhi's Diwan” (ibid: 125). About Imadi, he indicates that “he has mentioned some meanings and thoughts regulating the rules of wisdom in his verses” (ibid.: 520-519). Also, he writes that Khosravi Sarahsi “combines philosophical thoughts and poetic imaginations” (ibid.: 37), Adib Saber “shows signs of knowledge of literary techniques, Arabic poetry and fundamentals of mathematics and philosophy in his poems” (ibid.: 241), “Nasir Khosraw only knows the poems on wisdom and advice and those describing attributes of holy people or disasters of Imams as praised” (ibid.: 158), “Rashid Vatvat includes philosophical meanings in his poems” (ibid.: 324) and “Qatran includes philosophical meanings in his poems” (ibid.: 495). Also, he believes that “Fakhruddin As'd Gorgani uses a few theological and philosophical meanings at the beginning of

the story of Vis and Ramin” (ibid: 364). About Asadi, he declares that “most of his poems are influenced by Arabic and mathematical sciences and divine philosophy” (ibid: 441). About Anvari's poems, he writes that “the spirit of philosophy and mathematics is completely evident in his poems” (ibid: 336). Furthermore, he mentions that “Azraqi's poems are not without scientific meanings, especially mathematics” (ibid: 203). Finally, he sees Sufi ideas and moral verses in Khaqani Shervani's poems.

### 2.3 Literary Level

Since the seventh century is the century of figurative language, poets use different figures of speech in their works. Thus, the literary level is highlighted and appears in both poetry and prose. The use of figures of speech in poetry and prose is considered to be a skill. This also makes some changes in biographies. Afi praises the poets who use more figures of speech. For example, he writes that Sheikh Muammari Jarjani “was the golden standard of figurative language” (Afi: 10), or that Badi Balkhi's poems “were figurative and excellent” (ibid: 22), or that Mahmoud Heravi “has been one of the pioneers in using figures of speech” (ibid: 110). He praises the poems of Fakhruddin As'd Gorgani for their descriptions and similes. He considers the similes used by Azraqi delicate and metaphors used by Fathi Ghaznavi lovely. He also mentions symmetry in Mohammad Alavi's poems. About Mohammad Paizi Nasavi's poems, he writes that “they are full of amphibology and dual meanings (ibid: 345).

At the literary level, Dowlatshah pays attention to the poetic devices. He writes that Nizami “has many figurative poems” (Dowlatshah: 129), “Hassan Dehlavi's poems are not that much figurative” (ibid.: 248), “Khajavi Kermani has twenty thousand figurative verse” (ibid.: 251), “there are few poets who observe figures of speech like Lotfullah Neishabouri” (ibid.: 317), and “Yahya Sibak Neishabouri has exaggerated in the poetic devices” (ibid.: 417). He believes that Mozafar Heravi is proficient in using simile, hyperbole, and poetic imagination, and that Amir Ali Shir writes imaginative poems. He sees brevity and verbiage in the poems of Amir Khosraw Dehlavi. He considers Sharaf-al-din Ali Yazdi and Simi Neishabouri to be unique in riddle. At the literary level, simile and metaphor are more desirable in the ninth century. In a few cases, knowledge of



meanings such as brevity and verbiage are discussed.

Some of the stylistic considerations of biographies are based on the prevalence of a figure of speech or poetic device in a particular period. So, figures of speech are the basis of style in this period. For example, in biography written by Sam Mirza, riddle, which became prevalent in that period, is considered to be a criterion of style and poetry value. Sam Mirza cites over twenty seven poets who have used riddle in their poems. The degree of value of the poems written in that period is determined according to the use of riddle. Besides riddle, Sam Mirza mentions several poets who are skillful in using poetic devices. He writes that Mir Taqiuddin “was unrivaled in using poetic devices” (Sam Mirza: 35), Taleb Gilani “is skillful in using poetic devices” (ibid: 88) and Hafiz Ali “is skillful in using poetic devices” too (ibid: 113).

The past biographers do not go beyond mentioning the figures of speech at the literary level and do not refer to the philosophy of those figures of speech or their analyses.

At the literary level, Nesari Bukhari mentions two figures of speech that were prevalent in his period - chronogram and riddle. For chronogram, he names Sheikh Zein, Mulana Mohammad, Mir Ali Kateb and some other poets. For riddle, he names Mulana Safaei, Mulana Zadeh Lahiji, Mulana Kibak, etc. He mentions no other specific figures of speech and describe the poems through the adjectives such as imaginative, imaginary, or figurative.

Amin Ahmad Razi only mentions two major poetry devices in his age, riddle and chronogram, used by poets such as Ghazi Barkeh, Khwaja Hossein, Mulana Amir Hossein, Mirheidar Rafiei, and Niazi and mentions other figures of speech in general words. For example, he sees Eshvati as skillful as Sameri, or sees Mulana Lotfollah as the best poet in using poetic devices. In the field of rhetoric, he only addresses generalities. For example, he considers Maktabi Shirazi as a poet with good imaginations in poetry and writes that “Kami and Faqiri use many imaginative devices in their poems”. He also believes that Badr Chaichi's poems “are extremely complicated” (Razi: 468).

Azar writes that Seyed Zulfaqar “declares figurative panegyric poems and is superior compared to Qavami Ganji, Rashid Vatvat, Nizami Arouzi, Reihani Samarqandi, and Ahli Shirazi”, “Anvari has inserted

some verses of Abul Faraj's poems in his poems [as a poetic device]”, “Beshaq has inserted some verses of Khwaja Hafiz in his poems [as a poetic device]” and “Lotfollah Qazi was skillful in using poetic devices”. He writes that “Arafi uses so many metaphors that the reader is distracted from the meaning and if he had not used so many metaphors in his incomplete Mathnavi, *Khosraw va Shirin*, it would have been considered as a good work” (Bigdeli, 358). He mentions that Sabahi has written a chronogram on the death of Sahba. In sum, it is suggested that biographers in the past have also addressed observance of moderation in the use of figures of speech. From their judgments, it is concluded that excessive use of figures of speech or metaphors has been inappropriate in their opinion. Another point is that stylistic considerations can be extracted from critical discussions in these biographies. For example, when it is said “if he had not used so many metaphors ...”, it is suggested that metaphor has had a special place for the poet's style at the literary level.

Khan-e Arezu writes that Salem “uses new similes which are very eloquent” (Arezu: 90). He also writes that Faqir “says odes containing several figures of speech” (ibid: 108) and Monir Lahouri “does not uses metaphor as he mostly uses ambiguity and simile” (ibid.: 117).

At the literary level, Azad Bilgrami comments that Badr Jajarmi “has written many poems using rhetoric” (Azad Bilgrami: 194), or Faqiri Dehlavi “is the best poet in rhetoric and eloquence” (ibid: 549). He knows Talib Amoli as a poet with delicate and pleasing imaginations and Zahir Faryabi as the master of simile.

Hedayat focuses on figurative poems. For example, he takes the poems of Badr Jajarmi, Balkhi, Razi al-Din Khashab, Zein al-Din Segazi, Qavami Ganjavi, Abd ul-Rafe Heravi, Falaki Sharvani, Kamal Bukharai, and Sabai-e Kashani figurative. He praised the imagination used in the poems of Abul Barakat Beihaqi and Zahir Faryabi and mentions that Mohammad Qaznavi uses symmetry a lot.

Foruzanfar, like biographers in the past, agrees that moderation in the use of figures of speech is appropriate. At the literary level, he reprimands the poet whose poems are excessively figurative. For example, he writes that “Rashid Vatvat writes poems full of figures of speech which made them complicated, although he is skillful in doing this” (Foruzanfar: 323).

Moreover, he indicates that Abdolvase Jebeli “has devoted his poetic talent to the use of figures of speech. For this reason, his verses are loaded with parallel phrases, contrast, separated word combinations, ambiguity, and description and have lost their actual beauty” (ibid: 309). About Qatran, he writes that “his ability in poetry is proven through his figurative odes in his Diwan, some of which are very famous”(ibid.: 494). About Asdi, he believes that “most of his verses have several figures of speech and this has made a part of his verses ineloquent (ibid: 440). He also mentions that “although Khaqani does not adhere to figures of speech as much as his own counterparts and does not see using them as a criterion for superiority for poets, he uses them” (ibid: 619).

Foruzanfar’s stylistic considerations are hidden in his critical considerations. In rhetoric, he refers to the poems of Kasaei Marvazi who is distinguished by the elegance and accuracy of his similes from others and Farrukhi’s similes are less than his. Furthermore, he acknowledges that Firdowsi is unrivaled in appropriate use of similes and metaphors and observance of situational requirements. In addition, he sees similes and ironies in some parts of Asiruddin Akhsikati contrary to the meaning and inappropriate, and states that the bases of Manouchehri’s poems are similes, comparisons, and analogies. He pinpoints that Manouchehri’s similes are extremely accurate and delicate, but sometimes sees some of them inappropriate and abnormal. Similarly, he writes that Asadi’s poems are full of new similes and tropes and figures of speech in general. About Asadi, he writes that “metaphors are present in most of his verses and odes as if he defines rhetoric as tropes and ironies. Thus, he has based his poems on the best type of trop, which is metaphor, and has suffered to use some inappropriate and unpleasant metaphors in his poems” (ibid: 519). Similarly, he finds some strange similes in “Baharieh” odes of Nasir Khosraw and new and delicate ironies and similes in the poems written by Falaki. Finally, he knows Khaqani at the same rank as the most prominent Iranian poets due to new and abundant similes in his poems.

### 3. Conclusion

At the linguistic level and in the phonological part, biographers have mostly studied the rhythm and meter of the poems and have addressed *Eltezam* in difficult *Radifs* and defects in rhyme in some cases.

Among figures of speech, they have paid special attention to pun, *Saj’* and palindrome. In the lexical part, they have studied the use of Old Persian words and Arabic words. In the syntactic part, except the author of *Sokhan va Sokhanvaran*, who explicitly addresses eloquence and its details, the other biographers only mention the term eloquence and do not go to details. Generally, eloquence and rhetoric have been interpreted as explicitly as verbal ability, verbal knowledge, good speech, language proficiency, and the like in ancient Persian works. Usually the poets saw eloquence as proficiency in speech and rhetoric as fluency in speech. At the intellectual level, tendency for writing religious poems is mentioned, which depends on the dominant religion in the age of the poets. For the first time, Forouzanfar distinctively introduces the intellectual level to stylistic considerations, points to signs of poets’ information and knowledge in their poems and refers to poems containing Sufi ideas. At the literary level, only the general words “figurative” and “poetic devices or figures of speech” are mentioned before the Safavid period, while the type of figures of speech used by the poets and their use of rhetoric begin to appear in subsequent biographies. Presence of metaphors and similes was the basic criterion for evaluating the poems. In general, Badiozzaman Forouzanfar’s biography has more comprehensively addressed the poets’ styles than other biographies. This study showed that the analyzed biographies – since the 7<sup>th</sup> century – have stylistic features more or less. Although the term stylistics was not common in old ages, its realization could be observed in all of the biographies. It can be argued that as it comes to the recent times, biographers address the issues of stylistics more specifically and accurately. Therefore, it might be unfair not to consider the old biographers and take them merely as critics.

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