

S. R. Faruqi and F. W. Pritchett

LYRIC POETRY IN URDU: GHAZAL AND NAZM

Two lyric modes defined and compared

Urdu has had a particularly long and rich tradition of lyric poetry, and at the heart of that tradition has been the ghazal (*ghazal*). "Bachhus and Eros are the twin deities that preside over the ghazal,"¹ and their influence has made the ghazal emotional, expressive, a natural vehicle for every kind of longing and passionate desire. The ghazal poet typically adopts the stance of a romantic hero of one kind or another: a desperate lover intoxicated with passion, a rapt visionary absorbed in mystic illumination, an iconoclastic drunkard celebrating the omnipotence of wine. He presents himself as a solitary sufferer, sustained by brief flashes of ecstasy, defined by his desperate longing for some transcendent object of desire.² This object of desire may be human (female or male), divine, abstract, or ambiguous; its defining trait is its inaccessibility. Naturally such a subjective, introspective, deeply emotional poetic stance is well suited to lyric poetry.

Other ghazal conventions are common to much lyric poetry the world over. The ghazal's single greatest source of imagery has been the garden, with its inherent contradictions: nature cherished and nature subjugated, nature as both responsive and alien to human emotion, nature as flourishing and then decaying, nature as mirroring both love and the failure of love. The flower of the garden, in every sense, is the rose:

How murderous is the false faith of the rose!
The nightingale's doings amuse the rose.

Celebrate the breeze's freedom: everywhere lie broken
The meshes of the net of desire of the rose.

Deceived, everyone fell for its wave of color.
Oh, the lament of the bloody-voiced lip of the rose!

How happy is that drunken one who, like the rose's shadow
Rests his head on the foot of the rose.

Spring creates it for you, it's my rival
The perfume-like breath of the rose.

They make me ashamed before the spring breeze
My cup without wine, my heart without desire for the rose.

Your jealous beauty appears in such glory that
It's mere blood in my eyes, the color of the charm of the rose.

Even now, deceived, thinking it to be you
The rose runs recklessly after the rose.

Ghalib, I long to embrace her
The thought of whom is the rose on the dress of the rose.³

In each separate two-line *she'r*⁴ Ghalib (1797-1869), considered by many as Urdu's foremost ghazal poet, shows us the rose in a fresh light: mocking her lover, the nightingale; losing her petals, and with them, her hold on the breeze's affections; lamenting the folly of those who mistake her inner grief for a mere show of color; receiving a lover's submission; pleasing a

human beloved; incarnating all beauty; suffering by comparison to a human beloved; resembling a human beloved, and thus enchanting other roses; and finally, offering such an ultimate symbol of loveliness that the human beloved can be called the rose of the rose.

A second important source of ghazal imagery is the festive gathering, with its wine, poetry, romance, and conviviality. What the rose is to the garden, the candle is to the gathering. And the candle has at least as many dimensions as the rose:

The beloved's face calls forth the deathless flame of the candle,
The rose's fire is water of life to the candle.

In the tongue of the knowers of tongues, death is silence.
This shone forth in the gathering through the tongue of the candle.

The story was made explicit by the flame's suggestion alone:
In the style of those who have died to the world, is the story-telling
of the candle.

O flame, it grieves over the moth's vain longing:
Your trembling reveals the frailty of the candle.

At the thought of you my spirit sways, I swear
By the splendor-scattering of the wind, by the wing-fluttering of the
candle.

Oh, the joyous bloom of the scar of love's grief!
Flowering is in love with the autumn rose of the candle.

Seeing me at the beloved's pillow, it burns.
Why should my heart not be scarred by the jealousy of the candle?⁵

Here Ghalib has shown us the candle as a reflection of the power of beauty; a source of mystical illumination; a revelation of the nature of life and death; a beloved moved by the passion of its lover, the moth; an image of the human lover's desire; a symbol of the irresistible beauty of the heart scarred with love; a rival of the human lover's.

If the candle is an image of the lover's longing, the lover himself is tormented by the literal fire of his passion:

This heart entered me, feverishly my whole body burned:
This spark flew in, my clothing burned.

Sheer arrogance, that it shows its scar to the gathering!
If you can, have my neck-vein, like a candle, burned.

Gradually, at length, this fire spread over me like the full moon
Though at first, like the new moon, only the hem of my garment burned.

Hope for warmth from this fiery beauty
Only when your body and mind, like mine, are burned.

Fire smolders, Mir, in my heart; if it ever flares up
Then like dry wood, my heap of bones will be burned.⁶

The lover, in these *she'rs* of Mir (1723-1810), is both a sacrificer and a sacrifice to his love. By the fire of passion he is illumined, enveloped, finally consumed.

We chose the above ghazals for translation because we feel that they retain, even in English, something of their beauty and power. Urdu ghazals have long been the despair of translators; we have merely tried to choose some of the less untranslatable ones. Our versions are very close to being word-for-word literal. These few ghazals themselves could fruitfully be interpreted, explicated, and discussed for the whole length of this paper. And hundreds of other ghazals of equal lyricism, equal beauty, and equal or greater complexity could easily be cited. Since the ghazal is written in a number of languages, a good case could in fact be made for it as one of the preeminent genres of lyric poetry, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in the world.

While Bacchus and Eros may dominate the ghazal, it is important to note that they do not confine it. Since by tradition each two-line *she'r* of the ghazal is semantically independent, most ghazals contain *she'rs* in various moods and on various topics. Different individual *she'rs* of a single ghazal may contain abstract reflection, social commentary, pious exhortation, elegy, flattery of a royal patron, the poet's self-praise or self-deprecation, humor, or satire, as well as punning and other, more complex forms of word-play. While simplicity and melancholy have been hallmarks of the ghazal, metaphoric subtlety and verbal intricacy have also been cultivated. In theory, ghazal poets can say anything--and in practice, at one time or another, they have.

Just as not all ghazals seem equally (in a conventional sense) lyrical, so not all Urdu lyric poems are ghazals. Brief lyric passages occur in longer poems, in genres like *magnavī*, *qasīdah*, and *marṣiyah*. But if we leave aside such occasional passages, and minor poems in a few relatively uncommon short forms, then the other significant genres in which to look for lyric poetry are the *rubā'ī* and the *nazm* (*nazm*).

The *rubā'ī* is the Urdu quatrain, and rhymes either AAAA or AABA. The first three lines develop in progression; the fourth must provide a telling conclusion, while avoiding the effect of an epigram. The *rubā'ī* has its own special group of meters, consisting of twelve variations of the basic meter *hazaj musamma*. Since each of its four lines may use a different one of these variations, a *rubā'ī* can be something of a metrical jigsaw puzzle and tends to be regarded as a technical *tour de force*. As such, its position has been somewhat paradoxical: it has never been extremely popular, but neither has it ever lost what popularity and prestige it has had. Virtually every poet of distinction has written at least a few *rubā'īs*, though only a handful--Jafar Ali Hasrat Lakhnavi, Yagana Changezi, Amjad Haidarabadi, and Josh Malihabadi--have written a large number. *Rubā'īs* are rarely declamatory; rather, they are likely to be metaphysical or didactic in tone. Often they are romantically lyrical--like the western *rubā'ī* poem *par excellence*, Fitzgerald's rendering of Omar Khayyam's Persian *rubā'iyāt* (the plural of *rubā'ī*). Yet neither qualitatively nor, above all, quantitatively, can the *rubā'ī* compare with the two principal Urdu lyric genres, the ghazal and the *nazm*.

We do not include the *gīt* because, though it is certainly lyrical, we do not consider it a proper genre of Urdu poetry. The *gīt* is borrowed from Hindi, where it is much more popular. (Though perhaps it would not be considered a proper genre of Hindi poetry either.) *Gīts* have been written in Urdu by some poets--though never extensively--since they were introduced by Azmatullah Khan in the 1930s. In our time, Jamiluddin Ali of Pakistan, and Miraji, Zubair Rizvi, and Nida Fazli of India, have written *gīts*. *Gīts* are less complex and sophisticated than a ghazal or *nazm*, for they are generally designed to be sung to some simple, regular tune. Sometimes the poet makes this clear by singing the *gīt* himself to a distinct tune (as opposed to singing it in the freer *tarannum* style. *Gīts* have been written in Urdu meters as well as in derivative forms of Hindi meters. Most *gīts* have very simple themes: the

more obvious aspects of love (with the poet often adopting a feminine persona), the seasons, patriotic ideas, etc. Some of Nida Fazli's *gīts* focus on social problems (injustice, hard times, etc.) The *gīt* is not a true genre of Urdu poetry because (1) it is not, and has never been, extensively used by poets; (2) it has no thematic or technical defining criteria sufficient to give it a clear identity; (3) if it is a genre at all, it is a kind of song: "*gīt*" means "song," and any folk song can be called a *gīt*.

"Nazm" has been, in Urdu poetics, an extraordinarily elastic term. In its most extended sense, nazm is used as an umbrella term: every poem can be described as nazm ("verse") to distinguish it from prose. In this sense not only the ghazal, but also every other poetic genre, is a particular kind of nazm. But this sense is a trivial one, and for our purposes not very interesting. In its classical, strict sense, on the other hand, nazm was the name for a poem with the same technical features as the ghazal, but with a continuing, progressive development. The nazm had a single, coherent theme, and each *she'r* followed naturally from its predecessor, while the ghazal was a handful of independent *she'rs*. In other words, the *she'rs* of the ghazal could generally be rearranged without damage while those of the nazm could not. In this classical sense the term goes back to the beginning of Urdu poetry, though the nazm was never cultivated as an important genre in itself. Rather, nazms were commonly inserted into prose works, as were other brief verse-forms (*bait qaṣ'ah*, etc.) by way of ornament. Sometimes during the Dakani period, and then again later in the work of Nazir Akbarabadi, separate nazms were written on topics like "The Rainy Season," "Holi," "The Moon of Id," etc., and titled accordingly. Thus in traditional Urdu poetics the term nazm was used either extremely broadly for all verse, or extremely narrowly for a ghazal-like short poem that developed a single theme.

But from around 1878 on, "nazm" came to be the generic name for the "natural poetry" being written by Maulana Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914), Maulana Muhammad Husain Azad (1830-1910), and their followers. In a deliberate break with tradition, Hali and Azad insisted on austerity: they rejected not only the ghazal's hyperbole and metaphor, but also its whole voluptuous, erotic, "pathetic" sensibility. Their poetics invoked the prestige of (imperfectly understood) western ideas, and harnessed poetry to the chariot of social reform and intellectual modernization. Other poets, like Maulvi Ismail Merathi, Durga Sahay Surur Jahanabadi, and, above all, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), then continued to experiment with nazms. The nazm as they developed it was a genre outside the traditional poetic system, a genre hospitable to innovation and change. As time passed, new kinds of nazm, more or less influenced by English models, offered the poet even greater freedom. From *pāband nazm* (regular verse) through *nazm-e mu'arrā* (blank verse) to *āzād nazm* (free verse), more and more liberties were taken with traditional poetic conventions.

In the present discussion, when we speak of "nazm" we mean the modern nazm, that which began in the 1880s and continues to be written today. Modern nazms are often powerful and beautiful lyric poems, and their range is surprisingly wide. There are rich, voluptuous nazms like "Novel Waves of Passion," by Miraji, the greatest poet of pure imagery in Urdu. The speaker in this nazm is a woman:

I want the world's eyes to watch me, to keep on watching me
The way one watches the supple branch
of a tree
(Watches the bending, supple branch)
But the leaf-load, like a discarded dress, along with my
bedspread
Should lie on the floor in a crumpled heap
I want gusts of wind to keep wrapping themselves around me
Buffeting, teasing, laughing, saying something
With the weight of shame, halting, recovering, amid colorful

with lanes alongside
in which people lived.
Like moonlit nights
in drab houses,
in her cold face
were eyes that pleased.¹⁰

The versatility and freedom of the nazm, its ability to accommodate many kinds of experimentalism, is one of its most conspicuous qualities. Nazm has been the chief gate by which successive waves of innovation have entered Urdu poetry in the twentieth century. Not all nazms are as lyrically musical and romantic as those we have translated--but surprisingly many are.

The nazm and the ghazal are today the two dominant genres of Urdu poetry, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Rather than simply translating and discussing many examples of these genres, we would like to do something more theoretically interesting: to juxtapose the nazm and the ghazal as genres, and study them comparatively. For the two are on the face of it strikingly different: one so new (for we repeat that we are speaking only of modern nazm, which began in the late nineteenth century), and one so old; one so free, and one governed by strict conventions inherited from Persian poetic tradition.

Before we can make such a comparison, however, we must acquire the handful of technical terms indispensable to any discussion of the ghazal. To make these terms clear, here is a translation which carries over into English as many of them as possible. —

To hell with all hindering walls and doors!
Love's eye sees as feather and wing, walls and doors.

My flooded eyes blur the house
Doors and walls becoming walls and doors.

There is no shelter: my love is on her way
They've gone ahead in greeting, walls and doors.

The wine of your splendor floods
Your street, intoxicating walls and doors

If you're mad for waiting, come to me
My house is a store of gazing, walls and doors.

I never called down a flood of tears
For fear of my falling, pleading walls and doors.

She came to live next door
Doors and walls adoring walls and doors.

A lively house stings my eyes
To tears, without you, seeing walls and doors.

They greet the flood with rapture
From end to end all dancing, walls and doors.

Don't tell love-secrets, Ghalib
Except to those worthy of hearing: walls and doors.¹¹

This ghazal is composed of ten two-line *she'rs*. (It is misleading to call them "couplets," because they do not rhyme.) Each *she'r* is made up of two single lines called *miḡra's*, so that the whole ghazal contains twenty *miḡra's*. The ghazal rhymes AA, BA, CA, DA, etc. The two rhyming elements of the ghazal are called *radīf* and *qāfiyah*. The *radīf* consists of one or more whole words or syllables which are repeated in identical form at the very end of each rhyming line. In this ghazal the *radīf* is "walls and doors." The *qāfiyah* is the word which comes just before the *radīf*, and terminates in one or more final syllables which rhyme with the corresponding final syllables of all the other *qāfiyah* words in the ghazal. In this ghazal the *qāfiyah* words are "hindering," "wing," "becoming," "greeting," etc. (though the rhyme in the original is much stronger and more satisfactory than in our translation). The *radīf* may be omitted, but all ghazals must have a *qāfiyah*. The ghazal begins with a special introductory *she'r* called the *maṭla'* ("place of sunrise"): in the *maṭla'* both *miḡra's* rhyme (i.e., contain the *radīf* and *qāfiyah*). Most ghazals start with one *maṭla'*; some omit it, while a few start with two or even more. The last *she'r*, the *maqṭa'* ("point of termination"), includes the poet's *takhalluṣ*, or pen-name (in this case, "Ghalib"). Sometimes the *maqṭa'* is omitted. The use of an established traditional meter (*bāḡr*) is also an important part of the ghazal's identity; Urdu meters are quantitative, however, and cannot be reproduced in English. It is hardly possible to talk about ghazals at all without using these basic terms, and we hope our attempt at ostensive definition will reinforce the simple descriptions we have given. Highly technical definitions unfortunately tend to be of use mostly to those who know them already.¹² In any case these terms will be discussed at greater length as our investigation progresses.

For we are now equipped to approach the most interesting question: what exactly is the relationship between the ghazal and the nazm? How do the two genres differ? If we consider the problem against the background of Urdu and Persian poetic tradition, it becomes surprisingly complicated. All the standard, well-known, "obvious" differences between the genres prove, upon examination, to be much less consistent and infallible than they first appear. These standard criteria of differentiation, and their weakness, are worth examining at length.¹³

1. "The ghazal has an introductory *maṭla'* and a concluding *maqṭa'*." But the nazm may also have a *maṭla'* and a *maqṭa'*. And in fact it is not necessary for every ghazal to have both a *maṭla'* and a *maqṭa'*. There are today, and have been in the past, poets whose ghazals routinely lack, if not both *maṭla'* and *maqṭa'*, then certainly the *maqṭa'*. Khalilur Rahman Azmi is one poet who never uses a *maqṭa'*; occasional omission of *maṭla'* and *maqṭa'* is a famous charge made against Ghalib. Yet there are thousands of nazms in which poets have chosen to use both *maṭla'* and *maqṭa'*.

2. "The ghazal has a rhyming *qāfiyah* and a repeated *radīf*." But the nazm too may, and in fact often does, have a *qāfiyah* and a *radīf*. *Pāband nazms* which have both *qāfiyah* and *radīf* are numerous, and are still being composed today: Munir Niyazi, Saqi Faruqi, and Shahryar are poets whose names come readily to mind. In the ghazal the *radīf* may be omitted entirely and the *qāfiyah* reduced to a single syllable.

3. "The nazm develops connectedly, while the ghazal is a collection of independent *she'rs*." But the ghazal too can develop connectedly, and often does. Classical poets have composed sequential (*musalsal*) ghazals, and in our time Jamiluddin Ali, Ibne Insha, Zafar Iqbal, and Adil Mansuri have continued the tradition. Nor in fact is the nazm obliged to develop connectedly. Many nazms, especially recent ones, show no logical coherence at all, but are shaped by imaginative or emotional association. Many modern nazms are unified chiefly by the harmony of rhyme and sound, while many ghazals reveal an inner unity as well as the harmony of rhyme and sound.

4. "The ghazal has a limited number of *she'rs*, while no convention governs the maximum number of lines a nazm may have." But in practice the ghazal's length has proved to be quite flexible. Ghalib claimed that his ghazals were not longer than nine *she'rs*, but he would have great trouble supporting this claim. Even apart from the tradition of double, triple, and quadruple ghazals, from Mir to Firaq to Manomohan Takh, each ghazal is longer than the next.

5. "The nazm can be as short as desired; but the ghazal must consist of more than one *she'r*." This distinction is purely theoretical. The nazm can be as short as desired, but how short is that? Can a nazm of one word exist? Western poets have sometimes tried to make a single word into a poem, but have never left the word in its natural state. Rather, they have given it the form of a pictogram: Apollinaire's "calligramme" and the "ideogram" of concrete poetry are attempts of this kind. Only in such specially adorned and pictorially arranged forms has a single word ever been claimed as a poem. If a nazm of one (unadorned) word cannot exist, what of a nazm of a few words--of half a dozen words, the length of a *misra'*? In fact it is quite possible to imagine a *misra'* being turned into a minimal, but theoretically complete, nazm. The *misra'* could be broken into several lines, as has been done to this famous one of Ghalib's:

Paper
Is the dress
Of every pictured
Figure.

Or it could even be left as it is and simply called a nazm. Not every *misra'*, of course, could lend itself to such treatment. *Misra's* made grammatically or logically incomplete by enjambement could not be treated as nazms; this *misra'* of Ghalib's could not become a nazm: "I am beyond even non-being, otherwise, heedless, many times . . ." But we can certainly conclude that it is possible for a nazm the length of one *misra'* to exist.

Furthermore, we may well ask why a ghazal of one *she'r* is impossible. Logically speaking, there seems nothing wrong with the idea. At one time a *maṭla'* and a *maqṭa'* were conventionally required; now we have broken that convention. At one time the number of *she'rs* in a ghazal was established, even if somewhat vaguely; we have not respected those limitations. Now are several *she'rs* really necessary, before the existence of a ghazal can be accepted? After all, the nazm of one *misra'*, too, is a conceptual creation of our era: if Hali and Azad had been asked for an opinion on a "nazm" of one *misra'*, they would have advised medical attention for the poet!

Look at this *she'r* of Mir's, in his famous "Hindi" meter:

All cures ran contrary, medicine did not work.
Did you see? That heart-sickness finally finished him off.¹⁴

Perhaps you won't consider this a ghazal. But what if it had been written like this:

All cures ran contrary
Medicine did not work.

Did you see? That heart-sickness
Finally finished him off.

Now on what grounds can you refuse to consider these as two separate *she'rs*? Granted that the two *she'rs* do not have, separately or together, the power of the original single *she'r*; but nevertheless they are certainly two *she'rs*.

At the very most you can say that the two *she*'rs' second *miṣra*'s are shorter (seven long syllables) than their first ones (eight long syllables), but such a discrepancy is acceptable in this meter, *mutaqārib*. A number of Mir's *she*'rs in this meter have unequal *miṣra*'s.

Moreover, it is possible to make from one *she*'r, two *she*'rs which would not show this difference of meter. For example, take any *she*'r at all in the meter *rajaz maṭvī makhbūn*, like this one of Ghalib's:

It is a heart, not a stone or brick, why should it not fill
up with pain?
I will weep a thousand times, why should anyone torment me?15

Then break each *miṣra*' in half:

It is a heart, not a stone or brick
Why should it not fill up with pain?

I will weep a thousand times
Why should anyone torment me?

The result is two perfectly acceptable, if undistinguished, *she*'rs in the meter *rajaz murabba' maṭvī makhbūn*.

Furthermore, if we chose a *she*'r in *mutadārik sālim musamman muṣā'f* (long-short-long repeated eight times), or *mutaqārib sālim musamman muṣā'f* (short-long-long repeated eight times), we could even make it into four *she*'rs! Of course, most such breaking-up operations would yield new *she*'rs with different *qāfiyahs* and *radīfs*; but if we confined ourselves to breaking *maṭla*'s in half, we could create any number of (two-*she*'r) ghazals made from one *she*'r. Thus a ghazal can in principle be as short as one *she*'r; while a nazm, as we have seen, can hardly be shorter than the length of a *miṣra*'. Therefore this argument is not very helpful in establishing the difference between ghazal and nazm.

6. "The ghazal has special themes, while the nazm does not." But this is simply not correct. From ghazal poets to university professors, everyone maintains that the ghazal's themes are unlimited. By now this view has become so widely accepted that it is hardly even open to discussion. Since the *qaṣa'h* (which is like a ghazal without a *maṭla*', but shows continuity of thought) and the sequential (*musalsal*) ghazal exist, the ghazal must be acknowledged capable even of narration.

7. "All the *miṣra*'s of a ghazal are equal in length, while the nazm may have lines of varying length." This argument also fails to be decisive. Mir is, as we have seen, an effective counterexample: his *miṣra*'s are sometimes unequal in length. *miṣra*'s of slightly unequal length may also exist in a few traditional meters like *ramal* (in some of its variant forms), *khafīf* (in its most common form), etc. In our time, Mazhar Imam has composed ghazals with *miṣra*'s of unequal length. Perhaps his attempts have not been poetry of the highest order, but no one denies that they are ghazals! Zafar Iqbal too has, though in fun, composed such a ghazal. And of course many nazms have lines of the most impeccably regular length.

8. "The nazm has a title, while the ghazal does not." But nowadays in every journal and anthology dozens of nazms are printed with merely the title "Nazm" or "A Nazm." Furthermore, earlier poets used sometimes to give titles to ghazals too: "Unique Art," "Supreme Emotions," "Consumer," etc. Frequently these titles played on the literal meaning of the poet's *takhalluṣ* for additional effect. And sometimes ghazals have been published with one of their *miṣras* used as a title. So this criterion too is weak.

9. "The nazm can take the form of a *magnavi*, a narrative poem in rhyming couplets, while the ghazal cannot." But if the ghazal is sequential (*mu-balsal*) and has a series of *matlas*, then what difference is there between it and a *magnavi*? Of course, very few ghazals are sequential and have numerous *matlas*; but then very few nazms are in *magnavi* form either. The question becomes academic and gives us no practical help whatever.

10. "Many forms of the nazm are far removed from the ghazal, such as the *musaddas* ("six lines"), the *mukhammas* ("five lines"), etc." This argument is weak because so many forms of the nazm are *not* far removed from the ghazal. Only those few forms which have been mentioned are far removed: the various numerically named stanzas, of from three to ten lines, called as a group *musamma*. But all these forms of the nazm occupy an extremely limited territory, and are so narrowly defined that they might almost be said to be special forms of the ghazal. In any case very few nazms (and very *very* few good nazms) have been composed in these forms; among modern nazms you would have trouble finding even one example. So a definition based on *musamma* forms would be of no real help at all.

11. "The nazm poet enjoys a breadth and depth of freedom--to take liberties whenever and however he wishes with the length of lines, to use differing meters in a single nazm, etc.--which is simply not open to the ghazal poet." This criterion certainly helps us to differentiate the metrically irregular nazms of Faiz, Miraji, N. M. Rashid, etc., from the ghazal. But what of important poets like Josh, Iqbal, Firaq, etc., most of whose nazms do not display this metrical freedom? The nazms of these poets too are certainly nazms, and any criterion which does not allow for them cannot be accepted.

Inquiry of this kind is no mere academic exercise, devoid of real value and utility. In the past, before modern nazms began to be written, the ghazal stood in relative isolation in its generic niche. It was thought to be so clearly defined, and its technical characteristics so firmly prescribed by tradition, that no discussion was necessary. Nowadays, however, the ghazal is seen in juxtaposition to the nazm. And the view that the ghazal has come very close to the nazm in finding wide acceptance. This is a critical judgment; whenever modern poetry is to be evaluated and assessed, such critical judgments will be necessary. Has the modern ghazal really come very close to the nazm? However this question is to be answered, it will first be necessary to clearly distinguish ghazal from nazm. Until we understand the difference between the two, we cannot discuss their mutual influence.

We cannot yet clearly point to such a difference. But we certainly cannot abandon the search for effective criteria of generic definition. To do so would be to let a very helpful critical and analytic tool slip through our fingers. This tool is not perfect and not as widely applicable as we might wish, but it plays an indispensable problem-solving role in the criticism of Urdu poetry. If we declare that ghazal and nazm are two names for the same thing, then critical judgment of those poets who composed only ghazals or only nazms will become almost impossible. And it will become difficult to judge critically even those poets who have composed both ghazal and nazm, because when ghazal and nazm are judged by exactly the same standard, not only will one form or the other escape proper critical attention, but whatever critical judgments are made will inevitably be distorted and without depth. The distinction between ghazal and nazm is as necessary as it seems to be elusive.

Can we then perhaps conclude that the difference between ghazal and nazm is practical rather than theoretical, perceptible through intuition rather than through critical intelligence? Up to a point, intuition is definitely a helpful, commonsense guide. For we are accustomed from childhood to ghazals and nazms of certain familiar kinds. The new ones we encounter usually belong to one or another of these kinds, so that our intuitive response is immediate and appropriate. But when we encounter a poem quite unlike any we have seen before, our intuition loses its power. Many of Qurrtulain Tahirah's Persian ghazals, many of Iqbal's Urdu and Persian nazms, many of Manucahri's

and Qaani's Persian *qasīdahs*, would be virtually unrecognizable to anyone whose intuition was not assisted by a good deal of experience, and by knowledge of convention. Furthermore, even today, if five or ten *she'rs* of an unpublished *pāband* (regular) *nāzm* were to be published and criticized as *she'rs* of a ghazal, then certainly most people (if not everybody) would accept them as such. Most people would with equal readiness accept *she'rs* of an unpublished ghazal as a *nāzm* under similar conditions. Thus intuitive understanding is a weak reed on which to lean.

Yet undoubtedly most of the time we can immediately and accurately distinguish ghazals from nazms. Often we can do it on traditional technical grounds that are readily apparent. If we encounter a poem about love, consisting of about seven or eight metrically regular but semantically independent *she'rs*, displaying *qāfiyah* and *radīf*, beginning with a *maqṭa'* and ending with a *maqṭa'*--we will recognize such a classical ghazal without the slightest difficulty. And if we encounter a poem with lines of varying length, unrhymed, with irregular and shifting meter, linear in its development, descriptive or narrative, realistically concerned with some contemporary social problem--we will at once know it as a *nāzm*. The grey area in which classification is difficult falls in between these two extremes. The grey area includes innovative, experimental ghazals which violate one or more of the ghazal's conventions, as well as conservative nazms which deliberately maintain certain traditional kinds of irregularity. As we have seen, every single basic ghazal convention has been experimentally violated by ghazal poets and/or deliberately followed by *nāzm* poets.

Attempts have been made to cut through all such perplexities at a single stroke by declaring that the ghazal is defined by the essential *taḡhazzul*, "ghazal-ness," that it contains. And in fact people have had strong and relatively clear notions about the nature of *taḡhazzul*. The traditional vision of *taḡhazzul* shared by our poets, audiences, and critics has involved the expression of certain emotions of a simple, sentimental, and pathetic kind, and the depiction of certain common experiences of love.

Masud Hasan Rizvi Adib has told of a teacher of his in Lucknow who was a great scholar of Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, and had strong objections to Ghalib. Once Rizvi recited to him Ghalib's masterful ghazal that begins:

Seeing the brilliance of the beloved's face, why didn't I burn?
Seeing my own power of vision, I burn.

Rizvi's teacher sat silently through all the *she'rs* until Rizvi came to the *maqṭa'*:

The way that unhappy Ghalib used to beat his head
Came to my mind, seeing your door.¹⁶

Then he exclaimed, "Yes, why doesn't he compose *she'rs* like *that*? Why does the wretch compose such *mish*?" For the *maqṭa'* mentions head-beating and suffering, while the other *she'rs* show great verbal subtlety and intellectual depth. To Rizvi's teacher and many others of the older generation, the ghazal was a genre of poetry which should touch only a single layer of emotions; the ghazal should describe those experiences of beauty and love which occur in our daily observation, and to appreciate which it is not necessary (and in fact is not, according to Imdad Imam Asar, even desirable) to perform any serious intellectual activity. In accordance with this taste for simple emotions, poets like Hasrat Mohani and Jigar Muradabadi were esteemed as revivers of the ghazal tradition in the twentieth century, while at the same time the ghazals of an original poet like Yagana encountered great hostility and resistance.

This vision of *taḡhazzul* was so firmly established that even today in

mushā'irahs, where poets gather to recite their verse, when some very risqué, passionate, or uncommonly sorrowful and suffering kind of *she'r* is to be recited, the poet introduces it by saying, "Sirs, I present a *she'r* of ghazal." The hearers praise him accordingly: "O Lord, what *taghazzul*!" While if some *she'r* relies on punning, question-and-answer, clever use of an idiom, or other wordplay, the poet says, "Sirs, I present a *she'r* of language." And he is praised accordingly: "O Lord, what *taghazzul* in his language; it's devastating!"

Yet the problems with such a concept of *taghazzul* are evident. "A ghazal is a poem which contains ghazal-ness" is a flagrantly circular definition which must be carefully supplemented and qualified if it is to be of any real use. Moreover, traditional concepts of *taghazzul* have had increasing trouble encompassing the full extent of the genre. Ghalib, then Iqbal and Yagana, introduced so many new and formerly alien elements into the ghazal as almost to call into question the *taghazzul* of poets like Mir. If it be argued that both Ghalib and Mir have *taghazzul*, then seemingly almost everything is *taghazzul*. Must we then abandon the idea of *taghazzul* entirely?

On the contrary: we can find *taghazzul*--but we must look for it on a structural level deeper than the traditional ones of the thematic content and emotional tone. For the ghazal does create an atmosphere of its own. And it does this in part through harmony of sound. Harmony of sound is so pervasive a feature of the ghazal that its very ubiquity has made it difficult to notice. It is by no means confined to *qāfiyah*, *radīf*, meter, alliteration, and other well-known poetic devices. In fact the search for harmonious sounds has determined the language of the ghazal in a remarkably systematic and fundamental way.

In Urdu, the largest number of "harsh" sounds come from the Prakritic side; such sounds include the retroflex consonants ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṛ, ṛh, ṇ. Now Urdu ghazal (except for the anti-ghazal of poets like Insha and Zafar Iqbal) has always largely avoided these sounds. Ghalib, of course, was most scrupulous about this, but look at the poets whose language has been very close to everyday speech: Mir, Jurat, Insha, Hasrat Mohani, Firaq Gorakhpuri, etc. Look in fact at any significant ghazal poet, classical or modern, and you will find the same systematic avoidance of words containing retroflex sounds. It is not the case that such words are rare in Urdu: some few of them are among the commonest in the language. It is true that the large majority of Urdu words do not contain retroflex sounds, but words containing retroflex sounds occur far more often in the language as a whole than they do in the language of the ghazal. In the ghazal we find 'aṣā-e pīrī but not *buḥāpe kī lakṛī*, *vasī' rahguzār* but not *caurī sarak*, *dushvār vādī* but not *kāthīn ghāṭī*, *musht-e khāk* but not *muṭṭhī bhār miṭṭī*, *rahzan* but not *qākū*, *murgh* but not *cīriyā*.

Now it may be objected that because Urdu ghazal owes its very nature to Persian, it is not surprising if Arabic and Persian words are preferred to Prakritic ones. But this objection can easily be answered: the *qaṣīdah*, or eulogy, too owed its very nature to Persian; yet it contained a great number of Prakritic words, including ones with retroflex sounds. The *qaṣīdah* was so involved with Persian culture that when that culture ended, so did the *qaṣīdah*--while the ghazal still lives, and still holds aloof from words with retroflex sounds. Moreover, if the ghazal by its very nature is so un-Indian, why did it reject thousands of Arabic and Persian words in favor of their Prakritic counterparts? In the ghazal we find (except in *izāfat* constructions) *churī* instead of *kārd*, *khet* instead of *kiṣht* or *mazra'ah*, *carvāhā* instead of *shabān*, *bīcchū* instead of *kashdum*, *jālī* instead of *kashīdah* or *shabbāk*, *bāl* instead of *mū*, *ām* instead of *anbah*, *cor* instead of *dūd*, *garhan* or *gahan* instead of *kusūf* or *khūsūf*, etc. Or, where non-Indian words have not been completely rejected, why have they been used less frequently than

their Prakritic counterparts? The ghazal uses *sīdhā* and *saccā* more often than *rāst-bās* and *rāst-go*; *jālan* more often than *soziśh*; *ghar* more often than *khānah*; *galī* more often than *kūcah*; *phal* more often than *samar* or *fakīhah* or *bar*; *pattī* or *pattiyān* more often than *barg*; *patthar* more often than *hajar* or *sang*, etc.

The final proof can be found in the ghazal's similar fastidiousness about words borrowed from Arabic. A great many Arabic words which have been well accepted in Urdu are scarcely to be seen in the ghazal. Above all, the ghazal shuns words spelled with *tawīn* (*ghālibān*, *yaqīnan*, *zāhīran*, *bāqīnan*, *lafzan*, *ma'nan*, etc.) and constructions involving the Arabic particle *ul* (*maghlūb ul-ghazab*, *zarūrī ul-ishār*, *qarīb ul-khatm*, *ṭavīl ul-qāmat*, *'azīm ul-jusāh*, *zakī ul-hīs*, *shadīd ul-quvvat*, etc.). These and similar words may have occurred once or twice in ghazals, but could occur more often only in *qasīdahs*. Here too the reason is the same: their sounds are considered "clumsy" and "harsh" to the Urdu poet's ear, unsuited to the ghazal's quest for phonetic harmony. If there is such a thing as *taghazzul*, then, it must consist partly in harmony of sound. The very fact that this sound-quality is (usually) unconsciously created testifies to its depth and genuineness.

But in describing *taghazzul* are we reduced to one quality--and that too a purely technical one, resembling (though more universal than) the criteria we discussed earlier? Surely not. Rather, we must push our inquiry further. Why did the Iranian poets Anwari and Khaqani compose *qasīdahs*, rather than ghazals, about the destruction of Baghdad and Iran? Why did Mir and Sauda write *shahr-āshobs* about Delhi--is the destruction of Delhi not evoked in many individual *she'rs* of their ghazals? Why can't a ridicule-poem (*haju*) or a praise-poem (*madhiyah*) be composed in ghazal form? Why did Ghalib write, "The narrow scope of the ghazal does not fit my passion / More breadth is needed for my expression"? The styles which Iqbal chose for *Shama' aur shā'ir*, *Gorīstān-e shāhī*, *Zauq o shauq*, and *Masjid-e qurṭabah* are very close to the ghazal; why did he give these works the style (and sometimes almost the form) of nazms? If you want to deal with war, revolution, or other social or political problems, will you write a ghazal or a nazm?

These questions guide us toward perceiving the most fundamental quality of *taghazzul*, of the nature of the ghazal: its obliqueness, its indirectness of expression. The ghazal is a non-realistic genre; it can accept the common experiences of everyday life only when they are transmuted into metaphor. The ghazal can unconditionally accept all the experiences which the poet confronts alone as an introspective human being, particularly those of (divine and human) love. But experiences which the poet does not confront alone, but either considers rationally, on an abstract level, in the style of Iqbal, or encounters in the context of some particular society--such experiences must be expressed in non-realistic, symbolic form before they can come within the scope of the ghazal.

Of course, the modern nazm also makes heavy use of symbolic language. Consider the work of Abbas Athar, Iftikhar Jalib, Anis Nagi, Adil Mansuri, or any such poet whose style is more than ordinarily obscure. These poets emphasize collective societal experiences: their nazms essentially grapple with problems that are not theirs alone, but rather those of a whole society. Abbas Athar's nazm "But Horn-blowing Is Not Allowed" is an effective example of how such nazms achieve a reproduction of real events.

Come here, turmoil has broken out, come
 Look longingly at walls and doors, don't forget
 Trampling each other
 Wet with each other's blood

Striking their heads and screaming, shrieking, all are running
No one speaks.¹⁷

These images, like the prohibition of horn-blowing, are utterly real and direct. The experience with which the poet starts is that of a member of a merciless, isolating, alienating society. To express this experience, he has retained all the appearance of real-life events, but has enclosed the meaningfulness of the experience in the whole nazm. Thus the whole nazm itself is a metaphor, the magic and meaning of which cannot be unlocked without searching for the key. The conceptual structure of the nazm is as follows: the poet as member of a society--experience--realistic description of events--metaphor. By contrast, look at this *she'r* of Zafar Iqbal's:

There's so much fear of ruin that no one even
Reports his loved ones' murder in the papers.¹⁸

This *she'r* describes the same kind of experience as does Abbas Athar's nazm, but in its conceptual structure realistic events have no place. Its structure is simply: poet as member of society--experience--metaphor. Since real events are ignored, only metaphor itself as metaphor remains; by its very nature it expands and seeks its own meaning.

The complaint is often heard that modern ghazals are understandable, while modern nazms are not. The reason is that in the modern nazm reference to real events clash with the metaphor and make it obscure. While older nazms depended on scattered, separate metaphors, so that there was no difficulty in understanding them, the modern poet uses aspect upon aspect of real events as metaphor, so that the whole nazm has the effect of a metaphor, and realistic description gives rise to obscurity. This generic difference in the use of metaphor can be perceived in nazm after nazm, when compared to ghazal after ghazal. Consider Shahryar's nazm "Another Longing":

Oh, air
Carrying the stuttering voices of birds
On your shoulders where are you wandering
Look
Mountain peaks are swelling up out of the earth's lap
And on the bodies of black rocks lips, eyes, hands are growing.¹⁹

A similar example is "Mirror" by Balraj Komal:

But how unfortunate I am
For centuries I have been the mirror's prey--if only I too
Were a reflection, a wily enemy, a dagger, a devotee of blood
He would have remained facing me, he who has been named my
reflection
Day and night in the madness of murder I would have been like
the youthful word
Day and night on the shores of blood I would have been
irresistible.²⁰

In Shahryar's nazm parts of the body have been used to express a real state of affairs: the fear of the poet who feels himself to be in a society full of unsympathetic, alienated, hostile emotions. Balraj Komal's nazm is a metaphor for individual failure, in which the imagery of blood, enmity, and mirrored reflection serves to represent reality.

When these and similar moods come into the ghazal, the absence of realistic representation creates an entirely different effect. Zeb Ghorri writes:

I am surrounded on all sides by my own shadows
This time I struggle against strange enemies.²¹

And Khalilur Rahman Azmi has said in a similar *she'r*:

Every hour demands the value of my valueless life
Oh, my mirror, it demands of me my own face.²²

It is clear that realistic description (that is, description of real subjects and events from which it is possible to recognize them as such) is not the style of the ghazal. A ghazal about the murderousness of war can be composed, but it will not contain detailed descriptions of weapons and methods of attack. In the ghazal real events are pushed far into the background; the atmosphere of universality thus created suggests an organic unity based on simplicity and comprehensibility. The obliqueness of the ghazal can be, at its best, sharper and more focused than the realistic description of the nazm.

Thus we suggest our own fundamental, least-common-denominator definition of *taghazzul*: harmony of sound and indirectness of expression. *Taghazzul* in this sense is a conspicuous quality of virtually every Urdu ghazal, classical and modern, that has ever been written. Thus *taghazzul* in this sense is well suited to join the traditional metrical and technical criteria described earlier, which have always been basic elements in the definition of ghazal.

When we seek to discriminate between ghazal and nazm, however, our new sense of *taghazzul* is vulnerable to the same methodological problems we have already explored: innovative ghazal poets breaking out of the "circle of *taghazzul*," and imitative nazm poets breaking into it. The first threat remains so far purely theoretical: it does not at all appear that modern ghazals are evolving toward harsh sounds and realistic description of events. A more immediate problem is the incursions of modern nazm poets into ghazal territory. Some modern nazms--most of Munir Niyazi's, for example--are almost completely devoid of realistic description. Obliqueness has always been a primary property of the ghazal, while in the nazm it is a comparatively new effect, so it is easy to recognize that the modern nazm is imitating the modern ghazal--rather than the other way around, as is often held to be the case. But this imitativeness does mean that our search for a reliable criterion of difference between ghazal and nazm has once again come to a dead end.

The distinction between ghazal and nazm is both makeable and worth making. But the problem must be approached in a more sophisticated way. We must renounce once and for all the attempt to find a single magic key, a litmus test, a crucial quality in which the two genres always and essentially differ. The problem goes very deep, and difficulties must always attend such efforts to isolate single crucial defining criteria for literary genres. For genres are conceptual categories in literary theory: their development may not always lag behind the actual creation of new works, but it certainly cannot move much ahead of it. Rather, new notions of genre--which are rarely wholly novel but are usually modifications of old notions of genre--progress in a kind of leap-frog pattern along with the works to which they apply. New works modify accepted notions of genre, and accepted notions of genre influence new works. Generic terms, like Wittgenstein's famous example "game," are best conceived of as clusters of traits, like woven cables which remain coherent though no single strand runs the whole length of the cable. Ghazals must thus be seen in principle as poems which have all or *most* of the qualities traditionally possessed by ghazals. To establish the existence of a ghazal is to demonstrate the very strong predominance of these qualities, and the relative absence of countervailing ones. The same, of course, must be said for nazms and for other genres as well.

This view of genres as multi-stranded, functional, flexible constructs is hardly new. But students and critics of Urdu poetry have only recently had to come to terms with it. In the early years of its history Urdu ghazal was defined in opposition to *masnavi*, *qasidah*, *marṣiyah*, and other traditional genres. Relatively precise thematic and formal rules for each genre had been laid down, and were sustained by the great authority of Arabic and Persian poetic theory. Urdu poets were proud to think of themselves both as students of some particular master-poet and as heirs of a great tradition. They were new members of an ancient guild, with a strong interest in preserving and enhancing their heritage. Poetic conventions were rarely subjected to radical or disruptive challenge. Change came only gradually, and innovators justified themselves by seeking out precedents within the tradition. Such poetic conservatism inspired a static view of poetic form, and an incessant litany of complaints about the decline and corruption of fine old genres.

Times have changed, however, and changed with a vengeance. Many other traditional genres are moribund or dead, and the ghazal is defined chiefly in opposition to its main rival, the nazm. Poetic concepts, like non-poetic ones, are subject to challenge from many directions. Genres are pulled and twisted this way and that by different would-be definers. Iqbal has bequeathed us a wealth of strikingly ghazal-like nazms, interspersed with nazm-like ghazals. Ehtisham Husain has written a romantic, melancholy, obliquely expressed nazm, called it "In Memory of Vietnam," and declared it to be a ghazal.

Yet to any lover of lyric poetry, this growth and evolution of genres is an encouraging sign. Both the ghazal and the nazm are alive, developing, far from exhausted. And as the genres develop, so do the definitions. Some critics are prepared to state flatly that a poem which "does not employ the traditional language, imagery, and concepts" of the ghazal is not a ghazal at all.²³ We disagree. Not even the ghazal of the present--much less the ghazal of the future--can be so rigidly bound by the conventions of the past. Individual threads in the cable of definition have their own beginnings and endings. The modern nazm, born as an experimental genre, has still more freedom to evolve. The ghazal and nazm of the future cannot be known until they appear--and may not easily be accepted even then. Controversies will no doubt rage. But both the ghazal and the nazm are already so rich in fine lyric poetry that one can only wish them a future worthy of their past.

NOTES

1. Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 28.
2. On the conventionality of this stance see F. W. Pritchett, "Convention in the Classical Urdu Ghazal: The Case of Mir," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 3, No. 1 (Fall 1979), 60-77.
3. *Radīf*: "gul." This and all other translations given are our own.
4. The transliteration system used for Urdu words is that of the Library of Congress, with only one minor modification: *izafat* is in every case represented as -e.
5. *Radīf*: "shama'."
6. *Radīf*: "jalā."
7. A useful general introduction, which includes many ghazals in

- translation, is Ahmed Ali, *The Golden Tradition: An Anthology of Urdu Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).
8. Miraji, "Ras kī anokhī lahreṅ," *Na'ī nazm kā safar*, ed. Khalilur Rahman Azmi (New Delhi: Maktaba Jamia, 1972), p. 86.
 9. Majid Amjad, "Tausī-e shahr," *Anginat sūraj*, ed. Khvajah Muhammad Zakariya (Lahore: Ziya-e Adab, 1979), p. 47.
 10. Munir Niyazi, "Har mukh par khūbshūrātī kā muqām," *Chah rangīn darvāze* (Lahore: Maktaba-e Munir, 1979), pp. 72-73.
 11. *Radīf*: "dar o dīvār." This translation is freer than the others.
 12. For brief technical definitions of these and related terms see M. A. R. Barker and S. A. Salam, *Classical Urdu Poetry* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Spoken Languages Services, 1977, 3 vols.), vol. I, pp. xxii-lxiv. The most detailed work on the subject in English is G. D. Pybus, *A Textbook of Urdu Prosody and Rhetoric* (Lahore: Ramakrishna and Sons, 1924); see especially pp. 47-52 and 59-68.
 13. The following discussion is based on S. R. Faruqi, "Nazm aur ghazal kā imtiyāz, *She'r ghair she'r aur nasr* (Allahabad: Shabkhun Kitab Ghar, 1973), pp. 143-157. This essay was first published in *Shabkhun* 58 (March 1971), pp. 49-58.
 14. *Ulṭī ho ga'īn sab tadbīrēn kuch na davā ne kām kiyā*
Dekhā is bīmārī- dil ne ākhir kām tamām kiyā.
 15. *Dil hī to hai na sang o khisht dard se bhar na ā'e kyon*
Ro'enge ham hasār bār ko'ī hamen satā'e kyon.
 16. *Radīf*: "dekh kar."
 17. Abbas Athar, "Magar hārn bajāne kī ijāzat nahīn," *Shabkhun* 56 (January 1971), p. 25.
 18. Zafar Iqbal, *Raṭb o yābis* (Allahabad: Shabkhun Kitab Ghar, 1970) p. 102.
 19. Shahryar, "Id aur iltijā," *Shabkhun* 52 (September 1970), p. 21.
 20. Balraj Komal, "Ā'inah," *Shabkhun* 44 (January 1970), p. 19.
 21. Zeb Ghorī, *Zard sarkhez* (Allahabad: Shabkhun Kitab Ghar, 1976), p. 91.
 22. Khalilur Rahman Azmi, *Shabkhun* 32 (January 1969), p. 5.
 23. Barker and Salam, *Classical Urdu Poetry*, vol. I, p. xxiv.