

James White 

Reading In, Looking Out: Hermeneutics by Implication in an Early Fifteenth-Century Anthology

This article investigates aspects of mise-en-page in British Library Add. MS. 27261, an anthology of twenty-three texts on mixed subjects produced for Eskandar Soltān (d. 818/1415), grandson of Timur and self-styled ruler of territories in southern Iran during the early fifteenth century. It examines the juxtaposition of literary and scientific texts together with images in Add. MS. 27261, and explores the correlations that these juxtapositions create. It concludes that the London anthology should be seen as a coherent intellectual enterprise, and as an interpretative project designed to feed Eskandar's experiments with different forms of knowledge.

Keywords: Philology; Hermeneutics; Manuscript Culture; Editorial Practices; Eskandar Soltān; Nezāmi Ganjavi; Astronomy

Introduction

Recent studies have begun to uncover the existence of what we might term systems of “hermeneutics by implication” within medieval Islamicate anthology cultures. Standing in contrast to techniques of explicit analysis such as commentary (*sharh*) and exegesis (*tafsir*), hermeneutics by implication depend on the juxtaposition of complementary motifs, ideas or texts, which help to explain one another. Such juxtapositions, created by editorial design, encourage readers to discover connections between materials which are often superficially disparate, and aid in their interpretation. For example, as Adam Talib shows, certain collections of Arabic verse, such as *Kitāb al-muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb wa-l-mashmūm wa-l-mashrūb* (*The Book of Lover*,

James White is a research fellow at the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies, Warwick University, UK.

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Beloved, Musk and Wine)¹ by al-Sarī al-Raffāʾ (d. c. 362/972), juxtapose poems with overlapping formal features or imagery, often without gloss or comment, to create “a subtle, inexplicit progression of thematic and rhetorical movements.”² The primary function of such juxtapositions may have been to inculcate the tenets of practical literary criticism in readers without recourse to long-winded analysis; in other words, they make a work instructive and underscore its pedagogical utility, but they keep it readable. Similarly, Beatrice Gruendler writes of the associative approach adopted by Ibn Abī Ḥajala (d. 776/1375) in his prosimetric work *Sukkar-dān al-sultān* (*The Sultan’s Sugar-Bowl*), stating that the book’s appendices are rendered coherent by a “mesh of variegated motifs that strings together the widest possible array of historical, geographic, religious, legendary, literary and medical tidbits.”³ Again, these juxtapositions bind the text together and allow the author considerable scope to explore different intellectual fields which help to elucidate one another. These examples go to show that, although many of us may be used to thinking of the production of meaning as a phenomenon founded on techniques involving discussion and analysis, critical culture is not always explicit.⁴ Rather than explaining what a passage means, a book’s editors can provide readers with a framework for reading in and undertaking analyses through their arrangement of material. This is not a question of readers attaching randomly subjective meanings to texts—although such readings are always possible—but one of authors and editors encouraging particular programs of eisegesis.⁵

This article applies the concept of hermeneutics by implication to a Persian manuscript anthology of the early fifteenth century. The codex in question is British Library Add. MS. 27261,⁶ a luxury pocket-sized collection of twenty-three texts covering the diverse fields of

¹As the title implies, this is an anthology of erotic and descriptive poetry.

²Talib, “Woven Together as Though Randomly Strung,” 24, 37 ff. Talib’s article extends the findings of Sadan in his article “Maidens’ Hair and Starry Skies.”

³Gruendler, “Literary Sweets,” 73.

⁴Recent research has gone some way to reconstructing late medieval and early modern reading practices within the context of Arabic, Persian and Ottoman literary cultures. It is worth emphasizing that the techniques of exegesis (reading out) and eisegesis (reading in) are not mutually exclusive, and that the two modes seem to have been used sometimes by the same people concurrently. See, for example, el-Rouayheb, “The Rise of ‘Deep Reading,’” 210: “*Muṭālaʾah* [deep reading] ... is ... a close examination of a scholarly text that starts with noting its syntactic, semantic, rhetorical and logical features. Having done this, the reader should sum up the relevant issue by conceiving in his mind the claim (*mabdaʾ*), the argument (*wasat*), and the principles on which the argument rests (*maqtaʾ*) ... In his endeavors to thus unlock a scholarly handbook, a reader should follow the example of an acknowledged commentary.” This stance argues that readers should read into texts, but that their own interpretations should be tempered by reference to a commentary in which an established set of meanings is expounded. Not entirely dissimilarly, Alam’s article “Mughal Philology” explores the productive relationship between intuitive and formal criticism in ‘Abd al-Latif ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abbāsī Gujarātī’s (d. ca. 1638/9) editing of Rumi’s *Masnavi*.

⁵Although *eisegesis* is a word with a long history, I borrow the term from Elman, “Striving for Meaning,” 76-7.

⁶Add. MS. 27261 has been digitized in its entirety and is available to view at https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_27261. For an overview of the contents of the manuscript, see Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 868-72. For the poets featured, see Mahdavi, “Fehrest-e Jong-e Eskandar Mirzā Teymuri.”

literature, law, medicine, alchemy, theology, history, astronomy and mathematics, which was produced in 813-14/1410-11 for Eskandar b. ‘Omar Sheykh (d. 818/1415), the Timurid ruler of Fars.⁷ The manuscript has been studied extensively by historians of art on account of the value of its paintings and marginal decoration.⁸ It has also received attention from modern editors, because it is an early source for the history of several late medieval texts, including the *divān* of Hāfez.⁹ Furthermore, the poets whose writings it contains have been catalogued in detail by scholars of Persian literature.¹⁰ It is therefore well known. However, it has never been examined as a coherent intellectual enterprise, in which texts, images and decoration are juxtaposed in order to help explain one another.¹¹ My focus here is on how the anthology’s creators may have intended Eskandar, its first owner and reader, to view the manuscript. While attention is now being paid to connecting Eskandar’s theological and political program with his patronage of the arts, I stop short of arguing that the schemes of reading suggested in the anthology are either unique or reflective of a particular political philosophy.¹² Yet I do contend that its physical integration of texts and images renders the anthology something like a puzzle, from which Eskandar may have been intended to derive benefit. The book was not just a beautiful object and a compilation of instructive writings, but also a tool designed to feed Eskandar’s intellectual experiments with different forms of knowledge, and the interaction between texts and images was an important part of how it operated.

Text Block and Margin: Associative Methods of Arrangement

Add. MS. 27261 develops trends seen in extant books of the late fourteenth century. As in the so-called Behbahān Anthology of 801/1398 (Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi,

⁷Eskandar’s life and patronage have been treated extensively in scholarship, and for that reason I do not propose to discuss either in detail here. For his life, see Soucek, “Eskandar b. ‘Omar Şayx b. Timur”; Soucek, “Eskandar Soltān”; Aubin, “Le mécénat timouride à Shiraz”; Richard, “Un témoignage inexploité.” For discussions of his patronage of the visual arts, see Soucek, “The Manuscripts of Iskandar Sultan”; Keshavarz, “The Horoscope of Iskandar Sultan”; Akalay, “An Illustrated Astrological Work”; Wright, *The Look of the Book*, 84-105, 167-72; Robinson, “Zenith of his Time.” For his political and theological programs, see Binbaş, “Timurid Experimentation with Eschatological Absolutism”; Melvin-Koushki, “The Quest for a Universal Science.”

⁸See Soucek, “The Manuscripts of Iskandar Sultan”; Soucek, “Illustrated Manuscripts of Nizami’s Khamsch,” 283-306; Brend, “Beyond the Pale”; Roxburgh, “The Aesthetics of Aggregation”; Wright, *The Look of the Book*, 84-105, 167-72; and the two blog postings by Muhammad Isa Waley, “The Miscellany of Iskandar Sultan,” and “Inscriptions in the Miscellany of Iskandar Sultan.”

⁹The manuscript was, for example, used as a source for the textual history of Shabestari’s poem *Sā‘ā-datnāmeḥ* by the editor of Shabestari, *Majmū‘eh-ye āsār*. It was also used for Khānlari, *Divān-e Hāfez*, which is generally regarded as one of the most authoritative editions of the text. Khānlari also made a series of emendations to the *Divān* using Add. MS. 27261 which were first published as articles in the journal *Yaghmā*, and then as Khānlari, *Chand Nokteh*.

¹⁰See Mahdavi, “Fehrest-e Jong-e Eskandar Mirza Teymuri.”

¹¹For not dissimilar kinds of reading practices in a late thirteenth-/early fourteenth-century anthology made for a French queen, see Huot, “A Book Made for a Queen.”

¹²On Eskandar Soltān’s use of theology in the service of politics, see, most recently, Binbaş, “Timurid Experimentation with Eschatological Absolutism.”

1950), one text is presented in the central text block (*matn*) of each page, and another text is generally wrapped around the margin (*hāshiyeh*).¹³ The presence of two texts on each page, which was partly a practical way of saving space and reducing the physical bulk of the manuscripts, meant that paintings had to be integrated into the two anthologies in imaginative ways.¹⁴ In both cases, images often occupy the text block, replacing the central text but leaving the marginal text in place. So, in Add. MS. 27261, fourteen of the twenty large-scale paintings are not juxtaposed with the text that they appear to illustrate, but are instead surrounded by a marginal text. Of the remaining six large-scale paintings in the manuscript, five are full-page and are not juxtaposed with any text, and one begins beneath a section of both central and marginal text. Most of the paintings in the opening section of the manuscript, which depict scenes from Nezāmi Ganjavi's (d. ca. 602-12/1205-15) *Khamseh* (*Quintet*), are in fact surrounded by one of three marginal texts: 'Attār's (d. 618/1221) *Elāhināmeḥ* (*Divine Book*), the same poet's *Manteq al-teyr* (*The Oration of the Birds*), and a miniature anthology of early and late medieval poetry which is arranged by form and genre. Later paintings are organized in a similar way. For example, f. 298b, "Rostam Rescues Bizhan from the Well," a scene which illustrates a passage from Ferdowsi's (d. 410 or 416/1019 or 1025) *Shāhnāmeḥ* (*The Book of Kings*), is surrounded by the text of Beyzavi's (d. between 685/1286 and 716/1316) *Nezām al-tavārikh* (*The Order of Histories*), a history of Iran. The painting on f. 371b ("A Patient Sits in Bed while a Doctor Feels His Pulse"), which responds to a treatise on astrology and the interpretation of dreams, is surrounded by a marginal text on medicine.

An obvious question arises: can any sense of design be discerned in the juxtapositions of central and marginal texts throughout the manuscript, and, if so, how might this affect our viewing of the paintings? A simple answer is that the central and marginal texts are always arranged in a fashion which allows for cross-readings in theme and genre. For example, the narratives of Nezāmi Ganjavi's *Khamseh* harmonize well with those of 'Attār's *masnavis* because both works often use storytelling as a vehicle for exploring ethical precepts.¹⁵ The extracts from the part-mythological, part-historical *Shāhnāmeḥ* can be read in parallel with the accounts of Beyzavi's *Nezām al-tavārikh*, the earliest sections of which cover the same dynasties as Ferdowsi's text.¹⁶ The alchemical treatise *Tohfāt al-gharā'eb* (*The Gift of Curiosities*) is comparable with the *qasā'ed* on the Prophet and the Shi'ite imams which are presented on the same pages, because occult knowledge was perceived to be something "latent" in the

¹³On the Behbahān anthology, see Ağa-Oğlu, "The Landscape Miniatures."

¹⁴A full visual analysis of each of the large-scale paintings illustrating the text of Nezāmi's *Khamseh* in Add. MS. 27261 is given in Soucek, "Illustrated Manuscripts of Nizami's *Khamseh*," 283-306.

¹⁵On the didactic aspects of Nezāmi's *masnavis*, see Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 192-236; on 'Attār, see Davis, "The Journey as Paradigm"; Ritter, *The Ocean of the Soul*. This is not to suggest that the works of either author should necessarily be categorized as "didactic," as they engage with other kinds of writing. For example, on the use of parody in Nezāmi's *Khosrow o shirin*, see van Ruymbeke, "What Is It That Khusraw Learns?"

¹⁶For a work in English on Ferdowsi as a historian and author, see Davis, *Epic and Sedition*; Beyzavi's *Nezām al-tavārikh* appears to have attracted practically no scholarly attention in its own right.

imams.¹⁷ Esmā'il ibn Hasan Jorjāni's (d. 531/1136-37) medical treatise *Khoffi-ye 'alā'i* (roughly, 'Alā' al-Dowleh's *Pocket Book*)¹⁸ can be read alongside works on the law and astrology because legal prescriptions affected the human body, and it was commonly accepted that the movements of the heavenly bodies made people well or ill.¹⁹ For similar reasons, Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyr's (lived eleventh century) book on astronomy and astrology, *Rowzat al-monajjemīn* (*The Astronomers' Garden*), works well alongside treatises on veterinary medicine, alchemy and knowledge of God: the prime mover turns the heavenly bodies, which in turn influence animal (and human) health, and bring about changes in precious metals.²⁰ Thus, the anthology's texts appear to be organized in an associative way in order to complement one another. This method of arrangement breaks down barriers between different genres and emphasizes points of continuity between texts.

Yet we can go further than simply speaking of broad correspondences between the texts. Throughout Add. MS. 27261, the central and marginal material is organized so that complementary readings can be made on every page. Two examples, which are entirely typical, and which are drawn at random from different parts of the manuscript, illustrate this point. On f. 142b, a common reading emerges between the text block and the margin. Here, the *matn* contains part of the introduction to Nezāmi's *Haft Peykar* (*The Seven Beauties*), while the beginning of a miniature anthology of poetry runs around the *hāshiyeh*. Nezāmi enjoins his patron to recognize the majesty and bounty of God, and then praises speech as His only undying creation. These sentiments harmonize well with the marginal poems, which are all exordiums on the unity of God. One particular line from a poem by 'Emādi Shahriyāri (also known as 'Emād al-Din Ghaznavi, d. 573/1177-78 or 582/1186-87) stands out, because it unites the ideas of speech and divine majesty: "Praise be to the Creator, who arranged in two words / These seven domes which extend for six days."²¹ Thus, a clear dialogue concerning the nature of divine speech emerges from this page. The reference to the "seven domes" (*haft qobbēh*) of the seven heavens in 'Emādi Shahriyāri's poem also brings us back to the text in the *matn*, emphasizing the cosmological significance of the number seven in the *Haft Peykar*, and reminding us of the episode in Nezāmi's text in which Bahrām constructs seven domes to house the seven princesses.

Another example of harmonization comes from f. 337a, where lyric *ghazal* poems by Hasan Dehlavi (d. ca. 738/1338) are surrounded in the margin by passages from an introduction to astrology which explain when is the best time to undertake actions

¹⁷See Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science," 317.

¹⁸See Dehkhodā and Mo'in, *Loḡhatnāmeḥ*, fasc. 10 (letter Kh.), 665, col. 3. "Khoffi" means a book that is small enough to fit inside a shoe; "'alā'i" refers to the Khwārezmshāh 'Alā' al-Dowleh Atsiz, for whom Jorjāni compiled this compendium.

¹⁹Prescriptions and proscriptions concerning food, drink, bodily functions and coitus represent the most obvious ways in which the law could affect health. On this point, and the importance of the Zodiac in humoral pathology, see Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 43-5.

²⁰See n. 52 below.

²¹*Sobhān khāleqi ke beyārāst az do harf / in haft qobbēh rā ke be-shesh ruz bar keshand.*

such as buying property, sowing crops, beginning a student's education, taking medicine, engaging in therapeutic bloodletting, and going to town (Figure 1).²² Correspondences emerge from reading across the two texts, as the following lines by Hasan show: "What will happen to me today at dawn? / Pour that scarlet shower of pearls into the goblet / Nothing is better than the wine cup / Take my pen and paper away."²³ While the first of these two lines is ostensibly about wine, the image of pouring red liquid into a bowl recalls the practice of therapeutic bloodletting that is mentioned in the margin.²⁴ The reference to books and pens evokes the discussion of when to begin a student's education. Moving over to the next page (f. 337b), one of Hasan's poems speaks of abjuring oaths: "Once again, we have broken our pledge to the beloved / We repented and then recanted."²⁵ The topic is mirrored in the marginal discussion of when to bind oneself to others through oaths. To the right of the text block, Hasan's narrator begs his interlocuter to clothe him in the garb of nobility, while marginal comments at the top of the page discuss when one should importune others.

A striking case of correspondence comes on ff. 277a-8b of the manuscript (Figure 2). The text of the *matn* is from Nezāmi's *Eqbāl-nāmeḥ* (*The Book of Felicity*). In the narrative, Eskandar (Alexander the Great) has just reached the point of prophecy and is receiving the testaments of the assembled Greek philosophers; the text here consists of the ethical counsels of Aristotle, which are concerned with how a man who is both a prophet and a king should comport himself. They include the lines: "If a king repents of his justice / The state will be ruined / God created you for the sake of justice / Tyranny cannot come from an unjust king."²⁶ The margin contains a long *qasideh* by the poet Basāti Samarqandi (d. 840/1436 or 37) composed in praise of Eskandar Soltān.²⁷ Highlighting in red ink makes certain phrases in Basāti's panegyric stand out, among them: "Eskandar, consider this, and think the rest all tales / This speech is correct, all others are storytellers";²⁸ "You are Eskandar,

²²The astrological text is *Madkhal-e manzum* (*The Versified Introduction [to Astrology]*), composed by 'Abd al-Jabbār Khojandi in 616/1219-20, which has been edited and print published in Rezāzādeh-ye Malek, *Tankalushā*, 168-211. The version of this text presented in Add. MS. 27261 demonstrates significant differences in comparison with the printed edition; it appears to be an abridgement.

²³*Che shavad zin siyah-sepid marā / dar qadah riz lā'le gowhar-bār / beh ze qarābeh nist majmū'i / qalam o kāghaz az miyān bardār.* Cf. Hasan Dehlavi, *Divān*, 272-3.

²⁴Blood and wine are brought into comparison in earlier verses about therapeutic bloodletting. In a *qet'eh* composed when the last Ghaznavid, Bahrāmshāh, was bled, Shehāb al-Dīn Shāh 'Alī Abi Rejā' al-Ghaznavi writes: "Drinking wine after he bade the minstrels sit, the king desired bloodshed and called for the veneselector ... [who] dug a silver channel with the tip of his iron needle and brought forth carnelians from the gold-sprinkling hand of the king." 'Owfi, *Lobāb al-albāb*, 2: 281.

²⁵*Bāz 'abd-e niyāz beshekastim / towbeh kardim o bāz beshekastim.* Cf. Hasan Dehlavi, *Divān*, 333.

²⁶*Shāh az dād-e khvud gar pashimān shavad / velāyat ze bidād virān shavad / torā izad az bahr-e 'adl āfarid / setam nāyad az shāb-e 'adel padid.* Add. MS. 27261, f. 278a; Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 897.

²⁷Dowlatshāh Samarqandi tells us that Basāti was associated with the court of Khalil, Eskandar Soltān's cousin, in Samarqand (Dowlatshāh Samarqandi, *The Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shu'arā*, 352-6). The terms in which Basāti addresses him in this poem suggest that Eskandar had already taken control of Fars when the *qasideh* was composed. Did they perhaps correspond by letter?

²⁸*Eskandar in shomar to o bāqi fesāneh dān / in-ast qowl-e rāst degar-bā fesāneh-khvān.*

Figure 1. Add. MS. 27261 f. 337a: *Ghazals* by Hasan Dehlavi; astrological treatise. © The British Library Board.

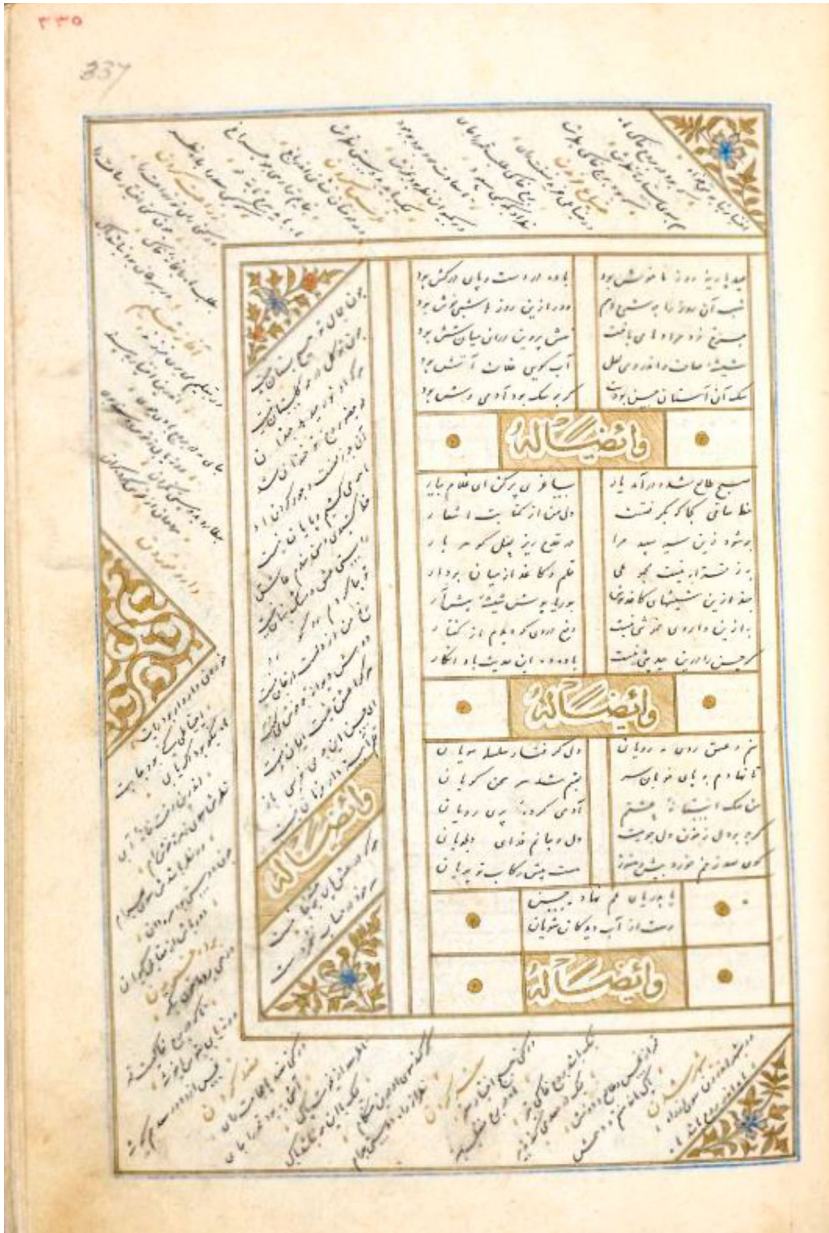


Figure 2. Add. MS. 27261 ff. 277b-8a: *Eqbāl-nāmah* of Nezāmi; a *qasideh* in praise of Eskandar Soltān. © The British Library Board.



more pleasant than the fount of life,”²⁹ an image recalling the adventures of Nezāmi’s hero in the land of darkness;³⁰ and “the law laid down by your considered view heals the kingdom and the faith / The path of your rule is the straight way through certitude.”³¹ These phrases simultaneously identify Eskandar Soltān with Nezāmi’s hero and distinguish him. Like Nezāmi’s Eskandar, he is a prophet,³² and a king whose rule has the power to lead the community in accordance with God’s laws. Yet he is real, whereas Nezāmi’s Eskandar is one of the fictive “tales” which Basāti mentions; and he is “more pleasant” than the fount of life, which Nezāmi’s Eskandar fails to find.³³ It is worth adding that this case provides some additional support for the

²⁹*Eskandari lotfiar az cheshmeh-ye beyāt.*

³⁰See Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 823-6. Eskandar travels into the land of darkness in search of the spring that grants immortality

³¹*Qānun-e ra’-y-e tost shefā-bakhs-e molk o dīn / nahj-e velā-ye tost rah-e rāst bar yaqīn.* “The straight way” (*rah-e rāst*) is an obvious reference to Q1:6: “Show us the straight way” (*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*).

³²For Eskandar’s (self-)representation as a prophet in the works of history and theology that he patronized, see Binbaş, “Timurid Experimentation with Eschatological Absolutism.” The literary evidence is still unexamined.

³³See Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 825.

theory that the visual representations of Nezāmi's Eskandar on ff. 225b, 230a and 286a of Add. MS. 27261 double as portraits of Eskandar Soltān.³⁴

The examples given above testify to what extent texts can be manipulated when they are reproduced within the book. As with other late medieval editors, both in Iran and elsewhere, the makers of Add. MS. 27261 do not seem to have had a strong interest in establishing a "fundamental" edition of each text in the anthology. Rather, they abridged and arranged them in order to create coherence on each page, a productive framework which would stimulate the reader's critical investigation of the underlying patterns between material. To give one example of their manipulation of texts, their recension of the astrological work *Madkhal-e manzum* displays significant differences with the modern print edition, which does attempt to reconstruct an original text. Passages are absent from Add. MS. 27261, and the order of many is inverted. The resulting recension cannot simply be imputed to a poor-quality or defective textual source. It reflects a literary culture in which the original intentions of a text's author were sacrificed to editorial concerns about the coherence of the page.

Illustration, Analogy and Independent Scene: Images and Marginal Texts

The associative arrangement of material throughout the anthology is not only confined to the written texts. Complementary readings can be made in all cases in the manuscript where a painting is surrounded by a marginal text. This is not a case of direct correspondence, but rather a form of juxtaposition which gives rise to overlapping interpretative strategies. The editors' method of arrangement affects our understanding of the paintings because it forces them to operate on more than one level, meaning that they not only depict events from works such as Nezāmi's *Khamseh* and Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāme*, but also act as spaces for contemplating a connected set of ideas. Contrary to what one might assume, this does not render them more dependent on the texts, but rather emphasizes their independence as images in which different meanings can converge.

A good example of this phenomenon is f. 118a, which features a painting depicting Majnun's establishment of just rule over the animals in the *matn*, and, in the margin, text describing the Prophet's invitation to the jinn and animals to attend him (Figure 3). On looking at the marginal text and the painting together, the viewer is invited to think of parallels between Majnun and the Prophet, to compare their ethical stances, and thereby to gain new interpretative perspectives on both the text and the image. The comparison created by the juxtaposition counters Nezāmi's statement that Majnun himself became like a wild beast among the animals, and dispels any doubt over whether Majnun should be taken as a positive ethical exemplum.³⁵

³⁴This suggestion is made in Soucek, "Illustrated Manuscripts of Nizami's Khamseh," 304. As Soucek implies, however, tropical comparisons between present kings and past rulers of history and myth were so common that it is difficult to believe that the editors of Add. MS. 27261 would not have automatically chosen to draw these parallels anyway (see *ibid.*, 292).

³⁵See Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 396.

Figure 3. Add. MS 27261 f. 118a: Majnun and the animals; 'Attār's *Elābināmeb*.
© The British Library Board.



On f. 38a, the painting is of Shirin gazing at Khosrow's portrait, while the marginal text describes the passion of the slave Ayāz for his master, Mahmud of Ghazneh. The image and the text are united by more than the general theme of lovers and beloveds. Both treat the desire of the beloved for their lover, inverting the common topos of the lover as the active pursuer of the beloved. While we look at Shirin beholding her lover, we can read the following lines in the margin:

The king said to [Ayāz]: "What is your prey?" / He replied: "His name is Mahmud."

The king said: "Show me your lasso." / He let his long locks fall to the floor

And said: "My lasso is my wavering locks, / And the king of the world is prey for it."

This speech affected Mahmud's soul / He hung his head and his cheeks burned like wood aflame.³⁶

The juxtaposition of this text with the image of Shirin looking at Khosrow leads to a kind of harmonization, in which the visual and the verbal elements of the page debate a shared theme.

How do the paintings work in conjunction with texts which are not narratives? The image on f. 159b responds to one of the embedded anecdotes from Nezāmi's *Haft Peykar* (Figure 4). It depicts the story's hero, Torktāzi, being handed a cup of wine by Torktāz, the fairy queen, who is about to undress in front of him but first enjoins him to close his eyes. He opens them to find himself back in the basket that transported him to her domain.³⁷ This story, in which the protagonist must unravel truth from sensible reality, and only recognizes what has happened to him when his adventure is over, is given a new interpretative slant by the marginal lyric poems. One by Shahid Balkhi³⁸ reads: "Like the narcissus and the rose, knowledge and the means / Do not bloom together in the garden / Whoever has the knowledge has no means / And whoever the means, little knowledge";³⁹ another by Ma'rufi Balkhi⁴⁰ states: "Bring the wine cup to me and let me sip from your lips / For your

³⁶For the text, see 'Attār, *Manteq al-teyr va elāhināmeḥ*, 305: *shahash goftā shekār-e to kodām ast / javābesh dād ke u mahmud nām ast / shahash goftā kamand-e khvish benemāy / sar-e zolf-e darāz afkand bar pāy / kamandam goft zolf-e biqarār ast / shah-e 'ālam kamandam rā shekār ast / asar kard in sokhan dar jān-e mahmud / foru afkand sar misukht chun 'ud.*

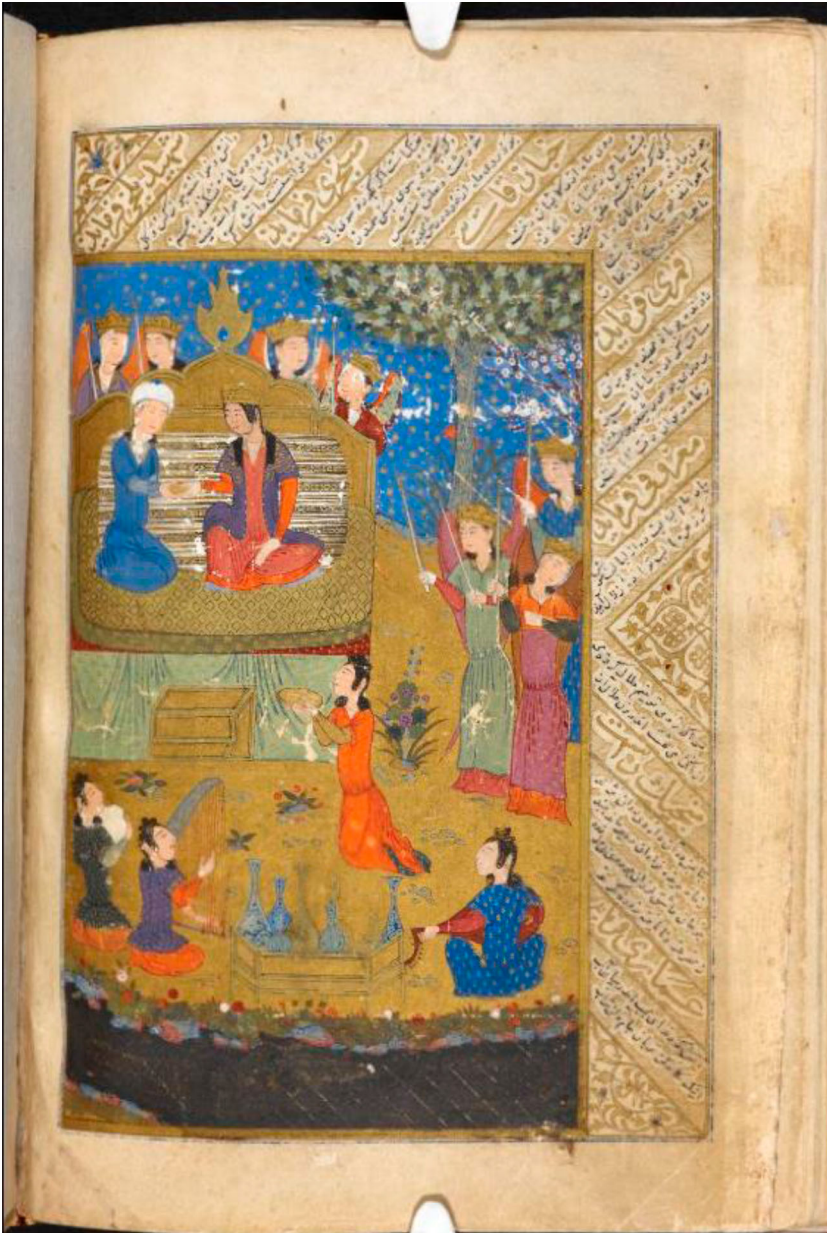
³⁷For an English translation of this passage, see Nezāmi Ganjavi, *The Haft Paykar*, 128-32.

³⁸Shahid (or perhaps preferably, Shuhayd) Balkhi was a poet and philosopher of the late ninth/early tenth centuries. See Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, 1: 20-1.

³⁹*Dānesh o khvāsteh cho narges o gol / har do dar bāgh nashekofīad be-ham / harke rā dānesh ast khvāsteh nist / o ānk rā khvāstast dānesh kam.* Cf. Lazard *Les premiers poètes persans*, 2: 31.

⁴⁰Ma'rufi is another important Sāmānid poet who specialized in lyric and satirical verse. See Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, 1: 31. This poem does not feature in the fragments collected by Lazard.

Figure 4. Add. MS. 27261 f. 159b: Torktāz and Torktāzi; marginal lyric and gnostic poems. © The British Library Board.



lips would turn poison into limpid wine / If I see your face, wine becomes licit for me / Since wine has overcome me, it must be licit";⁴¹ and finally, one ascribed to ʿAmāri says: "O wonder, they have lit a fire in the water / Look at that wine-cup and that wine."⁴²

As with the other examples given above, these lines do not break Nezāmi's text open and analyze it, but they offer a way of understanding the image by intersecting with it. In the first verse quoted here, the sardonic suggestion that knowledge and ability are diametrically opposed parallels Torkāzi's postponed recognition of what has happened to him. In the second poem, the lover's kiss is aligned with a kind of cure-all that alters our powers of perception for the better. The half-line complements Nezāmi's story, in which the protagonist's hard lesson in love changes his understanding of the world. The last poem is ekphrastic, and can be read as a playful appeal to the viewer to look at the image of the two would-be lovers drinking wine.

It has been contended that the paintings in the first half of Add. MS. 27261 "deal with causes and effects. The narrative elements of poetry are emphasized."⁴³ Yet this characterization only addresses one aspect of how these images function on the page. They are imbricated in a set of meanings which the viewer creates by moving their eyes between image and text. On one level, the painting on f. 159b visualizes an episode from *Haft Peykar*; on another it is simply a decorative scene which recalls many other depictions of enthroned lovers; but on a third level, it is an analogy which intersects with the themes and topoi of the lyric poetry that surrounds it. When viewed in conjunction with the image, the marginal poems impart a life lesson, enjoining the viewer to approach love with their eyes open. They also underscore the process of thinking through visual experience, a theme with which Nezāmi's text is concerned, but which—obviously—takes on a heightened significance within the context of the painting.

Two final examples fully demonstrate the complexity of text-image relationships in MS. Add. 27261. The double-page painting on ff. 362b-3a provides a schematic bird's eye view of the city of Mecca, its surrounding hills, and the Haram, which is populated by white-robed pilgrims in their state of ritual purity. Angels inhabit the sky over the sanctuary. Text projects into the right-hand page: the margin speaks of cures for ailments which commonly affect travelers, such as gangrene of the feet,⁴⁴ while the text block discusses the formulae that pilgrims on Hajj must pronounce and the things that are forbidden to them in *ehrām*—sex, swearing, the recollection of sex in the presence of women, and "sin." The painting is not an illustration of these concepts, but rather a visualization of the promise of what awaits the pilgrim who can overcome what they

⁴¹*Beyār jām labālab deb az labālab shurbash / ke zabreh bā lab-e to bādeh-ye zolāl āyad / man agar ruy-e to binam halāl gardad mey / az ānk mey bejast andarun halāl āyad.*

⁴²*Ātash kardand ey ʿajab dar miyān-e āb / ink negāh kon to be-ān jām o ān sharāb.* The image of fire in water refers to red wine.

⁴³Roxburgh, "The Aesthetics of Aggregation," 125.

⁴⁴For a print edition of this text, see Esmāʿil ibn Hasan Jorjāni, *Khoffi-ye ʿalāʾi*, 85-6.

discuss: the perils of travel to Arabia on land and by sea; and the invalidation of pilgrimage through breaking *ehṛām*.⁴⁵ It builds on both texts.

Similar processes are in play on f. 371b (Figure 5). The painting depicts a patient sitting up in a makeshift bed while a doctor feels his pulse. Behind the physician stands a serving girl holding a tray of poultices. The marginal text is part of a medical treatise which discusses how doctors should diagnose the sick, and how they should alter their treatment methods after observing their patients and taking their vital signs.⁴⁶ The text recognizes that the body must not be treated to the exclusion of the psyche: a doctor should inquire as to the patient's sleep, so as to ensure that their brain is sound. Some patients also require their loved ones and intimates to stay with them in order to regain their strength. The text of the *matn* on the previous and facing pages provides diagnostic methods for interpreting dreams. One table states that patients should name the objects which they see in their dreams, and that the first letter of each object will determine whether the dreams are well- or ill-omened. Since it depicts a figure in bed, the image on f. 371b takes on a double significance: it is as relevant to the text on dream interpretation as it is to the treatise on medicine, emphasizing the convergence of psychic and physical approaches in the treatment of sickness.

Visual and Verbal Play: The Case of *Rowzat al-Monajjemīn*

The text of the *matn* of the last ten folios of the anthology (ff. 533b-543b) consists of the chapter on the forms of the constellations from *Rowzat al-monajjemīn* (*The Astronomers' Garden*), a work by the eleventh-century polymath Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyr which deals with astronomy and astrology.⁴⁷ These pages are, for the most part, bordered by vignettes which at first glance seem to be discrete and randomly arranged. For example, the margin of f. 537b contains two separate monochrome scenes, one depicting a male figure out hawking on horseback for ducks, the other showing a jackal tearing into the stomach of a camel, a composition which recalls an episode from *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.⁴⁸ The margin of f. 538b contains images of a pair of lovers gazing at one another; Khosrow looking at the bathing Shirin; a stork; and two rams in combat. As these examples suggest, some of the vignettes featured throughout this section recall moments from well-known narratives, while

⁴⁵On *ehṛām* see Wensinck and Jomier, "Iḥrām."

⁴⁶Jorjānī's methods of treatment include the making of poultices, something which is referenced in the painting. For a print edition of the text, see Esmā'il ibn Hasan Jorjānī, *Khoffī-ye 'alā'i*, 123-5.

⁴⁷For a biography of Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyr, see Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyr, *Rowzat al-monajjemīn, nob-yāzdah*. Akhvān Zanjānī's edition is a facsimile in rather unclear *naskh*.

⁴⁸This scene is formally quite close to a sketch which depicts a lion, two jackals and crows tearing into the stomach of a camel, and which is found in the Diez album A. fol. 72 p. 6, no. 3. Roxburgh, "Persian Drawing", 76 n. 94 connects the Diez image to the *Kalīla wa-Dimna* manuscript made for Baysunghur Mirzā in Herat in 1429. The episode from *Kalīla wa-Dimna* with which these images engage is an embedded anecdote that tells of how a leopard, a jackal and a crow tricked a camel into allowing himself to be killed in order to feed an injured lion.

Figure 5. Add. MS. 27261 ff. 371b-2a: A doctor treating his patient; tables on dream interpretation. © The British Library Board.



others are thematically and technically reminiscent of near-contemporary preparatory sketches and single-page drawings.

It is possible that ff. 533b-543b were not originally intended to be decorated in this fashion, because there is a breakdown in the arrangement of *Rowzat al-monajjemīn*, and several folios are absent. This can be deduced from the fact that the northern constellations are incorrectly intermixed with the southern ones,⁴⁹ and several constellations are also missing.⁵⁰ There are further issues with the marginal text, Shabestari's (d. 740/1340) *Sā'ādāt-nāmeḥ* (*The Book of Felicity*), which breaks off at f. 553b,

⁴⁹Ff. 534 and 535b are misplaced. F. 534b details the second two southern constellations and should lead onto the text of f. 541a, which picks up with the southern constellation Hydra. It appears that the confusion over the order of the constellations occurred when the text was being copied, since f. 535 is not coherent: f. 535a concerns Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, which are the first two northern constellations in the lists of stars, while f. 535b concerns Andromeda, which is the twentieth of the northern constellations. Ff. 536a-537b cover the northern constellations from Draco to Pegasus, which should come before Andromeda. ff. 538a-540b cover the Zodiac and are coherent.

⁵⁰There ought to be another page of text after f. 533b with the first two southern constellations (Cetus and Orion), and another three folios from f. 535b with the northern constellations from Boötes to Ophiuchus.

then reappears in the margin of f. 539b, then breaks off again, before finally trailing off without actually ending on f. 540b.⁵¹ The confusion begins on f. 534a, where the margin has been left free of both text and image. If we follow the order of the constellations, f. 534 ought to be placed before f. 541, where the margin is also free of text and image. Assuming that the text-block was ruled and illuminated first, that the central text was copied next, that the marginal text was written out after that, and that the marginal paintings and drawings were executed last of all, it seems possible that the mix-up with the arrangement of the central text meant that it was not considered expedient to copy out the marginal text, and so the artist filled in the margins of this section with vignettes.

Although the decorated margins of ff. 533b-543b may not have been part of the anthology's original plan, we can still consider the artist's approach to filling in the blank spaces. Contrary to prevailing scholarly opinion, the marginal images often do appear to engage with the themes of *Rowzat al-monajjemīn*, in an oblique and playful way which is dependent on a close reading of the text as a whole. In some cases, the astrological import of the paintings and drawings is obvious. For example, the margins of ff. 534b-535a, surrounding text which discusses the constellations of Canis Minor, Argo, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, depict air, earth, fire and water, the four elements (*tabāʾī* or *arkān*) from which Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyṛ and the astrologers who preceded him claimed that life and the planetary bodies were constituted (Figure 6).⁵² Each of the scenes is inhabited by a sampling of the beings associated with the given element: fire contains angels, birds inhabit the air, waterfowl, a turtle and a sea monster churn the water, and big cats roam the earth. Fire and air are depicted above water and earth, reflecting the idea that the former were "lighter" and the latter "heavier."⁵³ The stars, the four elements and animal life were thought to be closely connected: like several of his predecessors, Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyṛ contended that the natures of each species of living creature were determined by the influences of the constellations and the planetary bodies. For example, elephants, ducks, cranes and crocodiles were governed by the moon, while lions, wolves, leopards and birds of prey were to be associated with Mars.⁵⁴ The inclusion of animals on ff. 534b-535a and more broadly throughout the marginalia of this section should not, therefore, strike us as random, but rather as a basic

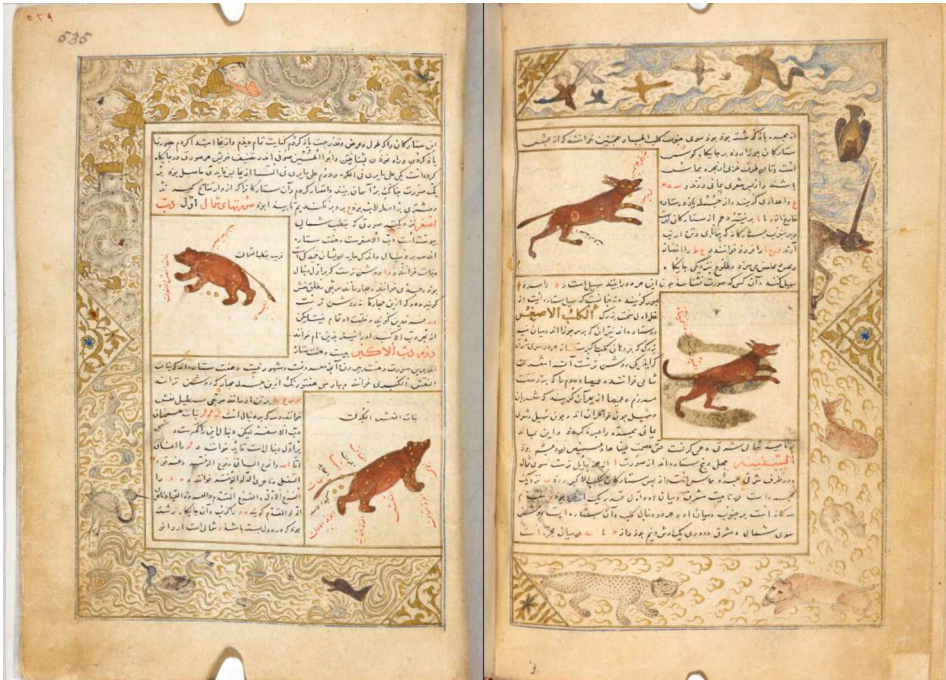
⁵¹Compare the text of f. 539b and f. 540b with Shabestari, *Majmūʿeh-ye āsār*, 241.

⁵²For Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyṛ's introduction to the four elements, see Add. MS. 27261, f. 387b. The simplest discussion of the elements' role in astrology is given in Abū Maʿshar, *Kitāb al-mudkhal*, 2:7-8: "The second type [of science] is the science of the decrees [of the stars], which consists of knowledge of every planet and sphere and of the particular nature of their indications; and of what comes into being and happens because of the force of their different movements and their effect on this world (which is located below the sphere of the moon) in terms of altering destinies and changing the elements, which are fire, air, water and earth; and [the effect of the planets and spheres] on the things that are made from these elements, in terms of individual animals, plants and stones."

⁵³See Add. MS. 27261, f. 387b.

⁵⁴Add. MS. 27261, f. 393a.

Figure 6. Add. MS. 27261 ff. 534b-5a: Astrological treatise; the four elements. © The British Library Board.



aspect of the study of cosmography, creation and the effects exerted by the heavenly bodies on life on earth.

In some cases, it is possible that the vignettes of animals and humans seen throughout this section also intersect obliquely with Shahmardān ibn Abi l-Kheyri's prognostications concerning the events that come to pass under the influence of certain heavenly bodies. Kings go hunting when Saturn is in the twelfth house, and they behave towards the people with clemency and justice when it is in the eleventh house.⁵⁵ Cloven-hooved animals are in fine fettle when Mars is in the second house.⁵⁶ The images that we see in the margins of ff. 536b-537b—showing flourishing animal life, a subject prostrate before a crowned ruler, and a princely figure out hunting—serve as visual exempla of the extent to which the heavenly bodies, which were moved in turn by God, supposedly dictated the natures of all humans and animals.

Three sets of marginal images in this section of the manuscript may operate in a more ludic fashion than those examined thus far, each necessitating a close reading

⁵⁵Add. MS. 27261, f. 458a.

⁵⁶Add. MS. 27261, f. 457b. It is probably needless to add that the different sources do not always agree on which animals should be associated with which heavenly bodies. A useful list is provided in Āmoli, *Nafā'es al-fonun*, 3:289-98.

of the first text in the anthology—Nezāmi Ganjavi's *Khamseh*, which makes considerable use of astrological themes in its poetic imagery. The marginalia of f. 533b depict two armies confronting one another at the top of the page; an angel holding a bridle in the right-hand margin; and, at the bottom, Bahrām Gur fighting a dragon, an episode drawn from Nezāmi's *Haft Peykar* which is the subject of a painting earlier in the manuscript (Figure 7). The images on f. 533b can all be viewed as playful visual puns relating to aspects of astrology: the constellation Auriga is known as *Mumsik al-ā'inna* ("he who holds the reins") in Arabic, which may help to elucidate the otherwise curious iconography of the angel carrying the bridle.⁵⁷ Bahrām is another name for the planet Mars,⁵⁸ the planet of war; the theme of warfare explains the battle going on at the top of the page.⁵⁹ The dragon represents the Moon's descending node (*al-dhanab*, i.e. the tail [of the dragon]), which is famously ill-starred in astrology.⁶⁰ It is important to stress that the reading of Bahrām's encounter with the dragon as a parallel for the conjunction of the moon's descending node with Mars is not of the artist's invention, since Nezāmi himself makes the astrological aspect of the episode a clear subtext in the *Khamseh*.⁶¹ However, the fact that the artist picked up on this and chose to reference it here suggests that he was engaged in close study of the anthology's texts, and that he expected the book's readers to do the same in order to understand the joke.

The visual recollection of *Khosrow o Shirin* on f. 538b is based on a similarly detailed reading of astrological imagery in the text of the *Khamseh* (Figure 8). When relating how Khosrow came across Shirin bathing in a spring, Nezāmi compares his hero to "the sun, who had wandered from his course," and his heroine to "the moon, whose place was in the Pleiades."⁶² Khosrow is unaware that this moon is destined to "descend in his constellation of the Zodiac (*dar borj-e u*)."⁶³ As she finishes bathing and arises from the water, Shirin is described as "the moon ascending in Aquarius," causing Khosrow to rain tears,⁶⁴ the basic astrological concept being that

⁵⁷Auriga is not usually represented as an angel. The Greek iconography is of a charioteer with one leg crossed over the other, holding a bridle; on Islamic celestial globes and in books of fixed stars, the constellation is sometimes depicted as a male figure, wearing a headdress, who either kneels or stands. In the Islamic representations, the reins are often replaced with an object that looks like a quirt. The angel on f. 533b retains the basic posture of Auriga, with bent or crossed legs, and holds the bridle.

⁵⁸See Add. MS. 27261, f. 387b: "Marikh-Bahrām."

⁵⁹On the martial influence of Mars see also Add. MS. 27261, f. 520b.

⁶⁰On the maleficence of *al-dhanab*, see Add. MS. 27261 f. 521b; Kunitzsch, "The Description of the Night," 107-8. A full study of the moon's ascending and descending nodes and their representation is given in Hartner, "The Pseudoplanetary Nodes." On *al-dhanab*, see *ibid.*, 120-1. A more recent study is Kuehn, *The Dragon*, 136-44.

⁶¹See the brief remarks in Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 218-19, n.44, 218.

⁶²*Ke bāshād jā-ye ān mah bar sorayyā... bedān cheshmeh ke jā-ye māv gashbeh / 'ajab bin kāftāb az rāv gashbeh.* Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 135.

⁶³*Nabud āgāh ke ān shabrang o ān māv / be-borj-e u forud āyand nāgāh.* Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 135. The line has the more prosaic primary meaning that Shirin will dismount from her horse in Khosrow's castle.

⁶⁴*Feshānd az dideh bārān sabābi / ke tāle' shod qamar dar borj-e ābi.* Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 135.

Figure 7. Add. MS. 27261 f. 533b: Astrological treatise; the descent of the moon in Mars. © The British Library Board.

The manuscript page is titled "اندازه پستایان صورتها" (Measurement of the positions of the planets). It contains a table with 10 columns and 10 rows of numbers, likely representing planetary positions or astrological calculations. The text is written in Persian script. The page is decorated with illustrations of celestial figures and animals, including a woman in a blue and gold dress, a man in a red and gold outfit, and various animals like a lion, a bear, and a horse. The background is filled with intricate patterns and designs.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Figure 8. ff. 538b-9a: Astrological treatise. © The British Library Board.



when the moon rises in Aquarius it generates rainfall.⁶⁵ The artist’s visual recollection of the text at this point of the manuscript connects not narrative action, but poetic metaphor, with what was perceived to be scientific fact. This not only links different parts of the anthology together, but argues that literature can help to instruct the reader in scientific principles, and vice versa. We can therefore go further than the contention that

the decoration of the pages on which these scientific texts were written down also links them—by way of rich ornamental motifs, animals, dragons, Chinese-style bands and clouds, scenes from Nizami’s *Khamsa* and cartouches with Iskandar Sultan’s name, titles and lines of poetry—ostensibly to the other genres of knowledge and to Timurid courtly patronage for the arts.⁶⁶

Rather, the marginal decoration of ff.533b-543b acts as a kind of visual analogy to Shahmardān ebn Abi l-Kheyri’s scientific text.

⁶⁵See Add. MS. 27261, ff. 459a, 460b. The Moon in Aquarius (*dalu*) can cause ‘much rain and a southerly wind’ (*bād-i janub*). A southerly wind is also called a ‘deviant wind’ (*bād-i nakbā*), q.v. Dehkhodā.

⁶⁶Brentjes, “The Interplay of Science, Art and Literature,” 463.

The vignette recalling *Leyli va Majnun* on f. 539a is equally involved. In the top left-hand margin, Majnun kneels surrounded by a fawn and lions (Figure 8). A shadowy dog and hare run across the bottom of the page. These two seemingly separate episodes actually feature together in a single line of Nezāmi's text. When describing how Majnun retreated to the desert and established harmony among the beasts, the poet adds, as an aside: "The dog made peace with the hare / The lioness suckled the fawn."⁶⁷ The first of these two images can be interpreted as an astrological joke. The dog is the constellation Canis Major (Sirius), while the hare is the constellation Lepus. These two bodies are positioned next to one another in the heavens, and so the dog is often shown ceaselessly attempting to catch the hare in textual representations and on celestial globes (Figure 9).⁶⁸

The vignette of the dog and the hare in the margin of f. 539a mimics these kinds of representations, and it therefore performs at least three functions simultaneously: it is decorative; it is an evocation of two constellations; and it is a visual puzzle which can only be related to the other vignettes on the same page through a close reading of the *Khamseh*. Nezāmi's text is particularly suited to being mined in this way because the poet integrates astrological imagery into the body of his narratives and engages in extensive descriptions of the constellations. An additional reason why the painter may have responded to this particular section of the text in the margin of f. 539a is that it is followed by a long and memorable passage, which extends to several pages in the print editions of the text, describing each constellation and planet visible to Majnun in the night sky.⁶⁹

The marginal images surveyed in this section cannot be considered illustrative or diagrammatic, yet they do engage with texts. Some of them are perhaps best described as analogical motifs which develop connections between *Rowzat al-monajjemīn* and the *Khamseh*. They also allow the painter to reference levels of imagery in Nezāmi's text which—while central to the experience of the *Khamseh* as it is read—would be difficult to represent in visual form without compromising our understanding of plot. This evidence brings into question the assumption that vignettes such as the scene of Majnun and the animals in the margin of f. 538a are visual "interpolations," inserted into the margins with the primary intention of subverting the viewer's expectations of what they should see on the decorated page.⁷⁰ Instead, the reverse seems to be true: these images are designed to challenge the viewer to consider how an apparently random vignette should be integrated within the book's program. While it is true that viewers are not obliged to read the text of the anthology, the primary aim of these marginal images is not to "promote, or reinforce, a habit of looking that did not require reading."⁷¹ They foster the viewer's combination of the modes of close

⁶⁷ *Sag bā khargush solb kardeh / ābu-bareh shir-e shir khurdeh*. Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 395.

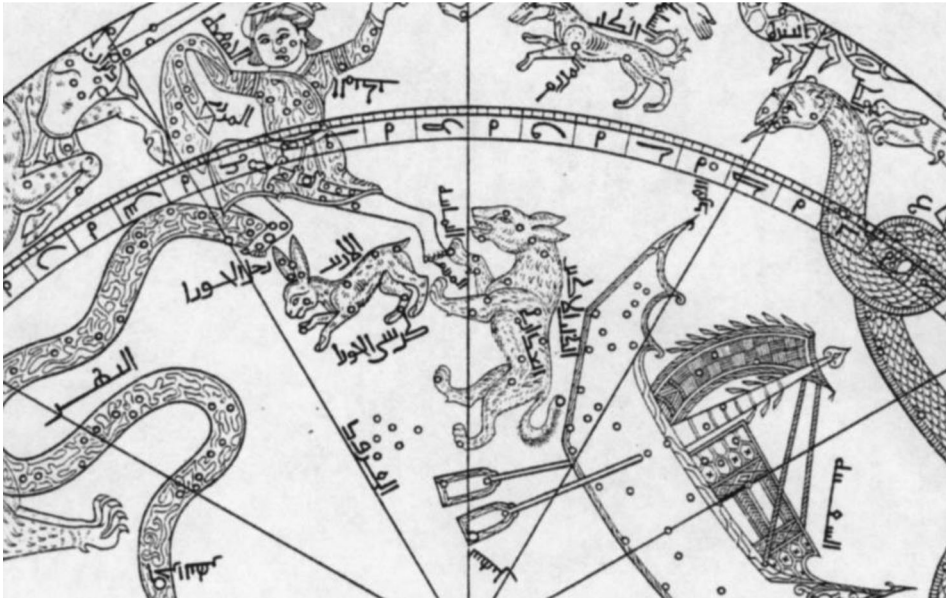
⁶⁸ See Savage-Smith and Belloli, *Islamicate Celestial Globes*, 194-7 (images 195-6); Dorn, "Description of the Celestial Globe," Pl. B.

⁶⁹ Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Kolliyāt*, 398-401.

⁷⁰ Cf. Roxburgh, "The Aesthetics of Aggregation," 126-7, 135-6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

Figure 9. Detail of Dorn 1829 Pl. B (Image out of copyright).



reading, memorization and looking. These are visual puns that depend, primarily, on an associative way of thinking which can link images with words.

Inventio and Experiment

I suggest that the pairings of text, marginal text and image studied in this paper both reflect critical ways of thinking and are designed to inculcate them in the viewer, and that they should be attributed to the careful design of the manuscript's editors. By "editors," I mean a group which may well have included the painter, the paper-ruler, the two calligraphers—Mohammad al-Halvā'i and Nāser al-kāteb—as well as the literary and intellectual figures who manipulated the texts. Qevām al-Din Mohammad Yazdi's (d. 830/1426 or 27) list of the notable men associated with Eskandar's court includes figures such as the astronomer Ghiyās al-Din Jamshid b. Mas'ud b. Mahmud Kāshi (d. 832/1429), who contributed the epistle *Mokhtasar dar 'elm-e hey'at* (*A Compendium on the Science of Astronomy*) to Add. MS. 27261,⁷² as well as numerous physicians, musicians, artists and religious scholars.⁷³ Could a select group of Eskandar's inner circle of boon companions (*nodamā'*), with their differing competencies and specialisms, have edited the volume collectively?

⁷²See Richard, "Un témoignage inexploité," 61.

⁷³See *ibid.*, 53-8.

The research of intellectual historians has paved the way for us to explore the extent to which the sorts of visual and verbal puzzles which predominate in Add. MS. 27261 intersect with early fifteenth-century theoretical discussions of reading. As Melvin-Koushki shows, the letrist thinker Sā'en al-Din Torkeh, who compiled several books under Eskandar Soltān's patronage and was affiliated with his court in Isfahan for a time, discusses critical frameworks in his epistle on Lettrism (*Resāleh-ye horuf*), which was written in 817/1414 in Shiraz.⁷⁴ In this treatise, Torkeh expounds a hermeneutic system in which differing interpretative systems apply to the different ranks of men; it is only Torkeh's elite—prophets and letrists themselves—who are capable of piercing through appearances and understanding essential meanings.⁷⁵ This can be understood as an approach to the critical analysis of visual experience. Similarly suggestive comments come in the introduction to Torkeh's Persian commentary on *Nazm al-sulūk* (*The Poem of the Way*, also known as *Nazm al-durr* and *al-tā'iyya al-kubrā*), the long mystical poem by Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), where it is essentially implied that visual experience is subjective, because people construct meaning out of stimuli in accordance with their abilities.⁷⁶

We should perhaps be cautious about seeing Torkeh's highly abstracted and intellectualized framework—of which the above discussion is a simplification—as one that would have exerted a broad appeal outside purely scholarly networks in his own time. We should also remember that many of the texts in Add. MS. 27261 are commentaries and relatively simple introductions to different branches of knowledge, not necessarily the sort of texts designed for consumption by one of Torkeh's "men of might and vision."⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it is worth considering the notion that three functions of Add. MS. 27261 may have been to spur its readers to discover connections between things intuitively, to test ideas and think through their consequences, and to look beyond formal appearances to find underlying patterns. It is conventional among scholars to argue that the books produced for royal Timurid patrons projected their power, legitimized their rule, or instructed them in the elements of Persian culture. Add. MS. 27261 is more sophisticated: it offers the reader ways of experimenting with critical thought. The inventive potential of the book may be one reason why Eskandar Soltān had so many anthologies made for him. His other anthologies may strike us as similar to Add. MS. 27261 in their content, but it is possible that the juxtapositions which they create are very different. Variations in the relationships between central and marginal texts, the rate of illustration, and the presence or absence of marginal images would have all contributed to the creation of different juxtapositions, and therefore different dialogues, on each page.

⁷⁴Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science," 88-90; edition and translation, *ibid.* 463-90. It is worth noting that a *ghazal* by Torkeh appears on Add. MS. 27261 ff. 247a-b.

⁷⁵Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science," 465; English trans. 478.

⁷⁶Torkeh, *Sharh-e Nazm al-dorr*, 6. A full translation of this passage is given in Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science," 401-7. For a broader discussion of why and how we should engage with the critical thought of writers such as Torkeh, see Melvin-Koushki, "*Tahqiq vs. Taqlid*."

⁷⁷A reference to Q.38:45: "Remember our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men of might and vision." Torkeh uses the phrase to designate his elite stratum of readers.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to emphasize two basic ideas. The first is the importance of pre-modern editors, a group of people whose role is virtually never discussed in modern scholarship on medieval Persian manuscript culture. Here I have advanced a strong model of editorship, in which the concerns of the book's makers to manipulate old material to new effect was ultimately far more important than what any of the texts' authors had meant to say. The second, linked, concept is that implicit frameworks for interpretation can be as sophisticated and complex as explicit analysis. The juxtaposition of material on the physical page offered one way for editors to guide readers to create meaning by looking and thinking, and to discover connections which altered the significance of what they saw. Add. MS. 27261 was a tightly controlled intellectual, literary and artistic project.

ORCID

James White  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3385-6134>

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