

intellectual culture” (p. 201). Insofar as anyone might imagine that culture to have been aloof from surrounding political goings on, this is a welcome dismissal. But otherwise, it is hard to think of an early modern culture that did not bear these features.

Chapter 6, “Incorporating Sanskrit into the Persianate World,” discusses courtly Persian translations of the Sanskrit texts, especially the *Ramayana* and the *Razmnama*. The penultimate section of the chapter comprises a survey of Persian royal lineages (*rājāvalī*), illustrating how ruling elites increasingly came to inscribe themselves into chronologies that integrated pre-Islamic and Islamic rule of India into a single stream. The final section offers a valuable conspectus of Dara Shikuh’s legacy, reassessing his interests in Sanskrit as far narrower than those of his predecessors and thus possibly having compromised his efforts to win the Mughal throne.

The conclusion offers a valuable characterization of the Mughal court as a frontier or contact zone in which “members of largely discrete traditions came into contact with one another” (p. 232). It concludes with a reflection on the value for “imperial history” of the methods Truschke has adopted in this book. With reference to the latter, she writes: “Chief among the concerns of those who want to parse imperial formations ought to be literature, aesthetics, and cross cultural exchanges” (p. 247). It is worth recalling, though, that for Michel Foucault representations derived their value for the analysis of power from their locus in institutions and practices embedded within them. The human subject was thus not a freestanding recipient of such representations but situated within an identifiably empirical and constraining locus. This means that traditional scholarly consideration of, say, the *mansabdārī* or Mughal military-administrative system as a technology of imperial power cannot be wholly displaced by attention to elite preoccupations with poetry and history. Rather, what remains to be answered is how such elite processes of subject formation may have related to the devolution of imperial power into nonelite locales, what if anything such aesthetics of royal self-fashioning may have meant in those locales, and what institutions outside courts may have mediated the power of the central and subimperial Mughal courts.

Notwithstanding these reservations, the benefits of this book make it richly worth the while of cultural historians of Mughal India and literary scholars of precolonial Persian, Sanskrit, and South Asian vernacular literatures. All of them will discover in *Culture of Encounters* information on Persian and Sanskrit’s roughly century long affair with each other that is either unavailable or highly dispersed in any European language. At a time of rising Hindu jingoism in India, nonscholarly readers, too, may have their historical imaginations beneficially complicated by this accessibly written study of the last flourishing of Sanskrit literary culture in the heart of Islamic imperial power.

JAROSLAV STETKEVYCH, *The Hunt in Arabic Poetry: From Heroic to Lyric to Metapoetic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016). Pp. 368. \$34.00 paper. ISBN: 9780268041519

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From scenes in the prehistoric cave art of southwestern Europe to Hollywood’s *Alien vs. Predator* series, the struggle between hunter and prey has entertained humankind from our earliest days. Mythic, political, or fantastic, stories about the hunt capture audiences of hunter-gatherers, nomads, agriculturalists, and urban industrialists alike. Arabic poetry is no exception. As *The Hunt in Arabic Poetry* demonstrates, hunting was an important topic from pre-Islamic times onwards, although the subject seems to have lost prominence after the Abbasid period. Hunters were either human

or nonhuman. For the prey, the stakes could hardly have been higher: the aim of the hunt in these poems was not to capture and tame, but to kill.

The book consists of nine chapters, seven of which have been published previously as articles, the earliest in 1996, the latest in 2013. When collections of single-authored articles are assembled into monographs, the result is not always a coherent argument, which develops from one chapter to the next. In this book, however, we do have a high degree of coherence, which stems from the chronological sequence of the poems analyzed in the individual chapters, and so a narrative of evolution. (The sequence of original publications also mirrors the chronology of the analyzed poetry.)

The principal trajectory of that poetic evolution, discussed in Chapters 1–7, leads from a bifurcated representation of the hunt in the classical tripartite *qasīda* to the single-themed poem of the hunt (*ṭardiyya*) of the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods. The final two chapters are devoted to modern Arabic poetry; Chapter 8 discusses poems by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī and Ahmad ‘Abd al-Mu‘tī Hijāzī, Chapter 9 a poem by Muhammad ‘Afīfī Matar. Here, the thematic complex of the hunt, of persecution and flight, is adapted creatively to the radically different circumstances of modern life.

The transformation of poetic representations of the hunt from the *qasīda* to the *ṭardiyya* forms the backbone of the bulk of this account. In the *qasīda*, the hunting theme is present in the second part, the *raḥīl* (the journey through the desert), when the poet appears as the “wretched hunter” who hunts on foot and for subsistence. The protagonist here, however, is the animal he chases. Following the *raḥīl* conventions of form, mood, and narrative, we can assume that since the animal, typically a stock character of the “animal panels” of the *raḥīl*, also stands for the poet’s mount, the prey has to survive and the hunter has to be unsuccessful. An altogether different hunt emerges in the third and final part of the *qasīda*, whether *fakhr* or *madīḥ*. In either conclusion, the protagonist is the heroic and successful hunter whom Stetkevych classifies as “chivalrous” since he hunts on horseback. The technical contrast between the two forms of hunting is reflected in Arabic terminology: while *ṣayd* or *qanṣ* is used for the type of hunt evoked in the *raḥīl*, the chivalrous hunt of the third part is referred to as *ṭard*.

This terminology substantiates Stetkevych’s argument that the courtly setting and the hunt on horseback were critical for the association between the third section of the *qasīda* and the all-dominating hunting theme of the later *ṭardiyya*. While both types, wretched and chivalrous hunter, had a semiotic legacy, the former became a poacher and disappeared. For most of the study, the author effectively traces some of these semiotic and structural transformations. He points out, for example, that in a poem by the Umayyad al-Shamardal, the hunt was clearly of the chivalrous kind, but the horse is not mentioned a single time (p. 55). Abu Nuwas stands “in the creative epicenter of the genre-emergence of the *ṭardiyyah*” (p. 128), while Ibn al-Mu‘tazz “realizes the full lyrical potential of the Arabic hunt poem and moves beyond the mere objective description to lyrical affect” (p. 139). After the genre has seen a shift to the descriptive, Abu Firas al-Ḥamdānī’s choice of *urjūza muzdawīja* meant a one-off experiment in narrative.

As with any other publication, readers should know what to expect from this book. Stetkevych assumes familiarity with and acceptance of his approach to Arabic poetry, which is in part anthropological. His interpretations are also marked by a formalist inflection of the principle that essence lies in origins.

In practice, the former means that the *qasīda* is read as a rite of passage. To some extent, this makes good sense. The image of the young hunter setting out for his first hunt and returning with meat is a common pattern in human history. The chivalrous hunter of the third part, however, presents a problem once hunting is understood as a significant social and political ritual. The wretched hunter for subsistence and the chivalrous hunter are several social strata apart. (A fuller discussion of Stetkevych’s approach, which takes aspects of anthropology and of social and political history into consideration, might be the subject for future research.)

The formalist perspective means that poems are commonly interpreted against the backdrop of the evolution of the *qaṣīda* and its three parts. Analyses are based on assumptions of associations of moods and themes, of original purposes of *raḥīl* or *madiḥ* compared to which post-*qaṣīda* poems appear first and foremost as reworkings. Stetkevych thus attributes to the *ṭardiyya* “a heightened form-consciousness” and the need to establish validity principally in terms of the poetic tradition (p. 2). The reader needs to look elsewhere for explanations of this principle and why, for example, Stetkevych’s explorations of form, imagery, and the poet’s position within the hunt should be read with reference to earlier poetic traditions rather than independently.

Stetkevych identifies his approach explicitly as text-centric and consequently does not explore the question of to what extent audiences would have been aware of the earlier poetic tradition and so made the associations that Stetkevych imputes. The reader’s contribution to a poem’s meaning is therefore downplayed, even dismissed, although this does not appear to affect Stetkevych’s own role in interpreting the poems.

What readers should not expect is a study that contributes to the cultural history of the hunt. Stetkevych is quite explicit in his analytical priorities, his “passion” being “mainly for what poetry did or is capable of doing for and with hunting” (p. 2). He includes very few references to social history; indeed, he is somewhat dismissive of social history in the introduction, where he appears to acknowledge that the selection of poetry may have been occasionally “compromised by extra-poetic decisions, for example, those of mere social history” (p. 3), occasions which he does not want to disguise. As a reason for such compromise, he mentions “to fill in an extra-literary vacuum of cold information” (p. 3). If there is anything but a rhetorical and polemical purpose in creating such a contrast between “passionate” literary analysis and “cold” social history, the present reviewer fails to recognize it.

That the shift from two-part hunt to *ṭardiyya* is consistent with any number of social and political transformations is easy enough to imagine and indeed finds confirmation in other studies such as Thomas Allsen’s *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). It is here, too, that particularly promising opportunities for future research become obvious. To mention but one example, the chapter on Abu Nuwas and the Abbasid *ṭardiyya* has the title “The Discreet Pleasures of the Courtly Hunt.” The “discreet” nature of the hunter lies, according to Stetkevych, in the hunter and poet’s almost invisible persona: “rather than being the foregrounded agent of the hunt, the ‘Abbāsīd hunter abstracts himself almost wholly from his own effective and affective centrality in the hunt” (p. 93). In this representation of the *ṭardiyya*, the hunting animals, i.e., falcon and dog, take center stage and the poet’s role is to describe them rather than his own activity. What greater contrast could there be between this “discreet” courtly hunter and Allsen’s royal hunter who enacts his claim for cosmological, political, and cultural significance in a hunt of such large scale that it was impossible to miss? Of course, the historian and the scholar of Arabic poetry need not tell the same story. The tension between the two accounts should rather be an occasion for further study of the social, cultural, and political functions of ritual and poetry, of patrons and audiences, and of just how much social reality the poems capture. The “wretched hunter,” for instance, may have disappeared in the *ṭardiyya* and he may not figure in the royal hunt either, but that does not mean that subsistence hunting ceased.

Likewise, and as is obvious from Stetkevych’s bibliography, a fair amount of scholarship exists concerning other literary productions around the hunt, mainly the so-called “technical treatises.” These texts deal with issues of training and hunting, but are also much concerned with the health and care of birds of prey and other hunting animals and thus not primarily with the activity of hunting itself. Stetkevych mentions these treatises a few times in passing without being specific about their contents or circumstances of production. A closer inspection yields relevant results. In his discussion of the origins of falconry and poetry about falconry, for instance, the author refers to an anecdote cited by al-Damiri (d. 808) in his book on animals. The story identifies the Byzantine court as the setting where falconry was first practiced and does not speak of Arabian origins (p. 56). The most prominent of the medieval Arabic technical treatises, however, a book

often referred to as “Adham-Ghitrif work” that dates to the early Abbasid or even late Umayyad period, presents a series of anecdotes about the origins of the practice of hunting with birds of prey. In this compilation, Byzantines stand alongside Persians as well as Arabs and Turks. (The compiler associates the different rulers with different kinds of birds. In Stetkevych’s study such ornithological differences are not made and birds of prey are variably referred to as falcons, hawks, or even eagles.)

Another area for future research of some promise concerns the period that falls between Chapters 7 and 8 in the present book. Stetkevych ends his main selection with a short section on Kushajim whose death falls in the third quarter of the 10th century. Having observed earlier that “it is a melancholy sight to observe a lyrical genre such as the *ṭardiyyah* agonize and die as joy in the courtly hunt itself died” (p. 4), Stetkevych then attributes this development to the fact that “the *ṭardiyyah* found itself ever more strongly enmeshed in trends that were urbanizing, mercantile, and socially bourgeois-like” (p. 203). The choice of words here is infelicitous as in a few other references to social and political history. If this is the “cold information” of social history, it will be too vague for many of those primarily concerned with social and material approaches to the past. Upon consideration of other academic publications, the implication of a parallel decline of practice and poetry might be hard to maintain. (Historians of hunting may also want to know that the correct reference to ‘Abd al-Ḥamid al-Katib’s *Risala fi Wasf al-Sayd is Jamharat Rasa’il al-‘Arab fi ‘Usur al-‘Arabiyya al-Zahira*, vol. 2, *al-‘Asr al-Umawi*, ed. Ahmad Zaki Safwat [Cairo, 1937], 544–48.)

While those who are already acquainted with Stetkevych’s work will welcome this publication as a convenient access point to the scholar’s publications on the subject of the hunt in Arabic poetry, those without such prior familiarity might find their reading experience frustrating. Given that the articles were revised for republication, it would have been easy to rework them in such a way as to make them accessible to a wider readership. What emerges as a main thesis of the book, for example, the formal evolution from *qaṣīda* to *ṭardiyya*, is presented a number of times. Some of these repetitions could have been replaced by a few introductory comments about Stetkevych’s approach as well as more detailed explanations about the nature of his sources and the extent to which the poems he focuses on are representative of larger bodies of literature. There are, to be sure, occasional references to poems as breaking with principles of their contemporaneous poetic canon, but more detail would have been needed for outsiders.

While it would be unreasonable to fault an aesthetic and literary study for failing to use history as its main analytical framework, a few steps could have been made to bridge the gap to readers from different disciplines. As Allsen has demonstrated, although the hunt was a practice of some importance in medieval Eurasia, it has remained underresearched. The present study helps to reconstruct the development of this important phenomenon in human history and so understand and appreciate its cultural, social, and psychological effects.

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Laura U. Marks’ *Hanan al-Cinema* puts us in the frame of a vibrant, engaging, and outward looking cinema developing in the Arab world—a diverse and multifaceted industry that is keen to reflect artistically on cultural and political contexts but which also cares deeply about aesthetics.