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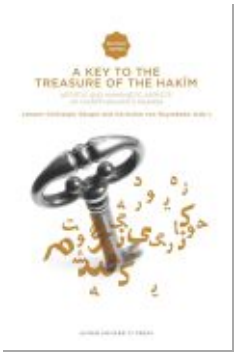

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13 “Let Even a Cat Win your Heart!” Nizāmī on Animal and Man.

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The command to take even a cat into one’s heart is uttered by Nizāmī in his second *mathnavī*, *Khusraw u Shīrīn.* It appears in the introduction to the work, where the poet outlines the objective of the composition as a whole. Nizāmī touches here on the theme of love and refers to the poet Firdawsī as an earlier editor of the story of *Khusraw u Shīrīn.* Without mentioning the latter by name – he refers to him simply as “the wise one” (حکیم *hakīm*)[2] – he alludes to the exclusion of the love story in Firdawsī’s edition and proposes to rectify this omission in his own version. In contrast to the other narratives about the Sassanid ruler, Nizāmī’s will focus on Khusraw’s love story with Shīrīn, and avoid repeating material already known to his readers. Nizāmī feels himself particularly well-qualified for this task, for there is no characteristic (شعار *shi‘ār*) that describes him better than that of love and he declares his refusal to compose any work except through love for the rest of his life.[3]

After this avowal he adds a number of assertions about the nature of love; he praises its cosmic power, and describes the globe as having no other محراب *(mihrāb)* than this. Love transcends the boundaries of religion – it speaks of the Qibla as much as of Lāt (one of the goddesses of Arab paganism), its treasure chest is the Ka‘ba and the wine barrel alike. Without the “earth of love” the world would have no water (the elixir of life itself). Love reveals itself in every aspect of the natural world; how, for example, could the magnet draw the iron longingly to itself, if not through its own love for the mineral? Nizāmī challenges his audience or reader to become the slave (غلام *ghulām*) of love. The world is love; all else mere hypocrisy (زرقسازی *zarq-sāzī*) and the man who is empty of love is dead, even if he were to possess one hundred souls. It is in these mental parameters that Nizāmī places the following verses:

مشو چون خر بخورد وخواب خرسند اگر خود گربه باشد دل درو بند
بعشق گربه گر خود چیر باشی از آن بهتر که با خود شیر باشی

(KS12,8-9)

Not like the donkey,[4] sated with eating and sleeping be! / If only a cat, let your heart be won by she!
T'is better through love of a cat[5] strong to be / Than without love yourself[6] as a lion to see!

What is the significance of the cat in these two verses? Or rather, what is the author attempting to convey through his reference to the cat here? Before answering this question, a brief overview of the characterisation of the cat in pre-modern Islamic cultural history should be permitted.[7]

It is often mentioned in Arabic and Persian sources that the cat eats her newborn young due to an excess of motherly love, as explained by Nizāmī elsewhere in the *Makhzan al-Asrār*.[8] This motif is already present in ancient Arabic animal descriptions and Sanā'ī, Nizāmī's predecessor, gives examples of its use in Persian poetry. The cat is also frequently portrayed as a thief, as can be seen in the works of the Ikhwān al-Safā',[9] of Sanā'ī,[10] and in the cosmological literature.[11] As such, the cat is not to be trusted and anyone who does so, should not be surprised at the damage incurred as a result. Such practical wisdom was popularly preserved in folk proverbs (based on the thieving nature of the cat), such as the Lebanese saying, *wakkel ĕl-'ott b-ĕl-lahme*, "to entrust the meat to the cat",[12] or the Egyptian proverb, *Massik elqutta muftâh elkerâr*, "he let the cat take the key to the pantry".[13]

From the assumption that the cat is not to be trusted, there is only a small step to the more general ascription of a false and deceitful character. The tale of the cat who masqueraded as an ascetic in order to lull potential prey into a false sense of security is a prime literary example of this outlook. The best-known form of this motif appears in *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and is mentioned by Nizāmī in his forty masterful aphorisms relating to the tales of the Indian fable collection, where he uses an elegant play on words to describe how the cat obtained its daily bread (روزی *rūzī*) through fasting (روزه *rūza*).[14] The satirist 'Ubayd-i Zākānī (d. ca. 771/1369-70) also used in his *qasīda Mūsh u gurba* the motif of the pseudo-ascetic, with political implications.

This negative characterisation of the cat stands in contrast to its often quoted efficiency in combatting the mouse plague, where it is of invaluable assistance to man (this will be discussed in more detail shortly). It is not only for this reason that the cat was a cherished as well as a detested figure. According to al-Jāhiz (d. 255/868-69) it is women who are particularly fond of cats.[15] This author continues in more detail that the companionship, familiarity, intimacy and comfort of lying together and sleeping under one blanket that one finds with a cat is not found with a dog, or doves, or chickens, or indeed any other of the animals with which man shares his household (in short, with no other domestic animal). Women kiss cats on the mouth and rhapsodize about how sweet the cat's mouth smells. Their

coats are dyed (*yukhdabu*), they are decorated with earrings and other ear-jewellery, receive gifts and are the subject of much petting and pampering.[16] There is no reason to dismiss al-Jāhiz's account as mere literary fantasy with no basis in reality. According to an – admittedly questionable – *Hadīth* love of cats was even a matter of faith[17] and there are various other traditions which refer to the Prophet Muhammad's particular affection for cats.[18]

Cats were bought and sold for their usefulness as mouse catchers, most likely for a relatively low price on the markets.[19] One problem with the trade in cats appears to have been their tendency to attack the other household animals, especially birds. The cat dealers do not appear to have shied away from using subterfuge as part of their efforts to bring about a deal. Al-Jāhiz relates in another account, this time from an informant referred to as al-Sindī b. Shāhak that some cat dealers would stuff the cat into a wine casket, which they would then roll along the ground until the cat was half-stupefied by dizziness, before placing it in a bird cage. The pitiable state of the cat, which prevented it from causing any harm to the doves, would deceive the potential buyer who would only later discover his cat's true character.[20] Al-Jāhiz records that whilst on the way to visit a friend, he himself overheard an enraged woman venting her fury on a man with the words, "May the leader of armed men stand between you and I! You acted as a middleman when I was buying a cat and [you] claimed that it wouldn't go near the chickens, wouldn't take the top off the saucepans, wouldn't come close to the other animals, and you claimed you knew more about cats than anyone else around! And I followed your so-called expertise and gave you a *dāniq* for your services! And then, when I brought it home, it was a devil that I had with me, for my God, it caused havoc with the neighbours, after it was finished with us! We've been trying to catch it for five days; see, there it is, I've brought it back to you, now give me my *dāniq* back!"[21]

Ibn Qutayba relates the anecdote of a family who brought the man to whom they had given their daughter in marriage before a judge. To the question as to how he made his living, he had answered that he sold animals (*dawābb*); following the wedding however, it emerged that he was a cat dealer. Upon hearing this, the judge said, "Why didn't you ask, "What kind of animals do you sell?"[22] This tale is similar to another anecdote told by al-Jāhiz. Here the object of wrath is not the husband himself, but a bystander who had been asked about the future bridegroom's profession and who justifies himself with the words "I didn't lie – the cat is an animal!"[23] It can be inferred from such tales that cat-dealing was regarded as a profession, but one related to a lower social standing.

Cats were trained for every conceivable purpose, also that of entertainment. Thus the encyclopaedist al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333) reveals that wandering street performers (*turuqiyya*) used to train cats to carry mice on their backs for the amusement of their audience.[24] In the Egyptian shadow play,

the Abū l-Qitat who worked with cats and mice was a common feature amongst the actors who trained performing animals.[25] A literary reference to the performing cat is also found in the *Shāh Nāma*: Firdawsī relates that in order to punish the inhabitants of the city of Rayy, the Sassanid king Khusraw Parvīz set a tyrannical governor over them, who subsequently ordered the removal of all roof guttering and the killing of every cat in the city. The inhabitants fled and a state of dilapidation began to set in. Thereupon Gurdiya[26] (who was both the sister of Khusraw's defeated opponent Bahrām Chūbīn and the wife of the king himself) resolved to save the city. She procured a kitten, decorated it with earrings and painted its claws red. Then she put it on a horse, from which it alighted in the king's spring garden. The fantastically adorned cat made the king laugh and he granted Gurdiya a wish. She asked him to give her the city of Rayy and to dismiss the diabolical governor from his post.[27]

Let us turn back to Nizāmī's verses, in which he commands the readers to take even a cat into their hearts. Rather than referring to the negative characteristics mentioned above, in spite of which we should make the cat the object of our affections, the poet most likely used the image of the cat here as an example of an inconspicuous, humble creature which is yet worthy of love. Rules of poetic diction also entailed a reference to another animal, its image harmonising with and completing the reference to the donkey in the first half of the *bayt*. The donkey (and often the cow) appears elsewhere in Nizāmī's work as an example of a creature exclusively interested in the satisfaction of basic needs.[28] This image also occurs frequently in Nāsir-i Khusraw's poetry.[29]

A significant feature of Nizāmī's "cat-verses" is the juxtaposition of cat and lion, which we also find in *Makhzan al-Asrār*.[30] Given the family affiliation shared by both animals and their physical resemblance, this is an obvious comparison documented throughout narrative literature.[31] The lion generally functions as the symbol of strength and courage; to be a lion in one's own eyes must mean here, to be convinced of one's own strength, which is a sure-fire path to vanity and *hubris*. However, this is not the nature of the love that concerns Nizāmī. In contrast to the lion, the cat is unobtrusive and yet beneficial to man and (also because of this latter aspect) worthy of his affection. Not only does it guard the crops from rodents, it also protects people against snakes and scorpions[32] – it was this aspect incidentally, which played a significant role in the domestication of the cat almost five thousand years ago.[33] In accordance with this view, moral approval is bestowed on the decision of a pious man who chose not to keep a cat during a mouse plague, for fear that the mice would then be driven into his neighbour's house and plague him instead. The anecdote is related by al-Ghazālī.[34]

The "benefit" or "harm" with which cats were associated was, incidentally, a central criterion for the attitude adopted towards particular animals

– and not only in the Islamic world. Early Islamic theological discussions on this topic reflect a certain lingering of the Zoroastrian view that the animals which are harmful to man were created by the Devil. Was it more permissible to kill harmful animals than those who contributed to man's well-being? Or, if animals should also be destined to enter Paradise – in itself a contentious question – was entry limited to the useful species?[35] Islamic philosophers, especially Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī (d. 313/925) also applied themselves to this question. Al-Rāzī approved of the hunting of dangerous meat-eating animals (such as lions, leopards, hyenas) and of dangerous animals who brought no benefit to man (such as snakes and scorpions). He justified their killing on two grounds: because if they were not killed, they would cause the death of many more animals and because as only a human soul was able to attain redemption, the freeing of the animal soul from its present body represented a step towards the ultimate redemption of the animals. This reasoning indicates al-Rāzī's adherence to the theory of the transmigration of souls.[36] The liberation of an animal soul from its body permitted its renewed individualisation, possibly in a human body, which in the best of cases, led to its ultimate redemption. For al-Rāzī, killing pasture animals was reprehensible as a matter of principle. Man should free himself both from his dependency on animals for food and from the practice of breeding animals, to avoid their excessive reproduction, which then made mass slaughter necessary.[37]

Nizāmī's verses about the love of cats may be understood in the context of his general theorization about love. It is not possible to infer more from the verses here, than the assertion that human affection can and should include humble creatures, such as the cat. However, the poet expresses himself more fully as to the relation between man and animal in another passage, this time in the seventh treatise of his *Makhzan al-Asrār*:[38]

اول از آن دایه که پرورده ای — شیر نخوردی که شکر خورده ای
نیکوئیت باید کافزون بود — نیکوئی افزونتر ازین چون بود
کز سر آن خامه که خاریده اند — نغز نگاریت نگاریده اند
رشته جان بر جگرت بسته اند — گوهر تن بر کمرت بسته اند
به که ضعیفی که درین مرغزار — آهوی فربه ندود با نزار
جانوارانی که غلام تو اند — مرغ علف خواره دام تو اند
چون تو همائی شرف کار باش — کم خور و کم گوی و کم آزار باش
هر که تو بینی ز سپید و سیاه — بر سر کاریست در این کارگاه
جغد که شومست به افسانه در — بلبل گنجست به ویرانه در
هر که در این پرده نشانیش هست — در خور تن قیمت جانیش هست
گر چه ز بحر تو به گوهر کمند — چون تو همه گوهری عالمند
بیش و کمی را که کشی در شمار — رنج به قدر دیتش چشم دار
نیک و بد ملک به کار تواند — در بد و نیک آینه دار تو اند

(MA26,3-15)

The key elements of the view that Nizāmī develops in this passage can be summarized as follows: First, he emphasizes the primacy of humanity in the order of creation. Heaven and Earth pay homage to him and the wet nurse who suckled him fed him sugar rather than milk.[39] The beautiful (نغز *naghz*) image of man was drawn with the (divine) quill (خامه *khāma*). We find here an echo of Qur'anic imagery such as that of Sura 95, 4: "We created man in the best of forms" (*khalaqnā l-insān fī ahsan taqwīm* خلقنا الانسان فی احسن تقویم). Nizāmī then addresses the relationship between animals and humanity; animals (جانوران *jānvārān*) are the slaves (*ghulām*) of mankind.[40] They are the fed birds of his net, i.e. they are completely subservient to man.

Man's authority over animals, together with their fear of him and dependence on his mercy, was already ordained for Christianity, Judaism and Islam in Genesis 1, 28 und 9, 2.[41] The view of the primacy of man was also dominant in the philosophical tradition of Antiquity, or at least according to the influential Aristotelian theory of the faculties of the soul. These faculties, which ascend hierarchically and culminate in rationality, are dispensed along with the other mental faculties to humans, animals and even plants, in quantities befitting their position in the cosmic hierarchy.[42] The question as to whether primacy should be given to man or animal is also the main topic in the philosophical fairy tale of the "Dispute between Animal and Man before the King of the Djinns" in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'*. Here too, the prevailing hierarchy is maintained in the end, but the very fact that the question is posed at all is noteworthy, regardless of how it is answered. The "dispute" is placed at the end of the tract on the animal world, which concludes the natural science section of the *Rasā'il* and constitutes a transition to the section beginning with a description of mankind.[43] Although the animals come forward with better arguments and make their suit more eloquently than the human representatives, the argument is decided in favour of the latter, for some of them will become saints or wise men and be permitted to enter Paradise with their immortal souls, whilst no animal can live on after its death. This method of argumentation makes it clear that the authors of the *Rasā'il* did not deem animals to possess an immortal soul.[44] It is the conclusive argument by which animals must ultimately accept the primacy of man.

Nizāmī then calls upon noble mankind – which he compares with the mythical bird, Humā[45] – to act in an equally noble fashion. This entails eating little, speaking little, and causing little pain to others (کم آزار *kam-āzār*). This concept is characteristic of *Makhzan al-Asrār,* in which Nizāmī often lists moral virtues (or their opposite) in a fashion recalling that of the "mirrors for princes" genre. The call to desist from violence is a cause to which he repeatedly returns.[46] In this passage, Nizāmī is particularly concerned about the humane treatment of animals and grounds himself firmly in Islamic soil when making his case.

That man must abstain from mistreating animals is already dictated in the *Hadīth*. One well-known tradition relates that a woman was condemned to Hell for letting a cat starve to death; this is contrasted with the account of another individual (or a prostitute in some variants) who was granted God's forgiveness for her sins because she drew water out of a well for a dog dying of thirst.[47] This signifies that on the authority of the Prophet, acts of charity towards animals are rewarded with extraordinary mercy – even when the animals concerned are neither domestic nor known to the individual. Legend portrays the second Caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattāb as one of the paradigms of the humane treatment of animals.[48] Amongst the philosophers, it is again al-Rāzī who argues for more compassionate relations between man and beast; he regards it as forbidden to cause pain to a creature capable of feeling (محس *muhiss*), unless deserved or required in order to protect it from a greater evil. He places in this category general acts of aggression or abuse (مظالم *mazālim*), but also the hunting of animals which was a favourite sport for kings, and the abuse and exploitation (كد *kadd*) of cattle. Relations should be characterised by honest intention, based upon recognised rules and methods and conducted in a comprehensible and just fashion, which may not be changed or abandoned at will.[49]

Nizāmī continues; every creature – the whole of creation is portrayed meristically through "black and white" – has its significance in this "workplace" (a metaphor for the world). Every animal has its place in creation and even the owl (جغد *jughd*), much maligned in the narrative literature (افسانه *afsāna*) is "*the nightingale of the treasures in the ruins*". Every creature has "*the spiritual rank befitting its body."*

This last statement of Nizāmī is reminiscent of a passage from the "Dispute between Animal and Man" of the Ikhwān al-Safā', which discusses the proportions between body and soul. They argue the perfectly just Creator fashioned his creation in such a way as to make all beings equal to one another. In order to attain this balance, he created animals with powerful bodies and gave them mild and subservient souls (camels, elephants), just as he equipped those animals with weak and vulnerable bodies, with resilient, clever souls (bees, silk worms).[50] It is evident that Nizāmī must have read the *Rasā'il*, at least in relation to several other passages in the *Makhzan al-Asrār*, such as the portrayal of man as a microcosm,[51] the cosmic relation between the heart and the sun[52] and the imagery of the human body.[53]

Animals, continues Nizāmī, are indeed less noble than mankind in relation to their substance, but like man, they are also in possession of cosmic matter. Man may not cause his fellow creatures more pain than that for which he is able to pay the blood money (دیه *diya)*. This argument reflects Nizāmī's view of the fundamental similarity of created beings, despite the subordination of animal to man. In addition to this similarity, the animals also have a valuable function in their relation to humanity; they "*hold a*

mirror up to man." The mirror does not lie; it provides a faithful reflection of good and bad actions. Thus, an individual can tell from his treatment of animals whether he generally behaves in a good or bad fashion. Nizāmī does not continue the theme of the relationship between man and animal in the rest of the introduction to the seventh section. However, the embedded allegory brings it centre-stage again: Whilst out hunting, Farīdūn, the mythical king of Iran, catches sight of a gazelle that takes his fancy. He gallops towards her on his horse and draws his bow to fire an arrow. Suddenly both horse and arrow fail to obey him. In response to the reproaches of the king the arrow informs him that the gazelle must be spared – no one may kill another creature purely for his own amusement.[54] In the concluding verses of the seventh treatise of *Makhzan al-Asrār* Nizāmī imparts the moral to be drawn from the theme discussed; it is in serving rather than ruling that the nobility of mankind lies.

The image of the animal as an expression of this maxim appears in two other *bayt*s at the end of the chapter. In the first, the snake sitting on the treasure (i.e. guarding it) is portrayed from head to foot as nothing more than a belt. The belt was regarded as the definitive symbol of a servant and is here compared effectively with the long, slender body of the snake. In the second passage, the candle is shown as unable to emit the light which benefits its surroundings without the bee's service in providing wax.

گنج نشین مار که درویش نیست — از سر تا دم کمری بیش نیست ...
شمع که او خواجگی نور یافت — از کمر خدمت زنبور یافت

(MA26,58 and 61)

To the best of this author's knowledge, the seventh treatise of the *Makhzan al-Asrār* is the only passage in Nizāmī's literary work in which the relations between man and animal are considered as a separate theme. The other functions fulfilled by animals in Nizāmī's work may be divided into three categories: First: In Nizāmī's metaphorical language and technique of associating ideas, as well as in his use of proverbs, animals play an indispensable role. However, this method is by no means unique to Nizāmī, but is a common feature of classical Persian poetry. Poets tended to derive their imagery chiefly from the natural world and it was animals and plants, alongside with the heavenly bodies, which represented the most important poetical "reservoir".

Second: Nizāmī repeatedly uses animals as the protagonists of moral parables. This too is a relatively common method in Persian literature; compare for example, Mawlanā Rūmī, whose work reflects a penchant for using animals – talking animals at that! – in this role. As befits the didactic purpose of this literary genre, a moral function for humans is bound up with the actions of the animals. Animals appear in this role in six of the twenty parables in the *Makhzan al-Asrār:* in the second parable (the

alleged wedding negotiations of the owls), through which the Sassanid king Anūshirvān comes to recognise the injustice of his actions; in the sixth parable (the hunter, the dog and the fox); in the eighth parable (the tradesman and the fox); in the tenth parable (Jesus and the dead dog) and finally in the twentieth parable (the nightingale and the falcon), which is a *munāzara* integrated into this didactic *mathnavī*. Talking animals feature in two of these parables (nos. 6 and 20).[55] In *Khusraw u Shīrīn,* the role of animals as the protagonists of parables finds its most succinct expression in the forty *Kalīla wa-Dimna* aphorisms (mentioned above). The fable of the partridge and the ants[56] and the story of the young man and the wild dogs[57] are the best examples of this role in the story of *Laylī u Majnūn*, whilst in *Haft Paykar*, it is the story of the faithless dog, which should be mentioned in this context. This last tale, which derives from Nizām ul-Mulk's *Siyāsat Nāma*,[58] is incorporated into the actual narrative of *Haft Paykar* but fulfils for the protagonist, Bahrām-i Gūr, the function of a fictitious parable; a dog hands his master's herd of sheep over to his lover, the she-wolf. Following the discovery of his disloyalty, he is hung in chains whilst still alive, both as a punishment and as a warning to others. It is through this incident that Bahrām finally perceives the evil machinations of his vizier, who has been committing transgressions and acts of injustice against his subjects.

Third: In *Laylī u Majnūn* only does Nizāmī permit the animals to actively contribute to the outcome of the narrative instead of only playing an allegorical role. The hunting scenes and tests of bravery which so often feature in court narratives (and thus also in the work of Nizāmī) and which involve the overpowering of wild animals do not belong in this category. The feat of the slave-girl Fitna, who carried a full-grown bull up the palace steps in order to impart a lesson to Bahrām-i Gūr also belongs in the second group, in which the main function of the animals is as a more or less decorative background to the actual narrative. But this third function, as active participant in the narrative, is awarded to the animals in *Laylī u Majnūn.* They are portrayed as Majnūn's friends, serving and protecting him of their own free will. This motif was already present in the narratives on which Nizāmī based his account; in the earlier versions of the legend, we see Majnūn in the final stages of his insanity, leaving his tribe to live alone in the desert. Here he wins the friendship of the gazelles who remind him of Laylī, buying their freedom from the hunters and persecuting the wolves who attack them. Playing with sand and stones, oblivious even to himself, he only returns to consciousness when the name Laylī is mentioned. He shies away from humanity like the wild animals.[59]

Like Solomon, the Majnūn of Nizāmī's version is a king of the animals.[60] As an outcast, alienated from human civilisation, he is intuitively understood by them and accepted into their circle.[61] Nizāmī gives more emphasis and substance to this motif than the earlier versions of the story

do. Its significance in *Laylī u Majnūn,* his third *mathnavī*, is also revealed in the tradition of manuscript illumination, where the picture of Majnūn surrounded by his animals is one of the most common images from the story.

The beasts of prey lose their savagery through contact with Majnūn; the wolf ceases to attack the sheep and the lion lets the wild ass be. The dog makes peace (صلح *sulh*) with the hare and the gazelle drinks the milk (شیر *shīr*) of the lion (شیر in older pronunciation *shēr*).[62] Under Majnūn's influence the *Tieridyll* is realised.[63]

When considered within its wider context, the relation of this picture to the well-known literary motif of peaceful co-existence between beasts of prey and pasture animals becomes clear. However, in contrast to its more concrete portrayal here, such harmonious cohabitation tends in other works to be transposed into a long-lost golden age, or to be used as a symbol for the coming reign of peace. An example for the former use can be seen in the court of the mythical king Gayūmarth in the *Shāh Nāma*,[64] whilst the well-known passage in the Old Testament, Isaiah 11, 6 -7 can be cited as an example of the latter.

Not only do the animals serve Majnūn of their own accord, they also tend to his welfare. Nizāmī describes this with obvious empathy and much attention to detail; the fox sweeps out Majnūn's sleeping place with his tail, the gazelle massages his feet, the wild ass and stag lie beneath him as a pillow and the lion and the wolf watch over him.[65] At the risk of being attacked by the wild animals, no one can approach Majnūn without being summoned by him first. If summoned however, none of the animals will do him any harm. When food is brought to Majnūn, he consumes only a "sunlight mote" (ذره *dharra*), and gives the rest to the animals to eat. These look to him as their provider (روزی ده *rūzī-dih*) and remain faithful to him until the end. Following Laylī's death, they accompany him to her grave. They maintain the dead Majnūn in their custody until his corpse has turned to dust, then each animal goes his own way.

This function of the animal, as active participant in the unfolding of the plot itself, rather than as the protagonist of a fable, is relatively rare in classical Persian literature. It is used by Nizāmī in *Laylī u Majnūn* to touching effect. Nizāmī had already begun to reflect on the relationship between animal and man in his early years and this had become a matter of fundamental moral significance to him, as shown by the seventh tract of *Makhzan al-Asrār,* in which he exhorts humanity to be aware of its responsibility, also and even especially in its dealings with fellow creatures. This guiding principle has lost none of its relevance today.

Notes

1 I am grateful to Antonia Bosanquet for her translation of this article into English.
2 KS11,49. Nizami-Dastgirdi (1333a) 33,2, the editor's comment on this verse; also Nizami-Bürgel (1980) 346.
3 KS12,4; Nizami-Dastgirdi (1333a) 33,8. Nizami-Chetagurov (1960) 62,5 proposes شمار *shumār* "number".
4 Nizami-Chetagurov (1960) 63; ult. سگ *sag* (dog). The less typical, antithetical pairing of donkey and cat seems to me to be the likelier reading, also in view of the wordplay with خرسند *khursand* and the alliteration خر *khar*, خورد *khward*, خواب *khwāb*, خرسند *khursand*.
5 Nizami-Chetagurov (1960) 64, 1: سیر *sīr* (full).
6 Nizami-Chetagurov (1960) 64,1: خودرا *khwad-rā* (for yourself).
7 General summary in Schimmel (1989); Omidsalar (1992); Viré (1997).
8 Würsch (2005a) 64.
9 Ikhwan al-Safa' (1405) 2, 246.
10 See relevant passages in Würsch (2005a) 145.
11 For example Tusi (1345) 595.
12 Abela (1981) 1, n. 1753.
13 Spitta (1880) 497, n. 44.
14 KS92 and KS92,25. See van Ruymbeke's article in this volume.
15 Jahiz (1937) 5, 337.
16 Jahiz (1937) 338.
17 The religious scholar 'Alī al-Qārī al-Harawī (d. 1014/1605) dedicated a treatise especially to this tradition, in which he declared it to be unauthentic. The text has been edited by Smith (1983).
18 Schimmel (1989) 11-20.
19 First-hand information about this subject tends to be found by chance. Barhebraeus (d. 1286) relates that in 468/1075 Damascus was struck by famine, plague and a dramatic fall in prices. Furthermore, mice were spreading out of control. A woman who owned two houses, each worth several hundred dinars, sold one of them for the sum of seven *zūzē* (i. e. drachmai or dirhams), with which she bought herself a cat; Barhebraeus (1932) 1, 226 (Trans.); 2, 79r (left column), lines 8-12 (Text).
20 Jahiz (1937) 5, 339-40, quoted by al-Tusi (1345) 596.
21 Jahiz (1937) 340.
22 Ibn Qutayba (1963) 2, 201.
23 Jahiz (1405) 1, 338.
24 Nuwayri (1933) 9, 284.
25 Bosworth (1976) 1, 129.
26 Gurdiya is one of the few women playing an active role in the *Shāh Nāma*; Khaleghi-Motlagh (1971) 79 seq.
27 Firdawsi-Dabirsiyaqi (1344) 5, 2464-5. Firdawsi-Bertels (1960) 9, 193-4. Firdawsi-Mohl (1876) 7, 270-3.
28 Würsch (2005a) 57-8, n. 133.
29 As an example Nasir-i Khusraw (1372) 47, ult.: "*He who only feeds and sleeps like the donkey, is a donkey in human form*"; 114, -3: "*Cows and donkeys seek only to sleep and feed*"; 146, 2: "*Feeding and sleeping are matters for the donkey.*"
30 Würsch (2005a) 111.
31 See the well-known story of the cat originating from the lion's sneezing; Würsch (2005b) 925-41; on the frequent comparison between the cat and the lion, also Delort (1987) 336-7.
32 Tusi (1345) 595: the cat keeps the house clean, eats insects, kills snakes and is the enemy of the mouse.

33 Delort (1987) 337.
34 Ghazali (1923) 129.
35 van Ess (1991) 2, 52-3; 3, 407.
36 van Ess (1991) 3, 430.
37 Razi (1939) 104-5.
38 Würsch (2005a) 138 seq.
39 Dastgerdi (Nizami-Dastgirdi (1334)) interprets the wet nurse as the embodiment of pre-eternity (ازل *azal*) and sugar as existence.
40 Nizāmī addresses mankind in general.
41 Bousquet (1958).
42 Aristoteles (1995) 74-5, II/3; the capacity for thought and rationality are additional qualities awarded to mankind and – this addition is worth noting – "if there should be another living creature of the same or a higher nature" (*timióteron*, 414b18-19).
43 Ikhwan al-Safa' (1990) XXXII-XXXIII.
44 Ikhwan al-Safa' (1405) v.2, 376. Ikhwan al-Safa' (1990) 200. For more about the concepts of the animal soul in Medieval Islam, see Giese (2001) 111-3.
45 Nöldeke (1896) 133: The Humā and its *farr* in particular distribute blessings; according to a Persian popular belief, the Humā's shadow fell on Achaemenes. This could relate to one of Aelian's tales, according to which the ancestor of the Achaemenids was brought up by an eagle. The Humā is often presented in antithesis to the owl – as in this passage in *Makhzan al-Asrār*, where the owl is mentioned almost immediately after the Humā.
46 Particularly relevant to this theme is the work of Bürgel. The contest between the philosophers that takes place in the *Iskandar Nāma* is settled peacefully in comparison to the *Makhzan al-Asrār* version (Bürgel (1991a)); the slave girl who confronts Bahrām-i Gūr survives and even dispenses words of advice to the king, whilst in Firdawsī's version she is trampled to death (Bürgel (1988a)).
47 Bousquet (1958) 40; 'Attār composed a poetical rendition of the story of the dog's rescue from dying of thirst. See Ritter (1978) 275.
48 Bousquet (1958) 45.
49 Razi (1939) 103-4. On animal rights in the Islamic context, see also Foltz (2006).
50 Ikhwan al-Safa' (1405) 2, 363 seq.; Ikhwan al-Safa' (1990) 184 seq.
51 It would be interesting to investigate the reception of this Greek theory in the Islamic world more thoroughly. "Microcosm" tends to be translated in Arabic with the loan translation العالم الصغير *al-'ālam al-saghīr*. The juxtaposition of microcosm/macrocosm is also present in the work of the Ionic Nature Philosophers, the Pythagoreans and in particular, the Stoics. The interpretation of man as a reflection of the macrocosm was developed further in Neo-Platonism, and it is likely that this last provided the vehicle by which the concept passed into the Islamic world. For more about the macrocosm/microcosm concepts in Antiquity see Gatzemeier (1980) 640-2.
52 Würsch (2005a) 209-10.
53 Würsch (2005a) 212.
54 It is a relatively common aspect of anecdotes and fables (if we widen the latter's definition beyond the scope of exclusively animal stories) that the moral of the tale is given by a talking object.
55 The phenomenon of the talking animal also features in Arabic literature, and individual examples can even be found in pre-Abbasid poetry. See Wagner (1994).
56 LM18; Nizami-Dastgirdi (1333b) 90; Nizami-Gelpke (1992) 71-3.
57 LM33,52 sqq.; Nizami-Dastgirdi (1333b) 169-72; Nizami-Gelpke (1992) 203-10.
58 See de Blois (2003).
59 Krachkovskij (1955) 1-50.
60 LM33,20; Nizami-Dastgirdi (1333b) 167, 14. According to Dols (1992) 337, in his function as king of the animals, Majnūn created a world that reflected his own insanity. This

interpretation was rejected (with justification, in this author's opinion) by Seyed-Gohrab (2001) 142-3. Nizāmī would not have compared Majnūn with King Solomon if he had wanted to portray the former's kingdom of animals as a world of insanity.

61 See also the epilogue in Nizami-Gelpke (1992) 332-3.

62 LM33,24-5; Nizami-Dastgirdi (1333b) 167, pu-ult.

63 The term originates from van Ess (1991) 3, 152.

64 It is more than likely that Nizāmī's use of the animal idyll is based on Firdawsī's "primordial sequence," as Seyed-Gohrab (2001) 140-1 suggests.

65 LM33,27-31; Nizami-Dastgerdi (1333b) 168, 2-6.