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Similitudo and Its Species in the Tradition of Contemporary Persian and Italian Literature

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ABSTRACT

In Aristotelian philosophy and, as a consequence, in the works of the first Persian philosophers of the Islamic period such as Fārābī and Ebn Sinā, rhetoric is a part of logic; thus, all the figures of thought, including simile, are to be used in poetic discourse and argumentation for the sake of clarity. According to this Hellenistic point of view, the simile is an element of the argumentatio, especially as a probatio, and therefore as a support to the speaker's reasoning. This figure in another level of interpretation is a form of ornatus, aimed at enriching and clarifying the discourse through comparison of a phenomenon, an event, or a situation that should be represented by being compared to another phenomenon that falls within the sphere of the common experience of those to whom it is proposed. Rhetorical techniques, after linguistic knowledge, could analyze the mechanisms of literary text by determining the stylistic aspects of each work as one of the most important keys to pursuing intercultural research. Medieval Romance rhetorics had almost condemned the use of similitudo: «Hoc autem modernis non licet» as Matthew of Vendôme affirms (*Ars versificatoria*, V), in the second half of the 12th century, but such an attitude is not attested among the rhetorical treatises concerning Persian literature. The poetic imagery of neo-Persian classical lyrics both in the theoretical field, i.e. in regards with rhetorical texts, and in the Divāns of poets who manifest the realization of ideas of the eloquence theorists, is wider than that of Italian poets. This fact is due to the limited view of Italian poets in this regard accompanied by the particular sophistication of Italian rhetoric at various stages of the development of the theory of eloquence. This phenomenon closes the way to the extravagant swings that are often seen in neo-Persian lyric. In this article, we have tried to explore one of the most fundamental figures of speech, simile, in Persian literature and the literature of the Romance languages, to better understand the role of imagery technics in two different areas of Aryan Languages. The norms and foundations of the structure of simile, which are more developed in Persian literature than the Romance culture, are in some way adaptable to European rhetorical insight from our point of view. In this regard, the selected poetical citations are based upon Italian, new Latin and Persian texts. It is noteworthy that the examples have been selected from various literary periods, from the works of different authors from the Middle Ages up to the last century. In this way the Italian rhetoric based on medieval eloquence - which finds its roots in late Latin and Romance rhetorics - is comparable through poetic compositions with the eloquence of classical neo-Persian literature.

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